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'Normalized' Pride? Pride parade participants in six European countries

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Abstract

Based on quantitative survey data collected during Pride parades in six European countries – the Czech Republic, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland – we analyse who participates in Pride parades. Engaging with the so-called protest normalization thesis we ask: are Pride parade participants, aside from sexual orientation, representative of the wider populace? In none of the countries could we find indications that Pride participants mirror the general populations. The parades remain dominated by well-educated, middle strata youth, rich in political resources. However, we find variation between countries, which we link to differences in elite and public support for LGBT rights.

Keywords

LGBT movements, normalization of demonstrations, Pride parades, protest participation, protest survey

Pride parades are today staged in numerous countries and localities, providing the most visible manifestation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movements and politics. Pride parades, we argue, are foundational rituals for LGBT movements across the globe; as such they act as collective responses to oppression, encourage redefinition of self, and express collective identity (Engel, 2001: 140; Taylor and Whittier, 1995). But are LGBT individuals from all ages and all

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walks of life included in Pride parades? Or are Pride parades the privileged public spaces of young, highly educated, middle-class, white males? Can we speak about a genuine democratization of the LGBT movement expressed by the diversity of its Pride parade participants?

In this article we examine what in the social movement literature is designated as the ‘protest normalization thesis’. The protest normalization thesis can be broken down in two parts. Firstly, it is argued that demonstrations have become an increasingly normal and acceptable means of political participation. Secondly, the composition of people engaging in demonstrations is becoming increasingly ‘normal’ in a statistical sense, that is, representing more or less a cross-section of the population. Linking these two dimensions together, Verhulst and Walgrave claim that ‘the normalization of protest has brought on a normalization of protesters’ (2009: 457). Subsequently, if the protest normalization thesis holds true, then we should expect to find that Pride parades are no longer solely the domain of what Verhulst and Walgrave call the ‘usual suspects’. Instead, Pride participants would more or less mirror the general population in terms of socio-demographics, thereby conforming to the general, albeit weak, normalization trend in demonstrations. Hence *our first question*: Are Pride parade participants, aside from sexual orientation, reflecting the social diversity found in the wider population?

Commemorating the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City, the first Pride demonstrations were held in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago in 1970 to publicly demonstrate and assert lesbian and gay identity and pride. The tradition has since travelled globally (Herdt, 1997; Lundberg, 2007: 173). Despite its origins in the USA, the tradition has become ‘translated’ into new contexts to suit different national and local settings (Adam et al., 1999; Browne, 2007; Calvo and Trujillo, 2011; Duggan, 2010; Enguix, 2009; Nardi, 1998; Robinson, 2012; Ross, 2008).¹ Subsequently, we argue that the mobilizing and political contexts should also impact on the participant profiles in Pride parades (Holzhacker 2012; see later in this article). Hence, *our second research question*: How do these different mobilizing and political contexts influence participation in Pride parades, either encouraging a mobilization of a broad range of people or recruiting only a more limited segment of the LGBT population?

Hitherto there has been little systematic knowledge about the participants in Pride parades, with only a few studies based on relatively small samples of participants (Browne, 2007; McFarland, 2012). In this study we use quantitative survey data collected within the European Science Foundation Euroscores program ‘Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation’ (CCC), to analyse who participates in Pride parades in six European countries: the Czech Republic, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland. This choice of countries is primarily based on available data from the CCC program, nonetheless the sample includes a range of different societal contexts that provide a basis for fruitful international comparisons. In the next section, we describe the normalization thesis of demonstration participation, and discuss its relevance for Pride

parades. After a section outlining the data and research methods we will turn to an analysis of the socio-demographic and political composition of the Pride parades included in our study.

The ‘protest normalization thesis’ and Pride parades

Demonstration participation has become a normalized form of political activity in Western European societies. Since the 1960s more and more issues have been raised in demonstrations and a steadily increasing number of demonstrations and demonstrators have taken to the streets across Western Europe (see e.g. Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Meyer and Tarrow, 1998; Norris, 2002; Norris et al., 2005; Tilly, 1983; Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001). According to Topf (1995), both the number and above all the legitimacy of all kinds of peaceful protest acts have risen to such an extent in Western Europe that any reference to ‘unconventional’ forms of participation is more or less outmoded. Demonstrations have become normalized resulting in what Etzioni (1970) very early proclaimed as ‘demonstration democracies’ and what Meyer and Tarrow (1998) call ‘social movement societies’.

The so-called new social movements that emerged in the 1960s, in addition to introducing new issues to the street, also produced a new kind of protester. The demographic profile of environmental, feminist or peace demonstrations differ radically from that of disgruntled workers: they are both younger and more educated. Demonstrations are no longer solely the means for the organized working class to air their demands, but (perhaps primarily) the domain of the politically active, well-educated middle class (Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001; see also Norris, 2002). But the question remains, has the normalization of demonstrations developed to produce a normalization of the demonstrator? Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001:466) posed the following question: ‘Are the profiles of demonstrators different to those of the average man or woman in the street?’ Their answer was ambivalent. As protest issues have become more diversified, the diversity in social groups that today stage demonstrations has increased (what Van Aelst and Walgrave see as an increasing ‘external heterogeneity’). However, the internal diversity of demonstration populations has but slowly increased. While gender is less a factor today, there remains what they called ‘female’ and ‘male’ demonstrations. Furthermore, younger and better-educated demonstrators continue to dominate. However, they found that in specific types of demonstrations, linked to what they call ‘new emotional movements’, the heterogeneity, and therefore representativeness, of the demonstration’s rank and file is quite remarkable (Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001: 477–78). These mobilizations are typically emotional reactions to criminal victimization and participants are predominantly mobilized directly through mass media rather than through associations or organizations. Nevertheless, they concluded, in regards to the normalization of the protester that the ‘underrepresentation of those with less education and the less affluent prevents us from speaking about genuine democratization of street protest’ (2001: 482).

In conclusion, while there appears to be a degree of normalization among demonstrators, the trend is still relatively weak. Nonetheless, there has been a social diffusion of protest. Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001: 481) maintain that the lower forecasting potential of socio-demographic variables has made way for situational variables. Individuals' likelihood to take part in protests depends less on their age, gender and, to a lesser extent, their education, than on the context of the mobilization, as well as the issue of the demonstration. It can also be added that compared to other forms of political participation (e.g. contacting governmental officials, or working in a political party), the level of participation in protests is today more similar between different social strata (Schlozman et al., 2012: 122–124).

Prima facie, many Pride parades could be expected to be a good example of this normalization trend, since they explicitly seek to mobilize the breadth of the LGBT community. They are often organized as 'open' demonstrations encouraging everyone with a LGBT identity (or heterosexuals who sympathize with LGBT politics) to participate. In this sense Pride parades encourage social diversity and are a celebration of the social diversity of the LGBT community. By extension, as noted by Ross (2008), there is an increasing tendency to embrace diversity in society as a whole.

LGBT identities are transversal. Although not always in equal proportions across all social demographic categories, they are found in all parts of society and cut across perceived social barriers such as class, ethnicity/race, age and sex (cf. Gates, 2015). This suggests a potential for the 'normalization' of Pride parade participants. However, the notion of 'normalization' is hotly debated within the LGBT movement and among LGBTQ scholars and does not carry the same connotation as within the wider social movement literature discussed earlier. Queer critics contend that 'normalization' – in terms of LGBT people ceasing to challenge broader relationship norms and sexual norms in society – leads to a politics of assimilation into heteronormativity, which thereby undermines the LGBT movement's emancipatory force and fundamental cultural challenge (e.g. Chasin 2000; Epstein 1998; Gamson 1995; Seidman 1997; Valocchi 1999; Walters 2003; Warner 2000).

Richardson (2004: 394) argues that, paradoxically, by drawing on respect for diversity LGBT movements 'may further their efforts in seeking social conformity as "normal gays", who espouse the norms and values of the "ordinary" citizen'. Despite the problematics associated with trumpeting out 'we are just like the rest of you', an underlying aim of the organizers of the Pride parades we studied is just that, to manifest the LGBT community as more or less reflective of the social diversity found within the wider population (Wahlström and Peterson, 2016) – 'We are everywhere' (Davis, 1995: 293) – the socio-demographic normalization of the Pride participants. We explore whether the normalizing tendencies in terms of socio-demographics outlined in the social movement literature, and the aims of some Pride organizers to maximize diversity, in fact holds for Pride parades. Hence the following hypothesis:

H1 The participants in Pride parades are not statistically different from their respective national populations in terms of age, gender, class and education.

Furthermore, the LGBT community is not a political monolith. Sexual orientation alone does not result in political consensus, especially not in states where parties across the left–right spectrum increasingly take liberal stances on LGBT issues. Consequently, LGBT individuals, like the wider population, could be expected to crisscross ideological and party political barriers – the political normalization of the Pride participants. However, in practice, LGBT people can be expected to less frequently vote for parties with illiberal stances on LGBT rights. For example, in the USA, LGBT voters show disproportionately weak support for the Republican Party (e.g. Gates, 2012). In line with this research we propose the following hypothesis:

H2 Among Pride participants, conservative political sympathies are underrepresented while liberal (centre) and left-wing sympathies are overrepresented, compared to national populations.

Aside from these hypothesized common patterns across countries, the varying macro-contexts of Pride mobilizations in the six countries in our sample can be expected to influence the socio-demographic profiles, as well as political sympathies, of Pride parade participants. Walgrave and Verhulst (2009) maintain that the internal diversity of anti-war protests was profoundly shaped by the government's and the opposition's position on the Iraq war. In those countries where both the government and the opposition were against the war in Iraq, staging what they called emotional 'aimless' demonstrations, proved to be the most internally diverse. In those countries whose governments and/or opposition supported the war, where the demonstrations had clear domestic targets for their demands, the demonstration populations were much less diverse. Rowing against mainstream politics results in participants from socio-demographically stronger groups, especially in terms of education. Walgrave and Verhulst hypothesize that demonstrators in these contexts also would come from the left of the political (left–right) spectrum, be strongly committed and well organized, although the empirical support for this is weak. Rowing with mainstream politics can attract a more 'normal' sample of the population and a more internally diverse protest crowd (2009: 1363).

Walgrave and Verhulst make no distinction between the effect of elite opinions and public opinions, arguing that public opinions are ultimately a consequence of elite opinions. Be that as it may, it is clear that elite and public opinions on LGBT issues are not always concordant. Consequently, Ron Holzacker (2007, 2012) explains differences between the character of LGBT movement organizations' strategies with reference to the combination of elite and public opinions on LGBT issues. He identifies three modes of interaction of LGBT movement organizations and their political environment. First, in countries where the public and elite attitudes regarding LGBT people remain internally polarized (as in, typically, countries or regions showing strong religious influence), LGBT organizations are embroiled in *morality politics*. In these cases, Holzacker argues, the organizations will most often pursue highly visible confrontational strategies, to be able to push

their causes onto the political agenda. Where both the elite and public attitudes are supportive or even highly supportive, LGBT organizations will practice a *high-profile politics* mode of interaction vis-à-vis their political environment, staging large-scale celebratory public events, engaging in close cooperation with government authorities and exporting their ideas and resources. Whereas Walgrave and Verhulst (2009) treat public opinion on the war merely as an intermediary variable between elite orientation and who is mobilized, Holzacker (2012) also discusses situations where elite and public opinions differ. In places where the elite opinion is relatively supportive, while public opinion is divided or negative, the organizations will seek *incremental change*, favouring small-scale events and working discreetly behind the scenes through lobbying, and cooperating with, government authorities.

In cases where elite and popular opinion are more or less in accordance, Walgrave and Verhulst's (2009) assumptions about anti-war demonstrators should be applicable also for the social composition of Pride parades. Consequently, where both elite attitudes and public opinion are polarized or hostile towards LGBT rights, the threshold for participation is higher and Pride mobilizations should be likely to be composed of participants from more resourceful social groups, possibly also more politically radical and likely to already be part of the formally organized core of the movement (i.e. those categories which in most contexts are typically more prone to participate in political demonstrations). Conversely, when both elites and the public are predominantly supportive towards LGBT issues, participants in Pride should be more diverse and more closely correspond to the general population. The consequences of intermediary types of situations for the socio-demographic composition of Pride parades are less obvious. If a situation where there is relatively strong support from elites but little support from the population typically leads to backstage lobbying rather than mass mobilization, then Pride parades are not likely to be prioritized by the (organized) LGBT movement. A tentative hypothesis is that the degree of internal diversity in Pride parades is somewhere between those under the other two context types, while the degree of formal organization is comparatively low (since the formal organizations do not prioritize mass mobilization).

In conclusion, we expect that: *the composition of the Pride parades in the six countries is influenced by public opinion and the support/nonsupport of political elites vis-à-vis LGBT demands*. That is, in contrast to Walgrave and Verhulst (2009) who focus on the internal diversity of demonstrations *per se*, we focus on the degree of similarity with national populations as a whole. We further argue that Holzacker's analysis can be used to break down our broad assumption into hypotheses regarding the impact of the political and cultural context on the composition of Pride parades:

H3 (a) In mobilizing contexts where there is broad support in society for LGBT rights, Pride participants will reflect the socio-demographics of the country to a higher degree than in other contexts. (b) In these contexts Pride participants will also reflect the party political sympathies of the general national population.

H4 (a) In mobilizing contexts, which are strongly polarized or hostile, Pride participants will more often be well educated, middle class and significantly younger than those participating in highly supportive contexts. (b) In addition, in these contexts Pride participants will more often identify with left-wing politics, will be more active in unconventional forms of participation, and more organized in the social movement sector compared to those participating in the former context.

H5 Participants within a mobilizing context where the movement finds relative support among elites but polarized attitudes among the population we expect to find in the middle of our normalization dimension, and to be less organized than those protesting under more strongly adverse conditions.

Methodology

The collection of data on Pride demonstrations mainly took place in 2012, covering six European countries: the Czech Republic (in both 2012 and 2013), Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden (2012 in Gothenburg and 2014 in Stockholm), Switzerland (one demonstration in Geneva in 2011, one in Zurich in 2012) and the UK (see Table 1). Two sampling procedures developed and tested by Stefaan Walgrave and colleagues were employed in order to produce reliable, valid and comparable data (van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001; Walgrave and Verhulst, 2011). First, to ensure that all participants had equal probabilities of becoming sampled, interviewers were directed by 'pointers'. The pointers made sure that postal surveys were meticulously distributed according to a predetermined rule to one demonstrator in every *n*th row. Second, every 5th demonstrator who was handed a postal survey was also asked to participate in a short face-to-face interview. The purpose of these interviews was to assess possible bias resulting from non-response to the postal survey. In each parade, typically between 100 and 200 face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants who also received postal survey questionnaires. Only postal questionnaires were handed out to an additional 500–800 participants. Unlike traditional postal surveys with address-coded questionnaires we were unable to send out reminders, hence our return rates varied between a low of 16% in Prague and a high of 36% in Gothenburg, Sweden. Contextual data were collected on the countries included, the mobilizing contexts, the demonstrations and the protestors, using specifically designed fact sheets and questionnaires.

Our country sample is analytically categorized following Holzhaecker's (2007, 2012) model of the expected modes of interaction of LGBT movements based on the movement organizations' layered interactions with their political environment. We can roughly group the countries in our sample within Holzhaecker's model based on public opinion towards gays and lesbians measured by how European Social Survey respondents responded in 2012 to the statement: 'Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish' (alternatives: 'agree

Table 1. Pride parades surveyed.

Date	Czech Republic		Italy	Netherlands		Sweden		Switzerland		UK	
	Prague 18 August 2012	Prague 17 August 2013	Bologna 9 June 2012	Bologna 9 June 2012	Haarlem 7 July 2012	Gothenburg 3 June 2012	Stockholm 2 August 2014	Geneva 2 July 2011	Zürich 16 June 2012	London 7 July 2012	Total
No. of participants in parade (according to CCC research teams)	9000	10,000	15,000	1000	1000	3300	60,000	3000	3000	20,000	64,300
No. of face-to-face surveys made	126	128	188	74	80	158	~810	159	94	140	1147
No. of distributed postal surveys	646	835	1000	368	445	238	792	478	1000	194	6374
No. of returned postal surveys	135	131	216	100	162	238	197	150	194	194	1523
Response rate (%)	21	16	22	27	36	29	25	31	19	24	

Table 2. 'Gays and lesbians should be free to live life as they wish'. Source: European Social Survey round 1–6 (2002–2012, see Note 2).

	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
<i>Percentage that answered 'Agree strongly' and 'Agree':</i>						
Switzerland	80	75	77	82	83	78
Czech Republic	60	59		66	67	61
UK	76	76	79	81	84	84
Italy	72	64				73
Netherlands	88	89	88	91	93	93
Sweden	82	84	86	87	90	88
<i>Percentage that answered 'Disagree strongly' and 'Disagree':</i>						
Switzerland	10	12	12	9	8	10
Czech Republic	17	20		14	13	18
UK	12	9	9	8	6	5
Italy	12	18				12
Netherlands	5	5	6	5	3	4
Sweden	7	6	5	5	3	4

strongly/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/disagree strongly'),² together with existing LGBT-relevant legislation (ILGA-Europe, 2012).

In Table 2 we can observe among the countries in our sample, public opinions that are either relatively stable or (most notable in the UK) progressively becoming more positive to LGBT persons' freedom to live life as they wish. While the countries in our sample do not fit unequivocally into clear-cut categories, we nevertheless find some patterns that can be used as a basis for an analysis. At one end of the spectrum in *category one*, which encompasses contexts where LGBT movements are expected to be engaged in high-profile politics, we have placed Sweden, the Netherlands and Great Britain. Public opinion in both the Netherlands and Sweden was highly supportive of gay and lesbians' right to live their lives as they wish: 93% and 88%, respectively. In both countries only 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement given in the last paragraph. In the UK, the support was almost as high. 84% of the British respondents replied positively and 5% negatively. Both Sweden and the Netherlands recognized same-sex marriage, same-sex couple adoption, and robust anti-discrimination legislation and legal protection against hate crime and hate speech were in place. At the time of the London Pride parade in our study, Britain had a partnership law and since 2010 it recognizes partnerships that take place in religious premises (however, the legislation includes an opt-out clause in which Christian churches are not obligated to conduct same-sex marriages on their premises). Since 2014, same-sex marriage is

allowed in all parts of the UK aside from Northern Ireland. Britain had robust anti-discrimination legislation, but Engel (2001: 78) argues that this had been enacted piecemeal and in a government-directed top-down manner, without the LGBT movement's active grassroots involvement. In ILGA-Europe's review of the national legal human rights situation for LGBT persons in 2012 (the year of most mobilizations in our data), UK is assigned higher overall scores than both Sweden and the Netherlands in regards to LGBT rights (ILGA-Europe, 2012). In contrast to Italy and the Czech Republic, elites in Great Britain, Sweden and the Netherlands were quite likely (32–40%) to acknowledge sexual minorities as relevant for a diverse society (Klicperová-Baker and Košťál 2012).

In *category two* at the other end of the spectrum we have Italy and the Czech Republic. In these countries we find the highest percentages of LGBT-unfriendly attitudes amongst the public. In Italy 12% disagreed/disagreed strongly with the statement 'Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish' and 73% agreed/agreed strongly; in the Czech Republic 18% responded negatively to that statement and 61% positively. According to Klicperová-Baker and Košťál (2012), elites in these countries rarely recognized the importance of taking sexual minorities into account. Both countries also scored relatively low in ILGA-Europe's 2012 human rights review. Italy lacked a same-sex partnership law,³ while the Czech Republic had a same-sex partnership law granting inferior rights compared to heterosexual partnerships (Fojtová, 2011). Both countries lacked legal protection against hate crime and hate speech. However, despite these ostensibly similar contexts, the categorization is complicated by the fact that the dominant strategy of the Czech LGBT movement seems to have been backstage lobbying rather than mass mobilization (O'Dwyer, 2013). We will return to this in the interpretation of the data.

In *category three* in the middle of our spectrum we placed Switzerland. Public opinion was far less polarized among Swiss respondents: 78% responded positively and 10% negatively. In the ILGA review of LGBT rights, Switzerland actually scored lower than the Czech Republic. However, Switzerland had a same-sex partnership law, which is almost equal to the heterosexual law, but lacked a hate crime law and a hate speech law.

The participant profiles in Pride parades taking place in these diverse contexts is compared to the national populations, as measured by the European Social Survey (ESS). One possible weakness of this approach is that the national populations from which the samples in the ESS are drawn are not necessarily equivalent to the populations that form the mobilizing potential of the demonstrations. First, the primary mobilizing potential of a demonstration in a particular city is the population of that particular city and its vicinity, and characteristics such as level of education and political opinion may differ in that city from the country as a whole. Second, the Pride parades in our sample also mobilized small proportions of participants from other countries, so in another sense the mobilizing potential extends beyond the borders of the nation state.⁴ Nevertheless, we chose to regard the national populations as a reasonable approximation of the mobilizing potential, and therefore use the national ESS data.

Socio-demographic normalization

We find that in none of the countries in our sample do participants in Pride parades represent a cross-section of the population in terms of age, level of education, or class position (see Tables 3 and 4). Hence we can reject *H1* – that the profiles of Pride participants mirror the rest of the population. Neither is there unqualified support for *H3 (a)*, which predicted a higher degree of socio-demographic conformity in countries with a broad support for LGBT rights. Nonetheless, there are significant country differences. The youngest demonstrators are in the Czech Republic and Italy, which corroborates our hypothesis *H4 (a)* that Pride parades in these countries will gather younger demonstrators than in the remaining four countries. Younger demonstrators (up to 29 years old) dominate also in Sweden, and are well represented in the Swiss demonstrations and to a somewhat lesser degree in the UK. The demonstration in the Netherlands is the exception in our sample, where the age group 50–64 years dominates. Only 11% of the Dutch Pride participants were under the age of 30 and only 1% were students (not working).⁵ The latter is also in stark contrast with the other countries. Students are particularly well represented in Pride parades in Italy and the Czech Republic.

In all of the countries a majority of Pride participants have university education or are currently studying at the university level. The level of education is most dramatic in the UK and Italy, where 76% and 75% respectively are university educated. The demonstrators in the remaining four countries in our sample are also far from representative of the general population in their respective countries in regards to level of education.

Corroborating research on participants in the so-called new social movements in general, Pride parades are also overwhelmingly dominated by the middle strata, in contrast to, for instance, May Day marches and other trade union demonstrations (Wennerhag, 2016). The parades in our sample attracted few participants with working-class occupations (see Table 4).⁶ In comparison to the general population, it is in particular individuals with middle-class occupations that are overrepresented amongst the Pride participants. In earlier research on class voting, it has been shown that especially the highly educated ‘socio-cultural professionals and semi-professionals’ (e.g. teachers, social workers, medical doctors) support left-libertarian political parties (Oesch, 2008), that is, parties that often have been at the forefront in supporting LGBT rights. Another occupational class that is overrepresented in the Pride parades in relation to the general population are self-employed professionals, another resourceful occupational class that generally tends to support, or participate in, ‘new social movements’ (cf. Kriesi, 1989).

Ideological and party political normalization

Pride participants in five of our countries in general position themselves on the left of the left–right political dimension, far more than the general population in their respective countries (see Table 5). This provides relative support for *H2*, which

Table 3. Socio-demographic profiles of Pride participants. Figures are percentages and those in brackets denote the corresponding figures for the country population, according to European Social Survey 2012.

	Czech Republic		Italy		Netherlands		Sweden		Switzerland			UK		
	Prague 18 August 2012	Prague 17 August 2013	Bologna 9 June 2012	Bologna 9 June 2012	Haarlem 7 July 2012	Haarlem 7 July 2012	Gothenburg 3 June 2012	Gothenburg 3 June 2012	Geneva 2 July 2011	Geneva 2 July 2011	Zurich 16 June 2012	Zurich 16 June 2012	London 7 July 2012	London 7 July 2012
Age														
up to 29 years	53 (21)	52 (21)	46 (21)	46 (21)	11 (18)	11 (18)	42 (22)	42 (22)	35 (22)	35 (22)	23 (22)	23 (22)	21 (19)	21 (19)
30–49 years	39 (38)	42 (38)	42 (34)	42 (34)	37 (33)	37 (33)	37 (30)	37 (30)	42 (30)	42 (30)	54 (33)	54 (33)	51 (31)	51 (31)
50–64 years	7 (25)	3 (25)	10 (25)	10 (25)	42 (28)	42 (28)	15 (24)	15 (24)	17 (24)	17 (24)	17 (25)	17 (25)	21 (26)	21 (26)
65+ years	1 (16)	2 (16)	0 (20)	0 (20)	6 (21)	6 (21)	4 (24)	4 (24)	6 (24)	6 (24)	5 (23)	5 (23)	5 (24)	5 (24)
Gender identity														
Woman	39	40	45	45	61	61	63	63	59	59	46	46	38	38
Man	60	60	52	52	38	38	32	32	34	34	51	51	58	58
Other gender identity	1	<i>n.a.</i>	3	3	1	1	5	5	7	7	3	3	5	5
University education (completed or ongoing)	56 (14)	60 (14)	75 (20)	75 (20)	65 (31)	65 (31)	70 (32)	70 (32)	74 (32)	74 (32)	54 (31)	59 (31)	76 (32)	76 (32)
Cases (N)	135	130–131	167–216	167–216	99–100	99–100	154–162	154–162	234–236	234–236	144–149	144–149	187–194	187–194

Note: * $p < 5\%$, ** $p < 1\%$, *** $p < 0.1\%$.

Table 4. Occupational profiles of Pride participants (Oesch's class scheme). Figures are percentages and those in brackets denote the corresponding figures for the country population, according to European Social Survey 2010 (of which Italy was not part).

	Czech Republic		Italy		Netherlands		Sweden		Switzerland		UK	
	Prague		Bologna		Haarlem		Gothenburg		Geneva		London	
	18 August 2012	17 August 2013	9 June 2012	7 July 2012	3 June 2012	2 August 2014	2 July 2011	16 June 2012	7 July 2012	7 July 2012	7 July 2012	Cramer's V
Self-employed												
Large employers (10 or more employees)	4 (1)	4 (1)	2	2 (1)	0 (1)	4 (1)	1 (1)	2 (1)	2 (1)	2 (1)	n.s.	
Self-employed professionals	7 (1)	9 (1)	7	5 (2)	5 (2)	2 (2)	2 (3)	5 (3)	8 (1)	8 (1)	n.s.	
Small business owners	6 (8)	6 (8)	2	4 (8)	3 (9)	3 (9)	3 (8)	7 (8)	7 (9)	7 (9)	n.s.	
Employed: Professionals and employees												
Associate managers and administrators	23 (7)	26 (7)	10	32 (23)	13 (16)	19 (16)	27 (17)	28 (17)	41 (16)	0.216***		
Technical professionals and technicians	5 (5)	6 (5)	8	7 (5)	3 (8)	7 (8)	8 (8)	8 (8)	7 (4)	n.s.		
Socio-cultural professionals/ semi-professionals	12 (8)	15 (8)	22	35 (17)	40 (13)	34 (13)	28 (14)	28 (14)	21 (10)	0.190***		
Employed: Workers												
Office clerks	5 (12)	3 (12)	4	5 (12)	3 (7)	3 (7)	7 (9)	5 (9)	4 (12)	n.s.		
Production workers	3 (31)	3 (31)	1	1 (14)	1 (18)	3 (18)	4 (20)	2 (20)	1 (20)	n.s.		
Service workers	3 (14)	5 (14)	10	7 (12)	9 (16)	7 (16)	4 (13)	8 (13)	3 (20)	n.s.		
Students not working	40 (13)	25 (13)	33	1 (6)	22 (11)	19 (11)	15 (8)	8 (8)	7 (8)	0.252***		
Cases (N)	115	108	162	82	143	214	176	130	164			

Note: ***p < 0.1%.

Table 5. Left-Right political orientation of Pride participants. Figures are percentages and those in brackets denote the corresponding figures for the country population, according to European Social Survey 2012.

	Czech Republic		Italy		Netherlands		Sweden		Switzerland		UK	
	Prague	Prague	Bologna	Bologna	Haarlem	Haarlem	Gothenburg	Gothenburg	Geneva	Zurich	London	London
	18 August 2012	17 August 2013	9 June 2012	9 June 2012	7 July 2012	7 July 2012	3 June 2012	3 June 2012	2 July 2011	16 June 2012	7 July 2012	7 July 2012
									2 August 2014	2 August 2012	2 August 2012	Cramer's V
Left-Right placement												
Left (0-3)	20 (20)	21 (20)	83 (29)	83 (29)	52 (18)	52 (18)	70 (20)	70 (20)	53 (18)	58 (18)	55 (14)	0.375***
Centre (4-6)	25 (41)	31 (41)	11 (42)	11 (42)	29 (46)	29 (46)	16 (43)	16 (43)	29 (51)	27 (51)	23 (53)	0.164***
Right (7-10)	38 (27)	37 (27)	2 (20)	2 (20)	15 (32)	15 (32)	11 (32)	11 (32)	11 (25)	12 (25)	11 (16)	0.303***
Don't know	17 (12)	10 (12)	4 (9)	4 (9)	4 (3)	4 (3)	4 (5)	4 (5)	7 (6)	3 (6)	10 (17)	0.152***
Cases (N)	131	131	207	207	96	96	161	161	197	147	192	

Note: ***p < 0.1%.

predicted a general overrepresentation of centre and left-wing political views among Pride participants. However, we found no support for hypothesis *H3 (b)*, that participants in highly supportive contexts (Sweden, Netherlands and the UK) would be politically very similar to the general population.

The exception to this ‘rule’, that Pride demonstrators lean decidedly to the left, are demonstrators in the Czech Republic. While Czech Pride participants are more representative of the general population with regards to left–right political orientation than demonstrators in the other five countries, they are nevertheless more orientated to the right and less centre orientated than the Czech electorate.

Scholars have reminded us that the left–right political orientation scale carries different meanings in different contexts (e.g. Huber and Inglehart, 1995). What has historically proved so valuable a tool for understanding political conflicts in established western democracies does not necessarily bare the same explanatory weight or meaning for post-communist societies (Deegan-Krause, 2006). Piurko et al. (2011) found in their study of the saliency of the left–right scale measured by personally held core values within the electorates in 20 countries that the Czech Republic exhibited a unique pattern. ‘A right orientation was associated with the openness to change values and a left orientation with security and conformity values’ (2011: 551–552). According to these authors, people who give high priority to openness to change values should prefer policies perceived as likely to promote and protect individual freedoms and civil rights. Given the meanings that left and right have for Czechs, it is not unanticipated that Pride participants who are challenging conformity to sexual norms and demanding change in the civil rights of LGBT persons position themselves on the right of the left–right political orientation scale.⁷

In general, the participants in the Pride parades tend to support left-libertarian parties such as Green, Left Socialist, and Social Democratic parties. But in comparison to the general population it is in particular the Green and Left Socialist parties that are overrepresented, while Conservative, Christian Democrat and Radical Populist Right parties are underrepresented. However, the Czech Republic is again the exception in this case, at least regarding support for conservative parties (33% in both demonstrations). Czech Pride participants lend their support to conservative parties almost to the same degree as the Czech electorate. On the other hand, the one moral conservative Christian democrat party (Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party, KDU-ČSL), received only marginal support among the demonstrators. Czech participants also deviate from the electorate in their support (33–39%) for the marginal Green Party, a typical ‘new social movement party’ that champions LGBT communities having the same rights as everyone else. In all Pride parades apart from the British, the support for Liberal and Left Liberal parties tends to mirror the general population. The Swedish demonstrators’ support for a feminist party (12–28%) reflects the newly formed party Feminist Initiative, which has LGBT rights as one of its primary foci.

The degree of organization among the participants again only partly validates our hypothesis *H4 (b)*, that participants in hostile contexts will be more organized

Table 6. Organizational membership and political participation of Pride participants. Figures are percentages and those in brackets denote the corresponding figures for the country population, according to European Social Survey 2012.

	Czech Republic		Italy		Netherlands		Sweden		Switzerland		UK	
	Prague	Prague	Bologna	Bologna	Haarlem	Haarlem	Gothenburg	Gothenburg	Stockholm	Geneva	Zurich	London
Member in LGBT organization	13	21	45	45	24	24	22	22	30	45	42	40
Have during the last 12 months taken part in...												
Demonstrations	45 (7)	41 (7)	87 (17)	87 (17)	33 (3)	33 (3)	79 (7)	79 (7)	68 (7)	81 (4)	78 (4)	75 (3)
Direct action (e.g. blockades, occupations, civil disobedience)	7	9	24	24	4	4	10	10	8	10	6	8
Cases (N)	129–135	123–131	205–216	205–216	91–100	91–100	155–162	155–162	228–238	182–197	138–150	179–194

Note: ***p < 0.1%.

Cramer's V 0.234***

in the social movement sector and are more often involved in unconventional forms of political participation. As expected, Swedish and Dutch marchers have a relatively low degree of membership of LGBT organizations, compared to those in Italy and Switzerland (see Table 6). However, participants in the UK deviate in terms of a relatively high proportion of organized participants. Conversely, the Czech participants deviate from our expectations with a comparatively low degree of organization. However, this corresponds to the generally low density of social movement organizations in the Czech Republic, and in particular dedicated LGBT organizations (O'Dwyer, 2013). The Czechs' comparatively low degree of involvement in demonstrations and direct action, must also be interpreted in the light of earlier studies' emphasis that activists in Central Eastern European countries seldom use disruptive forms of protests, and that the level of participation in voluntary associations and contentious forms of political actions in this region is relatively low in comparison to Western Europe (Císar, 2013; Císar and Vrábliková, 2010; Jacobsson and Saxonberg, 2013: 257; Petrova and Tarrow, 2007).

Hypothesis *H5*, which predicted that Switzerland would be in the middle of the spectrum in regards to level of organizational ties, does not find support; the Swiss participants were often members of LGBT organizations, as often as the Italian participants.

As regards experiences of extra-parliamentary activism, such as demonstrating or taking part in direct action during the last year, the Italian demonstrators clearly conform to our expectations with a high degree of participation, while the Dutch demonstrators have a low degree of participation. The Swedish participants score unexpectedly high while the Czech participants score relatively low. However, compared to the national averages, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, and UK turn out to be very similar.

Conclusions

In this article we have engaged with the so-called 'protest normalization thesis' and tested whether Pride demonstrators more or less reflect the social diversity within the general population in regards to ideological and party political orientations, and in regards to socio-demographic and socio-economic profiles. We argued that the phenomenon of Pride parades should be a critical case to test the 'protest normalization thesis'. In contrast to what researchers have found regarding the participant profiles in other 'new social movements', we had no reason to assume that LGBT individuals are only found in certain age groups, social classes or ethnic categories. Nor did we have any reason to assume that LGBT individuals are *per definition* left wing, even if in more hostile LGBT environments left-wing political parties have often been the main champions of their cause. In countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, where all major political parties support most demands of the LGBT movement, we expected Pride participants to span the party political spectrum. However, in *none* of the countries could we find indications that Pride participants mirror the general populations regarding party political

affiliation. An overview of variables where national averages were available for all countries highlights our most important findings (see Table 7).

Even in countries where we expected that Pride parades would mobilize a broader cross-section of potential LGBT individuals and LGBT political supporters, namely the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, the participants did not reflect the diversity within the general population. In short, we found no evidence for a normalization of Pride demonstrators.⁸ Much like new social movement demonstrators more generally, Pride participants are overwhelmingly from the middle strata, highly educated, young, and are politically left oriented (aside from Czech participants, see next paragraph). In short, they are rich in potential political resources.

Nonetheless, we did find country-level differences in the mobilizing patterns of the surveyed Pride parades, which underline the impact of general political opportunities on the national level, as well as the mobilizing structures of LGBT movements. The different national patterns only to a degree corroborate the hypotheses that we derived from Walgrave and Verhulst's (2009) study of anti-war demonstrators and Holzhaecker's (2012) ideal-typical model of different political environments for LGBT organizations in Europe. In countries where LGBT movements are 'rowing against mainstream politics', as well as being counter to public opinion, our hypothesis is at least partially confirmed. In both Italy and the Czech Republic, demonstrators were younger and significantly more highly educated than the general populations. They were also younger than Pride participants in the remaining four countries, although the same age pattern is also evident in Sweden. Pride demonstrators in Italy typically inclined far more towards the left than the Italian electorate, being what social movement scholars recognize as 'left-wing radical' in the context of Western European social movements, in other words, identifying significantly towards the left on the left-right political orientation scale, highly organized, frequent demonstrators, and familiar with disruptive protest tactics. The Czech demonstrators did not conform to this pattern. Pride demonstrators in the Czech Republic positioned themselves significantly more towards the political right than the Czech electorate, which can be interpreted as politically 'radical' in the Czech context where 'right' generally signifies change values, respect for individual freedoms and civil rights. That few Czech Pride participants were formally organized did not conform to what we expected from the political context. However, given the incremental change strategy of the Czech LGBT movement, this result becomes less surprising.

In contrast to Walgrave and Verhulst's (2009) study we find more ambiguous patterns. A possible explanation is that the political positions regarding LGBT issues are more complex and less clear-cut compared to the support for or opposition to the Iraq war. Compared to anti-war mobilizations, there may be different mechanisms at work when a large share of the participants in the demonstrations comes from the aggrieved population, as in Pride parades.

While there is good reason to believe that LGBT individuals represent more or less a cross-section of the general population, Pride participants do not. Pride

Table 7. Overview: relative diversity of protesters. The figures in the table are the differences in percentage points between the average among the protesters and the national average according to the European Social Survey 2012.

	Czech Republic		Italy		Netherlands		Sweden		Switzerland		UK	
	Prague 18 August 2012	Prague 17 August 2013	Bologna 9 June 2012	Bologna 9 June 2012	Haarlem 7 July 2012	Gothenburg 3 June 2012	Stockholm 2 August 2014	Geneva 2 July 2011	Zurich 16 June 2012	London 7 July 2012		
Age												
up to 29 years	+32	+31	+25	+8	-7	+20	+13	+1	+2			
30-49 years	+1	+4	+25	+8	+4	+7	+12	+20	+21			
50-64 years	-18	-22	-15	-15	+14	-9	-7	-15	-8			
University education (completed or ongoing)	+52	+46	+55	+55	+34	+38	+42	+23	+28			
Left-Right placement												
Left (0-3)	+/-0	+1	+54	+54	+34	+50	+43	+35	+40			
Centre (4-6)	-16	-10	-31	-31	-17	-27	-25	-22	-24			
Right (7-10)	+11	+10	-18	-18	-17	-21	-18	-14	-13			
Don't know	+5	-2	-5	-5	+1	-1	0	+1	-3			
Demonstration participation last 12 months	+38	+35	+70	+70	+30	+72	+61	+77	+74			

parades are not mobilizing the *potential* diversity of LGBT people. More or less like in other so-called new social movements, demonstrating on the streets remains the privileged arena of well-educated, middle-strata youth, rich in political resources and confident in their political capabilities. Our study is based on the actual participants in Pride parades. Future studies, either based on the mobilizing strategies of the organizers of Pride parades or on quantitative data on Pride parade bystanders, might be better equipped to provide answers as to why Pride parades are not mobilizing the full potential diversity of LGBT people leading to a genuine democratization of LGBT movements.

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Notes

1. Yearly ritual lesbian and gay demonstrations had not taken place in the countries in our sample prior to 1970. However, calling post-1970 LGBT demonstrations 'Pride parades' appeared in most Western European countries first in the 1990s, prompted by the European Pride Organizers Association staging EuroPrides (the Netherlands, London and Sweden) and InterPride, designating Rome as the venue for the first World Pride in 2000. Geneva has called its LGBT yearly event Pride, while Zurich initially called its events Christopher Street Day, connecting to the German tradition. Since 2009 when Zurich hosted EuroPride, the event is now called Zurich Pride. The relatively recent Prague parades have always been named Prague Pride.
2. The European Social Survey (ESS) has been conducted bi-annually since 2002 in most European countries. In this article, we have downloaded and analysed the survey dataset available for researchers on the ESS website <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org> (accessed July 2017).
3. The Italian Parliament passed legislation recognizing same-sex civil unions (albeit without adoption rights), which came into effect on 5 June 2016 despite mass rallies against the law sponsored by the Vatican.
4. The largest proportion of survey respondents resident in other countries – 15% – was found in the Geneva Pride parade (which is not surprising considering the proximity to the French border). In Prague Pride 2013 the corresponding figure was 7% and in the other events it was even smaller. Since the absolute numbers of foreign respondents are small, these figures should be interpreted with care, but they are nevertheless lower than expected considering the strong transnational dimension of LGBT mobilizations, noted by e.g. Ayoub (2013).

5. The absence of students can probably be explained by the fact that Haarlem is not a university city.
6. As a measure of occupational class in this article we use the class scheme developed by Oesch (2008). This class scheme is a modified version of the EGP (Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero) scheme that introduces a horizontal distinction between three work logics: the organizational, the technical and the interpersonal. The self-employed and employers are included in a fourth, independent, work logic. The wage earners are furthermore divided vertically into middle-class (professionals, employees) and working-class occupations. The resulting class scheme consists of 17 classes, which can be collapsed into the 9-class version we use in this article.
7. A comparison with data from the European Social Survey (2012) confirms that whereas there is a general tendency in European countries that people are less positive to the statement 'Gays and lesbians should be free to live as they wish', the more right-leaning they are politically, the Czech Republic belongs to the few countries where there is an opposite tendency. A closer look shows that the tendency to agree with that statement among Czech people is indeed highest from the middle to the right end of the political scale.
8. Unfortunately, the only demonstrations in the sample with a question regarding sexual orientation were the Pride parades in London 2012, Haarlem 2012, and Stockholm 2014. In London, 16% of the responding participants reported a heterosexual orientation, and the corresponding figures for Haarlem and Stockholm were 29% and 43% (for a discussion of these findings see Wahlström et al., forthcoming).

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