

Norm Diffusion in IGO Networks: The Case of Gay Rights and Women's Rights¹

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Abstract. In recent years a large number of states have taken significant steps towards protecting the rights of women, and, to a lesser extent, the rights of gays and lesbians. This study uses panel data for over 130 states to test the hypothesis that states' decisions to adopt more progressive policies in these issue areas are influenced by the decisions of their peers. Specifically, we find that after controlling for a number of other external and internal factors, states' policies with respect to various measures of women's rights and gay rights tend to be heavily influenced by those of the states with whom they share membership in intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). What is particularly interesting is that in spite of the fact that women's rights and gay rights differ significantly in the extent to which they are encoded in international human rights law, the two types of policy appear to diffuse with similar ease through IGO networks. These results appear to be robust to alternative specifications of the model that take account of differences in the characteristics of the member states of the IGOs as well as differences in the characteristics of the IGOs themselves. These results lend further weight to the argument that IGOs play an important role in promoting norm diffusion among states through a process of inter-state socialization, even in areas that are entirely unrelated to the official mandates of these organizations.

1 Introduction

1.1 Diffusion through IGO Networks

A number of recent large-n analyses have provided support for the idea that Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) serve as channels for the diffusion of norms and ideas among their member states. These studies have advanced our understanding of the possible “unintended consequences” of IGO membership by showing how states tend to adopt similar behaviors to those of their fellow IGO members, often in ways that are unrelated to the formal mandate of the IGOs themselves. Beginning with the study by Pevehouse (2002) that showed that authoritarian regimes are more likely to transition to democracy when many of their fellow IGO member states are already democracies, other work has gone on to find evidence of similar types of convergence with respect to states’ voting behaviors at the UN General Assembly (Bearce and Bondanella, 2007), their domestic economic policies (Cao, 2009), their levels of democracy (Torfason and Ingram, 2010) and their human rights practices (Greenhill, 2010).

Studies of IGO-mediated diffusion have suggested different mechanisms through which norms and ideas spread from state to state. Some have suggested that states tend to adopt similar policies to those of their fellow IGO members because of coercion. This entails the more powerful member states within the organization using either a carrot or sticks approach to bring about changes in the policies of the weaker members. This may explain, for example, why the promise of membership in the European Union (EU) has been successful in bringing about improvements in the human rights practices of some of the newer member states. Evidence for this type of coercive effect of IGO membership appears in Cao’s study of convergence in domestic economic policies. Cao (2009) finds that the three IGOs with the greatest ability to demand policy change of their members in the realm of economic policy (specifically, the World Trade Organiza-

tion (WTO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the EU) are the ones in which we are most likely to observe policy convergence.

Other studies have suggested more passive processes through which norms and ideas spread among an IGO's member states. In their study of the relationship between shared IGO memberships and bilateral trade, Ingram, Robinson and Busch (2005) find that IGOs with a social or cultural function can in some cases be more important than IGOs with a primarily economic function in fostering stronger trade ties between pairs of states. The authors suggest that these findings are consistent with a view of IGOs that emphasizes not only the "utilitarian" aspects of IGO membership—i.e., the ability of IGOs such as the WTO to facilitate the lowering of trade barriers among their member states—but also the ability of IGOs to foster trust and a "perception of joint purpose" among their member states, which in turn promotes trade between them (Ingram, Robinson and Busch, 2005: 7). Similarly, in his study of the convergence among the human rights practices of IGO members, Greenhill (2010) finds evidence for a strong convergence effect even when one models the diffusion process in a way that excludes the IGOs that are most directly concerned with human rights issues.

Studies such as these suggest that, in addition to their ability to enable member states to influence each another through coercion, IGOs enable states to influence each other through a process of socialization. The socialization mechanism might take the form of pressure to comply with social norms—what is sometimes referred to as "social influence" or "acculturation"—or might instead involve a deeper form of internalization of ideas held by one's peers (see Goodman and Jinks, 2004; Checkel, 2005). Even if we leave aside for the now the question of which of these socialization mechanisms plays a more important role in IGOs, the fact that socialization occurs at all should not be surprising given that most IGOs host regular meetings where the representatives of each state can come together in both formal and informal settings and that many of the larger

IGOs host permanent delegations from their member states. By providing opportunities for state representatives to closely interact with one another, we should expect to find that these representatives will, over time, become socialized into the norms of the group. Strong evidence of this type of socialization process has been found in studies of attitude formation within social institutions as diverse as families (McHale, Crouter and Tucker, 1999), universities (Guimond and Palmer, 1996), prisons (Wheeler, 1961), and company boardrooms (Davis and Greve, 1997).

Some recent case study work has suggested that socialization processes play an important role in shaping the preferences of members of international organizations. For example, Johnston (2008) has demonstrated how China's beliefs in the benefits of collective security developed as a consequence of its increased level of participation in international institutions over the 1980s and 1990s. One specific example he gives is of China's participation in the UN Conference on Disarmament. He argues that China had originally joined this organization in 1980 mainly because of its desire to maintain a higher profile on the international stage. Once inside, however, it needed to build up some expertise in the field of arms control, which led to its Ministry of Foreign Affairs establishing a team of arms control experts (Johnston, 2008: 52-53). Johnston finds that many different ministers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were rotated through this particular unit, which led to a wider diffusion of ideas about the value of disarmament through the government. He also shows how once this arms control bureaucracy was established, it started to expand and form more linkages to other government agencies, thereby further cementing its role in the Chinese foreign policy establishment.

In the case of Europe, a study of decision-making within the EU's Committee of Permanent Representatives conducted by Lewis (2005) finds strong evidence to suggest that state representatives become socialized into group norms of decision-making. Based upon a series of in-depth interviews with state representatives, Lewis finds that repre-

sentatives to the organization develop a sense of cohesion and loyalty to fellow members of the group that, in some cases, causes them to place the interests of the group above those of their member states. Lewis suggests that while the degree of internalization was limited in certain important respects, the high degree of socialization into group norms within this particular committee can be attributed to the intensity and duration of interactions between its delegates, and to their relative isolation from the influence of their home governments.

Whether through a process of coercion or socialization, all of these studies have provided positive evidence of the diffusion of norms and practices among the members of IGOs. What has attracted less attention is the question of the *conditions* under which IGOs can play this norm-diffusing role. This paper begins to answer this question by examining the relationship between the degree of legalization of a norm and its transmissibility through IGO networks. It tests the theory that norms that have a well-established basis in international law tend to diffuse more easily through IGO networks than other types of norms. It does so using time-series cross-sectional data on two types of human rights norms that are reasonably similar in substance but differ markedly in terms of their codification in international treaties, namely gay rights and women's rights. Both norms involve protecting the basic human rights of previously marginalized groups, but whereas the international human rights regime has taken bold steps towards recognizing the political and social rights of women—including, most notably, the passage of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)—no similar degree of international legal recognition has been granted to the rights of gays, lesbians and other sexual minorities.² Yet despite its lack of codification

²An alternative explanation for any difference between the transmissibility of women's rights and gay rights might be that, regardless of their status in international law, gay rights are simply too recent a development for there to be much evidence of an IGO-mediated diffusion effect. However, as is illustrated by Figures 1 and 2, there has been a significant increase in the number of states that have adopted progressive policies with respect to gay rights. This paper will examine to what extent IGO ties can help to explain these patterns of adoption after controlling for a number of different domestic

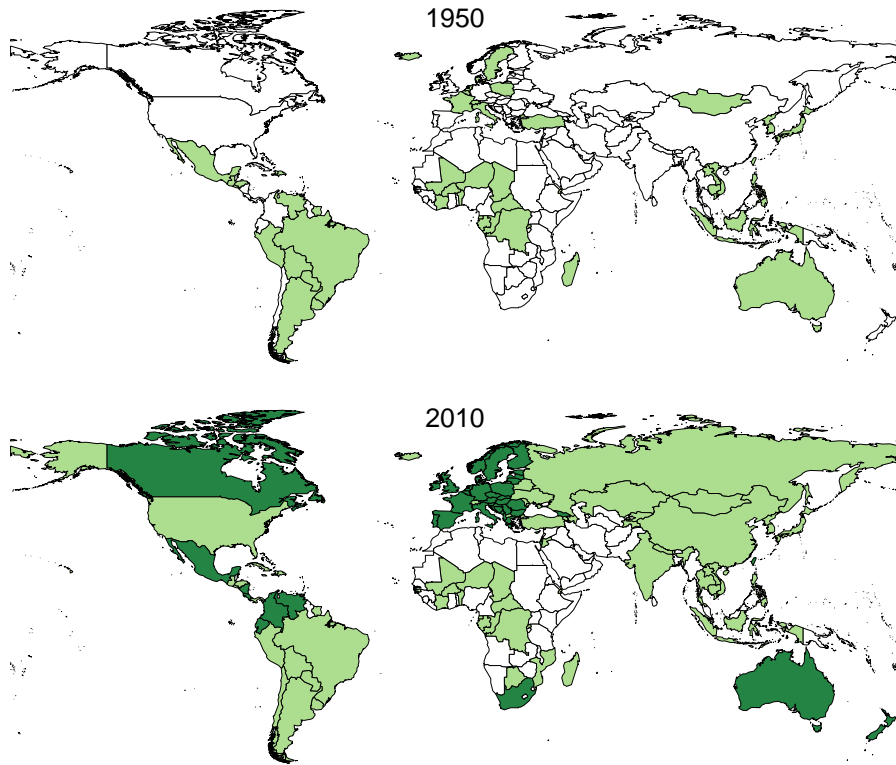


Figure 1: Policies towards homosexuality in 1950 and 2010. States where homosexual acts are legal are colored light green. States that have taken the further step of passing legislation to prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation are colored dark green. Data were obtained from Bruce-Jones and Paoli Itaborahy (2011).

in international law, a large number of states have recently made significant progress towards protecting the rights of sexual minorities (see Figure 1). This paper examines whether the difference in the international legal status of these two sets of norms (their degree of “legalization”) has had a significant effect on the role that IGO networks have played in promoting their worldwide diffusion.

and international factors that may explain a state’s policies in this area.

1.2 Theoretical Expectations

For the purposes of this analysis, I shall take “legalization” to mean the degree to which a norm is codified in international law. I am therefore interested only in the question of whether a norm is supported by a formal treaty, rather than whether that treaty can be effectively enforced.³ Having defined legalization in this way, why should we expect the degree of legalization to have any effect on the transmissibility of a norm through IGO networks?

One possible explanation is that once a norm is codified in an international treaty, it acquires a certain legitimacy that facilitates its more widespread adoption. No longer does the norm simply describe the peculiar habits or practices of a particular group of states, but it becomes part of the “logic of appropriateness” that describes the way in which modern states ought to behave (March and Olsen, 2005; Hurd, 2003; Sikkink, 1998). For example, it is fairly clear that CEDAW, as one of the core UN human rights treaties that has now been ratified by 185 states, establishes the general legitimacy of the idea that men and women should enjoy equal rights. Even the state of Saudi Arabia—which continues to place severe restrictions on the ability of women to participate equally in many different aspects of political and cultural life—ratified CEDAW in 2000, albeit subject to the reservation that Islamic law will prevail in the case of any conflict between it and the state’s obligations under CEDAW. Although this might suggest that Saudi Arabia is a party to CEDAW “in name only” (Keller, 2004: 39-40), the mere act of ratification has nonetheless signaled the state’s acquiescence to the more general principle of non-discrimination against women.⁴ Even if intended as nothing more than “cheap

³I am therefore interested primarily in the “precision” dimension of the obligation/precision/delegation framework developed by Abbott et al. (2001).

⁴Indeed, the Saudi government is careful to frame its policies towards women in terms of its compliance with a local interpretation of universal human rights principles. For example, on the website of its embassy to the United States the Saudi government claims that

“We believe that the comprehensive concept of human rights should be based on the realization that human communities have special characteristics, cultures, beliefs and re-

talk”, this could begin a process in which states are increasingly held to account for their behavior by their own citizens and the wider international community (see Thomas, 2001).

Another possible argument for the greater transmissibility of highly legalized norms is more instrumental in nature. It is based on the assumption that complying with highly legalized norms provides greater opportunities for states to develop a reputation for complying with international law.⁵ If having a reputation for compliance makes it easier for states to achieve certain foreign policy goals (see Guzman, 2008: 35),⁶ then we should expect to find that compliance with more legalized norms provides greater opportunities for states to develop their reputations in this regard. Thus, in the cases of women’s rights and gay rights, a state that values its reputation for compliance with international human rights law has more to gain by making reforms to its laws and practices that concern women’s rights than to those that concern gay rights. In other words, highly legalized norms provide more tangible rewards to states that are eager to signal to their fellow IGO members that they are committed to their international obligations.

Finally, a less instrumental, but perhaps more important, reason why legalization might have a positive effect on a norm’s transmissibility is that the process of legalization serves to highlight the importance of a particular norm, and to more clearly specify what

ligions, which must be acknowledged and respected. The Kingdom respects this international norm and adheres to the noble objectives that call for the protection of human rights and preservation of human dignity” (<http://www.saudiembassy.net/issues/human-rights/default.aspx>, accessed April 5, 2010.)

Elsewhere on the website the government takes pains to point out various rights that women enjoy in Saudi Arabia, as well as achievements that women have had in occupying ministerial roles (see “What about Muslim Women?” at http://www.saudiembassy.net/about/country-information/Islam/understanding_Islam.aspx and “Women appointed to top jobs at Ministry of Education” at <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2007/news/page788.aspx>).

⁵Hathaway (2002) makes a similar argument with respect to what she calls the “expressive” role of treaty ratification.

⁶For a critique of the role that reputation plays in international relations, at least from the point of view of international security, see Mercer (1996); Press (2005).

the states' obligations should be (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2005: 900). In other words, norms that are highly legalized tend to create expectations about appropriate forms of behavior that are less ambiguous and easier for states to follow, which in turn causes the norms to diffuse through the international system more easily. Proponents of the "transnational legal process" view of compliance argue that codification in international law enables a process of identification and management of the causes of non-compliance, which gradually narrows the gap between rules and behavior (Chayes and Chayes, 1993; Koh, 1997). In this sense, states may be equally willing to comply with norms of varying degrees of legalization, but in practice will end up being more successful at adopting the norms that are highly legalized.

1.3 The International Legal Regime

The difference in the degree of legalization of women's rights and gay rights norms at the international level is striking. While the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) makes relatively little direct reference to women's rights, Article 3 makes clear that all of the rights enumerated in the Covenant should apply equally to women and men. In addition, Article 23 deals directly with women's social rights, stating that no-one shall be forced into a marriage without her full consent, and that men and women shall enjoy equal rights during a marriage and following the dissolution of a marriage. Nevertheless, many commentators have pointed out that many of the acts of oppression carried out against women cannot be subsumed within the category of general violations of civil and political rights, and require special attention in international human rights instruments. As these critics point out, women's rights *are* human rights, and therefore need to be recognized as such (Bunch, 1990).

In response to this criticism, the international human rights movement began to embrace the issue of women's human rights during the 1970s. The United Nations

declared the period 1976-1985 the “Decade for Women”, and in 1979 the UN General Assembly adopted CEDAW, which now ranks as one of the most widely-ratified human rights instruments. The adoption of CEDAW has also involved the establishment of an independent committee of experts that monitors states’ compliance with their obligations under the convention. In addition, the UN has also devoted significant efforts to ensuring that women’s rights remain a significant part of its agenda through the sponsorship of a series of major international conferences that have helped to extract commitments from national governments to better protect women’s rights (Gray, Kittilson and Sandholtz, 2006; True and Mintrom, 2001).

However, at present the rights of gays and lesbians enjoy no such recognition in international law, nor in the work of most IGOs that are concerned with human rights issues. The major human rights instruments have been silent on the issue of the rights of sexual minorities, and may in fact have inadvertently provided legal cover to states that continue to outlaw homosexual acts. For example, Article 12 of the ICCPR allows the civil and political rights enumerated in the treaty to be waived when necessary to protect “public order, public health or morals” (Fellmeth, 2008: 806).⁷ At present, the only international legal instrument of any sort that deals directly with the rights of sexual minorities is the 2007 Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. This is not a treaty or convention that is open to ratification by states, but is merely a statement prepared by international legal scholars that aims to clarify the rights of sexual minorities under existing human rights laws (O’Flaherty and Fisher, 2008).

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 discusses the modeling strategy that will be used to compare the transmissibility of norms concerning gay rights with those concerning women’s rights. Section 3 begins by testing whether a

⁷The “public order” defense has however been challenged by the 1994 opinion of the UN Human Rights Committee in *Toonen v. Australia* (Fellmeth, 2008: 820).

relatively simple model of IGO-mediated norm transmission can identify evidence of such transmission in each case. It then goes on to modify these models in a number of ways to examine the roles that state and IGO-level characteristics play in the transmission of these norms. Finally, Section 4 discusses the significance that these findings have for our understanding of norm transmission through IGOs.

2 Data and Methods

2.1 Dependent Variables

This study employs two separate measures of the adoption of legislation protecting gay rights in the period 1960-2005. The first is a simple dichotomous indicator of whether or not male homosexuality constitutes a criminal offense in that particular country-year. We refer to this variable as *Legalization*. The variable is coded as 1 in the cases where male homosexuality has been legalized (or had never been a criminal offense in the past) and 0 otherwise.

The second gay rights variable is dichotomous indicator of whether or not each state has passed legislation that protects gays and lesbians from employment discrimination. This variable, that we refer to as *Non-Discrimination*, is coded as 1 for the country-years in which such legislation has been passed, and 0 otherwise. Both of these variables were constructed using data from a worldwide survey of laws concerning the rights of sexual minorities that was prepared by Bruce-Jones and Paoli Itaborahy (2011) for the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), a Brussels-based international federation of NGOs that campaign for equal rights for sexual minorities.⁸

⁸The data used in this chapter were obtained from the 2011 version of the report, available online at http://old.ilga.org/Statehomophobia/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2011.pdf (accessed June 29, 2011).

Identifying which countries have or have not legalized homosexuality is surprisingly complex. In preparing the ILGA report, Bruce-Jones and Paoli Itaborahy (2011) apply a rule whereby legalization of homosexuality is recognized in cases where the state does not have formal legislation prohibiting homosexual acts that take place in private places between consenting adults who are above the legal age of consent. This means that country-years will still be coded as having legalized homosexuality if laws remain in place that have higher ages of consent for homosexual sex than for heterosexual sex. This was the case in the United Kingdom which had legalized homosexuality in 1967 but did not equalize the age of consent until the year 2000, following a successful anti-discrimination case brought against the UK government in the European Court of Human Rights.

Another difficulty concerns the distinction between homosexual acts involving men and those involving women. Many states that criminalize homosexuality have laws that expressly prohibit homosexual acts among men, but either fail to recognize female homosexuality or have less precise laws concerning these acts. For example, in the case of the United Kingdom, female homosexual acts had never been illegal, and when male homosexual acts were legalized in 1967 with an age of consent set at 21, no corresponding age of consent was established for female homosexual acts (Waites, 2002). Because laws with respect to female homosexual acts cannot therefore be used a reliable indicator of states' policies towards homosexuality I have coded the *Legalization* variable by reference only to the status of male homosexual acts as reported by Bruce-Jones and Paoli Itaborahy (2011).

A greater difficulty, however, concerns the often large gulf that exists between a state's laws with respect to homosexuality and its treatment of gays and lesbians in practice. For example, in many states in Asia and Africa, homosexual acts are not illegal as such but would nonetheless result in prosecution for other types of public order offenses (Fellmeth, 2008: 815). On the other hand, despite being relatively progressive

in terms of its public attitudes towards homosexuality, the United States only officially legalized homosexuality at the federal level following the 2003 Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence vs. Texas* that struck down the rarely enforced anti-sodomy laws that still remained on the books in 13 states. However, given the absence of reliable data on states' *de facto* regulation of homosexual acts, I have coded the *Legalization* variable to reflect states' *de jure* regulation of homosexuality only.⁹

These types of difficulties do not arise to the same extent with respect to the *Non-discrimination* variable. In this case, the human rights issue at stake concerns a positive right—that is, the decision of a state to provide mechanisms to protect the individual against anti-gay discrimination. (The *Legalization* variable, on the other hand, can be thought of as a negative right insofar as it involves the state being prevented from interfering with one particular aspect of the lives of its citizens.) Coding the *Non-discrimination* variable is therefore simply a case of asking whether a state has provided a right for the victims of employment discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation to bring a claim against their employer. Given that these laws are a relatively recent development that necessarily involve the state taking a more activist position with respect to gay rights, the issues of enforcement, or of ambiguity regarding the status of these laws, are much less pronounced.

Figure 2 shows the trends in the total number of states that have legalized male homosexuality and passed legislation protecting the rights of gays and lesbians in the workplace. As the graph shows, the number of states that have legalized homosexuality has undergone a steady increase over the past 60 years. The existence of laws protecting gays and lesbians from employment discrimination is a much more recent development

⁹As shall be discussed in Section 2.3 below, the event history model of legalization of homosexuality used in this study explains variation in the time taken for states to legalize homosexual acts within the 1960-2010 period. States that had not officially outlawed homosexuality in the first place are therefore excluded from the model, and cannot bias the results in the same way that they would if included in, say, a simple logit or probit model of legalization status in each year.

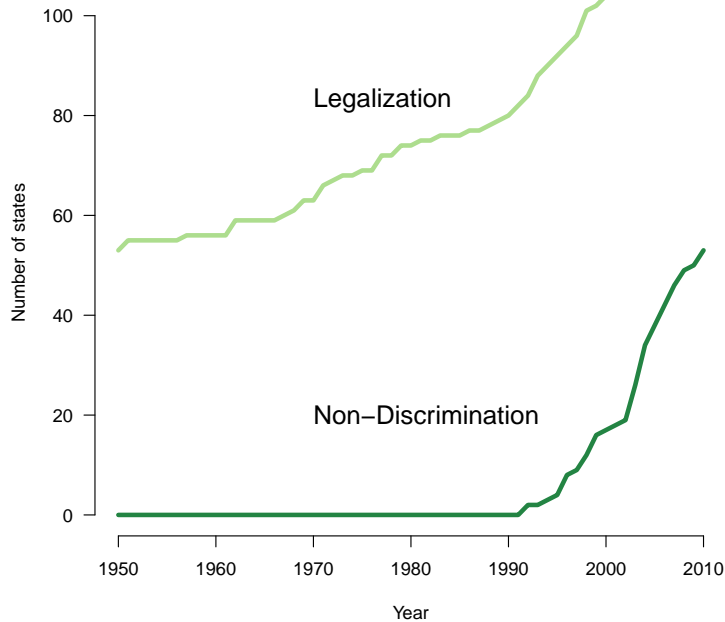


Figure 2: Trends in the number of states that have adopted progressive policies with respect to gay rights during the 1950-2010 period.

which only began in 1992 with the passage of such laws by Israel and the Netherlands.¹⁰ Since then the number of states having such legislation has undergone explosive growth, reaching a total of 53 by 2010.¹¹

This study employs three separate measures of women’s rights from the Cingranelli-Richards Human Rights Dataset. Cingranelli and Richards (2004) have constructed measures of women’s political rights, women’s social rights and women’s economic rights based upon a content analysis of the US State Department’s Country Reports on Human

¹⁰Similar legislation had been passed in earlier periods in several sub-state jurisdictions (e.g., the District of Columbia in 1983).

¹¹The rapid increase in the number of states passing such legislation in the first few years of the 2000s can be explained in part by the reforms that eastern European states were making in order to become eligible for EU membership. All ten states that joined the EU in 2004, as well as the two that joined in 2007, had introduced anti-discrimination legislation prior to becoming members. By the time Germany passed its legislation in 2006, all new and existing members of the EU had passed anti-discrimination legislation.

Rights Practices. These variables are designed to capture both the extent to which each country has legislation in place to safeguard women's rights and the extent to which these laws are actually enforced. Each of these variables is coded on a four-point (0-3) scale where 0 represents the lowest and 3 the highest level of respect for women's rights in that particular category. The data on women's political rights and women's economic rights cover the period 1981-2009, while the data on women's social rights cover the period 1981-2007. However, due to limitations in the availability of IGO membership data, the regression analyses in the following sections do not extend beyond 2005.

The *Political Rights* variable captures the extent to which women are allowed to participate in the political process, as well as the extent to which women are represented in the national legislature and/or high-ranking political positions. Countries that have no laws granting political rights to women are given a score of zero (e.g., Saudi Arabia, or Afghanistan under the Taliban regime). Countries that grant women the legal right to participate in the political process, but where only a small proportion of political positions are held by women, are assigned scores of 1 or 2 (depending on whether women constitute less than 5% or less than 30% of political positions, respectively). A score of 3 is awarded to any country in which more than 30% of political positions are held by women. Importantly, the Cingranelli-Richards dataset treats women's political rights as independent of democracy. Some non-democracies like Cuba still attain the highest possible score in this category provided that there are no laws that treat women differently from men with respect to political participation, and that women constitute at least 30% of seats in the national legislature (Cingranelli and Richards, 2008: 72).¹²

The *Social Rights* variable concerns the ability of women to enjoy the same rights as men in the realms of education, family life (e.g., with respect to divorce and inheritance) and property ownership. This category also includes the right to be protected from vio-

¹²Other examples of non-democracies with high scores on the CIRI measure of women's political rights include Czechoslovakia in the late 1980s, and Eritrea in 2004.

Table 1: Women’s political, social and economic rights for a sample of 12 countries in the year 2007.

Country	Year	Political Rights	Social Rights	Economic Rights
Cambodia	2007	2	2	2
Cote d’Ivoire	2007	2	0	1
China	2007	1	0	1
Denmark	2007	3	3	2
Ecuador	2007	3	1	0
Greece	2007	2	1	2
Liberia	2007	2	1	1
Peru	2007	2	2	2
Philippines	2007	2	1	1
Qatar	2007	1	0	1
Romania	2007	1	1	1
Russia	2007	2	1	2

lent cultural practices such as forced circumcision, honor killings, and “bride burnings”, but does not extend to women’s rights to be protected against individual acts of sexual or physical violence (Cingranelli and Richards, 2008: 85). As with the *Political Rights* variable, *Social Rights* is coded as zero in country-year cases where no legal protections exist, but is otherwise given a score ranging from 1 to 3 depending on the scope of these legal rights and the extent to which the government enforces them in practice.

Finally, the *Economic Rights* variable concerns women’s rights in the workplace. This includes, for example, the right to equal pay and to non-discrimination in hiring decisions. It too is coded on the 0-3 scale in a way that reflects both the extent of the laws on the books to guard against discrimination and the extent to which these laws are actually enforced.

To assist with the interpretation of these three variables, Table 1 provides a snapshot of the levels of these three variables for a sample of 12 countries in the year 2007, while Figure 3 shows how the distributions of scores on each of the three variables has changed

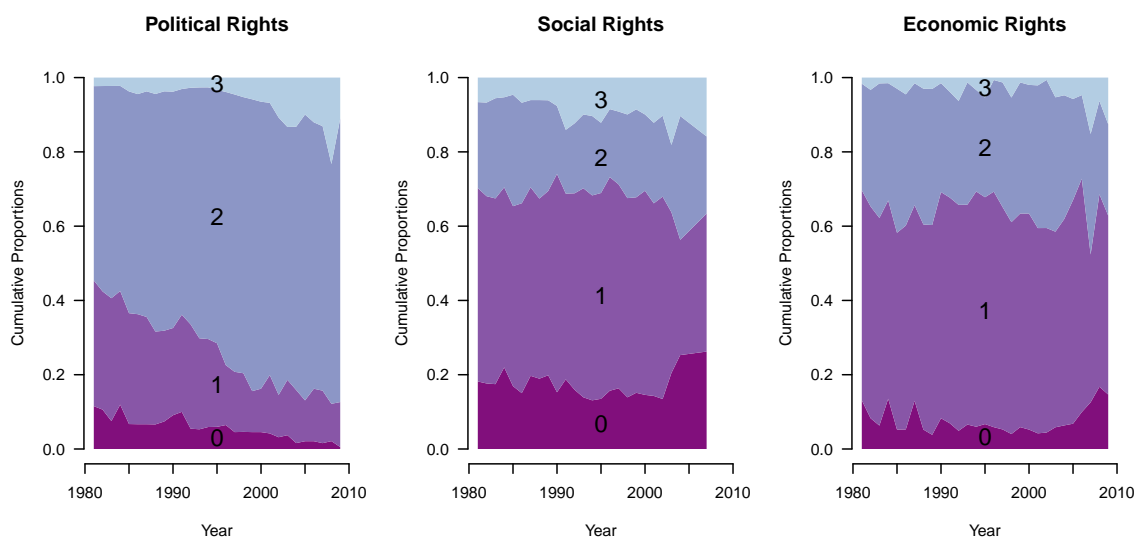


Figure 3: Distributions of scores on the *Political Rights*, *Social Rights* and *Economic Rights* variables over the 1981-2009 period (1981-2007 in the case of *Social Rights*).

over the entire 1981-2007 period.¹³ It is interesting to note that while *Political Rights* has shown clear signs of improvement over the period (as reflected in the declining proportion of countries with scores of only 0 or 1), the other two variables have not shown any significant movement over time.

2.2 Covariates

This study applies the same set of eight covariates to the analyses of the two gay rights models and three women’s rights models. These consist of a mix of international and domestic-level factors that may influence a state’s behavior with respect to gay rights or women’s rights. The key independent variable in all of the models is a network variable called *IGO Context*. In essence, this variable describes the average state of gay rights (or woman’s rights) found among each country’s fellow IGO members at each point in

¹³Given that no data for *Social Rights* are available for the years 2005 and 2006, the relevant proportions for these two years have been estimated by straight-line interpolation.

time. It is calculated in two stages. In the first stage, I calculate a quantity that I refer to as the “normative environment” of each IGO. This is simply an average of the level of the dependent variable found among the members of each IGO at each point in time. Thus, if a particular IGO has a total of 5 members, 3 of which have a *Women’s Political Rights* score of 3 while the remaining 2 members have a score of 1, the IGO’s normative environment with respect to that variable will be simply $\frac{3 \times 3 + 2 \times 1}{5} = 1.8$. In the second stage, I calculate each state’s “IGO Context” by simply taking the average of the normative environments of all the IGOs to which each state belongs in each year.¹⁴ Thus, if a state belongs to a total of only two IGOs, one of which has a normative environment of 1.8 and the other 2.4, the level of *IGO Context* for that country-year observation will be $\frac{1.8 + 2.4}{2} = 2.1$. In more concrete terms, this value of 2.1 tells us that, on average, our country of interest associates with other states whose *Political Rights* score is close to 2. What I am therefore interested in testing by including the *IGO Context* variable in the regression model is whether there is an association between each country’s own *Political Rights* score and those of its fellow IGO members.

Of course, the above method of calculating *IGO Context* assumes that all states exert an equal level of influence on their fellow IGO members, and that all IGO memberships are equally important to the human rights practices of states. To make the calculation more realistic, we can refine it by taking account of various state and IGO-level factors that are likely to affect the influence that each state has over the normative environment of the IGOs to which it belongs, and the influence that each IGO has over its member states. For example, if we are interested in testing how measures of state power affect states’ ability to influence their fellow IGO members, we can calculate *IGO Context* in

¹⁴To avoid including each state’s own score on the relevant dependent variable in its calculation of *IGO Context*, I calculate the normative environment for each IGO by excluding the state of interest. For example, when I am calculating *IGO Context* for the USA, in the first step of the calculation I calculate a normative environment for, say, NAFTA by calculating the average of Canada’s and Mexico’s scores, but not that of the US.

a way that weights each state's contribution to the IGOs' normative environment by a measure of, say, that state's GDP, and then re-estimate the model using this new variable. These are possibilities that we explore in Section 3.3; for the time being, we shall use the simpler specification of *IGO Context* that assumes that all states (and all IGOs) are equally important to the transmission of norms. (Although simpler in its form, this construction provides a relatively hard test of the IGO diffusion hypothesis.) In all cases, data on IGO memberships that are used in the construction of *IGO Context* were obtained from version 2.3 of the the Correlates of War IGO dataset (Pevehouse, Nordstrom and Warnke, 2004).

An alternative explanation for any effect of *IGO Context*—whether in the context of women's rights, gay rights, or any other dependent variable—is that the observed correlation is in fact due to other, non-IGO related, processes of interaction that facilitate norm diffusion among states. In other words, the argument would be that states that engage in frequent interaction with one another outside of IGOs (perhaps as a result of simple geographical proximity) would be more likely to adopt the same policies as their neighbors *and* would be more likely to belong to the same IGOs in the first place. In that case, IGO ties would appear to be responsible for the correlation between the women's rights practices of one state and those of its interaction partners when in actual fact the underlying mechanism has nothing to do with IGOs. It might instead involve, for example, the fact that geographically proximate states are exposed to similar cultural influences and/or tend to have large movements of people taking place between them.

In order to control for these alternative diffusion mechanisms, I try including four other spatially-lagged variables are included in the model alongside *IGO Context*. The first of these spatial lags, *Neighborhood Effect*, is simply the mean of the relevant women's rights variable among the 10 geographically closest states. Distances between countries are measured in terms of the shortest distance between their capital cities, which were

obtained from the dataset developed by Gleditsch (2002). Including a spatial lag provides a more nuanced measure of regional influences than is commonly done in studies that simply estimate a separate intercept for a few discrete (and often somewhat arbitrarily-defined) regions (see Ward and Gleditsch, 2008: Ch. 2). On a practical level, it means that one can explicitly model the fact that a northern European state like Norway is subject to a very different set of international influences than states like Greece or Malta at the southern end of the continent.

The three other spatial lags are designed to account for cultural channels through which policies might diffuse among states. Including these variables allows us to control for the fact that states often look towards a reference group consisting of culturally-similar peers when deciding whether or not to adopt a particular policy (Simmons and Elkins, 2004). The principle underlying the construction and interpretation of these variables, however, is the same as for the geographical spatial lag: two states can be said to be close to another in some sort of non-geographical space if there is a theoretical reason to believe that their policies are more likely to influence one another (Beck, Gleditsch and Beardsley, 2006). For the purposes of this analysis we use three such measures. The first is a measure of the average level of the dependent variable found among the states that share a common colonial history with the state of interest (*Common Colonial History*); the second is the average level of the dependent variable found among the states that share a common language (*Common Language*); and the third is the average level of the dependent variable found among states that share a common religion (*Common Religion*). Data used in the construction of all of these variables were obtained from the online edition of the *CIA World Factbook*. In the case of the language variables, only the official language(s) (or where inapplicable, the primary language) was used to identify the language group(s) to which each state belongs. In the case of the religion variable, only the religions with which more than 30% of the population identified were

recognized for the purpose of identifying religious ties between states.

Another important alternative explanation for the appearance of an IGO diffusion effect is simply a global trend in the level of the dependent variable over time. If states' behavior in one particular policy area is influenced not so much by the choices made by specific interaction partners but rather by a more general global trend, we might still find a positive correlation between the practices of one state and those of its fellow IGO members. To control for this possibility, we include an additional variable called *Global Norm* that, in the case of the women's rights models, measures the average level of the relevant dependent variable among all states in that particular year. In the case of the gay rights models, this variable is the cumulative number of states that have passed the relevant piece of legislation by the end of each year.

Following standard practice for modeling human rights practices, each of the models of women's rights and gay rights includes variables that capture the level of economic and political development of the state. Presumably the governments of democracies will be more responsive to pressure from their constituents to pass legislation protecting women's rights. Moreover, richer countries will also be more likely to have the capacity to enforce such legislation. The measure of regime type, *Democracy*, is the "Polity 2" combined autocracy and democracy indicator, which ranges from -10 in the case of the most autocratic states to +10 in the case of states with the most effective democratic institutions. These data were obtained from the Polity IV project (Marshall and Jaggers, 2009). The measure of economic development, *GDP per capita*, is the logged measure of GDP per capita (in constant 2000 US dollars) obtained from the World Bank's *World Development Indicators* database.

Finally, each model includes a dummy variable called *New Democracy* that indicates whether the state has undergone a transition to democracy within the previous five

years,¹⁵ or, in the case of newly-independent states, whether the state is democratic and less than five years old. Presumably, recently formed democracies will be more willing than others to establish their liberal credentials, a pattern which has been noted with respect to the greater willingness of new democracies to bind themselves to international human rights treaties (Moravcsik, 2003).¹⁶ Empirical studies of the adoption of women’s suffrage by world society scholars have also suggested that newly-created states are more likely to take advantage of the “window of opportunity” that the act of independence creates for the enactment of global cultural norms (Ramirez, Soysal and Shanahan, 1997; Paxton, Hughes and Green, 2006).

2.3 Model Specification

Although the covariates used in all of the models are the same, the model specification differs between the gay rights and women’s rights models owing to the different structures of the dependent variables.

In the case of the gay rights models, the dependent variables are essentially dichotomous indicators of whether the state has legalized homosexual acts, and/or whether the state has passed legislation that protects against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. However, given that states that have enacted a progressive piece of legislation with respect to gay rights are highly unlikely to repeal that legislation, I am interested only in modeling the transition to (rather than the maintenance of) more

¹⁵Transitions to democracy were identified with respect to the Polity 2 score. A positive score that had been preceded by a score of zero or less in any of the previous five years was taken to indicate a democratic transition.

¹⁶Moravcsik’s explanation for the willingness of newly-established democracies to embrace the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is based on the theory that the leaders of these states have a strong incentive to “lock-in” the democratic reforms that they recently received. Binding a state to a powerful international human rights regime would presumably make it much more difficult for future governments to dismantle these democratic reforms. In the case of women’s rights or gay rights, however, the mechanism is likely to be very different: newly-democratic states will presumably want to adopt such legislation as part of a general movement towards progressive reforms (e.g. South Africa legalized homosexuality in 1998), even though doing so has no binding effect on future governments.

progressive gay rights policies. I therefore use an event history model that has time to adoption of the relevant legislation as its dependent variable. Moreover, given that the data involves a number of time-varying covariates and that we I to avoid making any assumptions about how the probability of adoption of these laws changes over time, I use a simple discrete-time logit specification where the unit of analysis is the country-year and where the cases representing each country-year following adoption of the laws are excluded (see Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 2004: Ch 11). This ensures that country-year observations are included in the data used to estimate the model only for the period of time during which the country is “at risk” of experiencing the event (which, in this context, means adoption of the relevant legislation).

For the women’s rights models, all three dependent variables are ordinal in nature, with possible scores on the CIRI index of 0, 1, 2 or 3. I model the probability of obtaining each of these outcomes using an ordered probit model. The models also include a one-year lagged dependent variable in an attempt to minimize the bias that results from serial correlation among the dependent variable. I also lag all of the independent variables by one year to ensure that the covariates always reflect levels of the variables that exist prior to the point in time at which the dependent variable is measured. The women’s rights data are limited by the availability of the CIRI variables and cover the period 1981-2009 (1981-2007 in the case of *Social Rights*). Available data on gay rights policies cover a much longer period, but, because of limitations in the availability of data for GDP per capita, the regression models for the gay rights and women’s rights models cover the period from 1960-2005 and 1981-2005, respectively.

3 Results

I begin by presenting the results of the women’s rights and gay rights models that were estimated a simple specification of the *IGO Context* variable. This is one that assumes that all states make an equal contribution to the normative environment of the IGOs to which they belong, and that all states are influenced to an equal extent by each of these IGOs. By imposing a fairly restrictive set of simplifying assumptions, this specification provides a relatively hard test of the IGO diffusion hypothesis. In the next section, I shall explore the effects of relaxing each of these assumptions in turn.

The coefficient estimates for the models of gay rights are shown in Table 2, while those for the models of women’s political rights, social rights and economic rights are shown in Table 3. In each case, I try two different model specifications: the first is a simple model that consists of the *IGO Context* variable, the *Global Norm* variable, and the domestic control variables (*GDP per capita*, *Democracy* and *New Democracy*), while the second is a more complete model that includes the additional spatial control variables (*Common Colonial History*, *Common Religion* and *Common Language*). I refer to these as Models 1 and 2, respectively.

3.1 Gay Rights

Beginning with the results of the simpler specification shown in the first two columns of Table 2, we can see that the key independent variable—*IGO Context*—shows a positive and highly statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) relationship to the passage of legislation concerning both the legalization of homosexual acts (Model 1L) and non-discrimination in employment against gays and lesbians (Model 1ND). The positive and statistically significant coefficients for *IGO Context* in these two models provide some fairly compelling initial evidence for the IGO-mediated diffusion hypothesis: they suggest that states’

Table 2: Discrete-time logit models of time taken to adopt gay rights legislation. P-values (for a two-tailed test) are shown in parentheses below each coefficient estimate.

	Model 1L	Model 1ND	Model 2L	Model 2ND
IGO Context	12.28 (0.00)	9.73 (0.00)	11.13 (0.02)	-1.54 (0.83)
Global Norm	0.01 (0.43)	0.02 (0.59)	0.01 (0.47)	0.18 (0.03)
GDP per capita	0.05 (0.76)	0.27 (0.26)	0.39 (0.12)	0.96 (0.02)
Democracy	0.06 (0.06)	0.49 (0.04)	0.07 (0.11)	0.44 (0.04)
New Democracy	0.78 (0.08)	0.26 (0.81)	0.08 (0.92)	-14.37 (0.99)
Neighborhood Effect			-1.37 (0.39)	4.88 (0.05)
Common Colonial History			0.17 (0.85)	1.73 (0.33)
Common Religion			-2.43 (0.32)	-11.85 (0.12)
Common Language			1.85 (0.03)	-0.88 (0.58)
Intercept	-11.98 (0.00)	-12.34 (0.00)	-14.06 (0.00)	-18.61 (0.00)
N	2593	4957	1938	3649
AIC	327.37	252.66	196.2	151.47

policies with respect to gay rights closely track those of their fellow IGO members, all else being equal.

Interestingly, the results of these models indicate that, once the effect of *IGO Context* is accounted for, the strong positive relationship that would otherwise be observed between the *Global Norm* variable and both forms of gay rights legislation loses its sta-

tistical significance. (Re-estimating Model 1L and Model 1ND without *IGO Context* causes the *Global Norm* variable to become positive and highly statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).) The control variable for GDP per capita shows no evidence of a systematic relationship between economic development and gay rights. However, we do see fairly strong evidence to suggest that, all else being equal, more democratic states are more likely to pass legislation protecting gay rights. We also do not find any evidence to suggest that recently-formed democracies are any more likely to pass these laws.

In the third and fourth columns of Table 2, I add the spatial covariates designed to capture other cultural influences on states' policies with respect to legalization of homosexuality and non-discrimination in employment (Models 2L and 2ND, respectively). After adding these additional control variables, the effect of *IGO Context* is slightly attenuated in the legalization model (Model 2L) but remains positive and statistically significant ($p \approx 0.02$). In the expanded model of non-discrimination (Model 2ND), however, the *IGO Context* variable loses all statistical significance. This more exacting test of the IGO-mediated diffusion hypothesis therefore shows that while diffusion of the legalization norm is reasonably robust, that of the employment non-discrimination norm is not.

To give a more concrete illustration of the size of the IGO-mediated diffusion effect for the *Legalization* variable, Figure 4 shows that effect that increases in the level of *IGO Context* have on the probability that a state will legalize homosexual acts. The x-axis in this graph represents the full range of values of *IGO Context* in the data, while the y-axis shows the predicted probability of a state legalizing homosexuality in a single year—conditional on the regression coefficients estimated in Model 2L—while the values of all other covariates are held constant at their median levels. This graph shows that, all else being equal, once approximately 60% of a state's fellow IGO members have legalizing homosexuality, the probability of legalization dramatically increases. Indeed,

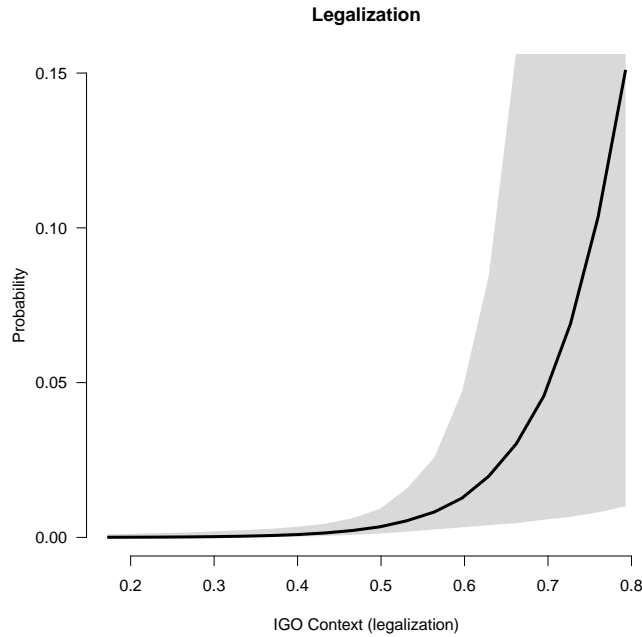


Figure 4: Estimated effects that variation in the level of *IGO Context* has on the probability of legalizing homosexual acts. Note that these probabilities refer to the probability of an individual country changing its laws in a single year, while the values of all other covariates are held at their median levels. The grey bands around the estimates represent the 95% confidence levels.

once around 75% of a state's fellow IGO members have legalized homosexuality (as was the case for many European states by the year 2000), the probability that a given state will change its laws in any single year rises to about 0.1.

The results for the variables designed to capture other external influences on a states' gay rights policies show little evidence of a cultural diffusion effect. The two exceptions are the *Neighborhood Effect* variable which indicates a positive effect in the *Non-Discrimination* model ($p \approx 0.05$), and the *Common Language* variable which appears to have a positive effect in the *Legalization* model ($p \approx 0.03$).

3.2 Women's Rights

The coefficient estimates for the three models of women's rights are shown in Table 3. As with the models of gay rights, we again start with a simpler model for each of the women's rights dependent variables that consists of only *IGO Context*, the *Global Norm* variable and the domestic control variables. These models are referred to as Model 1P, Model 1S and Model 1E for the models of political, social and economic rights, respectively.

Our key independent variable, *IGO Context*, shows a positive and highly statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) effect in the models of women's political and social rights. It does not, however, show a statistically significant relationship in the model of women's economic rights.

Once the effect of *IGO Context* is accounted for, the *Global Norm* variable shows mixed results. Its effect is negative in the model of women's political rights, positive in the model of women's economic rights, and shows no effect in the model of social rights. (When the *IGO Context* variable is excluded from this model, the *Global Norm* variable shows a positive effect in the models of political rights and economic rights, but no effect in the model of social rights.)

The democracy control variable suggests that states that are more strongly democratic are, all else being equal, more likely to score higher on all three categories of women's rights. This result is consistent with that of the gay rights models discussed above. We also find no evidence of a significant effect (at $p < 0.05$) for the *New Democracy* variable. However, unlike in the case of the gay rights models, here we are able to see evidence to suggest that women's political rights and—perhaps unsurprisingly—women's economic rights are better respected in richer countries. The finding that economic development has a stronger positive effect for the development of women's rights than for gay rights is an interesting finding that warrants further study; it is perhaps a reflection of the fact that acceptance of gay rights has not become as closely bound up with ideas

Table 3: Ordered probit models of women's rights with a lagged dependent variable. P-values (for a two-tailed test) are shown in parentheses below each coefficient estimate.

	Model 1P	Model 1S	Model 1E	Model 2P	Model 2S	Model 2E
IGO Context	2.13 (0.00)	1.45 (0.00)	0.31 (0.23)	-0.51 (0.44)	0.77 (0.04)	-0.78 (0.08)
Global Norm	-0.72 (0.05)	0.50 (0.32)	3.04 (0.00)	0.84 (0.12)	-0.12 (0.85)	3.45 (0.00)
GDP per capita	0.05 (0.05)	0.02 (0.31)	0.18 (0.00)	0.08 (0.01)	0.09 (0.00)	0.24 (0.00)
Democracy	0.01 (0.31)	0.02 (0.00)	0.02 (0.00)	0.01 (0.46)	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.04)
New Democracy	-0.19 (0.08)	-0.14 (0.11)	0.01 (0.93)	-0.18 (0.20)	-0.30 (0.02)	-0.11 (0.40)
Neighborhood Effect				0.54 (0.00)	0.21 (0.06)	0.49 (0.00)
Common Col. History				0.20 (0.23)	-0.15 (0.28)	-0.07 (0.71)
Common Religion				-0.02 (0.91)	0.20 (0.09)	0.11 (0.54)
Common Language				0.73 (0.00)	0.23 (0.02)	0.06 (0.64)
Lagged DV	2.51 (0.00)	2.08 (0.00)	1.00 (0.00)	2.31 (0.00)	2.08 (0.00)	1.86 (0.00)
τ_1	3.26 (0.00)	3.13 (0.00)	5.81 (0.00)	3.83 (0.00)	2.49 (0.00)	5.93 (0.00)
τ_2	5.95 (0.00)	6.14 (0.00)	9.06 (0.00)	6.37 (0.00)	5.53 (0.00)	9.21 (0.00)
τ_3	10.09 (0.00)	8.68 (0.00)	11.00 (0.00)	10.54 (0.00)	8.28 (0.00)	12.08 (0.00)
N	2973	2712	2913	2054	1885	2004
AIC	1946.55	2884.07	2941.62	1391.03	1950.88	2060.16

of modernity as has the acceptance of women's rights.

In the second set of models (Models 2P, 2S and 2E), I test whether the effect of *IGO Context* is robust to the inclusion of the other spatial variables. Once these variables are included, it turns out that *IGO Context* is only statistically significant (at the $p < 0.05$ level) in the model of women's social rights.¹⁷ To give a sense of the substantive size of the effect of the *IGO Context* variable in the model of women's social rights, Figure 5 shows how the predicted probability of obtaining each score on the social rights index varies as a function of *IGO Context*. This graph shows the predicted distribution of scores (i.e., 0, 1, 2 or 3) on the women's social rights index as the level of *IGO Context* is varied over the range of values found in the data, while all other covariates are held constant at their median levels. The width of each band on the graph represents the probability of obtaining each discrete outcome. The downward slope of the lines suggests that as *IGO Context* increases, the probability of obtaining lower scores on the *Social Rights* index decreases (and, of course, that the probability of obtaining higher scores increases). The graph shows that as the level of *IGO Context* is varied from its lowest observed level of 0.51 to its highest observed level of 1.96, a state will become many times less likely to have a score of zero and much more likely to have a score of 2 (or even 3).

The expanded models reveal fairly strong evidence of a spatial diffusion effect. The coefficient estimate for *Neighborhood Effect* appears to be positive and statistically significant in all three models, although somewhat less so in the *Social Rights* model ($p \approx 0.06$). The cultural diffusion variables show more mixed results. Neither the *Common Colonial History* nor the *Common Religion* variable show a significant effect at the $p < 0.05$ level in any of the models, whereas *Common Language* shows a positive effect in the models of women's political rights and women's social rights.

¹⁷Somewhat curiously, the *IGO Context* variable appears to have a negative effect in Model 2E that is almost significant at the traditional 0.05 level ($p \approx 0.08$).

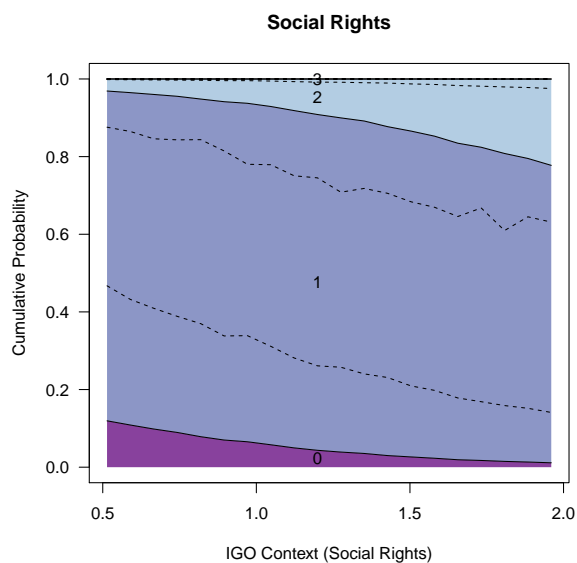


Figure 5: Estimated effects that variation over the full range of *IGO Context* has on the probability of obtaining each of the categorical outcomes of *Political Rights*, *Social Rights* and *Economic Rights*. In each graph, the level of *IGO Context* is varied over its full range of values found in the data while the values of all other covariates are held constant at their median levels. 95% confidence intervals around the boundaries between each of the outcome bands are represented by the dashed lines.

I also tested whether the apparent significance of the *IGO Context* is a result of “over-fitting” these models to the available data, meaning that the models describe idiosyncratic features of the data without capturing the underlying data-generating process (Beck, King and Zeng, 2000). This has been shown to be especially problematic in the case of IR models, given that the amounts of data available to scholars is restricted by the relatively small number of independent countries that currently exist in the world (Ward, Greenhill and Bakke, 2010). I therefore used a four-fold cross-validation procedure to test whether the inclusion of the *IGO Context* variable makes a significant improvement in the models’ ability to correctly predict outcomes. The results of these tests (details of which will be made available in the replication files) suggest that the statistically-significant estimates of *IGO Context* do not simply result from over-fitting

a model to the available data.

Taken together, the results of these models provide fairly compelling initial evidence to suggest the existence of an IGO-mediated diffusion effect with respect to certain aspects of both women’s rights and gay rights, despite the fact that these two issues differ significantly in terms of their degree of codification in international law. It is important to note that in the cases of the legalization of homosexual acts and women’s social rights, these IGO effects hold even after accounting for a large number of alternative pathways of norm diffusion, which gives us much greater confidence in the claim that the effect of *IGO Context* is the result of the IGO ties themselves, and not simply the cultural ties that tend to be closely correlated with IGO ties. In the next section I will test models that use alternative specifications of the *IGO Context* to allow us to more closely examine the role that state and IGO-level characteristics play in the diffusion of these norms.

3.3 Testing sender, IGO, and receiver effects

In the previous section the *IGO Context* variables had been constructed by assuming that (1) all states makes an equal contribution to the normative environment of the IGOs to which they belong; (2) all IGOs are equally influential when it comes to changing the behavior of their member states; and (3) all states are equally receptive to the signals they receive from their IGO partners. Because these are clearly very restrictive assumptions, I shall now consider the effects that relaxing each of these assumptions has on the transmissibility of the norms through the IGO network.

I begin by testing for the presence of what I shall call “sender” effects. This is the idea that some states may have a greater potential to influence their fellow IGO members than others. For example, rather than assuming that all member states have an equal impact on the normative environment of an IGO like the Organization of American

States (OAS), I can adapt the model to account for the fact that the United States is likely to have far greater influence over the organization than a state like Panama or the Dominican Republic. I do this by recalculating the *IGO Context* variable in a way that weights the influence of each state by different measures of its power. I include a measure of the states' material power—as reflected in their levels of GDP—as well as measures of their ideational or “soft” power (Nye, 2004) as is reflected in their scores on the Polity index of democracy or the Cingranelli-Richards index of physical integrity rights (Cingranelli and Richards, 2004). These “soft” power measures allow us to test the hypothesis that states that enjoy a greater level of legitimacy in the eyes of the wider international community may be more likely to serve as a role models for policy adoption.

The results of these tests—details of which will be made available in the replication files for this study—generally do not support the idea that materially powerful states have more influence over their peers with respect to either gay rights or women's rights. Similarly, support for the idea that more democratic states or states with superior human rights practices enjoy a larger degree of influence over their IGO peers turns out to be limited. The estimated size of the *IGO Context* term turns out to be slightly larger in the democracy-weighted model than it does in the original model of women's social rights, but at the same time the estimated size of *IGO Context* turns out to be more negative in the model of women's political rights. It is therefore difficult to confidently conclude that any of these sender effects make a significant difference to the ease with which norms diffuse through IGO networks.

I also found no significant effect of changing the construction of the *IGO Context* variable in a way that takes account of expected differences in the influence of individual IGOs. We did this via two separate tests. In the first one, I recalculated *IGO Context* in a way that considered only the influence of what we call “major” IGOs. These are

organizations which met at least one of the following criteria: the organization has more than 1,000 employees, an annual budget of more than US\$100 million, or generates more than 1 million hits on an exact-match Google search.¹⁸ A total of 56 IGOs met at least one of these conditions. However, recalculating *IGO Context* using only this subset of IGOs resulted in a series of models that were generally less successful at predicting outcomes for the gay rights and women’s rights variables than the simpler unweighted models. As a follow-up test, I further narrowed the range of IGOs to include only those which had a clear commitment to human rights issues.¹⁹ Again, this did not result in a significant improvement in the predictive power of the models. This suggests that the norm-transmitting potential of the IGO network is relatively insensitive to the types of IGOs involved, which is a point that I shall return to in the next section.

Finally, I tested for the presence of what I call “receiver” effects. This involves asking whether some states are more receptive than others to the signals or pressures they receive from their fellow IGO members. I tested two related propositions about the receptiveness of states to pressure from their IGO partners. The first is the idea that materially powerful states are better able to resist external pressures. A realist critique of the norm diffusion literature would argue that the behavioral similarities that one attributes to norm diffusion are simply the result of states behaving in ways that please their more powerful counterparts. Or, to put it in terms of the current discussion, powerful states do whatever they like with respect to women’s rights and gay rights, while the less powerful states do what they’re told to do. I tested this by interacting the

¹⁸Where available, details of employee numbers and annual budgets were obtained from the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (Union of International Organizations, 2009).

¹⁹This subset was obtained by restricting the list of 56 “major” IGOs to those which made reference to human rights in their aims (as reported in the *Yearbook of International Organizations*). The 10 organizations consist of the United Nations, the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the World Health Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization, the Organization of Central American States, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

IGO Context term with the “receiving” states’ levels of GDP per capita. This revealed a modest effect of GDP per capita with respect to the transmission of women’s rights norms: richer states were, on average, slightly more resistant to the signals from their fellow IGO members than poorer states. The effect, however, did not hold with respect to the transmission of gay rights norms.

The second related proposition that I tested is the liberal notion that more democratic states will be more receptive to the external signals and pressures they receive from other states, all else being equal. Not only might democracies be more likely to adopt liberal policies with respect to women’s rights and gay rights for domestic political reasons, but they may also be more attuned to prevailing global norms. Citizens of democracies are likely to have more access to foreign ideas than those of non-democracies, and are also more likely to be successful in petitioning their government to implement these ideas. I tested this hypothesis by interacting *IGO Context* with the Polity 2 measure of democracy and (in a separate series of models) with the CIRI physical integrity rights index. The results, however, were mixed. There was some evidence to suggest that states with better human rights practices are more receptive to the signals they receive from other states with respect to women’s social rights, but at the same time it seems that the effect of *IGO Context* becomes smaller (less negative) as a function of increases in democracy or human rights practices in the models of women’s political rights and women’s social rights. No significant difference was found with respect to the models of gay rights.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

This paper began by laying out a number of arguments as to why norms that are clearly enumerated in international law ought to diffuse more easily through IGO networks

than norms that lack such a foundation. The results, however, have not supported that hypothesis: the norm concerning the legalization of homosexuality appears to have diffused successfully through IGO networks in spite of the fact that it lacks support in any of the major human rights instruments. Although it is difficult to directly compare the effects of the *IGO Context* variables in these two very different models, the estimates presented on pages 32 and 28 could be taken to suggest that the IGO-mediated diffusion of the legalization of homosexuality norms is actually more pronounced than the IGO-mediated diffusion of women's social rights.²⁰

The finding that IGO-mediated norm diffusion takes place in a way that does not appear to depend upon the legal status of the norm provides further evidence in support of a mechanism that involves socialization among the delegates to IGOs.²¹ If, for the reasons discussed at the beginning of this paper, states have an interest in adopting norms that are deemed more legitimate in the eyes of the international community, then we should find that states are more likely to adopt the women's rights standards than the gay rights standards of their fellow IGO members. In other words, if the international political rewards on offer for protecting women's rights are significantly higher than the equivalent rewards for protecting gay rights, then states should be more likely to pay the domestic political costs of doing so. Instead we find that, in general, both types of norm diffuse relatively easily through IGO ties, suggesting that the mechanism involved is more likely to involve a passive process of international socialization than a straightforward calculation of costs and benefits on the part of the states involved.

²⁰Interestingly, in their study of human rights in Latin America, Lutz and Sikkink (2001) make a similar observation. They note that while a highly legalized treaty system exists with respect to states' obligations under the Convention Against Torture, a much less formal regime exists to protect citizens' rights to democratic institutions of governance. Yet they find that norms concerning democracy appear to have diffused more successfully than those concerning the non-use of torture.

²¹A number of recent case studies have suggested that IGOs can provide venues in which policymakers become socialized into the norms that prevail within these particular organizations. See, for example, Gheciu (2005) on NATO; Lewis (2005) on the EU's Committee of Permanent Representatives; and Johnston (2008) on the UN Conference on Disarmament.

An alternative explanation for these findings may be that even without a strong foundation in international law to support the adoption of gay rights, some IGOs have nonetheless taken a strong stand on this issue and have exerted pressure on their member states to make the necessary reforms. The most prominent example of this is the Council of Europe which, following the 1981 decision of the European Court of Human Rights in *Dudgeon v. United Kingdom*, has effectively prevented European states from outlawing private homosexual acts among consenting adults (Fellmeth, 2008: 819). However, the tests of IGO effects carried out in Section 3.3 suggest that the IGO-mediated diffusion effect is not enhanced when we consider only the more prominent IGOs, or only the subset of those that have a specific human rights mandate.

What about the characteristics of the states themselves? Surprisingly, the balance of evidence suggests that accounting for power differentials among the IGOs' member states makes little difference to the ease with which norms appear to diffuse through the IGO network. This poses a challenge to much of the existing literature on norm diffusion that assumes that powerful states are better positioned both in terms of their ability to influence others and to resist outside influences. For instance, the mechanism of norm transmission proposed by Keck and Sikkink (1998) involves transnational advocacy networks enlisting powerful states to bring pressure to bear on the "target" states. One clear implication of this is that more powerful states are better placed to resist external pressures, and are therefore less likely to change their behavior. Indeed, in a study of states' decisions to adopt policies protecting women against domestic violence, Hawkins and Humes (2002) argue that states that are poorer or less stable tend to be more susceptible to the effects of international socialization than richer, more stable states.

The fact that power would appear to play a relatively unimportant role in the transmission of these particular norms is suggestive of a mechanism of norm transmission that relies more on a passive process of socialization than coercion. It therefore seems that

states can adopt particular behaviors through a process in which the states imitate, or learn from, the behaviors of their interaction partners. As a result, the material power of the “sender” or “receiver” states makes relatively little difference to ability of states to influence and be influenced by others. When taken together with the fact that the nature of the IGOs themselves does not seem to make a significant difference to their ability to transmit norms, these results suggest that membership in IGOs can play a surprisingly important role in areas that were not foreseen by their founders or by their existing member states. This lends further support to the belief that IGO membership can have politically important consequences to an extent that goes beyond the “functional spillovers” identified by regional integration theorists (see, for example, Haas, 1961; Burley and Mattli, 1993) and raises the interesting possibility that IGOs can have effects in many other domains that are unrelated to their original mandates.

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