Morality Policy Processes in Comparative Perspective: The Two Worlds of Morality Politics*

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**Abstract:** Although there has been increasing recognition that morality policy in Western democracies is a distinctive field of study, many analyses are relatively narrow in issues and jurisdictions. This paper examines broad empirical patterns for five morality policy issues across 18 West European democracies since World War II. The issues analyzed are abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, assisted reproductive technology (ART, including stem cell research), and same-sex marriage. What is the overall direction in the content of policy adoptions? What is the duration of these issues on the governmental agenda? What institutional factors help to account for these patterns? Which of two prominent institutional theories of morality policy—Policy Type and “Two Worlds”---help explain morality policy direction, duration, and processes? The results indicate that morality policy processes do differ from the usual ones of parliamentary government, and that important differences are captured by the Religious/Secular division of party systems.

**Key Words**  content; duration; institutions; morality policy; religious party systems; secular party systems
Introduction: Policy Processes for Morality Issues

Recently morality politics issues have become of increased interest to scholars of European politics, moving beyond their normal realm of US politics (Albæk 2003; Engeli et al 2012; Tatalovich and Daynes 2011; Mooney 2001; Smith and Tatalovich 2003). There has been increasing recognition that morality policy in Western democracies is a distinctive field of study, but many analyses of this policy only cover one issue and/or a limited number of jurisdictions (Krabbendam and Ten Napel 2000; Mooney, 2001; Smith and Tatalovich 2003; Durham 2005; Engeli 2009; Engeli et al. 2012).

This paper is the first broadly comparative empirical study of morality policy across West European liberal democracies, taking account of multiple issues, a large array of countries, and developments over time. With the largest comparative data set to date on these issues, this paper examines the patterns of policy agenda-setting (duration) and content for five morality policy issues across 18 advanced industrial democracies in Europe since World War II.

Do morality issues constitute a distinctive category of policy by their content? While no definitive list of morality issues has been offered and the general conception may be subject to some variations across countries and other jurisdictions as well as over time, several studies (Studlar 2001; Smith, 2002; Engeli et. al 2012) offer a general suggestive list, including capital punishment (death penalty), abortion, alcohol consumption, euthanasia, homosexual rights, prostitution, gambling (gaming), assisted reproduction technology (ART), and stem cell research. While this list can be expanded, it is relatively comprehensive, especially considering cross-jurisdiction and cross-time concerns. With the exception of alcohol consumption and gambling, the six other issues are concerned with birth, sex, and death, the most intimate and personal experiences of humans. From this list of morality concerns, we shall examine five issues. The issues are one long-standing morality issue, capital punishment, and four of more recent vintage: abortion, euthanasia, assisted reproductive technology (ART)/stem cells, and same sex domestic relations (often called “gay marriage”).

These kinds of intimate relations involving birth, sex, and death are particularly susceptible to becoming politicized as morality issues because, even if the issues are complex and susceptible to scientific and economic influences, they deal with fundamental human concerns that most people in a society can readily grasp in principle and on which they often become politically mobilized. This is especially true for groups concerned with religious or individual or group human rights principles; advocates from these groups wish to have their governments adopt policies in line with their often strongly value-based views, even if this conflicts with other groups in society and/or specialized professional opinion on the matter. Thus religiously-affiliated groups generally favor more restrictive policies and secular groups support more permissive policies. Capital punishment, euthanasia, and ART/stem cells are partial exceptions. In the latter, for instance, there are both secular and religiously based suspicions of allowing science to delve too deeply into the reproduction of human life (Bleiklie et al. 2004; Montpetit et al. 2007).
Morality policies are of interest because of patterns and country variations in content, agenda setting (duration) and the impact of institutions on policy adoptions. This paper will concentrate on the latter problem through a comparative analysis of what three institutional theories reveal about these important dimensions of morality policy.

First we shall discuss the essentials of the parliamentary government model, the normal policy process in European democracies, followed by a review of two relevant institutional theories of morality policy, Policy Type and Two Worlds, with hypotheses from each. Then we shall present descriptive data on the content and duration for five major morality policies in these countries. We shall then examine findings on the applicability of the two alternative institutional theories of morality policy content, duration, and processes. The conclusion will examine how well the existing institutional theories help our understanding of morality policy and suggest future directions for research.

**Literature Review: Party Government Model and Morality Policy**

The normal policy process for most Western democracies is “parliamentary government,” with the lower house of the legislature choosing the government based on party shares of the seats and ability to form any necessary coalitions for a workable governing agreement. Usually a government is based on a majority of seats, but the key point is to be able to sustain itself in office until the next scheduled general election. However, the government is subject to periodic votes of confidence from the legislature, which, if ever lost, means that the government would have to resign and a new one formed, perhaps after an intervening general election. In order to make this “fused” system of executive-legislative relations work, strong party cohesion among legislators is necessary to make credible policy commitments, both to voters in party manifestos, to governing coalition partners, and to interest groups and the public more generally. The government controls the legislative agenda, and most policies considered are prepared, presented, and defended by the cabinet, which normally expects all government-supporting party members in the legislature to vote for it. Although there are some variations, this description of parliamentary government generally applies to the countries considered here (Laver and Shepsle 1994; Döring 1995). Empirically, party cohesion is “very high” or “rather high” on a four-point scale in all parliamentary democracies, including “dual executive” regimes (Kailitz 2010).

Even in regimes utilizing the parliamentary model, however, other institutions may be involved in some policy decisions. Political parties do not always display perfect party unity (Rasch and Tsebelis 2011). Legislative parties exert different amounts of resistance against governments even of their own partisan persuasion. Questions involving human rights, and therefore sometime morality questions, are the province of the judiciary. Referendums are another possible venue for consideration of morality issues, especially in countries where this can be done through popular initiative (Butler and Ranney 1994). Constitutional decisions can be the results of action through the judiciary, referendums, or other amending procedures.

While most European polities are unitary systems with weak second legislative chambers, some of them, such as Spain and the United Kingdom, have devolved in recent decades. Morality issues are still mainly a central-level state policy, however, and the EU, being economically-focused, has declined to become involved in these disputes.
beyond endorsing the principle of the European Convention on Human Rights that
countries should not use the death penalty
(Council of Europe 1999; Hood and Hoyle 2008) and ensuring that there is no
discrimination against homosexuals in employment or as customers (Eeckhout and
Paternotte 2011). More broadly, Kurzer (2001) argues that membership of the EU acts
as a pressure for convergence of countries with policies deviant from the norm,
including abortion in Ireland.

Overall, one would expect multiple arenas to be sites for morality policy
disputes, more so than for issues that are more amenable to economic arguments over
distribution, regulation, or redistribution that are subject to the views of materially-
interested interest groups, economic sectors, and social classes (Smith 1969;
Tatalovich and Daynes 2011). Despite erosion, the Left-Right social class division still
dominates West European democracies and drives government formation and
functioning through the party government model (Gallagher et al. 2011).

Observational studies for over a half century (Christoph 1962; Cohan 1986),
most systematically developed by Smith (1969; 1975); Tatalovich and Daynes (2011)
and Studlar (2001), indicate that there have been unusual policy processes on morality
issues in Western democracies. Because the dominant model of party government
obtains so broadly, the most likely deviation from established procedures occurs in
executive-legislative relations. Opposition party and individual backbench MPs often
introduce morality measures in the legislature even though this is not likely to be
successful immediately, and there are frequent splits in party voting on “conscience”
issues. Judicialization on a variety of issues has been spreading across Western
democracies (Tate and Vallinder, 1995). Morality policy has even been the subject of
important court decisions even in countries where this rarely occurs (Austria, Sweden).
Morality issues sometimes rise to the level of being subject to constitutional
amendments. For instance, bans on capital punishment increasingly have been written
into constitutions (Council of Europe 1999; Hood and Hoyle 2008). Butler and Ranney
(1994; see also Gallagher et al. 2011) find that morality issues are one of the major
topics of referendums in those countries where this institution is an option. Where
jurisdictions at different levels in federal, devolved, or decentralized systems have the
legal authority to be involved in morality policy, one would expect them to do this. This
may occur more through implementation of decisions than through broad law-making,
as in the case of Flemish regional authorities who, lacking jurisdiction over homosexual
rights policy, nevertheless have chosen to fund gay advocacy groups (Eeckhout and
Paternotte 2011).

Policy Type
Some commentators have argued that morality issues constitute a distinctive
policy area not only by their content, but also by the processes used to decide them.
Whether issues are examined individually (Christoph 1962; Cohan 1986)) or as a group
(Smith 1969; Richards 1970; Tatalovich and Daynes 2011; Cowley 1998; Studlar 2001;
Smith and Tatalovich 2003), it has been claimed that morality issues constitute
“democratic”, “marginal,” “emotive-symbolic,” “morally redistributive,” or “social
regulatory” policies, typically subject to institutional deviations from the normal policy
process for other types of issues in a country. This question, whether policy content
influences policy processes rather than vice versa, was first raised by Lowi (1964) in US
politics and has also been pursued in comparative politics by Smith (1969; 1975), Freeman (1986), Studlar (2001), and Smith and Tatalovich (2003). Recently, the “policy types” argument has been further tested in the study of European politics (Timmermans 2001, Montpetit et al 2007) but without definitive results.

On the basis of studies of the abortion issue, Studlar (2001) and Outshoorn (1996) argue that normal parliamentary government procedures rarely apply. The contentious value conflict involved in these policy deliberations make them difficult to contain within the normal institutional boundaries. In other words, morality policies should lead to relaxation of usual institutional rules, spillover effects into other institutions as disaffected groups challenge decisions, extended debate, and the revisiting of previously-made decisions. Nevertheless, some political systems may be able to contain these issues and make binding decisions that stand.

For the U.S., Daynes and Tatalovich (2011) contend that there are distinctive political processes for morality issues, involving public opinion, interest groups, political parties, and governmental institutions such as federalism, the executive, legislature, and judiciary. Mooney (2001) and Donovan et al. (2010) argue that in the US morality issues typically arise from “policy shocks” through judicial decisions, prompting popularly-based reactions through multiple venues in the federal system, and are eventually resolved through a variety of subcentral policies that are broadly responsive to constituency opinion in those jurisdictions. Smith (1969; 1975) and Smith and Tatalovich (2003) have extended this general conception to comparative politics, arguing that while morality issues typically excite broad public involvement and divide parties through executive abdication of responsibility leading to free votes in the legislature, the resulting direction is likely to be along the lines preferred by a more post-material, permissive elite than generally more restrictive public opinion.

Thus, under the Policy Type model, one would expect a long duration of policy discussion and the involvement of multiple institutions in this policy, including legislative initiatives on policy by opposition and backbench MPs, party divisions on legislative votes, constitutional disputes, participation of the judiciary, and, where available, decentralized institutions and referendums. However, fewer institutions may be involved on morality issues that are more scientific, such as ART/stem cells, than on others that are more consensually identified as morality policies. Although we shall not directly compare morality issues to others, multiple deviations from the dominant parliamentary government model would indicate that morality policy is treated somewhat differently than other policies.

Two Worlds of Morality Policy

Recently another institutional explanation has been added to the study of morality issues in Western democracies, especially European parliamentary systems. Engeli et al. (2012; see also Minkenberg 2002; Green-Pedersen 2007; van Kersbergen 2008; Fink 2008) argue that debate over morality policy develops different patterns in party systems with a strongly Christian, especially Catholic-based, major party than in those in which parties are not closely tied to religious groups. Thus there is a Religious World of morality policy and a Secular World of morality policy. In the former party systems, morality issues are more likely to be politicized by parties, and major change results from a switch of government control from a coalition with a religiously-based major party, usually the Christian Democrats, to a secularly-based coalition of Socialist,
Liberal, and other centre-left parties lacking a religiously-affiliated partner. Secularly-based parties contain elements interested in advocating “progressive” positions on issues, which can move the issue from one of parliamentary dissent to government-sponsored, or at least government-tolerated, bills. Even if party splits occurred in the voting, the secular parties normally overwhelmingly have their MPs support more permissive legislation while members of religiously-affiliated parties vote for more restrictive bills (Green-Pedersen 2007; Timmermans 2001; Outshoorn 1996; Grießler and Hadolt 2006). Thus it would seem that the Religious-Secular dimension is an important determinant of the significance of party through government proposals, legislative votes, and outcomes.

Once more permissive changes are instituted, that particular policy is likely to leave the political agenda although the partisan morality policy alignments may reappear on related issues. Abortion becomes the “master issue” for other conflicts. In other words, in Religiously-based party systems, morality policy more closely resembles the normal party government model once a secular coalition gains control of government, even if there is not much explicit campaigning on it (Pennings 2010).

In contrast, in Secular party systems, such issues are depoliticized and subject to change via free votes in parliament and judicial decisions rather than party competition. As an ‘abnormal’ issue for party government, however, it is subject to revisiting if social forces can muster enough support in the legislature. Furthermore, somewhat different patterns of party voting on morality issues are more likely to appear in a Secular party system than in a Religious one, with more conservative party deputies often voting for permissive positions (Cowley 2001).

The Two Worlds model is essentially a more refined version of the Policy Type model. The following are hypotheses for the Two Worlds institutional model, based on the overriding assumption that party government processes are more likely to obtain for morality issues in Religious countries than in Secular countries, but that resistance to change in Religious countries is also greater, leading permissive sections of the population to resort to other venues for expressing their desires. Which venues they utilize, of course, depends on availability, but all democratic political systems have institutional opportunities outside of an executive-dominated parliament in which political conflict can be engaged. :

1) The Secular and Religious worlds are similar in content of policies in the current time, 2012.
2) The Secular World has shorter durations for morality issues than the Religious World.
3) Morality issues are more likely to be the subject of legislative party initiatives in the Religious World than in the Secular World;
4) There is more unified party voting in the Religious world than in the Secular World;
5) Judicial decision making on morality policy is more prevalent in the Religious World.
6) There is more constitutional debate on morality issues in the Religious World.
7) There is more decentralized consideration of morality issues in Religious World.
8) There are more referendums on morality issues in Religious World.
9) More venues are involved in morality policy in Religious World.

Aside from the hypotheses about content and about ART/stem cells as a more scientific issue than other morality policies, those from the Two Worlds model are all derived from the Policy Type model. While this paper cannot resolve all of the
differences among institutional explanations of morality policies, it can at least systematically address how well each accounts for patterns observable in a systematic data analysis.

Data

Data were gathered from multiple sources on the five policies to be examined here—the death penalty, abortion, euthanasia, same sex marriage, and ART/stem cells (Albaek 2003; Blank and Merrick 2001; Bleiklie et al. 2004; Burrell 2006; Cohen and Jones, 2004; Council of Europe. 1999; 2004; Cowley 1998; Engeli 2009; Engeli et al. 2012; Evans 1996; Hood and Hoyle 2008; International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network.2009; Ketting and van Praag. 1986; Kollman 2007; Klinh and Trappenburg 2001; Marsh and Read 1988; Montpetit et al. 2005; 2007; Outshoorn 1996; Richards 1970; Rolston and Eggert 1994; Singh et al. 2009; Stetson 2001; “Stem Cell World Map,” http://www.stemgen.org/mapworld.cfm). Content of policy is based on a three-point scale, based on the judgment of the authors: Permissive, Intermediate, and Restrictive, with the direction reversed in the scoring for the death penalty since its abolition is the most ‘progressive’ policy, similar to what is termed ‘permissive’ for other policies. Countries lacking a codified policy are considered to be “permissive” since there are no formal limitations. Duration of the policy is from its first official agenda status through a government report or introduction of a bill until the last recorded official policy consideration, usually adoption of legislation but also including further attempted amendments. Consideration of the policy by specific political institutions other than through party government processes at any time in a country is drawn from studies and news reports.

Not all countries have all of these institutional venues for policy debate. Of the six venues presented, all 18 of the countries, in principle, have four (legislative initiatives, party divisions, judicial involvement, and constitutional conflict). Non-constitutional referendums on policy issues are readily available in only six (Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Switzerland) although the actual number of referendums conducted varies substantially across these countries (Gallagher et al. 2011). While it is not entirely clear which countries could, in principle, allow morality issues to be the subject of decentralized policy, we identify eight countries as having a generally significant element of decentralization (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) while the ten others are more strongly centralized (Hooghe et al. 2010; Lijphart 1999).ii

The role of different institutions in policy deliberations over morality policy constitutes a major basis for testing of the Policy Type and Two Worlds explanations. One instance of the policy being treated in other than the “normal” executive-dominated process is enough to qualify; thus the table does not record frequency of occurrence of each process. A more refined study would consider a greater range of issues of different nominal types and the relative proportions that they are considered by different institutions.

There is not complete agreement about the Two Worlds, or even which countries have parties that could be labeled as “Christian Democratic” in orientation (Engeli et al. 2012; Gallagher et al. 2011: 295).iii For purposes of this paper, we consider two versions of the Religious/Secular World party systems, with Ireland, and Italy variously being Religious, in addition to eight others: Austria, Belgium, Germany,
Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland. The following eight countries consistently have Secular World party systems: Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and United Kingdom.

**Findings: Party Government Model**

(Table 1 about here.)

Table 1 shows the overall scores for content, duration, and institutional dimensions of morality policy for the 18 West European countries. While this paper is not principally concerned with morality policy content (the subject of a separate paper), it is worthwhile to consider some overall patterns. Based on a 3-point scale of 0 (restrictive) to 2 (permissive) for each of the five issues, the maximum permissive score per country is 10, the minimum possible is 0. The mean for these 18 countries is 6.6, toward the permissive end, but there is considerable variation, ranging from Belgium and the Netherlands at 10 (permissive on all five issues) to Italy, Ireland, and Austria at 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The scores for each of the five individual issues across all countries reveal that, in content, euthanasia remains the most restrictive policy, followed by ART/stem cells, same sex marriage, abortion, and capital punishment, with the latter being uniformly abolished in Western Europe (meaning that it is on the “permissive” end of the current continuum across issues). Western European democracies are hardly the overall bastions of permissiveness that some observers claim, but they have manifested a strong postwar tendency toward that end, varying considerably by issue.

With respect to duration of morality policy debates, the post World War II mean across all issues, all countries (some predating the war) is 33.4, ranging from 52.2 in Switzerland to 19.2 in Austria. The mean number of years of official debate ranges from the high end of same sex marriage (because of the prior need to adopt legal rights for homosexuals) through abortion and capital punishment (the latter has a definite end in most countries with its abolition) to more limited debate on ART/stem cells and euthanasia. Perhaps surprisingly, euthanasia has had the most limited debate across countries, despite being an old issue in a few such as Switzerland. Although ART/stem cells is a relatively new issue and thus less subject to debate, nevertheless, it was a “foreseen” technology in some countries, such as the early reports in the Nordic countries in 1950 (Burrell 2006), predating its actual development.

The overall question is “Does the European party government model hold for morality issues? If not, what patterns of institutional variation occur?” In contrast to the dominant European party government model for policymaking, the mean number of additional venues involved across all morality issues in these countries (column 3) is 1.4, ranging from less than 1 in Iceland, Greece, Norway, and Sweden to 2.3 or more in Germany, Italy and Switzerland. Column 4 shows the total number of venues used across all five morality issues in these countries (maximum possible 30, composed 5 issues times 6 venues). The mean is 8.7, meaning that morality issue debate is normally confined to a few venues in each country, with some issues never reaching even all of those available.

Table 1 also shows, in more detail, institutional involvement in morality policy, both overall for each country and by specific issues. Overall, the most likely extra-party government venues for considering morality policy are the legislature, political parties, and the judiciary, followed by constitutionalism, decentralized venues, and referendums. In general, where more venues are available for morality policy contention, more will be
used. By issues, abortion easily is the most pervasive across all venues (50), followed by same sex domestic relations (31), ART/stem cells (28), capital punishment (22), and euthanasia (21). Abortion is the leading issue in legislative, party, and referendum venues, with euthanasia and same sex domestic relations leading in the judiciary, and same sex domestic relations in decentralization. Capital punishment is notable in having no judicial involvement but having the largest amount of constitutional amendments, as several European states have embedded this prohibition. ART/stem cells debate is centered in legislative initiatives and party votes. Abortion and same sex marriage are primarily legislative and party-centred issues while for euthanasia, the judiciary accounts for half of the extra-executive institutional involvement.

Findings: Policy Type:

Table 1 indicates that across Western democracies there are not wide variations in the susceptibility of particular morality issues to unusual political processes although it is noteworthy that abortion is the issue most subject to multiple arenas. Despite expectations that “more scientific” morality issues might be handled through usual parliamentary government processes, this is not borne out. However, there are specific variations by issue and political process. Overall, most procedural aberrations occur through legislatures and judiciaries. Judicialization is rarely involved in capital punishment or ART, compared to the other three issues. Although unusual legislative procedures (private member’s bills and split party voting) were first documented for capital punishment, in fact it is abortion that is the most common topic of these particular behaviors, twice as much as for any other morality policy. Referendums are rare, but again abortion is the leading issue, largely due to the presence of this option in Catholic countries (Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Switzerland). Contestation at multiple levels of government is also a limited option, utilized in similar proportions for each issue. Attempts at constitutional changes are infrequent, but utilized the most for capital punishment, as expected, and secondarily abortion. This includes judicial decisions based on constitutional grounds.

Some countries are more susceptible to multiple venues on morality issues than others. These tend to be countries, both Secular and Religious, in continental Europe. While not all countries with extra venues (referendums and decentralization) use them for morality policy, for the most part those with these characteristics, as well as those with a powerful judiciary, do so.

Overall, parliamentary government, even with legislative initiatives and divided party votes, is the most preferable model for dealing with morality policy mainly in Nordic countries.

Expectations from Policy Type theory on duration, and policy processes for morality issues, both overall and specific, are largely upheld. Once raised, issues have long durations, there is multiple institutional involvement, legislative initiatives are proposed, party divisions on floor votes occur, the judiciary is a significant actor (except on capital punishment), there is often constitutional debate, lower level institutions and referendums become involved where there are opportunities.

(Table 2 about here.)

Findings: Two Worlds

Data for the hypotheses from the Two Worlds model is presented in Table 2, with significance based on a difference of means test. Eighteen countries is a small number
for such tests but at least indicates some preliminary findings for specific hypotheses. As noted previously, the number of Religious and Secular countries varies depending on where Greece, Ireland, and Italy are placed. Overall, we find the following generalizations.

1) Table 2 summarizes all of the four iterations. They are ordered from the categorization with the most significant results on the left, in order, to the least number of significant findings on the right.

2) The most significant results are in the iteration with both the Irish and Italian party systems being in the Religious World, with 6 of 9 hypotheses being statistically significant. Constitution is significant at 0.01, Judiciary, Referendum, and Total Venues are significant at 0.05, and Duration and Legislative Party are significant at 0.1. Direction, Divided Party, and Decentralization are nonsignificant.

3) The least significant results occur when Italy is considered part of the Secular World (only legislative party significant) or Italy and Ireland Secular (only duration significant).

4) In looking at the nine venues measurements' difference of means tests, three variables--total venues, legislative party initiatives, and constitutionalism--are significant in three out of four tests, followed by judicialization and duration with two significant, and referendum with one. Three variables--content, party divisions, and decentralization--are never significant.

In terms of specific hypotheses, we find the following.

Hypothesis #1 (content) is not confirmed statistically although the placement of Ireland and Italy in the Religious or Secular World does affect the direction of the results. Hypothesis #2 (duration) has mixed results, with two of four tests statistically significant. In all tests, Religious party systems have shorter durations for morality policy issues, on average, than do Secular ones, the reverse of the hypothesized relationship. This may be due to the fact that once a Secular coalition gains control in a Religious party system, it can pass more permissive legislation, which tends to stand. In Secular countries, lack of party attention to these issues means that disaffected groups on either side can continue the debate even despite seemingly definitive legislation being passed since it lacks the clear imprimatur of government (Engeli et al. 2012).

Hypothesis #3 (legislative party) has mixed results, with three significant findings, although the numerical direction of the relationship is always correct.

Hypothesis #4 (party division) is not confirmed statistically although the numerical results are consistent. There are more divided party votes in the Secular World than in the Religious World. Despite party avoidance of morality issues, the party government model still largely holds for legislative voting in both the Secular and Religious worlds.

Hypothesis #5 (judicialization) has mixed results, with two of four tests statistically significant. In each instance, there is more involvement of the judiciary in morality policy in the Religious World than in the Secular World, reflecting the intense commitment of both supporters and opponents of policy change to have their “day in court” to resolve these issues if the legislature is not forthcoming. The fact that these issues can often be formulated in terms of “human rights” may facilitate this process.

Hypothesis #6 (constitutionalism) also has mixed results, with three statistically significant findings. There is some evidence that debate on morality issues in the Religious World, variously defined, is more likely to rise to the constitutional level.
Hypothesis #7 (decentralization) is not confirmed statistically at all. Nevertheless, where possible, morality issues numerically are more likely to be considered at decentralized levels in the Religious World than in the Secular World. Hypothesis #8 (referendum) has mixed results, with one significant finding. Depending on the exact delineation of the Two Worlds, morality issues are more likely to be the subject of referendums in the Religious World. That may be a function of the fact that Ireland and Italy, two countries with ready access to this venue, can be considered part of this world.

Hypothesis #9 (multiple venues) has mixed results statistically, with two significant findings, especially when Italy is in the Religious World.

Although the data are fragile, overall the Two Worlds model aids explanation of morality policy content and institutional processes, but not always in expected ways. Whether Ireland and/or Italy are considered part of the Religious or the Secular World does, however, affect several processes.

Thus the process of considering policies in the Religious World leads through more venues although, over time, the direction of policy may not differ from that in the Secular World. In fact, contrary to expectations, the duration of policy actually may be shorter in the Religious World. Policy controversy over morality issues may be more intense and institutionally diverse in the Religious World, but in most respects, the Religious and Secular worlds are similar in content, duration, and processes. Also, much depends on which countries are considered to have a Religious party system. While the party government model is compromised for morality issues, it is stronger in the Religious World.

**Conclusion and Future Research Directions**

This research broadly supports the views of previous students of particular issues in a limited number of countries. The diversity of institutions involved in morality policies in most of these 18 democracies indicates that the contentious value conflict involved in these deliberations makes them difficult to contain within normal party government boundaries. Consideration of morality policies leads to relaxation of normal institutional rules, spillover effects into other institutions as disaffected groups challenge decisions, extended debate, and the revisiting of decisions. Nevertheless, most countries in Europe eventually are able to resolve these issues. There does not appear to be any general institutional configuration for quick, decisive settlement of morality policy; instead the pertinent factors would appear to be a combination of cultural and institutional factors, namely Nordic countries operating on the usual parliamentary party government model.

This first extensive cross-country analysis of morality policy content, duration, and processes analysis has limits. It provides only a broad, largely descriptive analysis of the patterns of these five morality policy issues across Western Europe. Other morality issues may also be considered, case studies can be done on the specific dimensions of institutional political processing of them in particular countries, and improved metrics for these and other issues may be developed. There needs to be more direct comparison with institutional processes for other categories of policies, and frequencies of the use of different institutional venues should be compared. The findings here, however, can be considered baseline data on which others can build for a
broader theory of morality policy as well as extending the analysis to countries outside Europe.

These issues have been on the agendas of all of the countries and the content of policy has moved toward permissiveness, but there still remains considerable policy diversity, especially on the newer issues of euthanasia, same sex marriage, and ART. In at least some of these countries, all of these morality policies remain on the active public agenda. How long this will be the case depends not only on the parliamentary party government model but also on the availability of alternative institutional venues to pursue them. Within the general trend of permissiveness on all of these issues, restrictiveness and even constitutionally-based abolition of capital punishment is pervasive, relatively permissive abortion has become a “stable compromise” in most countries, and same sex marriage has become a trend.

Other possible explanations for morality policy similarities and differences may also be explored. Some of these may be cultural, such as Family of Nations (Castles 1993) and Post- Materialism (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Smith and Tatalovich 2003). Other institutional explanations may also be tested, such as Punctuated Equilibrium (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), veto groups (Tsebelis 2002), and majoritarian-consensus democracies (Lijphart 1999).

Timmermans (2001) proposes another variation of an institutional argument for explaining policy outcomes, involving both the number of institutional arenas in policy deliberation and the tightness of the rules governing the institutions. For morality issues, the number of institutions involved is likely to be higher than the norm for that country and may range from professional groups and expert executive committees to subcentral institutions and even the general public through referendums. As has been observed, normally tight rules of parliamentary government are often relaxed for morality policies. Decentralization as a variable affecting morality policy especially needs greater study, as the existent work tends to focus on single issues (Rothmayr et al. 2003; Montpetit et al. 2005). The role of international organizations may be important for some issues, as noted previously for capital punishment (Council of Europe 1999; 2004) and homosexual economic rights (Eeckhout and Paternotte 2011). In addition, the role of transnational advocacy organizations and diffusion may be important on some issues (Nadelmann 1990; Keck and Sikkink 1998; True and Mintrom 2001).

The Two Worlds model is a more elaborate, disaggregated version of the Policy Type model. Although both models seem to be promising explanations of morality policy processes, the Two Worlds model’s additional explanatory value depends very much on how the two worlds are divided. Depending on the venues available, morality policy is likely to be controversial across more venues, but for shorter rather than longer periods of time, in Religious countries than in Secular ones. At the end of the day, however, the content of policy may not be all that different in the two Worlds. Further research into the linkage between dominant churches and religious affiliations in the problematically Religious countries (Ireland and Italy) is necessary to help resolve these questions.

Both models do demonstrate that there are at least nascent institutional patterns in morality policy that deviate from the normal party government model. While hardly definitive, these simple data explorations provide prima facie evidence for further testing of theories of morality policy content, duration, and process. As in the U.S., the study of this policy needs to move from description towards explanation of differences. Morality
policy not only has been demonstrated to have distinct policy content, but also to be subject to policy processes that deviate in some ways from the European parliamentary party government model.
Table 1: The Content, Duration, and Institutional Configuration of Morality Policy

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<td>1.9</td>
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Mean by Issue

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<td>(of 6)</td>
<td>(of 540)</td>
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Total Issues

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Grand Total

| 41       | 35      | 33      | 21    | 16    | 9     |
Table 2: The Two Worlds of Morality Policy: Direction, Duration and Processes

<table>
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<th>It. Ir. (Rel.)</th>
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<td>10.3**</td>
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<td>1.8</td>
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</table>

* >.10, difference of means test  
** >.05, difference of means test  
*** >.001, difference of means test  
+ Secular countries have zero mean and zero standard deviation, unequal variance applied

N=10       N=8       N=9       N=9       N=9       N=9       N=8       N=10
References
Thirty-Six Countries, New Haven: Yale University Press.


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i The death penalty has uniformly been abolished by all 18 of these West European countries. Thus there is no variation on this measure. In the broader realm of 24 Western democracies, an “intermediate” score obtains in the U.S., Israel, and Japan since it is used in highly restricted circumstances.

ii Although Hooghe et al. (2010) have several policy indicators for different levels of government, morality policy is not among them. Most discussions of morality policy at the level of individual countries focus on the central level although variations by decentralized authorities are sometimes acknowledged (Engeli et al. 2012; Tremblay et al. 2011).

iii The Christian Democratic International became the Centrist Democrat International in 2001, thus confusing the formal distinction between Christian Democratic and other conservative parties. Similarly, the European People’s Party in the European Parliament contains a broad array of centre-right parties. Italy and Ireland can be considered to have Christian Democratic parties in the same sense that the Conservatives in Spain are considered a highly religiously-influenced party (Chaqués Bonafont, and Palau Roqué 2012), through internal influence of church organizations and positions taken on morality issues rather than explicit connections between churches and parties. France and Greece, on the other hand, despite parties that are part of the Centrist Democrat International, do not have such formal or informal ties. Thus they are considered part of the Secular World.