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M.A. THESIS

Reference Groups and Norm Resistance:

Exploring resistance to LGBTQ rights in the Kyrgyz Republic through acculturation

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Table of Contents

Abstract—English

While resistance to international liberal norms is not unprecedented, the persistence and intensification of resistance to the so-called "LGBT rights norm" heightens the importance of improving our understanding of norm resistance processes. This work contributes to existing norm resistance literature by building on Goodman and Jinks' acculturation theory (2004) to provide an explanation for variation in the manifestation of resistance across time. Developed to explain patterns in norm compliance, acculturation proposes that state behaviour can be explained, in part, by a state's identification with a given "reference group," and the cognitive and social pressures to conform exerted by this identification. Drawing on these psychosocial mechanisms of influence, this work explores how identification with and shifts in reference groups can impact the discursive manifestation of resistance across four dimensions: the intensity of resistance, the themes informing resistance, the main actors voicing resistance, and the intended aims of resistance. The explanatory power and limitations of acculturation theory in the norm resistance context are explored through a case study of anti-LGBTQ discourses in the Kyrgyz Republic from 1998-2021. The analysis concludes that acculturation's distinct explanatory mechanism generates important insights that supplement existing explanations for norm resistance dynamics. These findings reinforce the importance of studying norm diffusion, norm compliance and norm resistance as interconnected processes and shed light on how human rights advocacy strategies need to be adapted given the growing psychosocial appeal of non-Western-liberal reference groups.

Abstract—French

Bien que la résistance aux normes libérales internationales ne soit pas sans précédent, la persistance et l'intensification de la résistance à la "norme sur les droits LGBT" renforce l'importance d'améliorer notre compréhension des processus de résistance aux normes internationales. Ce travail contribue à la littérature actuelle sur la résistance aux normes en s'appuyant sur la théorie de l'acculturation de Goodman et Jinks (2004) pour fournir une explication pour la variation de la manifestation de la résistance trans-temporelle. Développée pour expliquer les tendances de conformité aux normes internationales, l'acculturation propose que le comportement d'un État puisse être expliqué, en partie, par l'association de cet État à un " groupe de référence ", et par les pressions cognitives et sociales de conformité exercées par cette association. En s'appuyant sur ces mécanismes d'influence psychosociale, ce travail explore comment l'identification et les changements de groupes de référence peuvent avoir un impact sur la manifestation discursive de la résistance à travers quatre dimensions : l'intensité de la résistance, les thèmes qui informent la résistance, les principaux acteurs qui expriment la résistance, et les objectifs visés par la résistance. Le pouvoir explicatif et les limites de la théorie de l'acculturation dans le contexte de la résistance aux normes internationales sont explorés à travers une étude des discours anti-LGBTQ en République kirghize de 1998 à 2021. L'analyse conclut que le mécanisme explicatif distinct de l'acculturation génère des idées importantes qui complètent les explications existantes de la dynamique de la résistance aux normes. Ces résultats renforcent l'importance de l'étude de la diffusion des normes, de la conformité et de la résistance en tant que processus interconnectés et mettent en lumière la manière dont les stratégies de

défense des droits de l'homme doivent être adaptées en tenant compte de l'attrait psychosocial croissant des groupes de référence non occidentaux et non libéraux.

Introduction

Over the past several decades, while lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) rights advocates have secured victories across the globe, these victories have not gone unchallenged. On the contrary, the diffusion of the so-called "LGBT rights norm" which promotes "the recognition and observation of the basic human rights of LGBT people to be protected from violence and discrimination" (Wilkinson and Langlois 2014, 249), has been accompanied by the intensification of homophobic and transphobic resistance. With this parallel escalation of two opposing dynamics—the increasingly successful diffusion of the LGBT rights norm alongside the increasingly successful resistance to said norm— the norm stands at a "crucial crossroads in contemporary world politics: both expanding and contracting, deepening and collapsing" (Ayoub 2019, 43; see also, Symons and Altman 2015, 2016).

While resistance to diffusing international liberal norms is not unprecedented, the ongoing and intensifying nature of resistance to the LGBT rights norm gives rise to concern by undermining the inevitability of arriving at a global recognition of LGBTQ rights. Contrary to early constructivist models of international norm diffusion and norm socialization (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Risse et al. 1999) which gave the impression that norms would either be successfully internalised or else succumb, early on, to opposition from defenders of the status quo, the likelihood of persistent polarization is high (Symons and Altman 2015). Moreover, resistance to this particular norm has been increasingly used to justify a blanket opposition to other Western liberal norms, and by extent "systematic and deliberate violations of people's fundamental rights by neoauthoritarian regimes" (Wilkinson 2018, 242; see also, Antonov and Galushko 2018).

Both the indefinite persistence of resistance to the LGBT rights norm, and the ways in which it has been used to undermine other norms heightens the importance of gaining a better understanding of resistance processes. In recognition of this importance, resistance has been extensively explored by different scholars, both generally (e.g., Payne 2001; Wiener 2004, 2014; Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2019), and in the specific area of LGBTQ rights (e.g., Wilkinson and Langlois 2014; Weiss and Bosia 2013; Bob 2013; Symons and Altman 2015, 2016; Ayoub 2014, 2016; Nuñez-Mietz and García Iommi 2017; Nuñez-Mietz 2019). Across the literature, resistance has been approached as (1) a process seeking to forestall the internalization and diffusion of a particular norm—the *behaviourist* approach (Wiener 2004, 191); and (2), as a concept describing the internal contestedness of all international norms, wherein "the content and scope of the norm itself change as both the norm setters and the (intended) norm followers engage[ ] in contestation" (Bloomfield 2016, 315)—the *reflexive* approach championed by Antje Wiener (2004, 2014). The reflexive approach encourages one to think critically about the ever-shifting substance of the LGBT rights norm and by extent draws attention to important debates on the norm itself (see e.g., Kollman and Waites 2009). However, since the dynamics of opposition with which my project is concerned have not sought to alter the parameters of the norm, but rather to actively prevent its domestic internalization, ward off its international diffusion and undermine its extant international legitimacy, a behaviourist approach to resistance is more fitting.

The literature has generated a rich array of insights about the origins and mechanisms of resistance. By contrast, explanations for the variation of resistance across different time periods and localities remain limited. Notably, existing explanations have not considered how resistance dynamics are impacted by a given state's psychosocial identification with a particular group, and

in turn how shifts in this identification can trigger changes in these dynamics. This kind of explanation can be found within the parameters of Ryan Goodman and Derek Jinks' *acculturation* theory, which proposes that state behaviour "is in part a function of social structure—the relations between individual actors and *some reference group(s)*" (2004, 638, *emphasis added*). More specifically it explains how "varying degrees of identification with a reference group generate varying degrees of cognitive and social pressures—real or imagined—to conform" (2004, 639). This approach, initially designed to explain pathways to norm compliance, has yet to be applied elsewhere. With this in mind, this project explores the explanatory potential of the acculturation framework in the context of norm resistance, and more specifically, in the context of resistance to the LGBT rights norm, with the primary aim of enriching literature on norm resistance, and the secondary aim of probing the boundaries of acculturation. The project is thus centered on applying the acculturation framework to the following questions: *How and why does resistance to the LGBT rights norm manifest in different ways across different contexts? And what are the main context-specific elements that affect this variation?*

My work strives to make a methodological contribution by putting forward a novel approach to capturing resistance in empirical analysis, and shed light on the diverse, though overlapping, motivations inspiring actors to oppose the LGBT rights norm and human rights norms more broadly. My hope is that the latter understanding will not only contribute to academic debates on factors forestalling norm diffusion but will also yield practical suggestions for altering human rights advocacy strategies in ways that defuse resistance and bolster the legitimacy of the international human rights regime.

Existing literature discusses how resistance to the LGBT rights norm has been rooted in a web of overlapping discourses that variably draw on themes of cultural and religious morals, national identity and state sovereignty, the traditional family, and demographic concerns, to construct tensions between the LGBTQ rights movement and "traditional values," presenting the former as a threat to the latter (see e.g., Wilkinson 2014a, 2014b, 2018, 2020; Ayoub 2014, 2016, 2019; Symons and Altman 2015, 2016). These discourses have also informed and enabled various forms of *behavioral* opposition to the norm, including the passing of laws and policies targeting LGBTQ rights and advocacy (Nuñez-Mietz and García Iommi 2017) as well as other forms of state and non-state violence, surveillance, intimidation and legal sanctioning. Resistance has thus been composed of both *rhetorical* and *behavioral* components that are mutually reinforcing and intimately interlinked. While acknowledging these ties and overlap, this project focuses primarily on variation in *rhetorical* or discursive resistance. This limitation is partially a matter of necessity—focusing on both rhetorical and behavioural elements would exceed the length of a Master's thesis. More substantively, the decision to focus on rhetorical resistance over behavioural is justified by the role that rhetoric plays in enabling and justifying other forms of resistance (see e.g., Nuñez-Mietz's (2019) discussion of the links between the *discursive* and *institutional* effects of securitization). Discursive resistance lays down a permissive framework from which the various forms of behavioural resistance can spring. This suggests, first, that a preliminary exploration of discursive resistance is a necessary step in securing a more holistic understanding of resistance broadly defined. And second, that a degree of extrapolation could allow the application of these preliminary conclusions to also explain variation in behavioural resistance. Breaking up norm resistance into four different dimensions, the rhetorical concentration leads me to explore (1) the intensity of resistance discourses; (2) the main themes

informing these discourses; (3) the main actors voicing resistance; and (4) the intended purposes of these discourses.

I approach my research through an exploration of resistance to the LGBT rights norm in Kyrgyzstan.[1] As described in more detail below, this case was selected partially due to the significant variation in the resistance that that the norm has faced in this country. Consensual same-sex acts have been legal in Kyrgyzstan since 1998 and transgender people are allowed to redefine their gender in legal documents (albeit with a precondition of a sex reassignment surgery). Moreover, LGTBQ activism has been evolving since the late 1990s, with numerous LGBTQ rights and community groups, notably Labrys and Kyrgyz Indigo, spearheading important advocacy work. Nevertheless, homophobic and transphobic attitudes persist across Kyrgyz society, translating into regular instances of violence, forced-outings, and increasingly organised legislative initiatives and campaigns designed to curb the in-country normalization of LGBTQ rights as human rights. Taking note of the continuity and variation in the discursive resistance that has accompanied, inspired, and enabled these anti-LGBTQ activity across time, I focus on the latter, considering existing explanations offered by the frameworks of visibility (e.g., Edenborg 2020; Wilkinson 2020), regime security (e.g., Weiss and Bosia 2013), counteradvocacy networks (e.g., Bob 2012; Symons and Altman 2015; Nuñez-Mietz and García Iommi 2017), and world time (e.g., Risse et al. 1999, Jetschke and Liese 2013), before devoting the bulk of my analysis to exploring the explanatory power of acculturation theory (Goodman and Jinks 2004, 2013). Overall, the case study demonstrates how acculturation's distinct explanatory mechanism and its consideration of numerous intervening variables, generates important insights that supplement, expand upon, and nuance existing explanations for variations

[1] Also referred to as the Kyrgyz Republic.

in resistance dynamics. Despite several limitations, these preliminary conclusions reinforce the importance of studying norm diffusion, compliance, and resistance as interconnected processes and, more practically, shed light on how human rights advocacy strategies need to be adapted given the growing psychosocial appeal of non-Western-liberal reference groups.

Theorizing Norm Resistance

Existing literature on international norms, and on the LGBT rights norm specifically, includes some explanations for variation in discursive resistance. Before delving into these explanations, I first provide an overview of the LGBT rights norm itself, and lay out the four dimensions of resistance discourses explored in my analysis. Next, I outline some existing explanations for variation in resistance, before expanding on the explanatory potential and limitations of *acculturation* theory.

The LGBT Rights Norm

The norm that concerns itself with rights related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) has been defined in different ways. Nuñez-Mietz uses the term "LGBT rights norm" to refer to a norm that encompasses "a set of proscriptions and prescriptions bound together by the principle of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity" (2019, 547). Wilkinson and Langlois similarly discuss the "LGBT rights as a human rights norm" promoting "the recognition and observation of the basic human rights of LGBT people to be protected from violence and discrimination" (2014, 249-50). By contrast, the content of the "sexuality rights norm" informing Symons and Altman's discussion of norm polarization is limited to contending that "sexual orientation and gender identity should be subjects of human rights protection" (65). The two make the argument that "to date, international polarization has primarily concerned [this] very general norm;" however, there is a "cluster of

related norms" which includes "non-discrimination, legal recognition of same-sex partnerships and marriage" (and I would also add questions of adoption and inheritance) that "are less accepted and not currently subjects of polarization" (ibid.). Their limited conception of the LGBT rights norm is useful in the context of the selected case study given that issues like same-sex partnerships and parenthood have not been the most pertinent issues in the context of contemporary LGBTQ rights advocacy and resistance struggles in Kyrgyzstan to date. The anti-LGBT rights norm resistance discourses with which this study is concerned have thus primarily aimed at thwarting the normalization of LGBTQ individuals as subjects of international human rights law, and only secondarily, preventatively, at forestalling the eventual consequences of this normalization, i.e., the recognition of concrete rights to non-discrimination, marriage, parenthood, etc..

More abstractly, these varying conceptions of the norm shed light on the importance of the terminology question (e.g., LGBT vs LGBTQIA vs SOGI(E) vs queer), which sparks a broader debate on the homonormativity (Duggan 2002, 179) of mainstream LGBTQ rights advocacy[2] and on whether these advocacy efforts should be organized on the basis of "rights" in the first place (Kollman and Waites 2009; see also, Brown 1995). These debates reveal the endogenous contestedness of all norms which informs Antje Wiener's work (2004, 2014); however, given the behaviourist approach to resistance adopted in this study they are consciously set aside. This in turn informs the framing of my analysis using the language of the "LGBT rights norm," despite its contestedness. Using it makes sense since this is how the norm has been perceived and presented by agents of resistance who have succeeded in conjuring a kind of LGBTQ "bogeyman" which has "compel[led] sexual minorities not only to respond in the state's

[2] Evidenced, inter alia, by the neglect of the human rights experiences of bisexual, transgender, and intersex people.

terms but to think through them as well" (Bosia 2014, 258). Moreover, the term "LGBT" has been strategically used by Kyrgyzstani non-heterosexual and transgender youth to facilitate their "entry into a globally-recognized discourse of LGBT rights as an integral part of universal human rights" (Wilkinson and Kirey 2010, 487). In other words, although I am conscious that using the language of the LGBT rights norm reinforces some of the issues associated with this terminology, doing so corresponds with the topic of my analysis and my case study.

The Four Dimensions of Rhetorical Resistance

The four dimensions of resistance rhetoric represent four elements whose relevance has been noted by LGBTQ rights activists and which have been explored by other scholars working on resistance to LGBTQ rights. The first dimension, the *intensity* or *severity* of the rhetoric used, maps onto literature which approaches resistance through *securitization*, tracing the rhetorical construction of the LGBT rights norm as an existential threat (see e.g., Nuñez-Mietz 2019). The intensity dimension can thus be understood as operating on a politicization spectrum. Resistance can be nonpoliticized—with the norm remaining outside of public debate; politicized—with the norm appearing on the public agenda; or securitized—with the norm framed as an existential threat (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998, 23-24).[3]

The second resistance dimension—the *themes* upon which resistance rhetoric builds—is more difficult to break down, partially because the nature of what constitutes a "theme" shifts depending on the level of intensity. In non-securitizing resistance discourses, the theme refers to the reasoning informing or justifying resistance, either implicitly or explicitly. In securitizing resistance discourses, the concept can be fleshed out through securitization theory, with themes

[3] As will be discussed in the case study, these three degrees of intensity are not entirely adequate in capturing the range of intensity across which resistance operates. They do, however, provide a useful shorthand.

conceptualised as *referent objects*—the objects presented as threatened by the LGBT rights norm (Buzan et al. 198, 36). Existing literature provides many examples of referent objects used in resisting the LGBT rights norm, including traditional and religious values and national identity (see e.g., Weiss 2013, 159; Wilkinson 2014a, 365; Wilkinson 2014b, 64; Symons and Altman 2015, 87; Ayoub 2014, 2016); children and children's rights (see e.g., Ayoub 2014, 347; Thoreson 2015, 1331; Nuñez-Mietz 2019, 556); the family unit and demographics (see e.g., Wilkinson 2018, 110-111, 114; Nuñez-Mietz 2019, 557); as well as state security, sovereignty, and national interests (see e.g., Nuñez-Mietz and García Iommi 2017, 205-6; Jetschke and Liese 2013; Schwarz 2004).

In unpacking the third dimension—the *primary actors* involved in voicing resistance—the concepts of "rival entrepreneurs" (Bob 2013) and "norm antipreneurs" (Bloomfield 2016) are helpful in identifying the different individuals and institutions that might be involved in opposing the work of norm advocates. Potential candidates for these counter-advocacy positions include family and friends, employers, media institutions, members of parliament, law enforcement agencies, religious leaders, and conservative civil society organizations.

The fourth and last dimension—the *aims* of resistance—can be broken down through Weiss and Bosia's work on political homophobia (2013). The aims of resistance can be simplified into aims rooted in "private, religious, and interpersonal sentiments" and aims which are more strategic in nature, taking on the form of "overt claims to political legitimacy," in line with the tenets of political homophobia (Weiss and Bosia 2013, 5). Additionally, a third category of aims characterized by the use of a homophobic and transphobic rhetoric for personal material gain can also be considered.

These four dimensions are not exhaustive. For example, it might have been helpful to include a fifth dimension considering the platform or means through which a given discourse was relayed, and/or a sixth dimension recording whether the discourse in question was directly linked to an instance of behavioural resistance (e.g., a protest, a violent act, or a legislative initiative). It was decided, however, that the dimensions selected could capture the dynamics of discursive resistance in a way that was nuanced and holistic, without overcomplicating the analysis. The idea was that the supplementary dimensions could be considered on an ad-hoc basis depending on their relevance for one instance of resistance or another.

As a final consideration, I call attention to the fact that changes across the four dimensions selected are not independent from one another. One can reasonably predict, for example, that the increasing involvement of political actors in the resistance process will be accompanied by a shift in the aims of resistance from ideological to more strategic ones. At the same time, the links between the dimensions cannot be taken for granted—the increasing involvement of political actors does not *guarantee* a shift in aims—demonstrating the importance of monitoring changes within each of the four dimensions in turn.

Existing Explanations

With the four dimensions laid out, I present several theoretical frameworks that could offer potential explanations for variation in resistance to the LGBT rights norm. This section, divided into approaches that operate at the domestic level and those that operate at the regional and international levels, is meant to provide an overview of existing explanations and some of their limitations, laying the groundwork for the main discussion on acculturation.

Domestic Level Explanations: Visibility and Legitimacy Crises

The *visibility* of LGBTQ individuals and advocates is one domestic-level factor to consider in explaining variation in resistance. This analysis can be teased out from Wilkinson's work on LGBTQ rights in the Former Soviet Union which, drawing on Edenborg's (2020) concept of the "regime of visibility," suggests that the "(d)evolution" of LGBTQ issues from invisibility to hypervisibility has played a central role in shaping LGBTQ politics across the post-Soviet space (Wilkinson 2020, 235). While acknowledging the empowering potential of visibility, Wilkinson stresses that "at best…visibility is a double-edged sword," since "greater visibility has frequently been accompanied by increasing vulnerability, danger, and insecurity" (ibid.). Consequently, Wilkinson underlines "the importance of asking not just whether LGBT people are visible but *how* and *why* they are visible and with what consequences" (235).

These questions of *whether, when,* and *how* LGBTQ people are visible offer avenues for the exploration of variation in resistance, particularly variation in intensity. Heightened visibility, for example, can be expected to yield more intense forms of rhetorical resistance, including through securitization (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; Nuñez-Mietz 2019; Creppell 2011). One could also argue that the transition of LGBTQ people into the public sphere could result in the increasing involvement of public figures in resistance processes, and by extent in the politicization of resistance itself, with the corresponding politicization of resistance themes and aims.

At the same time, visibility is not an entirely objective variable, with the public presence of the LGBTQ community often intentionally exaggerated by resistance itself. Resistance discourses tend to create a "'spectral' sexuality" with a "threatening, perverted and/or sick sexualized body or group of bodies… continually incarnated in a discourse but never fully

instantiated in the flesh" (Murray 2009, 148). The visibility of SOGIE minorities is thus not a prerequisite for resistance; to paraphrase Weiss (2013), prejudice is often acted upon before pride. This suggests that while visibility likely plays a role in shaping resistance dynamics, it must be considered alongside other factors, for example the prior impacts of a counteradvocacy network or a reference group on the resisting actor in question, that could either reinforce or dilute its effects. The role of these approaches will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

The *domestic political context* of the state in which the resistance is taking place, namely whether dominant political actors are facing *legitimacy crises*, is another relevant factor in the variation of resistance to the LGBT rights norms. Weiss and Bosia (2013) argue that under conditions of undermined legitimacy, political (and other) authorities are motivated to denounce the LGBT rights norm as a diversionary tactic. They refer to this type of resistance, aimed at the furtherance of strategic goals, as *political homophobia.* As noted above, Weiss (2013) emphasises that a domestic legitimacy crisis could bring about the politicization of a homophobic discourse, *without* any noticeable increase in the visibility of LGBTQ people ("prejudice before pride").

While Weiss and Bosia introduce the concept of political homophobia to account for how resistance manifests in *similar* ways across geographic contexts, it can also be mobilised to account for variation. Most evidently, a legitimacy crisis could trigger a shift in the *aims* of resistance discourses, e.g., from the desire to police sexuality and gender identity and expression to preserve social structures of heteronormativity or masculinity,[4] to more traditionally political aims such as "state building and retrenchment" (Weiss and Bosia 2013, 2). Similarly, legitimacy

[4] This is comparable to the function played by misogyny, see Manne (2017).

crises could explain changes in the actors of resistance e.g., from religious hardliners to political actors in search of a scapegoat. These shifts in the aims and actors of resistance could also correspond with the intensification of resistance, with actors driven by concrete material goals and perhaps better endowed as a result of their connections to the state (and potentially global networks of homophobia, as discussed in the next section). Finally, one could anticipate a shift in themes with resistance actors framing their discourse in a way that is likely to elicit broad support, for example, presenting the LGBT rights norm as a threat to entrenched international norms like sovereignty or children's rights.

Looking at domestic political crises thus offers a relatively holistic explanation for variation in resistance across all four dimensions. Similarly to the explanation offered by visibility, however, this factor requires the backing of a higher order explanation to account for *why* diversionary tactics are pursued specifically through homophobia. Considering Weiss and Bosia's claim that "there is not necessary and fixed relationship between political homophobia and extant private homophobia" (2013, 6), one is pressed to look for this explanation beyond the domestic sociocultural context of the state in question. Explanations can be secured by looking, as Weiss and Bosia do, at the role of transnational counteradvocacy networks or at "world time." However, as discussed in the next section, I argue that the explanations provided by acculturation can offer insights that both add on to and enhance those offered by existing frameworks by laying out a more precise mechanism of influence.

Regional and International Level Explanations: Counter-advocacy Networks and "World Time"

Much of the literature on resistance to the LGBT rights norm stresses the importance of "transnational networks of opposition actors" (Ayoub 2019, 48), or what Clifford Bob terms the "Baptist-Burqa" Network (2012), in shaping resistance (see also Weiss and Bosia 2013; Symons

and Altman 2015). It is argued that "as the wave of progressive change becomes transnational, opponents of the norm begin to operate transnationally with the purpose of preventing the regional or even global diffusion of the norm" (Nuñez-Mietz and García Iommi 2017, 200).

References to these networks are often used to account for the homogenization of strategies (rhetorical and otherwise) mobilized to oppose LGBTQ rights across different contexts, with their presence incentivising local groups to frame "longstanding grievances in [homophobic] terms, to import solutions devised elsewhere, and to seek overseas assistance" (Bob 2013, 80). To an extent, counteradvocacy networks can also be used to explain variation, especially by reinforcing explanations offered by domestic political crises. The active operation of these networks provides a readily available discourse upon which to draw when practicing political homophobia (Weiss and Bosia 2013, 8). Ultimately, however, the impact of counteradvocacy networks on variation depends on explaining and tracking their overall strength and their ability to exert influence within a specific state. Crucially, explanations for the latter can be identified in the psychosocial mechanisms laid out in the acculturation framework, while explanations for the former can be found in the "world time" factor. Without these supporting explanations, the value of the counteradvocacy networks approach remains limited to accounting for similarities across resistance strategies.

The concept of "world time" was initially put forward to explain an uptick in *compliance* with human rights norms. In their description of socialization to international (liberal democratic) norms, Risse et al. (1999) reference "world time" to account for the convergence in the "prescriptive status" phase of norm internalization in the years 1985-1995 (19-22; 264-267). Updating this argument, Jetschke and Liese (2013) argue that a "new world time" must be considered, one in which we are witnessing a decline in international political support for liberal

norms in general (27; 42; see also, Cooley 2015). "World time" is thus useful in explaining variation in resistance over time, insofar as it can provide one explanation for the rising strength of counteradvocacy groups, which can in turn exert the kinds of influence on the rhetoric of resistance described above. Nevertheless, shifts in the influence of these counteradvocacy networks within a given state remain unaddressed.

Without dismissing the explanatory capacity of these explanations, or suggesting mutual exclusivity, I have sought to offer a glimpse of how acculturation can both enhance and expand upon them. In shifting to explore the explanatory power of acculturation more fully, my aim is thus twofold: first, to draw on acculturation in developing a better understanding of the dynamics of variation in resistance to the LGBT rights norm (and resistance more generally). And second, to explore the relevance of acculturation beyond its typical area of application, by using the Kyrgyzstan case study to explore and identify the strengths and limitations of the framework as initially conceptualised.

Acculturation: The "Reference Group" Factor

Acculturation theory, similarly to the "world time" concept, was initially designed to explain pathways to norm compliance (Goodman and Jinks 2004). Situated between explanations citing mechanisms of coercion and persuasion, the theory suggests that state behaviour can also be explained by mechanisms of acculturation, i.e., "the general process of adopting the beliefs and behavioural patterns of the surrounding culture" (Goodman and Jinks 2004, 638). The theory proposes that "individual behavior…is in part a function of social structure—the relations between individual actors and *some reference group(s)*" (638, *emphasis added*). More specifically it explains how "varying degrees of identification with a reference group generate varying degrees of cognitive and social pressures—real or imagined—to conform" (639). At the

cognitive/internal level, actors are compelled to mirror the attitudes and behaviours of a specific reference group, as a result of the psychosocial costs and benefits of non-conformity and conformity respectively. At the social/external level, conformity results from the costs of real or imagined shaming and shunning and the benefits of displays of public approval (640-641). Changes in the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of a given state thus operate at a deeper level than those induced by material reward and punishment (coercion), and at a more superficial level than those induced by convincing argumentation (persuasion).

The ability of the reference group to exert enough social pressure to generate behavioural change depends on three factors: *strength*, *immediacy*, and *size* (Goodman and Jinks 2004, 642). Strength refers to (1) the saliency of the issue in question (e.g., LGBT rights) for the reference group, and (2) the target actor's degree of identification with the reference group. Immediacy refers to the target actor's degree of exposure to the reference group. Size refers to the size of the reference group which, I take to mean, refers to the number of members making up the group and the resources in the group's possession. All three factors are expected to correlate positively with the degree of social influence exerted by the reference group on the target actor.

Furthermore, Goodman and Jinks stress that the "state socialization" process through which acculturation operates is "grounded in the beliefs, conduct, and social relations of individuals" connected to the state, in one way or another, "including government officials, members of the national and local media, issue-specific activists, and even ordinary citizens" (2013, 40-41). Thus, their argument "does not rely on an any claim that the state exhibits any properties of personhood" (ibid.) This ontological clarification is important for the empirical application of their framework, given that it allows one to examine the impacts of acculturation on concrete actors, rather than being forced to grapple with its impacts on abstract entities that

"do not have brains...preferences...,needs... beliefs systems or emotions" (Goodman and Jinks 2013, 39).

Acculturation provides two main mechanisms for exploring variation in resistance. Most basically, it suggests that variation can be accounted for through the identification of the resisting actor's reference group. Variation in resistance *over time*, could be explained by a *change* of reference group, for example, from one that is ambivalent towards the norm, to one that is opposed. Because acculturation occupies a space between coercion and persuasion it, (1) provides an explanation for a change in attitudes and behaviour surrounding an issue area, like LGBTQ rights, where material stakes are relatively low; and (2) it helps explain why this change could be brought about comparatively quickly, given that the social influence of acculturation operates at a more superficial level than persuasion or complex learning (Levy 1994). The changes are not accompanied by deep internalization, meaning a shift in reference group can relatively easily catalyze a shift in perspectives.

Second, more subtly, the three factors impacting a reference group's influence on the behaviour of the resistance actor—strength, immediacy, and size—can be used to explain variation in resistance in the absence of a reference group change. This variation can be interpreted in terms of degrees of deviation from the referent resistance, i.e., the norm resistance displayed by the reference group. Patterns of resistance displayed by states who share a reference group could thus vary from state to state based on the intensity of identification with the reference group and the degree of exposure to its influence. Similarly, if one considers resistance within one state over time, changes in issue saliency, intensity of identification with and degree of exposure to the reference group, as well as changes in group size, could account for variation in the absence of a change of reference group.

As noted previously, explanations rooted in acculturation can productively intersect with, enhance, and add on to existing explanations. In terms of visibility, the saliency of the LGBTQ rights question for the resisting actor's reference group can shape how the presence of SOGIE minorities is perceived and responded to within the resisting state. Low levels of saliency can correspond to low levels of resistance, even if visibility is high and vice versa. As far as domestic legitimacy crises are concerned, considering the resisting actor's reference group can help evaluate whether the selection of SOGIE minorities as a scapegoat for social ills is pursued in response to similar strategies adopted by said group. This is in turn linked to the connection between acculturation and the impacts of counteradvocacy networks. The influence of a counteradvocacy network in a given state can be gauged by considering whether that state's reference group is implicated in the network, in which case a higher degree of influence can be anticipated. Finally, in terms of "world time," while acculturation provides a more precise and therefore more easily observable explanation for variation in resistance, world time (and the "new world time") can explain why a state might change reference groups towards or away from Western liberal states, something that is not accounted for in the theory's original formulation. In other words, the two approaches can fruitfully be applied together.

The Limitations of Acculturation

While acculturation provides a valuable lens through which to explore variation in discursive resistance to the LGBT rights norm, laying out its limitations is an important component of expanding its applicability. There are two limitations that I will lay out in abstract before evaluating how they manifest in the Kyrgyzstan case.

First, while Goodman and Jinks tentatively lay out an "integrated model of state socialization" that demonstrates how the three mechanisms of influence—acculturation,

persuasion, and coercion— could work together to advance norm compliance (2013, 166-185), their model fails to consider how the exercise of persuasion and coercion by *non*-reference actors might intervene with the social pressures exerted by the reference group. This is relevant for using acculturation to explain variation in resistance in general, but is even more relevant for explaining how resistance is impacted by a change in reference group. To what extent will a resisting actor's former point of reference continue exerting influence on resistance to the LGBT rights norm by means of e.g., publishing best practices or withholding development aid (see e.g., Wilkinson 2014b)? This also relates to the problem of not being able to clearly identify a state's reference group, especially during a process of transition from one reference group to another.

Second, acculturation's original formulation does not sufficiently reflect on what its two mechanisms of influence—cognitive/internal and social/external—imply for the characterization of the reference group as an entity.[5] The internal mechanism implicitly treats the reference group as a symbolic non-actor that passively exerts influence on the resisting state. The behaviour of the reference group is almost irrelevant, as all the attention is directed to the cognitive deliberations of the resisting actor. By contrast, the external mechanism presupposes a conceptualization of the reference group as an actor that must actively decide to adopt backpatting or sanctioning policies. This, in turn, requires a consideration of the obstacles that collective actors must overcome prior to agreeing on coordinated action—notably, obstacles stemming from collective action problems (see e.g., Olson 1965). The capacity and willingness of the reference group to initiate the policies required to activate the social/external mechanism gain significance.

[5] I would like to thank Fernando Nunez-Mietz for this point.

Considering the reference group as both a symbol and an actor has implications for the relationship between the group's degree of influence and the three factors mediating the degree of influence, especially size. When considering the reference group as a symbol, the positive correlation between size and degree of influence, is unproblematic—a bigger reference group is indeed more likely to trigger the internal mechanisms for conformity from the resisting actor than a smaller one. However, when considering the social/external mechanism, this positive correlation is problematized. While having more resources might make it easier for a reference group to adopt *effective* backpatting and sanctioning policies, having more members within the group will likely make it harder to (1) monitor and identify nonconformity, especially if the nonconforming behaviour is being carried out by a peripheral member; and (2) make decisions on those policies. By contrast, if the reference group is made up of a few states (or just one), both the monitoring and decision-making processes are simplified.

A similar argument can also be made regarding the impacts of reference group size on its *incentives* to punish nonconformity. If your reference group is large, the nonconformity of one member is unlikely to have a meaningful impact on the rest of the group. If, on the other hand, your group has a more limited membership, it might not only be easier to respond to nonconformity, but this response might also be more urgent—nonconformity could confront the group with an existential threat. Interestingly, these dynamics can also be linked to a feedback loop going back to acculturation's cognitive/internal influence mechanism. If a resisting state knows that its nonconformity is unlikely to be punished or even noticed, then, overtime, it is less likely to experience internal pressures to conform as well.

In sum, these limitations have clear implications for acculturation's applicability outside norm compliance. The implications are decisively revealed through my case study, which

illustrates that although the acculturation framework provide valuable insights, addressing the limitations is necessary to realize the full extent of its explanatory capacities in the norm resistance context.

Research Strategy

The strengths and limitations of the acculturation framework are explored in the case of Kyrgyzstan. The case was selected with several considerations in mind. First, existing materials on the case, especially recent work by Wilkinson (2020) and Kirey and Kirey-Sitnikova (2019), has revealed a dynamic (d)evolution in LGBTQ politics in this country over the past several decades, providing the variation needed to explore acculturation's explanatory potential. Second, Kyrgyzstan and the Central Asian region in general remain grossly understudied which, given its geographic positioning between Russia, China, Middle Eastern powers, and the Western world, presents a problematic blind spot. In pursuing this project, I thus aim to fill an empirical gap that promises to generate important insights on resistance to LGBTQ rights and norm resistance more broadly. Finally, my personal ties to this country and my knowledge of the Russian language presented practical advantages in the research process in terms of being able to establish ties with key members of local LGBTQ advocacy groups (most of whom speak Russian), having access to Russian-language news articles and other publications, and generally approaching the subject with an ethnographic sensibility—"an approach that cares—with the possible *emotional engagement* that implies—to glean the meanings that the people under study attribute to their social and political reality" (Schatz 2009, 5, *emphasis added*).

Through a discourse analysis of new articles published by the most wide-read Kyrgyzstani publications, complemented by interviews with scholars and activists, I was able to trace the changes and continuities in the rhetoric of resistance across the four dimensions of

resistance over time, from the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1998 to Summer 2021.[6] Drawing on this analysis, I parallelly examined (shifts in) the acculturation variables—reference group identification, issue saliency, intensity of identification, degree of exposure, and size, through an examination of academic work, news articles, think tank publications, and publicly available data distributed by international organizations. Pinpointing key trends in the variation of resistance discourses and mapping these trends onto variations across the acculturation variables, spurred several conclusions related both to norm resistance and to the utility of the acculturation framework beyond its initial formulation. As an important caveat, I stress that this case study was not designed to test the validity of acculturation theory in this context—let alone its external validity—but rather to preliminarily explore its usefulness and limitations in explaining the observed variation in resistance. Studying one country-context in detail provided a good opportunity to pursue these specific goals, by facilitating an in-depth probing of acculturation's internal validity and explanatory power.

Discourse analysis

Source Selection

To map the variation in resistance to the LGBT rights norm across the time period of interest, I conducted a discourse analysis covering written Kyrgyzstani news media (print and digital) reporting on LGBTQ rights issues. The newspapers and news agencies selected were considered as (1) sources of information on manifestations of resistance at the personal, societal, and political level; and (2) as actors of resistance in their own right, both reflecting and

[6] The start date precedes several key events linked to the choice and influence of reference group, including the election of Vladimir Putin, as well as the establishment of both American and Russian military bases near the capital city of Bishkek. Moreover, 1998 marks not only the decriminalization of homosexuality in Kyrgyzstan, but also the official registration of Kyrgyzstan's first LGBT organization Oazis which corresponds to a greater availability of resources on LGBT issues in Kyrgyzstan, and an increase in the number of LGBT activists operating during that period who were willing to share their experiences through interviews.

influencing resistance pursued by other actors. With this dual role of news media in mind, articles for analysis were selected from the most popular print newspapers—*Vecherniy Bishkek (VB)*, *Delo Nomer*, and *Moya Stolitsya Novosti (MSN)*, and online media agencies—*Azattyk*, *Sputnik.kg*, and *Kabar News* in a given year (OSCE 1999, 2002; IREX 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2016, 2018; MSC 2012; Soros 2017; CMDS 2019), the idea being that these news sources are likely to be most representative of the broader category of media actors as resistance actors and most influential in shaping resistance discourses expressed by other actors.[7]

In selecting articles for analysis, ten keywords were used, including "sex," "lesbian," "gay," "LGBT," etc..[8] With minor adjustments, the list was largely consistent across media platforms. The articles were briefly reviewed for relevance, with 609 articles reviewed in total.[9]

[7] The newspaper *Vecherniy Bishkek* has consistently reappeared in the lists of the most-circulated newspapers country-wide, topping the lists from 1998 to 2007, and coming in second from 2008 onwards. Moreover, all issues of this newspaper are available online throughout the period of interest. This availability allowed me to trace how the LGBT-related rhetoric espoused by this particular newspaper has changed across time. By contrast, the other two newspapers under analysis—*Delo Nomer* and *MSN*—allowed me to supplement the information provided by *VB* as a source of information on resistance rhetoric. *Delo Nomer* has been reported as the second or third most-circulated newspaper from 1998 until its recent closure in May 2021, however, only articles from 2012 onwards are available online (ibid.). *MSN*, by contrast, is available online throughout the period of interest, however, was widely circulated only from 2001 (the year of its founding) to 2008 (OSCE 1999, 2002; IREX 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008). While these fluctuations in availability and popularity for *Delo Nomer* and *MSN* respectively pose problems for my analysis of the changing role of news media as actors of resistance (since I can only conduct this kind of analysis for *VB* alone), analyzing the three newspapers together makes for a robust analysis of resistance on part of non-media actors.

The selection of news agencies proved to be more challenging. First, a very limited number of news agencies provide access to earlier articles or were established a lot later than 1998. Moreover, articles distributed by the *AKIPress* news agency, the first independent news agency in Kyrgyzstan established in 2000 and considered one of the most popular news agencies across sources (Soros 2017, CMDS 2019), keeps its archives behind a paywall. To compensate for these limitations, the three news agencies selected were chosen not only based on their popularity, but also on their geo-political affiliations. *Azattyk* is the Kyrgyzstani affiliate of *Radio Liberty*—a United States government-funded organization, *Kabar News* agency is a Kyrgyzstan state-run organization, and Sputnik.kg is the Kyrgyzstani affiliate of the Russian state-owned *Sputnik* news agency. In selecting these three sources with their diverse affiliations, my intent was to gather a fuller picture of the ways in which resistance to the LGBT rights nom is expressed by both media and non-media actors in Kyrgyzstan—with the expectation that the affiliation of each source would have an impact both on the types of incidents covered, and on how those instances were portrayed. The time range limitation, however, was difficult to overcome with *Sputnik.kg* and *Kabar News* only making news stories available from 2014 and 2015 respectively, and *Azattyk* from 2002.

[8] See Appendix A for full list of terms.

[9] See Appendix B for a disaggregation of totals by source and year.

Limitations in Source-Selection

Several challenges undermining the robustness of the analysis must be noted. Crucially, my lack of Kyrgyz language skills prevented me from analyzing Kyrgyz-language sources including the most widely-circulated newspaper since 2008—Super-Info and the corresponding online news agency Super.kg. Although no notable differences between Kyrgyz- and Russian-language sources are noted in the only analyses of the treatment of the LGBTQ topic by Kyrgyzstani media conducted yearly by local LGBTQ NGO, Kyrgyz Indigo (e.g., 2019, 2022), the omission is still worth noting. Another gap concerns the exclusion of TV and radio media sources. While including non-written media would have enriched the analysis, the challenges of accessing these sources, particularly those released earlier in the period of interest, informed the decision to limit the analysis to the more easily accessible written media.

Analysis

The discourse analysis was informed by both systematicity and interpretivist fluidity. The reading process aimed at identifying where the resistance discourse(s) present in each article might fall across the four dimensions of resistance. This was then recorded in a spreadsheet, alongside a brief summary of the article, relevant quotations, and impressions that came to mind while reading.[10] In a separate document I kept a chronology of key events indicating Kyrgyzstan's affiliation with potential reference groups, as well as shifts in the saliency of the LGBT rights norm, and Kyrgyzstan's intensity of identification with and degree of exposure to different groups. This complemented the more targeted evaluation of these acculturation variables described below.

[10] A sample of the spreadsheet can be found in Appendix C.

Interviews

In the interest of deepening my understanding of resistance and to address some of the limitations of the discourse analysis mentioned above, I complemented the analysis with open-ended audio and video interviews with Kyrgyzstani LGBTQ rights advocates and scholars (both Kyrgyzstani and non-Kyrgyzstani) who have previously studied LGBTQ issues in the country. Initial interviewees were selected through case-specific research, while additional interviewees were contacted through a snowball sampling strategy. A total of eleven interviews were conducted, each lasting between 45 minutes and two hours. The interviews helped (1) secure a rich understanding of resistance dynamics across time; (2) track changes in the expression of resistance discourses; and (3) gain an understanding of the different factors that could account for these changes, beginning to explore the utility of acculturation.

Acculturation Variables

The discourse analysis and interviews generated insights not only for variation in resistance dynamics, but also for trends across the acculturation variables—reference group identification, issue saliency, degrees of identification and exposure, and size. That being said, a more targeted evaluation and analysis of these variables was also conducted. The data was collected through a close reading of secondary sources (academic and news articles, and think-tank publications), as well as data made available by international organizations like the World Bank.[11]

[11] For a complete list of indicators, see Appendix D.

Resistance to the LGBT Rights Norm in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan, a small former-Soviet Central Asian republic located, is often described as a regional "anomaly" given its status as the region's only democracy and its relatively willing engagement with civil and political human rights norms. This has translated into the availability of "far greater opportunities for non-heterosexual and transgender people to organize formally and gain support and recognition" than in neighbouring states (Wilkinson and Kirey 2010, 486). Nevertheless, hate and discrimination against sexual minorities has persisted, notably in the forms of bias-motivated speech, threats and forced outing through traditional media and online platforms, legislative infringements on freedom of assembly and expressions, and police violence (ILGA-Europe 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). These evolving waves of anti-LGBTQ sentiments and actions have built on discourses of varying levels of intensity, informed by different themes, voiced by different actors, and pursued for different aims across the time period of interest. Mapping out this variation and seeking to understand the trends observed through the application of acculturation informs the remainder of this work. The case study is divided into two sections. The first provides a detailed account of variation in resistance observed across the four dimensions of interest. The second lays out a parallel account of acculturation-related dynamics, focusing on Kyrgyzstan's gradual shift from a Western liberal to a Russia-dominated reference group. Making note of correlations across these two dynamics, I conclude the section by drawing on acculturation-based explanations to highlight the utility and limitations of the acculturation framework for explaining the resistance observed.

Measuring Variation in Norm Resistance

Intensity

Of the four dimensions, variation in intensity is easiest to observe. Early articles (late 1990s to mid-2000s) primarily featured nonpoliticized resistance discourses. A 1999 *Vecherniy Bishkek* article on Kyrgyzstan's gay community provides an example, discussing how gay men "[were] constantly haunted by the fear of colliding inadvertently with acquaintances," and laying out an overview of the homophobic rhetoric these men faced from their families, friends, and fellow citizens (Vasilchenko 1999). Similarly, an *MSN* article discusses a case in which a man, suspected of being gay, was fired from work amid homophobic remarks from coworkers and management (Skorodumova 2001). Other articles discuss LGBTQ issues in relation to HIV/AIDS, acknowledging sexual minorities as a risk group alongside sex workers and drug users, but also deliberately striving to avoid the impression of HIV/AIDS as "the gay disease" and often praising the work of Oazis in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention and management (e.g., Khokhlova 2001; "SPID v Centralnoy Azii" 2002).

Overall, these findings align closely with the testimonies of early Kyrgyz LGBTQ activists recorded in my interviews who described homophobia and transphobia during this period as "byttovaya," roughly translating to "day-to-day" or "casual," meaning largely non-politicised and decentralised (personal communication, April 26, 2021; June 14, 2021). Over time, however, the intensification of resistance can be clearly observed. Crucially, intensification cannot wholly be conceptualized as a shift across the politicization spectrum from nonpoliticized, to politicized, to securitized acts of resistance. Early stages of intensification do not map neatly onto the categories of nonpoliticized and politicized resistance. Rather, in addition to the politicization of resistance, i.e., the incorporation of the LGBT rights norm and

resistance to it into government policy (Weaver et al. 1998, 23), there was a parallel increase in nonpoliticized, but nonetheless increasingly intense acts of resistance organized outside the confines of traditional political spaces and not explicitly by political actors. Despite these differences, however, both the non-political and political strands of intensified resistance were united in their call to draw attention to the LGBT rights norm in a more organized and formal way. In other words, both represent a step away from the "byttovaya" homophobia observed in the early to mid-2000s.

As far as nonpoliticized intensification, an exemplary discourse can be found across articles discussing the arrest and trial of a man accused of selling homosexual pornography. "We are not talking about the black PR of sex minorities," *VB* journalist Khokhlova clarified, "but about an illegal business, which really causes moral harm to those around who do not accept such freedom of morals" (2010). Here, the rhetoric triggers the transition of the LGBTQ rights issue from a private matter to an issue of broader societal concern. In the context of *politicized* intensification, a noteworthy example can be found in the speech of the patron of the Freedom of Choice party, Vladislav Lisovsky at a political meeting ("kurultai") held among members of the opposition in 2008. "[D]riven by incomprehensible feelings and emotions, [Lisovsky] said that it is necessary to fight not with corruption but with homosexuals (Malevanaya 2008) and "suggested no more, no less, than to send homosexuals to closed hospitals, where they would be forcibly healed" (Kasybekov 2008). Keeping the acculturation framework in mind, it is noteworthy that this first instance of politicised resistance was spearheaded by an ethnic Russian whose party worked to preserve the rights of Russians in Kyrgyzstan.

Both the non-political and political facets of intensification heightened to even more intense forms of resistance identifiable as securitization. As will be elaborated on in the Themes

section, my analysis revealed that the securitization observed is more complex than the concept coined by Weaver et al. given its manifestation through various combinations of three mutually reinforcing processes. First, most basically, the *direct* securitization of the LGBT rights norm through its rhetorical construction as an existential threat to a number of referent objects including children, sovereignty, public morality, etc.. Second, the *indirect* securitization of the LGBT rights norm through the elucidation or active construction of ties between the norm and secondary phenomena that have been or are currently being securitized, for example, fascism, the Euromaidan in Ukraine, or communal violence. And third, the *securitization of secondary objects or phenomenon,* for example, local NGOs or political opponents, by means of elucidating or constructing ties between that object or phenomenon and the norm. All three manifestations, however, constitute the securitization of the norm as far as intensification is concerned.

The first notable instance of securitization concerns the 2012 ban on the film-screening of "I am Gay and Muslim" at a human rights film festival in Bishkek. The film was banned in accordance with the "expert opinion of the State Commission on Religious Affairs" according to which the film "contains signs of incitement of sectarian enmity, which may be grounds for prohibiting its display and distribution on the territory of Kyrgyzstan" (Nichiporova 2012). Moreover, the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic recognized the film "as extremist material" justifying "the imposition of its display, printing, replication and distribution on the territory of Kyrgyzstan" (ibid.). The event thus represents the indirect securitization of the LGBT rights norm by means of connecting it to more traditional security concerns related to communal violence. The event which really opened the floodgates to more explicit cases of securitizing rhetoric aimed at the LGBT rights norm itself, however, was the 2014 release of a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report documenting police violence and extortion against gay and bisexual men in

Kyrgyzstan. The significance of this event was heightened by the fact that Kyrgyzstani LGBTQ activist Dastan Kasmamytov took advantage of the press conference held on the report to announce his homosexuality, becoming the first openly gay ethnically Kyrgyz man. The importance of this event, highlighted by my interviewees, could be doubly observed through my discourse analysis given the uptick in securitization rhetoric in the report's aftermath. The following table features particularly noteworthy events, distilled from articles and interviews, featuring this rise in securitization:

Figure 1: Key events featuring securitization discourses

Event	**Description**
Fatwa against homosexuality	A Fatwa issued by the Spiritual Authority of Muslims in Kyrgyzstan (DUMK/SAMK) in **2014**, stating the inadmissibility of same-sex relationships given the threat they pose to Islamic and broader religious values, with a line that could be translated as "if you see him doing this, kill him" (see e.g., Malikova 2014).
Anti-gay propaganda bill	The introduction of the anti-gay propaganda bill by the Kyrgyz Parliament—the Jogorko Kennesh—in **2014**, citing the need to protect the "traditional family, human, moral, [and] historical values of the Kyrgyz society" from the threat posed by the normalization of LGBTQ rights (Kureneva 2014).
Kalys and Kyrk Choro protests	Recurring protests carried out by nationalist groups Kalys and Kyrk Choro in opposition to "gay propaganda" and the links between the LGBT rights norm and the West, as well as the latter's perceived involvement in domestic human rights initiatives, the first of which was held in **2014** and which continue to be held to this day (see e.g., Mambetalieva 2014; Nichiporova 2015; Mambetalieva 2019).
Atambaev's constitutional referendum	The constitutional reform initiated by President Atambaev in **2015** and ratified by means of a referendum which officially eliminated the legal possibility for same-sex marriage in Kyrgyzstan by redefining marriage explicitly as a union between a man and a woman, framed as a means of safeguarding the marriage institution from LGBTQ influences (see e.g., Timaev 2015).
"Gay Pride Parade" and aftermath	The aftermath of what was referred to by many as the first pride parade in Central Asia which took place in **March 2019,** including vocal outbursts by parliamentarians and civil society groups in parliament, on the streets and on

	social media regarding the threats posed by the event to Kyrgyz values, customs, and traditions, Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty, and children and youth among other things (see e.g., Kasybekov 2019).
Reforma video	The recording and circulation of an intimate video of two male members of the opposition political party Reforma in the months preceding the **2020** parliamentary elections, with the implicit intent of undermining the party's credibility in the eyes of voters (see e.g., Isaev 2020).

In the context of intensity, these events constitute the general shift towards the securitization of the LGBT rights norm in the post-2012 era. They also symbolize an interesting dynamic in which the intensification of rhetorical resistance has followed a pattern of peaks and decline. While there has been an overarching trend of intensification, we can also observe that flair ups in securitization, especially in recent years, have centered *specifically* around these events, with periods in between featuring a return to the nonpoliticized kind of resistance observed throughout the early and mid-2000s. As I explain in the Aims section, this might be a result of the shift in resistance aims from ideological to strategic. In other words, the flair ups might be connected to securitization's role in advancing concrete political goals.

Themes

As previously explained, the conceptualization of "theme," shifts depending on the level of intensity. In cases of low-level resistance, "theme" broadly connotes the associations and reasoning that are used to implicitly or explicitly justify resistance. When it comes to securitized resistance, "theme" corresponds to the referent object of a given securitization discourse. In other words, it refers to the individuals, groups, concepts, and ideas presented as threatened by the LGBT rights norm. The five word clouds pictured below are illustrative of the changing themes

informing and shaping resistance across time.[12] Each word cloud represents a five-year period with the last cloud representing the period from 2018 to May 2021.[13]

Figure 2: Themes of Resistance Discourses Across Time

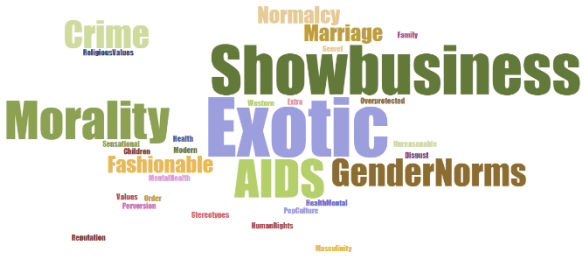


Image 1. 1998-2002

Image 2. 2003-2007

Image 3. 2008-2012

Image 4. 2013-2017

[12] The word clouds, however, are limited in several ways. First, they fail to capture shifts in the terminology used both by media and other actors to refer to sexual and gender minorities across time, a point that was raised in several of my interviewees (e.g., personal communication, June 7, 2021; June 11, 2021). Most news sources, apart from Delo Nomer, avoid the use of derogatory language in discussing sexual minorities. The most problematic language surrounds transgender individuals, as well as intersex and bisexual individuals. In general, there seems to be some confusion around these terms, which is gradually (although not entirely) resolved over the years, perhaps in response to journalistic trainings targeting sensitive terminology held by Kyrgyzstani NGOs. The word clouds also fail to portray how the themes interact when they are used together. I have pointed out some of these links in my descriptions (for example, the link between the "Sovereignty" and "Western" themes), but this limitation of the visualizations remains an important one to acknowledge.

[13] The clouds were constructed using the "Themes" column of the spreadsheet constructed during the discourse analysis (Appendix C), containing key words and phrases that corresponded to the main themes identified in the resistance discourses covered by a given article. The clouds were constructed using the JasonDavies word cloud generator with word size corresponding to the number of times the word or phrase appeared in the input text.

Image 5. 2018- May 2021

Period 1: 1998-2002

Through a sequential comparison of the five clouds, several trends emerge. In the first period, discourses on sexual and gender minorities centered around themes of exoticization and "showbusiness," HIV/AIDS, and morality. Many early articles discussed gay men in particular, as exciting, sensational, and implicated in the performing arts, with frequent discussions of drag shows as well as gay actors, musicians, and other cultural icons and performers. A 2003 *VB* article, for example, discusses the opening of the third gay club in Bishkek, commenting, among other things, on the audience: "among the spectators, a group of Amazons started jumping down a la topless. A group of Bishkek transvestites recently returned home from the Emirates, could not restrain themselves and danced exotic dances, in women's Arabian costumes" ("Golubyh rozbavili rozovami" 2003).

Articles centered around the HIV/AIDS theme, in turn focused on discussing gay men as one risk group among others, as well as describing and praising the efforts of AIDS advocacy groups, regardless of whether it was conducted by an LGBTQ rights group (e.g., Khokhlova 2001; "SPID v Centralnoy Azii" 2002). This relationship between the LGBTQ community and AIDS mirrors the dynamics described by many of my interviewees who noted that the relative

neutrality of the medical frame achieved through AIDS advocacy enabled Kyrgyzstan's LGBTQ community to pursue other advocacy efforts in the absence of intense backlash (personal communication, June 01, 2021; June 11, 2021; June 16, 2021, June 24, 2021). At the same time, the prominence of the "Morality" theme points to an undercurrent of a private, ideologically motivated resistance that was also present during this period. In this vein, one article features an interview with a man whose business activity centered on coordinating sex services for gay men discussed in terms of the "perversions of the sexual revolution" (Vasilchenko 2000).

Period 2: 2003-2007

In subsequent word clouds, new words point to interesting developments in resistance discourses. In the second cloud, "AIDS" and "Exotic" are joined by "Western" and "Masculinity." "Western" refers to discourses in which homosexuality and gender non-conformity were characterized as Western phenomena either through commentary on LGBTQ rights-related events taking place in the West, for example, Pride in the US ("Gey parad po-amerikanski" 2004) or Montreal (Dyadyuchenko 2006a) or by suggesting that the LGBTQ subculture and LGBTQ rights activism in Kyrgyzstan originated in the "rotten, capitalist West" (Dzhigitov 2004). This latter connotation of the theme is intensified in later years, whereas in this period, it refers to the Western origins of the LGBT rights norm, rather than to the Western infringement on Kyrgyz independence through the advancement of LGBTQ rights.

The "Masculinity" theme refers to discourses suggesting (at this point in time, primarily implicitly) that gay and bisexual men undermine proper conceptions of masculinity in Kyrgyz society. One article, for example, recounts the result of a poll on male strip dancing, with one male respondent stressing that he "could never believe, that *a normal dude* would agree to undress in front of a crowd" (Dyadyuchenko 2006b, *emphasis added*).

Period 3: 2008-2012

From 2008 to 2012, the "Masculinity" theme remains prominent and we can also note the emergence of "Children," "Religious Values," and to a lesser extent, "Security" and "Extra." The "Children" theme, aligning with Ayoub's "well-being of children frame" (2014, 347), refers to the threat of the LGBT rights norm to children's physical and mental health, as well as their moral integrity, and is often reinforced through implicit or explicit ties drawn between homosexuality and pedophilia. Several articles on the arrest of the man selling "gay videos" stress how these could be accessed by young boys, who would be subjected to "moral harm" (Khokhlova 2010). One *Delo Nomer* article asks readers to

> Imagine, that the website is secretly visited by... let's say your five-year old son... What will he see there? (...) First, close-ups of genitalia and endless copulation. And secondly, all of these acts being performed by uncles and little boys not much older than himself. At first, he will be shocked, and then, somewhere in the depths of his psyche, the idea will be deposited that, since this is shown, then it must be normal, this is how things should be(...)This is exactly what homosexuals are trying to achieve (Delo Nomer 2012).[14]

While the intensity of resistance featured in *Delo Nomer* makes it a bit of an outlier, other newspapers also became increasingly likely to draw on the "Children" frame in these more intense ways. Starting from 2012, *VB* began to publish a significantly greater number of articles on pedophilia. More articles across sources also began to argue that "if a child is raised by two men or two women living together, then, of course, this will affect the psyche of the little one in a negative way" (Mambetalieva 2014).

[14] Since the discourse analysis was conducted, the *Delo Nomer* website has become inaccessible. As a result, information on journalist names could not be retrieved.

Discourses informed by a "Religious Values" theme were interestingly informed by a cross-denominational agenda. A *Delo Nomer* article, for example, stresses that allowing for the internalization of the LGBT rights norm would lead to outrageous outcomes like having "priests of all denominations begin[ning] to consecrate [same-sex] unions in full accordance with the canon of Christianity or Islam" (2012). The "Religious Values" theme thus truly refers to discourses drawing on religious values generally speaking, to discredit the LGBT rights norm, rather than on the values of a specific religious tradition. Importantly, the rhetoric is thus not tied to the Kyrgyz context but draws on ideas that could be mobilized in any society where religion plays a moderately important role.

Finally, the theme "Extra" was noted every time an article discussed an event or topic that was not directly related to LGBTQ issues, but that introduced or overexaggerated these issues to make the article more interesting or, more perniciously, to implicitly associate the LGBTQ community with something negative, often crime. For example, one article on the investigation of a murder notes that "the list of suspects includes people with a non-traditional sexual orientation, specifically, a 26-year-old student from Tajikistan" (Kuzminykh 2008).

Period 4: 2013-2017

The starkest change in the fourth period concerns the dominance of two new themes: "Propaganda" and "Sovereignty," and to a lesser extent, the prominence of the "Family" theme and the return of the "Western" theme. All four are linked to the Jogorko Kennesh's introduction of the bill on gay propaganda in 2014. While the bill was never passed, the framing of the LGBT rights norm as "propaganda," defined as "the dissemination of information aimed at forming a positive attitude towards non-traditional forms of sexual relations," irreversibly altered perceptions of the LGBTQ community in Kyrgyzstan (Temir 2014a). The introduction of the bill

is also important from the acculturation standpoint, given that it was copied almost word for word from a law successfully passed in Russia months prior (personal communication, April 26, 2021; April 27, 2021).

The other prominent themes were primarily featured within the propaganda frame. The "Western" and "Sovereignty" themes naturally go hand-in-hand, with resistance actors claiming that the dissemination of "gay propaganda" in Kyrgyzstan was orchestrated by malignant Western forces intent on undermining local authorities and local values. The criticism that Kyrgyzstan received for the propaganda bill from the international community further fueled these discourses. Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, denounced the 2016 US State Department Report on human rights, which featured an extensive critique of the bill, "as a politically motivated, unfounded and inappropriate attempt to put pressure on the existing political system of the state" (Alymbekov 2016). Even more intensely, the "Sovereignty" and "Western" themes framed sexual and gender minorities as "an instrument of Western big politics" (Delo Nomer 2012). At their most extreme, these discourses warn that

> [t]he enemies of Kyrgyzstan want to impose the same rules in our society as in Europe (gay pride parades, same-sex marriages). These forces even destroyed the Soviet Union, and now they want to blow up the countries of Eastern Europe and Asia from within. They want to get their hands on our wealth. And for this they need to clear our land of the population. So that in 100 years only their descendants would live here (Delo Nomer 2014).

The "Family" and "Children" frames can also be found alongside the "Western" and "Sovereignty" themes within the propaganda framework and separately. The parliamentarians who introduced the bill, as well as members of civil society groups, private citizens, and media actors who supported it, frequently underlined the threat posed by sexual minorities to "traditional foundations and family cohesion," given that children are "unfortunately... left alone

with the TV and the Internet, where the propaganda of non-traditional forms of relations very often plays out" (MP Dyikanbaev qtd. in Temir 2014b). This rhetoric is based on the idea that the "propaganda of information that denies traditional family values of Kyrgyz society (...) is especially dangerous for children and young people who are not yet capable of taking a critical attitude to the flow of information that falls on them every day" (Temir 2014c).

These themes were also mobilized during President Atambaev's 2016 campaign for constitutional reform, branded as a reform to ban gay marriage ("Kyrgyz Voters Back Amendments" 2016).[15] Justifying the need for the reform, a traditionalist activist stressed that pro-Western NGOs "advocate same-sex marriage, free sex, and whatever else. and they are allowed to do so within our current legislation. [And] all this information is absorbed by our children" (Timaev 2016). Here again, the "Western," "Sovereignty," and, "Children" themes are used together, joined by the theme of securitizing NGOs as the "fifth column," covertly acting with a Western agenda in exchange for monetary compensation.[16]

Period 5: 2018- May 2021

In period five, the most important feature to underline is the co-presence of many themes, including "Kyrgyz Values," "Gender Norms," "Sponsorship,"[17] and to a lesser extent, "Children," "Morality," "Order," "Religious Values," and "Extra," many of which had been prominent in previous periods. This variety resonates with a point that will be raised in the *Aims* section that politicized resistance to the LGBT rights norm, which likely originated outside of the

[15] In reality, this initiative was directed at strengthening the office of the Prime Minister, position that Atambaev hoped to fill post-presidency.
[16] This connection between anti-LGBTQ sentiments on the one hand and anti-NGO sentiments on the other can be traced to the parallel discussions on the "foreign agent" bill, also modelled after a Russian counterpart, which proposed to designate any NGOs receiving international funding as foreign agents.
[17] Referring to allegations waged against Kyrgyzstani NGOs for receiving foreign funding and acting on a foreign agenda.

country, has since been adopted and adapted by Kyrgyz politicians, who have transformed it into a fine-honed domestic political tool. This is evidenced in resistance discourses that are less formulaic and more tailored to the Kyrgyz context.

Resistance in this period is centered around three events; first, the 2019 Bishkek women's rights march, attended by LGBTQ organizations and therefore referred to as a "gay-pride parade." Responses to the march from members of parliament, civil society organizations, and media, drew on most of the themes listed above. A series of notorious statements were made by MP Jyldyz Musabekova, who stressed that in having allowed the event to take place, "we have trampled on the traditions, customs and honour of the Kyrgyz people," and warned that "men who don't want children, girls who don't want to pour tea, which was unacceptable for our ancestors, should not just be cursed, but beaten" (qtd. in Beishenbek kyzy 2019).

The second important event was the secret recording of an intimate video featuring two male students of the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) who were also members of the opposition political party Reforma in the months preceding the 2020 parliamentary elections. Discourses accompanying the circulation of the video drew on the "Foreign," and more specifically, "American" themes, in addition to "Kyrgyz Values" and "Morality." The clip was titled "What is AUCA Really Teaching its Students," and proceeded to explain that "under the guise of developing democratic ideologies," the university "is actively introducing among its students the propaganda of same-sex marriage and Western immoral principles that are non-traditional for the Kyrgyz mentality" (Delo Nomer 2020).

Finally, a counter-protest held in response to an anti-femicide demonstration in April 2021 drew on similar themes.[18] Attendees held up professionally-printed, slightly absurd posters stating that “Homosexual recruitment and propaganda of minors is the destruction of family foundations and the elimination of moral values. LGBT is artificial birth control. Project: Cultural Marxism of the Frankfurt School - Rethinking, Slow Bloodless Revolution” (Delo Nomer 2021). Other participants stated that “the participants of the "Against violence" campaign are "NGOs and gays who only take advantage of the death of a girl to promote their own interests" (“Neizvestnye pomeshali aktivistam” 2021). The “Foreign,” “Kyrgyz Values,” “Propaganda,” “Children,” and “Morality” themes, among others, are all seen operating together to advance an anti-LGBTQ (but also an anti-NGO) discourse.

In summary, one can observe a shift from early discourses drawing on stereotypes, AIDS advocacy, and morality, through periods of resistance shaped and justified by references to the Western origins of sexual minorities and the threat they pose to masculinity, religious values, and children. This is followed by a shift to rhetoric informed by the anti-gay propaganda bill, dominated by arguments presenting the LGBT rights norm as a Western threat to Kyrgyzstani sovereignty; and finally, in the most recent period, the co-dominance of a many themes attacking the norm from every angle.

Actors

Concerning variation in resistance actors, the discourse analysis and interviews drew attention to a shift from “byttovaya” homophobia led by private actors to the formalization of resistance through the involvement of public actors (governmental and non-governmental) (personal communication, April 27, 2021; June 07, 2021; June 16, 2021). Resistance discourses

[18] Organized in response to the kidnapping and murder of a young woman, Aizada Kanatbekova, by her stalker.

in the late 1990s and early 2000s were circulated largely among friends and family members, who stressed the importance of suppressing and concealing LGBTQ affiliations. Early resistance discourses were also expressed by media actors. *Vecherniy Bishkek* and *MSN* publications from this period suggest that media resistance was originally unintentional and unorganized, manifesting through derogatory language, the exoticization and dehumanization of sexual minorities, and the proliferation of harmful stereotypes. One *VB* article, for example, explains that "usually a homosexual relationship is stable for a year. Then...partners run away, angry and disappointed...Many give up looking for a betrothed…, looking for thrills in orgies" (Vasilchenko, 1999). As stressed in the interviews, *Delo Nomer* proves an exception to this trend, given its role in launching an intense anti-LGBTQ campaign as early as 2004 (e.g., personal communication, April 27, 2021).

Other early resistance actors include medical professionals working with intersex and transgender patients. In some ways, these individuals advanced the LGBT rights norm. One psychotherapist interviewed by *VB,* for example, argued that "homophobia is just as preposterous as any other phobia" (Savchenko 2002). However, a surgeon specializing in "operations concerning a change in sex," interviewed for the same article, was deliberate in voicing his hesitations about operating on adults: "The world has gone insane! Men have forgotten how to be men and women have forgotten what it is to be womanly" ("Bantik malchiku, bryuki—devochke" 2002).[19]

From the mid to late 2000s, additional actors were implicated in resistance. Several articles and interviewees noted the role of police officers in taking advantage of the

[19] It is interesting to note, however, that in seeking somebody to blame for this "insanity," the surgeon landed on Russian popstar Boris Moiseev, rather than on a Western icon, which gains significance in the context of the acculturation framework.

vulnerabilities of sexual minorities, especially gay men, through blackmail (e.g., Orlova 2004; personal communication, April 27, 2021). Examples of resistance discourses expressed by state security personnel, building primarily on dominant conceptions of masculinity, are featured prominently in the aforementioned Human Rights Watch report on the violence experienced by gay and bisexual man at the hands of Kyrgyzstani police (2014). Other important resistance actors operating during this time period include religious groups, like the Congress of Muslims in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia, and members of the political opposition, like Freedom of Choice party representative Vladislav Lisovsky. Importantly, neither the Congress nor Lisovsky are representative of mainstream institutions. The shift to the broader participation of religious and political actors did not occur until (1) the banned film-screening of "I am Gay and Muslim" by the State Commission on Religious Affairs and the General Prosecutor's Office; (2) the issuance of the fatwa against homosexuality by DUMK/SAMK; and (3) the introduction of the anti-gay propaganda bill in the Jogorko Kennesh. These early politicized resistance discourses catalyzed their future use by other political figures, notably President Atambaev in the context of his constitutional reform initiative. The employment of anti-LGBTQ rhetoric by DUMK/SAMK and MPs also overlapped with the emergence of Kyrgyzstan's two nationalist civil society organizations: Kalys and Kyrk Choro. Both have been among the most well-organized, and vocal norm antipreneurs, exercising pressure on political authorities to take a more active anti-LGBTQ stance.[20]

Currently, resistance towards the LGBT rights norm continues to be employed by all aforementioned actors. While parliament has not reintroduced the anti-gay propaganda bill, the

[20] With this in mind, the fact that many of my interviewees noted the ties that both groups, and especially Kalys, have with Russian sponsors is important to note (personal communication, May 31, 2021; June 11, 2021; June 16, 2021; June 24, 2021).

anti-LGBTQ rhetoric persists politically through the manipulation of anti-LGBTQ sentiments in anti-opposition campaigns. The LGBTQ topic has become a "bargaining chip" ['razmennaya moneta'] (personal communication, April 26, 2021; April 27, 2021; May 31, 2021; June 07, 2021). Politicians have advanced their agenda by stressing their anti-LGBTQ stance and exaggerating or fabricating the LGBTQ connections of political opponents. Similarly, while Kalys and Kyrk Choro have not recently made an appearance, other groups similar in tactics and agenda have continued to surface, most recently in the April 2021 counterprotest.

Aims

Given the difficulty of securing primary sources produced by resistance actors themselves, tracking variation in aims proved challenging. Fortunately, commentary provided by interviewees alongside direct quotations extracted from the articles analyzed, provided some insights. Early anti-LGBTQ discourses were informed primarily by *secular ideological aims;* resistance was driven by certain conceptions of family values, gender norms, and "normalcy" stemming from a combination of Kyrgyz and Soviet customs and practices. These ideological aims were also accompanied by *monetary strategic aims:* resistance driven by the financial gain that could be generated through extortion and blackmail made possible by the prevalence of these same norms and values (e.g., personal communication, April 27, 2021).

Over time, these aims were joined and sometimes overtaken by *religious ideological* aims on one hand, and *political strategic aims* on the other. Defending the fatwa issued by the DUMK/SAMK, "Islam and Sharia expert" Kadyr Malikov stressed that it was justified given that "Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, condemns same-sex contacts" (Malikova 2014). Similarly, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church of Kyrgyzstan, Bishop Daniel, provided a defense for

President Atambaev's constitutional reform initiative centered around a ban on same-sex marriage. According to the Bishop:

> The indignation of believers, both Orthodox Christians and Muslims, is caused by an alarming global trend aimed at the destruction of traditional human values, and family values in particular. Even the theoretical possibility of formal marriages between a man and a man or between a woman and a woman contradicts these values (Tuzov 2016).

It is worth reiterating that in both examples, the expert stresses how anti-LGBTQ rights discourses are driven by a *universal* religious indignation. As noted above, this points to some incongruity between the rhetoric of resistance and the Kyrgyzstani context. The emphasis is on universal, rather than Kyrgyzstani, resonance. In certain respects, the incongruity suggests that domestic resistance in Kyrgyzstan is echoing external forms of resistance. And more specifically, as I will lay out in the subsequent section, resistance in Russia.

In terms of political strategic aims, analysis provided by interviewees proved crucial. As already noted, several interviewees stressed how LGBTQ rights had become a "bargaining chip" ['razmennaya moneta'] for politicians looking to boost their popularity, ensure favorable legislative modifications, or secure the downfall of their political opponents (personal communication, April 26, 2021; April 27, 2021; May 31, 2021; June 07, 2021). Some media commentary also revealed the political strategic aims of resistance discourses from later time periods. Explaining the decision to introduce the gay propaganda bill, one article contemplated that "most likely, before the elections, parliamentarians [were] trying to earn points on this topic [LGBTQ rights], to curry favor with those who sponsor them from the outside, because it is clear that this trend is a consequence of the influence of other states with an interest in Kyrgyzstan" (Moldalieva 2014). Similarly, commenting on the leaked video, one article highlights how the video can be contextualized within a pre-electoral "information war," and flagged that it

"recalled that not only students, alumni and teachers of AUCA, but also some Kyrgyz politicians,,, actively speak out at rallies in support of the LGBT community" (Delo Nomer 2020). Both examples demonstrate the political utility of the LGBTQ rights issue which has been increasingly capitalized upon.

Explaining Norm Resistance as Acculturation

With the variation in resistance discourses across the period of study laid out, the remainder of the work explores the utility of acculturation theory in explaining the dynamics of change. As outlined in the theoretical framework, there are five elements that must be considered in applying acculturation. First, *identifying the reference group* or groups for the state in question, in this case Kyrgyzstan. Second, identifying the *saliency* of the issue at hand (the LGBT rights norm) for the reference group. Third, identifying the state's *intensity of identification* with the reference group. Fourth, identifying the state's *degree of exposure* to the influence of the reference group. And fifth, identifying the *size* of the reference group. Outlining how these elements vary across time and how this variation correlates with the variation in resistance, informs a preliminary investigation of acculturation's strengths and weaknesses when applied to variation in resistance to the LGBT rights norm in Kyrgyzstan. This is followed by tentative conclusions regarding the framework's explanatory power within the broader context of norm resistance.

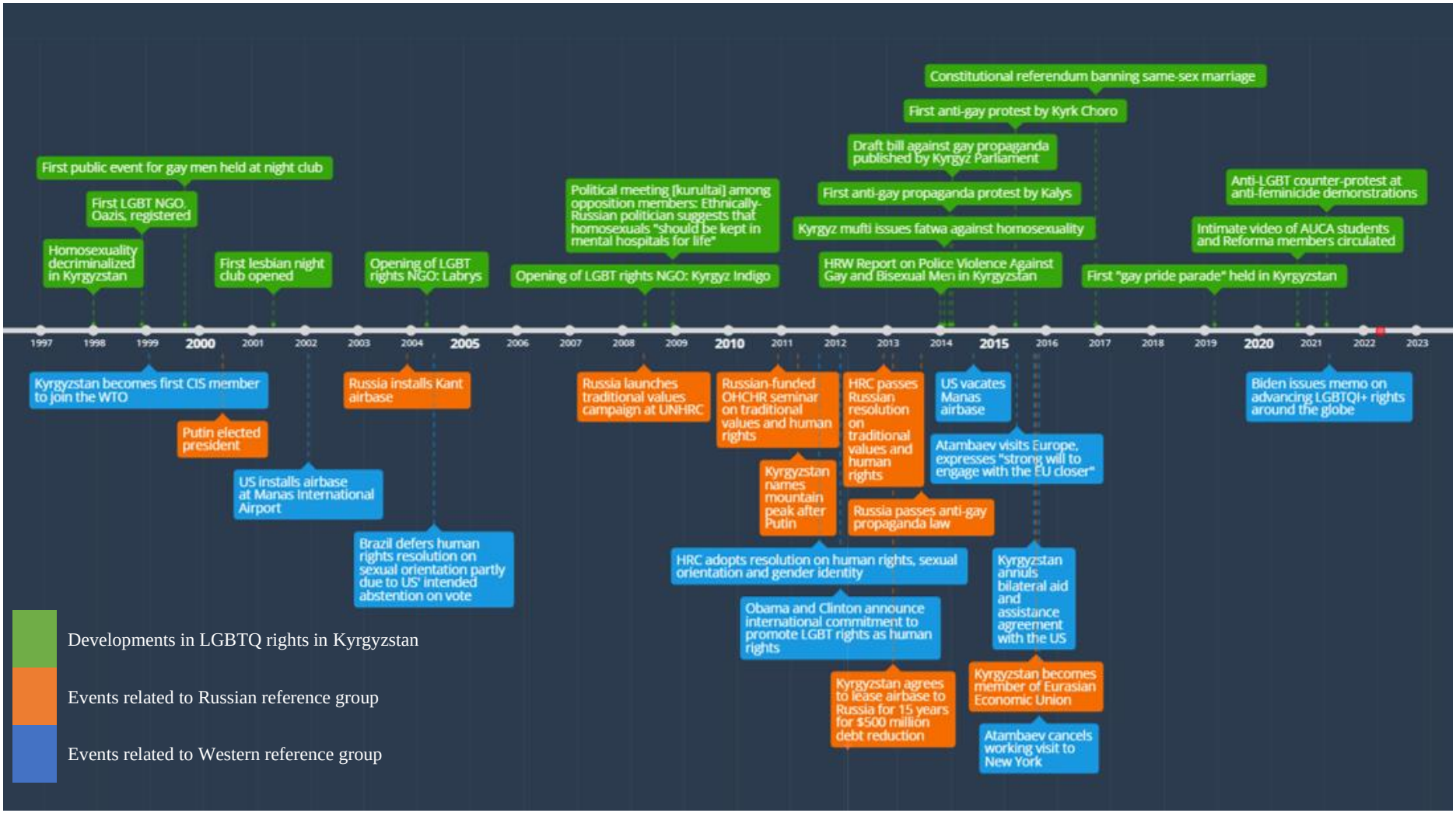
Reference Group Identification

Throughout the time period of interest, Kyrgyzstan's state behaviour and norm orientation have been influenced by two reference groups: the Western group of liberal democratic states led by the United States and Western Europe, and the more traditionalist,

authoritarian-leaning group led by Russia. Its degree of identification with each group has followed a trajectory that resonates with broader post-Cold War trends in the region. As noted by Kirey and Kirey-Sitnikova, early on "Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan were torn between the supporters of integration with Russia and those advocating closer ties with the US and the European Union" (2019, 122). Kyrgyzstan's distinct course amongst the Central Asian republics was shaped both by its limited natural resource stocks (ibid.), and by Kyrgyzstan's first President, Askar Akaev, who put the country on a pro-Western track (see e.g., Oraz 2013).[21] Early identification with the American-led group, gave way to a multi-vector period in the mid-2000s, and transitioned to a decisively pro-Russian orientation towards the end of the 2000s, across the 2010s, and into the contemporary period.[22]

[21] Akaev was well-known for making speeches indicative of his Western-oriented vision for Kyrgyzstan. Speaking, for example, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington during a visit to the US in September 2002, Akaev colorfully expressed how in flying over Philadelphia that week, he was able to draw personal inspiration from the city where the US Constitution was adopted over two centuries ago (Donovan 2002).
[22] President Atambaev referred to Russia as "a center of friendship, a country that brings only positive, bright things no matter how hard some forces in the world may try to demonize it" (Putz, 2017). Similarly, during a 2020 meeting with Putin, President Jeenbekov stressed that "although all kinds of forces opposing stability and national development…are trying to...drive a wedge into [Kyrgyzstan and Russia's] allied relationship and strategic partnership. Of course… they would never succeed." ("Meeting with President," 2020). In slight contrast, While Kyrgyzstan has maintained an affiliation with Russia under the new President Sadyr Japarov, brought into power following protests organized in the aftermath of October 2020 parliamentary elections, the extent of his personal pro-Russian orientation remains unclear given his nationalist and populist agenda.

Figure 3: Timeline of Developments in LGBTQ rights and Acculturation



Examining security cooperation arrangements between Kyrgyzstan and the leaders of the two reference groups provides one proxy for identifying affiliation. As depicted on the timeline above, the United States, followed closely by Russia, opened an airbase near Kyrgyzstan's capital city, Bishkek, in the early 2000s.[23] The establishment of the American base is indicative of Kyrgyzstan's early pro-Western orientation, whereas the establishment of the Russian base alongside it suggests the beginnings of a shift to multivectorism. As noted in the theoretical discussion, acculturation in its initial formulation is poorly equipped to explain the behaviour of a state deliberately striving to strike a balance between two reference groups. The resistance discourses observed in the mid-2000s, when multivectorism thrived, are therefore difficult to analyze through the acculturation lens. Over time, however, the American airbase attracted more controversy, symbolic of Kyrgyzstan's increasingly strained relations with the United States and the parallel solidification of its relationship with Russia (see e.g., Ott 2014). This, in turn, correlates with the stark changes in resistance discourses observed in the late 2000s and early 2010s, when discourses not only intensified, but also began to incorporate a wider range of themes and involve more organized parties including politicians and religious actors.

The first instance of politicized resistance, Lisovsky's insistence on the need for the forced hospitalization of all homosexuals in December 2008, materialized amid contentious debates on the renegotiation of American basing agreements and base-related scandals extensively covered by Russian-language media (e.g., Mamontov 2008). Even more starkly, the 15-year extension of Russia's airbase lease agreement in August 2012, and the closure of the American base in June 2014 overlaps with the banned film-screening of "I am Gay and Muslim"

[23] While studies on these basing politics have often focused primarily on their impacts on local regime stability and corruption networks (see e.g., Cooley, 2010; Cooley, 2011; Cooley, 2012; Toktomushev, 2015), the significance of the bases for reflecting the degree of identification with the West one hand, and Russia on the other, cannot be ignored.

in October 2012, the issuance of the fatwa against homosexuality in January 2014, and the publishing of the bill against gay propaganda in May 2014, months after the anti-propaganda law passed in Russia. This overlap is reinforced by the widespread stance of Central Asian scholars that "the closing of Manas [the American airbase] mark[ed] Kyrgyzstan's new era as a Russian client state" (Cooley, qtd. in Ott 2014), and the fact that Russia is increasingly "supporting the militaries of Central Asian states with activities ranging from arms sales and joint military exercises to training and assistance programs" (Szálkai 2020). The shift in reference group indicated by security cooperation, thus correlates closely with the intensification of anti-LGBTQ resistance and the rising involvement of political actors in its expression.

Considering Kyrgyzstan's membership in and application for reference-group affiliated regional and international organizations as another indicator for reference group identification, reinforces these correlations. Two organizations are especially significant in highlighting the pivot from the West to Russia: The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). In December 1998, Kyrgyzstan became the first post-Soviet to join the WTO, preceding even the Baltic states.[24] The speedy accession speaks to President Akaev's steadfast determination to align Kyrgyzstan with the West, which resulted in the opening of Kyrgyzstan not only to development aid, but also to other forms of support for a vibrant civil society sector (including Kyrgyzstan's LGBTQ rights NGOs).[25]

[24] Just as it had been the first post-Soviet state to conclude a stand-by agreement with the International Monetary Fund in 1993 (Clinton 1993).

[25] While the more complex implications of Western investment in Kyrgyzstan's economic and sociopolitical development have often been described in a critical light (see e.g., Connery 2000, Petric 2005), its positive impacts on the diverse proliferation of NGOs and on the development of an extensive donour network which continues to collaborate with local human rights initiatives must be acknowledged.

Akaev's Western alignment was not, however, accompanied by cutting ties with Russia. Speaking at a Harvard seminar, while Akaev reaffirmed the inspiration provided by the United States for Kyrgyzstan in its early stages of democratization, he also stressed that without Russia's support, "we would not have been able to achieve independence... Russia was given to us by God and history" (qtd. in Beshimov 2004). Institutionally speaking this can be observed in Kyrgyzstan's membership in key post-Soviet institutions including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This institutional multivectorism gave way to a decisive identification with Putin's Russia expressed through Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union in May 2015 ("Kyrgyzstan Joins Eurasian Economic Union" 2015), an event whose significance as a critical turning point with direct implications for LGBTQ advocacy in Kyrgyzstan was repeatedly stressed by nearly all of my interviews (personal communication April 26, 2021; April 27, 2021; May 31, 2021; June 11, 2021).[26] The correlation between shifts in reference group identification and resistance variation is doubly reinforced. To discuss the causal pathways that acculturation offers for this correlation, it is necessary to look at the four other acculturation dimensions.

Beyond Identification: Issue Saliency

The remaining components of acculturation theory are critical for (1) understanding why identification with either group would have any impact on resistance to the LGBT rights norm specifically, and (2) comparing the *degree* to which identification with the Western group versus with the Russian group influenced resistance trends. Considering the saliency of LGBTQ rights for the two groups across the period of study furthers the first of the two aims by generating

[26] In this light, it is important to highlight that Tursunbai Bakir uulu, one of the Kyrgyzstani MPs who was promoting the propaganda bill, explicitly mentioned Russia's and Kazakhstan's negative stance on homosexuality as an important reason to adopt it, saying that "we are now going to join the Custom Union. [And] Russia and Kazakhstan are also against homosexuality" (Delo Nomer 2015).

explanations for why early identification with the Western group correlated with low levels of non-politicized resistance, whereas a later identification with the Russian group correlated with intense levels of organized and often-political discourses.

Considering SOGIE in a human rights context was not a pertinent agenda item for either group early on. Initial efforts to advance LGBTQ rights within the UN human rights framework were spearheaded by Brazil as opposed to Western states. Moreover, Brazil's proposed 2003 resolution on human rights and sexual orientation was dropped partially due to trade threats by OIC members and partially in anticipation of lacking American support (Symon and Altman 2015, 78-79). Neither the Western group nor the Russian group featured prominently in this early instance of polarization.[27] The low levels of resistance built on themes of exoticization and gender norms and carried out by private and media actors for private ideological aims in the late 1990s and early 2000s thus coincide with the low saliency of the LGBTQ rights issue for Kyrgyzstan's Western reference group (as well as for its future, Russian reference group). Acculturation would propose that potential resistance actors in Kyrgyzstan experienced neither cognitive nor social pressures to adjust their anti-LGBTQ discourses to reflect the practices of Kyrgyzstan's reference group. Resistance during this period was thus more independent, shaped by dominant, local-level conceptions of appropriate sexual conduct and gender norms.

Over time, however, the saliency of the issue grew exponentially. Crucially, the intensification of saliency for the Russian group, marked by Russia's launch of the traditional

[27] This aligns with Kirey and Kirey-Sitnikova's finding that in the early to mid-2000s, "the Kremlin had not yet realized that the LGBT issue was a useful topic to be instrumentalized in both international and electoral politics" (2019, 123).

values campaign at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2008,[28] preceded Kyrgyzstan's reorientation towards that group in the early to mid-2010s. Parallelly, the intensification of saliency for the Western group, marked by the Obama administration's role in pushing for the first UNHRC resolution on discrimination on the basis of SOGIE in 2011 (Resolution 17/19), and by the administration's commitment to promoting LGBTQ rights as human rights in the same year (Labott 2011), overlapped neatly with this reorientation. This timing could account for several trends in the observed resistance variation. First, the fact that the earliest politicized resistance discourses were voiced by an ethnically Russian politician in 2008, several years prior to the uptake of political homophobia by mainstream Kyrgyz politicians. Second, the timing for this mainstream uptake, which followed in Russia's lead, but with a six-year lag.[29] And third, the return to prominence of the "Western" theme, alongside the "sovereignty" theme in the third time period.[30]

Similarly, the decline in the saliency of LGBTQ rights for Russia towards the end of the 2010s can explain the shift to adapting resistance discourses to the political needs of Kyrgyz politicians. As noted above, while resistance remains intense around certain events and political periods, the absence of a constant stream of intense resistance discourses can be explained by a similar lack of a persistent emphasis on the LGBTQ rights issue in Russia. Acculturation would propose that Kyrgyzstani resistance agents no longer feel that upkeeping an identification with the Russian group requires a constant and intense vocalization of homophobia. Resistance has

[28] Which led to the organization of a seminar on the intersection between human rights and traditional values (UNHRC, 2010), and the passing of the resolution on the role of traditional values in the domestic application of human rights standards, backed by Kyrgyzstan (among others) (UNHRC, 2012)

[29] With the first cluster of securitization discourses expressed in 2014, six years after Russia launched its traditional values campaign at the UNHRC.

[30] Given that Kyrgyzstan's pivot towards Russia was accompanied by an intensified American commitment towards LGBTQ rights.

thus receded into the background, granted, at a higher level of intensity than in the 2000s, and with the potential of being returned to the spotlight at politically pertinent moments.[31]

Beyond Identification: Intensity, Degree of Exposure, and Size

With *issue saliency* sketching out the link between the reference groups and resistance to the LGBT rights norm, the remaining components of acculturation theory—*intensity of identification*, *exposure*, and *size*—can enable a comparison of the *degrees of impact* that either group had on resistance. *Intensity of identification* can be approximated by looking at (1) coincidence in membership in regional and international organizations; and (2) shared historical, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic ties. Almost a priori, these factors suggest the weakness of Kyrgyzstan's identification with the Western group compared to its identification with the Russian group. Coincidence in membership between Kyrgyzstan and Western states increased in the aftermath of the Cold War; however, the absence of a dramatic break in relations between Russia and Kyrgyzstan following Soviet collapse generated the more significant overlap in organizational membership previously discussed. Consequently, even while Kyrgyzstan was looking Westward, this identification was watered down by a passive, but nonetheless persistent Russian influence. This dynamic speaks, again, to the challenges that acculturation might face in situations where two reference groups are vying for influence, or where the influence of one is actively being contested and undermined by another. This same dynamic is clearly reinforced by looking at the shared historical, linguistic, and to a degree, cultural ties between Kyrgyzstan and Russia. While various waves of Kyrgyz nationalism have attempted to delineate a distinct

[31] Of course, one could also suggest that this change in resistance discourses has also been fomented by the nationalistic and populist agenda of Kyrgyzstan's current President Sadyr Japarov mentioned above, which has perhaps brought about a slight decline in affiliation with the Russian reference group. Either way, we can speak of a return to *byttovaya* homophobia in which resistance is motivated by local interests, more so than by the influence of a reference group.

Kyrgyz identity separate from Soviet influence (see e.g., Laruelle 2012), Russian culture and language continue to shape Kyrgyz society (see e.g., Umetbaeva 2012).[32]

Looking at the *degree of exposure* to the reference group similarly suggests the limitedness of Western influence compared to Russia's. To account for the material and non-material aspects of exposure, we can consider (1) geographical proximity, and (2) the influence of each reference group on Kyrgyzstan's civil society. Although neither Russia, nor any Western states border Kyrgyzstan directly, Kyrgyzstan is situated squarely in Russia's "near abroad," and does not fall into any even remotely Western regions (in the way that other post-Soviet states, such as Georgia and Ukraine, fall into the European neighborhood). This eases and intensifies Russia's influence by facilitating (1) the construction and mobilization of a geographically informed unifying rhetoric, evidenced, for example, by the "near abroad" term just used, and (2) a more readily available exchange of people and ideas through, for example, student and worker programs. Clearly, geographic distance does not eliminate these forms of influence. Identification based on ideas of international community have been advanced by the Western group. Similarly, Western states have long since established ties with the region by funding media networks such as *Azattyk* (Radio Liberty), sponsoring student and work exchange programs, and establishing institutions such as the American University of Central Asia. Nevertheless, the geographic factor (alongside the strength of identification factors) challenges the maintenance and justification of influence, undermining its potency in the long run.

[32] This is clear if one considers the overwhelming role of Russian-language, and often Russia-based, media in Kyrgyzstan. Recent research has emphasized the "enormous advantage" these media agencies have "over the hearts and minds of people in Central Asia' (Rollberg and Laruelle 2015, 228). This role of Russian media was also stressed by several interviewees, with one individual sharing findings from previous research they had conducted on media consumption in Kyrgyzstan which identified a shocking predominance of Russian media among Kyrgyzstan's citizenry (personal communication, 27 April 2021). While Russian-language Western media like Radio Azattyk continues to have some influence, it is greatly overshadowed by the Russian equivalents of Sputnik and RT (see e.g., personal communication, June 11, 2021; June 16, 2021).

Considering the identification and exposure variables suggests that variation in resistance can be further explained by considering the impacts of different levels of identification and exposure on the effectiveness of acculturation's social and cognitive mechanisms. Kyrgyzstan's greater identification with and exposure to the Russian reference group during a period of LGBTQ rights saliency, suggests that Kyrgyzstan's resistance actors felt higher degrees of cognitive and social pressure to follow Russia's lead, explaining the politicized and strategic nature of resistance which borrows heavily from the equally politicized and strategic discourses observed in Russia (see e.g., Wilkinson 2014, 2018; Nunez-Mietz 2019). By contrast, the limited nature of Kyrgyzstan's identification with and exposure to the Western reference group reinforced the low saliency of the LGBTQ issue for this group, further explaining why the resistance observed in the late 1990s to the mid-2000s was informed by locally-rooted themes and carried out by private actors.

Contrastingly, reference group *size* initially yields contradictory predictions. Measuring size through both number of members and GDP, the Western group has been and remains decisively larger than the Russian group. The latter is arguably made up of Russia and Belarus alone, whereas a very conservative estimate of the former's membership would include, the United States and Canada, as well as most European states, New Zealand, and Australia. Looking at this factor alone would thus suggest that the Western group should have had a greater psychosocial influence on Kyrgyzstan than Russia. While both degree of *identification* and *exposure* suggest otherwise, this is nonetheless an important prediction to explore, given that it highlights some of acculturation's limitations discussed in the theory section.

First, the contradictory predictions suggest something about the *longevity* of the influence of a former reference group, especially by means of coercion. The greater size of the Western

reference group might have allowed it to maintain its psychosocial influence for longer than it otherwise would have, as well as to continue exerting pressure by leveraging its economic power even after the decline of its psychosocial appeal. Considering the evolution of Kyrgyzstan's anti-gay propaganda bill provides support for this narrative. As outlined by Wilkinson (2020), many Kyrgyzstani LGBTQ activists, when asked about the propaganda bill, noted that "an initiative to pass a law similar to the Russian one was entirely possible… [and] that politicians often follow Russia's lead with legislation" (2020, 63). At the same time, respondents also noted that "Western donors bring in huge amounts of money to the country, and our government doesn't want to lose serious amounts of money" (ibid.). This tension between the acculturative pressure exerted by Russia and the pressure exerted by Western liberal states as a former reference group *and* as a powerful actor with impressive coercive capacities, is important to draw out. As noted by an interviewee, the fact that the bill successfully passed several readings, but was neither adopted nor formally rejected, speaks directly to these tensions, with resistance actors pulled in two directions by the acculturative and coercive mechanisms (personal communication, June 25, 2021). This complexity, reinforced by the role of corruption in intensifying the Western threat of withdrawing foreign aid for specific politicians in power (personal communication, 27 April 2021), cannot be accounted for by acculturation in its original formulation. The framework should be adapted to consider the role of non-reference actors, and relatedly, the concurrent impacts of different mechanisms of influence.

Considering the *size* variable also points to the failure of acculturation to nuance the positive correlation between size and degree of influence in accordance with the theory's two mechanisms of influence—the cognitive and the social. In this case, we can see how Russia's influence on Kyrgyzstan's resistance dynamics was likely bolstered by its smaller size. As laid

out above, having a limited membership could have increased Russia's *social* influence over Kyrgyzstan by (1) enhancing its ability to detect and heightening its incentive to respond to nonconformity in resistance patterns; and (2) decreasing the challenges posed by collective action problems in activating mechanisms required to ensure conformity. The size of the Western group, in contrast, likely had the opposite effect. This case can thus demonstrate that problematizing the positive correlation between size and influence is necessary to expand acculturation's explanatory power.

Conclusion

In considering how and why (discursive) resistance to the LGBT rights norm manifests in different ways across different contexts, Goodman and Jinks' (2004) acculturation framework generates important insights that both supplement and expand upon existing explanations. Acculturation's distinct explanatory mechanisms provides a convincing account for how shifts in the intensity, themes, actors, and aims of resistance discourses in a given state can be explained by considering variation in the influences of cognitive and social pressure exerted by a particular reference group. The framework's consideration of issue saliency, degree of identification, degree of exposure, and reference group size as intervening variables, in addition to mere identification, enhances its explanatory power, especially in accounting for subtle variations in resistance in the absence of a reference group shift.

My efforts to expand acculturation's application also brought to light two main limitations. First, the original formulation does not consider how persuasion and coercion exerted by non-reference group actors (including former reference groups) might interact and interfere with the impacts of the reference group. Second, it lacks a theorization of the reference group as both symbol and actor necessitated by the framework's dual mechanisms of influence. This gap

has problematic implications for the framework's predictions about the impact of group size on degree of influence, which are necessarily complicated by conceptualizing the reference group in these two different ways.

The analysis of discourses targeting the LGBT rights norm in Kyrgyzstan from 1998-2021 allowed for a thorough exploration of acculturation in this resistance context. Recording variation across four dimensions—*intensity, themes*, *actors*, and *aims*— generated a nuanced picture of the changing discourses across time and facilitated the mapping of these trends onto parallel variations across the acculturation variables. A clear correlation between shifts in resistance dynamics and shifts in Kyrgyzstan's reference group identification (from the Western group to the Russian group) and the saliency of the LGBTQ rights issue for the two reference groups (from non-salient to salient) preliminarily provides evidence in support of acculturation. Furthermore, considering Kyrgyzstan's degree of identification with and exposure to the two reference groups and their respective sizes, provides additional information on the psychosocial influence that each group could exert on resistance during its reference period. The case also highlights the aforementioned limitations. Considering the propaganda bill illustrates how the coercive and persuasive pressures exerted by the former Western reference group, clashed with pressure to mirror Russian legislative initiatives, yielding an ambiguous result. Parallelly, accounting for the dominant influence of the Russian group, compared to that of the Western group, requires an engagement with the divergent implications of size on a reference group's degree of influence.

Theoretically speaking, this study preliminarily suggests that, despite some limitations, the boundaries of acculturation can be expanded to account for dynamics of norm resistance, which has broader implications for norms scholarship. The fact that a model designed to explain

norm compliance and facilitate norm diffusion, can be used to account for variation in norm resistance reinforces the idea that the three dynamics of diffusion, compliance and resistance are closely interlinked, necessitating a consideration of this interconnectedness in norm theorizing. This awareness is important for developing better explanations for why and how norm resistance, and especially resistance to human rights norms, is pursued, but also for continuing to tackle the implicit, often-problematic assumptions and normative commitments of norm scholarship.[33]

These theoretical implications are closely linked to practical ones. One of the main aims of Goodman and Jinks' 2013 work was to demonstrate how an understanding of acculturation, and implicitly, the appeal of the Western liberal group, could be leveraged to enhance the efficacy of international institutions in improving compliance with human rights. Given the rapidly declining appeal of this group, however, it is now more pertinent to leverage an understanding of acculturation's mechanisms of influence to comprehend the appeal of non-Western groups, and to adapt advocacy strategies in response, both for contested norms like the LGBT rights norm, but also for well-entrenched human rights norms. My case study and analysis can provide some insights into how local and international human rights advocacy groups can target different kinds of resistance, with the knowledge that this variation is likely influenced by the resisting state's identification with a reference group that is increasingly less likely to uphold liberal values.

[33] These include the understanding of norm development and diffusion as a linear and one-way process with passive, non-Western norm followers receiving norms from Western norm entrepreneurs, as well as an overwhelming scholarly preoccupation with "good" norms over "bad" (see e.g., Acharya 2004, 2011; Bloomfield 2016; Price 2008).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Key words used in selection of articles for analysis

Russian Term	**Transliteration**	**Translation**
Секс	Sex	Sex (e.g., sexual minorities; homosexual)
Голуб (- ой, - ые, - ым, - ого, - ых)	Golub (-oi, -ye, -ym, -ogo, -yh)	Literally “blue”-- Russian slang for gay
Лесб	Lesb	Lesbian (ending omitted to account for different case endings)
Геи	Gei	Gays (plural used because singular appears in a lot of unrelated words)
ЛГБТ	LGBT	LGBT
МСМ	MSM	MSM—Men who have sex with men
Трансв	Transv	Transvestite (ending omitted to account for different case endings)
Трансге	Transge	Transgender (ending omitted to account for different case endings)
Гомик	Gomik	Derogatory term for gay man (“homo”)
Пидар	Pidar	Derogatory term for gay man (“f*g”)

Other terms considered included ВИЧ/СПИД (HIV/AIDS) and простит (prostit, I.e. prostitution, prostitute, etc.). Many articles containing these words were reviewed, but ultimately excluded from the formal analysis, partially due to their relative irrelevance to the topic in

question (articles containing these words that were relevant also contained one or more of the words above) and to make the analysis more manageable. Furthermore, when it came to selecting *Azattyk* and *Sputnik.kg* articles, material that was written about LGBTQ issues outside of Kyrgyzstan with no insight about Kyrgyz responses to these issues were also excluded. The exclusion was justified since these articles were often reposted from other national versions of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Sputnik and were thus neither written by Kyrgyzstani journalists, nor about Kyrgyzstani attitudes to the LGBTQ rights issue.

Appendix B: Articles reviewed for discourse analysis, by news source and year

Year	Vecherniy Bishkek	Delo Nomer	Moya Stolitsya (MSN)	Azattyk	Kabar	Sputnik.kg
1998	2	-	-	-	-	-
1999	4	-	-	-	-	-
2000	8	-	-	-	-	-
2001	3	-	1	-	-	-
2002	11	-	3	-	-	-
2003	11	-	5	0	-	-
2004	18	-	6	0	-	-
2005	6	-	1	0	-	-
2006	9	-	3	0	-	-
2007	5	-	5	0	-	-
2008	11	-	6	0	-	-
2009	10	-	-	0	-	-
2010	9	-	-	0	-	-
2011	4	-	-	1	-	-
2012	9	7	-	4	-	-
2013	8	11	-	7	-	-
2014	30	36	-	35	-	0
2015	20	26	-	28	0	10
2016	7	9	-	16	0	18
2017	7	10	-	9	3	4
2018	6	15	-	6	0	4
2019	11	20	-	29	3	9
2020	5	18	-	7	1	1
2021	0	11	-	6	1	0
TOTAL	**214**	**163**	**30**	**148**	**8**	**46**

Appendix C: First 25 rows of discourse analysis spreadsheet

Newspaper	Year	Month	Content Notes	Section	Intensity	Themes	Actors	Aims
Вечерний Бишкек	1998	December	Two girls" insult" their driver by insinuati	Trial and Case	Nonpoliticised	na	na	na
Вечерний Бишкек	1999	August	Opening of Oazis; tone is slightly mocking	Separate	Nonpoliticised	Children; Values; Stereotypes	Family members	Secular Ideological
Вечерний Бишкек	1999	August	The role of Oazis and other organizations	Separate	Neutral	na	na	na
Вечерний Бишкек	1999	September	First night club for homosexuals. 200 peo	Separate	Nonpoliticised	na	na	na
Вечерний Бишкек	1999	October	A "transvestite" show instead of compen	Separate	Nonpoliticised	na	na	na
Вечерний Бишкек	1999	December	Oazis' approach to AIDS prevention. Prais	World AIDS day	Nonpoliticised	na	na	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2000	February	Show on AIDS prevention; "homosexualis	Separate	Nonpoliticised	AIDS; Morality	Media; civil society org	Secular Ideological
Вечерний Бишкек	2000	March	A murder committed by several gay men	Trial and Case	Nonpoliticised	Exotic; Extra; Crime	Media	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2000	March	Oazis' "transvestite" show (drag). Someti	Culture	Nonpoliticised	Exotic; Disgust; Showbusiness	Media	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2000	March	Short story on interntional dating compar	Briefly on everything	Nonpoliticised	Family; Marriage	Company	Secular Ideological
Вечерний Бишкек	2000	April	Pimp who works with male prostitutes se	Separate	Nonpoliticised	GenderNorms; AIDS; Crime; Morality	Media	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2000	May	Man accused of performing violent homo	She was condemned	Nonpoliticised	Perversion; Crime	Court	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2000	July	"Initimate haircuts"-- discussing their pop	Oh come on	Nonpoliticised	Exotic; Fashionable	Media	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2000	October	Event at night club (Master I Margarita st	Night life	Nonpoliticised	Exotic; Showbusiness	Media; night club	Secular Ideological
Вечерний Бишкек	2001	October	Girl prank caller pretending to be a gay m	Separate	Nonpoliticised	Morality; MentalHealth	Media	Secular Ideological
Вечерний Бишкек	2001	December	NGO organized seminars for teen refugee	Healthcare	desecuritising	na	na	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2001	December	United Central Asian anti-AIDS effort. Gay	Healthcare	Nonpoliticised	AIDS	Media	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2002	February	Interview with a surgeon who has been p	Sensation	Nonpoliticed BUT getting th	ReligiousValues; Health; GenderNorms	Doctors; Media	Religious ideological
Вечерний Бишкек	2002	February	Counterpart to interview with surgeon, w	Sensation	Nonpoliticised; desecuritisi	na	Doctors; Media	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2002	March	A brief mention of Boris Moiseev by KG si	Metropolitan romances	desecuritising	na	na	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2002	June	A discussion of men's fashion-- one man i	Men's Club	Nonpoliticised; desecuritisi	Masculinity	"Manager"	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2002	June	A new men's strip club in the city. Has "qu	Men's Club	Nonpoliticised; desecuritisi	Normalcy; Showbusiness	media	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2002	July	A description of Tashkent as a very specia	Capitals of the world	Nonpoliticised	Exotic; Modern	na	na
Вечерний Бишкек	2002	July	A KG drag queen ("Transvestite") finding	Klubnichka	Nonpoliticised	Exotic; Sensational; Showbusiness; Ger	media	na

Appendix D: Indicators for acculturation variables

Variable	**Indicators**
Reference group: *Identifying the reference group*	Identifying reference group by looking at: • Discursive references by political leaders to a given group as model or reference point • Cooperation on security matters • (Application for) membership in regional partnerships and organizations (e.g., Eurasian Economic Union)
Strength 1*: Measuring issue saliency in the reference group*	Identifying the importance of the issue for the reference group: • Outspokenness on LGBTQ issues at international fora (written or oral statements)
Strength 2: *Measuring intensity of identification with the reference group*	Identifying the importance of the reference group for the resisting actor: • Coincidence in membership in multiple regional organizations and informal groups • Shared historical, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic heritage
Immediacy*: Measuring the degree of exposure to the influence of the reference group*	Identifying the degree of exposure to the influence of the reference group • Geographic proximity of reference group members • Degree of reference group involvement in the sociocultural activities of the target actor
Size *(of the reference group)*	Number of members: • Presence of great powers/ powerful states amongst the group's membership Number of resources: • Combined GDP of all members