Opposition Avoidance or Mutual Engagement? The Interdependent Dynamics between Opposing Transnational LGBT+ Networks

Kristopher Velasco, *Princeton University, USA*

Embeddedness within transnational networks influences how countries govern LGBT+ communities. Research commonly highlights how pro-LGBT+ networks enable the expansion of rights; however, increased transnational coordination between anti-LGBT+ actors means network embeddedness also leads to policy backlash. Therefore, an important question to ask is: why are countries differentially embedded within these opposing networks to begin with? Moreover, does embeddedness in one network influence embeddedness in the other over time? To answer these questions, I develop original datasets of transnational pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks from 1990 to 2018. Using cross-lagged and dynamic panel models, results reveal that there is indeed an interdependent relationship where opposing networks mutually engage, or "follow," one another; however, these patterns vary across region. These results give insights into how countries exist in tension between these opposing networks and can help illuminate where expansion and backlash may transpire. While focused on LGBT+ networks, these findings give insights into tensions over (il)liberalism and gender justice occurring within the international community.

In 2014, Hungary's Victor Orban gave a speech outlining his vision for the "illiberal state." In it, he declared that "the stars of international analyses are Singapore, China, India, Turkey, [and] Russia" because they put national competitiveness ahead of the individual. Debates over the individual's role relative to the corporate bodies of the nation, religion, and traditional family represent a key differentiation between cultural models of liberalism and rising illiberalism (Frank and Moss 2017; Hanley and Vachudova 2018). This

I would like to thank Pamela Paxton, David John Frank, Phillip Ayoub, Javier Auyero, Debra Umberson, and Jonathan Coley for assistance and feedback in the development of this project. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers at Social Forces for engaging with previous drafts and providing comments that substantively improved this manuscript. *Direct all correspondence to Kristopher Velasco, Princeton University, 185 Wallace Hall, Princeton, NJ 08540, USA; e-mail: kvelasco@princeton.edu.*

Social Forces 101(4) 2087–2116, June 2023
https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soac068
Advance Access publication on 8 July 2022

(il)liberal divide manifests through democratic backslide, erosion of civil society, rising nationalism, though no issue more starkly displays these contrasts than gender justice (Bromley, Schofer, and Longhofer 2019; Htun and Weldon 2018; Korolczuk and Graff 2018). The specter of "gender ideology" is continuously used to curtail women's rights, reproductive rights, LGBT+ rights, and sex education to preserve traditionally heteronormative collective orders (Corredor 2019; Faúndes and Manuel 2019).

Transnational advocacy networks are an important force pulling countries across this divide.[1] To date, scholarship largely attends to how these networks leverage liberal norms and institutions within the international community to advance gender justice programs (Ayoub 2016; Frank, Camp, and Boutcher 2010; Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2006; Velasco 2018). Orban's speech highlights that illiberalism is nevertheless transnationally organized too. Indeed, an opposing transnational network of illiberal actors has emerged to undermine gender justice with increasing efficacy (Buss and Herman 2003; Chappell 2006; Cupać and Ebetürk 2020). Consequently, countries are situated within "twin countervailing forces" competing to influence gender justice policies and (il)liberalism more broadly (Hadler and Symons 2018, 1725).

But why are countries differentially embedded within these opposing networks to begin with? To date, studies evaluating integration investigate either one or the other—treating them as distinct, independent phenomena. Theories of domestic counter/movements suggest that integration must be studied simultaneously as there is likely to be an interdependent relationship: opposing networks either avoid their opposition or mutually engagement similar countries. Existing scholarship supports both patterns.

I evaluate this interdependency by utilizing the case of transnational LGBT+ networks—one important aspect of gender justice (Ayoub 2019; Htun and Weldon 2018). Using both cross-lagged and dynamic panel models, I predict country-level embeddedness within opposing pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks from 1990 to 2018 and whether these interdependent dynamics meaningfully vary across region. I do so by developing necessary original, cross-national datasets.

Findings reveal that there is indeed an interdependent relationship between opposing transnational networks in where they locate. As countries become more embedded within anti-LGBT+ networks, opposing pro-LGBT+ networks follow—with effects heightened within regions with greater anti-LGBT+ institutionalization. This pattern suggests that actors in pro-LGBT+ networks are particularly responsive to anti-LGBT+ developments. Conversely, anti-LGBT+ networks only mutually engage, or "follow," pro-LGBT+ networks in regions that have low levels of pro-LGBT+ institutionalization (e.g., sub-Saharan Africa). In regions where there are high levels of pro-LGBT+ institutionalization (e.g., Europe), anti-LGBT+ networks respond to other factors. Considering these networks ultimately influence policy outcomes, tracking their dynamic movements helps demonstrate that no country is inherently "good" or "bad" on these issues but, instead, always exist in tension between such forces.

Understanding the Emergence of Transnational Networks

A robust set of scholarship explains the emergence of transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Tarrow 2005). The cultural and institutional fabrics of the liberal international environment are consistently documented as particularly instrumental. Below, I briefly detail these developments before theorizing how they contribute toward the interdependent dynamics between opposing transnational networks.

The cultural development most central to the emergence of transnational networks is the centering of individuals. This "cult of the individual," in the parlance of Durkheim, is both foundational to and a unique product of liberalism (Cole 2016; Mathias 2013; Meyer and Jepperson 2000). Constructing individuals into rights-bearing actors based on personhood alone untethered them from corporate bodies of family, state, or religion (Elliott 2007; Jepperson and Meyer 2021). As such, "empowered" populations became ready to actualize their rights through civic participation. Exposure to international liberal norms, then, conditions the formation and robustness of domestic civil sectors (Bromley et al. 2020; Longhofer and Schofer 2011; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004). Especially important, constructing personhood unmoored from corporate affiliation enables individuals to imagine identifying with communities beyond boundaries (Frank and Meyer 2002). Thus, organizing for protections because of one's gender or Indigeneity become causes universal to the human experience—coalitions for fundamental human rights now stretch across borders (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Second, the institutional fabric of the international community provides space for such individuals to create transnational partnerships for advocacy. While international coalitions existed previously, the decentralized organizational structure following World War II accelerated these trends. The creation of numerous inter-governmental organizations such as the U.N. provided unprecedented opportunities for transnational coordination (Tallberg et al. 2014; Tarrow 2005).

While one pathway for transnational networks to emerge is by bottom-up collectives seeking to influence international institutions, the reciprocal process is especially true (Tsutsui 2017). By creating agreements and norms around issues such as the environment or gender, international institutions create new opportunities for transnational networks to form (Tsutsui and Woptika 2004; Smith and Wiest 2005; Wiest and Smith 2007). Organizers leverage new norms to hold member-states accountable and, also, agreements increase resources and attention around an issue—thus, there is a top-down pathway for the international institutional fabric to mold collectives of empowered individuals into transnational structures (Schofer and Longhofer 2011; Smith and Wiest 2005).

Importantly, this line of research largely focuses on transnational networks organized around (neo)liberal principles (e.g., environmental protections, human rights, open markets). But distinct, culturally "empowered" individuals promoting illiberal causes are not immune from this institutional environment and

are similarly products of it. That is why despite denouncing "globalists," those asserting national sovereignty are forging transnational bonds (Abrahamsen et al. 2020). Opponents of liberal values such as multiculturalism and gender justice and liberal processes such as institutional checks on authoritarianism are also organizing transnationally—to noticeable effect (Buss and Herman 2003; Buzas 2021; Buzogány 2017; Chappell 2006; Cupać and Ebetürk 2020). Regardless of seeking to advance liberal or illiberal outcomes, then, normative and institutional landscapes are central toward facilitating the emergence of transnational networks and country-level integration with them (Smith and Wiest 2005; Tsutsui and Woptika 2004).

Theorizing Opposing Transnational Network Interdependence

To date, there is little scholarship examining opposing transnational networks simultaneously. Examinations of opposing movement dynamics typically focus internally within a single site, such as a country or intergovernmental organization (Fetner 2008; Cupać and Ebetürk 2020), or across global–local divides (Nuñez-Mietz and García Iommi 2017). Less often are opposing movements examined at a transnational scale (for exception: Bob 2012). One reason for this deficit is because transnational networks are perceived to be organized around liberalism with resistance localized. As mentioned, though, sustained oppositional networks are forming across the transnational plane. Consequently, Fillieule and Broque (2020) call on more scholars to investigate the interactionist elements between opposing movements simultaneously. Thus, I draw on existing movement-countermovement scholarship to theorize why integration into transnational networks is conditional upon knowing country-level integration into its transnational opponent—either through opposition avoidance or mutual engagement.

Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) outline three conditions needed for countermovements to form: (1) the initial movement shows signs of success—either real or perceived; (2) the goals of the initial movement threaten some population; and (3) there are elites and political allies who can aid mobilization efforts and provide resources. Chappell (2006) adds that the opposing movement must perceive success as a viable outcome given their efforts. While these conditions are applicable to all opposing movement dynamics, shifting up to a transnational scale does alter their applications.

Scale shift introduces several ways for satisfying these conditions (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005). Rather than these conditions needing to be satisfied within proximity, any global event can potentially catalyze opposition: the success of LGBT+ rights, particularly in the West, can motivate "anticipatory" countermobilizations elsewhere (Dorf and Tarrow 2014), and the elites in one country can provide the necessary resources for opposition efforts continents away (Stoeckl 2020). Additionally, liberalism helps facilitate perceiving external populations as under threat. The construction of individuals unmoored from

state, family, or religion enables identification with "imagined" cross-national communities (Frank and Meyer 2002). Thus, if transnational networks threaten a population in Country A, individuals in Country B "imagined" to be part of that population may similarly feel threatened and become motivated to act. As such, scaling up to the transnational realm makes opposing movement dynamics more unpredictable as interactions become a "loosely coupled tango" spanning the globe—rather than tightly bounded by local conditions (Zald and Useem 1987, 247).

Finally, opposing transnational networks are, of course, definitionally interdependent. Take Corredor's conceptualization (2019, 618). Their definition states opposing movements are a "constellation of social actors, networks, and organizations of shared concern that make *sustained contrary claims to an opposing social movement's objectives*" (emphasis added). Therefore, my aim is not necessarily to explain the interdependent *emergence* of networks within the international space but the interdependent *integration* across countries.

Opposition Avoidance or Mutual Engagement?

Do opposing transnational networks avoid one another to target more amenable domestic conditions? Or do opposing networks attract one another and mutually engage the same locations? Present scholarship supports both.

Several movement studies document the strategic advantage of opposition avoidance to heighten likelihood of success. Sanders (2016, 167) refers to this process as "forum shopping" where opponents intentionally seek out the "weakest link" on the global playing field to promote their agenda. Transnational realities make forum shopping efforts a useful strategy for NGOs, nation-states, and multinational corporations. Murphy and Kellow (2013) detail how forum shopping creates challenges for global governance as international actors can strategically select domestic legal environments to pursue their goals. Avoiding opposition, whether that be tax policies, regulations, or actors, is an important condition for identifying these "weakest link" countries.

While opposition avoidance may have strategic advantages, mutual engagement seems to occur more often. Mutual engagement is when opposing transnational networks end up targeting the same country. One reason why this occurs is because the presence of transnational partners increases the attention and focus on an issue within a country (Ayoub 2016). For example, Keck and Sikkink (1998) popularized their boomerang model in which domestic actors seek transnational allies to overcome incalcitrant governments. In doing so, however, this internationalizes efforts and globalizes the debate (Bob 2012). Especially when the utilization of transnational allies is successful, this changes the domestic political opportunity structure and increases the urgency for opponents to mitigate such advancements (Fillieule and Broque 2020). Thus, the inherent *relational interactions* of opposing movements, even at a transnational scale, means that a "following" effect of mutual engagement may be the more likely form of interdependency.[2]

Explaining Integration into Opposing Pro- and Anti-LGBT+ Networks

I apply this general framework to the specific case of transnational pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks. Indeed, scholarship on emerging illiberal transnational networks and interdependent oppositional dynamics are, to date, most centrally focused on issues pertaining to gender justice—a broad category comprised of distinct fields such as women's rights, reproductive rights, sex education, and LGBT+ rights (Buss and Herman 2003; Chappell 2006; Corredor 2019; Cupać and Ebetürk 2020; Fillieule and Broque 2020; Friedman 2003; Htun and Weldon 2018). Below, I briefly outline the rise of opposing LGBT+ networks before hypothesizing how regional environments condition patterns of opposition avoidance and mutual engagement.

Emergence of Pro-LGBT+ Transnational Networks

Modern transnational LGBT+ networks are direct manifestations of liberalism (Frank and Moss 2017). One reason is because, under liberalism, "sex shifted from an activity meant to propagate the collective order through sanctioned reproduction to an activity meant to enhance individual pleasure through self-expression" (Frank, Camp, and Boutcher 2010, 871). Now, sexuality and gender identity are elements of personhood argued to be protected as fundamental human rights and incorporated within the broader LGBT+ rights umbrella (O'Flaherty and Fischer 2008).

To change how states governed their lives, LGBT+ activists viewed transnational coalitions between their "imagined" cross-national communities as imperative. While some transnational coalitions formed in the early 1900s (Rupp 2011), persistent modern organizing largely begins in 1978. This is when activists from several countries founded the then-named International Gay Association (now ILGA) (Paternotte 2016). ILGA made targeting international bodies a central organizing tactic (Paternotte 2016). Though initially concentrated within Europe, ILGA has since branched out across all regions. Today, networks of LGBT+ proponents have made strides in advancing their claims within the United Nations, European Union, World Bank, the Organization of American States (OAS), among others, by arguing that LGBT+ rights are fundamental to the liberal human rights project (Voss 2020).

Transnational networks flourish beyond targeting specific international organizations. While some networks focus on advocacy (e.g., Transgender Europe, Organization Intersex International, Coalition of African Lesbians, and National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance), there are also in the words of Armstrong (2002) "gay +1" recreational organizations (e.g., GALA Choruses, Network of European LGBTQ Families, and International LGBTQ+ Travel Association) and networks of distinct groups (e.g., International LGBTQI Youth Organization, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network, and Global National LGBT+ Chambers of Commerce). These network-weaving organizations facilitate interactions between an expansive set of local partners working to advance social change

and foster community (Ayoub 2016; Gonsalves 2021; Gonsalves and Velasco 2022).

Opposing Anti-LGBT+ Actors Respond through Networks

Shifting the scale of contention up to the international realm created an opportunity for an opposing network to form at the same level (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005). Importantly, what is new here is the configuration of this opposition into a *network*. Actors opposed to LGBT+ rights and in favor of heteronormative sexuality and binary gender long populated the international community (Bush 2007). However, the strategic coordination into transnational structures can be characterized as an opposing movement response (Cupać and Ebetürk 2020).

Scholarship on illiberal, oppositional networks largely focuses on the formation of these anti-gender networks.[3] This is due to their relatively early emergence within the international community, coherence in transnational coordination, and demonstrable effect. Although scholars use slightly different language, there is consistency in highlighting this force's emergence in the early 1990s (Bob 2012; Bunch et al. 2001):

> "That right-wing and conservative groups are *increasingly connected across national and denominational borders* is often overlooked in single country case studies and work that focuses on nationalism or on single religious groups. *Transnationally connected* right-wing interest groups constitute . . . a '*global right wing*'," (Stoeckl 2020, emphasis added).

Why did anti-LGBT+ actors decide to strategically coordinate through transnational networks? The necessary conditions laid out by Meyer and Staggenborg (1996) are instrumental toward addressing this question. Principally, all three conditions were met. First, pro-LGBT+ networks were accumulating successes within the international arena (D'Amico 2015; Velasco 2018). In 1993 alone, for instance, gay and lesbian organizations were accredited at a UN conference for the first time and the UN Human Rights Committee ruled sodomy laws violated right to privacy in *Toonen v. Australia* (D'Amico 2015). Second, the advancement of LGBT+ rights anywhere, meant that pro-"natural family" advocates felt threatened everywhere. Anti-LGBT+ advocates argue that because the "traditional" family is a universal, "natural" structure endemic to the human experience, protecting it is paramount to protecting society itself (Cupać and Ebetürk 2020; Korolczuk and Graff 2018; Stoeckl 2020). Third, these pro-"natural family" advocates had powerful allies and elite connections to offer political and financial assistance (e.g., the Vatican, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, U.S. evangelicals, Russian Orthodox Church) (Buss and Herman 2003; Chappell 2006; Corredor 2019. Cupać and Ebetürk 2020; Friedman 2003; Korolczuk and Graff 2018). Finally, these developments took place as US liberalism was ascendant following the end of the Cold War. Consequently, this corresponded with a promotion of the US' model of retreating state authority and an explosion in global civil society—including new religiously-aligned

NGOs—to fill the space (Berger 2003; Bush 2007; Faúndes, Manuel, and Peñas Defago 2016).

Therefore, the necessary conditions and infrastructure were in place for this opposition to emerge. These actors were able to immediately push back against LGBT+ advancements—successfully suspending ILGA's consultative status in 1994—one year after it was issued. More intentional coordination began in 1995 when US and Russian academics developed the World Congress of Families to anchor "traditional family" advocates into "God's last best hope" (Friedman 2003; Korolczuk and Graff 2018; Stoeckl 2020). Because anti-LGBT+ organizations already populated the international community, the inaugural 1997 congress immediately drew over 700 organizations from 43 countries. These organizations represented diverse geographic regions and religious denominations—resulting in an "Unholy Alliance" due to Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Jewish, and Muslim participation (Friedman 2003). Now, the World Congress of Families is the pre-eminent organization leading anti-LGBT+ efforts worldwide (Southern Poverty law Center 2019).

Other conference and network systems continue to develop. Just within the United Nations, there now exists coalitions of civil society groups (e.g., Family Rights Caucus, Civil Society for the Family) and like-minded member-states. Countries including Bangladesh, Egypt, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uganda banded together through The Group of Friends of the Family to "reaffirm that the family is the natural and fundamental unit of society and entitled to protection" (2019). Additionally, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has emerged as a powerful voting bloc limiting pro-LGBTQ+ developments due to its 54 member-states (Karam 2017).

Today, illiberal, anti-LGBT+ networks are broad and diverse—consisting of INGOs, multilateral organizations, religious denominations, political elites, media corporations, academics, think tanks, and policy institutes (see Table 1 below). These distinct coalitions and sub-networks loosely coordinate through forums such as World Congress of Families, Political Network for Values, and Global Home Education Exchange (Permoser and Stoeckl 2021). These efforts represent the vast global infrastructure and alternative international community polarizing countries' approach to gender justice and (il)liberalism more broadly (Hadler and Symons 2018; Velasco forthcoming).

Opposing LGBT+ Networks and Opposition Avoidance

Significant evidence supports opposition avoidance between opposing LGBT+ networks. Anti-LGBT+ actors actively engage in "forum shopping" by seeking "out more amenable forums to promote their anti-gay agenda" (Sanders 2016, 174). For example, one month before Ugandan MP David Bahati introduced his infamous "Kill the Gays" bill in 2009, the Family Life Network of Uganda hosted the "Seminar on Exposing the Homosexuals' Agenda" and invited US minister Scott Lively of Exodus Global Alliance—an international organization promoting "ex-gay" conversion (Kaoma 2014). This conference ignited concern around

Table 1. Ten Example Pro- and Anti-LGBT+ INGOs

Pro-LGBT+ INGOs	Anti-LGBT+ INGOs
Asia Pacific Rainbow	Advocates International
Coalition of African Lesbians	Alianza Latinoamericana para la Familia
European Pride Organizers Association	Alliance Defending Freedom International
Federation Gay Games	Doha International Family Institute
Gay and Lesbian Arabic Society	European Large Families Confederation
Global Action for Trans Equality	Global Exodus Alliance
ILGA	International Federation for Family Development
International Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce	International Organization for the Family
Transgender Europe	Trans World Radio
World League of Sexual Reform	World Evangelical Alliance

homosexuality and created a perceived need for Bahati's legislation despite pro-LGBT+ organizations having minimal standing at that time—a prime example of anti-LGBT+ networks instigating anticipatory countermobilization through forum shopping (Nuñez-Mietz and Garcia Iommi 2017; Sanders 2016).

Similar anti-LGBT+ efforts have occurred in Brazil, Ghana, the Philippines, Romania, and Taiwan (Chang 2020; Margarit 2019). Opposition avoidance typically motivates the selection of these countries. For example, in a regional World Congress of Families conference, Brian Brown, the leader of International Organization of the Family, which runs World Congress of Families, argued Ghana must take up anti-LGBT+ legislation as the issue is "lost" in the United States but not in Ghana (openDemocracy 2019). These conferences, just one mechanism through which information on LGBT+ rights circulates, increase pre-emptive politics as awareness of success elsewhere heightens perception that such rights are imminent locally and transnational allies are needed.

These patterns suggest that the interdependent relationship between transnational opposition LGBT+ networks is one of opposition avoidance. Therefore:

> *H1: There will be a negative association between opposing networks such that greater country-level integration into one network will be associated with lower country-level integration into the opposing network.*

Opposing LGBT+ Networks and Mutual Engagement

While anti-LGBT+ networks may be operating with an eye toward forum shopping, mutual engagement often occurs over time. Many of the above cases resulted in transnational pro-LGBT+ networks targeting the same country—either because these external actors were acting on their own or because domestic

LGBT+ actors sought support via boomerang models (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Thoreson 2014). For example, Uganda received significant international attention following Bahati's bill and so did Taiwanese and Romanian LGBT+ organizations during national marriage referendums (Chang 2020; Margarit 2019). Mutual engagement, then, may be inevitable as success by either pro- or anti-LGBT+ networks necessarily changes the political opportunity structure within a country to attract opposition (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996).

Additionally, despite arguments for "forum shopping," countries embedded within pro-LGBT+ networks and with (relatively) progressive policies are also embedded within anti-LGBT+ networks. One prominent example is the US. Despite Brown's assertion; LGBT+ rights are far from settled. Pro-LGBT+ advancements in some domains have not been met with an acquiescing—anti-LGBT+ advocates just target new areas (e.g., transgender youth following marriage equality). Indeed, Sweden—a country with strong ties to pro-LGBT+ networks—was targeted by Advocates International, a "Christ centered" organization using legal expertise and strategic litigation to advance its agenda (Bob 2012). This line of evidence provides support that the nature of interdependency between opposing transnational networks is mutual engagement within the same country. Therefore:

> *H2: There will be a positive association between opposing networks such that greater country-level integration into one network will be associated with higher country-level integration into the opposing network.*

Global and Regional Normative, Institutional Environments

As mentioned, normative, institutional environments are demonstrated to contribute toward the growth and integration into transnational networks (Longhofer and Schofer 2011; Smith and Wiest 2005). When the international environment increases its normative support for LGBT+ communities or further institutionalizes heteronormative constructions of the family, this encourages a growth of such networks. Therefore:

> *H3: As global normative, institutional environments support either pro- or anti-LGBT+ causes, this will be associated with greater country-level integration into the corresponding network.*

While true at a global level, regional-level environments are increasingly instrumental for LGBT+-related advocacy (Gonsalves 2021). Institutional environments pertaining to LGBT+-related issues vary significantly across region. Notably, Europe has a long history of pro-LGBT+ organizing due, in part, to robust supranational institutions (Gonsalves 2021; Rupp 2011). Uniquely, influential bodies such as the Council of Europe, European Union, etc., create an environment where transnational coordination is necessary and available to address social problems (Wiest and Smith 2007). Other regions are also increasing their institutionalization of LGBT+ rights. For example, in 2016, the OAS established the LGBTI Core Group. Similarly, the ASEAN SOGIE

Caucus seeks to advance protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Regional institutions that limit the participation of LGBT+ organizations—whether *de jure* or *de facto*—stifle the formation of such transnational networks (Tallberg et al. 2014; Wiest and Smith 2007). Thus, differences in integration into LGBT+ networks may reflect the normative, institutional environment which produces LGBT+ populations and transnational organizing strategies.

Conversely, regional dynamics may make participation within anti-LGBT+ networks more appealing. The internationalization of LGBT+ rights results in an argument that LGBT+ rights are Western inventions. Consequently, an oppositional stance emerges where denial of LGBT+ rights asserts national or cultural sovereignty vis-à-vis the West (Bilic 2016; Corrales and Pecheny 2010; Rahman 2014). Thus, despite their own transnational connections, anti-LGBT+ actors present LGBT+ rights as "un-African" or contrary to "Asian values" to engender support (Lee 2016; McEwen 2019). The portrayal of these pan-regional values and identities (real or imaged) facilitates transnational cooperation. This is something the World Congress of Families leverages by taking an increasing regional approach to its conference system (SPLC 2020). Therefore, I argue that there are not inherent, time-invariant regional characteristics that influences integration into transnational pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks but, rather, these changing normative and institutional dynamics.

> *H4: As regional normative, institutional environments support either pro- or anti-LGBT+ causes, this will be associated with greater country-level integration into the corresponding network.*

Finally, regional variation likely not only influences the absolute level of integration into either network but may condition the effect of interdependence as well. As regional environments increase support either for LGBT+ communities or further institutionalize heteronormative constructions of sexuality and gender, this changes the political opportunity structures for transnational networks to emerge and changes perceptions of success. If opposition avoidance were to be true, greater institutionalization of pro-LGBT+ rights may make anti-LGBT+ networks even *less likely* to integrate into that region—and vice versa. Alternatively, regions where gains are being made, such as after the formation of OAS' LGBTI Core Group, may draw more opposition to the region to buttress developments and, therefore, heighten mutual engagement. Therefore:

> *H5: The regional normative, institutional environment conditions country-level integration into opposing movements.*

Data and Methods

(In)Dependent Variables: Pro- and Anti-LGBT+ Networks

I use country-level ties to INGOs to measure integration within pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks (Boli and Thomas 1999). These international organizations

operate as important network-weaving institutions by creating arenas of interaction for domestic member-organizations (Ingram and Torfason 2010). Thus, INGOs are often used to measure transnational advocacy network participation (Gonsalves and Velasco 2022).

Data are collected using the *Yearbook of International Organizations*, which records information such as organizational aims, founding, affiliates, and country memberships on thousands of INGOs and other international organizations annually. Importantly, the *Yearbook* uses a dichotomous indicator for country membership. While the *Yearbook* is helpful to assess the breadth of transnational connections, the *Yearbook* is limited in measuring the depth of those connections. Nevertheless, the *Yearbook* is consistently used to measure country-level integration into a range of transnational advocacy networks (Murdie and Davis 2012; Wiest and Smith 2007).

Pro-LGBT+ networks

Pro-LGBT+ networks are measured as country-level ties to LGBT+ INGOs. Pro-LGBT+ INGOs are those which state working on behalf of any community within the LGBT+ community within its organizational aim (Velasco 2018). See Table 1, for example, INGOs.

Anti-LGBT+ networks

To measure embeddedness within anti-LGBT+ networks, a similar approach as above is taken—total country-level ties to anti-LGBT+ INGOs. Determining if an INGO should be classified as "anti-LGBT+" is more challenging considering many anti-LGBT+ INGOs use liberalized language which can obscure anti-LGBT+ animus, participation, or effect. Rarely is an INGO *explicitly* anti-LGBT+.

Consequently, relying solely on organizational aim is insufficient to correctly categorize anti-LGBT+ INGOs. Instead, organizations must either demonstrate participation in anti-LGBT+ efforts or express explicitly anti-LGBT+ statements to be included. One central way to determine anti-LGBT+ participation is to attend or sponsor a World Congress of Families' event. Using programs from every event held or sponsored by World Congress of Families, I identify INGOs that are present within these programs and the *Yearbook* at any time. A second explicit action is participating within events or support resolutions promoted by the UN Family Rights Caucus or Civil Society for the Family. Although these forums are not *explicitly* anti-LGBT+, they work to prevent the adoption of inclusive definitions of family within UN resolutions—thus being anti-LGBT+ in effect. Lastly, in the wake of the US Supreme Court's decision to legalize same-sex marriages, Alliance Defending Freedom International, another leading anti-LGBT+ INGO, directed organizations to include a values statement on their website to justify LGBT-based discrimination (Alliance Defending Freedom International 2015). If any organization included this values statement, or one similar, it was included.

After identifying this initial set of INGOs, I examine each one's website or *Yearbook* entry to find references to partner INGOs and examine each partner organization for anti-LGBT+ animus. Finally, using the indices of each *Yearbook,* I examine all INGOs categorized as "Evangelical," "Islamic," "Family," "Children," or otherwise religious to look for those that mimic the language of previously identified anti-LGBT+ organizations in aims and websites. For example, using language such as "natural" or "traditional" families or marriage, "biblical sexuality," or "biological man/woman/sexes." Altogether, this set of INGOs represent those who are actively engaging anti-LGBT+ efforts. See Table 1, for example, INGOs.

Independent Variables

Transnational normative, institutional environments

Global pro-LGBT+ context. Capturing a latent concept such as the normative, institutional environment with any one indicator is likely to be associated with significant measurement error. Therefore, I use confirmatory factor analyses to produce factor scores (Hughes, Krook, and Paxton 2015). Three distinct indicators are used to produce these scores. The first is the global count of LGBT+ INGOs using data from the *Yearbook* (Boli and Thomas 1999). The second indicator is the count of statements emanating from the United Nations (e.g., concluding observations, committee rulings, resolutions, etc.) that pertain to sexual orientation and gender identity. The International Commission of Jurists collects these data. Finally, the last indicator looks at the role of public discourse. Using LexisNexis and Factiva, I collect a global count of all newspapers that mention any aspect of the LGBT+ community.[4] The cumulative count of each variable is used to create annual factor scores. Factor scores are re-scaled to have a value of zero in 1990, the first year of observation.

Global anti-LGBT+ context. Annual factor scores produced through confirmatory factor analyses are used to measure the global anti-LGBT+ context. Five distinct manifest indicators are used: (1) the cumulative total of anti-LGBT+ INGOs; (2) the average number of country-members across anti-LGBT+ INGOs per year; (3) the cumulative total of anti-LGBT+ INGOs with any form of consultative status from the UN's Economic and Social Council; (4) the cumulative total of traditional values resolutions, pro-family resolutions, and pro-family groups within the United Nations; and (5) the cumulative total of World Congress of Family events. Factor scores are re-scaled to have a value of 0 in 1990.

Regional pro-LGBT+ context. Annual factor scores produced through confirmatory factor analyses are used to measure the regional pro-LGBT+ context. Three distinct manifest indicators are used: (1) average country-member ties to pro-LGBT+ INGOs within a region; (2) the cumulative total number of ILGA (the largest pro-LGBT+ INGO) conferences located within a region; and (3) the cumulative total of pro-LGBT/SOGI-related resolutions and statements produced through regional international organizations.[5] Countries are categorized into six geographic regions based on ILGA's regional networks: Africa, Asia,

Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Oceania. Factor scores are re-scaled to have a value of 0 in 1990.

Regional anti-LGBT+ context. Annual factor scores produced through confirmatory factor analyses are used to measure the regional anti-LGBT+ context. Three distinct manifest indicators are used: (1) average country-member ties to anti-LGBT+ INGOs within a region; (2) the cumulative total number of World Congress of Families sponsored conferences located within a region; and (3) the cumulative total of number of anti-LGBT+ INGOs headquartered within a region. Countries are categorized into six geographic regions based on ILGA's regional networks: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Oceania. Factor scores are re-scaled to have a value of 0 in 1990.

Alternative explanations

Of course, an important alternative is that there are no interactive dimensions between these networks in terms of why countries are embedded within one or the other. It may very well be that these two networks—though having opposing goals—largely operate within their own independent field rather than interwoven within the same (Fillieule and Broque 2020). Therefore, I present three sets of alternative factors explaining network integration: internal LGBT+ politics, socio-cultural factors, and structural determinants.

LGBT+ policy environment. To measure a country's policy landscape, I use the LGBTI Policy Index (Velasco forthcoming). The LGBTI Policy Index captures the implementation and robustness of 18 different LGBT+ policies—both repressive policies such as the criminalization of sodomy as well as supportive policies such as banning employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This index ranges from −5 to +13 with higher scores associated with more supportive policy environments.

LGBT+ policy change. Using the LGBTI Policy Index, I create two binary indicators for when this index changes. A *Progressive* indicator is coded 1 the years where there is a policy change that expands rights, while the *Regressive* indicator is coded 1 in years where there is a contraction in rights.

Domestic LGBT+ movement. To measure domestic LGBT+ movements, I use the cumulative count of all domestic LGBT+ organizations, associations, groups, and collectives founded in each country. This measure is logged due to a skewed distribution. Details on how this original dataset was developed by my collaborator and me are in appendix.

Anti-LGBT+ demonstrations. Ideally, I would use a parallel dataset of domestic anti-LGBT+ organizations to control for internal mobilization. This ideal dataset does not exist; this is partly due to the difficulties in identifying anti-LGBT+ organizations becoming magnified considerably when moving within and across countries. Therefore, internal mobilization is approximated through an alternative measure: anti-LGBT+ and "pro-family" demonstrations.

To develop this measure, I first pull from multiple cross-national protest datasets: Mass Mobilization Protest Data, Nonviolence and Violence Campaigns

and Outcomes Data Project, World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, and the Social, Political, and Economic Database Project. Next, I used the previously collected newspaper data to search for mentions of anti-LGBT+ and pro-family demonstrations in each country. These data result in a variable that is the annual count of such events in each country. Counts were harmonized across datasets so that specific events are only counted once. It is important to acknowledge, however, that there are well-known limitations to cross-national protest event data (Herkenrath and Knoll 2011). The consultation of numerous sources is an attempt to mitigate against some of these biases. By focusing on demonstrations, this measure captures one public dimension of this movement—though an important one. Implications of these different approaches to internal measurement are discussed below.

To account for other social, cultural, and structural factors that may explain embeddedness within pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks, the following controls are included: overall religiosity, fertility rate, economic development (measured as logged GDP per capita), democracy (measured the combined Freedom House and Polity IV measure [Hadenius and Teorell 2005]), an indicator variable for post-2008 financial crisis, ethnic fractionalization, population (logged), strength of civil society, secondary education, and total INGOs. All measures come from the World Bank except for democracy and civil society index, which come from Varieties of Democracy, total INGOs, which are from the *Yearbook of International Organizations,* and the ethnic fractionalization index, which comes from the Historic Index of Ethnic Fractionalization.

Sample construction

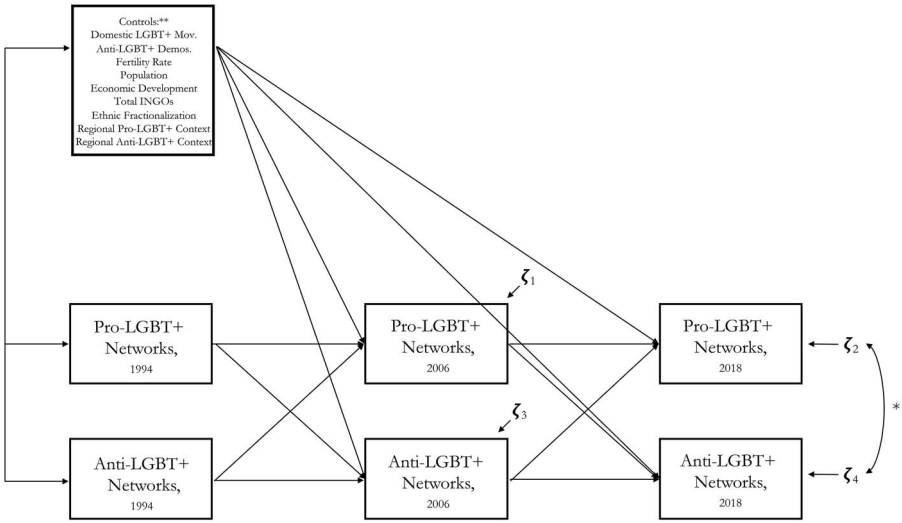
This study assesses the interdependence between pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks between 1990 and 2018 for all countries with an average population of at least 500 000. This results in 143 countries and 3221 country-year observations with full information.

Methods

Two different modeling approaches are used. First, I predict country-level embeddedness within the two outcome variables using cross-lagged panel models across three waves: 1994, 2006, and 2018 (see Figure 1). Cross-lagged panels are a longitudinal design that simultaneously model change in independent and dependent variables when they are theorized to be interrelated (Finkel 1995). This describes the present situation at hand as it allows for a simultaneous determination if pro- and anti-LGBT+ embeddedness at $t - 1$ predicts embeddedness in either network at t. Evaluating such reciprocal effects are important to understand if there are indeed interrelated dynamics. Finally, these models also include stability effects, or the degree to which variables at one time point predict themselves at the next time point (Allison 2005).

Second, I incorporate panel regression models with lagged dependent variables—also referred to as dynamic panel models (Nickell 1981)—to overcome limitations from the cross-lagged panels and to provide corroborating evidence.

Figure 1. Three-wave cross-lagged panel model of pro- and anti-LGBT+ network integration.
***Errors in the equations are correlated at all time points.**



**Control variables vary across time.

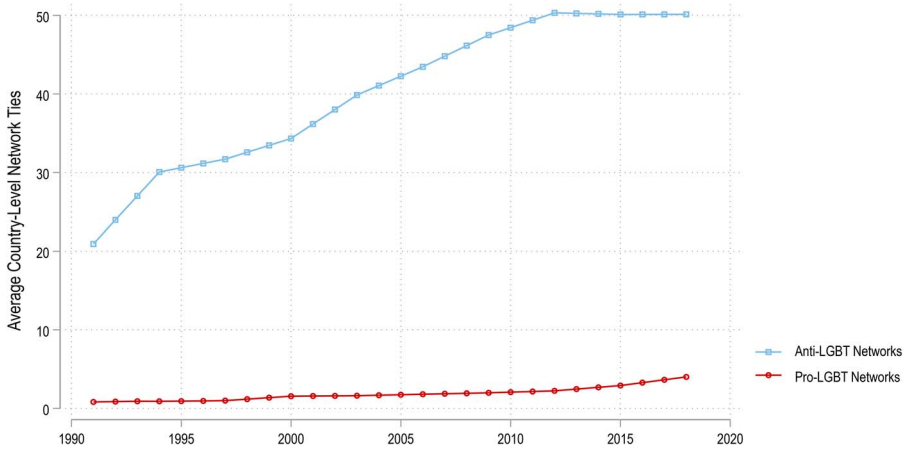
These models are advantageous because: (1) they allow for the inclusion of all data from 1990 to 2018 and, with it, all controls; (2) they are appropriate for processes theorized to be dynamic, as is the case here; and (3) accounting for a lagged dependent variable helps reduce serial correlation and endogeneity. A limitation of this strategy relative to the cross-lagged panel is that since outcomes are not modeled simultaneously, it does not account for correlated errors.

Dynamic panel models include the opposing network as an independent variable, a five-year-lagged-dependent variable, and country fixed effects to account for time invariant attributes. Additional models include interactions between the opposing network and Regional Pro/Anti-LGBT+ Context measures to understand regional variation. Finally, in both cross-lagged and dynamic models, all predictors are lagged one year for temporal ordering (Figure 1).

Results

Before discussing model results, Figures 2 and 3 document the growth of these opposing networks. First, Figure 2 highlights the average number of ties all countries have to each network from 1990 to 2018. There are two important trends to note. First, the average number of connections is growing for *both* pro-LGBT+ networks *and* anti-LGBT+ networks—although connections to anti-LGBT+ networks plateau from 2012 to 2018. Second, while pro-LGBT+ networks are seen as the first mover with anti-LGBT+ networks emerging as the countering force, ties to anti-LGBT+ networks are significantly greater in magnitude. In 2018, for example, countries had, on average, five ties to

Figure 2. Average number of country-level ties to pro- and anti-LGBT+ transnational networks



pro-LGBT+ networks, while they had around 50 ties to anti-LGBT+ networks. Even when considering two conservative measures of anti-LGBT+ networks (see appendix), countries have on average 24 and 32 ties, respectively.

Figure 3 reveals the reason for this discrepancy: there are significantly more anti-LGBT+ INGOs than pro-LGBT+ INGOs through which transnational networks can be formed.[6] While a handful of pro-LGBT+ INGOs existed prior, it was not until the 1980s that these network-weaving institutions expanded. Anti-LGBT+ INGOs, meanwhile, have populated the international community longer as their growth began accelerating following WWII. Consequently, "pro-family" and religious organizations pull from an already existing international infrastructure. These figures help put into perspective the relatively small size of transnational LGBT+ networks compared with its opposition and makes success by them that much more compelling. See appendix for full set of descriptive statistics and maps showing the distribution of pro- and anti-LGBT+ network ties in 2018.

Figure 4 includes the results of interest from the cross-lagged panel models. Several interesting insights emerge. First, we do see evidence of interdependency between opposing LGBT+ networks as indicated by the bolded arrows crossing from 1994 to 2006. Greater integration into either network in 1994 is associated with greater integration within the opposing network in 2006 net of covariates and stability effects. While the present model cannot determine a causal relationship, the pattern during this period indicates mutual engagement and a "following" effect between these transnational networks. Moving from 2006 to 2018, however, patterns change. Now, only pro-LGBT+ networks continue to "follow" anti-LGBT+ networks. This is in alignment with recent events where once backlash events occur (in part contributed by anti-LGBT+ network actors), the international pro-LGBT+ community descends upon that country seeking to help—whether in Uganda during the "Kill the Gays" bill debate or, more recently,

Figure 3. Growth in pro- and anti-LGBT+ international organizations, 1900–2018

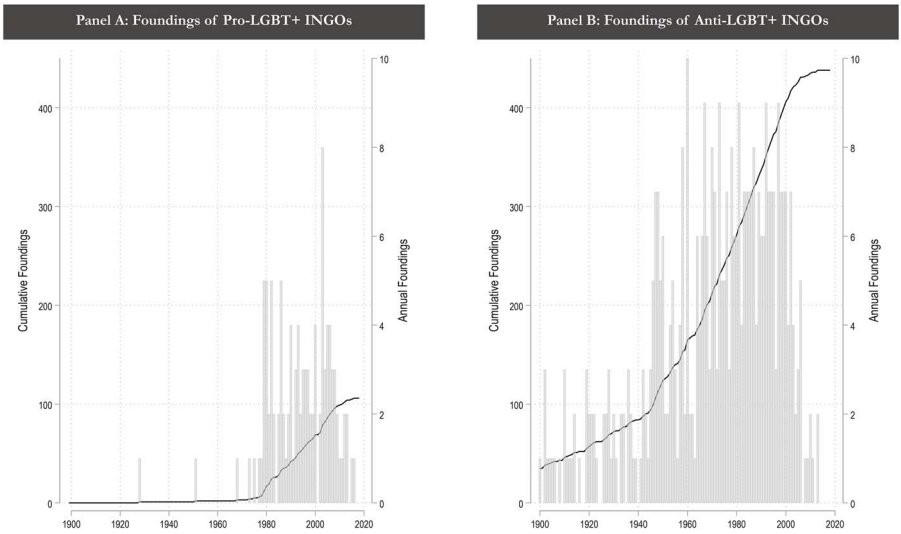
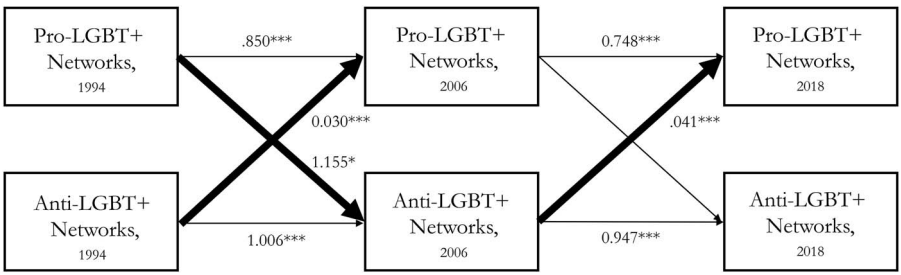


Figure 4. Three-wave cross-lagged panel of pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks with results.



Note: Significant cross-lagged associations are bolded. Models include all controls. See appendix for full results

Ghana. Integration in anti-LGBT+ networks in 2018 is not associated with the integration into pro-LGBT+ networks in 2006; meaning that anti-LGBT+ networks are locating across national contexts for reasons other than their opposing network. This is unexpected as it is during this precise period Sanders (2018) documents cases of "forum shopping". Therefore, rather than opposition avoidance or mutual engagement, from 2006 to 2018, anti-LGBT+ networks operated according to their own agenda independent of where pro-LGBT+ transnational networks were locating. Full results are in appendix.

Table 2 includes the results from the dynamic panel models which incorporate all years of data. The first model predicts integration within pro-LGBT+ networks. As found in the initial wave of the cross-lagged panel, greater integration into anti-LGBT+ networks (Opposing Networks in Table 2) is associated with greater integration into pro-LGBT+ networks the following year ($b = 0.022$,

Table 2. Pooled, Cross-Sectional Models Predicting Embeddedness within Pro- and Anti-LGBT+ Networks, 1990–2018

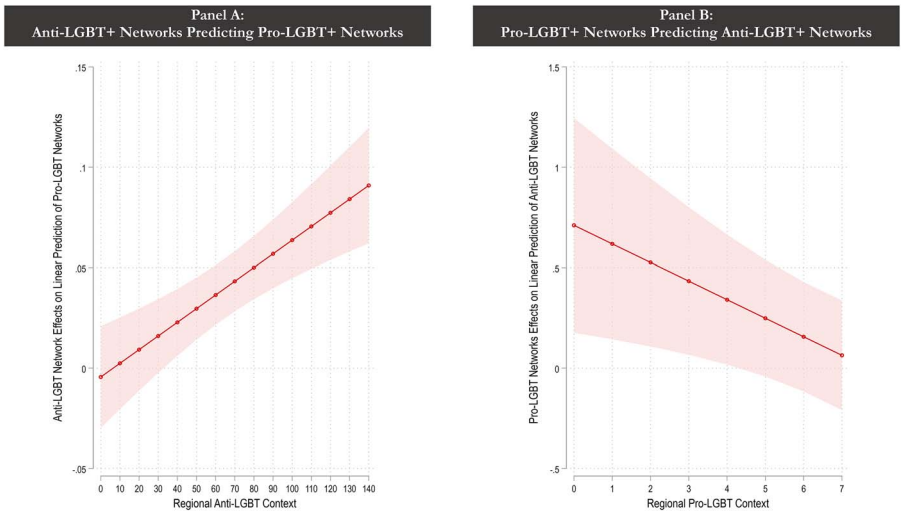
	1	2	3	4
	Pro-LGBT+ Networks		Anti-LGBT+ Networks	
Opposing networks	0.022 *	0.009	0.257	0.615 *
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.156)	(0.241)
Transnational normative environments				
Global pro-LGBT+ context	0.062 ***	0.064 ***	−0.458 ***	−0.466 ***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.042)	(0.041)
Global anti-LGBT+ context	−0.023 ***	−0.019 ***	0.199 ***	0.198 ***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Regional anti-LGBT+ context	0.045 *	−0.023	0.08 *	0.056 +
	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.040)	(0.033)
Regional pro-LGBT+ context	0.491 ***	0.582 ***	−0.423	0.115
	(0.112)	(0.127)	(0.285)	(0.351)
Regional anti-LGBT+ context × Opposing network		0.001 ***		
		(0.000)		
Regional pro-LGBT+ context × Opposing network				−0.092 *
				(0.036)
Country fixed effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,221	3,221	3,221	3,221
R-squared	0.699	0.71	0.881	0.882
Number of countries	143	143	143	143

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All models control for: Lagged Dependent Variable, LGBT+ Policy Environment, Progressive LGBT+ Policy Change, Regressive LGBT+ Policy Change, Domestic LGBT+ Movement, Anti-LGBT+ Demonstrations, Fertility Rate, Religiosity, Secondary Education, Ethnic Fractionalization, Post-2008 Financial Crisis, Population, Democracy, Economic Development, Total INGOs, and Civil Society Index.
$^{***}p < .001$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{+}p < .1$

$p < .05$). A standard deviation increase in anti-LGBT+ networks (~28 ties) is associated with a .6 increase, or roughly half a tie, to pro-LGBT+ networks. Although a seemingly small effect size, the average number of ties to pro-LGBT+ networks is only 2.12—so this does represent a substantive increase. These findings provide additional support that pro-LGBT+ transnational networks "follow" their opposing counterpart.

Findings for the normative, institutional environments are generally as expected: when the overall global context increases in support for LGBT+ communities, this is associated with a generalized increase in ties to pro-LGBT+ networks ($b = 0.062$, $p < .01$). However, when the anti-LGBT+

Figure 5. Average marginal effects of pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks predicting opposing network ties conditional on regional contexts



context increases globally, this is associated with a reduction in generalized ties to pro-LGBT+ networks ($b = -0.02$, $p < .001$)—underscoring how these global normative environments work in opposition to one another. These dynamics differ a bit when moving across regions. Increases in integration within pro-LGBT+ networks are associated positively with both regional pro-LGBT+ contexts ($b = 0.045$, $p < .05$) and anti-LGBT+ contexts ($b = 0.491$, $p < .001$). Although both results show a positive association, the underlying mechanisms likely differ. As Gonsalves (2021) highlights, supportive regional environments encourage the formation of a more robust LGBT+ civil society and as regional international organizations address LGBT+ issues, this creates an opening within the political opportunity structure for movements to form at that transnational scale (Wiest and Smith 2007). However, greater institutionalized support for anti-LGBT+ efforts may trigger *boomerang* processes where domestic organizations within the region seek assistance from transnational partnerships. The interaction in Model 2 finds this effect of anti-LGBT+ networks predicting pro-LGBT+ networks to be stronger as the regional environment is increasingly anti-LGBT. Figure 5 plots the average marginal effect of anti-LGBT+ networks conditional on differing levels of Regional Anti-LGBT+ Context to help visualize these dynamics. This interaction provides additional support that pro-LGBT+ networks are responsive to their transnational opposition but, also, the normative context.

Model 3 assesses how these patterns hold when predicting integration into anti-LGBT+ networks. First, greater integration within the opposing network (i.e., pro-LGBT+ networks) is not associated with greater integration within anti-LGBT+ networks. In other words, there is insufficient evidence that anti-LGBT+ networks "follow" pro-LGBT+ networks—which is consistent with the

second panel of the cross-lagged panel analysis. Although there is evidence of "following" between 1994 and 2006 in Figure 4, this pattern may not be robust once considering more years of data and additional control variables.

The global and regional normative context variables are associated in expected patterns. An increase in the Global Pro-LGBT+ Context is associated with a generalized reduction in ties to anti-LGBT+ networks ($b = -0.458$, $p < .001$). However, higher levels of the Global Anti-LGBT+ Context are associated with generally greater ties to anti-LGBT+ networks ($b = 0.199$, $p < .001$). Additionally, as the regional context further institutionalized anti-LGBT+ efforts, this is associated with an increase in anti-LGBT+ ties ($b = 0.08$, $p < .05$). Interestingly, the Regional Pro-LGBT+ Context is not associated with anti-LGBT+ network integration. This continues to suggest that anti-LGBT+ networks are not locating based on either their transnational counterpart or regional-level developments.

However, the interaction in Model 4 offers clarity as to the discrepancy between the cross-lagged panel results and the results from Model 3: regional variation matters. When a region is low in its support for LGBT+ efforts, there is indeed this "follow" effect such that more pro-LGBT+ networks later predicts more anti-LGBT+ networks. However, as regions become more pro-LGBT, the effect of the opposing network diminishes to where it eventually loses significance. As Figure 5 shows, the average marginal effect of pro-LGBT+ networks is never significantly negative—meaning that anti-LGBT+ networks are not associated with actively reducing their numbers—although the direction suggests that this may eventually occur. What is demonstrated, though, is that there is less of an association in regions where pro-LGBT+ norms are strong—such as Europe and Latin America. One interpretation is that anti-LGBT+ networks are "conceding" such territory for more fertile efforts, such as the "forum shopping" process Sanders (2018) theorizes. Or the factors influencing where anti-LGBT+ networks locate are increasingly determined by other explanatory factors.

Indeed, when comparing attributes of the domestic LGBT+ political environment, it is anti-LGBT+ networks which are more responsive. Surprisingly, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that integration into pro-LGBT+ networks is explained by any of the domestic LGBT+ political variables. Lack of significance is not the result of multicollinearity either as auxiliary analyses (not shown) testing each variable independently are also insignificant (see correlation matrix in appendix). Both Ayoub (2015) and Velasco (2018) find pro-LGBT+ networks to predict LGBT+ policy; these results confirm, then, that the direction of influence is as they theorize since neither policy environment nor either of the policy indicators predict transnational pro-LGBT+ networks. Additionally, neither of the domestic mobilization measures, though getting at different components, are significant. Altogether, this suggests that transnational pro-LGBT+ networks are responding more to transnational elements. The implications of these findings are discussed below.

Meanwhile, anti-LGBT+ networks are indeed associated with domestic LGBT+ political factors—though with puzzling effects. The associations with the policy environment—and changes to it—require explanation. Countries with

more progressive LGBT+ policy environments are associated with more ties to anti-LGBT+ networks ($b = 0.356, p < .05$). However, a *regressive* policy change, such as the codification of "traditional marriage" within law, is associated with a reduction in anti-LGBT+ network integration ($b = -0.528, p < .05$). Interpreted together, this would suggest that anti-LGBT+ networks are integrating within countries that have some level of LGBT+ rights initially but leave to focus elsewhere following regressive change. Given the aim of the present investigation to focus on transnational dimensions, these patterns invite future investigations to explicate on these results.

Finally, more robust domestic LGBT+ movements are associated with greater ties to anti-LGBT+ networks ($b = 1.782$, $p < .001$) but not pro-LGBT+ networks. One explanation is that as local movements develop, this poses more of a threat—leading either domestic anti-LGBT+ actors to seek external help via *boomerangs* or transnational anti-LGBT+ actors taking the initiative. Conversely, the domestic movement may not be associated with pro-LGBT+ networks as transnational actors turn toward national contexts more in need (see: Gonsalves and Velasco 2022).

Discussion and Conclusion

No issue illuminates current tensions over (il)liberalism more than gender justice (Htun and Weldon 2018). This is because gender and sexuality represent key axes of differentiation between (il)liberal cultural models: is the individual supreme or do the corporate bodies of the "natural family," nation, and religion take precedent? One force advancing these tensions between and within countries are opposing transnational networks. This is because integration these networks socializes actors into differing cultural models, provides resources, and shapes policy outcomes (Velsaco forthcoming). But what explains embeddedness to begin with? Specifically, is there an interdependent relationship between these two opposing networks such that they mutually engage or avoid one another? Or, alternatively, do they operate independently?

In investigating these questions, this study unearths several important insights. First, even descriptively, both networks are growing over time. While others document the growth of pro-LGBT+ networks (Ayoub 2016; Gonsalves 2021; Velasco 2018), this is among the first to detail the rise of transnational anti-LGBT+ networks quantitatively and longitudinally (Velasco forthcoming). Yet, there is notable difference in the scale between the two. Despite LGBT+ advancements typically being portrayed as the initial movement, anti-LGBT+ INGOs significantly outnumber pro-LGBT+ international organizations. As Figures 1A and 2 highlight, this difference in scale is due both to there being more anti-LGBT+ INGOs and these INGOs, on average, having members across more countries. These differences are partly due to anti-LGBT+ INGOs, many of which are religious in nature, being much older and emerging after WWII (Bush 2007). Consequently, when LGBT+ advocates started to achieve international success during the early 1990s, opponents could quickly draw on an existing infrastructure to oppose these advancements (Bob 2012; Bunch et al. 2001;

Stoeckl 2020). Therefore, it is the transnational coordination through a *network* structure that represents the opposing force within international politics—initially through the World Congress of Families but through other arenas over time. Knowing this scale of opposition puts the recent achievements of LGBT+ networks in an important context.

Second, there is indeed sufficient evidence demonstrating an interdependent relationship between opposition transnational networks in where they locate. Despite potential advantages to opposition avoidance through "forum shopping" (Sanders 2016), the more typical pattern is the "follow effect" of mutual engagement. However, this pattern differs between pro- and anti-LGBT+ networks. Integration into anti-LGBT+ networks is associated with greater subsequent integration within pro-LGBT+ networks. This pattern holds even after accounting for domestic LGBT+ politics, socio-cultural factors, and structural determinants of global civil society integration (Smith and Wiest 2005). Rather than seeing the global arena as one playing field, where networks "concede" countries to instead focus constrained resources on more amenable forums, there is a mutual pull toward the same country. This pattern mimics recent examples spotting the globe where anti-LGBT+ actors connected to these transnational networks spur a backlash event—such as the introducing a regressive piece of legislation, arresting LGBT+ individuals, or initiating a national referendum—which then draws pro-LGBT+ actors from around the world in defense (either because local LGBT+ communities sought this support through a boomerang process or foreign actors took it upon themselves). This pattern of mutual engagement is less consistent for anti-LGBT+ networks following pro-LGBT+ networks. While the cross-lagged panels highlight evidence of this similar interdependency from 1994 to 2006, it no longer holds from 2006 to 2018. Indeed, even when incorporating all years of available data in the dynamic models, there is insufficient evidence that integration into pro-LGBT+ networks predicts changes in anti-LGBT+ integration the following year.

Third, these interdependent dynamics are conditional upon the normative, institutional environment within a country's region. As others have highlighted, the international environment encourages the growth of transnational networks (Longhofer and Schofer 2011; Tallberg et al. 2014; Tsutsui 2017; Wiest and Smith 2007). This is due to both intergovernmental organizations creating the opportunity for transnational coordination to address social challenges and the institutionalization of norms encouraging transnational networks to hold member-countries accountable to collective standards. While the present results show that this is true at a global level, it is especially the case at a regional level as where the distinction between whether LGBT+ rights are "foreign" v. "local" is increasingly salient (Gonsalves 2021). Therefore, rather than the geographic region in and of itself conditioning patterns, it is the institutional environment and how it fosters LGBT+ and pro-"family" norms.

Regional contexts influence interdependency in two important ways. First, the mutual engagement found by pro-LGBT+ networks is heightened in stronger anti-LGBT+ regions. Meaning if pro-LGBT+ networks are following anti-LGBT+ networks to buttress their effects, understandably this pattern

will be pronounced in regions with greater institutionalization of anti-LGBT+ norms. Second, factoring in regional context illuminates that there is indeed an interdependent follow effect by anti-LGBT+ networks; however, this only occurs in regions with lower levels of pro-LGBT+ institutionalization. In other words, as regions becomes more supportive, greater integration into pro-LGBT+ networks attract fewer and fewer anti-LGBT+ networks in response. While the pattern does not prove anti-LGBT+ *actively avoid* or "concede" countries in such regions, it does suggest that regional context influences perceptions of amenableness. Altogether, these results highlight that transnational LGBT+ networks are more reactive and responsive to where opposing, anti-LGBT+ networks are locating. This supports findings from Gonsalves and Velasco (2022) who highlight how domestic LGBT+ organizations in unfriendly contexts are more likely to be central within transnational networks (even if momentarily). Anti-LGBT+ networks, meanwhile, are less responsive to their opponent and are, instead, integrating more as a function of domestic political considerations—it is these actors more engaged in "forum shopping" to achieve high-profile wins (Sanders 2016). This difference in pattern, can potentially contribute to perception that pro-LGBT+ actors are "foreign" as they follow in response, while anti-LGBT+ networks move in first and present themselves as more concerned with "local" considerations.

An important conclusion from these findings is that no country or is inherently "good" or "bad" when it comes to LGBT+ rights or firmly on one side of (il)liberal divide. Instead, countries constantly exist in tension between these dynamic opposing forces. As such, approaches to LGBT+ politics can be moved as embeddedness within transnational networks alters. Indeed, enacting LGBT+ rights is achievable in conservative societies, while LGBT+ politics can be pre-emptively, even suddenly, animated into repression due to such alterations (Ayoub, Page, and Whitt 2021; Nuñez-Mietz and Garcia Iommi 2017). Given that illiberal, anti-LGBT+ networks are both more present within the international arena and experiencing greater growth rates; though, it raises an important question if more resistance and backlash to gender justice will emerge moving forward.

Finally, this scholarship advances our understanding of many (il)liberal divides emerging within the global arena (e.g., democracy v. authoritarianism, free markets v. protectionism, multiculturalism v. ethnic nationalism) by attending to the increased transnational organization advancing these alternative cultural models (Ayoub and Page 2020; Buss and Herman 2003; Chappell 2006; Friedman 2003; Korolczuk and Graff 2018). World society scholars, for instance, consistently demonstrate the international organization of cultural models, but this scholarship largely focuses on *liberal* outcomes. Consequently, illiberal processes get presented as distinctly local with transnational coordination obscured. But, as mentioned, these illiberal actors are produced by the same global environment as their liberal counterparts. Acknowledging illiberalism and these opposing networks, then, helps expand world society theory toward a general understanding of the international structuration of culture, legitimated organizational activities, and the role of agentic individuals applied to outcomes of all types

(Bromley et al. 2020; Lerch et al. 2022). Such an approach helps advance a more nuanced, richer understanding for how cultural models operate across a varied transnational plane (Wimmer 2021).

Notes

1. Following Keck and Sikkink (1998), I define transnational networks as "relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services."
2. Transnational networks are developed both through elite-driven decisions into amenable forums but also by agentic local actors seeking such transnational partnerships. This project investigates patterns between opposition avoidance and mutual engagement; it does not evaluate how transnational networks are formed.
3. I conceptualize these networks as illiberal as their cultural foundations stand in contradistinction from their LGBT+ counterparts. Anti-LGBT+ networks stress the family, nation, and faith as taking precedent over the sexual desires or gender identity and expression of the individual.
4. Newspaper articles are searched for across 13 languages. Given that only English-language sources would bias these results, we consult LGBT+ organizations and experts operating in various languages to appropriately expand the keyword search terms into all relevant languages based on the largest national newspaper in circulation available on LexisNexis and Factiva.
5. Regional international organizations include: African Union, Arab League, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Council of Europe, Organisation of American States, Pacific Islands Forum, and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Countries are assigned values based on regional organization membership. If a country is not a member of any of these organizations, they receive a score of zero. Since membership in these entities does not perfectly align to region, this means countries within the same geographic unit can have differing scores on this regional context measure.
6. Figure 1A in the appendix shows that anti-LGBT+ INGOs also, on average, have more country-members; meaning that there are both more anti-LGBT+ INGOs for countries to join *and* these INGOs have members across more countries than pro-LGBT+ INGOs.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material is available at *Social Forces* online.

About the Author

Kristopher Velasco is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Princeton University. Kristopher uses the case of LGBT+ rights to illuminate changes within international organizations, transnational processes, and world culture. His

recent work appears in *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, and *International Studies Quarterly*. Kristopher received his BA from the University of Kansas and MA and PhD from the University of Texas at Austin.

References

Abrahamsen, Rita, Jean-François Drolet, Alexandra Gheciu, Karin Narita, Srdjan Vucetic and Michael Williams 2020. "Confronting the international political sociology of the new right." *International Political Sociology* 14(1):94–107.

Alliance Defending Freedom International. 2015. *Protecting Your Ministry*. Online report: https://lcmsed.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/LCMS-Alliance-Defending-Freedom-Legal-Guide-2016-v4.pdf. Accessed June 6, 2018.

Allison, Paul D. 2005. *Fixed Effects Regression Methods for Longitudinal Data Using SAS*. Sas Institute.

Armstrong, Elizabeth A. 2002. *Forging gay identities: Organizing sexuality in San Francisco, 1950–1994*. University of Chicago Press.

Ayoub, Phillip M. 2015. "Contested norms in new-adopter states: International determinants of LGBT rights legislation." *European Journal of International Relations* 21(2):293–322.

Ayoub, Phillip M. 2016. *When States Come Out*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ayoub, Phillip M., and Lauren Bauman. 2019. "Migration and Queer Mobilisations: How Migration Facilitates Cross-Border LGBTQ Activism." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45(15): 2758–78.

Ayoub, Phillip M. and Douglas Page 2020. "When do opponents of gay rights mobilize? Explaining political participation in times of backlash against liberalism." *Political Research Quarterly* 73(3):696–713.

Ayoub, Phillip M., Douglas Page and Sam Whitt 2021. "Pride amid prejudice: The influence of LGBT+ rights activism in a socially conservative society." *American Political Science Review* 115(2):467–85.

Berger, Julia 2003. "Religious nongovernmental organizations: An exploratory analysis." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 14(1):15–39.

Bilic, Bojan 2016. *LGBT Activism and Europeanisation in the Post-Yugoslav Space: On the Way to Rainbow Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Bob, Clifford. 2012. *The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Boli, John, and George M. Thomas. 1999. *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organizations Since 1875*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bromley, Patricia, Evan Schofer, and Wesley Longhofer. 2019. "Contentions Over World Culture: The Rise of Legal Restrictions on Foreign Funding to NGOs, 1994–2015." *Social Forces* 1–24.

Bromley, Patricia, Evan Schofer and Wesley Longhofer 2020. "Contentions over world culture: The rise of legal restrictions on foreign funding to NGOs, 1994–2015." *Social Forces* 99(1):281–304.

Bush, Evelyn L. 2007. "Measuring religion in global civil society." *Social Forces* 85(4):1645–65.

Buss, D., and D. Herman. 2003. *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.

Búzás, Zoltán I. 2021. "Racism and Antiracism in the Liberal International Order." *International Organization* 75(2):440–63.

Buzogány, Aron 2017. "Illiberal democracy in Hungary: authoritarian diffusion or domestic causation?" *Democratization* 24(7):1307–25.

Bunch, Charlotte, Peddy Antrobus, Samantha Frost, and Niamh Reilly. 2001. "International Networking for

Women's Human Rights." In *Global Citizen Action*, edited by Edwards, Michale, Gaventa, John, pp. 217–29. London, UK: Routledge.

Chang, Doris T. 2020. "Legalisation of same-sex marriage in contemporary Taiwan." *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* 3(2):268–91.

Chappell, Louise. 2006. "Contesting Women's Rights: Charting the Emergence of a Transnational Conservative Counter-Network." *Global Society* 20(4):491–520.

Cole, Wade M. 2016. "Human rights and the individual: Cross-cultural variation in human rights scores, 1980 to 2010." *Social Forces* 95(2):721–52.

Corrales, Javier and Mario Pecheny 2010. *The politics of sexuality in latin America*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Corredor, Elizabeth S. 2019. "Unpacking "Gender Ideology" and the Global Right's Antigender Countermovement." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44(3):613–38.

Cupać, Jelena, and Irem Ebetürk. 2020. "The Personal Is Global Political: The Antifeminist Backlash in the United Nations." *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 22(4):702–14.

Currier, Ashley, and Joëlle M. Cruz. 2020. "The Politics of Pre-Emption: Mobilisation against LGBT Rights in Liberia." *Social Movement Studies* 19(1):82–96.

D'amico, Francine. 2015. "LGBT+ and (Dis) United Nations." In *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTQ Claims Shape International Relations*, pp. 54–74. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Della and Sidney Tarrow 2005. *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. New York: NY. Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Dorf, Michael C. and Sidney Tarrow 2014. "Strange bedfellows: How an anticipatory countermovement brought same-sex marriage into the public arena." *Law & Social Inquiry* 39(2):449–73.

Elliott, Michael A. 2007. "Human rights and the triumph of the individual in world culture." *Cultural Sociology* 1(3):343–63.

Faúndes, Morán, José Manuel and María Angélica Peñas Defago 2016. "Strategies of Self-Proclaimed Pro-Life Groups in Argentina: effect of new religious actors on sexual policies." *Latin American Perspectives* 43(3):144–62.

Faúndes, Morán, and José Manuel. 2019. "The Geopolitics of Moral Panic: The Influence of Argentinian Neo-Conservatism in the Genesis of the Discourse of 'Gender Ideology'." *International Sociology* 34(4):402–17.

Fetner, Tina. 2008. *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Fillieule, Olivier and Christophe Broqua 2020. "Sexual and reproductive rights movements and counter movements from an interactionist perspective." *Social Movement Studies* 19(1):1–20.

Finkel, Steven E. 1995. *Causal Analysis with Panel Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Frank, David John, and Dana M. Moss. 2017. "Cross-National and Longitudinal Variations in the Criminal Regulation of Sex, 1965 to 2005." *Social Forces* 95(3):941–69.

Frank, David John, Bayliss J. Camp, and Steven A. Boutcher. 2010. "Worldwide Trends in the Criminal Regulation of Sex, 1945 to 2005." *American Sociological Review* 75(6):867–93.

Frank, David John and John W. Meyer 2002. "The profusion of individual roles and identities in the postwar period." *Sociological Theory* 20(1):86–105.

Friedman, Elisabeth Jay. 2003. "Gendering the Agenda: The Impact of the Transnational Women's Rights Movement at the UN Conferences of the 1990s." *Women's Studies International forum*. 26(4):313–31.

Gonsalves, Tara 2021. "Transnational Diffusion and Regional Resistance: Domestic LGBT Association Founding, 1979–2009." *Social Forces* 99(4):1601–30.

Gonsalves, Tara and Kristopher Velasco 2022. "Seeking Friends in Troubled Times: The Structure and Dynamics of Transnational LGBT Networks in Europe." *Mobilization* 27(1):91–114.

Hadenius, Axel, and Jan Teorell. 2005. *Assessing Alternative Indices of Democracy*. Committee on Concepts and Methods Working Paper Series, August.

Hadler, Markus and Jonathan Symons 2018. "World society divided: divergent trends in state responses to sexual minorities and their reflection in public attitudes." *Social Forces* 96(4):1721–56.

Hanley, Seán, and Milada Anna Vachudova. 2018. "Understanding the Illiberal Turn: Democratic Backsliding in the Czech Republic." *East European Politics* 34(3):276–96.

Herkenrath, Mark, and Alex Knoll. 2011. "Protest Events in International Press Coverage: An Empirical Critique of Cross-National Conflict Databases." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 52(3):163–80.

Htun, Mala, and S. Laurel Weldon. 2018. *The Logics of Gender Justice: State Action on Women's Rights Around the World*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hughes, Melanie M., Mona Lena Krook, and Pamela Paxton. 2015. "Transnational Women's Activism and the Global Diffusion of Gender Quotas." *International Studies Quarterly* 59(2):357–72.

Ingram, Paul and Magnus Thor Torfason 2010. "Organizing the in-between: The population dynamics of network-weaving organizations in the global interstate network." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 55(4):577–605.

Jepperson, Ronald L. and John W. Meyer 2021. *Institutional theory: The cultural construction of organizations, states, and identities*. Cambridge University Press.

Kaoma, Kapya 2014. "The paradox and tension of moral claims: Evangelical Christianity, the politicization and globalization of sexual politics in sub-Saharan Africa." *Critical Research on Religion* 2(3):227–45.

Karam, Azza. 2017. "Positions on Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Muslim-Majority Countries and Institutions: A Telling Indication of Things to Come?" *Development in Practice* 27(5):698–707.

Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Korolczuk, Elzbieta, and Agnieszka Graff. 2018. "Gender as 'Ebola from Brussels': The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43(4):797–821.

Lerch, Julia C., Evan Schofer, David John Frank, Wesley Longhofer, Francisco O. Ramirez, Christine Min Wotipka and Kristopher Velasco 2022. "Women's Participation and Challenges to the Liberal Script: A Global Perspective." *International Sociology* 37(3):305–29.

McEwen, Haley 2019. "Suspect sexualities: contextualizing rumours of homosexuality within colonial histories of population control." *Critical African Studies* 11(3):266–84.

Lee, Po-Han 2016. "LGBT rights versus Asian values: de/re-constructing the universality of human rights." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 20(7):978–92.

Margarit, Diana. 2019. "LGBTQ Rights, Conservative Backlash and the Constitutional Definition of Marriage in Romania." *Gender, Place & Culture* 26(11):1570–87.

Mathias, Matthew D. 2013. "The Sacralization of the Individual: Human Rights and the Abolition of the Death Penalty." *American Journal of Sociology* 118(5):1246–83.

Meyer, David S., and Suzanne Staggenborg. 1996. "Movements, Countermovements, and the Structure of Political Opportunity." *American Journal of Sociology* 101(6):1628–60.

Meyer, John W. and Ronald L. Jepperson 2000. "The 'actors' of modern society: The cultural construction of social agency." *Sociological Theory* 18(1):100–20.

Morán Faúndes, José Manuel, María Angélica Peñas Defago 2016. "Strategies of Self-Proclaimed Pro-Life Groups in Argentina: effect of new religious actors on sexual policies." *Latin American Perspectives* 43(3):144–62.

Murdie, Amanda M. and David R. Davis 2012. "Shaming and blaming: Using events data to assess the impact of human rights INGOs." *International Studies Quarterly* 56(1):1–16.

Murphy, Hannah and Aynsley Kellow 2013. "Forum shopping in global governance: understanding states, business and NGOs in multiple arenas." *Global Policy* 4(2):139–49.

Nickell, Stephen 1981. "Biases in dynamic models with fixed effects." *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society* 49(6):1417–26.

Nuñez-Mietz, Fernando G., and Lucrecia García Iommi. 2017. "Can Transnational Norm Advocacy Undermine Internalization? Explaining Immunization against LGBT+ Rights in Uganda." *International Studies Quarterly* 61(1):196–209.

openDemocracy. 2019. "American-led 'pro-family' summit in Ghana condemned for 'shocking' white supremacist, Islamophobic links." Retrieved from: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/american-led-pro-family-summit-in-ghana-condemned-for-shocking-white-supremacist-islamophobic-links/. Retrieved: October 10, 2020.

O'Flaherty, M., & Fisher, J. (2008). Sexual orientation, gender identity and International Human Rights Law: Contextualising the Yogyakarta Principles. *Human Rights Law Review*, 8(2), 207–248. https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngn009

Paternotte, David. 2016. "The NGOization of LGBT+ Activism: ILGA-Europe and the Treaty of Amsterdam." *Social Movement Studies* 15(4):388–402.

Paxton, Pamela, Melanie M. Hughes, and Jennifer L. Green. 2006. "The International Women's Movement and Women's Political Representation, 1893–2003." *American Sociological Review* 71:898–920.

Permoser, Julia Mourao, and Kristina Stoeckl. 2021. "Reframing Human Rights: The Global Network of Moral Conservative Homeschooling Activists." *Global Networks* 21(4):681–702.

Rahman, Momin. 2014. "Queer rights and the triangulation of Western exceptionalism." *Journal of Human Rights* 13(3):274–89.

Rupp, Leila J. 2011. "The persistence of transnational organizing: The case of the homophile movement." *The American Historical Review* 116(4):1014–39.

Sanders, Rebecca 2016. "Norm proxy war and resistance through outsourcing: The dynamics of transnational human rights contestation." *Human Rights Review* 17(2):165–91.

Sanders, Rebecca 2018. "Norm spoiling: undermining the international women–s rights agenda." *International Affairs* 94(2):271–291.

Smith, Jackie, and Dawn Wiest. 2005. "The Uneven Geography of Global Civil Society: National and Global Influences on Transnational Association." *Social Forces* 84(2):621–52.

Schofer, Evan and Wesley Longhofer 2011. "The structural sources of association." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(2):539–85.

Southern Poverty Law Center. 2019. "*World Congress of Families*." Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/world-congress-families.

Stoeckl, Kristina. 2020. "The Rise of the Russian Christian Right: The Case of the World Congress of Families." *Religion, State and Society* 48(4):223–38.

Tallberg, Jonas, Thomas Sommerer, Theresa Squatrito and Christer Jönsson 2014. "Explaining the transnational design of international organizations." *International Organization* 68(4):741–74.

Tarrow, Sidney. 2005. *The New Transnational Activism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Thoreson, Ryan. 2014. *Transnational LGBT+ Activism: Working for Sexual Rights Worldwide*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Tsutsui, Kiyoteru and Christine Min Wotipka 2004. "Global civil society and the international human rights movement: Citizen participation in human rights international nongovernmental organizations." *Social Forces* 83(2):587–620.

Tsutsui, Kiyoteru. 2017. "Human Rights and Minority Activism in Japan: Transformation of Movement Actorhood and Local-Global Feedback Loop." *American Journal of Sociology* 122(4):1050–103.

Velasco, Kristopher. Forthcoming "Transnational Backlash and the Deinstitutionalization of Liberal Norms: LGBT+ RIghts in a Contested World." *American Journal of Sociology* .

Velasco, Kristopher. 2018. "Human Rights INGOs, LGBT+ INGOs, and LGBT+ Policy Diffusion, 1991–2015." *Social Forces* 97(1):377–404.

Voss, M. Joel. 2020. *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in International Institutions*. Oxford, UK: Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.

Wiest, Dawn and Jackie Smith 2007. "Explaining participation in regional transnational social movement organizations." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 48(2–3):137–66.

Wimmer, Andreas. 2021. "Domains of Diffusion: How Culture and Institutions Travel around the World and with What Consequences." *American Journal of Sociology* 126(6):1389–438.

Zald, Mayer N., and Bert Useem. 1987. "Movement and Countermovement Interaction: Mobilization, Tactics, and State Involvement." In *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*, edited by Mayer N. Zald and John D. Mccarthy, pp. 247–72. New Brunswick, NJ: Transnaction Books.