The Individualization of Society and the Liberalization of State Policies on Same-Sex Sexual Relations, 1984-1995*

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Abstract

Over the last half century, social life throughout much of the world has been reconstituted around individualized persons, conceived to embody ultimate authority over their own lives. As individuals have become more central to society, and as models of individuated personhood have been claimed by women as well as by men, many changes have ensued, including a dramatic transformation of sex. Sex has ceased to be dominantly associated with the family and procreation and has come to be associated with the individual and pleasure. One expression of this shift is the recent rise and public legitimation of same-sex sexual relations. Gay and lesbian social movements have appeared worldwide, and many nation-states have liberalized their policies on homosexual relations. Using regression models on cross-national data, we show that (1) high levels of individualization and gender equality provide a “cultural opportunity structure” that gives rise to active lesbian and gay social movements and liberalized state policies on same-sex relations and that (2) active lesbian and gay social movements and liberal state policies each facilitate the other. Competing explanations for the changes, such as economic development and democratization, receive little support.

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Worldwide between 1984 and 1995, lesbian and gay social movements expanded, and state policies on homosexual relations liberalized. While significant cross-national variation remains, with many countries still characterized by confining social sanctions and restrictive policies, the trend during that brief period was unequivocal and dramatic: throughout the world, gays and lesbians mobilized and policies against same-sex relations, between men and between women, were lifted.¹

We argue that this trend occurred with the recent spread of individualism beyond its masculine Western origins (Durkheim 1933; Frank, Meyer & Miyahara 1995; Giddens 1991; Thomas et al. 1987; Weber 1930). Women as well as men have claimed individuated personhood in recent decades (Zaretsky 1994), and such individuated personhood has become institutionalized at the level of world society (Boli & Thomas 1997; Forsythe 1991; Smith 1995). The overall process has freed persons from communal, religious, and familial embeddings, and it has undercut gender differentiation. Thus the individualization of society has displaced family-based procreative sexuality and focalized sex for individual pleasure, spurring the liberalization of state policies on same-sex relations and the rise of lesbian and gay social movements, which have further pressured states for reform.

With cross-national data on state policies and social movements in 1984 and 1995, we explore our argument below. First we document recent changes in the state regulation of same-sex relations.² Then we develop the pieces of our argument and finally test its propositions regarding lesbian and gay social movements and national policies on same-sex intercourse.

CHANGES IN STATE POLICIES ON HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS

State policies on same-sex sexual relations changed rapidly between 1984 and 1995. Of the 86 countries for which we have data at both time points, 24 changed their policies regarding sex between men, sex between women, or both in just an 11-year period. Strikingly, nearly every change was one toward liberalization, with more than a quarter of the countries in our data set relaxing their policies during this period. In some cases, liberalization entailed merely the cessation of systematic police harassment, which accounts for Panama’s policy shift on homosexual relations between women. In other cases, a legal prohibition was struck down and new legislation was passed, as when South Africa granted homosexual and heterosexual relations equal status under the new constitution (a similar constitutional provision is pending in Poland).³

In spite of the liberalizing trend, a good deal of variation remained in state policies by 1995. Liberalization had occurred in Hong Kong but not Singapore, in Ireland but not Italy, and in South Africa but not Nigeria. Unlike state policies in some areas, such as those regarding female suffrage (Ramirez, Soysal & Shanahan 1997) or abortion to preserve the life of the woman (McEneaney & Ramirez 1996), regulations on homosexual relations are far from isomorphic worldwide (see
DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Thomas et al. 1987). As of 1995, one-third of the countries in our data set accorded legal, unrestricted status to sexual relations between women, while one-quarter prosecuted them. Similarly, 29% of the nation-states in our data set provided for legal sex between men, while nearly 45% prosecuted them.

The percentages reveal that many more countries outlawed sexual relations between men than those between women during this period. In 1995, for example, 29 countries in our data set had no policy regarding sex between women, whereas only 11 had no policy regarding male-male sex. Historically, women have appeared in the direct gaze of the state mainly conjunctionally, in their roles as wives and mothers (Berkovitch 1999; Conell 1990; Orloff 1993; Skocpol 1992). Thus aspects of female sexuality such as same-sex relations (and, more generally, aspects of sexuality not directly related to reproduction) have remained outside the state purview (Giddens 1992; Russett 1989). This has not yielded a realm of sexual freedom for women, but it has meant that the state is not typically the primary source of restrictions on the nonreproductive sexual behavior of women. Even so, to the extent that the state has wielded restrictive policies over women as well as men, we expect the liberalization of state policies to occur for similar reasons.

While our data are revealing, more detailed information from a longer time period would reveal even more. Data from the 1960s would capture the European origins of the most recent wave of liberalizations. Data from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would reveal that the earliest moves to decriminalize same-sex relations occurred with the consolidation of democratic nation-states, such as France in 1791, Belgium and Luxembourg in 1792, the Netherlands in 1811, and Spain in 1822 (Tatchell 1992). Such data would further show that many of these same countries, including France, experienced later episodes of restriction, and still later episodes of liberalization. Our data miss such long-term policy trajectories. However, even considering only the most recent period, there has been a remarkable amount of change — nearly all of it toward liberalization.

TWO BROADER CONTEXTS

Our focus here is on the rising public legitimation of same-sex relations, seen in expanding social movements and liberalizing state policies. We emphasize, however, that there are broader transformations afoot, in the meaning and legitimacy both of same-sex sex and of sex more generally. We discuss each of these broader contexts briefly before returning to our argument.

First, expanding social movements and liberalizing state policies are not the only changes in same-sex sexuality. At the level of individual persons, for example, there has been a dramatic efflorescence of homosexual identities, especially in the West (see Gamson 1995). There have perhaps always been persons who engage in same-sex relations, but increasingly such relations are thought to signify specific
kinds of persons, with specific mannerisms, occupational interests, and so on (D’Emilio & Freedman 1988; Greenberg 1988; Zaretsky 1994). “Making fun” of homosexuals — on playgrounds, in movies — is part and parcel of the rise of homosexual identities. Were it not for the fact that homosexuals have become so distinct and publicly recognizable, no such “fun” would be possible.

Likewise, one can observe the rising public legitimation of same-sex relations among scientific and medical professionals. Typologies that once distinguished sex that is procreative (normal) from sex that is nonprocreative (perverted) now typically distinguish that which is healthy, in which the individual exercises sovereign consent, from that which is unhealthy, in which the individual experiences physical or psychological compulsions (Dynes & Donaldson 1992; Foucault 1978; Giddens 1992; Green 1994; Kasl 1990). Thus professionals increasingly cast consensual homosexuality as an illness. The American Psychiatric Association depathologized homosexuality in 1973, the World Health Organization followed suit in 1991, and many other organizations have done the same, recently including the Japanese psychiatric association (the Chinese designation is under review) (Adam 1987; Mirken 1995).

Among states, the liberalization of policies on same-sex relations is only one of the relevant changes. Others include the legalization of same-sex civil marriages (in Denmark, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and possibly soon a state in the U.S.), the protection of homosexuals from hate crimes (Grattet, Jenness & Curry 1998), immigration rights to those fleeing persecution or joining partners, and equal access to employment and housing.

Similarly in world society, we see rising public legitimation. Human rights treaties have increasingly been used to authorize same-sex relations, and transnational social-movement associations have increasingly asserted the “rights” of persons to engage in same-sex intercourse (Hendriks, Tielman & van der Veen 1993; Tatchell 1992). These associations include Amnesty International, which in 1991 resolved to defend those imprisoned for homosexuality; the International Lesbian and Gay Association, founded in 1978; and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, founded in 1990. Both of the latter expressly seek the liberalization of state policies on same-sex relations.

The point is that a pervasive redefinition of same-sex sexuality is under way, evident at every level of society: social movements and state policies are only two dimensions of the broader change. All of this has occurred within a wider transformation in the meaning and organization of sex more generally, involving a shift in the locus of sexuality from the family to the individual, and a shift in the purpose of sex from procreation to pleasure. 6

Ideal—typically under familiarly based sex—for—reproduction, a person must be married to have legitimate sexual liaisons. The purpose of such liaisons must be procreation, and thus the focal act must be vaginal intercourse. There must be two and only two participants, one male and one female, both of whom should be of
child-rearing age (young adult). Birth control is forbidden. Pleasure and satisfaction
are incidental.

By contrast, in individually based sex-for-pleasure, a person need not be married
to have legitimate sexual liaisons (indeed marriage often desexualizes a
relationship). The purpose of sexual liaisons is rarely procreation, and thus the
focal act may be of many sorts: manual, oral, anal, and even “virtual” sex are
increasingly routine (Kroker & Cook 1986; Laumann et al. 1994; Rubin 1990). Accordingly, sexual encounters may involve more or fewer than two participants,
who are male or female in any combination, and of any age beyond the age of
consent. Birth control is de rigueur, and satisfaction is the preeminent goal.

This broader frame best describes changes taking place in the West, but it also
captures changes under way throughout the world (see, e.g., international discourse
on contraceptives and the phenomenal expansion in their use in United Nations
1987). A grand transformation appears to be under way, in which the meaning of
“sex” is being reconstituted.

A Cultural Opportunity Structure and an Organizational Catalyst

We now focus on two pieces of the bigger picture: expanding lesbian and gay social
movements and liberalizing state policies on same-sex relations. The literature
addressing these issues consists primarily of richly detailed case studies (e.g.,
Frederick 1995; Jackson 1989; Murray 1987; Whitam & Mathy 1986). While
suggestive, such studies understate the general features of the social processes at
play (see Lieberson 1994; Olzak 1989). Our cross-national approach — which we
mean to complement the casework — allows us to focus on the common
antecedents of active lesbian and gay social movements and liberal state policies
on same-sex sexual relations.

We think of these antecedents in terms of cultural opportunity structures, which
refer to distributions of meaning in and across societies (in contrast to political
opportunity structures, which refer to distributions of power: see Jenkins &
Klandermans 1995; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996). Especially important to
cultural opportunity structures are core conceptions of actors and action
institutionalized in culture and organization (Thomas et al. 1987). Such taken-
for-granted notions shape who and what counts in society and serve not only as
“frames” or “strategies” available to and manipulable by social actors but also as
the constituent materials of actors themselves (cf. Snow et al. 1986; Swidler 1986).

In the case at hand, we argue that individualized notions of personhood have
expanded beyond their masculine Western origins in recent decades and
increasingly have come to characterize women and men throughout the world.
This process has created a new cultural opportunity structure — that is, new kinds
of actors and new possibilities for action — facilitating the rise of liberal state
policies and lesbian and gay social movements. In turn, lesbian and gay social movements and liberalized state policies have further facilitated each other. We detail this argument below, building on large bodies of literature emphasizing the transnational and cultural bases of social movements (Long & Harris 1993; Nadelman 1990; Roberts 1995; Smith, Pagnucco & Romeril 1994; Starn 1995) and the state (Jepperson & Meyer 1991; Meyer et al. 1997; Ruggie 1993; Steinmetz forthcoming), especially in regards to gender and sexuality (Barrett & Frank 1999; Berkvitch 1999; Bradley & Ramirez 1996; Conell 1990; Foucault 1978; McEneaney & Ramirez 1996; Orloff 1993; Ramirez 1987; Ramirez, Soysal & Shanahan 1997).

Our approach stands in contrast to two more standard sociological imageries. In one, economic expansion is seen to require lowered social barriers and is therefore understood to underlie the rise of lesbian and gay social movements and the liberalization of state policies on same-sex relations. In the other, democratization plays the same role. We test both imageries in the analyses. Before doing so, however, we discuss each of the posited relationships summarized in Figure 1. Of course we imagine all three aspects of the cultural opportunity structure to be closely interrelated. We focus our discussion, however, on the relationship between the aspects of the cultural opportunity structure and the dependent variables.

OVERALL CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM

As a first step, we argue that overall cultural individualism provides crucial ingredients for the rise and legitimation of same-sex sexuality. Individualism frames sexuality in terms of free-standing persons and thereby constitutes a legitimate claim for the lesbian and gay social movement and the state liberalization of same-sex sexual relations. In nonindividualized settings, sex is typically bound to the heterosexual family and defined in terms of reproduction. State policies — prohibiting contraception, adultery, divorce, and the like — provide support for procreative, family-based sex. In an individualized cultural setting, by contrast, the tight linkage between sex and procreation is loosened. Same-sex sexuality becomes a legitimate means of satisfying an expanded array of individual desires, or even a deep-seated identity.

Individualism furthermore constitutes persons who act as the authors of their own destinies and the elemental components of the state, and thus it provides authorized claimants for lesbian and gay rights. In an individualized cultural setting, persons wield considerable authority over their own lives, including their sex lives. This authority may be used in public and against the state, especially when the state is seen to infringe upon individual liberties.

The effects of individualism can be observed, for example, in the depiction of same-sex sexuality as an individual “human right,” which as a matter of natural
law accrues to all individual persons. In Bermuda’s recent debate on the legalization of same-sex sexual relations, the Royal Gazette (Mar. 7, 1994) put the matter thus: “When all of the shouting is ignored, the gay law issue comes down to one bare fact, human rights. In almost every period of recorded history minorities have fought and died to win their rights. . . . The gay cause is no different.” The individualized cultural setting provides fertile ground for the constitution of such principles.

In sum, by reconfiguring sex in terms of personal expression and pleasure, and by reconstituting persons as sovereign actors, individualism contributes to a cultural opportunity structure that enables the formation of the lesbian and gay social movement and the liberalization of state policies on same-sex intercourse. Thus a first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. High levels of cultural individualism in a country should facilitate the rise of the lesbian and gay social movement and more liberal state policies on same-sex sexual relations.

INDIVIDUALIZED GENDER EQUALITY

A general cultural individualism, however, is clearly insufficient to explain the changes on which we are focused. Individualism, after all, grew prominent with the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, while lesbian and gay rights were hardly visible before the 1960s. Thus we call attention to a second aspect of the cultural opportunity structure: gender equality. Cultural emphases on the equality of individuals, across genders, foment the rise and legitimation of same-sex sexuality.

Enlightenment models of individuated personhood were originally contained by the “natural” barrier between the sexes: they applied to men but not, naturally, to women (Scott 1996; Zaretsky 1994). Scientific work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at first confirmed the “natural” barrier and difference,
but individualism implied equality across the gender barrier: “The moment the real being is conceived to be not the group but the individual, hierarchy disappears” (Dumont 1986:77). Increasingly, biologists and psychologists discovered the universality of individual personhood, legitimating women’s claims — visible for centuries — to be individuals equal to men, similarly disembedded from communal, religious, and familial rules (Russett 1989; Zaretsky 1994).

Cultural emphases on the individuality and equality of women work against the sharp sex differentiation that underlies normative heterosexuality and thus help constitute a legitimate claim for the lesbian and gay social movement and the liberalization of state policies on same-sex relations (Herdt 1993; Jones 1990). Where high levels of inequality prevail, women and men typically occupy differentiated, hierarchical, and “complementary” roles, entailing differentiated, hierarchical, and “complementary” sexualities. The patriarchal man, virtually by definition, desires the passive woman: the gender and sexuality systems interlock. In more equalized cultural settings, however, the differentiation of “men” and “women” blurs and the roots of desire grow more decoupled from gender. The resulting fluidity opens the possibility of same-sex sexuality and enhances its legitimacy.

Gender equality furthermore allows persons to sample from a broader set of roles and identities, which helps constitute claimants for lesbian and gay rights. In less equalized cultural settings, a vast array of personal characteristics lock onto biological sex: girls must be “girls” and boys must be “boys” (Edwards 1994; Rich 1983; Vance 1984). Women in particular may be confined to motherhood, defined in terms of heterosexual reproduction. In more equalized cultural settings, however, fewer aspects of being follow inevitably from biological sex: persons are freer to experiment with same-sex relations and to adopt homosexual identities — publicly and with authority.

The equalization of women to men also typically involves a lowering of the barrier between the public and the private realms, which helps constitute a claims structure that is susceptible to the lesbian and gay social movement and to demands for the liberalization of state policies on same-sex relations. In settings characterized by crystallized inequality, the state often observes a strict gender-based separation between public and private and thus may be less yielding to matters of sex (Fitzpatrick 1994; Reanda 1981). In an equalized cultural setting, however, such divisions crumble and sex becomes legitimate fodder for state administration (see Thomas & Meyer 1984; Zaretsky 1994).

One can observe the relationship between gender equality and the rise and legitimation of same-sex sexuality in the discourse of a Filipino feminist, speaking at a United Nations symposium on women and development: “Should this forum, all other fora, and the women’s movement continue to remain silent about homophobia and discrimination against lesbians, we leave open the possibility for all women to be discriminated against” (UN-ESCAP Symposium on Women in
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Development). The overthrow of gender oppression is seen to require the overthrow of oppression based on sexuality. The two wax and wane together.

As with overall individualism, cultural emphases on gender equality contribute to a cultural opportunity structure that enables the formation of the lesbian and gay social movement and the liberalization of state policies on same-sex relations. This leads to a second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Cultural emphases on gender equality in a nation-state should facilitate the rise of the lesbian and gay social movement and more liberal state policies on same-sex sexual relations.

LINKAGES TO WORLD SOCIETY

Above and beyond the extent to which individualism and gender equality prevail in particular nation-states, exposure to the individualized and gender-equal models of world society may influence state discourse and activity around same-sex sexual relations. Thus we acknowledge the role of emerging world society, which celebrates a universalistic vision of equal individuals (Boli & Thomas 1997; Boyle & Meyer 1998; Thomas et al. 1987).

Cultural emphases on individualized equality spread with the Reformation and Enlightenment and spread further as developments in psychology eroded traditional public-private barriers (Foucault 1978; Zaretzky 1994). With the victory of the Western powers in World War II and the attendant organization of world society, individualization and gender equality rose as features of the wider world culture, especially in the discourses around human and women's rights (Boli & Thomas 1997; Meyer et al. 1997; Robertson 1992). It is from this world culture (rather than from an indigenous local one) that emphases on equal individuals diffused to most nation-states.

In our scheme, individualism and gender equality measure the extent to which these cultural features exist in national political cultures. The measure of world linkages is different: it taps a nation-state's exposure to the individualizing and gender equalizing models of world society.

Thus, when Zimbabwe president Robert Mugabe pursued an antigay campaign in 1995, 70 members of the U.S. Congress signed a letter asking him to cease and desist. Many international associations, including some mainstream human rights organizations, joined the protest. Mugabe remained adamant, but Zimbabwe's Supreme Court aligned itself with international opinion and ruled in favor of the lesbian and gay groups wishing to organize (Legón 1996). For Zimbabwe, a relatively weak country with relatively strong ties to world society, resisting the authorized world culture — in which equal individuals have the right to choose their own sexualities — proved difficult.

Even more vividly, the importance of world linkages appeared when Romania applied for membership in the Council of Europe. Articles 200 and 204 of the
Romanian Penal Code prohibit all homosexual sex. Some members of the Council of Europe found this code to violate the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and therefore threatened to veto Romania’s application for membership. Before taking this step, however, the Council called on Romania to lift the ban. Romania’s law is currently under review.

Clearly, the organizational ties to the world system need not be based on expressly lesbian and gay issues in order to carry the requisite cultural elements. Tapping into general international organizational discourse, which embodies liberalized, individualistic conceptions of persons and society, is sufficient to start the process (Boli & Thomas 1997). Thus we argue that:

**Hypothesis 3.** Dense linkages to world society should facilitate the rise of the lesbian and gay social movement and more liberal state policies on same-sex sexual relations.

### SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The intensifying cultural forces associated with individualization and gender equality gave rise to the lesbian and gay social movement — beginning in the Anglo West in the 1950s and 1960s before diffusing rapidly through world cultural and organizational conduits to places throughout the world (Adam 1987; Hendriks, Tielman & van der Veen 1993). Where the social movement was constituted, it pressured the state to liberalize its policies on same-sex sexual relations.

The relationship between social movements and states, however, is broadly recursive. In one direction, the very existence of a lesbian and gay social movement presupposes a relatively friendly state. In the other direction, the social movement catalyzes change in state structures, pressing for the liberalization of policies. The cultural opportunity structure enables the construction of an organizational carrier — the social movement — and this social movement serves as the immediate supplicant for changes in state policy.

Of course the social movement is not the only carrier produced by the culture. Individualized and equalized cultures also constitute, for example, medical professionals who call on states to liberalize same-sex sexual relations, some political elites, and certainly sociologists. The gay and lesbian social movement, nevertheless, is the most prominent and visible catalyst for changes in state policies.

For example, the Association of Bisexuals, Gays, and Lesbians (ABIGALE), a predominantly black, working-class organization in South Africa, actively campaigned for the inclusion of lesbian and gay rights in the new South African constitution, in spite of the fact that the traditional local South African culture virtually rules out the possibility that blacks can be homosexual (like blue eyes, homosexuality is thought to occur exclusively among whites). ABIGALE successfully lobbied the African National Congress to include a lesbian and gay antidiscrimination clause in its draft bill of rights, and this clause was made part
of the constitution for post-apartheid South Africa. South Africa has now become the world’s first nation-state to constitutionally protect the rights of lesbians and gay men. (In 1998, Fiji became the second.)

In many instances throughout the countries of the world, social movements have called on states to liberalize same-sex sexual relations, yet the relationship between policies and social movements is a reciprocal one. Thus:

Hypothesis 4. Nation-states with active lesbian and gay social movements should be more likely to have subsequently more liberal policies on same-sex sexual relations,

and

Hypothesis 5. Nation-states with more liberal policies on same-sex sexual relations should be more likely to develop subsequently more active lesbian and gay social movements.

The five hypotheses outlined above guide the empirical analyses that follow. Together they depict the rise of new cultural opportunities based on a redefinition of society’s core elements and actors: an individualization of persons across the gender barrier; a disembedding of persons from familial, communal, and religious constraints; and a consequent shift in the core meaning of sex from family reproduction to individual pleasure.

Data and Methods

Our first task is to demonstrate that endogenous cultural emphases on individualism and gender equality along with linkages to an individualized world society create a cultural opportunity structure that promotes lesbian and gay social movement activity. Second, we wish to demonstrate that the same cultural opportunity structure promotes more liberal state policies on same-sex sexual relations. Finally, we seek to demonstrate positive reciprocal effects of social movements and liberal policies on each other. Summaries of the dependent variables appear in Table 1. We have complete data on 84 countries.¹¹

STATE POLICIES

Our primary dependent variable concerns state policies on same-sex sexual relations. In one analysis, state policies also serve as an independent variable, affecting the strength of lesbian and gay social movements. The data come from a series of cross-national surveys organized by the International Lesbian and Gay Association (Hendriks, Tielman & van der Veen 1993; International Gay Association 1985), supplemented by regional and country reports (Gmünder 1995; Rosenbloom 1995; Tatchell 1992) and country-level archives housed at the headquarters of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.¹²
TABLE 1: Description of Dependent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables and Codings</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Policies on Same-Sex Sexual Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>We coded the variable 1-5:</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) The state explicitly outlaws same-sex sexual relations.</td>
<td>(1) Algeria: “Homosexual acts between men and between women are illegal according to section 338 of the Penal Code” (Hendriks et al. 1993:253).</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) The state routinely prosecutes same-sex relations under a more general legal provision, such as hooliganism.</td>
<td>(2) Philippines: “Homosexual behavior between consenting adults is not mentioned in the law as being a criminal offence. Laws referring to ‘public morality’ are used against gays and lesbians” (Hendriks et al. 1993:316).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) The state does not regulate same-sex sexual relations.</td>
<td>(3) Panama: “Homosexual behavior between consenting adults is not mentioned in the law” (Hendriks et al. 1993:314).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) The state explicitly allows same-sex sexual relations but restricts them to a greater extent than heterosexual relations, for example, with a higher age of consent.</td>
<td>(4) Croatia: “In Croatia, homosexual acts between consenting individuals under eighteen years are illegal; among heterosexuals the age of consent is fourteen” (Hendriks et al. 1993:271).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) The state explicitly accords same-sex relations equal status to heterosexual relations.</td>
<td>(5) Sweden: “Legal protection against discrimination of homosexuals exists . . . The age of consent has been the same as for heterosexuals (fifteen) since 1978” (Hendriks et al. 1993:329).</td>
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We coded the state regulation of same-sex relations, separately for men and women, into five categories: (1) the state explicitly outlaws same-sex sex; (2) the state routinely prosecutes same-sex relations under a general legal provision, such as public morality; (3) the state does not regulate same-sex sexual relations; (4) the state explicitly allows same-sex relations but restricts them to a greater extent than heterosexual relations, for example with a higher age of consent; (5) the state explicitly accords same-sex intercourse equal status to heterosexual relations.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

We use social movement activity both as dependent and independent variable, national and international measures of which we have at early and late time points. The national measure is an index of three indicators of lesbian and gay social movement activity (Gmünder 1995; Hendriks, Tielman & van der Veen 1993;
TABLE 1: Description of Dependent Variables (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables and Codings</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Lesbian and Gay Social Movement Index</td>
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<td>We coded the variable as a 0-6 sum of three 0-2 scores of national social movement activity. Gay and/or lesbian media, social movement organizations, and social life each received a score of 0 when there was no activity reported in a country, 1 when there was limited activity reported (e.g., one organization or magazine, or bars in one city), and 2 when activity was widespread.</td>
<td>(2) China (1 point for organization and 1 point for social life): “In 1992, the first underground gay group was started in Suzhou. In 1993, the first openly gay bar was allowed to open in Beijing” (Hendriks et al. 1993:269). (3) Ireland (2 points for organization and 1 point for social life): “There is a national lesbian and gay organization . . . as well as other gay and lesbian groups, bars, and social clubs, mainly in Dublin” (Hendriks et al. 1993:293).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Lesbian and Gay Social Movement Activity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We coded the variable 0-4 based on participation in four international lesbian and gay associations.</td>
<td>(0) Zaire: Zaire has national chapters of none of the four international lesbian and gay associations. (2) Iceland: Iceland has national chapters of the International Lesbian and Gay Association and the International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organization.</td>
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</table>

International Gay Association 1985). The first indicator is whether any known gay and/or lesbian organizations existed at the time point. Here we extend work on racial and ethnic organizations (McEneaney & Olzak 1993; Minkoff 1993) to argue that gay and lesbian organizations, even social or cultural ones, play a part in social movements on behalf of gay and lesbian rights. Second, we consider whether a gay and/or lesbian press was known to be operating. Olzak and West (1991) contend that newspapers enhance racial and ethnic solidarity, and we expect similar effects here. Third, we gauge the extent to which there was an aboveground social life for lesbians and gay men. Such sites provide safe meeting spaces and often serve as the origin points of social movement activity (see Kennedy & Davis 1993). We coded each indicator 0 if there was no activity, 1 if there was limited activity (e.g., one social movement organization or newspaper, or bars in one city), and 2 if activity was widespread.

The second measure of social movement activity is an index of participation in four international lesbian and gay social movement organizations, such as the International Lesbian and Gay Association, around 1990 and 1995 (Union of International Associations 1992, 1996). For each international organization in
which a country had a representative chapter, the nation-state received a 1. In each
set of analyses below, we show two parallel models, one using national and the
other using international lesbian and gay social movement activity.

INDIVIDUALISM

We factored together three indicators to determine the overall cultural emphasis
on individualism in a country around 1984. The indicators have reasonably high
intercorrelations, averaging .69.

The first indicator is an index of a nation-state’s commitment to human rights,
summing scores from 0 to 3 on 36 specific rights in 1985 (Humana 1986). For
example, an individual’s freedom from torture or coercion by the state may be
constantly respected (for a score of 3), usually respected (2), frequently violated
(1), or constantly violated (0). Final scores may range from 0 to 144. Norway earns
the top score of 111, while Romania trails all others with 17.

The second indicator is a trichotomous measure for those countries with origins
in the tradition of Protestant individualism. Taking into account the varying levels
of emphasis accorded the individual among different types of Protestantism (Weber
1930), we coded the Anglo-American Protestant countries, such as the United
Kingdom, as 2, the northern European Protestant countries (mostly Lutheran) as
1, and other countries as 0.

The third indicator measures the prevalence of psychology in a country. Psychology is the science of individualized persons and reflects general social
emphases on individuals (Frank, Meyer & Miyahara 1995; Zaretsky 1994). Our
measure is the number of psychology authorships in professional journals,
cumulated 1972-80 and logged, per thousand people in 1980 (Institute for
Scientific Information 1972-80). The United States has the highest number of
psychology authorships per thousand people, with an unlogged value of 36. Several
countries, such as Iraq, have no psychology authorships in professional journals.

GENDER EQUALITY

With gender equality, women as well as men come to be conceived in universalistic
and individualized terms. We used three indicators to determine the cultural
emphasis on gender equality in a country. The indicators are substantially
intercorrelated, with Pearson coefficients averaging about .50.

The first indicator gauges a nation-state’s commitment to women’s rights in
1985, summing scores from 0 to 3, as above, on political and legal equality for
women, social and economic equality, and equality of the sexes during marriage
and divorce (Humana 1986). Finland and Sweden scored 8 out of 9 on this index,
while Pakistan was among those receiving the low score of 0.

The second indicator is a ratio of women in the labor force over the total labor
force in 1980 (World Bank 1980). The country with the highest proportion of
women in the labor force was Tanzania (50%, owing to the active participation of women in agriculture), while in Saudi Arabia women constituted only 6% of the labor force.\textsuperscript{15}

The third indicator measures participation in international women's organizations around 1983 (Union of International Associations 1985). Twenty-four international and intercontinental women's organizations existed in 1983, such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. The United States and Canada belonged to the largest number of these associations, 22, while Malawi was among those belonging to only 1.

LINKAGES TO WORLD SOCIETY

In order to assess the degree to which particular nation-states are exposed to the universalistically individualized models dominant in world society, we factored together three indicators. Their intercorrelations are high, averaging .68.

The first indicator is the number of international nongovernmental associations, logged, in which a nation-state had participating citizens in 1982 (Union of International Associations 1983). Several thousand international associations existed that year, in fields such as science and industry (Boli & Thomas 1997). French citizens belonged to 2,132 such associations in 1982, while Oman was represented in only 60.

Second, we used the natural log of the number of memberships held by a nation-state in official intergovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations, in 1982 (Union of International Associations 1983). France belonged to 87 such organizations, while Angola belonged to 22.

The third indicator is the number of international treaties ratified by a nation-state between 1981 and 1985 (Bowman & Harris 1984, 1993). Treaty topics range from environmental protection to international security. Portugal ratified a total of 106 treaties during the period, while Iran ratified only 2.

The five variables outlined above — measuring state policies on same-sex sexual relations, the lesbian and gay social movement, individualism, gender equality, and linkages to world society — are central to our theoretical imagery. We do wish, however, to address the strength of competing theoretical explanations.

COMPETING EXPLANATIONS

First, we assess the strength of the effects of the cultural opportunity structure relative to the more general social conditions theorized to facilitate new social movements (Melucci 1980; Inglehart 1990). Education levels, urbanization, and wealth are all understood from this theoretical perspective to encourage the formation of predominantly urban, middle-class social movements emphasizing self-expression and tolerance. Inglehart (1988) suggests that such "postmaterialist"
values underlie both social movements and more liberal attitudes and policies toward abortion and divorce. Since a nation's investments in higher education, urbanization, and wealth are highly correlated, we chose logged per capita gross domestic product (World Bank 1980) to assess the magnitude of this relationship.

We also wished to account for political opportunity structures (Jenkins & Klandermans 1995; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996). Escobar and Alvarez (1992) suggest that social movements flourished in Latin America once nascent democratic structures were in place. The breakdown of these structures has also been shown to dampen activities of some kinds of social movements. Olivier (1989) found lower rates of ethnic and racial protests in South Africa in the wake of intensified state repression. We therefore include Gurr's (1990) index of democracy, which emphasizes formal, mass democratic institutions. (Democracy also taps the individualism of the polity and therefore could be used as a measure of overall individualism. We keep it separate in respect to the established literature.) To help normalize the index's bipolar distribution, we sum values for 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, and 1980.

CONTROL VARIABLES

We also include two control variables that may affect lesbian and gay social movements and state policies on same-sex relations: total population logged (World Bank 1980) and official state religiosity (Kim & Jang 1996). Big countries may have larger gay and lesbian populations and thus be more likely to have active gay and lesbian social movements, leading to the liberalization of state policies (see Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin 1948). And nation-states where religion is officially institutionalized in a national ministry might be less friendly to calls for lesbian and gay rights (Dupuis 1995; Greenberg & Bystryn 1982).16

THE MODEL

Our argument and analysis proceed in three steps. In the first, we investigate the effects of overall cultural individualism, gender equality, and linkages to world society on the lesbian and gay social movement at both national and international levels. We then assess the effects of the same cultural opportunity structure on state policies on same-sex relations. Finally, we consider evidence on reciprocal effects between social movements and liberalized policies. Our general strategy is first to gauge the baseline effects of individualism, gender equality, and world linkages and then to see if the baseline effects hold up against the competing explanations. To investigate these relationships empirically, we use ordinary least squares regression to estimate coefficients for equations taking the following form:17

\[
\text{Social Movement Index}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Individualism}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Gender Equality}_{it} + \\
\beta_3 \text{World Links}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{Competing Explanations}_{it} + \beta_5 \text{Controls}_{it} + \epsilon
\]
Policy Liberalism = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Individualism + \beta_2 Gender Equality + \beta_3 World Links + \beta_4 Competing Explanations + \beta_5 Controls + \epsilon

Policy Liberalism = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Social Movement Index + \beta_2 Policy Liberalism + \beta_3 Controls + \epsilon

Social Movement Index = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Policy Liberalism + \beta_2 Social Movement Index + \beta_3 Controls + \epsilon

In each equation, \epsilon is assumed to be a normally and independently distributed error term with mean 0 and constant variance. Since correlations between the independent variables sometimes exceed .70, we suspected that collinearity, with its attendant inflated standard errors, might be a problem. Though its effects are gradational, Neter, Wasserman, and Kutner (1990:409) suggest that collinearity begins to "unduly influence" significance tests when variance inflation factors exceed 10. Diagnostics based on OLS regressions revealed that no model had a variance inflation factor greater than 8. Hence, we proceed cautiously by introducing the measures relating to competing explanations one at a time to avoid more extreme problems with multicollinearity.

Results

The results of our empirical tests are shown in Tables 2 through 5. Table 2 assesses the effects of the cultural opportunity structure — overall cultural individualism, gender equality, and world linkages — on the relative strength of national and international lesbian and gay social movements. In each model, we control for total population and state religiosity in 1980. All models in Table 2 fit exceptionally well, with adjusted R^2 ranging from .69 to .73. In general, the models offer strong support for the influence of the cultural opportunity structure, even as assessed in contrast to competing theories focusing on democracy and economic development.

In the first model, we show baseline effects of individualism, gender equality, and world linkages on national lesbian and gay social movements in 1995. As expected, the individualism and world linkages factors have strong and highly significant positive effects (p < .001), while gender equality has positive but statistically insignificant effects. A rise of one point in the overall cultural individualism factor score results, on average, in an additional point on the national social movement index, which ranges from 0 to 6. Similarly, an extra point on the world linkage score is associated with a subsequent national social movement score that is on average 1.3 points higher, net of other effects.

The second model additionally considers the effects of democratic institutions on national lesbian and gay social movements. The presence of strong mass democratic institutions has no significant effect beyond the cultural effects, especially those of individualism and world societal links. Controlling for
TABLE 2: OLS Regression Models of Individualism, Gender Equality, and World Linkages on Lesbian and Gay Social Movement Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>National Lesbian and Gay Social Movement Index, 1995</th>
<th>International Lesbian and Gay Social Movement Index, 1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Opportunity Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism factor</td>
<td>1.0*** (.22)</td>
<td>.82** (.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Human rights score, 1985</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Three-category Protestant tradition score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Psychology authorships, 1972-80, per 1,000 people in 1980 (logged)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equality factor</td>
<td>.30 (.26)</td>
<td>.24 (.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Women's rights score, 1985</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Women as percent of labor force, 1980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Memberships in international women's organizations, 1983</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World linkages factor</td>
<td>1.3*** (.37)</td>
<td>1.2** (.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Memberships in international nongovernmental organizations, 1982 (logged)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Memberships in international governmental organizations, 1982 (logged)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· International treaty ratifications, 1981-85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

democratic institutions slightly weakens the effects of overall cultural individualism and world linkages, but both remain vigorously significant. Gender equality continues to have positive but insignificant effects.

The third model adds economic resources to the baseline model. This competing explanation clearly has merit — the coefficient of .49 is significant at the .01 level, meaning economic development is positively and significantly associated with lesbian and gay social movements. Note, however, that cultural opportunities continue to play a critical role. Individualism retains a positive and significant effect on lesbian and gay social movements ($p < .01$), as do world linkages (although a bit weaker than before, $p < .10$). Furthermore, controlling for economic resources allows gender equality to show a stronger positive, and now significant, effect ($p < .10$).
### TABLE 2: OLS Regression Models of Individualism, Gender Equality, and World Linkages on Lesbian and Gay Social Movement Activity (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Lesbian and Gay Social Movement Index, 1995</td>
<td>International Lesbian and Gay Social Movement Index, 1995</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competing Explanations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurr index of mass democratic institutions</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>−0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita gross domestic product, 1980 (logged)</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>(.17)</td>
<td>.33***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population, 1980 (logged)</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.51***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious ministry dummy 1984</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>−2.5*</td>
<td>−2.8**</td>
<td>−6.8***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes.** Unstandardized coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses.
N = 87 countries.

+ p < .10  * p < .05  ** p < .01  *** p < .001 (two-tailed test)

Similar patterns hold for the last three models in Table 2, which look at memberships in the international lesbian and gay social movement. Overall, cultural individualism has highly significant and positive effects. In the baseline model, the coefficient of .58 (p < .001) indicates that an increase of one point in the individualism score corresponds to an international social movement index score that is, on average, more than half a point higher (on a scale of 0 to 4 organizations). Linkages to world society (replete with cultural emphasis on individualism) also have significant positive effects (p < .05) in the baseline model, but gender equality, while positive, does not play a significant role.

The measure of democratic institutions again has virtually no effect on participation in the international social movement organizations, once we have accounted for cultural effects and control variables. Finally, per capita gross domestic product is strongly associated with participation in international lesbian and gay organizations, having a positive and highly significant effect (p < .001). As with national social movements, controlling for economic development allows gender equality to have statistically significant positive effects, in this case at the
level of $p < .05$. Across all models, total population has strong positive effects, while state religiosity, as measured by the existence of a ministry of religion, has virtually no effect.

Overall, then, Table 2 indicates that individualistic conceptions of equal men and women in society provided cultural opportunities for subsequent lesbian and gay social movement activity between 1984 and 1995, as did sufficient economic resources. Across all levels of economic development, cultural individualism and linkages to the individualized world society clearly contribute to stronger lesbian and gay social movements. The organization of society around individuated persons appears to loosen the tie between sex and procreation, allowing more personal modes of sexual expression. Among nations of similar levels of economic development, gender equality is also a significant factor for lesbian and gay social movements. A lowering of gender barriers seems to further unmoor sex from traditional familial constraints.

Table 3 considers the effects of the same variables on the level of liberalism of state policies regarding same-sex sex. The first three models consider policies on sex between women, while the last three models investigate policies on sex between men. The fit of the models is very high, ranging in adjusted $R^2$ from .53 to .61.

We notice immediately that, in contrast to the conditional effects of gender equality on social movements, the effects of gender equality on state policies are positive and significant across the board. In the baseline model of policies on sex between women, an increase of one point on gender equality is associated with an average increase of .53 ($p < .01$) in the policy liberalism index (range of 1 to 5). A similar increase in gender equality corresponds to an extra .47 points ($p < .05$) on the liberalism of the average state’s policy on sex between men.

Linkages to world society also demonstrate positive and statistically significant effects on the degree of policy liberalism for both men and women. In all models, countries with larger conduits to world society appear significantly more likely to have liberal policies on same-sex relations.

The evidence regarding individualization per se is more mixed. While positive in all the models, the individualism effect is significant only on the liberalization of policies on sex between men: in the baseline model, the coefficient of .35 is significant at $p < .05$. Clearly in the state policy (as opposed to social movement) realm, it is the more specific form of individualism — designating gender equality — that has the predominating positive effect.

The two competing explanations fare poorly in the models presented in Table 3. The Gurr index of democratic institutions has effects on neither policies pertaining to women nor policies pertaining to men, net of the cultural effects. Likewise, a country’s economic development has no direct association with liberalized policies on homosexual relations, although introducing per capita gross domestic product does weaken the effect of world linkages slightly (as it did in Table 2). Per capita gross domestic product and world linkages clearly compete for some of the same
variance, although their correlation is only .36. Moreover, the presence of gross domestic product in the model draws strength from the cultural individualism effect. The point stands, however, that in comparison to the measures of the cultural opportunity structure, political and economic variables have far less impact on state policies regarding same-sex sex. Finally, the control variables, logged population and official state religiosity, have no significant effects in Table 3.

In general, the results in Table 3 support the notion that liberalized state policies on same-sex relations appear in societies with cultural emphases on equality and in societies tightly linked to a world society in which individualization and equality are institutionalized. The social construction of persons as bounded and free and similar across genders appears to promote official state policies accepting same-sex sex.

Before turning to our next set of analyses, we wish to highlight the strong fit of the models presented in Tables 2 and 3, suggesting that our measures account for much of the variation in the dependent variable. This is particularly impressive since we do not include a lagged measure as a control in these analyses. This statement is tempered, of course, by the fact that the dependent variables are not truly continuous. For the five-point index of international social movements, for example, one could predict the outcome in 20% of the cases strictly by chance. Nevertheless, the explanatory power of the models is excellent.

Table 4 asks whether gay and lesbian social movements influence subsequent liberalization of policies on same-sex sex. Clearly, social movement activity in 1984 has positive and very significant effects (p < .001) on the degree of policy liberalism in 1995, controlling for policy liberalism in 1984. In the first model, an additional point in the 7-point national lesbian and gay social movement index (e.g., the difference between no social movement organizations in a country and one or two such organizations) is associated with an average increase of .23 in liberalism in the policy on sex between women. Participation in international gay and lesbian organizations matters as well. Membership in an additional international organization (out of four constituting the index) is associated with an extra one-third of a point, on average, in the five-point index of liberalism of the policy pertaining to sex between women.

Policies regarding sex between men are subject to nearly the same degree of influence by gay and lesbian social movements. National social movements, with a coefficient of .24, have almost exactly the same effect on policies pertaining to men as they do on those pertaining to women. Participation in the international gay and lesbian social movement has an even larger effect on policies regarding sex between men: the coefficient .53 is about 50% larger than the analogous effect on policies on sex between women. Hence, gay and lesbian social movements at both the national and international level almost certainly are effective in prompting subsequent liberalization of state policies.20
**TABLE 3: OLS Regression Models of Individualism, Gender Equality, and World Linkages on Liberalization of State Policies on Same-Sex Relations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Liberalized Policy on Sex between Women, 1995</th>
<th>Liberalized Policy on Sex between Men, 1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Opportunity Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism factor</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.35*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights score, 1985</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.53**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-category Protestant tradition score</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology authorships, 1972-80, per 1,000 people in 1980 (logged)</td>
<td>(.15)</td>
<td>(.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equality factor</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s rights score, 1985</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.43*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women as percent of labor force, 1980</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memberships in international women’s organizations, 1983</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World linkages factor</td>
<td>.71**</td>
<td>.69*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memberships in international nongovernmental organizations, 1982 (logged)</td>
<td>.69*</td>
<td>.73*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memberships in international governmental organizations, 1982 (logged)</td>
<td>(.25)</td>
<td>.55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International treaty ratifications, 1981-85</td>
<td>(.25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 takes up the reverse causal argument: Do relatively liberal state policies promote growth in lesbian and gay social movements? The analysis here suggests the answer is a qualified yes. Controlling for national social movement infrastructure in 1984, more liberal policies for women in 1984 led to statistically significant growth in national social movements by 1995. For each extra point a nation rates on policy liberalism in 1984, there was a half-point gain in the index of national social movement (p < .01). More liberal policies pertaining to men have a similar positive effect on later national social movement development (p < .05). Yet these beneficial effects do not hold for international social movement participation. Countries with liberal policies in 1984 are no more likely to increase participation in gay and lesbian international organizations than those with less liberal policies. Hence, liberal policies act as key resources to developing national social movements, but they do not appear to spur further participation in gay and
TABLE 3: OLS Regression Models of Individualism, Gender Equality, and World Linkages on Liberalization of State Policies on Same-Sex Relations (Continued)

| Independent Variables | Dependent Variables | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---|---|
|                       | Liberalized Policy on Sex between Women, 1995 | Liberalized Policy on Sex between Men, 1995 |
| **Competing Explanations** | | | |
| Gurr index of mass democratic institutions | .0052 | -.0090 |
| (standard error) | (.0082) | (.0097) |
| Per capita gross domestic product, 1980 (logged) | -.00027 | .13 |
| (standard error) | (.12) | (.13) |
| **Control Variables** | | | |
| Total population, 1980 (logged) | -.09 | -.93 | -.09 | -.11 | -.11 | -.079 |
| (standard error) | (.078) | (.079) | (.084) | (.093) | (.093) | (.099) |
| Religious ministry dummy, 1984 | .15 | .18 | .15 | .39 | .33 | .33 |
| (standard error) | (.27) | (.28) | (.28) | (.32) | (.33) | (.33) |
| Constant | 3.3*** | 3.2*** | 3.3* | 3.1*** | 3.2*** | 1.9 |
| (standard error) | (.71) | (.72) | (.13) | (.84) | (.85) | (.15) |
| Adjusted R² | .61 | .60 | .60 | .53 | .53 | .53 |


+ p < .10  * p < .05  ** p < .01  *** p < .001 (two-tailed test)

Lesbian international organizations. Seen in another way, these results indicate that increased contacts to gay and lesbian international organizations are not contingent on relatively liberal state policies.

Overall, Tables 4 and 5 further confirm our expectations. Countries with active lesbian and gay social movements in the mid-1980s tend to have more liberalized state policies on same-sex relations by the mid-1990s, and vice versa. Social movements and liberalized state policies appear to facilitate each other.

In the big picture, we see that cultural structures emphasizing the equality and individuality of women and men appear to provide opportunities for the rise of lesbian and gay social movements and liberalized state policies on same-sex relations. In turn, lesbian and gay social movements and liberalized state policies each subsequently catalyzes the other.
TABLE 4: OLS Regression Models of Effect of Social Movements on Subsequent Liberalization of Policies on Same-Sex Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberalized Policy on Sex between Women, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National social movement index, 1984</td>
<td>.23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.047)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International social movement index, 1990</td>
<td>.34***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.085)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged policy, 1984</td>
<td>.70***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.092)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population, 1980</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(logged)</td>
<td>(.047)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious ministry dummy, 1984</td>
<td>-.41+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.1**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Unstandardized coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses.
N = 84 countries.

+ p < .10   * p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p < .001 (two-tailed test)

Conclusion

In this article, we have considered some factors driving the lesbian and gay social movement and the liberalization of state policies on same-sex sexual relations. Our theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of cultural structures, especially institutionalized conceptions of actors and action, in providing opportunities for such movements and policies. The empirical analyses substantially support our main theoretical arguments.

The process of individualization, in which both women and men come to be conceived as free and equal entities, enabled both gay and lesbian social movements and the liberalization of policies pertaining to homosexual sex in countries throughout the world. Our measures of individualism, gender equality, and linkages to the individualized and gender-equal organizations of world society all show the expected positive effects. Our analysis further suggests that gay and lesbian social movements at both the national and international levels encourage subsequent liberalization of policies, while relatively liberal policies spur the subsequent development of national (but not international) gay and lesbian social movement activity.
### TABLE 5: OLS Regression Models of Effect of Liberalized Policies on Same-Sex Sex on Subsequent Social Movement Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>National Social Movement Index, 1995</th>
<th>International Social Movement Index, 1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberalized policy on sex between women, 1984</td>
<td>.50** (.16)</td>
<td>.03 (.085)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberalized policy on sex between men, 1984</td>
<td>.33* (.13)</td>
<td>.026 (.069)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged social movement index, 1984</td>
<td>.70*** (.079)</td>
<td>.71*** (.087)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population, 1980 (logged)</td>
<td>.25** (.08)</td>
<td>.24** (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious ministry dummy, 1984</td>
<td>-.45 (.39)</td>
<td>-.65 (.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.4** (.86)</td>
<td>-1.6+ (.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes.** Unstandardized coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses.

N = 84 countries.

+ p < .10  * p < .05  ** p < .01  *** p < .001 (two-tailed test)

While the findings are generally consistent with our expectations, we were surprised that our most direct measure of individualism had a stronger effect on the formation of lesbian and gay social movements, while gender equality had a stronger effect on the liberalization of state policies. The latter is particularly true regarding policies on sex between women. It seems that general cultural individualism, in which individuated persons act as sovereigns over their own lives, especially promotes social movement activity. Meanwhile, gender equality, which involves the breakdown of sharply differentiated sex roles and the individualization of women, plays the stronger role in catalyzing liberalized state policies.

Despite these minor departures from expectations, the overall strength of the cultural explanation is clear. In these analyses, the components of the cultural opportunity structure clearly outperform other explanatory variables, such as democracy and state religiosity. Economic resources do fuel gay and lesbian social movements, as other “new” social movements, but they have no direct effects on policy liberalism. It seems that the cultural foundations of social change, particularly as they diffuse through the global system, deserve more attention than they currently receive.
Given this initial support for our approach, we have extended our research agenda in hopes of overcoming two limitations of the data used here. First, we are gathering more detailed policy data over a longer period of time, with information on policy scope (to whom does it apply? under what conditions?) and punishment (how severe? how often enforced?). Second, we are gathering policy data on a wider range of sexual behaviors (such as adultery, rape, and incest). We believe a fundamental transformation of sex is under way — involving a shift from family-based procreative sexuality to sex for individual pleasure — but this is difficult to prove solely with analyses of same-sex relations.

Even in the current investigation, however, we see some evidence of a transformation in sexuality. Whereas once sex was approved strictly for the purpose of family reproduction, sex increasingly serves to pleasure individualized men and women in society. This shift has involved the casting off of many traditional regulations on sexual behavior, including prohibitions of male-male and female-female sex.

Notes

1. We do not assume that liberalized laws directly produce freedom for lesbians and gays. Police may ignore laws, and private citizens may do their own policing. The social conditions leading to liberalization may also promote increased social acceptance, but we currently lack the data to show this.

2. We interchange the phrases “same-sex sexual relations,” “same-sex relations,” and “homosexual relations” to highlight policy focus on particular behaviors, rather than the social identity implied by “gay” or “lesbian.” In many places, same-sex sexual activity has never involved gay or lesbian identities.

3. Only Nicaragua passed a new law forbidding homosexual sex during this period, when the Catholics regained power from the Socialists. The only other move toward greater restriction occurred in Peru, where a social crackdown provoked increased surveillance of gay men under a public morality statute. Our sample underrepresents small countries in Africa and the Middle East, which tend to have low levels of individualism and gender equality, weak linkages to world society, and tend not to have lesbian and gay social movements or liberal policies on same-sex sex. The pattern is consistent with our argument.

4. On the balance between state and societal regulations, one lesbian activist from Jordan stated: “Although Jordanian law contains no mention of the word suhak (lesbianism), widespread prejudice within Jordanian society is more powerful than any legal prohibition” (Assfar 1995:110). Forced marriages, rapes, and beatings are among the tools used to restrict same-sex relations between women (Kennedy & Davis 1993; Rosenbloom 1995).

5. These laws applied only to men: women at the time were largely relegated to a private, desexualized sphere. For examples of more detailed histories, demonstrating the often cyclical character of liberalization and restriction, see Boswell 1994; Frederick 1995; Greenberg & Bystryn 1982.
6. Former U.S. Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders neatly summarized the shift: "I think the religious right at times thinks that the only reason for sex is procreation. Well, I feel that God meant sex for more than procreation. ... Sex is about pleasure. ... We need to speak out to tell people that sex is good, sex is wonderful. It's a normal part and healthy part of our being, whether it is homosexual or heterosexual" (San Francisco Chronicle, Mar. 19, 1994, p. A3).

7. We do not mean to claim that the practice and acceptance of homosexuality occur only under conditions of individualism and gender equality. That is patently not the case (see, e.g., Boswell 1994; Makoto 1994). Our claims refer only to modern social movements and state policies.

8. Not all persons in all settings are constituted as individuals (Durkheim 1933; Geertz 1974; Weber 1930). Persons may be submerged in families or other corporate subgroups, and personal boundaries may be highly permeable (Carrithers, Collins & Lukes 1985). Increasingly throughout the world, however, persons are thought to be bounded, autonomous entities with articulated needs and desires (Brown 1987; Dumont 1986; Frank, Meyer & Miyahara 1995; Giddens 1991; Meyer 1987).

9. The remnants of this system appear in the relatively intense state scrutiny of male sexuality and relative state blindness to female sexuality. Under conditions of sharp gender differentiation and inequality, sexual desire is often prominent in one gender role and not the other.

10. Early battlegrounds included contraception (Barrett & Frank 1999) and prostitution (Nadelman 1990).

11. In the analyses below, only countries that were independent in both 1984 and 1995 are eligible.

12. The International Lesbian and Gay Association is a worldwide federation of more than 300 gay and lesbian groups in 50 countries. It is the only lesbian and gay association ever officially recognized by the United Nations. The association's cross-national surveys were conducted in 1984 (International Gay Association 1985), 1987 (Tielman & de Jonge 1988), and 1992 (Hendriks, Tielman & van der Veën 1993).

13. All indicators load strongly, positively, and relatively equally on all factors created in our analysis. Details on factor loadings are available from the authors.

14. We also tried a more expansive coding of religious tradition, separating Anglo-American Protestantism, northern European Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism, Eastern Orthodox Catholicism, and Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and other. The results are similar to those reported.

15. A few cases had missing data on the human rights and women's rights measures for 1985, for which 1991 scores were available (Humana 1992). In those instances, we used the 1991 scores. Likewise, a few cases had missing data on the labor force participation measure for 1980, for which 1977 measures were available (World Bank 1977). In such cases, we used the 1977 value.

16. We replicated these analyses with an alternative measure of religiosity, a dummy variable indicating majority Catholic or Muslim population. Roman Catholicism and
Islam have tenets against homosexual relations, so nations with Catholic or Muslim majorities might have weaker lesbian and gay social movements and more restrictive policies than others. This measure had similar effects to the one used.

17. Because our dependent variables are not strictly continuous, OLS regression techniques are suspect (Maddala 1983). As described, our measures of national and international social movement activity and state policies range from 0 to 6, 0 to 4, and 1 to 5, respectively. Multinomial logit models are, in theory, more appropriate, but in practice they are extremely demanding of the data, because of the number of equations that must be estimated. For example, a multinomial logit model of the international social movement index requires four equations, each with a full complement of parameter estimates. This approach quickly exhausts degrees of freedom. Nevertheless, for each OLS model presented, we estimated an analogous one using multinomial logit. Significance levels declined slightly, but the overall patterns of the effects were overwhelmingly the same as those reported using OLS. Ordered logit models are appropriate when the proportional odds assumption is satisfied, and they use fewer degrees of freedom than multinomial logits. These models replicate the pattern of OLS effects almost perfectly. Residual analysis suggested that other basic OLS assumptions had not been violated.

18. When multicollinearity is present, ridge regression techniques may be superior to OLS (Hoerl & Kennard 1970; Miller & Smith 1980; Neter, Wasserman & Kutner 1990; Pagel & Lunneborg 1985; Vinod & Ullah 1981), although Kennedy (1985) and others are skeptical of its benefits. We replicated our analyses using ridge regression. The results are similar to those presented.

19. Each of the three measures of the cultural opportunity structure are standardized factor scores, as described in the previous section. Therefore, a one-point change in the factor score corresponds to a standard deviation change in the factor. Hence, as we discuss results associated with each factor, we refer to the effects of a “one-point change”—meaning a change of one standard deviation in the factor score. Other than this interpretation, factor scores are essentially unitless measures.

20. While we expected the religion ministry’s negative effect, the negative and significant effects of population in Table 4 are unexpected. They may be a statistical artifact of controlling for policy liberalism at the earlier time point, or they may result from the fact that several countries undergoing policy liberalization during the period have small populations, such as Liechtenstein, Albania, and Israel. Perhaps small countries are afforded temporal “slack” in conforming to global institutions.

21. We note that no “ceiling” effect is operating here, since only three countries have the maximum score of four on the international social movement index in both 1990 and 1995.
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