Visceral, Teetering, and Imperfect - Three Generations of Partisans; Three Generations of Gay and Lesbian Americans

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Three Generations of Partisans; Three Generations of Gay and Lesbian Americans

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Abstract

The two party system in United States politics belies the complexity and nuance of political identity. Understanding the partisan psychopolitical behavior of lesbian, gay, and bisexual U.S. citizens informs our collective understanding of the American political tradition. There is currently a scarcity of literature on the topic of LGB political partisanship. This thesis draws out the complex nature between human beings and their partisan behavior, or lack thereof. Data collected from 10 partisan LGB U.S. citizens in tandem with quantitative models drawn from General Social Survey variables suggest that an identity based model is the best predictor of partisanship in LGB Americans over the age of 35. Data demonstrates a model based on socialization is the best predictor of partisanship for Millennial LGB American citizens. This thesis further identifies the intricate role that social and economic modeling has on LGB partisanship.

Context matters. History and demography have impacted the “political” LGB community uniquely over the past three generations. Prior to the Millennial generation, a gay person could indeed be political, but a political person couldn't be gay.
In early March of 2018, I was able to participate in a local Democratic caucus about 30 minutes from where I live. This time-honored American tradition was held at the local high school in my hometown, and while every face was warm, friendly, and sometimes even familiar - the average age of the attending Democrats had to be in the 50s.

The 15 people in my precinct were split evenly between undecided voters and the grassroots candidate Cary Kennedy. At the time, Jared Polis and Mike Johnston were considered strong contenders for the nomination alongside Kennedy. When prompted for reasons why they were supporting their candidate, there were a number of people who cited her authenticity and character, one middle aged gentleman even addressed the room quite directly. “Look, especially after the last election, we as Democrats need to throw our support behind Kennedy. Polis is from Boulder, he’s gay. We need someone who can win.” To a murmur of assent from ten other adults in the French classroom at Golden High School.
Most people on the street could tell you how rapid the advent of same-sex marriage equality was the in grand scope of United States history. So furious was the struggle for equality on behalf of LGB Americans, and so definitive was the Supreme Court's 2015 ruling mandating same-sex marriage at the federal level, that many citizens of the U.S. are still navigating their own political relationships with such a pronounced gay and lesbian partisan presence.

Perhaps more importantly, gay and lesbian American citizens themselves now have a substantial political victory under their belt, a victory that arguably affords more ideological flexibility to a group of people institutionally oppressed and marginalized for most of recorded history. The future trajectory of such a diverse and modestly large coalition should be on the radar of not just political scientists, but any civically-minded intellectual more broadly.

Within the realm of political science specifically, it is evident from the following findings that the two party system in the United States belies the actual complexity of the public's approval of same-sex marriage, and the contemporary interpretation of the gay rights movement might suggest that to be a Democrat is to be pro-gay, and to be a Republican one might be, at best, highly traditional and at worst extremely homophobic and hateful. There is so much more to be said about this overly simple distillation of Queer partisanship.

But perhaps the most important aspect of this project to communicate to readers is the implication this research has upon the contemporary political landscape within the United States. Party affiliation is much more than a capital letter after a name, it underscores the social and cultural context from which we emerged. While this project aims to contextualize the social-psychological importance of LGB political affiliation, the ramifications on an institutional level are a fundamental reason as to why this area of research is important.
In the modern era of an ever ballooning and all inclusive LGBTTQQIAAP+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, Queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, ally, and pansexual plus) movement, initially defending my decision to observe only the variable of sexual orientation is important. My own area of interest, and the need for simplicity of vision demands that I only examine the LBG portions of the Queer coalition. This is in large part, again, because of the public’s rapidly changing opinions on issues exclusive to the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities. The legalization of same-sex marriage, and the first Republican president that is (somewhat) ambivalent to the gay and lesbian communities is also conducive to the specificity of my research. For the sake of simplicity, the terms gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and the abbreviated format “LBG”, will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis. The umbrella term “gay” may also refer to both men and women, but not bisexuals.

It's important to acknowledge that the the term “American” can apply to an enormous number of countries, ethnicities, and creeds. Also for simplicity, within this thesis the proper adjective ‘American’ refers exclusively subjects pertaining to the United States of America.

Research Question

In light of recent political events, the gay rights movement in the United States has moved into somewhat nebulous territory regarding its political trajectory. While it is common knowledge that the Democratic party considers the gay and lesbian polity to be a captured electorate, one would not be out of line to suggest that many of the factors that would lead a gay, lesbian or bisexual individual to align themselves to the Democratic Party are being challenged by the mainstream conservative movement.
Throughout the course of this essay, the primary topic of what determines party affiliation will be analyzed through the lens of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual liberation movement. In other words, is being gay, lesbian or bisexual the most powerful predictor of party affiliation?

In order to understand the framework in which gay and lesbian Americans select political parties, John Aldrich (1995) impresses the importance of an organized and cohesive political voting bloc. His foundational observations of the political behavior of the two major American parties provided an excellent backdrop from which to construct my own research. As Aldrich might put it, my area of research is pertinent to the future of the United States because the ever-changing elements that consist of the LGB’s political movement would likely have a serious impact on how the two major parties position themselves around issues important to LGB Americans themselves.

While collecting my qualitative data, applying the results of other researchers within the topic of party affiliation shaped my own thought process and hypothesis in many ways. There are some who speculate that, despite the racial, ethnic and religious differences that are likely to occur in the next 25 years, the underlying support for each party is unlikely to shift in any one significant direction (Kaufmann et. al). While these authors do show that the Democratic party will likely gain 3% of the total electorate by 2043, This piece stands in important contrast to select conservative pundits on the right who claim that Queer party affiliation is likely to shift to the right over the next several decades - as issues such as same-sex marriage and economic parity slowly rotate outside the realm of “reasonable debate”. This piece will inform particular
questions within my qualitative study, as I was enormously curious for respondents to elaborate on where they see partisan LGB politics headed.

Political Scientists love a fight: This research will be dominated by three ruling schools of thoughts within the realm of voter motivation and party affiliation. **Identity, socialization and rational and economic modeling.** The following thesis stacks all three perspectives up against each other, in order to see which best predicts party identification as it relates to LGB status.

**Literature Review**

Campbell et. al. (1960) holds claim to the idea that party affiliation is a facet of **identity.** If his research accurately applies to this topic, then a gay or lesbian American would align themselves with a particular party in large part because that particular political tendency was formed early in their lives. This intergenerational facet of party affiliation might still hold true for many gay and lesbian citizens. Gays and lesbians affiliate with X political party because **that is who they are.** The importance of early developmental socialization cannot be understated.

Anthony Downs’s 1957 economic model of voter participation espouses the belief that the political behavior of an individual is explained by **rational and economic modeling.** Downs believes that a rational voter will only express political action (and by proxy affiliation) if they feel that the issues at hand during an election cycle are salient to them personally. For a more nuanced approach, the Downsian perspective posits that a rational voter will essentially weigh the cost versus the perceived benefits of voting for a particular candidate or affiliating with a particular party. This concept is especially pertinent when contextualizing the importance of same-sex marriage - perhaps in contrast to the possibility of only having economic parity via
civil partnership or same-sex unions. This is an important perspective to take into consideration, as it is likely that there is at least a sizable portion of the gay and lesbian community that is more compelled to become politically active due to fiscal issues, rather than the more provocative (and ratings-grabbing) social justice movements that unquestioningly inhibit the modern narrative of LGB rights.

Niemi and Jennings (1981) famously found that socialization was the most critical element in determining a person’s political behavior. While these authors concede that the influence of parents is incredibly potent early on in the political development of an individual, the persuasion that parents wield decays as people move through early adulthood. This concept is critically applicable to the development of gay and lesbian politics, as the process of “self-selection” is in keeping with how one is socialized to feel about gay and lesbian lifestyles. This approach encapsulates a leading portion of my hypothesis, in that it is socialization among the gay and lesbian community that in large part acculturated people to affiliate with a political party (in this case the Democratic party). In plain terms, being socialized into the LGB community is a proxy for being socialized into the Democratic party.

Since the topic area of party affiliation is well-traversed terrain within political science, an interesting question to posit is which of the many schools of thought concerning party affiliation best explains why LGB people politically align the way that they do. Drawing from seminal thinkers of the 20th century, I attempted to position these schools of thought against each other as I moved into my quantitative and qualitative phases of this research.

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1 Egan, Patrick J. “Group Cohesion without Group Mobilization: The Case of Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals.”
A final primary goal was to gain a fuller and more empirically based understanding of the way LGB identity/community membership intersects with political partisanship.

**Identity**

One potential explanation as to why LGB people affiliate the way that they do is through an *identity* model (Campbell et al. 1960). Advocates of this approach believe that party affiliation is a facet of identity, and that the primary predictor of how someone will align themselves with a political party is in many ways determined from deeply personal experiences such as how one was raised, how politically zealous an individual's parents were, et cetera. A political identitarian may feel they are a Democrat/Republican because that is a *visceral* part of who they are. Surveying LGB people in particular, teasing out any political lineage from one’s upbringing was a foundational aspect of my qualitative research.

From a psychological perspective, the vehicle of identity being critical to the development of one's sense of political affiliation is accurate, and as such this perspective lends important insight to the impact of being associated with the LGB movement.

Identity is a complicated business however, and some Queer theorists bridle at the blatant depiction of a “solidly LGB” political voting bloc. In keeping with this approach is the clear distinction drawn between the different group identities *within* the gay community. However, the need for placing the differing struggles of the LGB community within a historical context (the AIDS crisis) lead to political unification. (Humphrey, 1999).

**Socialization**
The final seminal approach to party affiliation could be encapsulated by mainstream narratives such as the “it’s ok to be gay” campaign. Select scholars in 1965 put forward the belief that the processes of socialization that Americans experience in early-independent adulthood is the most important factor in determining party affiliation. (Jennings and Niemi, 1981). While it is almost universally conceded that an identity approach to party affiliation is highly influential early in a person's life, many contest that it is our formative years as young adults that ultimately instill political attitudes regarding the world around us. This research was incredibly persuasive in the formation of my own hypothesis, as it would seem that how a person is socialized about the gay and lesbian community is a key factor as to how that person will advocate for themselves politically. In plainer terms, how a person who experiences same-sex attraction is socialized into an attitude about the gay and lesbian community will be enormously impactful when that person ultimately decides to affiliates with a party.

In keeping with the socialization model, some political scientists have focused specifically on why the gay and lesbian movement is such a highly organized group, despite the conspicuous absence of an “intergenerational transmission” that exists within so many other policy groups and movement (Lewis, Rodgers, and Sherrill, 2011). One’s “gayness” is almost never inherited from members of his or her nuclear family. This stands in direct contrast to more traditionally organized groups, such as military veterans or self-identified feminists.

Results have aligned with the socialization model listed above in that the adult socialization of sexual identity and civic engagement were responsible for the surprisingly coordinated efforts of the LGB movement in the United States.
Rational and Economic Modeling

Drawing from foundational political thought of the 20th century, many believe that an individual's party affiliation can be best explained by a rational and economic model, rather than by a more “emotionalist-driven” message of social equality in the eyes of the law. (Downs 1957) If this perspective is to hold true, many LGB Americans were/still are more interested in economic equality. The Democratic Party, which was the first major party to include same-sex economic rights in its mainstream political platform, would have understandably been the party of choice for many gay and lesbian people during the gay civil rights era.²

The importance of financial issues that align smoothly with the mainstream Republican platform might prove to be an incredible draw for many gay and lesbian Americans. These issues could likely exists even outside the realm of economic parity within marriage, such as the overall tax rate, levels of government spending, or the government's role in society more broadly. With the rise of President Trump and the universal legality of same-sex marriage in the United States - the perspective of economic modeling was a deeply interesting area of thought to pursue within the semi-structured interviews of my qualitative research.

How thoroughly has the LGB community been ensnared by the dominant narrative of “social equality” in the years leading up to the legalization of same-sex marriage? An incredibly interesting element of the contemporary LGB community is that there exists a sizable number of gays who believe that economic and financial parity is the single most important aspect of the LGB movement.

² It is worth noting that the first openly gay candidate for president was Fred Carver, a Republican, in 2012.
In tandem with the above approach, additional authors have referenced the *exclusive* importance of healthcare and employee benefits to the political motivations of same-sex Americans (Schaffner and Senic, 2006). Again, it is quite possible that the importance of economic parity to many who supported the Democratic party was overshadowed by the more romantic and media savvy tagline of “equality in the name of love”. As I hope to interview respondents from an older-generation of LBG Americans, I suspect that many of them will impress the importance of financial equality over the more visible slogans of social equality - as perhaps these men and women felt they had little to prove to the “straight” world in terms of why they felt their love should be legitimately defended. Perhaps they were, and still are, only interested in their bottom financial line.

**The Psychology and Politics of Coming Out: The Patchwork of LGB Identity**

A key element of this project is the differentiation between same-sex attraction and actively identifying as LGB (Egan, 2012). As was referenced in the socialization portion of the literature review, the process by which a person comes to terms with his or her own same-sex attraction is critically important to how that person exercises his or her political efficacy. Egan provides an impressively solid structure from which to build my own hypothesis - which suggests that being gay or lesbian is the most powerful predictor in determining party affiliation.

Pulling from the psychological tradition, Vivian Cass’s 1979 landmark homosexual identity model has been truncated by certain sexual scholars into a dichotomy of “integrated” sexuality or “unintegrated” sexuality regarding one's identity (Johns and Probst, 2004). This
refreshingly simplified version of one's “trajectory of identity” is in clean alignment to much of
the work espoused by Egan. Fusing these two concepts through the lens of the Jennings and
Niemi socialization model has provided me with a sturdy psychopolitical framework.

**Fighting Amongst Ourselves**

It would be irresponsible to acknowledge the topic of gay and lesbian party affiliation
without mentioning the current climate of extreme polarization the United States is currently
enduring. Interestingly, the difference between a person’s ideological standing and his or her
party affiliation is shrinking (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2005). It would seem as though we live
in an era where being “liberal” is becoming more and more synonymous with being a
“Democrat” and vice versa with conservative/Republican. This was an important approach to
consider within my own project because the heart of my hypothesis posits that the process by
which someone comes to terms with their own same-sex attraction is an inherently “liberalizing”
process - which arguably could be considered a device of inculcation for the Democratic political
machine.

There is also the considerable dissonance within the broader LGBTQ+ community. Such
a formally recent, massive, and diverse community has sizable hurdles to overcome in the
coming years as they coordinate and debate the broader political goals of the community. Each
head of this newborn cerberus may be seeking different prey.

Conspicuously absent from much of this discussion is a more contemporary take on
where Queer identity is headed. The positions of radical Queer progressives should at the very
least be brought to my reader’s attention. Many within the realm of Queer Theory believe that
the distillation of the Queer identity into sheer political and pragmatic terms is not just problematic, it is egregious. (Jose Esteban Munoz, 2009).

The current political narrative of marriage equality and economic parity is denounced by many progressive Queer scholars as the “domestication of the Queer”. This narrative of progress is seen as perniciously taking away the “edginess” or “avant-garde” aspects of Queer culture in favor of a domesticated and heteronormative categorization of the gay and lesbian lifestyle. Indeed, many of these Queer thinkers espouse the belief that gay marriage is actually a hyper-conservative manifestation of the contemporary Queer body politic. Arbiters of this approach instead envision a “Queer Utopia” of sorts, in which every aspect of our lives has been transformed in large part due to the radical perspectives of Queer Theory. The end result for many radical gays and lesbians is not purely same-sex equality rights, it is a futuristic, dazzling city upon a hill.

While not the most valuable perspective within the confines of an objective political science project, it is important to take note of where the needle has shifted in recent years concerning the future of the Queer citizenry. The nuance of the recent and rapid partisan acquisition of the LGB community has manifested itself comprehensively in the qualitative portion of this project.

This Issue Matters

The above thinkers have constructed the skeleton of my research. It was through these perspectives that I pursued appropriate variables from the GSS data set - and more importantly it is from these great thinkers that I formulated my own questions to ask respondents during the
qualitative data collection. Many of the authors referenced above have unique and important insights as to the nature of my research. That said, is critical to note that there lies a sizable amount of nuance to be gleaned from the many sources and references that were not explicitly mentioned above. These perspectives were slowly illuminated as I began to collect qualitative data.

The topic of the Queer political trajectory is important to the field of political science because it is still in its infancy. The “Western” gay and lesbian voting bloc is an incredibly large, organized, diverse, and recent phenomenon. My research has ramifications not just for the United States, but for the numerous gay and lesbian liberation movements that are sure to follow throughout the rest of the world. It's critically important to note that the United States is radically far behind a number of countries on the issue of same-sex equality. However, as a contemporary example of importance, Australia’s parliament recently voted to legalize same-sex marriage. Understanding the behavior of this emerging group of politically involved human beings has global ramifications. Arguably, this thesis fills in another piece of the puzzle concerning the political trajectory of the entire planet.

Guiding Hypotheses

My original working hypotheses stemmed from a confluence of social science research. I integrated Gender Studies, Sociology, Psychology and Social Psychology, and of course Political Science into the following proposition: Gay and lesbian party affiliation is dependent on an individual having fully integrated their sexual identity into their political identity. In plainer
terms, yes - being gay or lesbian is a powerful predictor in terms of party affiliation - but that fact is dependent on a number of elements, the most crucial of which is the process of aligning one’s same-sex attraction to considering themselves gay. To be clear, a person does not need to consider themselves a “gay voter” in order for their orientation to influence their affiliation - but they need to view themselves as a gay, lesbian, or bisexual individual who believes they have political efficacy, and more importantly, agency.

How much or how little someone has fused their two identities is a difficult question to ask - which is why a qualitative approach to this project is so critical. The respondents themselves were highly introspective when it came to their LGB identity, but were often not as cognisant of their political behavior.

It is important to note that, of the three primary schools of thought referenced above concerning party affiliation, there is little question that all approaches hold water to various degrees. The nature of social science is to gather what best explains the human phenomena we are experiencing, and I suspect that the political socialization model most accurately explains the partisan decision making of LBG American citizens. However, it is my aspiration to explicitly detail how much or how little each school of thought contributes to the intricate inner-workings of this convoluted issue.

The social model is the best explanation for why LBG people affiliate the way that they do for a number of reasons. The profound psychological process of self-selecting into a community that was up until recently considered a pariah to mainstream politics has a profoundly homogenizing effect. An individual who exposes themselves to the emotional and arguably intellectual process that is “coming out” must experience seismic shifts in their sense of
political efficacy. In the case of the Queer community, the Democratic party is empirically attractive due to their now solid support for gay and lesbian couples to be allowed the privileges afforded by marriage.³

As qualitative data was collected throughout this project, it became clear that this hypothesis only explains a particular segment of the LGB population. This topic will be further explored in the Qualitative portion of this thesis.

Individual Selection / Data

An individual-oriented approach was the most appropriate format in studying this topic. Data-driven analysis is critical to dissecting party affiliation in the United States - as such, I utilized information from the GSS (General Social Survey) data set to provide a backdrop on LGB status on party allegiance from which to construct my research. An independent variable of sexual orientation run against partisanship was the foundational model of this entire approach.

Fortunately, the topic of party affiliation is a well-worn path thanks to our intellectual predecessors. In particular, the most common control variables concerning party affiliation were utilized: marital status, religious affiliation, age, educational attainment by year, the sex of the respondent, the respondent’s income, a dependant variable of the respondent’s political

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³ Sociological data, and common sense, imply the existence of a large number of people who experience same-sex attraction but do not understand themselves as gay, or even bisexual (this may in part be explained by the concept of a solidly formed identity - as mentioned above). As such, these people’s “gayness” would not influence their political affiliation. The stereotypical and tawdry example is the socially conservative politician who is “outed” in a sex scandal involving someone of the same-sex. Although the political data concerning closeted homosexual people would surely be an enormously fascinating addition to my thesis, the methods of collecting such information are ethically dubious, and I could not even conceive of a safe and scholarly format from which to find, let alone interview, closeted homosexuals. As such, data on people who don't consider themselves gay despite experiencing same-sex attraction will not be handled in this project.
affiliation, and finally an independent variable of sexual orientation. A full appendix to these variables is available at the conclusion of this thesis.4

This project handled the data collected through a mixed-methods approach, as both regression analysis and semi-structured interviews were equal aspects of this study.

It is important to clarify that these data are drawn from the most recent statistics available for numerous reasons. As mentioned in the literature review section of this project, the volatile and ongoing nature of LGB politics demands the most recent information possible. The public attitudes on gay and lesbian Americans have shifted so rapidly in the past 20 years that there is no excuse for me to reference data that is ten, or even five years old. Ten short years ago we saw the Democratic party internally struggling to find unity on the issue of same-sex marriage. According to the Pew Research Center, 2011 was the first year in which support for same-sex marriage outstripped opposition, at 46% of Americans in favor against a 45% opposition. Lastly, as the nature of my qualitative research involves living, breathing gay and lesbian people who have lived through this incredible period of seismic political change, only the most recent data available will render the results of the project valid.

These explanations having been put forward, there is a certain depth of understanding that is crucial in order to understand the political thought process of LGB Americans - this insight could only be gleaned from “semi-structured” interviews that afforded the level of detail that is critical in order to understand what might cause someone to affiliate with a particular party. I asked a highly diverse pool of 10 openly gay participants about the political climate they

4 It's important to note the seismic changes that have occurred throughout my thesis process concerning the quantitative analysis portion of my project, as I originally intended on utilizing the ANES data set, but some of the initial variables in the GSS database had to be tweaked so that they represented exclusively numeric values. Additionally, certain variables that appeared in the earlier forms of this draft were removed due to the fact that data was not gathered on these variables during this most recent election cycle.
were raised in (both nationally and at home), the importance they place on economic parity vs. social parity, and the influence they experienced from external social factors as they move(d) through early adulthood. I was also extremely successful in asking participants about their own personal trajectory of the “coming out” process - and how that influenced their political behavior and decision making. The results were fascinating.

From there, it was my desire to obtain insightful life “stories” that inform the results I had drawn from my quantitative analysis. I was highly motivated to frame many of my own questions through the three primary schools of thought mentioned above concerning party affiliation. Additional questions such as how members of one’s community reacted to the respondent coming out, be it positive or negative, were especially crucial to testing my original hypothesis.

Anecdotally, a point of interest among many political (usually younger) sophisticates is the role of the homosexual within modern conservatism. Provocateurs such as Milo Yiannopoulos have demanded significant media attention in their “radically gay” approach to mainstream conservatism, and increasingly the up and coming right-wing movement known as “the alt right”. Within the confines of my qualitative research, gathering opinions on the more radical, visible, and reactionary members of the LGB community was a point of sizable interest, as these particular gadflies were likely to provoke any number of meaningful responses. Additionally, respondents will likely be asked to expand on their feelings toward the conservative establishment LGB group known as the Log Cabin Republicans.

The aim of this research was to interview 10 openly LGB people from various backgrounds about some of their deeply held political beliefs. I was successful. The gay citizenry
is a rare and intriguing political subgroup in that it consists of, quite literally, every walk of life. This fact underlied the importance of interviewing a diverse pool of participants that vary in age, gender, education, income - and perhaps most importantly, political orientation.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

For the Data-analysis portion of this project, variables from the General Social Survey (GSS) data archive were collected and run into three different regression models that attempt to explain the impact of sexual orientation on partisanship and party affiliation. The third model was then divided into two cohorts based on age. Below is a model examining the relationship between partisanship and LGB status, without accounting for other variables. It is clear there is a correlation between partisanship and LGB status:
In order to really examine the relationship between LGB status and party affiliation, variables that other researchers have found to be significant in party affiliation must be examined. These variables include age, educational attainment, gender, religiosity, income, and marital status. While the variables representing religious affiliation and income were originally
included, their statistical significance within the context was minimal. The catch-all “religious”
variable was plainly too dimensional - as tolerance levels to homosexual behavior varied
amongst different denominations. Income merely served as a mirror variable for educational
attainment, so that was also excluded. Marital status however quickly proved to be a unique and
somewhat problematic variable in relationship to LGB politics for a number of reasons, which
will be further explained after the third and final regression.
Unsurprisingly, the variables of educational attainment, gender, and marriage were significant predictors of partisanship. Again, existing research demonstrates that, the more educated an individual is, the more likely that person is to be politically liberal. Nuance within this variable is important (i.e. a Business major is more likely to be conservative than an Art History major) but the hard and fast rule is that higher education is typically liberalizing. In that same vein - women are simply more likely to lean left on a contemporary and traditional political spectrum, but the wealth that typically accompanies marriage indicates an increasingly
conservative approach to politics. The importance of model 2 lies in its established explanations, the political magic happens when you run a full model with all variables stacked up against each other:

While the above regression contradicts the starting hypothesis of this project, the absence of an influential LGB variable is more telling that is it dismissing. Yes, when placed in conjunction with the partisan indicators of established literature, the significance of same-sex
attraction vanishes - but these finding suggest that there exists intricate connections between a person’s same-sex attraction and the other traditional, partisan-measuring variables. With that in mind, these models still suggest that there is a correlation between partisanship and LGB identity, but that other variables, not LGB status, cause partisanship. These results also suggest that the political identity of gay, lesbian, or bisexual people has been static for the past two decades. However, the variable of marriage in particular is rather telling for a number of reasons - which will be touched on in the Qualitative portion of this project.

I interacted age with LGB status in an attempt to find meaningful significance of LGB status on partisanship, and for respondents under 40, there was. A full analysis for why this might be the case can also be found in the qualitative portion of this project.
Since the above dichotomy is too massive and diverse to draw more meaningful conclusions - the exact same model was run with the binary resting on age 35 (roughly the oldest of the millennials), and a more accurate cutoff point was revealed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 4 Respondents under 40</th>
<th>Model 5 Respondents 40 and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>-0.81761* (0.39650)</td>
<td>-0.47355 (0.51425)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.038 (0.021)</td>
<td>-0.05* (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.29 (0.156)</td>
<td>-0.32 (0.177)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.171 (0.165)</td>
<td>0.306 (0.178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married – other</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Ordinary Least Squares regression
Note: *p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01
With this in mind, the findings that one’s status as a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person is mostly unimportant to party affiliation more broadly is not an entirely unexpected finding. However, the above models fail to provide a comprehensive explanation of LGB partisan affiliation. The political nuance here may only be obtained by pounding the pavement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 6 Respondents Under 35</th>
<th>Model 7 Respondents Over 35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>-0.922* (0.432)</td>
<td>-0.511 (0.456)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.015 (0.025)</td>
<td>-0.063 (0.196)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.175 (0.173)</td>
<td>-0.40 (0.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.06 (0.188)</td>
<td>0.304 (0.161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married – other</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ordinary Least Squares regression
Note: *p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01
Qualitative Data Analysis

The process of collecting and analyzing data about people who experience same-sex attraction is problematic for a number of different reasons. As Patrick Eagan forcefully denotes, the stark differences in how a gay individual perceives their own political identity is heavily dependent on the selection process into the LGB community. In addition, the complexity and diversity of LGB networks suggests a wide possible range of political beliefs, despite the stereotype of the loose and liberal gay person.

There are also several interpersonal elements that could affect any researcher’s results. The concept of being “out”, often belies a person's overall comfort level with discussing their own sexuality and personal experiences. There is obviously a marked difference in what information people are willing to volunteer about their political beliefs, and what they choose to share about their own personal relationship with their sexuality.

There are also the personal characteristics of the interview itself. Classic “in-group, out-group” dynamics of psychology could apply to the interview experience, i.e. being interviewed by a heterosexual researcher potentially affects the quality of the data collected from LGB participants. The decision to openly acknowledge my own orientation as gay was made in the attempt to help participants be more comfortable with the process of talking about such divisive issues as politics and sexual orientation.

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5 Tajfel and Turner, 1986
Qualitative Methodology

All aspects of this study were approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB) of the University of Colorado at Boulder. All interviews conducted took place from mid February to early March. For the sake of political equity, I believed it was important to collect qualitative data from a diverse set of subjects - in particular subjects with varied political backgrounds. As such, interviews were conducted inside and outside the Boulder area. A majority of subjects were white - though several gay people of color were interviewed. The racial composition of my subject pool is appropriate given the demographics of Colorado.

Subjects for this study were found through snowball sampling. Interviews were recorded and transcribed anonymously. All names used are pseudonyms.

Again, It's also important to note the impact my own position as a research had on the quality of the data collected as well. I began the interview by explaining that I myself was a member of the gay community - and while this surely altered the data I was given. I fiercely believe that it was the most appropriate form of action to take, as I myself would personally respond to the above questions quite differently if I were asked them by a heterosexual researcher.

Location & Logistics

Almost every interview was done in an enclosed - private room. Only individuals who were comfortable discussing this topic openly in public were recorded in public spaces. A number of participants were interviewed in their own homes or workspaces. As the topic of both politics and sexual orientation have potentially powerful emotional baggage, a space that was not only private but soundproof was required in order for my interview to take place.
The interview themselves were conducted over the course of 30 to 60 minutes, with the longest being just over an hour. Questions ranged from conversational and innocuous (When you hear the word politics, what do you think of/what images enter your mind?) to the more politically charged and personal, (ex. Who did you vote for in the last election? Describe your process of coming out?)

As the interview process was “semi-structured” in nature, the following questions were used as a sturdy framework - and were asked of all participants. While I did reserve the right to “go off script” and probe for information that was pertinent to or informed my thesis, these questions provoked the vast majority of my qualitative data.6

Armed with said questions, I collected the following qualitative data, and organized the findings into three major, formal frameworks before diving deeper into the infinite morass of Queer politics.

Data Organization

I used elements of grounded research theory (see Glaser and Strauss 1967 and Charmaz 2001, 2006) to analyze the data collected through semi structured interviewing. My approach allowed theoretical ideas or concepts to develop from the data (i.e., respondents’ narratives) throughout the course of the study. The resulting theoretical offering can be applied to any marginalized group and, to some degree, to all groups who must mediate stigmatized identities.

I organized, coded, and analyzed the data using colored pencils, highlighters, pens, pencils, and pastels. Through interactive readings of the transcripts, I developed themes based on

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6 The full list of which is located in the appendix portion of this thesis.
the topics raised in the respondents’ narratives. For example, the theme of “identity” (color coded as blue) appeared in all narratives collected.

**The Identity Model**

Perhaps the most profound and controversial finding of the *The American Voter* (1960) was that most Americans seem to be casting their vote based on their party alignment. Within the gay and lesbian media narrative however, it is easy to locate numerous anecdotes that tell stories of an LGB youth whose sexuality was met with anger, and even fear from their loved ones and close friends. While there is little doubt that stories such as these are true - the impact of an identitarian model of partisanship is profoundly more influential than people realize.

This portion of my Qualitative research was most thoroughly rooted out by the rather direct question: *Did your parents talk about politics at home/watch political news at night? Were they politically involved/informed? Grandparents? Siblings?*

Participants in this study were also asked to further expand upon their childhood and adolescent upbringings - with the added twist that they should try to remember any *early political cues* from their parents, sibling, and grandparents. As I was asking an already diverse pool of participants about their political upbringing, I initially suspected that my qualitative data on identitarian partisanship would be scattered and convoluted, and it seemed that I was correct at first as I moved through the interviewing process. However, it soon became clear that the LGB lifetime narrative carries with it differing experiences that are **unique to that generation**. Age is a variable that is impossible to overlook when one is examining LGB political decision making.
The Contours of Age

Drawing a distinction between politics and partisanship was not a theme that I foresaw prior to the interview process, however, the following findings suggest that the time period in which a gay person was raised is the most critical factor as to how that gay person expresses his or her political beliefs. Three gay “Baby Boomers”, or people who were born prior to 1964, were members of my sample, and how they were socialized into political attitudes during their youth could not be more different than by today's standards:

Did your parents talk about politics?

“No, they assumed I was Republican. I grew up in a rural town back East, let me tell you exactly how much was going on...(she shakes her head)Once when I was a young girl I remember asking my mother “who do you think Jesus is? And I got silence - and they had been dragging me to church for 19 years and my mom just said “well we just never thought to question”. That was the same approach they had on politics, and my parents were born in 1907 and 1909 and... “toe the party line” was the sense I got. I remember once I was 8 or 9 when JFK was running - in the other major town near us he was having a parade and I remember thinking, at age 8: “well i’m not going because I am a Republican.” -Clarissa, 68

While having unforgivingly political parents is not unique to this particular generation, this research suggests that the impact of early parsitan socialization for gays and lesbians didn't just reinforce partisan beliefs, it calcified the relationship between citizen and party. While the above subject did ultimately realign to the Democratic party, it look literal decades to undo the shared identity that had been so deeply ingrained within their psyche.

Another baby boomer, a man in his late 60s - commented on how he thinks his father’s absence from an early age may have impacted his partisanship”

Did your family talk about politics?

“They were not politically involved but they were always informed, they would watch the nightly news. My mother was a Democrat but my Dad flipped sides. I remember both my parents liked Kennedy and I myself still like what LBJ did - but when Nixon came along that is when the arguments really started between my father and I...there was the war (Vietnam) and my Dad did
go to war, he was in three wars actually. But when he went away that's when my two sister and my mother and I moved to Puerto Rico (his mother was fully Puerto Rican) and I remember getting politically involved when I was down there - ya know, going to anti-war demonstrations and what have you with my aunt. This would have been in 69 and 70...It helped me become more of a Democrat if that makes any sense at all...It was such a volatile time.” -Peter, 67

This gay man in particular became a lifelong Democrat. Noteworthy of the oldest generation studied, one's sexual orientation was conspicuously absent when respondents came of “political age” and began expressing political beliefs for the first time in their lives. This case holds steady on both liberal and conservative sides of the ideological spectrum.

Also noteworthy is the fact that gayness in and of itself hadn't even been named in some circumstances in post-WWII United States:

Describe your process of coming out.

That's really funny you say that because I feel like I haven’t, I dated men when I was younger - there were no words for same-sex relationships, there wasn't even the word gay, maybe in New York City but not where I was. It wasn't on the news and it wasn't...I mean...my Grandmother hated Catholics the way people hate blacks so it's a far piece to gay people. Because Catholics drank...and I (forcefully) HATED labels because in the tiny town I grew up in everyone was ready to label you whether you wanted it or not so I rejected the label of lesbian as I got older. I didn't want to be called anything - not gay, not even straight. Clarissa, 68

A common theme that surfaced with the older respondents was that nobody in their communities growing up even had the language to deal with homosexual attraction and relationships. The climate of homophobia was so extreme and so normalized that the very language that one must be equipped with in order to even discuss this topic was absent. This fact alone is powerful evidence that the existence of gay and lesbian people in post WWII United States was far, far removed from partisan politics.

When asked more directly whether or not baby-boomer respondents connected their sexual orientation to their political identity - one fiercely partisan Republican man responded: “No! It never played a role before I came out and it really hasn't played a role since. It's just one of the many things I am. You know -
I'm a college educated person with three degrees. I'm a retired Army colonel...I'm a brother, I was a son, but I never came out to either of my parents - I think they knew but that wasn't anything that I felt they needed to know.” - Dave, 65

These findings suggest that the intolerant climate of one of the United States’ most economically prosperous eras lead people to straightforwardly disassociate their partisan identity from their sexual preference. One could speculate that the political machines of the industrial era certainly retained lingering vestiges of their influence prior to the collapse of politically organized labor. People of the Baby Boomer generation simply did not question, challenge, or critique the identity based party platforms on which they were raised.

It's also worth noting that the parents of the three oldest research participants varied on the spectrum of “politically inclined”. Some were militant partisans, while others were indifferent and compliant. Neither position indicated that gayness was disapproved of by both parties to differing degrees. Being gay wasn't “bipartisanly frowned upon”, it just wasn't partisan at all.
As models 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate - one's gayness does not impact one’s partisan affiliation after a certain age, however - throughout the process of collecting qualitative data on gay people in their 40s (the oft forgotten “Generation X”), there was a creeping sensation that, during their upbringings gay identity wasn't necessarily partisan, but it wasn't exactly apartisan either. Data on gay members of generation X (1961-81) suggest that the historical significance of the AIDS crisis in tandem with the advent of a politically potent religious right wing (“the moral majority”) is when sexual orientation became an issue of partisan importance. With that in mind - the identity model still explains the political behavior of gays and lesbians who are now moving through their 40s and beyond, but there are flashes of what I coin as “glimmers of socialization” that in essence hint at the future impact the socialization model would have on gay millennials today.

“Honestly, I don't even know what my parents were growing up, I never paid any attention - but in today’s terms they are Democrats. They are now both always cussing and waving their fists when Trump was on, but when I was growing up I mean...(pauses) pardon my French but it's just really fucked up these days..I don’t think (my) coming out ever impacted my politics back then. I guess to the world I came out after high school, and it was just - back in Grand Junction back at that time...the people out there (laughs). Big blond girl and big huge trucks and big guns the whole deal - a lot of crazy shit. So I couldn't wait to graduate and be myself and move away. It wasn't strategic it was just how I felt at that time because I couldn't hide anymore and it just wasn't worth the energy to pretend that I was something else...which is exhausting. -Lee, 48

While it would be unacademic to ignore the salience of growing up in a rural community - the above sentiment was echoed in almost all of the gen X-ers I interviewed. A surfacing theme of this generation was existing in limbo, a liminal state, in the ether. A time when the collective
gay and lesbian citizenry was taking a clumsy, and incredibly tragic turn into an involved, competence, and organized political entity.

Another gay man in his 60s was able to offer his own explanation for why the AIDS crisis unforeseeably galvanized not gay men but women:

“(back then)...it was a lot more dichotomised, the gays (men) did not mix with the lesbians per-se and it was rare if you were a gay man and you had a lot of lesbian friends - like we would even go downtown (Denver) to the gay bars and there would be no straight people and no women...I want to say things started to change in the early 80, but it didn't really formalize until the late 80s. So probably around the AIDS crisis, 81 and 82 is when the impetus started coming, and I knew a lot of gay men who ended up being positive, and the lesbian community stepped up, big time. In that whole process they became a lot of the caregivers and a lot of the "hey this isn't right politically, we need answers from our government!"

- Why the lesbians?

“Because the lesbians historically have been a voice in terms of politics, whereas the gay community (men) weren't so much. I think lesbians were just more interested in trying to change things. I think gay men were also interested in trying to change things but they were much more comfortable being themselves...gay men were in these relationships with women - they were closeted and so when they could escape that and go to these clubs and have fun but still be upstanding members of their communities.” - Kennen, 60

The historical importance of the AIDS crisis in the United States cannot be understated. The carnage wrought by the sexually transmitted HIV was so publicly visible and so tragic on the most primal human level that the American public “had no real choice” but to allow gay and lesbian men and women a respected and legitimate political voice. A voice that was eventually fused into the platform of the political entity known as the Democratic Party.

The AIDS crisis is salient to the modern LGB political presence, and it's easy to forget that the LGBT+ coalition was never that: a coalition. The harboring of same-sex attraction was only really expressed to one’s own sex - and while there is still a credible argument to be made that gay men and lesbians still self-segregate rather drastically in modern society, there is empirically no doubt that the differences within the LGB(T) coalition do not manifest themselves
in a partisan manner. The disagreements are in private, within the hard-earned privacy of the massive Democratic party platform.

Given the above, one subject in particular proved to be an interesting case study on how important parental socialization is in spite of the historical realignment:

- Did your parents talk about politics at home?

  “Yes! they talked about politics every night at dinner...well, almost every night at dinner we would talk about politics. And my dad, ya know - he was one of those old Southern Democrats, so back when Democrats... my dad was a bigot and he was horrible but he was still a Democrat because he believed they took care of poor people and the downtrodden, so it was not about race at all for him - it was about the poor - and it was absolutely class based - so we talked about it a lot then as I moved out my own I moved away from politics for a long time.

  (But) Argument was an art form, and so he would bait me, and then I would bait him - and my poor mother (there were just three of us) would say to me “why did you have to bring up politics, you know what that does to your father” and then we’d get into this whole political debate about slavery and, ya know, the powers of the president or the states. I mean we would light up - we’d take two bites of food and he would look at me and... I knew what was coming.”

  -Jane Ellen, 45

Fascinatingly, when this person finally “returned” to politics, her ideological standing as a gay women coincidentally aligned with her “capital D” Democratic upbringing inherited from her “bigot” father, in large part due to the realignment the parties themselves were experiencing during the 60s and early 70s.

However, as was evidenced by Dave in the previous section - I suggest that, had the party platforms remained static throughout the 1960s that this person would simply be an openly lesbian Republican women. The most poignant detail of generation X is the turbulent historical context from which they came of age.

The contemporary climate of hyperpartisan politics I believe frequently overshadows the sheer upheaval that the American political tradition was experiencing during the 60s and 70s. Gay millenials are privileged in a unique way; the two previous generations of LGB Americans
literally died horrible deaths before the gays and lesbians finally sieged their way into the U.S. body politic.

One last item that is worth noting is simply how generation X respondents were much more likely to have a notable sense of where their sexual orientation fit into their own internal identity pecking order:

**Do you see yourself as being politically motivated because of your sexuality?**

“I think my sexuality is so far down my identity hierarchy that I would like to say that it doesn’t really influence my decisions...I’m a parent, I’m an academic, I’m a pet-owner, I’m an environmentalist, **I am many things before I am a lesbian.**” Jane Ellen, 45

Generation X respondents existed in a “liminal, in-between” state when confronted with their sexual politics. The three people from this generation that I spoke with all had a very firm grip on their sexual orientations and how that fit into their identity. Interestingly none of them seemed particularly motivated to combine their gayness with their politics, though they seemed completely comfortable with the idea that other gay people (particularly younger gay people) might feel differently.

**Knowing is Half the Battle.**

As both qualitative and quantitative data was categorized into an identity-based framework, it immediately became clear that the partisan behavior of gay, lesbian, and bisexual millennials could be accounted for in ways unique to the youngest generation of American adults. What was so telling about millennial respondents was they there is simply a presence of mind that exists at early ages that was simply not present in the older generations:

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7 Not to be confused with *awkward.*
Did your family talk about politics at home?

“...I also had an older brother but he was never very political. I remember once in high school he had a report that he had to do and it was on George W. and Gore - and I pretty much ended up doing it for him - you know, high school dudes (laughs). But it was interesting because I remember some teenage girl magazine like Elle - there was a big section on the presidency coming up. They had a chart - blue and red, that just described each side - like major issues and where each candidate was on those issues, it was either Elle Magazine or Cosmo Girls or something like that. And the blue side of the chart didn’t mention any of the things that my Dad had told me about Democrats and Gore.” - Holly, 28

Did your family talk about politics?

“I would say that both of my parents identify as Republicans and I would say that they are not informed at all - I would say that they are only informed on the issues they care about. Yeah and that for me is unrelatable. The issues they care about are not the same issues that I care about, so. Um.

- Where are you all originally from?

Both of my parents are from the South... I’m a Registered Republican I believe, but I would say that I am more often than not a right sided-liberal - definitely with some influences from my family. I think it was based off of the information I heard growing up - I will say that I do stand for a lot of things that the Republican party has - like their positions on immigration and everything. Based off of what my family does say about the economy I think it would be fair to say that I am actually right wing on the economy. A fiscal conservative but a social liberal absolutely.” - James, 19

Quite plainly, there is an active cognisance concerning Millennials and their parents’ political influence on their lives that was not present in the gays I interviewed who were older than 35(Table X). The question ‘What makes millennials so special?’ is a colossal one, but one obvious refrain from any academic would be technology. Millennials have had unprecedented access to the planets collective information - and while the current controversy over fake news is a clear indicator that there is plenty of misinformation out there, the simple fact alone that scared and lonely teenagers can find solidarity and community outside of their proximal nuclear relationships could be enough to explain why “The Gayest Generation” is so mindful of the political environments from which we spring.
The identity model is further weakened in young LGB Americans as the popularity of both parties in the United States continues to decline, as denoted as early as 1985 by Stephen Craig, the “neutrality hypothesis” suggests that people are not becoming less interested in politics, they are simply become disenchanted by political parties themselves. In order for the identity model to operate in the first place, there needs to be a strong foundation of zealous partisans in your immediate family. If young Americans are increasingly disenchanted with the current two-party system then it is increasingly unlikely that one would fuse his or her party ID with the more intimate aspects of their identity.

The identity framework of this study suggests that the identity model is enormously influential on LGB American citizens, but the salient caveat is age. If the above findings are accurate - public attitude and opinion on the LGB movement has changed so quickly that a social scientist need only to examine three different generations of gay Americans to survey the marked differences in partisan identity integration.

The Socialization Model

What do you do with an identity that isn't passed down from generation to generation? Niemi and Jennings challenged *The American Voter*'s assertion that the family was the sole most important agent of political socialization. While considerable credit is afforded to parental influence on a general scholarly basis, Niemi and Jennings put forward the argument that the critical years after one moves away from home and begins to interact with the political world around them autonomously are significantly more influential than the academic consensus had been acknowledging. These years in particular are often enormously critical for young LGB
adults, and thus the interesting question of how adult socialization and LGB status intermingle politically is born.

The dime-a-dozen stories surrounding this line of thought are numerous - “a young adult moves away from home and goes to college, only to return to their parents’ horror, with newfound ‘deviant’ political principles.” The trope has many flavors, but the “homosexual socialization” version of the narrative isn't just commonplace, it is pernicious. The anecdotes about ‘the daughter who went away to college and came back a man-hating lesbian’ belie the importance and sincerity these years have on young gay adults. As such, the years of early adult socialization impact people not just on an introspective level, but on an external, behavioral, and political one as well.

Respondents were able to shed light on their process of “coming into their own” politically. Crucially, I did not directly ask respondents to tie in their sexual orientation to their political behavior until the very end of the interview - as to gauge whether or not they made that connection themselves. The following data references how LGB people monitored their own political trajectories as they move(ed) through young adulthood.

**Bucking Partisanship**

In stunningly clear contrast to the qualitative data collected from older gay people, the identity based socialization of parents upon millennial LGB is noticeably weaker. On young homosexuals, the parental impact upon partisanship has slowly eroded over the past several decades. Three questions in particular regularly prompted reactions on how adult socialization has impacted people's lives: Do you talk about politics with your friends? How interested are you
in politics? In addition to their reaction to a statement claiming that there would be a rise in the number of LGB Republicans now that same-sex marriage has been obtained. The topic of early adult socialization was brought up by a number of different questions depending on the individual.

One college age participant distilled a theme that was recurring with many of the younger subjects:

How interested are you in politics?

“Um, increasingly so - especially during these past several years through college and now in grad school I’m thinking about it a bit more and my own involvement...Gosh, I don’t know I think perhaps because college is when I really started thinking about these things and college was really when I was able to come into my identity and fully embody it and embrace it, and now I’m fully comfortable with it and I’m doing even more - as much as I can at this point so who knows there might be a correlation there.” - Kai, 24

Due to the lack of an intergenerational transmission, homosexuality is a trait that causes individuals to be uniquely vulnerable to the socialization model espoused by Niemi and Jennings, the crucial differentiation rests upon age. Again the historical significance is the major factor when determining the impact and importance of the socialization model. As the U.S. citizenry attunes itself to the idea that gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are actual human beings, the political impact of an individual that is self-selecting into the LGB community is being amplified. In the case of the modern two-party system, gay millenials are more likely than straight millenials to “buck” their parents partisan label and join Democratic due to the political salience that LGB identity now harbors.

The additional troupe of “the gay child of fierce conservatives” did manifest itself from two of my respondents. While both had the presence of mind to reference the influence their
conservative upbringing had on their current ideological beliefs, the supreme importance of their LGB status and other social issues proved to be too persuasive - and their parents failed to preclude their children from “joining the wrong side”.

- Do you connect your atheism to your politics?
  “(having been raised in Colorado Springs)...as years went on I became more libertarian in my ideals. I interestingly, originally was a history major. I used to be one of those “the south was right! Let them secede!” those kind of people. If that makes any kind idea as to where I was politically. I was a very states rights Republican. - almost like every state should be like it's own country.

- Then what?
  “And then in 2012, I came out as pansexual, pansexual meaning sexual attraction to any kind of gender identity or expression. And I kind of had a political shift to the libertarian... I knew I was not straight since like the 5th or 6th grade-ish, I never actually came out until after high school because I went to a super religious, conservative high school...yeah I was like “if I come out now I’m going to be bullied for the rest of my life” so it was after high school...So over the years I shifted from libertarian to democratic socialist, not full socialist because full socialism is like ‘the government controls everything’ whereas Democratic Socialist, which is where I stand now after watching all this stuff and coming here (to CU).”

  Chandler, 21

The importance that millennials place on actually communicating their sexual orientation with their parents is worthy of mention as well. As was referenced previously, the very language of sexual orientation was simply not available for people to understand and process. Older gay people I spoke to had critical moments of socialization as they moved into their early 20s as well, but the “specter of homosexuality” was simply never summoned like it was it millenials:

“I honestly can't even tell you if I voted in my 20s because I was so clueless, but I was against the war and Kent State. I went to a very tiny Presbyterian college and I was bored all the time...but I went to Europe for a semester once and I met all of these Americans from other states... and that's when I really started to expand my scope of political knowledge. We went to Northern Ireland during the Troubles and it just blew me away to see these 19 year old boys in military Jeeps with loaded weapons. That was the first time in my life when I was like, “oh my god, war”. - Clarissa, 68
Put plainly, this was par for the course with the older LGB people that were interviewed. Their experiences as young adults were no more or less “political” per se, but their socializing experiences existed completely outside the realm of anything related to their sexual orientation.

“The first thing that I did was register to vote. Then I also registered for the draft at that point in time too. I was not in favor of the war - I can’t say that I was anti-draft but I was anti-war. I remember sitting with my buddies around the TV and we were all glued to the screen when they were making the lottery drawings, there was nothing about that war that was ok.” - Peter, 67

Despite being gay, the gravitas of the issues of the time in tandem with the general public's inability to hold a neutral discussion about sexual orientation lead this man, along with the two others I interviewed in his generation, to simply socialize into political maturity like heterosexuals. The obvious lack of authentic and healthy gay media figures only served as a cue to the masses that anything gay was simply not serious, not legitimate, and not worthy of genuine political attention. It's not that gay people couldn't be political, but political people just couldn't be gay.

**Rational and Economic Model**

Anthony Down’s seminal 1952 *Economic Theory of Democracy* gifted Political Science with a unique non-normative approach to voter behavior. Examining an LGB individual exclusively as a self-interested and rational unit gave an important approach to the questions asked of research participants. What made this framework unique was the multitude of financial dimensions surrounding institutionalised same-sex marriage. As was previously mentioned, a major goal of this thesis was to collect data that informed the future of the LGB political coalition -particularly as it pertained to fiscal conservatism. As economic and financial parity
were leading arguments in favor of gay civil rights, the attainment of such benefits leads to questions concerning the future of the fiscally conservative wing of the LGB coalition.

As was mirrored in the previous two frameworks, the influence of a respondent’s age proved to be extremely influential. A truism in political science is that people generally become more fiscally conservative as they age through life. Indeed, as LGB people grow older - their relationship to their finances shift as well. Prior to gathering field data, I expected the older gays and lesbians I interviewed to have identical and celebratory sentiments on the topic of same-sex marriage, unforseen was the thorough disinterest in “official” same-sex marriage that respondents over 35 seemed to harbor.

“I mean...I don’t believe that, we got married because we have an adopted son and we wanted to make things easy should something happen to one of us so he would get our social security and so on. So it was more for economic reasons than legal (social). You know, I don't need a piece of paper to determine who I love...I don't need that. I did it more for the ease of things as things started happening as we got older. Harriss and I just celebrated our 25th this past Sunday. And that I consider as the official day...even though we were married nov 25 of 2015.”  - Peter, 67

It would be inaccurate to say that being recognized as equal citizens in the eyes of the government was and is unimportant to older gay people, but what is under acknowledged is the personal importance that gay people may not place on statutory same-sex marriage.

One particularly emboldened respondent in his 40s named this quite explicitly after he was done cutting my hair. He blurted out (as I was paying for the expensive haircut) “Do you really think we needed a bunch of straight white boys who used to look like you to tell us who we get to share our lives with? No honey, sorry” but winked and then recommend I start using brown eyeshadow to fill in the weak patches on what he called “my so called beard”.
Poignant, but salient. The narrative of the Queer Struggle is often uncharitably distilled and bottled for the straight masses in a way that makes the conflict relatable and human (or not so much, depending on what flavor of media you consume), While there is obvious political importance to seizing the public's attention and subsequently reforge their collective opinion to favor of your cause, many older gays and lesbians were already disillusioned with the litigious, flowery, technical, and bureaucratic struggle for civil equality.

One could name this phenomenon with any number of arbitrary labels: indifferent, jaded, deflated, traumatised, defeated, enraged or even exhausted. From my own data however older gays and lesbians simply don't care what straight society thinks of them in a way that stands in direct contrast to younger gays. One man put it beautifully, "(we are) just, over it.". Older generations have not just accepted that they didn't need societies recognition to love who they love, they feel confident enough to share that fact with anyone who is willing to ask.

A humorous, but stark reality of what gay marriage can ultimately result in was brought to my attention by one older women:

- You haven’t connected your status as an LGB person to your politics, do you have a guess as to why that might be?

  "Well... dude. When everyone was celebrating gay marriage in 2014 - that was about the same time that I was getting a divorce from a woman - we had a ceremony and everything but it wasn’t (gestures with air quotes) official. If we would have gotten married I would have been fucked because then she would have had access to half of my money. She...her first question (when they were sorting out custody of their children) was like “well what about Clarissa’s inheritance?” And i’m like (exasperated) “my parents aren’t dead AND we’re NOT married!!” I lost a lot of money on this women, my parents even ended up paying for her Masters degree. So when everyone was like RA RA RA gay marriage I was like woah make sure you idiots are making the right decisions! Ha!" - Clarissa, 68
Again, a lot of the data collected from older LGB people represented a more realistic and pragmatic perspective on life. Sure, legal gay marriage is important, but sometimes all the red tape just gets in the way.

Particularly interesting results also concerned the ambiguity and openness that young LGB people seem to have toward financial and economic issues. Every gay millennial, save for one, conceded that “fiscal conservatism” as they defined it, was easily within the realm of reasonable debate. Following are a collection of just a few comments from millenials on monetary importance, as well as critiques on how they view government spending today:

“I would not say I’m that interested (in politics) but I do actively pursuit advocacy for groups of people, marginalized people. I listen to politics but I would never get into a debate with someone over the economy” James, 19

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• What do you think of the Republican Party?

“I think the Republican party used to be good. I have no problem with libertarianism - let people get married and whatever and they also stay out of money issues - they stay out of the market that kind of thing - we can have debates. I feel more inclined to have debates over the whole monetary situation. In the 80s when Ronald Reagan brought the religious right into the Republican party the Republican party died immediately. Because I’m a staunch atheist, and I am hugely against any kind of government and religion mixing at all. So I feel like the Republican party has moved so far in the way of the original Progressive party in the 19teens with their ‘superior morality!’ and ‘we need to regulate morality!’ and ‘we need to make sure everybody is Christian!’...the Ted Cruzes of the world.”

• Are there Republicans you like or trust?

“People in congress like Ron Paul, Rand Paul - who I would say are proper Republicans - they are more pure Republicans. So I’d like to see a shift in the Republican party more toward libertarian ideals and away from the religious right. It’s like, I can handle the fight for the money issues - let’s have a debate about that. But there is really no debate to be had about stuff like civil rights and gay marriage. There is really no debate to be had there.” - Chandler, 21

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“I think that liberals will focus a lot of social matters and I think that Republicans focus a lot on fiscal matters and I think that if you want to come to some sort of conclusion you need to hear everyone’s side.” - Tucker, 21
“Have you heard about this military parade that he (Trump) wants to put on? Like what the actual hell is that, no- bad idea. He’s spending so much money on a military parade just to kind of show off, and those dollars can obviously be much better spent.” Holly, 28

**Gendered Biopolitics and Homosexuality**

Traditional gender roles are, by definition, not practiced by same-sex couples in the same manner as their heterosexual counterparts. That said, the same biological constraints and limitations of humanity still apply. Gay men are significantly less likely than lesbians and bisexual women to have their own biological children, particularly amongst LGB adolescents - where bisexual and lesbian women are carrying teen pregnancies to term at twice the rates of their heterosexual peers. To a casual observer, it may seem puzzling that people who are attracted to the same-sex are managing to have children at all, but again - this two dimensional perspective of human sexuality is problematic.

Diamond (2008) put forth the explanation that women are simply more *fluid* in their sexual orientations. Gay men’s sexuality is much more likely to be fixed and static, while women - young gay women in particular, are engaging in sexual activity that is less prescriptive regarding the embodied

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gender of their sexual partners (Diamond, 2008) More “indiscriminate”\textsuperscript{9} sexual activity means more opposite sex-intercourse, which consequently amplifies the likelihood of conception.

Raising children is an expensive and time consuming investment, one that undoubtedly makes climbing the corporate ladder that much more difficult. While the discussion around the fluidity of human sexuality is an active and lively one, gays with children could be described as artifact of their biology, rather than “life decisions” or their “sexual appetites”.

As it does with heterosexuals, the financial status of gay men and women varies by gender. Gay male couples hold the highest rates of annual income over the rest of the LGBT coalition, as depicted in the accompanying graph.

Sociological literature firmly suggests that wealth and marriage are deeply interconnected. People of higher socioeconomic statuses are likely to not only get married, but stay married\textsuperscript{10}. The financial benefits of marriage, particularly before children enter the household, are so stark that the topic of marriage is rapidly becoming an issue of economic inequality. Interestingly, this same dynamic is easily applicable to the gay and lesbian community, who are not only less likely to get married overall, but have simply been denied the right to marry (and all economic benefits that accompany it) up until very recently.

In keeping with broad sociopolitical consensus, there was a substantial difference in how male and female participants ranked financial and economic importance in their lives. Overwhelmingly, men were more likely to bring up the importance of personal economic

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\textsuperscript{9} NOT to be confused with promiscuous


wellbeing as it related to their outlook on government. Not only was the economy invoked more passionately by men than by women, it was simply brought up *unprompted* more often.

The tangled nature of the rational and economic model as it relates to gays and lesbians is one of the reasons the Downsian perspective on partisanship was the least *clearly* informative approach in this study. These findings fail to suggest that gays and lesbians are not *generally* motivated to act politically on behalf of their economic interests. Frustratingly, a sizable amount of research still needs to be done on the convoluted relationships between LGB partisan behavior and economic salience. With respect to these findings, the valuable data lies after you control for both gender and age.

I also couldn't help but speculate with particular interest given to the white men I interviewed, who seemed not just warm to the “fiscal wing” of the Republican party, but eager to join it. The only inconvenience for many of them was the fact that The limited results from this project suggest that if the Republican party were to collectively decide to move past the issue of gay and lesbian civil rights, a sizable piece of the LGB demographic could be lured away from the Democratic Base.
“Have you Seen That Picture Where He Held up the Flag?”

An enthralling aspect of talking politics with people one on one with the assurance of confidentiality is that you often gain access to their opinion - raw and unedited. Few topics are as incendiary within the typical body politic as President Donald Trump, and his recent mandate banning transgender individuals from serving in the armed forces certainly soured his relationship with the “T” portion of the LGBT coalition. Interestingly, the opinions of the gay and lesbian individuals who participated in this study were enormously diverse, despite the vast majority claiming to have voted for Clinton in the most previous election.

This question was particularly revealing when I asked participants to trace their feelings on President Trump during his actual 2016 campaign. Results show that LGB people’s take on the contemporary 2018 Trump compared to what they witnessed two years ago during his ascension is incredibly telling. The accompanying image was recognized by every individual I interviewed as being noteworthy at the very least:

The political explanations for why Trump's relationship with the LGB community has soured over the course of his first term in office are numerous and accurate - but the more interesting Queer observations from my respondents were the most insightful and informing as it pertains to the gay body politic.¹¹

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¹¹ A point of personal privilege: throughout the process of writing this thesis, every heterosexual family member, friend, associate, professor, or carbon based life form in my life had either never seen the above image, or didn't fully understand or appreciate why it could be interpreted as such a nonpartisan historic occasion.
Unsurprisingly, President Trump was met with immediate reactions (often nonverbally) from participants when asked rather directly: *What do you think of President Trump?* Following is data pulled from self-identified Democrats in my:

“All...Alright - with the trans military ban, I don't think he did that because he hates Trans people. I think he did that because before he was under a huge amount of scrutiny from the scandals...Russia, the Comey thing, I think he does that just to get people talking about different stuff”

- Chandler, 21

Refreshingly, people did feel comfortable sharing the few things that they actually liked about our Commander in Chief, and most even admitted to never saying these things out loud:

After being asked the Trump question, one young women even said, “Wow, I've just never been asked that so bluntly before...one on one.” Which serves as direct and explicit evidence as to why this specific qualitative approach is so valuable. Here was an unexpected comment from a die-hard Hillary supporter:

- (as a followup) Do you think Trump is smart?

“Ok (significant pause) I think Trump is cunning...he's smart enough to get what he wants. And I mean oh my god what the hell is actually going on. He did it, you have to give him some credit for that, he pulled it off!” - Holly, 28

Queers of Color

It would be a colossal disservice to the gay men and women of color that I interviewed not mention the impact of race upon their decision making as LGB individuals. All participants I interviewed were incredibly upfront about how they viewed their sexuality in relationship to
their ethnic identity, and I appreciated that. I would be seriously undermining the complexity of
race upon the LGB community by attempting to address the depth of this issue alone. I was
especially fortunate to come across a Queer of color who provided unprompted insight as to the

ggradation of their marginalized identities:

- Clarify that for me.

“I think it's easier to hide being gay than it is to hide being a woman or a person of
color, and I think that there are a lot more passing privileges with being gay or straight or bi.
A lot of my rage... politically comes from seeing black men lynched in front of a happy mob of
white people smiling like idiots. And women... I grew up with women. And like, the gay thing just
wasn't talked about.

(Pause) Yeah, I guess it was pretty traumatic to come out as gay... or to realize that I was
gay. But then after the fact - everybody accepted me. (shrugs) I was never really bullied. I’m also
confident so I think people respected me enough to not really mess with me -i’m also big, ya
know?”

- Big? You think that had a lot to do with your coming our process?

“Well ya, whos gonna fuck with a big black dude over some tiny little effeminate white
boy...plus I played football, I played sports - a lot of my close friends are straight men and so I
really respect straight men and their sexuality. There is this whole gay fantasy about turning
straight men and making them sleep with you because masculinity is so idolized - and ive never
had that urge, i've never wanted to put them in a position where i’m hitting on them and they're
uncomfortable. Not because of my effeminacy, i’m pretty effeminate. (Pauses) It’s like I just
understand the relationship and boundaries, and I get along with straight men a little bit better
sometimes, gay men are kind of catty.”

- You think?

“Yeah, which comes from like internalized homophobia and internalized trauma that
straight men just don't have because of their privilege.
I also think i’m sort of steeped in my Dads personality, like - I don't try to avoid
confrontation. I’m a very straight shooter and I don't get offended easily, im not afraid of
confrontation, but if I DO feel like I need to confront someone or I feel unsafe in some way... I
don't get offended easily, like (pauses) if someone says tranny or transvestite instead of
transgender I don't fly off the handle and call them a gay basher or ignorant or whatever I just
go “hey just so you know the correct terminology is XYZ” and then I move on with my day.”

- Bring it back to race, you were headed there.

“Sometimes I think white queers, hold their queerness - they clutch onto it because
that’s the one thing that separates them from hegemonic society and so that’s the one thing that
there really dead set on protecting so if someone encroaches on their privilege as white people
too, I think informs their need for being safe and their need for feeling that one marginalized
identity needs to be protected. So if anyone encroaches on that then...ya know.”

- Does this apply to people who are still in the closet?
“Only to out gay people. I think that out white queers are people who have felt the sting of hegemonic society but have also been steep in white privilege so they feel the need to have a certain sense of salient identity that should be respected. SO when people devalue their sense of respectability they lash out, because their privileged. **White people are very “I’m pan-demi-sexual-whatever and you are going to respect that gender!”** They feel that they are entitled to my being and my identity but you should know all the ins and outs of their identity.”

- And so does none that apply to people of color as well?

“**Where as black queers and queers of color are juggling that really..... and I feel like certain marginalized identities should never have to teach people these things - like I don't think that black people should have to teach white people anything. Because I think that black pain in this country is worse than the pain of queer people, you know like... queers people were not rounded up and taken from some island and shacked and put to work.**

At this point, I had to interrupt

- I mean they have been killed

*There may have been harassment and murders of gay people, that is uncontested.*

*But. The stitching of black pain into the fabric of our society is more rooted and more deep. Like black people really built this country - **like literally on our backs** we built this (gestures around) whereas... Queers have definitely been killed and murdered but their pain hasn't been woven into the fabric of our society.”* - Tucker, 22.
Truth: The Importance of the Queer Journey: The Importance of Self-Selection

As is uncommon for political science honors theses, this study was heavily qualitative in nature - in the name of academic integrity it is necessary and pertinent to inject some of my own anecdotal experiences as I was moving through my process of data collection. And I must immediately thank the 10 complete strangers who were open and willing to discuss an incredibly intimate (let alone political) part of their lives.
The significance of paying 20 dollars to research participants was also not lost on me. While I expected to include a note as to how the financial incentive might have affected my sample. *A small majority of respondents refused to take my money.* I was honored and touched by the genuine appreciation that these respondents had. Many invited me into their own homes or workplaces, and all of the respondents aged 35+ mentioned their genuine appreciation that someone was showing interest in a aspect of their lives they had previously considered inconsequential, imperfect, and unimportant.

A Queer community was revealed to me, and not through the often forced and pedantic LGBT organizations/support groups/communities/dating apps that now so permeate most of the developed western world. I found a community of gay people unrelated and unconnected to each other, but united by their shared human experiences. United so intimately, and with such great depth, that the 50-something preceding pages this sentence will never, and should never, do them justice.

In particular, I was enthralled by the early political anecdotes from my older respondents, partly because these gay and lesbian Americans witnessed “the era of same-sex marriage equality” unfold in front of their eyes. These accounts are also telling because the recollections of their early political memories *supply insight to the potential political trajectory of young, closeted Americans today.*

While it is difficult to specifically measure the impact of the recent amplified LGB media presence on people who harbor same-sex attraction, I suspect closeted individuals are more likely to be socialized into self-selecting due to a recent but enormously influential infrastructure of socialization: the internet. Answers, and life-changing information is only a few clicks away
for the confused, lonely, and fearful closeted people all around the world. Information that was not available or accessible for the vast majority of human history. Our species is constrained and bound by technology. But we finally seem to be overcoming some critical communication barriers. At least you can still catch a strong wifi signal from the closet.

I know myself that I am politically active because I came of age during a time when it felt as though, a prerequisite to being a “good” gay American was to be a “political” gay American. Selfishly, i’m fiercely proud of the fact that I know this project has already spread hope to the lives of other people. Often not “on the record”, and thus absent from this academic paper, are the conversations that followed my interviews. Ironically, the very nature of my questions prompted extended interrogations by more than half of my respondents after I had stopped recording. The questions asked took many different forms: “What have other gay people said? Is my story unique? How many other people have you talked to? Are there a lot of other gay conservatives?”. But as someone who has experienced firsthand the pain that is concomitant to being gay, all I could hear was: “Am I alone?”. The answer is no, and I can prove it:

“I am.... actually still in the closet to some people but not to others... I know it's weird.”

It's actually very common, a lot of the people I have spoken to stagger the people they come out to. Including myself.

“Really? Wow...thank you, that makes me feel... a lot better about it”.

I never undertook this project with the impression that I was out to “change the world” by any stretch of imagination. But what I also didn't expect was the very real, and very meaningful human interaction I was blessed with while collecting such authentic and genuine data. A lot of

12 Virtuous, just, fair, and most important of all, “dignified”
gay people, some of them our family, friends, and relatives, are trying as hard as they possibly
can to find the truth in themselves. We have a visceral need to share the excruciating anguish that
has so consumed us for years. For many, politics is the answer.

The seminal work of Patrick Eagan is a cornerstone of this study. The process of
politically self-selecting into a sexual and political community is immensely consequential.
Coming out is important, not because it's cool, not because it's brave, not because it's “personal”,
and not because it's socially acceptable. It's important because it helps other human beings who
are struggling - really struggling - to make sense of their place on this planet.

It's important because it's the right thing to do. Same-sex attraction is an enormously
personal thing, yes. But the personal is political.

Full Circle

So what next? While one can only speculate on how Queer futurity will unfold, I myself
suspect the answer lies in one of the last things an older participant mentioned to me:

“...You know - things are different now for our son, he's 17 now and initially he dealt
with stuff about having two dad and now it’s...just ok. All his friends are good with it, he's good
with it. It's never an issue, never an issue! And it's never been an issue with anyone here in this
cul-de-sac, and we moved here in 92! We have never had any sort of pushback or snide
remarks. That's the way it should be.”

- What exactly had your son been through if you don't mind me asking?
  “He’s not very open, he never really shares a lot - especially a teenager. I understand he
  has some struggles - but I think most of that was self-imposed... you know - with shame and stuff
  like, “how is everyone going to treat me when they know I have 2 dads”” and “they are going to
  ask, where is my mom”

  ...I would say since the age of 10 he's been ok with it. When he has friends over at the
  house his friends can see that there is no judgement on their behalf about ___’s parents. It's
  okay, it's all going to be ok” - Peter, 67
In a Hobbesian state of nature, homosexuality is not political. For most of The United State’s history, homosexuality was political, but nonpartisan. Now it's ostensibly both. How long do we have to wait? How long do we have to wait until being gay is neither political nor partisan? Maybe all we need to do is wait for Generation Z to tell us the answer.

As E.E. Cummings would put it: truth is here

Conclusions

Despite the linguistic miasma that often accompanies Qualitative conclusions, these findings are actually quite clear. The original proposition of “socialization is the most important model for predicting how Queer’s vote” was naive in it's narrowness. Again, age proved to be the most influential variable for both the qualitative and quantitative approaches of this thesis.

The identity model commands an impressive amount of influence over early political socialization, and for LGB people over the age of 35 it is predictor of partisan affiliation. As one grows older, the more your past becomes who you are. Regardless of the partisan environment from which a gay or lesbian person older than 35 sprang, that person is most likely to align themselves with the partisan environment they held growing up. The sole stipulation being the absence of politically informed or particularly zealous and partisan parents.

The socialization model failed to support the partisan behavior LGB people as a whole. However - the Millennial generation has proven to react uniquely to the model of adult partisan socialization. If one is young, and has self-selected into the Queer community, then that individuals political future is particularly impressionable to early-adulthood partisan socialization in favor of progressive ideals.
Quality data on the actual impact of rational and economic issues proved difficult to tease out in isolation. Deeply tangled in a multitude of social stratifications and biopolitical constraints, the Downsian perspective failed to overpower the previous two models in its predictive power. That said, these results indicate immense complexity within the Downsian perspective. Complexity that is unique to certain subgroups: the L,G, and B all have different financial priorities, and are also entangled within the layers of one's personal and biological identity.

While thankful and glad for same-sex marriage. The bureaucratic, pragmatic, tiring struggle for equality actually dampened the symbolic importance of same-sex marriage for the oldest generation interviewed. White male respondents, particularly Millennials, seemed eager to engage in financial discussion and debate from a multitude of ideological angles, which is cleanly in keeping with SES data on gay men and women.

Based off of these findings I also predict that as homosexuality is more normalized within society, the American LGBT political coalition will teeter. It is unlikely to be a dramatic ideological schism based stemming from one event, but a gradual siphoning of people who understand themselves to be “fiscal conservatives first and foremost” to the Republican party. This shift has been, is now, and will consist mostly of white gay men at first. As the Republican party quite literally “ages past” their nonsensical annoyance of Queer existence.
Opportunities for Future Research

This branch of American political science demands more study, on every possible level. There are no limitations on what can be done with this thesis model, because political scientists don’t believe in limitations. While this project is substantiated in established literature, my own nuanced and detailed qualitative data from LGB Americans pushes the frontier of American political thought, and the scope of broader political wisdom and insight more broadly. This thesis enriches the American Political Tradition, which, for all of its flaws, is a colossal influence on the rest of the planet. This American community is governed by politics, but this American life is governed by partisanship.

The immediate and proximal importance of this issue should not be news to the anyone reading these words. Queer people across the planet are **ARE BEING MURDERED** for being just that, Queer. A cliche and a truism - but the best way to combat hate and ignorance is with accurate information, which this thesis provides. Reading and understanding real human context against the salient backdrop of politics should be universally communicated and shared.

The frameworks put forward in this thesis -particularly the socialization and identity models, will prove to be easily replicated if applied to a broader audience.

During the convoluted nature of quantifying religious affiliation, it became clear to me that the topic of LGB people in relationship to their religious communities was dramatically more complicated than any one research alone could handle. Much more research political impact of religion upon Queer partisanship.

Queer people of color and Queer conservatives are an egregiously underrepresented sample from the data that is available. The colossal influence of Queer people, not just as
politically active citizens, but as an economic force to be reckoned with will surely be a source for fascinating information. As the above data demonstrates, the gay and lesbian lived experience may be easily told through any color lens: Blue, or Red.

Most importantly, this thesis further inform us of the complexity of the human condition. The bluntness of this original hypothesis did not factor in the intricate texture that better explains group behavior. It's worth revisiting the original research question of this project in order to fully appreciate the depth of my findings. The originally inadequate inquiry of: “Is same-sex attraction the most influential predictor of partisan behavior?” Belies the span that the human experience embodies. Outside of arbitrary and socially assigned labels, the data I’ve gathered speaks to a universal facet of the human condition. The words you just read raw, fresh, and real. Straight from the source: a private space in a massive library, endless cornfields of the Midwest circa 1960, a socialite salon in the affluent Rocky Mountains, a quiet cul-de-sac free of
hate. This project doesn't just “address the psychopolitical behavior of gay American citizens”, it speaks to a very old, and a very human struggle. A visceral, teetering, and imperfect struggle towards community.
Variable Appendix & Semi-structured Interview Script
(GSS)

- **ballot** - which ballot was used for the survey
- **id** - respondents ID number for the survey
- **year** - the year the survey was asked
- **marital** - the marital status of the respondent
- **relig** - religious preference of the respondent
- **age** - age of respondent (NOT the year of birth)
- **educ** - highest level of education completed by the respondent (in years)
- **sex** - respondents sex
- **rincome** - the income of the individual respondent (NOT total family income)
- **partyid** - political party affiliation, if any, of the respondent
- **sexornt** - if answered, the sexual orientation of the respondent

- *When you hear the word politics, what do you first think of/what images enter your mind?*
- *Do you believe that your voice, vote and political actions matter? (why or why not)?*
- *Did your parents talk about politics at home/watch political news at night/involved/informed/active?*
- *How interested are you in politics?*
- *Do you talk about politics with your friends?*
- *Are you affiliated with a political party, and what was the thought process that went into that decision? (ask for history here)*
- *To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement - the following statement - “Now that marriage equality has been institutionalized by the Supreme Court, the number of LGB identified Republicans will increase.*
- *What do you think of President Trump?*
- *What do you think of the Republican Party*
- *What comes to mind immediately when I say the following names: Anderson Cooper, Milo Yiannopoulos, Rachel Maddow, Vice President Mike Pence.*
  - **Anderson** -
  - **Milo** -
  - **Rachel** -
  - **Vice President Pence** -
- *Describe your own process of understanding politics throughout your life, and upbringing*
- Did you vote in the 2016 presidential election.
- Have you ever felt pressured into voting for a particular person or political party?
- Describe your process of coming out. (At my discretion)

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**Visual Credit**

Ashley Mackenzie & Henri Matisse

Thank you.