

A Comment on ‘Instrumentally Inclusive: The Political Psychology of Homonationalism’ (Turnbull-Dugarte and López Ortega (2024)).

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Introduction

Turnbull-Dugarte and López Ortega (2024) consider whether increasing acceptance of homosexuality in Western countries may be partly attributable to increasing exposure to sexually conservative ethnic out-groups. The authors’ argue that such exposure may drive an instrumental increase in LGBT+ tolerance and inclusion among those who are pre-disposed to disfavour the ethnic out-group.

To test this theory, the authors present results from two similar experiments, conducted in the UK (“study 1” in the paper) and Spain (“study 2” in the paper) respectively. In these two experiments respondents were randomly assigned to read vignettes about protests of LGBT+ education in schools. In the UK experiment, the control vignette featured protestors with conventional white-British names, while the treatment vignette featured protestors with conventional Muslim names and a photograph of protestors in identifiably Muslim dress. In the Spain experiment, the treatment vignette likewise featured Muslim names, Muslim organizations, and a photograph of people in identifiably Muslim dress. Post-treatment, the authors measure support for LGBT+ education in schools as their primary dependent variable.

The key finding is that being primed with the ethnic out-group (Muslims in both cases) leads to an increase in support for LGBT+ inclusion in schools, but that this effect is generally stronger (and in the UK case only present) among those with pre-existing negative attitudes towards immigrants. The authors argue that this heterogeneity is evidence of instrumentalism. Individuals who are pre-disposed to disfavour the out-group are more likely to support LGBT+ inclusion in schools when they see that support as in opposition or contrast to an ethnic out-group.

In this note I outline some concerns with the paper, focused primarily on the Spain experiment. Two are major concerns:

1. The published results of the Spain experiment rely on the use of post-stratification survey weights in the regression analyses. This choice is inconsistent with the analysis of the UK experiment, where no such weights are used. When the data are not weighted the results in the Spain experiment are largely null, both statistically and substantively. This sensitivity appears to derive from the weights having an unusual distribution, with roughly two-thirds of the data receiving weights less than 0.1, and roughly one-third receiving a weight of approximately 3.