

## **Sexual Orientation and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in Western Europe**

**Ilan James Hogston\* and Anastasia Gorodzeisky\***

### **Abstract**

This paper investigates the attitudes of LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual) individuals towards immigrants (specifically, perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country) and immigration (specifically, opposition to immigration) as attitudes of a minority group - out-group in terms of sexual orientation, towards another minority group - out-group in terms of nativity status. Using ESS survey data, the empirical analysis demonstrates that partnered LGB individuals in Western Europe perceived lower levels of threat from the presence of immigrants in their countries and expressed lower levels of opposition to immigration than partnered heterosexual individuals. The study further develops arguments regarding possible mechanisms underwriting the association between sexual orientation and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. The findings reveal that perceived group discrimination based on sexuality fully mediated the association between sexual orientation and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. By contrast, political orientation only partially mediated this association.

**Key words:** anti-immigrant sentiment, perceived threat, opposition to immigration, public opinion, sexual orientation, cultural marginality theory, Europe.

\* Tel Aviv University

## Introduction

Recent years have seen an increase in public opinion research examining the relationship between sexual orientation and social and political attitudes, albeit mostly in the US context (e.g. Grollman, 2017, 2018; Worthen, 2020; Swank, 2019). Investigating differences in a wide range of social and political attitudes between the heterosexual population and sexual minorities in the United States, Schnabel (2018) suggests that sexuality should be seen as a key socio-demographic predictor of such attitudes, along with race, gender, and education. In the European context, such attitudinal research based on national representative samples has been scarce, largely due to data limitations, and focused mostly on LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual) individuals' attitudes towards political ideology (e.g. Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020). To bridge this gap, the present paper aims to contribute to the discussion of the effect of sexual orientation on social attitudes in Western Europe by focusing on one of the most politicized and polarizing topics in current public and political debates – migration.

Specifically, we examine whether and to what extent sexual orientation is associated with perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country (i.e., attitudes towards immigrants) and opposition to immigration (i.e., attitudes towards immigration) in Western Europe.<sup>1</sup> Following Ceobanu & Escandell's (2010) argument, we view attitudes towards immigrants and attitudes towards immigration as two distinct concepts. While the former refers to public perception of foreigners who are already living in the country and their impact on society, the latter pertains to public opinion about immigration as a phenomenon or, in other words, to public objection to the admission of foreigners to the country and to public views regarding immigration policies implemented by the state (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010). Likewise, our research corresponds with other European studies that treat public support for the exclusion of foreigners as a concept that is distinguishable from other forms of hostility (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Blinder, 2013; Gorodzeisky and Richards, 2016; Hercowitz-Amir & Rajman, 2020). Thus, in this paper we examine the attitudes towards immigrants and attitudes toward immigration, separately.

We further investigate two mediating mechanisms that might underlie the association between sexual orientation and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration: (a) cultural marginality position and (b) left-right political orientation. To develop the arguments on the mechanisms underlying the association between sexual orientation and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, we situate the discussion in the theoretical framework of inter-group relations. In this framework, the attitudes of LGB<sup>2</sup> people towards immigrants and immigration can be considered as attitudes of members of one minority group –

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<sup>1</sup> Perceived threat posed by immigrants on society, or, in other words, the anticipation of negative impact that immigrants living in a country may exert on society, can be considered as one of the types of attitudes towards immigrants. For the sake of brevity, we refer here to perceived threat from immigrants living in a country also as attitudes towards immigrants. We also refer to opposition to immigration as attitudes towards immigration.

<sup>2</sup> Following Turnbull-Dugarte (2020), we refer in this research to individuals who participate in sexual activity with members of the same-sex as being LGB. Yet, it does not mean that these individuals self-identify as LGB.

an out-group in terms of sexual orientation – toward members of another minority group – an out-group in terms of nativity status.

Thus, the paper's contribution is twofold. First, it advances the discussion of sexual orientation as a socio-demographic predictor of social and political attitudes by expanding it to the European context and studying attitudes towards immigrants (more specifically, perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country) and attitudes towards immigration (more specifically, opposition to immigration). Second, it develops an argumentation regarding the mechanisms underlying the association between sexual orientation and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration within the theoretical framework of inter-group relations, and empirically tests these mechanisms.

We begin the paper with a brief discussion of sexual minorities and related public opinion research. Next, we present a theoretical framework that guides the current investigation. We then describe the data source, the variables, and the methodological strategy adopted in the article. The next section presents the findings that emerged from the empirical analysis. We conclude with a discussion of the findings.

### **Sexual orientation and public opinion research**

Until only a few decades ago, LGB people were seen as victims of mental disorders, in need of psychiatric treatment and religious redemption. Due to the stigma associated with homosexuality, members of the LGB community often hid their sexual orientation and identity. Today, due to scientific advancements, which define these identities not as forms of mental illness, but as expressions of human sexual identity, acceptance of LGB individuals in most Western countries has grown. Anti-discrimination laws related to sexual orientation have also played a large part in this development (Bailey et al., 2016; FRA, 2020). Although there has been a meaningful improvement in the granting and safeguarding of LGB persons' rights in Western nations, the LGB population remains a minority group (i.e., out-group) that suffers from distinct forms of discrimination and marginalization, e.g., hate-based violence or harassment, and discrimination in the workforce and other areas of life (FRA, 2020).

Public opinion research has traditionally focused more on the social attitudes of the general population towards various minority groups than on the attitudes of the minority groups themselves. So, the body of public opinion research that explores social attitudes of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people is relatively small. In other words, public opinion research that treats the sexual minority population as social subjects is much scarcer than the research that examines the sexual minority population as social objects and studies attitudes toward them (Schnabel, 2018). Notwithstanding the meaningful contribution of the latter to the knowledge on prejudice and discriminatory attitudes towards the LGB population, it is also important to understand the attitudes of the LGB population itself toward other minority and disadvantaged groups (e.g., immigrants, ethnic or religious minorities) in a society. The present paper aims to expand this

body of public opinion research by studying attitudes of LGB individuals towards immigrants and immigration.

The empirical analysis of the present paper is based on data obtained from the European Social Survey (ESS) for 12 Western European countries (ESS Cumulative File, 2020). We adopt Turnbull-Dugarte's (2020) strategy to identify partnered LGB respondents in the ESS data. Following Turnbull-Dugarte (2020), the present empirical analysis is also limited to those adults who live together with their partners, wives, or husbands. While an analysis of all identities in the LGBTQ+ community is ideal, the data at hand only allows us to distinguish sexual orientation and not gender identity. Thus, we examine attitudes of partnered lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) respondents as compared with partnered heterosexual respondents. Although the ESS data cover also post-socialist Central and Eastern European countries, we focus only on Western European countries for two main reasons. First, whereas Western Europe has experienced substantial immigration flows for decades, Central and Eastern Europe has only started to receive foreign residents in sizeable numbers quite recently. Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in countries with longer experiences of migration are more stable than in countries, which are at the early stages of the migration circle (Semyonov, Raijman and Gorodzeisky, 2006). Second, Western European countries are characterized by a greater general acceptance of the LGB population than Central and Eastern European ones. For example, a substantially smaller share of the populations in Central and Eastern European countries favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally than in Western European countries (Diamant and Gardner, 2018). It is, thus, reasonable to suggest that a smaller and less representative subsample of LGB respondents in Central and Eastern European countries are willing to self-identify themselves in the survey as being in a same sex relationship than that in Western European countries.

### **Theoretical framework and expectations**

Discussing the general tendency of LGB community members towards liberal and tolerant attitudes, previous research based on US national representative samples, demonstrated that sexual orientation is associated with a range of racial attitudes as well as with attitudes towards immigration. For instance, Grollman (2017, 2018) found that LGB respondents had a greater tendency towards recognition of racial discrimination and racial inequality and tended to express more sympathy with and admiration of black people than their heterosexual compatriots. Likewise, Schnabel (2018) demonstrated that compared to heterosexuals, LGB respondents were scored more liberal on race attitudes and immigration attitudes scales. Thus, following previous studies we expect that,

*(H1) LGB individuals, as compared to their heterosexual compatriots in Western European countries, will report lower levels of perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in their countries and express greater support for the admission of immigrants (i.e., support for immigration) to their countries.*

Within the theoretical framework of inter-group relationships, sexual orientation can be understood as an indicator of belonging to an in- or out-group. Specifically, the heterosexual population can be seen as representing a dominant, majority in-group; while the homosexual population as representing a minority out-group. Thus, the attitudes of LGB individuals towards immigrants and immigration can be considered as attitudes of a minority out-group in terms of sexual orientation, toward another minority out-group in terms of nativity status. Consequently, according to cultural marginality theory (Fetzer, 2000), the marginality position of homosexual individuals can explain the differences in the levels of anti-immigrant sentiment between LGB individuals and heterosexual individuals. Cultural marginality theory suggests that "everything else being equal - experiencing marginality or oppression oneself creates sympathy for other marginalized or oppressed groups, even if they do not belong to one's own group." (Fetzer, 2000, p.7; Allport 1979). The theory stresses the importance of the socialization process, in which group members learn to identify themselves as marginalized due to the discrimination they perceive to be experiencing. To develop feelings of solidarity with and sympathy for another disadvantaged group, individuals should be socialized to believe that they themselves are marginalized (Fetzer, 2000). This theoretical thesis has received solid empirical support in previous studies focusing on the differences in anti-immigrant sentiment between minority and majority groups, in terms of religion, race, and ethnicity (Fetzer, 2000; Hayes and Dowds, 2006; Gorodzeisky, 2021a, 2021b). These studies found that individuals belonging to religious, racialized, and ethnic minorities tend to express more positive attitudes towards such minority groups as migrants and refugees, compared to citizens belonging to majority populations in their countries, in terms of religion, race, and ethnicity. Here, we suggest that the cultural marginality position can explain the lower level of anti-immigrant sentiment among LGB persons (as compared to heterosexual persons), who are more likely to perceive themselves as members of the minority group discriminated against based on sexuality. As a result of experiencing such discrimination, LGB individuals may develop solidarity with and sympathy towards other victims of discrimination and prejudice (i.e., immigrants).

In line with the logic underlying cultural marginality theory, recent attitudinal studies regarding sexual orientation explain its influence on social attitudes using the underdog or positionality theoretical theses. Whether described by Schnabel (2018, p.14) as a "sexual minority subculture shaped by experiences with disadvantage" or by Grollman (2017, p.137) as "an underdog group subjected to widespread discrimination," the perceived discrimination experienced by the LGB community has been considered a mechanism for greater sympathy toward other disadvantaged groups. In sum, a tendency to more positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration among homosexual as compared to heterosexual individuals can be explained by homosexual people's perception of the LGB community as a marginalized, discriminated-against group and by their sense of belonging to this group.

*H2: The effect of sexual orientation on perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country and opposition to immigration will be explained by a sense of belonging to a marginalized discriminated-against group.*

An additional explanation as to why LGB individuals may have more positive attitudes towards immigrants and immigration than their heterosexual compatriots can be linked to the differences between the two populations in their inclinations toward certain political ideologies. "The Lavender Vote" (Hertzog, 1996), a pioneering study in this field, demonstrated that in the US, LGB voters tended to vote for Democratic candidates and to support leftist policies. Moreover, Egan (2012) suggested that LGB individuals were more likely to hold leftist preferences from the inception of their political participation. One of the main reasons for the LGB individuals' tendency towards left-wing political ideologies relates to the fact that the political goal of LGB equality in Western liberal democracies is part of left-leaning liberal parties' manifestos. Previous research has also pointed out that the ideas of political solidarity and egalitarianism, promoted by the political left, found particular sympathy among the LGB community as a minority group (Hertzog, 1996, Sherrill, 1996). Indeed, recent public opinion research found that LGB citizens in the US and in Western European countries tended to hold left-leaning political ideologies and vote for left-wing parties more frequently than heterosexual citizens (Grollman, 2017; Schnabel, 2018; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020).

Studies in Western European countries and the US have demonstrated a strong association between left-right political orientation and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Semyonov, Raijman, and Gorodzeisky, 2006; Bohman, 2011; Lamont, 2019). More specifically, the political left is associated with pro-immigrant attitudes, while the political right is associated with anti-immigrant sentiment. Moreover, the differences between holders of left-wing political ideologies and holders of right-wing political ideologies in attitudes toward immigrants and immigration have been increasing over the last decades in various Western societies (Semyonov, Raijman, and Gorodzeisky, 2006; Sanderson, Semyonov, and Gorodzeisky, 2021). Because LGB individuals are more likely to hold leftist political ideologies than heterosexual individuals, and because left-wing political ideology is associated with pro-immigrant attitudes, political orientation should be responsible at least in a part for any differences in attitudes towards immigrants and immigration between LGB and heterosexual citizens. Thus,

*H3: The effect of sexual orientation on perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country and opposition to immigration will be at least partially explained by the differences in political orientation between LGB and heterosexual individuals.*

Based on the theoretical expectations presented above, the empirical analysis presented in the next section estimates the differences in anti-immigrant sentiment between LGB and heterosexual individuals

and examines the mechanisms of cultural marginality position and political orientation underlying such differences.

### **Data, Variables, and Methodological Strategy**

Data were obtained from the eight rounds of the ESS, conducted every two years from 2002 to 2016. We used information provided for 12 Western European countries, 10 European Union member state – Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Finland, France, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden – plus Norway and Switzerland. In each country, information was gathered from a random probability national sample of the eligible resident populations aged 15 and over (ESS Cumulative File, 2020). The analytical sample includes 101,748 respondents with 1,401 LGB and 100,347 heterosexual respondents (Appendix A presents the number of respondents by country)<sup>3</sup>

The first dependent variable – *perceived threat (i.e., attitudes towards immigrants)* – is an index constructed as the mean score of responses to three questions regarding views on the impact that immigrants exert on society: 1) Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?; 2) Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries?; and 3) Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries? Responses are coded according to an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (most positive) to 10 (most negative).

The second dependent variable – *opposition to immigration (i.e., attitudes towards immigration)* – is an index constructed as the sum score of responses to the three following questions: 1) To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here?; 2) How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people?; and 3) How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe? Responses to each question were coded on a 4-point scale with the highest value indicating the highest level of exclusionary attitudes.

Previous studies showed that the items measuring both dependent variables are reliable, with satisfactorily loads on their corresponding latent variables, and demonstrate sufficient levels of comparability across countries and times (Davidov et.al. 2015; Davidov, Cieciuch, and Schmid, 2018). Appendix B presents the loadings of the items on their corresponding variables in the current total sample and for LGB and heterosexual respondents, separately.

The key independent variable, *sexual orientation*, is a dummy variable that distinguishes between respondents who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) and respondents who are heterosexual. We borrow the strategy employed by Turnbull-Dugarte (2020) to identify LGB respondents in the European Social Survey data. The ESS questionnaire asked respondents to provide information about sex of each member

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<sup>3</sup> Out of this sample, 0.2% did not respond to the "attitudes toward immigrants" question and another 1% did not respond to the "attitudes toward immigration" question.

of their household and about the relationship of each household member to the respondent. When respondents identified a household member as a 'husband/wife/partner' and the sex of the respondent was the same as the sex of this household member, the respondents were labeled as being in a same-sex relationship, in other words, as homosexual (L, G) or bisexual (B). When respondents identified a household member as a 'husband/wife/partner' and the sex of the respondent was different from the sex of this household member, the respondents were labeled as being in a different-sex relationship, thus, heterosexual. One may suggest that such operationalization of sexual orientation is based on an aspect that draws the most historical attention – sexual behavior (Bailey et al., 2016). Following Turnbull-Dugarte (2020), all respondents who were single were dropped from the analysis because the data at hand did not allow an identification of their sexual orientation. This is the major limitation of the present analysis since it includes only adults who live together with their partners. Yet, in light of the scarce public opinion research based on national representative samples on the social attitudes of LGB people as compared to heterosexual people, the results are worthwhile.

*Perceived discrimination based on sexuality* is a dummy variable which distinguishes between respondents who describe themselves as members of the group that is discriminated against on grounds of sexuality and those who do not. The variable was constructed using responses to the two following questions: 1) Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country? (yes/no), and 2) On what grounds is your group discriminated against? The respondents were given a list of grounds, including sexuality, and multiple answers were allowed. Examining the role of perceived discrimination on grounds of sexuality allows empirical testing of the mechanism underlying the association between sexual orientation and social attitudes, as suggested by either cultural marginality theory (Fetzer, 2000) or positionality theoretical thesis (Schnabel, 2018; Grollman, 2017).

*Political ideology* is measured by the left to right political orientation scale. The respondents were asked the following question: In politics, people sometimes talk of "left" and "right." Where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?

Multivariate analysis included also several individual attributes, which are considered as consistent predictors of attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. Education (years of formal schooling) and reported subjective income (insufficient versus sufficient) were used as proxies of an individual's socio-economic position. Numerous studies in Western countries have demonstrated that native-born residents in socio-economically vulnerable positions (low-educated, with low earnings) express more negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigration than their compatriots in stronger socio-economic positions (e.g. Esses et al., 2001; Scheepers, Gijsberts, & Coenders 2002; Semyonov, Raijman & Gorodzeisky, 2006). Age, gender, place of residence (rural versus urban), and native-born status (native versus non-native) were introduced into the analysis as demographic control variables. In addition, both country and year of survey were controlled for.



## Findings

### *Descriptive statistics*

The descriptive statistics of all variables are presented in Table 1. The descriptive results demonstrate that, on average, LGB respondents express lower levels of threat from the presence of immigrants in a country and opposition to immigration than heterosexual respondents. Graphs 1 and 2 present the distribution of perceived threat and opposition to immigration among both groups for illustrative purposes. LGB respondents are more likely to hold left-wing political ideology as compared to heterosexual populations. As expected, the percentage of LGB respondents who see themselves belonging to the group discriminated on the grounds of sexuality is substantially higher than that in heterosexual populations. LGB respondents on average have higher levels of education and a lower tendency to reside in rural areas as compared to heterosexual respondents. They are also substantially younger than heterosexual individuals in this sample of adult populations living together with their partners/wife/husbands.

Although interesting and informative, the data presented thus far do not tell us whether and to what extent the differences in perceived threat and opposition to immigration are due to differences in the demographic and socioeconomic composition of the two groups. These data also do not tell us whether a cultural marginality position of belonging to the LGB minority or the group's tendency to a left-leaning political orientation may explain their lower levels of perceived threat and opposition to immigration as compared to their heterosexual counterparts. To answer these questions and test our hypotheses, we proceeded to multivariate analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics by sexual orientation, mean (standard deviation)/percentage

	LGB respondents	Heterosexual respondents
Perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country (PT) (1-10 scale)	4.38 (2.09)	4.71 (2.05)
Opposition to immigration (OTI) (1-4 scale)	1.2 (0.74)	1.32 (0.75)
Perceived discrimination based on sexuality	25.6%	6.5%
Political orientation (1-10 scale)	4.57 (2.02)	4.91 (2.02)
Education	13.98 (4.15)	13.03 (4.20)
Insufficient income	11.7%	12.9%
Rural residence	32.7%	38.7%
Native to country	89.5%	90%
Age	47.63 (14.77)	51.13 (14.86)
Women	42.6%	49.1%
N	1,401	100,347

Graph 1: Distribution of Perceived Threat from the Presence of Immigrants in a Country  
by Sexual Orientation

Table 2: Coefficients (standard errors) from linear regression analysis										
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	A	b	a	b	A	b	A	b	a	b
	PT	OTI	PT	OTI	PT	OTI	PT	OTI	PT	OTI
Constant	4.81	1.30	6.95	2.02	6.96	2.02	6.35	1.75	6.36	1.76
LGB	-0.20*	-0.06*	-0.16*	-0.05*	-0.05	-0.02	-0.12*	-0.04*	-0.04	-0.01
	(.05)	(.01)	(.04)	(.01)	(.05)	(.02)	(.04)	(.01)	(0.05)	(.02)
Female	0.11*	0.02*	0.09*	0.01*	0.09*	0.01*	0.11*	0.02*	0.11*	0.02*
	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)
Age	0.01*	0.00*	-0.00	0.00*	-0.00	0.00*	-0.00*	0.00*	-0.00*	0.00*
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Rural residence	0.29*	0.09*	0.16*	0.05*	0.16*	0.05*	0.14*	0.04*	0.14*	0.04*
	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)
Non-native	-0.70*	-0.12*	-0.72*	-0.12*	-0.73*	-0.12*	-0.71*	-0.11*	-0.71*	-0.12*
	(.02)	(.00)	(.02)	(.00)	(.02)	(.00)	(.02)	(.00)	(.02)	(.00)
Insufficient income			0.45*	0.13*	0.45*	0.13*	0.49*	0.14*	0.49*	0.14*
			(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.00)
Education			-0.13*	-0.04*	-0.13*	-0.04*	-0.12*	-0.04*	-0.13*	-0.04*
			(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Discriminated by sexuality					-0.57*	-0.18*			-0.46*	-0.14*
					(.10)	(.04)			(0.11)	(0.04)
Left-right political orientation							0.12*	0.05*	0.12*	0.05*
							(.00)	(.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
R Square	0.08	0.11	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.16	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.18

\*P<=0.05

Note: Models a predict perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country, models b predict opposition to immigration.

### **Multivariate analysis**

We begin with an analysis of the results of models that predict perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country (i.e., attitudes towards immigrants). We then turn to the comparison between these models and models that predict opposition to immigration. The results presented in Model 1a demonstrate that LGB respondents tend to express somewhat lower levels of immigrant-related perceived threat than heterosexual respondents ( $b=-0.20$ ), controlling for such demographic characteristics as gender, age, rural versus urban residence, and nativity status. Including income and education into Model 2a only slightly reduces the size of the LGB coefficient, suggesting that even net of the differences in demographic characteristics and socio-economic position, the level of perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country tends to be lower among partnered LGB respondents than among partnered heterosexual respondents. The difference between LGB and heterosexual respondents is comparable with the difference between rural and urban residents and constitutes a third of the average difference between those who have sufficient income and those who have insufficient income. These results are in line with the theoretical expectation.

Model 3a tests whether the difference in the level of perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country between LGB and heterosexual respondents can be attributed to perceived discrimination, or in other words, to the cultural marginality position of the LGB community. The findings of Model 3a reveal that, controlling for demographic attributes and socioeconomic position, respondents who assert that they belong to a group being discriminated based on sexuality express lower levels of threat from the presence of immigrants in their countries than those who do not belong to such a group (as implied by the statistically significant, negative, and sizable coefficient,  $b=-0.57$ ). These findings confirm the cultural marginality theoretical thesis suggesting that those who identify themselves as belonging to an oppressed and marginalized group (members of an LGB minority group, for example) feel more sympathy toward other disadvantaged groups (i.e., immigrants). The coefficient of LGB in Model 3a, which includes perceived group discrimination, is statistically insignificant and small. These results are in line with hypothesis 2, according to which perceived discrimination (i.e., acknowledging of one's group marginality position) is responsible for the association between sexual orientation and perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country. Apparently, marginality and victimhood positionality explain more positive attitudes of LGB individuals regarding the impact that immigrants exert on a society.

Model 4a tests whether the difference in perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country between LGB and heterosexual respondents can be attributed to the differences between the two groups in political orientation, with LGB individuals more likely to hold left-wing views. In line with previous research on attitudes towards immigrants, the results of Model 4a reveal that right-wing political orientation is associated with higher levels of perceived threat ( $b=0.12$ ). Yet, the coefficient of LGB in Model 4a, controlling for political orientations, is statistically significant although somewhat smaller than this

coefficient in Model 2a (without political orientation). Specifically, the size of LGB coefficient in Model 4 ( $b=0.12$ ) was reduced only by a quarter as compared to Model 2 ( $b=0.16$ ). This implies that political orientation is partially responsible for the association between sexual orientation and perceived threat. Specifically, LGB individuals are less likely to feel threatened by the presence of immigrants in their countries than their heterosexual counterparts in part since they are more likely to hold left-wing political ideologies, which tend to be associated with pro-immigrant views. Yet, even controlling for political orientation, as well as for the demographic and socio-economic central predictors of threat perceptions, LGB individuals tend to express lower levels of threat from immigrants than heterosexual individuals. The role of political orientation in the differences in attitudes towards immigrants between LGB and heterosexual populations is modest.

Model 5a includes perceived discrimination and political orientation together. Both exert a statistically significant 'net' effect on perceived threat, while the coefficient of LGB is negligible and statistically insignificant.

The results of the models predicting opposition to immigration (1b-5b), and thus touching on immigration policy preferences, are very similar to those predicting perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country. The differences between LGB and heterosexual respondents in threat perceptions described earlier are quite similar to the differences between the two groups regarding opposition to immigration. Likewise, while perceived discrimination is fully responsible for the association between sexual orientation and opposition to immigration, political orientation explains a small part of such association.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

The present study examined whether and to what extent sexual orientation is associated with perceived threat from the presence of immigrants in a country (i.e., attitudes towards immigrants) and opposition to immigration (i.e., attitudes towards immigration) in Western Europe. It investigated two possible mediating mechanisms for this association: (a) cultural marginality position and (b) left-right political ideology. Following previous research, the present study considered attitudes towards immigrants and attitudes towards immigration as two distinct concepts. However, the findings of the empirical analysis were strikingly similar for both types of attitudes.

Situating the discussion in the theoretical framework of inter-group relations, the study examined the attitudes of LGB individuals towards immigrants and immigration as attitudes of a minority group - out-group in terms of sexual orientation, toward another minority group - out-group in terms of nativity status. The empirical analysis demonstrated that partnered LGB individuals in Western Europe expressed more positive attitudes towards immigrants and immigration than their heterosexual counterparts. More specifically, partnered LGB individuals were less likely to express threat from the presence of immigrants in a country or to oppose admission of immigrants into their countries than heterosexual individuals.

Further findings revealed that perceived group discrimination based on sexuality fully mediated the association between sexual orientation and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. The findings confirm the hypothesis derived from cultural marginality theory (Fetzer, 2000), according to which LGB individuals express more positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration than their heterosexual counterparts because they view themselves as a group that is discriminated against and, thus, are more likely to express sympathy towards other minority and discriminated groups, i.e., migrants. These findings also echo the theoretical argumentation of previous research suggesting that LGB identity formation makes sexual orientation a consistent predictor of social and political attitudes (Egan, 2012; Schnabel, 2018; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020). It is not the simple fact of belonging to a minority group in terms of sexual orientation that increases sympathy toward other minority groups and therefore reduces anti-immigrant and anti-immigration attitudes. It is a socialization process, which teaches LGB individuals that they belong to a discriminated minority group and leads them to develop solidarity and positive attitudes towards migrants as another minority group, and to support inclusive immigration policies.

The findings regarding the political leaning of LGB respondents are in line with the results of previous research on the topic (Hertzog, 1996; Egan, 2012; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020). These findings show the LGB population's stronger inclination towards leftist political ideology, as compared to the heterosexual population. Yet, the role of political orientation as a mechanism beyond the association between sexual orientation and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration was found to be modest.

### **Limitations**

This study has two main limitations. First, the analysis covers only those adults who live together with their partners. The exclusion of adults who live alone also leads to the underrepresentation of younger populations in the analytical sample. Thus, the generalizability of the finding is limited. The second limitation is that the data at hand does not allow identification of the views of members of LGBTQ+ population but is limited to LGB respondents only. Yet, in light of the scarce public opinion research on LGB individuals' social and political attitudes as compared to heterosexual individuals in Europe, we believe that the results of this study are meaningful.

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**Appendix A: Distribution of sexual orientation by country among partnered respondents**

Country	Heterosexual	LGB	Total
BE	8,081	167	8,248

CH	7,503	98	7,601
DE	13,230	225	13,455
ES	7,706	67	7,773
FI	9,601	82	9,683
FR	6,153	118	6,271
GB	8,057	103	8,160
IE	8,100	213	8,313
NL	8,607	124	8,731
NO	8,342	73	8,415
PT	6,341	42	6,383
SE	8,626	89	8,715
TOTAL	100,347	1,401	101,748

#### Appendix B: Item loadings on their respective variables (principal component analysis)

	Total sample	LGB respondents	Heterosexual respondents
<b>Perceived Threat</b>			
Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?	0.87	0.89	0.87
Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries?	0.85	0.87	0.85
Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?	0.89	0.89	0.89
<b>Opposition to Immigration</b>			
To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here?	0.89	0.87	0.89
How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people?	0.94	0.94	0.94
How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe?	0.91	0.91	0.91