

Instrumentally Inclusive: The Political Psychology of Homonationalism

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Can nativist attitudes condition support for LGBT+ rights? The sustained advance in pro-LGBT+ attitudes in the West often contrasts with the greening of anti-immigrant sentiment propagated by nativist supply-side actors. We argue that these parallel trends are causally connected, theorizing that exposure to sexually conservative ethnic out-groups can provoke an instrumental increase in LGBT+ inclusion, particularly among those hostile toward immigration. Leveraging experiments in Britain and Spain, we provide causal evidence that citizens strategically liberalize their levels of support for LGBT+ rights when opponents of these measures are from the ethnic out-group. In a context where sexuality-based liberalism is nationalized, increasing tolerance toward LGBT+ citizens is driven by a desire among nativist citizens to socially disidentify from those out-groups perceived as inimical to these nationalized norms. Our analyses provide a critical interpretation of positive trends in LGBT+ tolerance with instrumental liberalism masking lower rates of genuine shifts in LGBT+ inclusion.

The damage and devastation that can be inflicted by Islamic radicals has been proven over and over [...]. Only weeks ago, in Orlando, Florida, 49 wonderful Americans were savagely murdered by an Islamic terrorist. This time, the terrorist targeted LGBTQ community. No good, and we're gonna stop it. As your president, I will do everything in my power to protect our LGBTQ citizens from the violence and oppression of a hateful foreign ideology. Believe me.

– Donald Trump (Republican National Convention Speech) July 21, 2016

of a desire to create a country where “gay and lesbian Americans” are safe from those who “want to murder and ha[ve] murdered gays.” On the same day, Trump made another speech in New Hampshire. The central motif of the address, focused on the issues of terrorism, immigration, and national security, was the same: incoming Muslim migrants were, according to Trump, an inimical threat to the welfare of LGBT+ Americans and the liberties afforded by the West. Speaking at Saint Anselm College, Trump remarked:

Our nation stands together in solidarity with the members of Orlando's LGBT Community. [...]

This is a very dark moment in America's history. A radical Islamic terrorist targeted the nightclub not only because he wanted to kill Americans, but in order to execute gay and lesbian citizens because of their sexual orientation. *It is a strike at the heart and soul of who we are as a nation. It is an assault on the ability of free people to live their lives, love who they want and express their identity.*

We cannot continue to allow thousands upon thousands of people to pour into our country, many of whom have the same thought process as this savage killer. Many of the principles of Radical Islam are incompatible with *Western values* and institutions. Radical Islam is anti-woman, anti-gay and anti-American. (*emphasis added*)

In office, Donald Trump would become known for the pursuit of policies, often focused on rolling back Obama-era advances, that were actively detrimental to the progress of LGBT+ rights (Movement Advancement Project 2023; Murib 2018; Thoreson 2021) and which produced significant detrimental effects on the everyday welfare and mental well-being of LGBT+ Americans (Kuroki 2021). Yet Trump's carefully orchestrated aesthetic solidarity with the LGBT+ community in the immediate

INTRODUCTION

On June 12, 2016, 49 people were killed in an Islamic terrorist attack at the LGBT+ nightclub, Pulse, in Orlando, Florida. The following day, Donald Trump, who was then running for the Republican presidential nomination and later became the 45th U.S. President, delivered a campaign rally speech in Greensboro, North Carolina. Trump blamed the attack on a “failed immigration system” that was “importing Islamic terrorism,” and criticized his political opponent, Hillary Clinton, for being “no friend of LGBT Americans” as a result of her liberal views on immigration. Trump spoke

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aftermath of the Pulse tragedy allowed the far-right Republican candidate to commodify the claimed protection of LGBT+ individuals as a tool to legitimize his electoral pledge for a blanket prohibition on immigration from majority-Muslim countries: a policy that he presented as necessary for the safeguarding of Western values. This strategy is not unique to Trump but reflects a wider commodification of the protection of “liberal western values” (Siegel 2017), including those specifically related to LGBT+ rights, by other far-right actors in the West—such as France’s Marine Le Pen and the Netherlands’ Pim Fortuyn or Geert Wilders—who project a stereotypical caricature of those beyond the West, often Muslims, as a “homophobic bogeyman” (Bayoumi 2017).

Despite its own muddled history in the advancement of LGBT+ rights—including, most notably, the colonial imposition of westernized penal codes that criminalized homosexuality (Gontijo, Arisi, and Fernandes 2021; Han and O’Mahoney 2018; Semugoma, Nemande, and Baral 2012; Vanita 2013)—many liberal democracies in the West appear to have “nationalized” such liberal values (Lægaard 2007) as an integral part of their national identity. Just as some states reject (liberal) international norms of tolerance toward homosexuality as a “foreign” threat to their national identity and cultural way of life (Ayoub 2014; Kurar and Paternotte 2017) against which anticipatory defensive measures are often taken (Mos 2020; Nuñez Míetiz and Iommi 2017), other states have engaged in the mirror opposite and adopted liberal tolerance of sexual minorities and those with diverse gender identities as inherent to their national identities and a core signal of their membership of the “West” (Ayoub 2015; Jones and Subotic 2011) and sense of western belonging (Baker 2017).¹ Certain countries, including Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands, have even included tolerance of homosexuality as part of their citizenship exams (Michalowski 2009)² and the Netherlands recently approved a constitutional amendment that would enshrine anti-discrimination protections for individuals based on sexual orientation (Corder 2023).

Trump’s superficial flirtation and strategically employed symbolic gesture of LGBT+ tolerance is just one of a catalog of examples of western actors engaged in homonationalism (Dudink 2017; Puar 2007; 2013; Rahman 2014; Siegel 2017). Homonationalism involves increasingly liberalized and heightened support for

LGBT+ citizens when liberal tolerance toward this minority group is seen as part of native “Western” domestic culture subjected to ethnic out-group threat. States and political actors (often radical right-wing parties and other far-right organizations) present their nativist and xenophobic rejection of immigration and ethnic others to be legitimate and necessary to protect sexual and gender minorities from the supposedly homophobic and inimical ethnic out-group threat (Akkerman 2005; Dudink 2017; Hunklinger and Ajanović 2022; Murib 2018; Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017). Not only is this flirtation with tolerance of LGBT+ issues a means of *aesthetic*, as opposed to genuine, deradicalization, but parties of the far-right have also been actively employing homonationalist strategies in order to rally and “recruit” (Siegel Forthcoming) sexual minority voters—if, however, unsuccessfully (Turnbull-Dugarte 2022b)—to their nativist cause against immigrants—primarily Muslims—and other non-conforming minorities (Hunklinger and Ajanović 2022; Spierings 2021).

Like the strategic tolerance of LGBT+ citizens leveraged by elites engaged in homonationalism, does instrumental liberalism also explain why nativist *citizens* have become more liberal on questions related to LGBT+ rights and inclusion?

Across many European states, scholars have identified the prevalence of a sizeable proportion of so-called sexually modern nativists (Lancaster 2020; Spierings 2021; Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017): those that simultaneously harbor tolerant liberal views toward LGBT (but often not T+) individuals and intolerant illiberal views toward ethnic out-groups. As LGBT+ rights have become increasingly nationalized, the proportion of these citizens has increased (Lancaster 2020) and sexually modern nativists are significantly greater in number in those states that boast greater levels of institutional recognition of LGBT+ rights (Kwon, Scarborough, and Taylor 2023). Whether the rising liberalism among right-wing nativists toward LGBT+ citizens is the result of a *genuine* liberalizing transformation of socially traditionalist attitudes (Lancaster 2020), or—like the case of supply-side political actors’ strategic commodification of LGBT+ tolerance (Akkerman 2005; Dudink 2017; Murib 2018; Siegel 2017)—a demonstration of *instrumental* liberalism (Jennings and Ralph-Morrow 2020; Kwon, Scarborough, and Taylor 2023) based on “inclusion for the purpose of [ethnic] exclusion” (Hunklinger and Ajanović 2022), remains unanswered.

In this article, we seek to contribute to this debate by asking: do nativist individuals become more supportive of LGBT+ rights when exposed to *out-group* opposition to LGBT+ rights? Building on scholarship in social psychology (Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001; Heider 1958) and the literature on social identity theory (Tajfel 1974; Turner 1975), we present a novel theoretical model on the psychology of homonationalist instrumental liberalism. Theoretically, we argue that *disidentification*—a desire to define oneself by who one is *not*—can lead individuals, particularly those who harbor nativist preferences, to express more

¹ As argued by Ayoub (2015), a strong determinant of LGBT+ rights advances among new-adopter states is often the signals of legitimacy and group membership of the club of “Western” democracies that adopting developing Western international norms can indicate to the international community. Consider, e.g., the tweet shared by the twitter account of the Slovenian Government (@govSlovenia) on January 31, 2023 upon legalizing equal marriage: “Today is an important day. By providing same-sex marriage with the same rights as heterosexual marriage, Slovenia is *joining the most progressive and open democracies in the world*” (emphasis added).

² Michalowski (2009) argues that the cross-national presence of such culturally oriented questions that convey social liberalism is, in many ways, an indication of how Muslims—as a religious group perceived to harbor socially conservative values—are often a target demographic in these tests.

inclusive positions toward LGBT+ rights. We find strong empirical support for our theory from two vignette experiments fielded in Britain and Spain. Randomly exposing survey respondents to examples of opposition toward LGBT+ rights from either (i) the ethnic in-group or (ii) the ethnic out-group, we find that individuals become more supportive of policies aimed at benefiting LGBT+ individuals' welfare when exposed to non-native opposition to the collective. In other words, when ethnic out-groups are perceived to discriminate against LGBT+ citizens, respondents become more instrumentally liberal on LGBT+ policy questions. These findings provide empirical support for the homonationalism thesis: the inclusion of LGBT+ citizens is *instrumentally* liberalized and heightened when homosexuality is seen as part of native culture under ethnic out-group threat.

This project makes a direct contribution to work on instrumental tolerance (Berntzen 2019; Jennings and Ralph-Morrow 2020; Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017) and hypocritical liberalism (Graham and Svulik 2020; Simonovits, McCoy, and Littvay 2022) in two ways. First, we focus on support for concrete, and salient, LGBT+ rights issues as opposed to generic "tolerance" toward LGBT+ individuals. Existing research, driven by data limitations, often relies on more diffuse indicators³ that, given a context of social desirability, are likely to provide over-estimations of positive affect toward sexual and gender diverse minorities (Turnbull-Dugarte 2022a). We focus on LGBT+ education, a policy that remains salient in a number of Western nations and which, similar to the case of parental and child-bearing rights for LGBT+ individuals (Dotti Sani and Quaranto 2020; Turnbull-Dugarte 2022a), is less likely to enjoy widespread positive support in the same way that general tolerance and acceptance of homosexuality (increasingly) enjoys. Second, we provide causal purchase to the relationship between anti-immigrant attitudes and support for LGBT+ rights. Moving beyond correlational analysis, we leverage an experimental manipulation to test if the emergence of so-called sexually modern nativism may indeed be *causally* driven by individual-level psychological reactions catalyzed by anti-immigrant prejudices.

Empirically, our findings provide robust causal evidence in support of the homonationalist instrumental liberalism thesis and, consistent with the theoretical model we develop: exposure to (Muslim) out-group opposition to the rights of the (sexual) out-group engenders a significant rise in support for LGBT+ rights among those with existing anti-immigrant dispositions. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" is a commonplace English proverb and, in the case of the intersectional relationship between opposition to sexually modern values and anti-immigrant attitudes, we identify

that those with negative dispositions toward immigration are inclined to causally update their preferences in order to make the sexual "enemy" their friend.

INSTRUMENTAL LGBT+ TOLERANCE: THE HOMONATIONALIST THESIS

Mass support and tolerance toward LGBT+ individuals in democratic nations has increased overtime. While homonegative biases, trans-exclusion, outright homophobia and transphobia remain present in society, transformations in institutional recognition, social tolerance, and public support for LGBT+ individuals and public policies that would seek to expand this group's welfare, have been steadily increasing across liberal democratic nations⁴, moving sexual and gender minorities from being a sexual out-group to part of the "mainstream" societal in-group. The explanation for this can be found in increased inter-group contact (Ayoub and Garretson 2017; Garretson 2018)⁵, generational replacement (Ekstam 2023), active in-group and elite-level persuasion efforts (Harrison and Michelson 2017a), as well as positive policy feedback effects whereby state-sponsored recognition triggers a norm-establishing effect that induces greater social tolerance and results in intolerance becoming more socially unacceptable (Abou-Chadi and Finnigan 2019).

As detailed by Harrison and Michelson (2017a), the rapid expansion of increased social tolerance toward LGBT+ individuals and support for LGBT+ rights is, in many regards, remarkable. Instead of resulting from the slow effects of cohort replacement, whereby more socially liberal generations emerge to replace those generations with more conservative values, a rich catalog of evidence from panel studies (Flores and Barclay 2016) and experiments (Ayoub, Page, and Whitt 2021; Brookman and Kalla 2016; Harrison and Michelson 2017a; 2017b) has demonstrated that, in the case of LGBT+ rights, individual-level changes in attitudes play a significant role in explaining these macro-level trends. The liberalization of attitudes toward LGBT+ individuals is normatively desirable as it has concrete benefits for the psychological welfare and well-being of LGBT+ individuals (Boertian and Vignoli 2019) and, as a result, understanding the amenability and

³ For a discussion, see Dotti Sani and Quaranto (2020). An example of diffuse measure would be that included in the European Social Survey (ESS): *Using this card, please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements, "Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish."*

⁴ It is not the case, however, that advances in LGBT+ rights are unidirectional. Regrettably, and as detailed by Mos (2020) and Nuñez Mietz and Iommi (2017), advances in other states can trigger *elite* actors to engage in anticipatory backlash to "immunize" themselves from the globalization of LGBT+ rights advances. In other cases, opponents of LGBT+ rights increase their homophobic campaigning in advance of any domestic steps toward liberalizing LGBT+ rights, and where LGBT+ rights advances have been established, certain actors promote policy proposals that would roll-back past LGBT+ policy victories.

⁵ While contact effects are strongly observed in the case of LGB individuals, evidence of contact's effect on support for transgender individuals is mixed (see, e.g., Flores, Haider-Markel, and Lewis 2018; Jones et al. 2018).

conditionality of LGBT+ inclusion is of widespread importance.

In contrast to the more benevolent explanations that help us understand the liberalization of attitudes toward LGBT+ individuals and support for LGBT+ specific policy provisions, a homonationalist interpretation presents a more critical perspective. As detailed by Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove (2017) and Lancaster (2020), an increasingly large proportion of nativists and radical right-wing voters—those that, conventionally, exhibited both traditional heteronormative and patriarchal values alongside nativist, anti-liberal, and nationalist values (Kitschelt 1997)—are liberalizing their views of and support for LGBT+ individuals. Observing trends in tolerance toward homosexuality among nativist individuals using data from the European Social Survey (ESS), there is strong evidence of increasing tolerance among nativists in Western Europe, where LGBT+ rights are increasingly nationalized, that is absent among nativist peers in Eastern European countries, where LGBT+ rights have not (yet) been equally nationalized (see Supplementary Figure A1).⁶ Homonationalism theorizes that such moves in mass opinion, particularly among those we would expect to be most resistant to issues of LGBT+ rights, toward LGBT+ tolerant social liberalism are, in part, the product of *instrumental* considerations (Berntzen 2019) as opposed to a more genuine transformation in attitudes. Similar to evidence signaling the amenability and superficiality of support for liberal democracy and tolerance of violations in democratic norms to in-group dynamics (Graham and Svolik 2020; Simonovits, McCoy, and Littvay 2022), the homonationalist thesis posits that support for LGBT+ rights depends on associations between sexual freedoms and the national ethnic in-group. As a result of the long, and often muddled, social road that has been traveled in the “nationalization of liberal values” in many Western countries (Lægaard 2007), as well as the archetypal dissociation between LGBT+ rights and the Muslim ethnic out-group (Berntzen 2019; Rahman 2014), the ground is fertile for the instrumental tolerance of LGBT+ citizens to be adopted in order to differentiate the “nation” from the other (Lægaard 2007).⁷

The empirical literature, relying on observational analyses, supports this idea: in those countries where

institutional recognition of LGBT+ rights is greatest, the proportion of individuals who *simultaneously* harbor more tolerant views toward homosexuality alongside more intolerant views toward ethnic out-groups is significantly higher (Kwon, Scarborough, and Taylor 2023). These “sexually modern nativists” (Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017) are not trivial in number and some evidence signals their numbers are actually ascending (Lancaster 2020). A simple descriptive visualization of simultaneously held attitudes toward homosexuality and immigration among respondents in the ESS identifies proportions in excess of 30% in many country-years (Supplementary Figure A2) across Europe, but particularly in Western Europe, between 2002 and 2020. The prevalence of this group of citizens reflects, and perhaps stem from, active engagement by supply-side political actors who seek to leverage national-based and ethnic-based social identities to engender an image of the ethnic “other” (specifically, Muslims) as an inimical threat to members of the national in-group. State governments, most frequently that of Israel (Gross 2015; Puar 2007; 2013), the media (Dhoest 2020), radical right-wing parties (Siegel 2017), and other radical right-wing groups (Foster and Kirke 2023; Jennings and Ralph-Morrow 2020) in continental Europe (Akkerman 2005; Hunklinger and Ajanović 2022; Siegel Forthcoming; Spierings 2021; Turnbull-Dugarte 2021; 2022b), the United Kingdom, (Lockhart 2022), and the United States (Murib 2018) have been actively pursuing homonationalist strategies. Examples of these strategies—as employed by the German far-right party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), the leader of the Netherlands’ far-right *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV), Israeli campaigners, and the UK’s former far-right party (UKIP)—are shown in Figure 1 and demonstrate rhetoric similar to that of Trump discussed in this essay’s opening. Far-right parties in countries that boast high levels of public acceptance toward the LGBT+ community, frequently leverage the defense of LGB (but often *not* T+)⁸ citizens and their rights as a motivation to rationalize their opposition to ethnic others who they portray as inimical to so-called Western values including—among wider signals of liberalism such as the inclusion and protection of women as well as other “women’s issues” (de Lange and Mügge 2015; Farris 2017; Weeks et al. 2023)—the defense of sexual minorities (Akkerman 2005; Hunklinger and Ajanović 2022; Siegel 2017; Forthcoming).

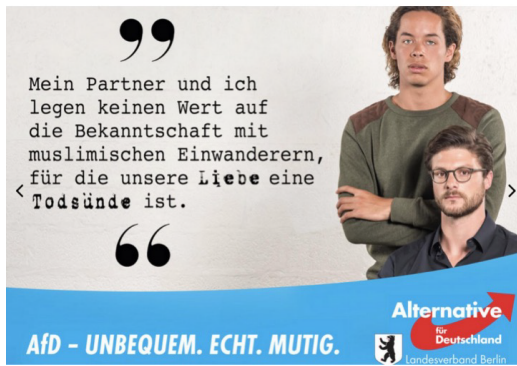
The increasing tolerance of LGBT+ issues among nativists and the far-right, be they ordinary citizens or elite-level actors, presents something of a paradox.

⁶ This variation suggests, much in line with the arguments of Lekisikov and Rachok (2020), that homonationalism is less applicable in Eastern European states. Indeed, rather than tolerance of LGBT+ individuals being “nationalized” in Eastern Europe, LGBT+ rights and tolerance of the LGBT+ community are often perceived as extranational foreign imports that threaten the strictly heterosexual notion of national identity in these states (Ayoub 2014; Kurar and Paternotte 2017; Mos 2020; O’Dwyer 2012).

⁷ This nationalization of liberal sexual values as “Western” alongside an archetypal association non-Western ethnic out-groups as inimically threatening to these values is not without irony. Much of the institutional rejection of homosexuality, including present-day prohibitions on same-sex sexual activity, alongside social intolerance toward LGBT+ individuals across the globe is the product of the colonial-era reforms (Gontijo, Arisi, and Fernandes 2021; Han and O’Mahoney 2018; Semugoma, Nemande, and Baral 2012; Vanita 2013; Victor and Sommer 2016).

⁸ A similar distinction between LGB and T+ support among right-wing voters can also be observed. In the United Kingdom, e.g., while the electoral constituents of parties on the left and right have coalesced in increased tolerance of LGB citizens, a similar convergence has not been observed in the case of the rights of the transgender community (Turnbull-Dugarte and McMillan 2022). Similar patterns are observed elsewhere: in Germany, e.g., the voters of all parties express majority support for a new transgender self-identification bill with the exception of those voters of the radical right AfD (Wurthmann 2023).

FIGURE 1. (Comparative) Examples of Supply-Side Homonationalism



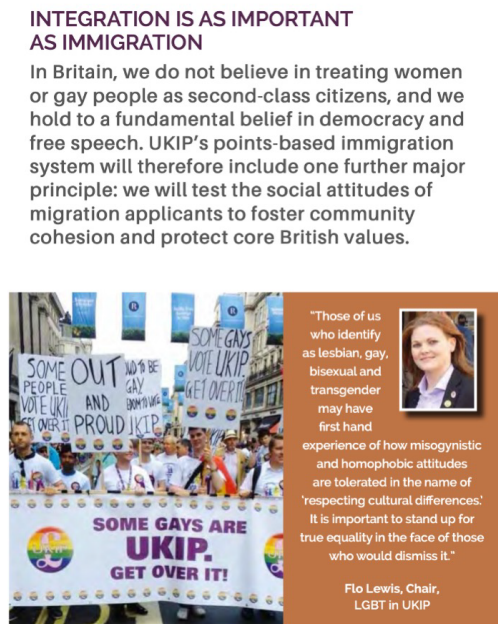
(a) AfD election campaign poster (2017)



(b) Geert Wilders celebrating *International Day Against Homophobia & Transphobia* via Twitter (2020)



(c) Pro-Israel campaign poster (2014)



(d) Excerpts from UKIP's (2017) election manifesto, *Britain Together*

Note: German translation (a): *My partner and I do not value the acquaintance of Muslim immigrants, for whom our love is a mortal sin.* Dutch translation (b): *Stop the gay hate. Stop Islam.*

One empirical puzzle, for example, remains: it is not clear if the movement toward socially liberal positions on LGBT+ issues is the result of a *genuine* and organic transformation in attitudes toward this out-group, or rather nativist individuals are *instrumentally* and strategically diluting their opposition to LGBT+ rights issues in order to further socially demarcate themselves from the *ethnic* out-group. The instrumentally liberal homonationalist thesis posits that it is the latter. Nativists, we argue, see LGBT+ rights as part of the bundle of liberal positions viewed as a cornerstone of Western

values—and self-congratulatory sense of exceptionalism (Rahman 2014)—that allows them to draw a line with the ethnic out-group which they caricature as inimically intolerant, misogynistic, and homophobic. Empirically testing these expectations is fraught with limitations given the constraints of observational data analyses. We seek to overcome these limitations by experimentally manipulating group-based opposition to LGBT+ rights.

Should more amicable positions toward the sexual out-group be truly independent of views toward the

ethnic out-group, experimentally manipulating the ethnic out-group status should *not* influence preferences for policies that benefit the sexual out-group (organic liberalism thesis). Should, however, more positive dispositions toward the sexual out-group emerge when those hostile to the ethnic out-group are randomly exposed to anti-LGBT+ positions by the same out-group, this would indicate that sexually liberalism is the result of *instrumental* preference formation (instrumental liberalism thesis). Before laying out our empirical test of these opposing theoretical expectations, we present a theoretical model that lays out an intuitive road map of how homonationalism can engender psychological processes that result in instrumental tolerance to LGBT+ rights expansion.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF HOMONATIONALISM

We theorize that support for LGBT+ rights can be driven by a desire to create social *disidentification* with those perceived as opposed to LGBT+ rights. Disidentification with a certain group, as argued by Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001), can be expressed by one seeking to actively define themselves as *not* harboring the attributes, features, and values that the individual believes to define that same group. Social identity theory (Tajfel 1974; Tajfel and Turner 1979) establishes that individuals are incentivized to engage in activity that enhances one's positive self-perceptions and, as a result, where associations with a certain group run the risk of undermining one's perceived social value, *disidentification* and a desire to alter one's identity to augment the marked social distinctiveness from the group is high (Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001; Turner 1975). In short: when individuals are presented with a threat to the integrity of their identity and sense of self resulting in shared attributes or values with other identity groups that are perceived negatively, individuals—out of fear of being “tarred by the same brush”—engage in disidentification strategies in order to enlarge the space between their own identity and that from which they wish to present themselves as distinct (Brown and Williams 1984).

We expect these strategies to play a role in shaping concrete policy preferences. Just as primes of an in-group identity that cue in-group-based sympathy for a policy can engender increased support (Harrison and Michelson 2017a; Ostrom et al. 1993), a simple corollary of this phenomenon would be that primes of out-group identities that cue out-group-based *opposition* for a position can also engender increased *support* for the same position. Put simply, instead of adopting preferences that are shaped and defined by who we *are*, we theorize that associations between concrete issue positions and salient out-groups can result in adopting political preferences that are defined by who we *are not*.

Our theoretical proposition is founded in Heider's (1958) balance theory. Balance theory assumes that individuals, seeking to maintain their idea of self

cognitively balanced, are incentivized to identify, establish, and maintain relationships that provide balance between their personal preferences and their personal affect toward groups and individuals. In other words, individuals seek to maintain a positive balance between those issues they endorse and those individuals they identify as their friends, alongside a symmetrical balance between those issues they reject and those individuals they identify as their enemies. If an individual discovers one of their friends disagrees with them on a salient political issue, then they are out of balance. Symmetrically, an individual is also out of balance should they discover that one of their enemies agrees with them on a salient issue. In these scenarios, the individual is presented with two alternatives: either disidentify with their issue position and maintain their kinship group, or disidentify from their kinship group and maintain their issue position. We know from a rich body of work assessing the efficacy of identity primes—including, in the specific case of LGBT+ rights, Harrison and Michelson's (2017a) work on dissonant identity priming—that individuals are likely to opt for the latter option. Essentially in-group priming effects are an effective means of persuasion given individuals are more inclined to be receptive to cues and, by extension, prone to update their preferences to match those of respected members of the same identity-based in-group and reject those of out-groups (Ostrom et al. 1993).

A corollary of both balance theory and identity priming is that primes from social identities that simultaneously signal out-group membership and out-group opposition to an *orthogonal* out-group, then in-group members will be inclined to close the gap between one of these out-groups. In short, the premises of balance theory lead us to expect a pattern captured by the “enemy of my enemy is my friend” proverb outlined above.

Empirical support for this corollary of balance theory has been found in both experimental and ethnographic applications of the theory. Borgeson and Valeri (2007), for example, explore how shared out-group dislike for members of the Jewish faith explains the establishment of formal alliances and collaborations between members of the *Aryan Nation* and followers of the *Islamic Jihad*. Similarly, Whigham (2014) explores how out-group animosity toward the English among Scottish football fans drives the latter to support any rival team, or “*Anyone but England!*” (Abell 2011; Whigham 2014), in competitive football matches. In a laboratory experiment where subjects' sense of affinity (friendship) and animosity (enmity) toward concrete individuals was experimentally induced, Aronson and Cope (1968) show that subjects were significantly more inclined to reward independent third-party individuals who exercised animosity toward those with whom the subjects also held animosity. In other words, the enemy of a subject's enemy, was rewarded like a friend.

Now imagine the following scenario. A nativist individual who holds negative affect toward Muslims (Out-Group 1) as well as the LGBT+ population (Out-Group 2) is presented with an identity prime that signals the identity-based association between the

rejection of the LGBT+ population with the ethnic out-group. This information induces cognitive discomfort, and signals a lack of balance between their group-based affect: if Group 2 is the enemy of my enemy (Group 1), should I update my views on the sexual out-group or do I accept that I am, in fact, not dissimilar to the ethnic out-group?

This imbalance incentivizes the individual—assuming they are unwilling to accept this psychological discomfort of this dilemma—to make one of two choices to re-establish cognitive balance. This dilemma, and the resulting alternatives detailed below, can be summarized succinctly as a decision between defining oneself as we who *are* (e.g., anti-LGBT) or who we *are not* (e.g., Muslim).

Option A—the individual retains their negative affect toward the LGBT+ population and accepts the cognitive cost of reducing the identity-based distinctiveness between their national in-group identity and that of the ethnic out-group.

Option B—the individual updates their view toward the LGBT+ population in order to maintain the identity-based distinctiveness between their national in-group identity and the ethnic out-group, rejecting the cognitive costs of reduced inter-group distinctiveness and association with the out-group.

STUDY 1: U.K. EXPERIMENT

To test these expectations, we rely first on an original survey experiment fielded in the United Kingdom to a representative sample of online panel respondents in March 2021 ($N = 1,200$). Our experimental research design asks: is support for LGBT+ rights driven by out-group disidentification?

To measure support for LGBT+ rights, we analyze support for LGBT+ inclusive education in schools. LGBT+ education is of recent salience in the United Kingdom, where the experiment is fielded, as well as elsewhere, and represents a contemporary LGBT+ policy issue that remains contentious even in those countries where equal marriage has been legalized for some time. In the United States, for example, recent state-level actions have outlawed the discussion of LGBT+ issues in schools such as that evinced by the so-called *Don't Say Gay!* bill in Florida (Goldstein 2022; Philips 2022). Similar moves toward state-sponsored prohibitions on LGBT+ inclusive education have been observed in the comparative context including in countries with precedents of low-level (e.g., Hungary; [Rankin 2021]) and high-level (e.g., Spain; [Mateo 2021]) tolerance of LGBT+ individuals. Given attitudes toward LGBT+ education is an outcome that captures specific policy support toward a concrete, and politicized, LGBT+ policy concern, we argue it serves as an ideal variable for testing the presence of homonationalist instrumental liberalism. Theoretically, however, we would expect similar empirical relationships to be observed with other viable outcomes measuring specific support for LGBT+ policies.

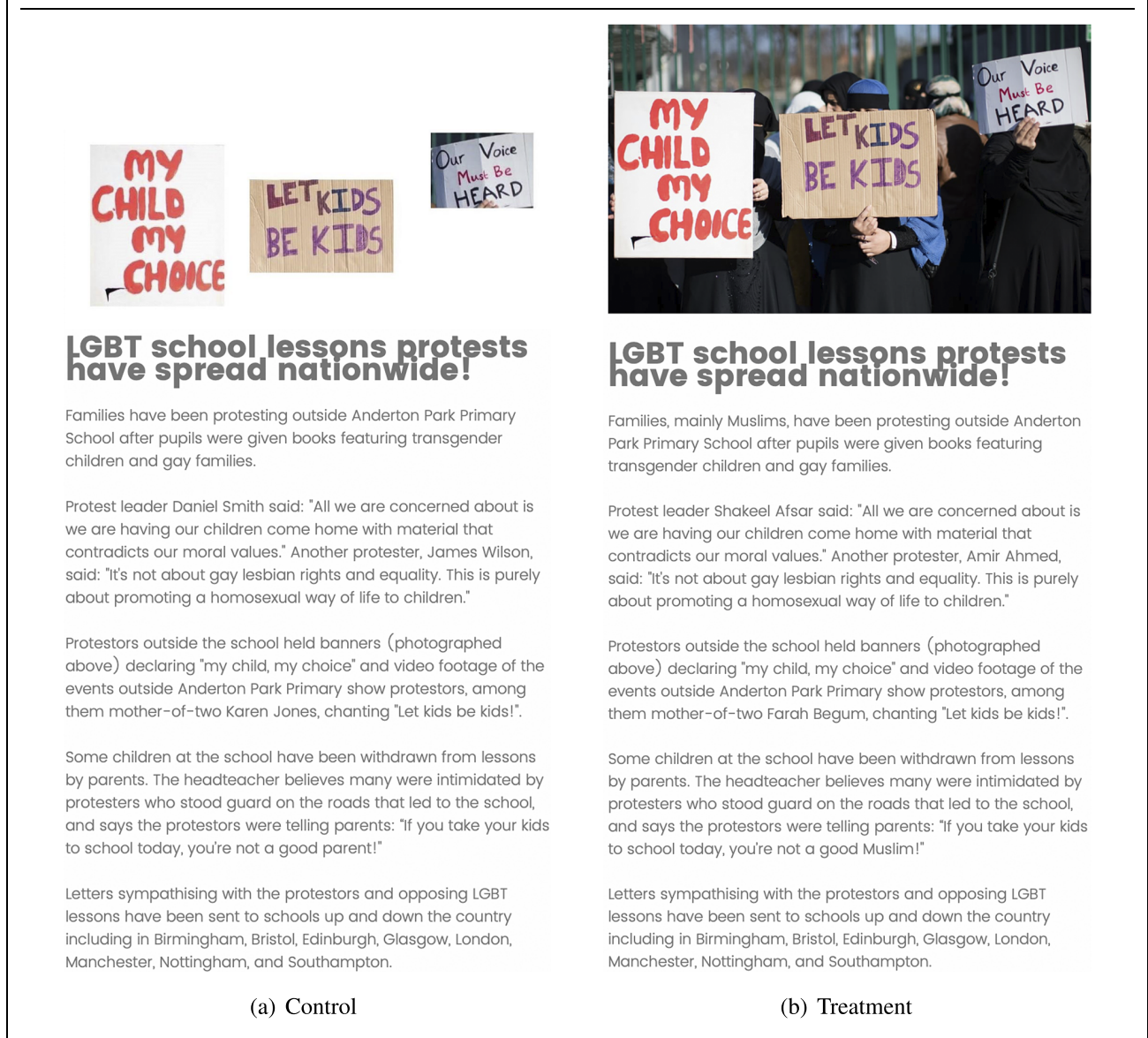
The dependent variable is recorded via the following survey question: *Some people think that schools should discuss lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT+) issues in the classroom and others think that schools should not discuss these matters. Where would you place yourself on this scale?* Responses were measured on an 11-point scale ranging from “Discuss LGBT+ issues in school” (0) to “Do not discuss LGBT+ issues in school” (scale order randomized). For parsimony, the results reported below rely on dichotomized support for the policy (0–1). Estimations using the full continuous scale are reported in the Supplementary Material (see Supplementary Table A8 and Supplementary Figure A4). The conclusions remain constant across operationalizations.

To test if individuals' views toward LGBT+ policy concerns are shaped by strategically instrumental liberalism, we leveraged an experimental research design that randomly assigned individuals to one of two treatment conditions: in-group condition (control) and out-group condition (treatment). Immediately before being asked to express their views on LGBT+ education, both groups were exposed to a short news article about opposition to the policy. Those in the control condition were informed of opposition to the policy among non-denominational families and three named protesters with conventional white-British names (Daniel Smith, James Wilson, and Karen Jones). Those in the treatment condition were informed of opposition to the policy explicitly among Muslim families and three named protesters with conventional Muslim names (Shakeel Afsar, Amir Ahmed, and Farah Begum). Both treatment texts (visualized in Figure 2) were also accompanied by images: the image accompanying the treatment group text displays individuals in traditional Muslim dress (*Niqab*) holding protest placards, whereas the image accompanying the control group text displayed the placards without revealing those who held them. Importantly, the texts presented in both conditions were presented as independent of any political affiliation and were not, as a result, attached to any elite-level actor that may be actively engaged in leveraging homonationalist talking points. Of note is that the treatment scenarios reflect anti-LGBT+ protests that have actively taken place. These include the salient, if somewhat exceptional, Muslim protests⁹ against LGBT+ education in the United Kingdom (for a discussion of these protests and the subsequent judicial action that resulted from these, see Vincent 2017), as well as protests in Spain, organized by the Islamic community and other far-right actors, in favor of a parental veto [*PIN parental*] on LGBT+ content in the classroom (Moreno 2022).

Our theoretical argument posits that those individuals who harbor negative predispositions toward immigration and are subsequently exposed to the treatment condition

⁹ While concrete instances of Muslim-led anti-LGBT+ demonstrations may not be uncommon, they are by no means prevalent. Nor do these isolated events signal systematic anti-LGBT+ campaigns among the Islamic community comparable to the widespread transnational organizational efforts of certain socially conservative Christian groups (Stoeckl 2020).

FIGURE 2. Experimental Design (UK)



will display more socially liberal preferences toward LGBT+ education than individuals with comparable anti-immigrant sentiment in the control condition. The empirical test of this expectation is summarized in Model 1 in which $\delta_1 Treatment_i$ is dichotomous indicator of exposure to the out-group (Muslim) treatment (1) or control (0), and $\beta_1 ImmigrationAttitudes_i$ is the moderating variable indicating attitudes (recorded pre-treatment) toward immigration. Attitudes toward immigration are recorded on an 11-point scale (0–10) with higher values indicating more positive (liberal) positions toward immigration.¹⁰ The estimand of interest is the conditional average treatment effect (CATE)—that is,

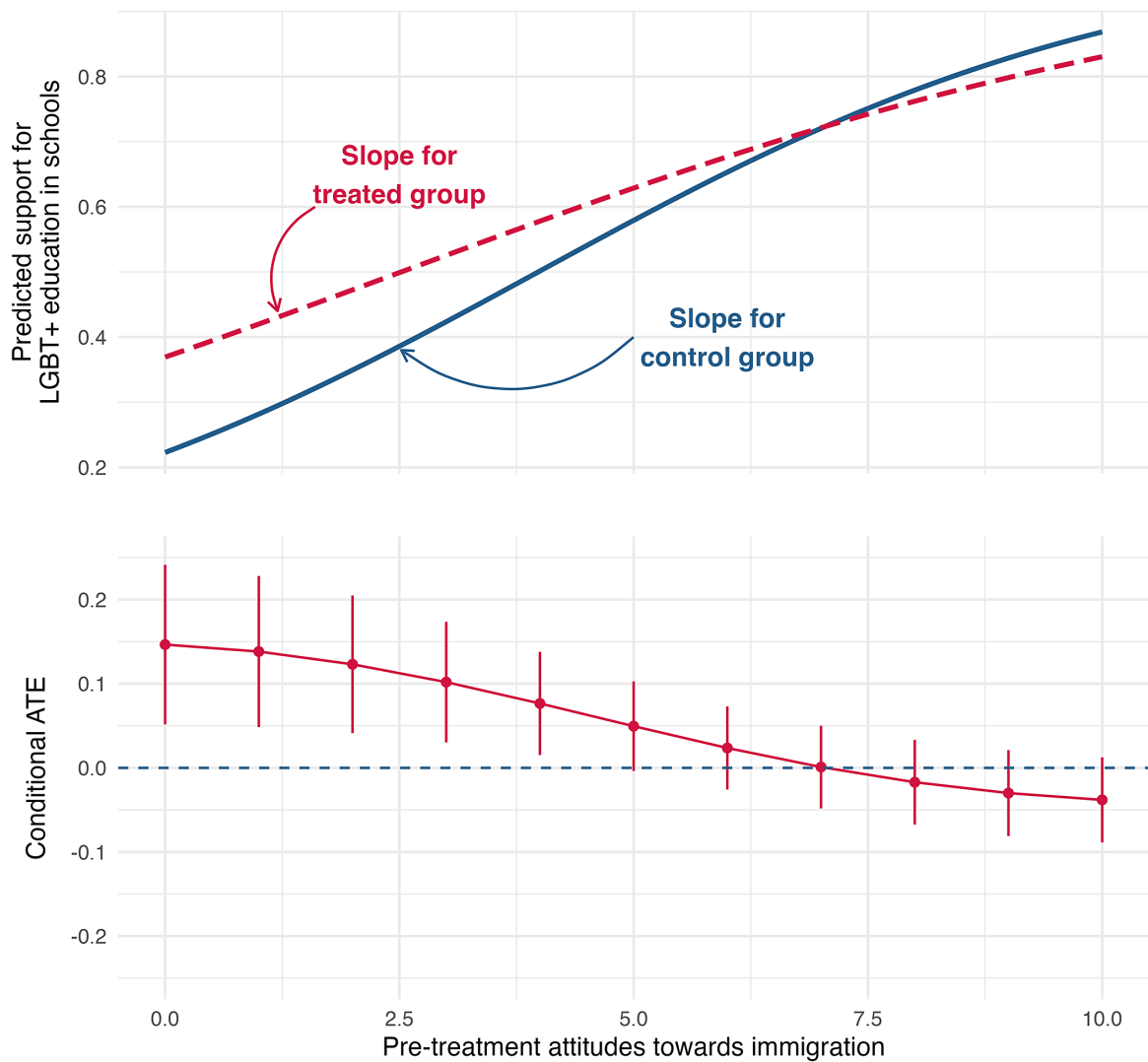
¹⁰ We opted to include a moderator focused on attitudes toward immigration in general as opposed to the Islamic faith so as not to prime individuals specific on anti-Muslim attitudes in the pre-treatment response measure. However, in the Western European

the effect of exposure to treatment conditioned by pre-treatment attitudes toward immigration. Empirically, we estimate the CATE via both a linear estimation of the conditionality of moderator values and a dichotomous indicator based on below- and above-mean attitudes. Power calculations for the estimation of the CATE are reported in Supplementary Figure A8.

$$Y_i = \alpha + \delta_1 Treatment_i + \beta_1 ImmigrationAttitudes_i + \delta_1 Treatment_i * \beta_1 ImmigrationAttitudes_i + \epsilon_i. \tag{1}$$

The empirical results from Study 1 are summarized in Figures 3 and 4. The full regression output, including

context, anti-immigrant preferences are largely determined by confusions between immigration and Islam (Donnalaja 2022).

FIGURE 3. Treatment Effect across Distribution of Immigration Preferences (UK)

Note: Full regression output in Supplementary Table A7.

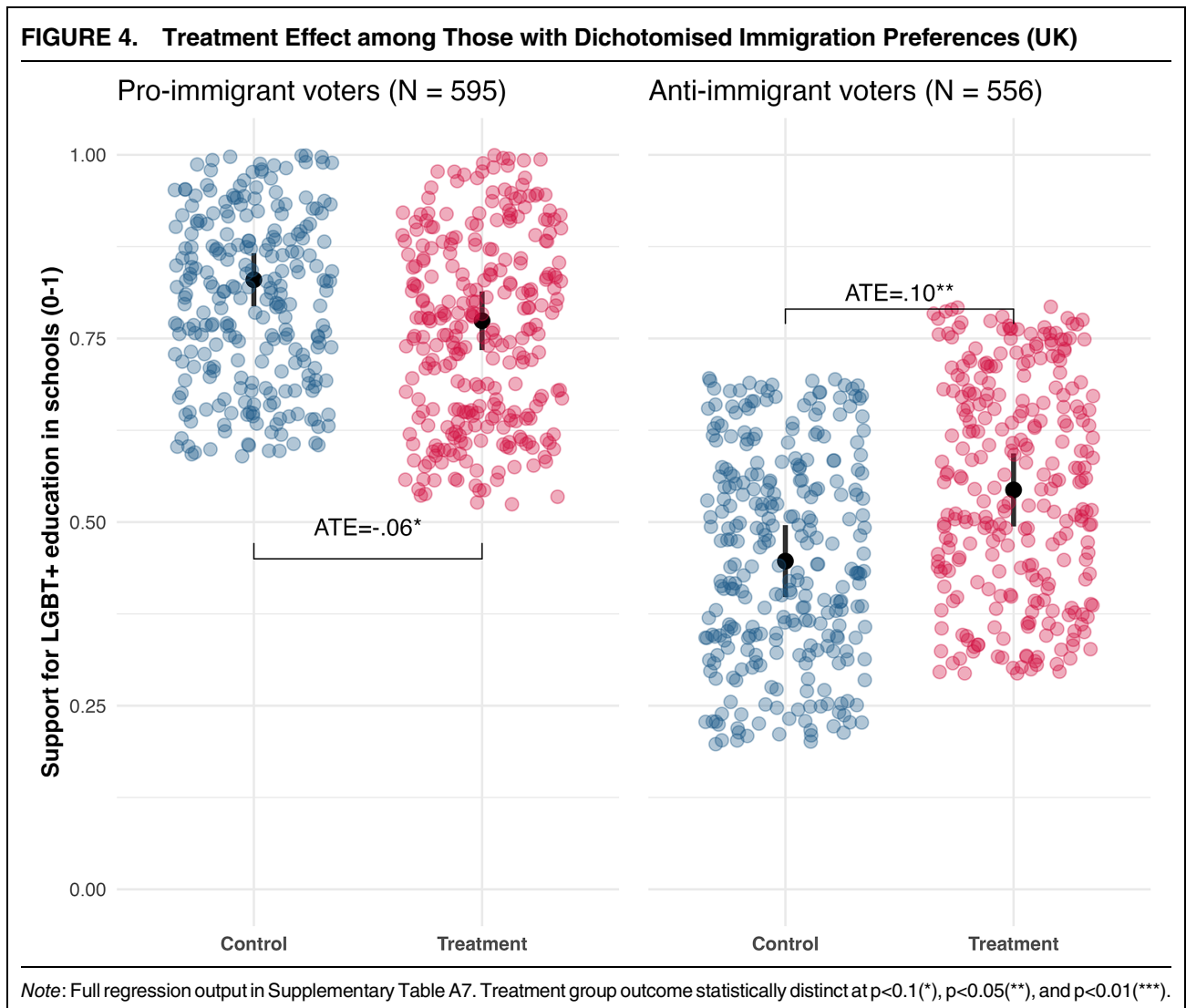
the overall average treatment effect (ATE) in the full sample, is reported in Supplementary Tables A7 and A8.¹¹ Figure 3 visualizes the effect of random exposure to the treatment (ethnic out-group) prompts vis-à-vis control across pre-treatment levels of support for immigration where higher values on the x -axis indicate a more liberal immigration position. The upper panel visualizes the predicted probability of supporting LGBT+ education in schools across observed values of the moderator, and the lower panel reports the CATE across these same values.

As one might expect, support for LGBT+ inclusive education and liberal attitudes toward immigration are

correlated, signaling their coalesced nature as socially progressive issue positions: the more one is supportive of immigration, the more likely it is one is supportive of progressive LGBT+ policies (upper panel of Figure 3). Should individuals' support for LGBT+ education be *genuine* and independent of the out-group identity of those opposed to the policy, we would expect the slopes of those in the control and treatment groups to consistently overlap across different values of the moderator. They do not. Those exposed to treatment and with conservative (illiberal) views on immigration deviate significantly from the baseline counterfactual trend observed by those in the control group with similar views on immigration.

Consistent with our theoretical expectations, the results provide causal evidence that individuals who harbor anti-immigrant preferences become significantly more inclined to adopt more amicable

¹¹ The original data and replication scripts for the studies described in the article are available at the *American Political Science Review* Dataverse (Turnbull-Dugarte and López Ortega 2023).



preferences toward LGBT+ inclusive education when exposed to news of opposition to the same by the ethnic out-group. Among those positively predisposed toward immigration, treatment exhibits no significant ($p < 0.05$) effect if, however, the CATE is negatively signed. The same is not true of those with negative views toward immigration. An individual with views on immigration 4 on an 11-point scale, becomes 7.7 percentage points ($p < 0.05$) more likely to support LGBT+ education when exposed to ethnic out-group opposition to the policy. The conditional ATE is greatest among those with the most negative dispositions toward immigration who become 14.7 percentage points ($p < 0.05$) more likely to express socially liberal preferences toward LGBT+ issues than their equally anti-immigrant peers in the control group. Importantly, these effects are not conditioned by linearity assumptions of the multiplicative interaction (Hainmueller, Mummolo, and Yiqing 2019) as demonstrated in Supplementary Figures A6 and A7.

Figure 4 visualizes a parsimonious test of the instrumentally liberal thesis by dichotomously stratifying the

sample in relation to their views on immigration relative the sample mean. The left-hand panel reports the effect of the out-group treatment message among those with positive dispositions toward immigration (those equal to or greater than the sample mean). The right-hand panel reports conditional treatment effect among those who have a more negative immigration stance (a position below the sample mean). As in the case of the continuously operationalized linear measure (Figure 3), and in line with the expectation of our instrumental liberalism thesis, the results demonstrate that treatment exposure to out-group opposition to the LGBT+ policy only influences support for the policy among those with negative predispositions toward the ethnic out-group. Respondents with below-average dispositions toward immigration become 9.7 percentage points ($p < 0.05$) more inclined to favor LGBT+ inclusive education vis-à-vis those with symmetrical anti-immigrant attitudes in the control condition. Those with illiberal immigration views have a baseline (control group) probability of supporting LGBT+ inclusive education in schools of 0.45. A treatment-

engendered effect of 9.7 percentage points is consequently equatable to a 22% increase against the baseline.

A rich catalog of sensitivity tests are reported in the Supplementary Material, including a comprehensive multiverse analysis (Simonsohn, Simmons, and Nelson 2020) with variation in model specifications and covariate inclusion (see Supplementary Figures A10–A13), which demonstrates the robustness of these findings. In some specifications, the CATE among respondents with positive dispositions toward immigration is significantly negative. These indicative findings suggest that—at least in the British case—among those with strong pro-immigrant preferences, attitudes on LGBT+ issues may actually become less positive. This would imply that non-nativists update views on the sexual out-group negatively as a result of increased sympathies with the ethnic out-group. Theoretically, these results could be the result of those with positive affect toward migrants seeking to identify with the preferences of ethnic out-groups. We do, however, exercise caution in our interpretation of the CATE among pro-immigrant respondents given the significance of the results is not robust to sensitivity tests and, as we reconsider in Study 2, this finding does not replicate outside of the British context.

The results of our first study provide robust empirical support for our primary thesis. Consistent with a homonationalist interpretation of the nationalization of LGBT+ tolerant values and the corollaries of balance theory, we find that exposure to ethnic out-group opposition to LGBT+ rights causes a significant and substantive uptick in support for LGBT+ rights among those with nativist attitudes in the United Kingdom. We now turn to answer two additional subsequent questions that emerge from these findings.

STUDY 2: SPAIN EXPERIMENT

In Study 2, we replicate the test of our theoretical argument via an additional experiment fielded on an online crowd-sourced (Prolific) sample of survey respondents in Spain ($N = 1,200$) in March 2022. The sample is weighted to approximate population parameters based on gender, age, education, and geographical region. The value added of Study 2 is twofold. First, we sought to assess the external validity of the primary findings of Study 1, asking: are these results externally valid and replicable beyond the concrete British case? Second, we seek to expand upon our findings by introducing additional components in our design that facilitate supplementary tests which assess treatment's effect on ancillary outcomes that may give insight into the underlying mechanisms behind the instrumental liberalism we observe, asking: does ethnic out-group opposition result in increased national pride in liberal “Western” values?

Britain is arguably a “most likely” case for us to observe instrumental homonationalist liberalism. First, Britain is a country where opposition to immigration and out-group animosity toward ethnic out-groups, including Muslims (Donnalaja 2022; Ford 2011), has

been comparatively high compared to that observed among the country's European peers (Dennison and Geddes 2019). Second, Britain has, until very recently, played host to a politically influential radical right-wing party (UKIP), and other radical right-wing groups (Jennings and Ralph-Morrow 2020), that have actively pursued homonationalist strategies (Foster and Kirke 2023; Lockhart 2022).

Spain deviates from the British case on a number of significant variables, not least including in the country's electoral and party systems. First, and of theoretical significance for our argument, the salience of concerns related to immigration and ethnic out-group (Muslim) rejection is, unlike the United Kingdom, marginal and significantly below the average observed in other West European nations (Dennison and Geddes 2019; Encarnación 2004). In a low-salience context and where aggregate public opinion on non-European migration is consistently net positive (Dennison, Kustov, and Geddes 2023), the incentives to demarcate oneself by in-group and out-group status are reduced and, consequently, may have less of a moderating role on responses to out-group positions. Second, public support for LGBT+ rights issues, as cross-national observational data on LGB and T+ inclusive education in Europe demonstrates (Supplementary Figure A3), is particularly high in Spain and the country, under the leadership of the then-governing Socialist party (PSOE), was one of the pioneering “early movers” on equal marriage legislation (Calvo 2007; Kollman 2007). Spain legalized equal marriage in 2005, some 8 years before similar legislation was introduced in the United Kingdom. Third, while Spain does have an electorally successful far-right party in the form of VOX, the party, rather than homonationalist, is more explicitly and outspokenly opposed to LGBT+ rights (Rama et al. 2021).¹² Recent anti-LGBT+ policies pursued by VOX, which is currently Spain's third largest national party in terms of both votes and parliamentary representation, include efforts to introduce a parental veto on LGBT+ inclusive education, prohibiting the presence of the rainbow flag on public buildings, the repeal of prohibitions on conversion therapy, and the derogation of LGBT+ anti-discrimination laws. Given these distinct factors, we consider Spain a “less likely” case and, as a result, a replication of our original experiment in this country represents a tough test of our theoretical argument that would provide notable value-added in terms of broader external validity.

The core dependent variable (support for LGBT+ education) and the moderator (pre-treatment attitudes toward immigration) are measured and operationalized symmetrically in Studies 1 and 2. The treatment text and accompanying images in Study 2, as shown in Figure 5, do vary from those in the original experiment. The treatment

¹² VOX has close ties with, and has actively endorsed the policy proposals of, the ultraconservative Catholic organization *Hazte Oír!* [Make yourself heard!] (Rama et al. 2021) which advocates for, in addition to draconian limitations on access to abortion, the repeal of all national- and regional-level LGBT+ anti-discrimination legislation.

FIGURE 5. Experimental Design (Spain)



El contenido pro-LGBT en los libros escolares descrito como "sectario"

Una asociación de padres encabezada por Lucía Muñoz propone revisar los libros de texto que educan a los alumnos de la Comunidad de Madrid. Según declaraciones de una de las madres preocupadas, Teresa Márquez, su asociación ha identificado contenido "sectario" cuyo objetivo es manipular ideológicamente a los niños.

De este modo, este grupo de padres se suma a las demandas de Padres por la Libertad. Bajo el paraguas de que "los padres puedan elegir el tipo de educación sexual que quieran para sus hijos", José Manuel Fernández, portavoz de la asociación, propone revisar una lista de libros sobre el colectivo LGTB que va en contra de sus valores.

Entre los preceptos que quieren tumbar de los libros escolares, los hay que giran en torno a la protección de la diversidad familiar, la adopción, la inclusión de contenido sobre el colectivo en los planes de estudio de los colegios o la financiación de investigaciones en las universidades públicas en materia de orientación sexual e identidad de género.

(a) Control



El contenido pro-LGBT en los libros escolares descrito como "sectario"

Una asociación de padres musulmanes encabezada por Farah Begum propone revisar los libros de texto que educan a los alumnos de la Comunidad de Madrid. Según declaraciones de una de las madres preocupadas, Fatima Bennani, su asociación ha identificado contenido "sectario" cuyo objetivo es manipular ideológicamente a los niños.

De este modo, este grupo de padres se suma a las demandas de Padres Musulmanes por la Libertad. Bajo el paraguas de que "los padres puedan elegir el tipo de educación sexual que quieran para sus hijos", Mohammed El Idrissi, portavoz de la asociación, propone revisar una lista de libros sobre el colectivo LGTB que va en contra de sus valores musulmanes.

Entre los preceptos que quieren tumbar de los libros escolares, los hay que giran en torno a la protección de la diversidad familiar, la adopción, la inclusión de contenido sobre el colectivo en los planes de estudio de los colegios o la financiación de investigaciones en las universidades públicas en materia de orientación sexual e identidad de género.

(b) Treatment

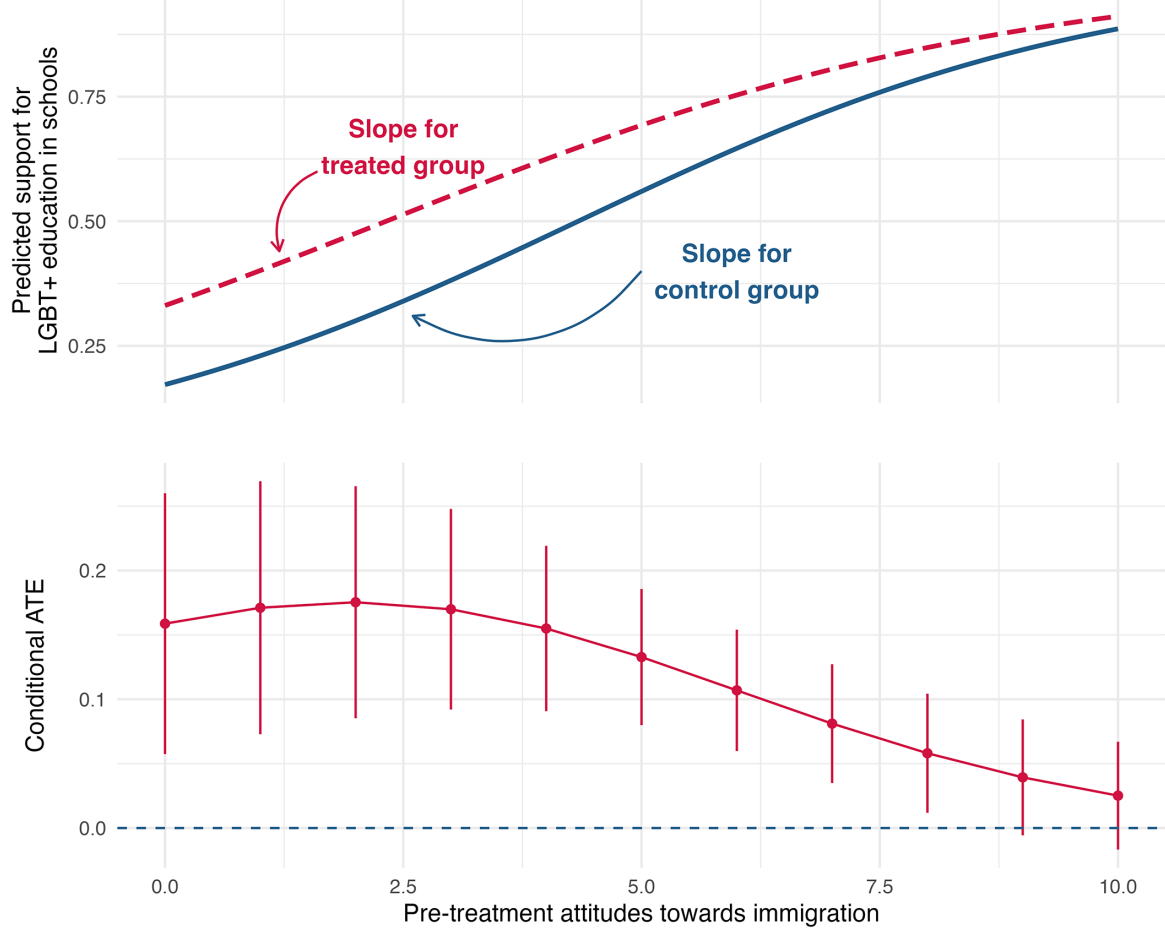
Note: English translation of original Spanish treatment text reported in Section E of the Supplementary Material.

message in Study 2 in Spain focuses on protests specifically around the use of LGBT+ inclusive textbooks. As in the case of Study 1, out-group (Muslim) identities were primed using both visual cues based on individuals in traditional Muslim dress, as well as named organizations (e.g., Muslim Parents for Freedom) and typical Muslim names (Farah Begum, Fatima Bennani, and Mohammed El Idrissi).

In Study 2, we build on our first experimental study by introducing a new survey item in order to test ancillary outcomes that may indicate the mechanisms at play. After recording the core outcome measure, we included a question regarding the extent to which individuals felt national pride in a battery of outcomes. Of interest to our theory was the extent to which individuals felt pride in liberal "western" values. We did, however, also solicit levels of pride in several placebo items which, theoretically should not be influenced by the potential for out-group threat primed in treatment, including: EU norms, green policies, domestic violence laws, the Spanish flag, and the army. Should part of the support for LGBT+ rights engendered by treatment allocation be the result of out-group

opposition priming individuals regarding the nationalization of liberal values (Lægaard 2007) among the "enlightened West" (Siegel 2017), we would expect to observe a simultaneously induced uptick in pride in these values to result from treatment assignment.

The primary results of our experimental manipulation in Study 2 are visualized in Figures 6 and 7. The upper panel of Figures 6 visualizes the predicted probability of supporting LGBT+ education among those randomly exposed to ethnic out-group opposition (treatment) and ethnic in-group opposition (control) to LGBT+ inclusive education in Spanish schools across observed values of attitudes toward immigration. The lower panel reports the CATE across these same pre-treatment immigration attitudes. As in the case of Britain, Spanish respondents with more liberal attitudes toward immigration are more inclined to support LGBT+ education. In other words, nativism is, on average, a strong predictor of opposition toward more liberal and inclusive LGBT+ policies. Experimentally exposing Spanish respondents to ethnic out-group opposition to LGBT+ rights, however, significantly increases support for the liberal LGBT+ policy vis-à-vis those randomly exposed to ethnic in-group

FIGURE 6. Treatment Effect across Distribution of Immigration Preferences (Spain)

Note: Full regression output in Supplementary Table A9.

opposition and this effect is significantly larger among those with nativist preferences.

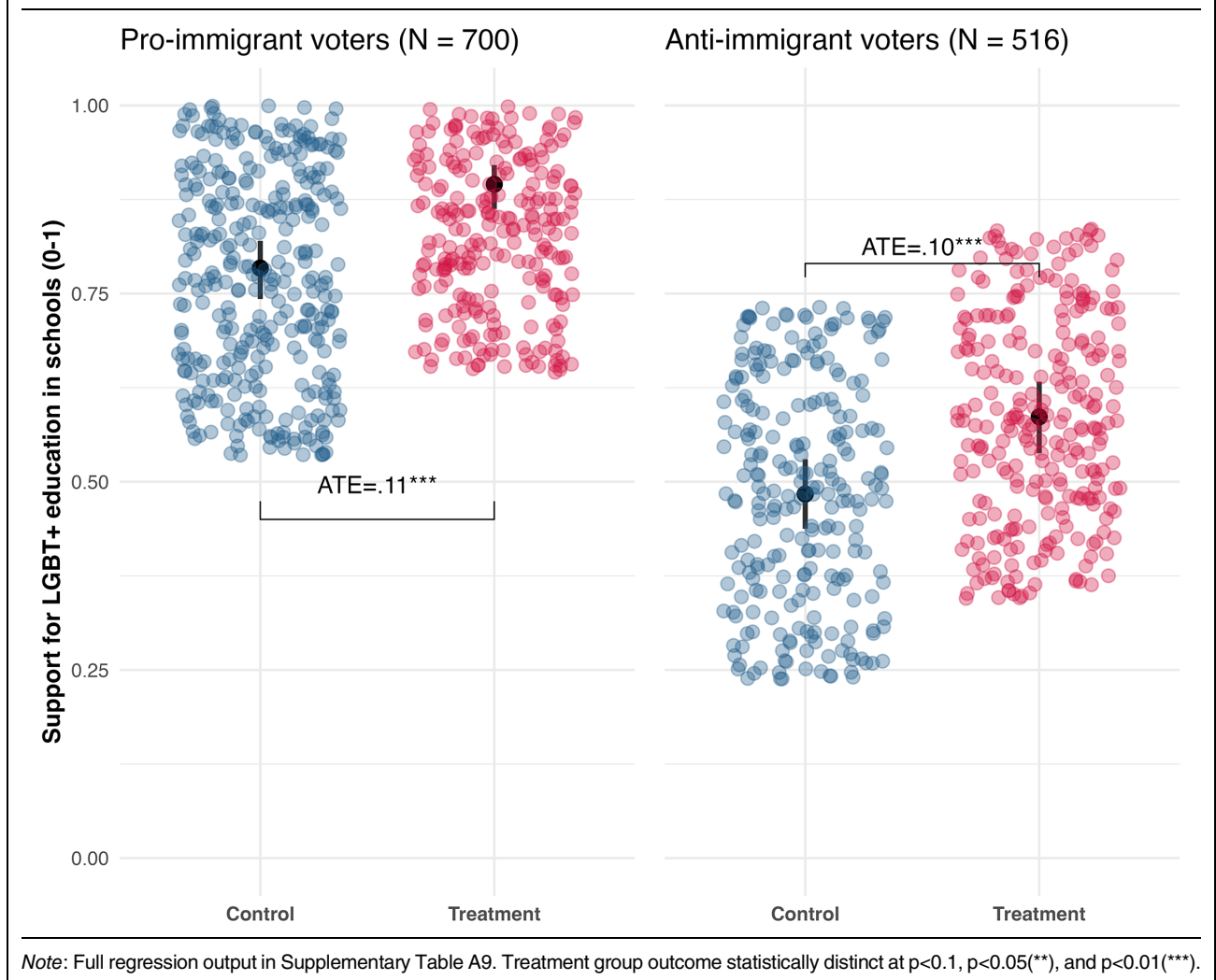
As visualized in the lower panel of Figure 6, the treatment-induced uptick in support for LGBT+ education vis-à-vis the control group counterfactual is present across all values of moderator. In other words, although treatment induces a significantly larger increase in pro-LGBT+ policy preferences among those with more nativist attitudes, treatment also exhibits a small increase in LGBT+ policy support among those without nativist views. This latter finding is distinct from that of Study 1 where indicative evidence pointed toward opposite effects among individuals based on their position related to immigration. This is more explicitly apparent when the sample is stratified based on respondents' immigration position relative the sample mean (Figure 7). Treated respondents in Spain, regardless of whether or not they held nativist views, reported support for LGBT+ education that was 10 or 11 percentage points higher, respectively, than their peers with similar (non)-nativist views. Given that each group has a different baseline, this does indicate that the magnitude of the effect among

anti-immigrant respondents is notably larger. While for pro-immigrant respondents exposure to treatment resulted in a 14% change in the outcome vis-à-vis the control group-based counterfactual, the same treatment message resulted in a 21% change among anti-immigrant respondents.

Ancillary Evidence: Pride in “Western Freedoms”

In addition to the core dependent variable (support for LGBT+ education), in Study 2, we further explore the homonationalist mechanism with an additional indicator (pride for the freedoms inherent to Western lifestyle). Does exposure to ethnic out-groups promoting positions at odds with LGBT+ tolerance result in a shift in citizens' pride in the liberties of the West?

The results visualized in Figure 8 demonstrate that, consistent with our theory of instrumental liberalism, nativist individuals exposed to ethnic out-group opposition to LGBT+ rights, in addition to becoming more supportive of LGBT+ right themselves, also report

FIGURE 7. Treatment Effect among Those with Dichotomised Immigration Preferences (Spain)

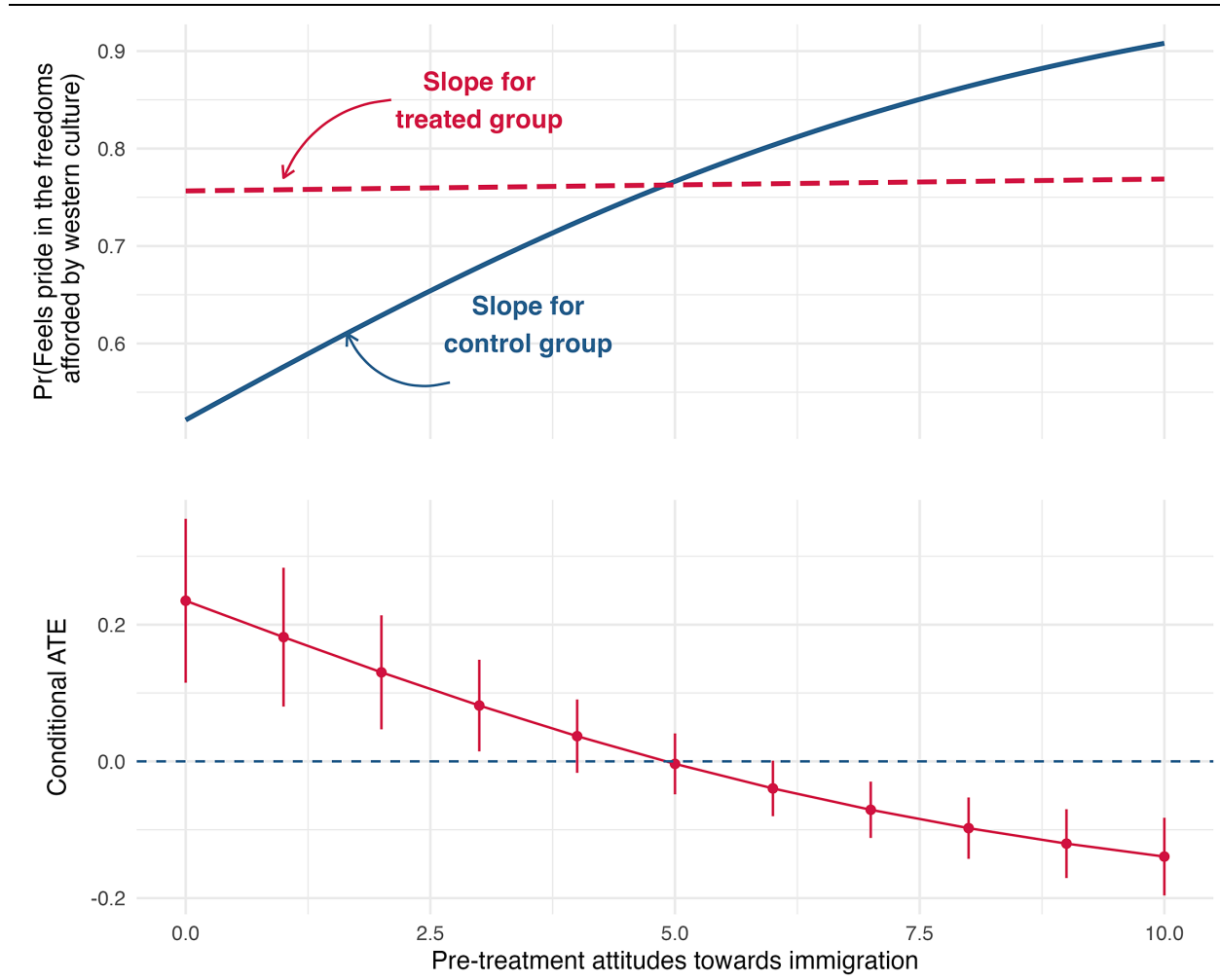
significantly higher feelings of national pride in the liberties and freedoms afforded by their country's "Western lifestyle." This positive effect is not observed among those with more amicable views on immigration where the observed effect is the reverse (negative) if, however, notably smaller than that observed among nativists. In other words, while treatment induced a positive effect on LGBT+ policy support among all respondents, the same is not true when it comes to pride in western values where positive treatment effects are unique to nativists. Estimating the conditional effect of treatment on national pride on a number of placebo concerns including "green" policies, domestic violence protections, the flag, and the military, provides null results (see Supplementary Table A11) demonstrating that the incremental effect among nativists of exposure to ethnic out-group opposition to LGBT+ rights is unique to a sense of pride in Western liberal values. This provides evidence that nativists not only become more positively inclined toward pro-LGBT+ education as a result of negative affect against the ethnic out-group, but that their instrumental pro-LGBT+ positioning

responds to a binary worldview in which sexual freedoms are associated with a "Western" nationalization (Lægård 2007) of pro-LGBT values that situates "the West" above the ethnic out-group.

DISCUSSION

In seeking to understand the growth in more tolerant positions toward gender and sexuality minorities among those individuals with intolerant positions toward ethnic out-groups (Kwon, Scarborough, and Taylor 2023; Lancaster 2020; Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017), in this article, we ask if the proverb of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" has implications for how we understand and explain these macro-level trends. Observational analysis, like the cross-sectional and longitudinal descriptive data we present in the Supplementary Material, cannot assess to what extent the presence of LGBT+ tolerant nativists among the right is a reflection of a *genuine* transformation in LGBT+ specific liberal values, or the result of more

FIGURE 8. CATE on Pride in Western Liberties



Note: Full regression output in Supplementary Table A11.

superficial *instrumental* changes based on developing norms that stem from the in-group normalization of LGB persons alongside ethnic out-group rejection of Muslim others.

Empirically, we build on these observational data and provide causal evidence to demonstrate that when opposition to progressive LGBT+ policy issues is presented as a concern of an ethnic out-group (Muslims), those with illiberal predispositions toward immigration are significantly more likely to strategically liberalize their preferences on LGBT+ rights. We demonstrate that exposing individuals in Britain with below-average support for immigration to news of out-group based opposition to LGBT+ rights induces a 9.7 percentage-point uptake in support for LGBT+ vis-à-vis individuals with comparable illiberal positions on immigration. A similar experimental design finds effects of a comparable size (10 percentage points) in Spain. These effects are not trivial, but rather, of a

sizeable and substantive magnitude. Our concrete experimental tests come from Britain and Spain where we have variation in the recent presence of far-right actors that employ homonationalist rhetoric. The scope conditions of our theory assume that these effects will likely be observed in other liberal democracies where baseline state-level recognition of LGBT+ rights has been established and enjoys a longer pedigree.

The observational data we report from the ESS point toward the presence of a significant proportion of sexually liberal nativist citizens on the right across a catalog of Western democracies. One important empirical takeaway from our results, however, is that despite the growing presence of these sexually liberal nativists, nativism itself remains a major determinant of homonegative preferences. The more liberal one's views toward immigration, the more inclusive one's views on inclusive LGBT+ education. The causal evidence from our experimental studies suggests that part of the

observed liberal turn on LGBT+ tolerance among nativists is likely a function of instrumental processes that stem from ethnic out-group *disidentification*. Given far-right homonationalist agendas have become commonplace in many countries (Siegel *Forthcoming*), including notable examples outside of Europe like the United States (Murib 2018) and Israel (Gross 2015; Puar 2013), we surmise that instrumental disidentification-motivated liberalism on questions of LGBT+ rights is likely active in these states as well.

The results of these experiments have important implications for how we understand the relationship between attitudes toward ethnic out-groups and preferences toward LGBT+ rights. Nativist radical-right-wing political parties, social actors, and individuals harboring anti-immigrant prejudices have increasingly leveraged political rhetoric that strategically rationalizes anti-immigrant policy positions as a function of their desire to defend and protect the welfare of the LGBT+ community from the *alleged* inimical threat that immigrants (read Muslims) represent to this collective. These strategies are not unique to issues related to LGBT+ rights (Farris 2017), but also reflect wider attempts by radical right-wing actors to strategically and aesthetically deradicalize their image by defining themselves by who they *are not* as opposed to solely by who they *are*.

We argue that these processes of disidentification with ethnic out-groups contribute to our understanding of the evolving nature of mass support for LGBT+ rights. The rise in social acceptance of LGBT+ is clearly positive in terms of expanding the liberal principles of the democratic nations that have been engaged in the advancement of policies aimed at establishing, normalizing, and protecting the egalitarian treatment of sexual and gender minorities. In a context where individuals are incentivized to perceive and promote one's in-group positively, and in so doing engage in comparisons that allow them to perceive and promote one's out-group negatively (Turner 1975), individuals are actively engaged in identifying attributes that allow for differentiation—and the enlargement of this differentiation—in order to maintain their perceived superior status and distinctiveness from the “other” (Tajfel 1974; Turner 1975). Just as Trump's own commodification of LGBT+ tolerance was superficial, short-lived, and conditioned by the strategic salience of concerns related to his planned prohibition on Muslim migrants, we interpret the disidentification-induced effects among citizens to likely be superficial and somewhat ephemeral. Indeed, an assumption of our theoretical argument posits that in a context where the incentives for out-group distinctiveness are absent or relaxed, so too will be the incentives to signal increased tolerance toward sexual minorities and those with diverse gender identities.

LGBT+ freedoms have not been the only element that nativists have used as a political weapon to justify their prejudice against ethnic out-groups. The findings of this article are extensible to similar strategies such as femonationalism (Farris 2017) or environmental

nationalism (Conversi and Hau 2021), where women's and environmental rights are the issues that could hide instrumental support from nativists. In general, our study adds evidence on how democratic systems rely on circumstantial support for goals understood as superior, whether it is the rule of the political in-group (Graham and Svolik 2020; Simonovits, McCoy, and Littvay 2022); or the exclusion of ethnic out-groups as we show in this study. Indeed, many civil rights gains may hide fragile underpinnings that could explain recent democratic reversals in Western countries (Gidengil, Stolle, and Bergeron-Boutin 2021; Vachudova 2020). We invite researchers to re-examine the strength of the gains that liberal democracies have made in recent decades by delving into the conditionality and instrumental nature of liberalized values.

Across much of Europe, positive affect and liberal attitudes toward the LGBT+ community, as well as concrete policies that expand the welfare of this group, have been increasing. Simultaneously, concerns over immigration have also been enjoying a renaissance in salience leading to the electoral success of far-right parties that propagate anti-immigrant policy proposals and stir up ethnic-based conflict. The findings presented here suggest that these two parallel trends may not be independent: tolerance toward LGBT+ issues, while undoubtedly experiencing a genuine increase, is likely also the fruit of instrumental liberalism that stems from Western nativists' efforts to differentiate themselves as members of the enlightened West from the homophobic other.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The supplementary material for this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000849>.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research documentation and data that support the findings of this study are openly available at the American Political Science Review Dataverse: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/70UDEG>.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

The authors declare the human subjects research in this article was reviewed and approved by the University of Southampton Faculty of Social Science Ethics Review Board (Certificate No. ERGO80620). The authors affirm that this article adheres to the APSA's Principles and Guidance on Human Subject Research.

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