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An Analysis of Factors which Influence Individual's Opinions of Homosexuality in the Middle East

Abstract:

This project seeks to fill the gap in LGBTQ advocacy literature in the Middle East by using Jordan and Lebanon as case studies to identify the factors which influence individuals' opinions of homosexuality. These findings can be used to inform future policy approaches and advocacy techniques to promote LGBTQ protections and freedoms in the Middle East. In my research a small-n neopositivist case study approach was used, utilizing data taken from the World Values Survey. A careful exploration of these two cases provides insights which have important implications regarding advocacy for LGBTQ groups in the Middle East, such as the need for intersectionality in advocacy. This research is important because not only will it contribute to the body of LGBTQ scholarship and literature, but also because the findings may be able to be applied to other minority groups seeking to improve their status in Middle Eastern countries. In essence, this paper works to highlight the importance of intersectional advocacy in the Middle East as well as the importance of individualizing LGBTQ advocacy in each Middle Eastern country.

Introduction:

It has been a continuous struggle throughout history for members of the LGBTQ community, regardless of their country or nationality, to be guaranteed basic human rights and freedoms and to be free from persecution. However, these struggles have been significantly more pronounced in the Middle East than they have been in Europe and North America.¹ Individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender historically have had extremely limited rights in the majority of Middle Eastern countries, as in many of these countries, expression of their sexual identities is still illegal, and, in some countries, is punishable by death, such as Saudi Arabia. However, some Middle Eastern countries, such as Jordan, are starting to revoke the repressive laws that previously were in place against the LGBTQ community, and as a result, a wider spectrum of LGBTQ rights among the seventeen Middle Eastern countries is beginning to emerge.² On this continuum, LGBTQ rights vary from complete repression of the LGBTQ community to laws which protect individuals' freedom of expression and action, regardless of sexuality. But on both ends of this continuum, Middle Eastern individuals' attitudes towards homosexuality have remained pervasively negative.³

Because of this, it is essential to study and be able to identify the factors which most significantly impact individuals' attitudes towards homosexuality in the Middle East. If these such factors and influences were to be identified, it would then be possible for LGBTQ advocacy

¹Jayesh Needham. "After the Arab Spring: A New Opportunity for LGBT Human Rights Advocacy?," *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy* 20, no. 2 (2013): 287–288.

² In this study, the Middle Eastern countries are considered to be: Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the UAE, and Yemen

³ Pew Research Center. "The Global Divide on Homosexuality." *Pew Research Center*, June 4 2016, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/06/04/the-global-divide-on-homosexuality/> (Accessed: 15 April 2018).

groups in the Middle East to be able to apply the information gathered from countries in this research to more successfully promote increased levels of LGBTQ rights and freedoms in the Middle Eastern countries which still repress and subjugate the LGBTQ community. Such identification of factors which influence individuals' attitudes towards homosexuality in Middle Eastern countries is the purpose of this research paper.

In order to accomplish this, I follow this introduction with a review of the relevant literature which is essential to this field in order to identify the main schools of thought regarding LGBTQ history in the Middle East, the current state of affairs of the LGBTQ community there, and the recent impact of advocacy groups on LGBTQ rights in the Middle East. Then, I will perform a small-n neopositivist methodology to complete a case study analysis. I have chosen to utilize Mill's method of agreement to analyze two Middle Eastern countries which each hold a similar position on the wide spectrum of LGBTQ rights in the Middle East, with each having very basic LGBTQ laws and freedoms. The two countries which I am analyzing in this case study are Jordan and Lebanon. In order to conduct my data analysis, I use data from the World Values Survey and I will be using several variables taken from this data, such as education level, influence of religion, etc. in order to analyze what factors influence an individual's attitudes towards homosexuality. Data from the World Values Survey was chosen due to its availability and high numbers of participants. After discussing these factors, I conclude with how the findings from these two cases as well as the issues which are identified in the literature review can be used by advocacy groups to direct their advocacy in more successful manners than previously, including the idea that advocacy groups need to work in an intersectional manner with other organizations to promote a broader variety of rights in order to try to improve LGBTQ rights.

However, while reading this paper and its findings, it is important to keep in mind that the cultures, value structures, and governing systems are significantly different between European countries and Middle Eastern countries. Many of these differences will be presented in greater detail in the following literature review section of this paper. The findings from the case study presented in this paper will hopefully help to create a greater understanding of what factors influence the formation of opinions on homosexuality in Middle Eastern countries and how LGBTQ rights can best be promoted. It is important to note though that much discussion of LGBTQ rights has remained quite Eurocentric, and as such, it is possible that many analysts which I refer to may hold implicit Orientalist biases. I attempted to mitigate these biases as much as possible through choosing sources written by Middle Eastern scholars as well. However, even with in mind, each and every Middle Eastern country is unique and different from all other Middle Eastern countries, and for that reason, a technique or factor which might be successful in one country may not be successful in another. Thus, it is essential to not make broad generalizations regarding this topic across the Middle East, as those are likely to not be helpful.

Literature Review:

Within this literature review, several schools of thought will be explained and contrasted. While some of this serves to be background material on LGBTQ issues, it is still important to consider in the context of this research. First, I will discuss how the status of LGBTQ rights in the Middle East in previous centuries is different than now. From there, I will discuss how homosexuality is viewed in Islam. I will also examine the literature surrounding LGBTQ advocacy in the Middle East and the results of using specific advocacy techniques. Finally, I will conclude with how the scholarship has helped to shape my research.

History of Homosexuality in the Middle East:

Even though the subject has often been taboo, there is a long history of homosexuality which is present in the Middle East and as such, even though this may seem initially surprising, LGBTQ rights in the Middle East have not always been as repressive as they currently are in many countries. In fact, as Middle Eastern historian Joseph Massad points out in his book *Desiring Arabs*, homosexuality was accepted and celebrated in many parts of the Middle East during the Ottoman Empire.⁴ During this time, homosexuals were not seen through the same negative lens through which they tend to be today in the Middle East. As a result, “Islamic society perpetuated this ... sense of love that encompassed same-sex attraction, but Muslim jurists formed a hetero-exclusive system of marriage”.⁵ Massad argues that many of the modern, negative perspectives on homosexuality which are prevalent in the Middle East are actually the results of increased European and North American contact with the region and the imposition of what are perceived to be ‘Western’ beliefs and practices.⁶ Colonial powers in the region encouraged heterosexuality and negatively viewed anything which deviated from this norm, and as a result, individuals who were not heterosexual became increasingly ostracized in Middle Eastern societies. While beliefs, attitudes, and laws towards homosexuality have greatly evolved in many parts of Europe and North America in recent years, such change has not been as prevalent in Middle Eastern countries. According to Massad, this lack of change is due in part to the epistemological underpinnings of European rule, as well as the continued attempts by Europe and the United States to impose imperial policies upon the Middle East.⁷ As a result, as Massad

⁴ Joseph Massad. *Desiring Arabs*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 9-10.

⁵ Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle. *Homosexuality in Islam*. (United Kingdom: Oneworld Publications, 2010), 191.

⁶ Massad, 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

argues, the cultural influences from colonial powers are still having an impact on daily life in the Middle East for LGBTQ individuals.

There are also scholars who theorize about the role of collective denial in influencing public attitudes towards homosexuality in the Middle East. As homosexuality is a topic which many Arabs are hesitant to discuss, there is often denial of one's identity, especially public denial, which is common for members of the LGBTQ community in the Middle East.⁸ Any type of public acknowledgement of homosexual identity is viewed as going against many of the underpinnings of Arab society.⁹ It is clear that individuals must keep up appearances in order to conform to the principles and values of these societies, even if that entails living a double life, which may even include a heterosexual marriage and children.¹⁰ These ideas are furthered by the strong loyalty which many Arabs feel towards their families, and the idea of potentially disappointing them or bringing shame upon their family through open homosexuality often is enough to keep individuals from being able to live openly and often stifles discussion of LGBTQ-related topics.¹¹ These power dynamics, further discussed by Michel Foucault, indicate the power relations which are involved and the role of society, the state, and the dominant culture over individuals' process of identity construction.¹² This also helps to stifle a potential LGBTQ community in the Middle East, as in Lebanon, "those who self-identified as gay did not express

⁸ Brian Whitaker. *Unspeakable Love: Gay And Lesbian Life In The Middle East*. (London: Saqi Books, 2011), 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7

¹¹ Bruce Dunne. "Power and Sexuality in the Middle East," Middle East Report No. 206, (Spring 1998), 8.

¹² Michel Foucault and Robert Harley. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. (New York, Vintage, 1990), 27; Baghdadi, Lizette M. (2013). *Lesbanon: The lesbian experience in lebanon* (Order No. 1536524). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1354473403).

any particular group solidarity, neither one based on a perceived common sexuality or one informed by a mutually embraced political cause.”¹³ It is clear that homosexuality is not thought of the same way in the Middle East as it is in European countries or the United States, as sexuality in the Arab world is constructed along different lines.¹⁴ This is important to keep in mind while considering LGBTQ advocacy in the Middle East, which will be explored in an upcoming section.

The Role of Islam

The Middle East is significantly influenced by Islam, and many who condone homosexuality and LGBTQ rights and freedoms use Islam and the Quran as justification for their beliefs. However, homosexuality is never explicitly mentioned in the Quran, and most of the justifications given by those who use Islam to condemn homosexuality use the story of the people of the city of Lot, which the Quran describes as being destroyed because of the wrath of God after men engaged in homosexual acts.¹⁵ Another Quranic verse, also regarding the city of Lot, which is commonly used by conservative Muslims to argue against homosexuality is Verse 7:81; “Most surely you come to males in lust besides females; nay you are an extravagant people”. Further, there are verses in the Hadith which conservatives argue justify the death penalty for those who engage in homosexual behaviors.¹⁶ However, many scholars do not interpret either verse as actually being in relation to homosexuality; instead, they believe, they are an argument against rape and the imposition of this verse into arguments surrounding

¹³ Sofian Merabet. *Queer Beirut*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 133.

¹⁴ Massad, 383-384

¹⁵ Fordham University. “The Qu’ran and Homosexuality.” *Internet History Sourcebooks Project*, Fordham University, Web.

¹⁶ Jim Wafer, “Muhammad and Male Homosexuality,” in *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature*, ed. Stephen Murray & Will Roscoe (New York: NYU Press, 1997), 87.

LGBTQ rights for Muslims is unreasonable.¹⁷ The arguments both for and against LGBTQ rights in relation to permissibility in Islam are based in interpretations of the same verses in the Quran and as a result, this comes down to differing interpretations and translations of even the smallest of words in the verses. The influence of Islam is also visible when looking at the attitudes of Muslim majority and minority populations, especially when considering that Muslim countries “have the lowest average acceptance of homosexuality... in comparison to other religious traditions”.¹⁸ Thus, it is clear that Islam is likely to be a factor which influences individuals’ attitudes towards homosexuality and it should be operationalized in order for it to be considered as a variable.

Advocacy:

An understanding of the history of homosexuality in the Middle East is necessary to understand the impact of advocacy groups on LGBTQ rights in the Middle East. The points which Massad makes regarding imposition of Western ideals of sexuality coincide with the fact that in recent decades, there has been a significant worldwide push for LGBTQ rights, with much advocacy done by American and European nations and organizations. Many of these organizations have called for the application of international human rights law in the Middle East in order to protect LGBTQ people, as the treatment of LGBTQ individuals in some Middle Eastern countries is against common human rights principles. However, some have argued that international pressure, especially coming from these European nations and the United States, is unlikely to be successful and actually increase human rights principles because many in the

¹⁷ Junaid B. Jahangir and Hussein Abdul-latif, *Investigating the Islamic Perspective on Homosexuality*, 63 (2016), 954.

¹⁸ Momin Rahman, *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures, and Modernity*. (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 56.

Middle East see the pressure to adopt LGBTQ-friendly laws as impositions of ‘Western’ ideals.¹⁹

There is certainly a prevalent argument that the idea that the construction of an openly gay identity in the Middle East and increased LGBTQ rights are imposed notions of sexual identity taken from Europe and North America, as the rise of globalization has led to human rights becoming a key criterion for the progress of nations.²⁰ In terms of LGBTQ rights, this is argued in the Yogyakarta Principles, written in 2007 by a group of human rights experts, which has been the most comprehensive attempt thus far to apply international human rights principles to LGBTQ individuals around the world.²¹ However, the application of these principles has largely failed in the Arab world, as there have been continuous efforts by the Arab world to shut down any potential proposals to discuss international human rights for LGBTQ individuals.

Others argue that now, in the era directly following the Arab Spring, the time is ripe to harness the power of the cultural and societal revolutions to push for increased LGBTQ rights in the Middle East.²² But those advocating for this agree that it is more beneficial to move away from the styles of activism that were successful in Europe and the United States. One style of advocacy which has been particularly successful in the United States which has not worked in the Middle East is the “substitutive model”, which focuses on an outward expression of LGBTQ identity in order to build a public, collective identity which assumes that there is a universality among LGBTQ individuals which goes beyond their status as members of the LGBTQ

¹⁹ Jayesh Needham, 289.

²⁰ Carl F. Stychin. “Same-Sex Sexualities and the Globalization of Human Rights Discourse,” *McGill Law Journal* 49 (2004), 951.

²¹ “Yogyakarta Principles,” adopted November 10, 2017.

²² Needham, 315.

community.²³ With the failures of and problems associated with this model, many scholars are promoting the adoption of models of advocacy which are more individualized.

One of these new activism methods which is being promoted is known as “activism from the closet.”²⁴ This method does not explicitly include the promotion of LGBTQ rights and issues, but rather advocates for issues that benefit society as a whole and LGBTQ individuals.²⁵ This includes things like increasing levels of privacy protections, which allows for LGBTQ individuals to feel more comfortable expressing their identities within their home but privacy is also a particularly strong value in many Arab societies.²⁶ Thus, it is important that the emphasis on advocacy focuses on techniques which are unique to the Middle East and the unique cultural factors which are present in Middle Eastern countries.

Implications for Research:

A review of the literature has influenced my research significantly, including how I choose variables for my research. The literature indicates that a variety of factors influence a individual’s perception of homosexuality, which means that I need to have a variety of independent and dependent variables. Further, I can also choose variables which have not been thoroughly discussed in research regarding this topic. Finally, as a lot of literature on this topic focuses on why current advocacy models have failed, I would like to further this question by looking into what might make an advocacy model successful in the Middle East. Thus, the

²³ Sonia Katyal. “Exporting Identity,” *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 14 no. 1 (2002), 108.

²⁴ Needham, 316.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Whitaker, 58.

literature review has helped to both refine my research question and to choose variables for my research.

Methodology:

Once again, the basic question which I will be researching is ‘What factors influence individual’s opinions of homosexuality in the Middle East’. In order to complete this research, I will be performing a small-n neopositivist research project in the form of a case study analysis. The cases which I have selected for my analysis for this project are Jordan and Lebanon.

I have chosen to analyze the cases of Lebanon and Jordan because, when comparing them to other Middle Eastern countries, their levels of rights for LGBTQ individuals are considered rather advanced in comparison, but still quite basic when compared to many European countries. Jordan decriminalized homosexual sexual acts in the 1950s, while the Lebanese courts have recently ruled that the statutes which were previously used to arrest people for homosexual sexual relations should not be used to arrest LGBTQ individuals any longer, making homosexuality *de facto* legal.²⁷ Further, there is more information regarding LGBTQ rights and attitudes towards these rights in Jordan and Lebanon than there is for many Middle Eastern countries, which makes the case study both easier to do and more likely to have more significant and stronger results.²⁸ Further, even though both of these countries have much better LGBTQ rights than most other Middle Eastern countries, attitudes towards homosexuality within them are not as tolerant as in many countries with equivalent laws regarding homosexuality. As such,

²⁷ Lucy Rogers, Pablo Gutierrez Martin, Martyn Rees, and Steven Connor. ‘Where is it illegal to be gay?’ *BBC News*, 10 February 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-25927595> (Accessed: 4 May 2018)

²⁸ Stephen Van Evera. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. (United States, Cornell University Press, 1997), 77.

it is important to do further research on such interesting outlier cases, as “unknown causes explain their outcomes and can be identified by examining the case.”²⁹

I have chosen to do a case study approach and only analyze two cases in my research for several reasons, including the time constraints for the research project as well as my desire to delve deeply into the factors which influence individuals’ perceptions of homosexuality in these two countries. Further, because my case study includes more than one case, this helps to offset some of the possible methodological concerns.³⁰ A case study approach also fits my topic well because small-n neopositivist research aims to ‘produce knowledge that is both situated and universal’.³¹ Thus, even though my research will be highly contextualized, and focus solely on Jordan and Lebanon, there is still the strong possibility that my results will be applicable to other Middle Eastern countries as well and be helpful to LGBTQ advocacy networks doing work in the Middle East.

Variables and Operationalization:

In order to complete my research, I must operationalize all of my variables in order to be able to analyze them. The data used to operationalize all of my variables in this research project comes from the World Values Survey, which is a group of social scientists who take nationally representative surveys to study changing values and their impact on social and political life.³² Both Jordan and Lebanon were surveyed in the most recent iteration of the survey, which took place in Jordan in 2014 and Lebanon in 2013. In Lebanon, there were a total of 1,200 people

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 85

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

³¹ Andrew Abbott. *Methods of Discovery*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 2004), 58.

³² World Values Survey. “What we do,” *World Values Survey*, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp> (Accessed: 12 April 2018).

interviewed, while Jordan had slightly fewer with 1,179 individuals who participated in the survey.

For this research project, my dependent variable is public opinion about homosexuality in Jordan and Lebanon. The operationalization of this variable comes from the World Values Survey. Question 203 of the most recent iteration of the survey asked participants to

“Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between:

Homosexuality”³³

Participants rated their perception of the justifiability of homosexuality on a scale from one to ten, with one indicating that homosexuality is never justifiable, and ten indicating that homosexuality is always justifiable.³⁴ With the large sample size for the survey in each of the countries, there is enough data collected on this question for it to be considered as valid. Thus, it is a good operationalization of my dependent variable of public opinion of homosexuality in Jordan and Lebanon.

As this research project is a case study, I have chosen a variety of independent variables to use in this research, many of which are based off of my literature review and all of which are based off of data collected in the World Values Survey. I chose a variety of factors which I thought would influence an individual’s perception of homosexuality as well as a variety of factors which I thought would not influence an individual’s perception of homosexuality. The

³³ World Values Survey 2010-2014,” *World Values Survey*, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp> (Accessed 28 February 2017)

³⁴ *Ibid.*

factors which I chose to analyze as my independent variables are listed below, in the order which they appeared as questions on the World Values Survey.

- Important in life: Religion
- Important child qualities: obedience
- Active/inactive membership: church or religious organization
- Active/inactive membership: sport or recreational organization
- Active/inactive membership: art, music or educational organization
- Active/inactive membership: environmental organization
- Active/inactive membership: humanitarian or charitable organization
- Agree/disagree: A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl
- Marital status
- Desire to do something for the good of society
- Importance of behaving properly and avoiding doing anything people would say is wrong
- Importance of tradition and following customs
- Interest in politics
- How much you trust people of another religion
- Level of confidence in the press
- Level of confidence in the government
- Importance of democracy
- Religious denomination
- Frequency of attendance to religious services
- Frequency of prayer

- Belief in Hell
- Belief that their religion is only acceptable religion.
- View of self as world citizen
- Information source: daily newspaper
- Information source: printed magazines
- Information source: TV news
- Information source: radio news
- Information source: Internet
- Employment status
- Age
- Age completed education
- Size of town
- Region of interview

In order to analyze these variables and determine their effect upon the dependent variable, I will be analyzing the variation from the base mean. The base mean refers to the average justifiability rating of homosexuality in each country, using data from the dependent variable. In Jordan, this value was 1.29. In Lebanon, this value was 3.00. In order to determine variation, the independent variable was used to cross the dependent variable in order to determine how answers to independent variable questions related to the justifiability of homosexuality. Then, the values which were derived from this were taken and the difference between these justifiability ratings and the base mean ratings was calculated. While this may initially seem to be confusing, in sum, I used basic math to determine how a person's answer to each independent variable question

influenced the rating of the justifiability of homosexuality that he or she gave for the dependent variable.

Using my literature review, I have formed two different hypotheses to be tested in this research.

Hypotheses:

- **H1: Rating of justifiability of homosexuality is most influenced by religious factors.**
- **H2: Rating of justifiability of homosexuality is most influenced by demographic factors.**

Analysis:

In this section of my paper, I discuss my analysis of the data which I have collected. I also discuss the outcome of my hypotheses. After discussing my hypotheses, I discuss some of the other variables which had interesting or unexpected results.

Before this analysis is done, there are a few important things which must be kept in mind. First, it is important to note that there were different initial base means in Jordan and in Lebanon, with Lebanon's being significantly higher, indicating that individuals in Lebanon think that homosexuality is much more justifiable than individuals in Jordan. However, this initial difference did not change the way that the data is analyzed. Further, as Jordan and Lebanon are separate countries with different countries, there are independent variables which had different results in the two countries. While some factors were the same for both countries, others were not. Finally, as the analysis was generated by looking at the differences in mean justifiability of homosexuality ratings, I had to decide what level of difference was significant. A difference

level of 0.15 was determined to be significant, as this indicates a level of change, and while it is not large, is still significant.

The first hypothesis I tested was found to not be accurate. Religion does significantly impact an individual's view on the justifiability of homosexuality, but it is not the most significant factor. Further, the data pointed to how religion impacts views on homosexuality in different ways in Jordan and Lebanon, which makes sense as both countries have a different religious makeup.³⁵ For example, when individuals' ratings for the justifiability of homosexuality were analyzed in reference to how important they viewed religion to be in their lives, it was found that individuals in Jordan who believe that religion is 'rather important' have significantly higher justifiability ratings of homosexuality than those who placed it at a higher or lower importance rating, while in Lebanon, the less importance an individual placed on religion correlated with increasing ratings of the justifiability of homosexuality.³⁶

Religious tolerance was also a factor in both countries, with individuals who expressed that they had complete trust in people of another religion expressing higher tolerance for homosexuality as well.³⁷ In terms of how religious denomination affected views of homosexuality, in Jordan the data indicated that Protestant Christians were the only religious group that had a more positive view of homosexuality, while Orthodox Christians had the least positive view of homosexuality.³⁸ A similar trend was present in Lebanon, in which Protestants

³⁵ Central Intelligence Agency. "Jordan," *CIA World Factbook*, 22 February 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html> (Accessed: 24 February 2018).

³⁶ World Values Survey, Variable 9.

³⁷ World Values Survey, Variable 106.

³⁸ World Values Survey, Variable 144.

had a mean justifiability rating of 3.92, compared to the base mean of 3.00.³⁹ However, when individuals were asked to consider whether or not their religion was the only acceptable religion, there was not a trend which correlated with ratings of justifiability of homosexuality.⁴⁰ For example, the groups of Jordanian individuals who agreed and those who disagreed with this statement had ratings significantly higher than the base mean, while those who strongly agreed or strongly disagreed had ratings lower than the base mean.

Although initially surprising, frequency of attendance to religious services did not have much of an influence on individuals' perceptions of homosexuality. In Jordan, changes in the base mean did not reach the 0.15 level for any of the frequencies in the survey, indicating that none of them impacted an individual's perception of homosexuality.⁴¹ This was not the case in Lebanon, where many of the frequencies were above the 0.15 level required for significance, but there were only very weak trends which pointed towards increased attendance to religious services correlating with a higher justifiability rating of homosexuality. There was also occasional significance in data relating to frequency of prayer in Jordan, but it did not point towards a trend.⁴² In Lebanon, however, less frequent prayer, such as praying only on special holy days or when attending religious services, did correlate with higher ratings of homosexuality, giving insight into the role of religious influence on homosexuality.⁴³ Thus, it is clear that religion had different influences on the justifiability of homosexuality in each country, but played a significant role in determining an individual's level of justifiability in each.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ World Values Survey, Variable 154.

⁴¹ World Values Survey, Variable 145.

⁴² World Values Survey, Variable 145.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

My second hypothesis was also not determined to be true, as demographic factors did play a role in influencing individuals' ratings of justifiability of homosexuality, but again were not the most important factor. Further, the data given by the World Values Survey would not allow me to cross-reference an individual's rating of homosexuality with his or her sex, which paints an incomplete demographic picture. However, there were some demographic factors which proved to be significant. For example, in both Jordan and Lebanon, when analyzing employment status, those who were students or unemployed had the highest justifiability ratings, while those who worked full time had the lowest.⁴⁴ This also correlates with data from looking at the effect of age on ratings of the justifiability of homosexuality, as those who are younger, especially those under 50, have significantly higher justifiability ratings than those who are 50 or older.⁴⁵ Further, when examined in terms of marital status, while some statuses did correspond with ratings that were significantly higher or lower, there was no trend which would point to a way that marital status impacts a person's view of homosexuality.⁴⁶ Thus, while the data shows that demographics can influence an individual's perception of homosexuality, it is hard to say definitively if it is the most important factor.

There were a myriad of variables outside of my hypotheses which were analyzed, and some of the findings were quite interesting. First, there was a trend of those who valued the importance of tradition, necessity of obedience, and the idea of behaving properly tended to view homosexuality much more negatively than those who did not. For example, those in Lebanon who strongly identified with the importance of behaving properly and avoiding doing anything people would say is wrong gave a justifiability level of 0.61 lower than the base mean, and those

⁴⁴ World Values Survey, Variable 229.

⁴⁵ World Values Survey, Variable 242.

⁴⁶ World Values Survey, Variable 57.

who did not identify with the statement gave a justifiability level of 0.70 higher than the base mean.⁴⁷ Influence of tradition was also shown in the data by the fact that those in Lebanon who did not strongly identify with belief in the importance of tradition and following customs had a justifiability rating that was more than a whole point above the base mean, while those who strongly identified with it had a justifiability rating which was more than half a point below the base mean.⁴⁸ Thus, in some cases, beliefs like these can be more influential on attitudes towards homosexuality than religion.

Further, one of the variables which was especially influential was membership status in other organizations. Most interestingly, the simple act of becoming a member tended to be most important, whether an individual was an active or inactive member tended not to have significant impact on an individual's perceptions of homosexuality than membership status overall. For example, in Jordan, individuals who were active or inactive members of sports or recreational organizations had justifiability ratings of homosexuality 0.10 and 0.59 higher, respectively, than individuals who were not.⁴⁹ The same trend was followed in Jordan for individuals who were members of art, music, or educational organizations and in Jordan and Lebanon for individuals who were members of church or religious organizations.⁵⁰ Individuals in Jordan and Lebanon who were active members of environmental organizations both had justifiability ratings of homosexuality of more than an entire point above the base mean for those countries.⁵¹ Thus, the

⁴⁷ World Values Survey, Variable 77.

⁴⁸ World Values Survey, Variable 79.

⁴⁹ World Values Survey, Variable 26.

⁵⁰ World Values Survey, Variable 27.

⁵¹ World Values Survey, Variable 30.

data points to organizational membership, whether active or inactive, as being a factor which significantly influences an individual's perception of homosexuality.

Even though both hypotheses were dismissed, this dismissal was more due to lack of confidence in the data's ability to verify that they were not false. For example, it is difficult to say that my second hypothesis was accurate, when I did not have access to data which could demonstrate the influence of an individual's sex on their opinions of homosexuality. Thus, I can say with confidence that I have identified several variables which are important in determining an individual's opinion of homosexuality, but I cannot confidently say which of these is the most important.

Conclusion:

I follow my analysis with a discussion of some of the alternative interpretations of my findings, possible problems with the research which I have conducted, how the information gathered could be used to benefit advocacy organizations, and a discussion of the work that remains to be done with future research on this topic. The main conclusions from the analysis of this data is how the results can be used by LGBTQ advocacy groups in their advocacy directed towards Jordan and Lebanon. If advocacy models focus more on the results of this study, they are likely to have more success than previous models of advocacy which were not successful in the Middle East. After a thorough analysis of the data, there are two main recommendations which may help LGBTQ advocacy groups doing work in Jordan and Lebanon to be more successful.

Firstly, LGBTQ advocacy groups need to adapt their mediums of advocacy. As individuals who tend to get much of their media and information from magazines tend to have significantly more favorable perceptions of homosexuality, LGBTQ advocacy groups should not

focus on the use of magazines as a means for advocacy, as they would be theoretically advocating towards individuals who already are in agreement with their message. Conversely, individuals who consume a significant amount of media and information from television and radio media networks tend to have a less favorable impression of homosexuality. Thus, LGBTQ advocacy groups should focus on advocacy through these channels, as they are more likely to influence people whose opinions they would like to change. However, freedom of media and of speech are issues in both Jordan and Lebanon which could make advocacy on television channels and on the radio more difficult, and this is something which advocacy groups must keep in consideration.

Further, it would be in the best interest of LGBTQ advocacy groups to not solely focus on LGBTQ advocacy in Jordan and Lebanon. While this may seem initially to be confusing, the data shows that individuals who are involved in a variety of organizations tend to hold more tolerant views of the LGBTQ community. For example, those who are members, whether inactive or active, of environmental organizations or art groups tend to rate homosexuality at a much higher level of justifiability than individuals who are not members of such organizations. This is likely due to the fact that individuals who know someone who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ community tend to hold more tolerant views towards homosexuality. As a result, LGBTQ advocacy groups should also try to work in more intersectional manners, focusing on other issues as well. For example, they could also encourage environmental activism or individuals to participate in arts and cultural activities in order to promote individuals to meet other individuals as well as foster the creation of intersectional identities. Various advocacy groups could work together in Jordan and Lebanon on a variety of topics to try to advance all of

their causes, which would also likely be beneficial to the state of LGBTQ advocacy in these countries.

Further, as the data shows, even though Jordan and Lebanon are similar in many aspects, there were still factors which impacted one country significantly more than the other country, as well as factors which impacted one country in an opposite manner than the other. This goes to further highlight the necessity of approaching LGBTQ advocacy in the Middle East on an individualized and specialized basis. Even though it is sometimes easier to not take an individualized approach, it is necessary if advocacy groups want to be successful in the Middle East.

This research and analysis are far from perfect, however, and there are many possible problems with this study. One likely criticism is that these variables are not enough to make a determination of what influences individuals' opinions in these countries. However, within the scope and limits of this study, based on the resources which are available to me, it would likely be difficult to attempt to do a more comprehensive research project. But with that being said, these variables could be explored with more depth, including in ways which I do not have access to, such as interviewing Jordanians on their opinions of LGBTQ rights and how these opinions have changed in recent years.

There is a lot of future research on this topic which could be very beneficial to the state of LGBTQ advocacy in the Middle East. In order to think about LGBTQ advocacy throughout the region, similar data would need to be found for each of the countries, which is not possible through utilizing the World Values Survey. However, advocacy groups would likely want to get a similar understanding of what factors influence individuals' opinions about homosexuality in other Middle Eastern countries, so such information would be important to obtain. Further, it

would be interesting and beneficial to do more case studies of other groupings of Middle Eastern countries which have different levels of LGBTQ rights, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel, to see what factors influence an individual's opinion of homosexuality in these countries and compare these results to the factors found in the case study of Jordan and Lebanon. This would be a useful way to further the conclusions which were reached in this research project.

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