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Politics and Context: Public Opinion, Representation, and Group Consciousness

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

by

Andrew Ryan Flores

March 2015

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Martin Johnson, Committee Co-Chairperson
Professor Karthick Ramakrishnan, Committee Co-Chairperson
Professor Benjamin G. Bishin

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The Dissertation of Andrew Ryan Flores is approved:

Committee Co-Chairperson

Committee Co-Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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To my mom, whom I hope to always make proud.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Politics and Context: Public Opinion, Representation, and Group Consciousness

by

Andrew Ryan Flores

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Political Science

University of California, Riverside, March 2015

Professor Martin Johnson, Co-Chairperson

Professor Karthick Ramakrishnan, Co-Chairperson

Situational contexts vary substantially across the country. This variation provides conditions where a subset of the American public may be exposed to situations that others are not. How do contexts affect the politics of minority groups? In this dissertation, I examine how the politics of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people are situated by differing contexts across the United States. I examine how LGB presence affects and conditions the approval for LGB rights of the mass public. I examine the mechanism this influence bears on representative behavior in Congress. I finally examine how varying contexts uniquely affects some LGB people over others. In total, I find that varying contexts situate the political positions of LGB people differently. This results in unique conditions where LGB people are politically influential and cohesive.

Contents

List of Figures	ix
List of Tables	xi
1 Introduction	1
1.1 The Case of Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals	6
1.2 Theoretical Conundrums	13
1.3 A Road Map	15
2 Reexamining Context and Same-Sex Marriage: The Effect of Demography on Public Support for Same-Sex Relationship Recognition	17
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Contact or Context?	21
2.3 Data and Methods	24
2.3.1 Dependent Variable	24
2.3.2 Explanatory Variable	26
2.3.3 Data Analysis	27
2.4 Results	29
2.5 Discussion	37
2.6 Appendix	39
2.6.1 A. Selection Effects and District-Level Covariates	39
2.6.2 B. Summary Statistics of Variables	42
3 Conditional Contextual Contact and Threat: How Gay People Affect the Opinions People Have	43
3.1 Introduction	45
3.2 Contact/Context and Perception	48
3.3 Data and Methods	51
3.3.1 Dependent Variable	52
3.3.2 Explanatory Variable	53
3.3.3 Data Analysis	55

3.4	Results	57
3.5	Discussion	66
4	How Do Subconstituents Matter? Unpacking Demography and Constituent Opinion on the Representation of LGBT People	71
4.1	Introduction	73
4.2	Symbolic and Substantive Representation	77
4.3	Analytical Strategy	80
4.4	Study 1: 110th Session of the U.S. House of Representatives	84
4.4.1	Results	84
4.5	Study 2: 112th Session of the U.S. House of Representatives	89
4.5.1	Results	90
4.6	Discussion	94
4.7	Appendix: MRP for Congressional Districts	97
5	Controversy and Consciousness: Examining the Conditions and Mechanisms that Elevate Group Consciousness	102
5.1	Abstract	103
5.2	Introduction	104
5.3	A Theory of Controversy and Consciousness	107
5.4	Data and Methods	109
5.4.1	Exogenous Controversy: The Case of Chick-fil-a	109
5.4.2	Dependent Variable	112
5.4.3	Mediating Variable	114
5.4.4	Data Analysis	115
5.5	Results	116
5.6	Sensitivity Analyses and Robustness Checks	119
5.7	The Effect of Group Consciousness on Political Behavior	123
5.8	Discussion	125
5.9	Appendix	128
5.9.1	A. Re-Analysis using Only the Second Wave	128
6	Conclusions	133
6.1	Research Questions and Answers	133
6.2	Implications	137
6.2.1	Context, Contact, or What?	138
6.2.2	The Representation of Minority Groups	138
6.2.3	Group Cohesion and Political Threat	140
6.3	Identity Politics and Political Change	140
	Bibliography	142

List of Figures

1.1	Simulated probability of pro-LGBT rights opinions based on the results of Gaines and Garand (2010)	9
1.2	Simulated probability of pro-LGBT rights opinions based on the results of Dyck and Pearson-Merkowitz (2012)	12
2.1	Regression results from the sequential logit analysis, points are the estimated median with the line segments representing the 95% uncertainty interval (if there is no line segment, it is covered by the point)	31
2.2	The relationship between the LGB percentage in legislative districts and the estimated median of the random intercept of congressional districts. A semi-parametric regression line is fit to facilitate in understanding the relationship.	33
2.3	Average linear prediction of the individual level covariates, varying only the district effect in each state for each model, gray lines are 20 simulations to represent uncertainty in the estimate; the top-left panel is the district with the smallest LGB population and the remaining represent quantiles to the district with the largest LGB population	35
2.4	Average effect of LGB population holding the individual covariates at their means and the district covariates at their median income and ideology, with twenty simulations to represent uncertainty in the estimate	36
3.1	The percentage of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals (LGBs) by Congressional District for the 110th session of Congress. Estimates range from 1.4% to 16.6% of the Congressional District.	54
3.2	Regression results from a multilevel logistic regression with varying intercepts, varying slopes, and cross-level interactions, the results were computed in R (v. 3.0.2), packages arm (v. 1.6-10) and lme4 (v. 1.0-4), and the segments represent 95% credible intervals	59

3.3	The effect of LGB population density in a Congressional District by individual demographic characteristics averaging over all other covariates, darker lines are the average prediction and the lighter lines represent 20 simulations. The solid line is the probability in favor of relationship recognition versus all else, and the dashed line is the probability in favor of same-sex marriage versus civil unions. The colors represent different, comparable subgroups with the orange/blue text identifying the orange/blue lines.	62
4.1	3 Latent classes that characterize the voting patterns of legislators in 110th House on LGBT-related bills.	86
4.2	Latent classes that characterize the voting patterns of legislators in the 112th House on LBGT-related bills	91
4.3	MRP Estimates for the 110th U.S. House of Representative Congressional Districts	100
4.4	MRP Estimates for the 112th U.S. House of Representative Congressional Districts	101
5.1	LGBTs in the sample are geo-coded by zip code. The size of the circle represents the number of observations in a single zip code. The color of the circle indicates how far respondents in that zip code are from Chick-fil-a. . .	111
5.2	Analytical diagram from log-distance from Chick-Fil-A to group consciousness	115
5.3	Average Direct Effect (ADE), Mediation Effect (ACME), and Total Effect of the distance from Chick-fil-a on Group Consciousness.	118
5.4	Google Trends data mapping information searching on Chick-fil-a over time and by metropolitan areas (similar to Metropolitan Statistical Areas). Trends are also plotted for urban centers and the national average.	131
5.5	Logo TV viewership by Chick-fil-a patronage from market research data is plotted against time to indicate the trend in Chick-fil-a consumers of these viewers. The dashed lines indicate the average viewership of Logo TV. . . .	132

List of Tables

2.1	Effect of low concentrations of LGBs in districts to high concentrations on support for relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples, after matching on district ideology (DW-NOMINATE), percent of the population that resides in urban portions of the district, and median income of the district. Each column varies the cut-point determining low and high concentrated districts. Estimate is the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT). . . .	42
2.2	Summary statistics at the data and district level used in the models	42
3.1	Summary of findings by demographic category and whether the result indicates intergroup contact or context in support (\checkmark), rejection (x), or no relation (-)	67
4.1	Elements of Subconstituency Politics	78
4.2	Summary Statistics for Covariates in this Analysis	83
4.3	LGBT-Related Bills in the 110th Congressional Session for the House of Representatives	85
4.4	Mediation Regression and Multinomial Logistic Regression Results. Predicting class membership relative to being in the “Non-Supporters” group. . . .	88
4.5	Decomposing the Effect of Subconstituency Size	89
4.6	LGBT-Related Bills in the 108th Congressional Session for the House of Representatives	90
4.7	Mediation Regression and Multinomial Logistic Regression Results. Predicting class membership relative to being in the “Non-Supporters” group. . . .	93
4.8	Decomposing the Effect of Subconstituency Size	94
4.9	Summary of constituent and legislative characteristics by classification	98
5.1	Question wording and factor loadings for the measurement of Group Consciousness. Standard errors are in parentheses.	113
5.2	Question wording and factor loadings for the measurement of LGBT Media Consumption. Standard errors are in parentheses.	114

5.3	Causal effects of the logarithm of distance from Chick-fil-A on Group Consciousness. The direct effect is all other potential mechanisms, and the mediation effect is the specified mechanism through Media Consumption. . . .	117
5.4	Logistic regression predicting whether respondents cited “Corporate support (e.g., recent Chick-fil-a controversy)” as an LGBT issue that is important to them, standard errors are in the parentheses.	123
5.5	Effect of the log-distance through Group Consciousness (mediation) and all other mechanisms (direct) on differing measures of political behavior.	126
5.6	The effect of the log-distance from Chick-fil-a through Media Consumption (Mediation) and all other mechanisms (Direct) on Group Consciousness using only the survey data from the second wave.	129
5.7	The effect of the log-distance from Chick-fil-a through Group Consciousness (Mediation) and all other mechanisms (Direct) on political behaviors using only the survey data from the second wave.	130

Chapter 1

Introduction

“The motivating thesis of this book is simply stated: the political opinions and behavior of individuals cannot be explained apart from the environments within which they occur.” Huckfeldt (1986, p. 1)

People are products of their social and political environments, and their interactions with the political process are conditioned by those environments. This set of studies examines the extent to which social and political environments shape the attitudes, opinions, and opportunities for representation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, and whether these environments help structure group consciousness among LGBT people. Sexual and gender minorities make up a very small proportion of the populace (Gates 2011). Given their socially undesirable status throughout American history (D’Emilio 1983), the democratic process has been tested by the extent to which LGBT people are offered the same rights and privileges as are provided to other minority groups. If social and political environments help structure the legitimacy of the rights of sexual and gender minorities (Barclay & Flores 2014, Kreitzer, Hamilton & Tolbert 2014), then how

do LGBT people influence that environment?

A person's political environment may be drawn differently. At times, cities or municipalities are the focus of the political environment. For current purposes, the bulk of my analyses relies on congressional districts as the boundaries of the political environment. The choice in congressional district is twofold: (1) it directly links social and political contexts, constituent opinion, and representative behavior in the U.S. House of Representatives; and (2) though geographically varied, legislative districts are of approximately the same amount of people, guaranteeing variation across the entire country. Previous studies of contextual environments and politics have been squarely urban (e.g., Berelson, Lazarsfeld & McPhee 1954, Bailey 1999, Huckfeldt 1986). This leaves out the rural experience (Walsh 2012), which may also truncate some of the existing variation across the varieties of political environments.

It remains unresolved whether the presence of minorities facilitates in people having attitudes and opinions that are in favor of those minorities. In his seminal work, V.O. Key observed that diversity in the South actually increased antagonism toward racial minorities as opposed to greater acceptance. He found that county contexts actually hindered affirming the rights of minorities, and it fostered the passage of policies that would subjugate African-Americans. In his findings, Key observed that diversity induced threat and more restrictive policies in most Southern states. Since then, scholars have unpacked the way diversity may facilitate in both more restrictive political attitudes and policy outcomes.

These studies started with white attitudes toward African Americans in the South and across the entire country. A consistent finding was that greater population densi-

ties of African-Americans generated greater intergroup threat toward African-Americans and rights toward them. Racial threat on white attitudes from the presence of African-Americans has been a major factor in contemporary understandings of racism in America (Aberbach & Walker 1973, Bobo 1983, Edsall & Edsall 1992, Glaser 1994, Glaser 2003, Welch et al. 2001, Taylor 2000). Issues may even be exploited by linking white racial animus toward African-Americans and social policy or a politicians' electoral gain (Gilens 1999, Mendelberg 2001).

The exploitation of issues by coded “racial frames” may be an expression hegemonic political “whiteness” (Hosang 2010). California’s history of ballot initiatives regarding racial and ethnic exclusion (e.g., immigration policy, bilingual education, and fair housing) relegated minorities as subject to a dominant norm. It is when these norms are challenged that race and racism are reconstructed. Social conditions outside the American context also show that the *same* groups in *different* environments may be allies or enemies (Posner 2004). The framework regarding when and how differences matter, however, should not be considered solely in the contours of race. A hegemonic political order may be construed as white, male, and heterosexual. The categories that are granted privilege in contemporary American society. I explore the role of sexual orientation.

The logic underlying intergroup threat is that information processing and cognitive limits encourage people to create categories. These categories are also reinforced by structural factors that facilitate in the creation and stability of these categories (King & Smith 2005, Ngai 2004, Omi & Winant 1994). Classifications facilitate in assimilative processes to create coherent social structures fostering intragroup cohesion. At the same time,

this process generates difference, and any realized difference becomes a threat to cognitive and social structures underpinning one's understanding of the world (Tajfel 1969).

Differences are not always present or salient at all points in time. In African elections for example, racial differences become much more salient during elections, which govern the allocation of resources to *groups* (Eifert, Miguel & Posner 2010). It has also been shown that people in a political environment with an influx of Latinos occurring contemporaneously with national attention to the issue of immigration induces attitudes that are more restrictive on immigration-related policies than if these conditions were not present (Hopkins 2010). While social and political institutions facilitate in the creation and maintenance of difference, they are seldom sufficient to induce threat. There must be conditions present in the social and political environments. Particularly, the minority must be present in a context for group difference to be realized.

Minority presence may induce threat. In a unique field experiment, Enos (2014) randomized whether Spanish-speaking Latinos were present at train station docks over a series of days. The treatment was to have these Spanish-speaking Latinos engage in conversations with each other as confederates to the study. The train station was comprised of a homogeneous group of white business people on their daily commutes. The manipulation negatively affected the attitudes of these people when asked their opinions on immigration policy. Their attitudes were much more restrictive. Since most studies on intergroup contact is observational and subject to selection bias, the ability to randomize minority group exposure identifies a causal effect of intergroup threat.

However, all of this literature lies in stark contrast to what is known to oper-

ate among individuals who have interactions with outgroup members. The seminal work of Gordon Allport (1979) on the reduction of prejudice serves as a stark contrast to the expected outcomes of intergroup interactions. At its core, Allport seeks to explain why and how intergroup prejudices are reduced. His theory relies on interpersonal interactions among group members that facilitates in learning and understanding. The process reduces differences among group members, which helps them notice their similarities. It is in this humanizing process that prejudice is reduced.

The contact hypothesis has been examined in observational and experimental studies. In their meta-analysis, Pettigrew & Tropp (2006) evaluate hundreds of studies and find overwhelming support for the effects of interpersonal contact on the reduction of prejudice (see also Pettigrew & Tropp 2008). In his original theoretical development, Allport made the case that there needs to be certain conditions in interpersonal interactions to reduce prejudice. An ideal example is when two people collaborate in a way that does not invoke a hierarchy. This situation re-replaces original social scripts that invoke privilege and subjugation with an interaction of *equals*. These conditions, however, have *not* been necessary or sufficient in subsequent studies (Forbes 1997). This means that all that has been necessary and sufficient to change attitudes about social minorities is interacting with someone who acts as a representative of that group.¹

¹There is, however, a literature on “exceptional” experiences, where people have the tendency to make exceptions for the social minority they know while keeping constant their current prejudices (Bukach et al. 2012, Condor et al. 2006, Sherman et al. 2005, Walker & Hewstone 2006)

1.1 The Case of Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals

The role of intergroup interactions with LGB people has also been thoroughly examined. Consistent with the previous discussion, reductions of prejudice and increases in threat have both been observed. There are two ways that interactions with LGB people may relate to prejudice. One is personally having a LGB person come out to someone else, which I term as interpersonal contact. The other is having increased interactions that are not as direct, as measured by population densities of LGB people, which I term intergroup contact.

How might indirect interactions occur with LGB people? Social psychologists find that people in general can infer a person's sexual orientation with minimal behavioral cues (Freeman et al. 2010, Johnson 2007, Nalini 1999, Rule 2008). This may mean that greater exposure to LGB people may operate similarly as for other minority groups, where greater population density positively relates to opportunities for direct and indirect interactions. People tend to be aware of the diversity around them (Newman et al. 2013).

On one hand knowing someone who is LGB positively relates to attitudes toward the group. Herek & Capitanio (1996) pioneered the finding that knowing someone who is LGB is positively correlated with attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Since then, studies have consistently found that knowing someone who is LGB positively relates to the rights of LGB people (Lewis 2011, Martinez, Wald & Craig 2008, Overby & Barth 2002, Overby & Barth 2006). Greg Lewis (2011) provided the most thorough analysis of this topic to date. He pooled numerous surveys that measure interpersonal contact with lesbians and gay men and also rights toward LGB people. He then analyzed both the correlates of interpersonal

contact with lesbians and gay men, which varied from coworkers, acquaintances, friends, and family members. He also found that knowing someone who is lesbian or gay positively relates to supportive of LGB rights attitudes even after controlling for the significant predictors of interpersonal contact. Interpersonal contact regarding lesbians and gay men or LGB rights is also generalizable to other cultural contexts (Lau, Lau & Loper 2014, Schmid et al. 2012) and other minority groups such as transgender people (Flores N.d., Norton & Herek 2013).

These findings, however, have been further examined to understand to what extent all members of the public are equally affected by LGB contact. These findings have shown that the effect of contact may vary by social and demographic categories (Barth & Overby 2003, Bramlett 2012, Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2013, Garner 2013, Skipworth, Garner & Dettrey 2010). Particularly, Skipworth, Garner & Dettrey (2010) identify that knowing someone who is LGB is moderated by ideology, identifying as an Evangelical Christian, the region of the country in which one lives, and white Southern Evangelicals. The moderations tend to weaken the overall effect of LGB contact, and in some cases, render its effect insignificant. Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz (2013) similarly find that there are partisan differences in the effect of knowing someone who is LGB. There is no observable effect among strongly identified Republicans. Garner (2013) finds that knowing someone who is LGB *increases* ambivalence among conservative-leaning respondents and *decreases* among liberal-leaning respondents.

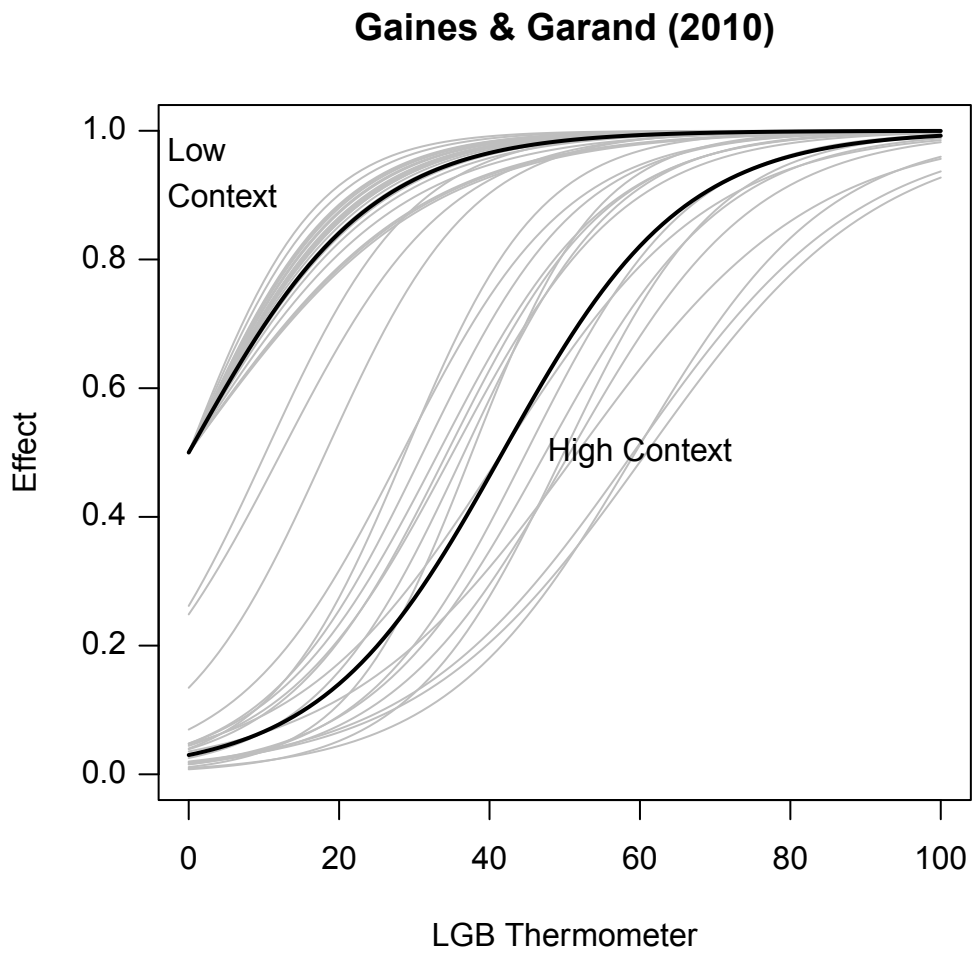
Similar to studies on other minority groups, people may be threatened by the presence of LGB people. Initially studied by Gaines & Garand (2010), the authors found that greater population densities of LGB people results in increased threat. Using the

American National Election 2004 Study, the authors use the percentage of households that are same-sex couples by counties as a correlate of attitudes toward same-sex marriage. They find that the main effect is negative and insignificant. They also found that interacting LGB population density with feelings toward lesbians and gay men was a significant predictor. What this ultimately indicated is depicted in Figure 1.1, which is a simulation based on the results reported in Gaines & Garand (2010).² The x-axis contains the range of the LGB feeling thermometer. As would be expected, as feelings toward LGB people become warmer, there is an increased probability of supporting same-sex marriage. The interaction effect with LGB population density moderates this effect. Essentially, people residing in counties with a high LGB population density need to have *warmer* feelings toward lesbians and gay men to be as supportive of same-sex marriage than those who reside in counties with a low LGB population density. While the findings of Gaines & Garand (2010) have their limitations due to sample size ($N = 620$), the general story to take away is that if intergroup interactions play a role in attitudes toward LGB rights, then they do so in way that infers threat. The authors also note a minimal substantive significance of social context in people's attitudes.

Alongside Gaines & Garand (2010), there is another study examining LGB population density and LGB rights. Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz (2012) perform analyses on Exit Polls from states where there were votes on marriage bans in 2004 and 2006. Their analyses include Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia. They cluster respondents at the congressional district

²I did not replicate the study. I used the reported effects to simulate a postestimation of the results, using 1,000 simulations. The variance-covariance matrix of the estimated partial slope coefficients are assumed to resemble an identity matrix with the main diagonal the square of the reported standard errors.

Figure 1.1: Simulated probability of pro-LGBT rights opinions based on the results of Gaines and Garand (2010)



level and analyze how varying contexts influence the likelihood of supporting such bans. If analyzed without covariates, the LGB population density negatively relates to support for same-sex marriage. This finding, however, is not stable when the percentage of the population that resides in urban contexts is also included. As urban politics is intricately related to gay rights (Bailey 1999), LGB population density in this case was picking-up the urban environment. When that is accounted for, the effect of LGB population density is no longer significant. The authors discuss that people may respond to LGBT rights and same-sex marriage as political symbols (*cf.* Sears et al. 1980). But this is especially the case when there is a salient and clear symbol from which a response to LGB population densities is structured. They contend that this is most likely the case with Evangelical or Born-Again Christians who have been at the forefront of the movement against the expansion of LGBT rights (see Fetner 2008). By interacting whether a voter identifies as a Born-Again Christian and LGB population density, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between LGB presence and voting in *favor* of a same-sex marriage ban among these voters. The authors suggest that elite framing providing clear symbols from which people may use to draw conclusions about being in contexts with more LGB people will continue to be important in the development of marriage policies.

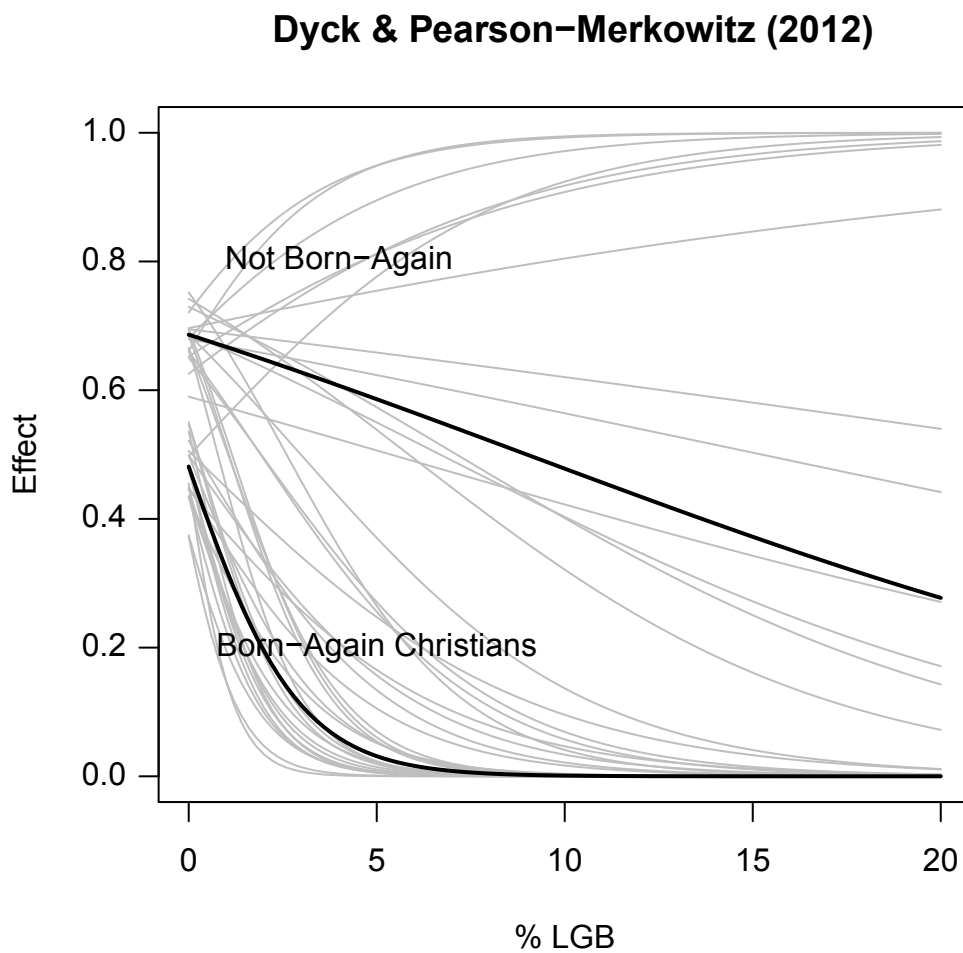
Figure 1.2 provides a simulation of the results of Dyck and Pearson-Merkowitz (2012) based on their final interactive model. These simulations are similar to the generation process for Figure 1.1. Along the x-axis is the percentage of same-sex couple households. Their results suggest not only threat among Born-Again Christians. They also find, though statistically not significant, threat among those who do not identify as Born Again. This

may suggest that greater LGB presence, regardless of whether the individual is Born-Again or not, is threatened by that context. This may be the case, at least, for voters residing in areas that had a same-sex marriage ban on the ballot in 2004 and 2006, which may have been strategically decided by the Religious Rights and the Republican Party (Stone 2012).

Regardless of either of the two major studies on LGB population density and same-sex marriage, the conclusion to draw is either: (1) LGB presence bears no consequence to attitudes toward LGBT rights or (2) if LGB presence matters, it increases the conflict or threat people have with LGBT rights. These findings may be consistent with contextual studies of other minority populations, but they do run counter to theories about reducing prejudice. It also runs counter to a normative argument of those who advocate for the rights of LGBT people. Harvey Milk, a famous gay politician, claimed: “Coming out is the most political thing you can do.” There is a strongly-held belief that *presence* creates positive social and political change.

Is it the focus of this study to reassess and examine to what extent LGB presence may be a source of social and political change. I investigate its potential for positive and negative change, and I also investigate whether there are broader consequences for change in relation to the actions of lawmakers who represent different social contexts. If having a presence is the most political action a person who is LGBT can take, then what change does it bring about?

Figure 1.2: Simulated probability of pro-LGBT rights opinions based on the results of Dyck and Pearson-Merkowitz (2012)



1.2 Theoretical Conundrums

Contemporary understandings of prejudice and minority group interactions are left with what appears to be a crossroads. On one end, intergroup threat should be a likely result. On the other, interpersonal contact should occur. However, this leaves a number of open questions:

1. Why is it that scholars have both found intergroup conflict and contact to occur?
2. Is it possible to reconcile these theories?
3. What are the political consequences of intergroup contact?
4. What happens to minorities in environments that become politically threatening?

Most of the literature on intergroup interaction has treated contact and threat as opposing theories (Campbell, Wong & Citrin 2006, Dixon & Rosenbaum 2004, Dixon 2006, Hood & Morris 1997, Hood & Morris 1998, Hood & Morris 2000, Stein, Post & Rinden 2000, Wagner et al. 2006). This treatment has been questioned by some, and they largely attempt to approach the two as complementary conditioned by the nature of the interaction (Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2012). While this may be the case, the only study that has tested this question found that the nature of the interaction does not necessarily matter (Forbes 1997). Others question whether it is the scope of the analysis (Baybeck 2006, Stein, Post & Rinden 2000). Dixon (2006), for example, examines whether racial triangulation facilitates in contact occurring for Asians and Latinos while threat occurs for African-Americans (see also Kim 1999). And Dyck and Pearson-Merkowitz (2012) argue that it relates to elite symbols about minority populations.

The relationship between out-group presence and attitudes of the general public rests on perception. Whether this perception is interpreted by symbolic politics or other mechanisms, at its core people must perceive that their environments are threatening or alleviating. For instance, people may not perceive certain environments as threatening unless conditions make objects that are possibly threatening about that environment salient (Hopkins 2010). Whether and to what extent a perception of intergroup threat or contact is central to this study. Also, to what extent is it safe to assume that people in general interpret their environments uniformly? People have the tendency to interpret the same information differently (Balectis & Dunning 2006). In light of this, how might the same environments produce different responses? And is this why in some studies there is an observation of threat and in others contact?

Less understood is what happens to members of the minority group when placed in social contexts that are threatening. The literature reviewed in this opening chapter are generally about how members of the hegemony perceive and respond to those outside of the mainstream. My final empirical investigation turns toward what happens to LGBT people in varying social contexts. In environments that become threatening along the lines of identity politics, those who are implicated by the environments may seek others who similarly identify (Finifter 1974, Huckfeldt 1986). Huckfeldt (1986), for example, found that political loyalties of individuals are more cohesive in social contexts where their presence is at either extreme (low or high). This indicates that threat or dominance may incite greater cohesion. For minorities and LGBT people in particular, they seldom have a chance to be a majority of a political environment. With the fluidity of identity over time and

space (Huddy 2002, Junn 2006), it remains an open question about how different social and political environments impact individuals who identify with the minority group. It is plausible that threat induces greater cohesion.

1.3 A Road Map

The following chapters examine how social contexts affect political outcomes. The first two chapters investigate how varying LGB presence affect the political attitudes of the general public. My first analysis examines the significance of this effect on average, and my second analysis examines how this effect may vary by different subpopulations. Both chapters are responses to the previous studies on this topic and an effort to theorize why certain subpopulations may respond differently to LGB presence. These chapters utilize a dataset that is larger in both the number of interviews conducted and the geography of the country. The increase in scope allows me to provide a nuanced analysis that complements the previous two studies on this topic and advances an argument that reconciles the seeming contradiction between theories of intergroup contact and threat.

The subsequent chapter investigates whether LGB presence affects the actions of lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives. Based on the previous chapters, there is a potential mechanism through which LGB presence may cultivate a different political environment. Representatives may be responding to these different environments. Some of them may opt to represent the minority without much consideration of the median voter (Bishin 2009, Bishin & Smith 2013). Others, however, may opt to represent the minority in a political environment where minority presence has cultivated a supportive majority.

What are the effects of LGB presence on the actions lawmakers take of LGBT rights? And how might presence of LGB people, through its effect on their surrounding environment, offer an incentive for lawmakers to be even stronger LGBT rights supporters? This chapter shows the extent to which the presence of LGB populations cultivates political change.

I finally address the last theoretical conundrum: what are the effects of social and political contexts on LGBT people? For the breadth of studies relating to minority populations, the focus primarily has been on the attitudes of the general public. I investigate what happens when places get politicized and become a site of contention to LGBT people. I find that those more proximate to a politicized place end up placing greater importance to being LGBT than those less proximate. And I find that this also affects the cohesion LGBT people, where those who are closer to a source of controversy are more politically cohesive than those residing further away. This chapter enhances our understanding of what happens to minorities when they are placed in a situation that makes them perceive their environment as threatening. And it shows that threats forge a stronger group consciousness that facilitates in creating a more cohesive political response.

Chapter 2

Reexamining Context and Same-Sex Marriage: The Effect of Demography on Public Support for Same-Sex Relationship Recognition

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Abstract

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people reside in practically every geographic region in the United States, with substantial variation regarding what proportion of that region is populated with LGB people. Given this variation, I analyze whether denser LGB congressional districts have an effect on individuals views on relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples. Areas that have more dense LGB populations could potentially have two effects: normalizing contact or contextual threat. I find that as the proportion of LGBs in legislative district increases so too does the probability of individuals supporting relationship rights for same-sex couples. As the results indicate, context does not increase threat.

Keywords: public opinion, LGB rights, demography, Bayesian multilevel modeling.

2.1 Introduction

In what ways do regional contexts affect public approval of the rights of minority groups in the United States? There are potentially two competing answers to this question. On one hand, Allport (1979) established the argument that certain contexts which facilitate the interaction between groups should reduce irrational fears, leading to a net positive effect on an individuals attitudes regarding that group. In politics, the contact hypothesis should also affect the opinion these individuals have when asked questions regarding the rights of that group. At the same time, situational contexts may establish the conditions under which competitive threat may occur (Key 1949). Such interactions should then make a persons attitudes more negative and induce a person to hold negative opinions regarding the rights of that group.

The areas of research investigating these questions have, for the most part, examined racial and ethnic politics. I extend this research to a different minority group: lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals (LGBs). Observational studies asking respondents whether they know someone who is LGB has led to an ongoing debate regarding the role contact plays in attitude change for sexual minorities. In one line of research Herek & Capitanio (1996), among others, have found that knowing someone who is LGB is a correlate of positive attitudes and beliefs about LGBs, and those who have this form of contact have greater support for LGB rights. However, the causal direction of these findings has been questioned. Lewis (2011) shows that contact may be more complex in observational studies. The individuals who happen to be more open-minded and approving of LGB rights are the same individuals with whom LGBs are more likely to be open to about their sexual orientation. Thus,

previous findings have yet to fully untangle the potential for selection effects whereby LGBs may select whom to come out to (an exception to this is Lewis, 2011).

However, knowing someone who is LGB is not the only way a person may experience the presence of LGBs. Advances in social psychology have indicated that people are adept at picking up information from minimal cues to identify a person's sexual orientation (Freeman et al. 2010, Johnson 2007, Nalini 1999, Rule 2008). Awareness of a gay community need not necessarily require direct contact as much as it may have to do with being in a place with a prominent gay presence. Thus, people may experience contact through direct interaction and these less direct mechanisms. Greater densities of LGB people increase the probability of these interactions. However, presence may also induce people to have a heightened awareness of sexual orientation and that salience may incur negative reactions.

My theoretical framework and analytical scope are informed by two previous studies that have explored the effect of context on same-sex marriage (Dyck and Pearson-Merkowitz, 2012; Gaines and Garand, 2010). These studies find, at varying levels of significance and forms of measurement, that contexts do not matter or result in threat. I reexamine this question with data that is more fitting. In the following, I elaborate on the research regarding contact and contextual threat, providing two competing expectations. My findings indicate that, in the case of LGBs, the contact hypothesis applies. Respondents who reside in areas with more LGBs tend to be more approving of relationship recognition rights for LGBs, and I also find that as LGBs are a larger proportion of the area, support is more likely to be in favor of same-sex marriage as opposed to civil unions.

2.2 Contact or Context?

According to contact theorists, increased interpersonal interactions among people of different groups should induce positive feelings and reduce prejudice (Allport 1979, Amir 1969, Pettigrew 1998). These prejudices are a product of social constructions of in-groups and out-groups. The out-group is stereotyped to the degree that those received ideas dominate how members of the in-group perceive members of the out-group. According to the contact theory, repeated interactions among members of the in-group and the out-group will counter such tropes. In addition, political scientists indicate that there may be conditions under which contact also positively affects political opinions (e.g., Rocha & Espino 2009). Allport (1979) theorizes that there are necessary conditions to the operation of the contact hypothesis (see also Rothbart and John, 1993), but subsequent research has found these conditions to not be necessary (e.g., Amir, 1976; Forbes, 1997).

Recent studies have found that less direct forms of contact or parasocial contact can reduce prejudice toward LGB people (Schiappa, Gregg & Hewes 2005). Less direct forms of contact may also be at work in social settings. LGBs living “out of the closet” create their own culture and awareness (Bailey 1999).). Regions with a greater proportion of LGBs likely have a greater cultural presence and an increased likelihood of contact. Since people are capable of making accurate inferences about a person's sexual orientation with very little information (Freeman et al. 2010, Johnson 2007, Nalini 1999, Rule 2008), they may also be aware of the presence of a local gay culture. These less direct forms of contact should bear a relationship to the way people understand and respond to members of that group.

From this research and the work of Gaines and Garand (2010, pp. 556-7), the theoretical expectation for contact is:

H_1 : People who reside in regions with a larger percentage of LGBs will have positive attitudes toward the rights of LGBs.

Alongside the contact hypothesis, political science has largely found that diversity induces irrational fear rather than cures it. V.O. Key's research in Southern politics did not find that contact was at work in race politics. Counties that had a higher proportion of black residents also had increased hostility among whites toward blacks. These competition models have continued to find that in race and ethnic politics, contextual threat explains political behavior (Blalock 1967, Campbell, Wong & Citrin 2006, Glaser 1994, Hawley 2011, Siegelman & Welch 1993, Stein, Post & Rinden 2000). Threat is largely framed as an economic resource model. Threat increases as diversity increases because outgroup minorities are perceived to be taking resources (e.g., jobs) from the ingroup. Baybeck (2006) indicate that such threat occurs in geographic regions that include job centers, while contact occurs at smaller, residential regions.

Threat from LGBs could potentially operate differently, with smaller geographic regions actually having more negativity than larger ones. If some of the popular negative tropes still dominate how the public perceives sexual minorities (e.g., predatory gay men), then smaller geographies could actually increase threat. In two previous studies, scholars have found conditional support for the threat hypothesis regarding LGB people and context (Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2012, Gaines & Garand 2010). In one study, Gaines & Garand (2010) find that at the county level, higher levels of same-sex partnered households *decrease*

support for same-sex marriage, though the effect is not significant. The authors also note that when interacted with the feelings people have toward LGBs, that the effect is diminished. They find similar and significant effects when they dichotomize their measure of same-sex partnered households identifying only households above one standard deviation of the mean (6% of their sample). The authors also note that when interacted with the feelings people have toward LGBs, that the effect is diminished. This left the authors to conclude that context largely bears a negative relationship to favorable same-sex marriage opinions among those who live in the densest LGB areas. In Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz (2012), the authors find that Evangelicals who reside in more dense LGB congressional districts are significantly more likely to support same-sex marriage bans. Though the direct effect of LGB density is not significant, the direction of the effect was negative. In both studies, the conclusion to draw is that a greater presence of LGB people results in contextual threat or bears a minimal relationship to public opinion.

This leads me to a second theoretical expectation:

H_2 : People who reside in regions with a larger percentage of LGBs will have negative attitudes toward the rights of LGBs.

There are limitations to the two previous studies that make further analysis of contact and context warranted regarding LGB people. Gaines & Garand (2010) are limited by sample size ($n = 620$), potentially limiting the analytical power of the study. Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz (2012) analyze gay marriage bans in 2004 and 2006, which are practically of southern, conservative states. These cases may potentially mask existing variability in the population, as political strategists likely selected these states in order to pass ballot

measures. This current study overcomes these limitations with a much larger sample that is nationally representative. I examine both opinions on relationship recognition rights and same-sex marriage. This scope allows me to reexamine the contact-context question on same-sex marriage.

2.3 Data and Methods

To assess whether the contextual threat hypothesis or the contact hypothesis operates for LGBs, I use the 2008 National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES). This dataset contains sizable samples of respondents within most congressional districts. The NAES has two different sampling procedures in the 2008 study, with a portion of their sample from online surveys and another from telephone surveys. This analysis relies on the telephone sample, with a total sample of 57,967 respondents. The NAES did not survey on LGB rights throughout the entire timeframe, so I restrict the analysis to the subset of the full sample that did receive LGB rights questions, which lowers the sample size to 26,226 respondents. Geocodes were collected from NAES that included the congressional district in which respondents reside. I use this geographic coding to nest individual respondents within their congressional districts, and I analyze covariates at both the data level and the congressional district level.

2.3.1 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable under analysis is how respondents addressed the rights of LGBs regarding relationship recognition, and more specifically how they addressed same-

sex marriage. The NAES asks respondents whether they support marriage recognition for same-sex couples, support civil unions instead of marriage recognition, or do not support any form of legal recognition. The responses to this question indicate that in 2008, a majority of respondents support some form of relationship recognition. Of the sample, 59 percent of the respondents favor some form of legal recognition, but they are about evenly split regarding whether this should be marriage (29%) or civil unions (30%). In addition, 41 percent of the respondents do not indicate support for legal recognition of same-sex relationships.

Support for some form of relationship recognition may be substantially different from support for same-sex marriage. Respondents who indicate support for civil unions may have cognitive dissonances about whether or not they actually support same-sex marriage. McCabe & Heerwig (2012) find that respondents who are initially asked about their approval of same-sex marriage and then about civil unions are more likely to indicate support for civil unions than if the question order were reversed. This indicates that some respondents, who would otherwise be opposed to relationship recognition, end up supporting civil unions to resolve such dissonances. As many in the mass public are ambivalent regarding gay rights (Craig et al. 2005), respondents who support civil unions form a distinct class of individuals who have yet to be convinced that marriage may be necessary for the advancement of LGB rights. My analytical focus analyzes both support for any form of relationship recognition and also same-sex marriage, as they may be conceptually distinct.

2.3.2 Explanatory Variable

With respondents geocoded at the congressional district level, I incorporate data on the LGB population by districts. Gates (2006) provides estimates of the LGB population from the American Community Survey in 2006; the report included population estimates at the congressional district level. This data has been used to analyze whether members of Congress are more prone to represent LGBs (Bishin 2009, Bishin & Smith 2013). The data range from 1.4% of the population in the second district of Mississippi to 16.6% in the eighth district in California. The average percentage across the congressional districts is 4.09 with a standard deviation 1.8 percentage points. While previous studies have used counts of same-sex partnered households from the U.S. Census, my use of population estimates is a clearer and more consistent operationalization of context. I include the District of Columbia as a congressional district. The decision to use congressional districts in this analysis stems from the correlation between public opinion and behaviors of representatives (e.g., Bishin 2009, Lax & Phillips 2009*a*, Miller & Stokes 1963). If there is constituency influence in representative behavior, then evidence of LGBs influencing public opinion would encourage an analysis of that mechanism. Dyck and Pearson-Merkowitz (2012) also use congressional districts, so the results I provide can be comparable to the results documented in that study.

While survey research may misrepresent estimates of the LGB population, there are likely very real differences among behavior, attraction, and identity (SMART 2009). The ACS data with Gates statistical adjustment is the best available measure for population estimates of those who identify as LGB. These methods have even been cross-validated

with a separate sample from Gallup (Gates and Newport, 2012). Identification is also more appropriate for this assessment because those who identify as LGB are politically distinctive (Lewis et al., 2011; Egan, 2012).

2.3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis is one that assesses how a district-level variable affects individual-level responses; I use Bayesian multilevel models. Given the potential differences in support for civil unions and same-sex marriage, and given my reexamination on studies on same-sex marriage, I analyze the dependent variable in the form of a sequential logistic model where the likelihood of being in support of some form of relationship recognition is considered one step in the process of being in favor of same-sex marriage. The next step of the analysis estimates the probability that a respondent favors same-sex marriage given that the respondent already supports some form of relationship recognition.

More specifically, the model is estimated as in equation 1 for the first step:

$$\Pr(y_i = \text{Marriages or Unions}) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\alpha_{j[i]} + X_i\beta) \quad (2.1)$$

$$\alpha_j \sim (\gamma_0 + \gamma_1 * u_j^{lgbpop} + \gamma_2 * u_j^{ideol} + \gamma_3 * u_j^{med.income} + \gamma_4 * u_j^{pct.urban}, \sigma_\alpha^2).$$

I then model the second step as follows for equation 2:¹

$$\Pr(y_i = \text{Marriages} | \text{Marriages or Unions}) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\alpha_{j[i]} + X_i\beta) \quad (2.2)$$

$$\alpha_j \sim (\gamma_0 + \gamma_1 * u_j^{lgbpop} + \gamma_2 * u_j^{ideol} + \gamma_3 * u_j^{med.income} + \gamma_4 * u_j^{pct.urban}, \sigma_\alpha^2).$$

¹Subsequent references to this model are referred to $\Pr(\text{Marriage})$; readers should note that this is $\Pr(\text{Marriages} | \text{Marriages or Unions})$.

Though not all individuals necessarily take the steps from an opinion against any form of relationship recognition to approving for same-sex marriage, there is evidence that some respondents do support civil unions to reconcile their dissonances when they are against same-sex marriage but want to appear supportive of LGB rights (McCabe and Heerwig, 2012). This is indicative of an analytical strategy that allows the assumption of a sequential logistic model.

The controlling covariates at the individual level, $(X_i\beta)$, include age, age², income, religiosity, gender, race, identifying as an Evangelical, identifying as LGB, and partisanship. At the district level, I control for the district's ideology by approximating it with the DW-NOMINATE score the district's member of Congress received (Poole & McCarty 2005). I also include the percentage of residents in a district who reside in urban areas. Previous studies have equated LGB politics with urban politics (Bailey 1999), so I determine whether LGB populations have an effect independent of urbanism. In addition, I include the median income in the district to control for affluence, which other studies have shown to be consequential to partisan vote choice (Gelman et al. 2008). After applying the controlling covariates at the district level, I can attribute any effect of the explanatory variable as plausibly independent of potential selection effects (see Appendix A).

My ability to control for sexual orientation is especially beneficial to this analysis, as I can then assess how the proportion of LGBs affects individuals controlling for individual level sexual orientation. A likely alternative explanation to the findings is that districts that have more LGB people are more likely to support same-sex relationship recognition because respondents in that district are more likely to be LGB. By controlling for sexual orientation

at the individual level, I can examine whether district characteristics, independent of an individual's sexual orientation, affect policy support.

I run the model with three Markov Chains for 10,000 iterations. The first 5,000 of the iterations are removed from the analysis, and the remaining iterations are used for model estimates, post-estimations, and model assessments. I use uninformative prior distributions for all of the estimated coefficients. All of the models are checked for appropriate mixing (Gelman & Hill 2007), with all of the model mixing parameters (R-hat) below 1.2. Alternative models to the sequential logistic model were also assessed with little change in the inferences I provide.

2.4 Results

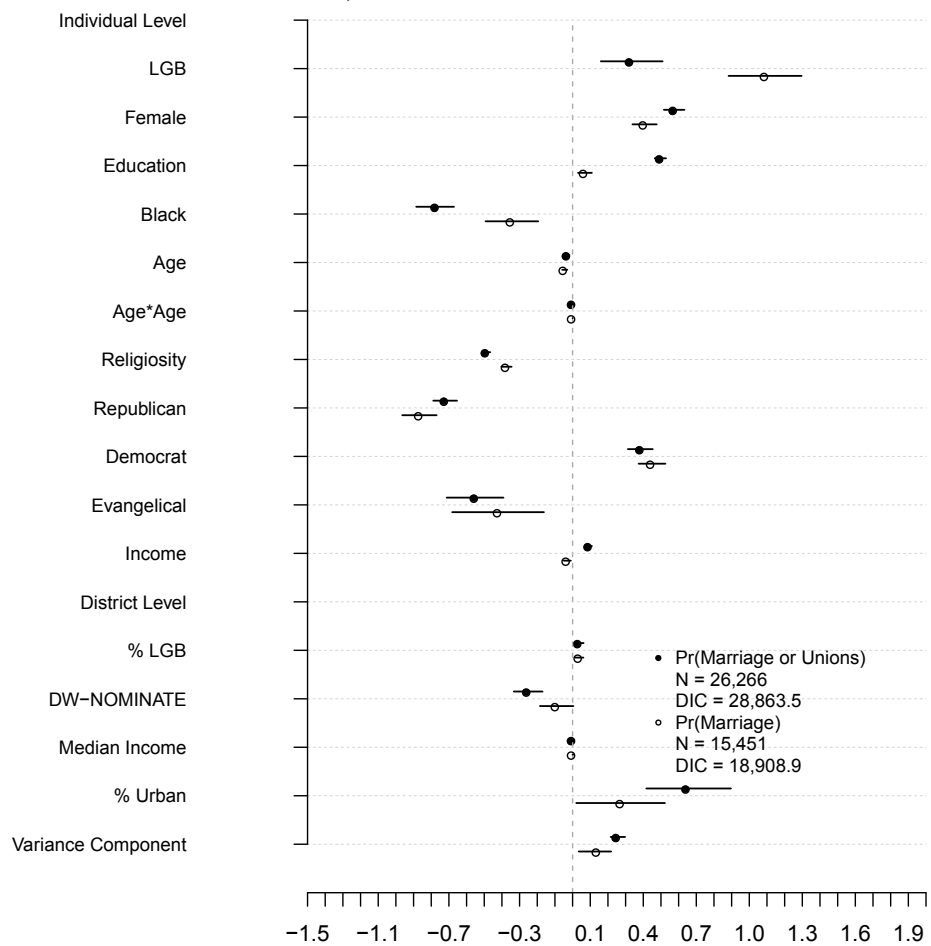
The results of the analysis, as plotted in Figure 1, indicate that many of the predictors at the individual level operate as expected on relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples. The first stage of the model is plotted above the dashed gray lines, and the second stage is plotted below the dashed gray lines. Each point in the figure is the median estimate of the effect, and the tails represent 95% uncertainty intervals. I find that LGB respondents are significantly more likely to be in favor of some form of relationship recognition and more likely to be in favor of marriage than civil unions. I observe a similar pattern among Democrats, younger respondents, and females. The model results also indicate that respondents with greater religious attendance, who identify as Born Again, who are Republican, and who are older, tend to be against all forms of relationship recognition and, of those who would be in support of some form of relationship recognition,

would prefer civil unions over marriages. The individual-level covariates of the two models have a number of consistent patterns in the direction of the effects, but there are differences among the sizes of these effects, indicating that other modeling strategies could potentially mask this magnitude (e.g., ordered logistic regression).

Also plotted in Figure 1 are the results of the district-level effects. Since the model is one of varying intercepts, the effects at this level influence the average level of support in congressional districts. I find that the districts ideology operates as would be expected. As DW-NOMINATE scores increase (become more conservative), districts have lower intercepts, which lower the likelihood of supporting same-sex relationship recognition. This relationship is also present among those who are supportive of some form of relationship recognition, with conservative districts more likely to support civil unions than same-sex marriage. Similarly, respondents who reside in districts that have a greater proportion of the population in urban areas are more likely to support relationship recognition rights, and of those who support some kind of recognition, districts with a greater share of urban residents are more likely to favor same-sex marriage than civil unions.

In addition to district ideology and the percentage of population in urban areas, I find a consistent, positive effect of the percentage of LGBs in a congressional districts and its influence on the support of relationship recognition for same-sex couples. This effect is positive and significant in both models. Simulations of the posterior distribution of each effect approach normality, indicating that the posterior simulations converge to a common inference with a small standard deviation ($\hat{\sigma}_1 = .0121$; $\hat{\sigma}_2 = .0119$). The results further indicate that, as the percentage of LGBs in a district increases, the likelihood to support

Figure 2.1: Regression results from the sequential logit analysis, points are the estimated median with the line segments representing the 95% uncertainty interval (if there is no line segment, it is covered by the point)

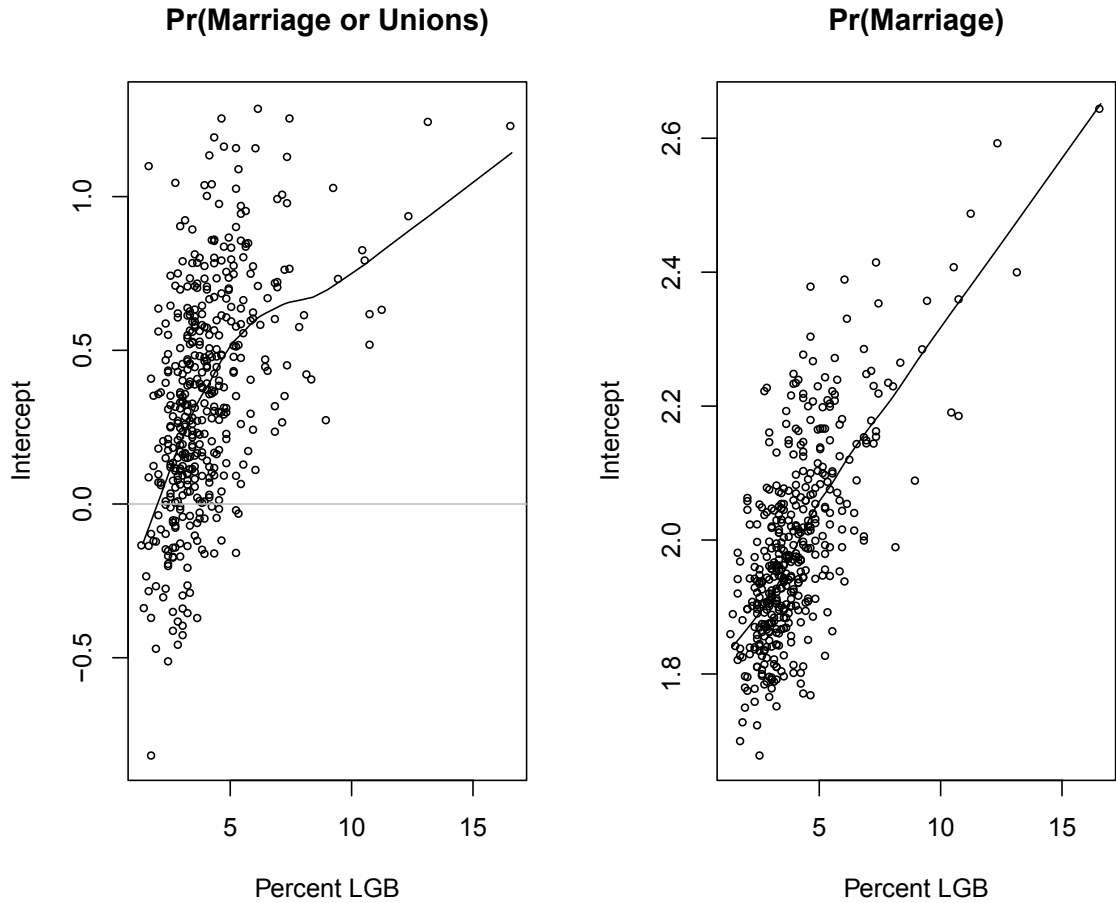


same-sex marriage over civil unions also increases.

To examine the effect of the LGB population in congressional district, I first convey the relationship between this variable and the average level of support in congressional districts. The plot in Figure 2 is of the estimated district intercept ($\hat{\alpha}_j$) predicting support for relationship recognition for same-sex couples plotted against the percentage of LGBs in a district. The left panel of Figure 2 is the first stage model, predicting whether individuals support some form of relationship recognition, and the right panel of the figure is of the second stage model, predicting whether individuals support same-sex marriage given that they support some form of relationship recognition. Both scatterplots have nonparametric (lowess) regression lines fitted to facilitate visualizing the relationship between the percentage of LGBs in a congressional district and the district intercept. The y-axes are different for the two panels, with the left panel providing a reference line at zero. In the left panel, a positive correlation exists, showing that congressional districts with a greater share of LGBs tend to support some form of relationship recognition independent of the covariates. Additionally, there is a strong positive relationship in the right panel of Figure 2, indicating greater support for same-sex marriage in congressional districts with larger shares of LGBs.

To convey how these results relate to the probability of supporting same-sex relationship recognition, I create a linear predictor from the individual covariates, $(X_i\beta)$, for each respondent and then estimate the logistic regression line for each congressional district, $[\text{logit}^{-1}(\alpha_j + \beta x)]$. I plot the predictions from the model in Figure 3 with the top-left panel plotting the district with the smallest LGB population and the bottom-right plotting the largest. The other plots in Figure 3 represent the quartiles of the LGB percentage of the

Figure 2.2: The relationship between the LGB percentage in legislative districts and the estimated median of the random intercept of congressional districts. A semiparametric regression line is fit to facilitate in understanding the relationship.



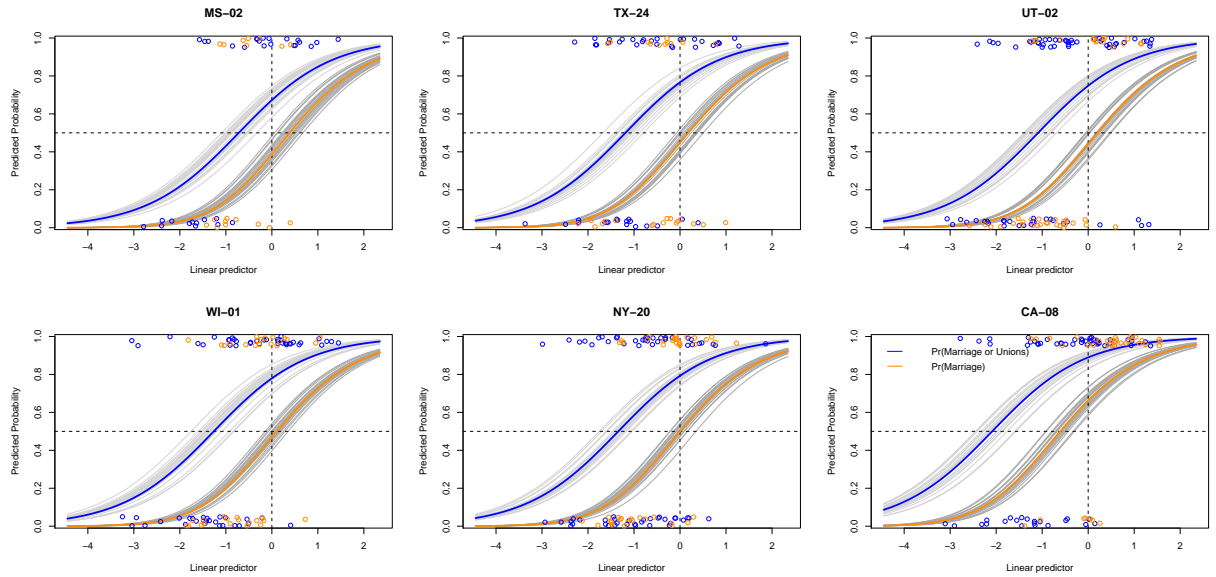
population: the 25th percentile (TX-24), 50th percentile (UT-02 and WI-01), and 75th percentile (NY-20). In each panel, the fitted curve on the left predicts support for relationship recognition (blue) and the fitted curve on the right predicts support for same-sex marriage (orange).² I provide reference lines in each plot to indicate where the probability is 0.5 and the linear predictor is 0. The plot also provides twenty random posterior draws from

²The predictions for supporting same-sex marriage are from the product of $\Pr(y_i = \text{Marriage} | \text{Unions})$ and $\Pr(y_i = \text{Marriages or Unions})$.

the Bayesian model to indicate uncertainty, which is equivalent to 95% confidence intervals (Gelman & Hill 2007). Each plot also contains a scatterplot of the linear predictor and the responses from respondents in that congressional district; these points are jittered to fully convey the size of the sample in each district.

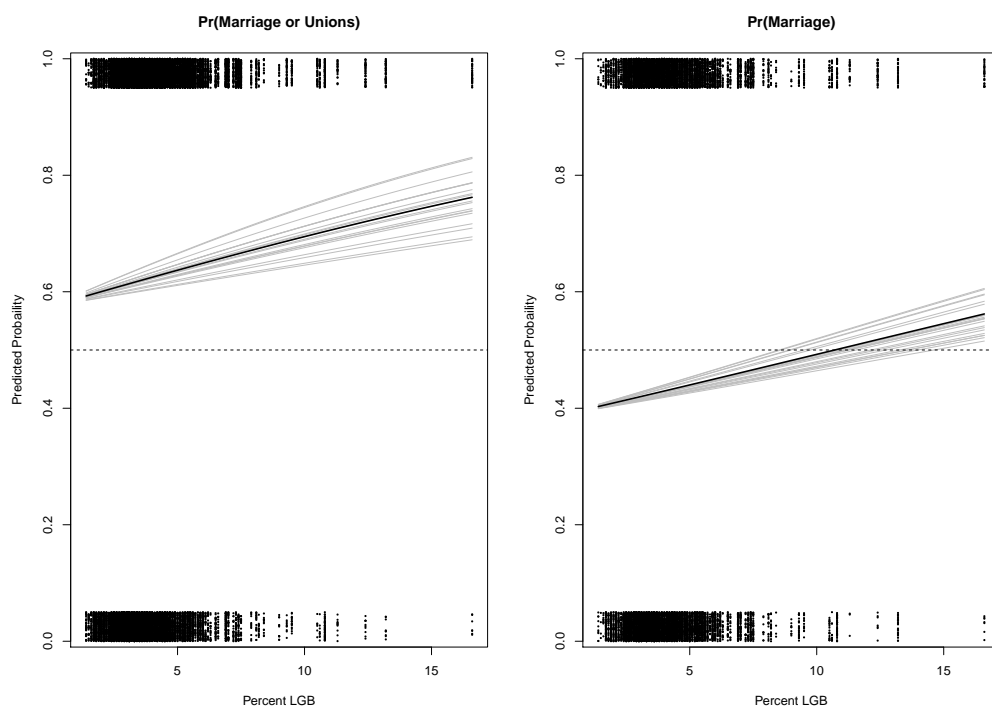
Comparing across plots, the percentage of LGBs in a congressional district positively affects the likelihood of support for both relationship recognition and same-sex marriage. Consider the predictions in the second district of Mississippi in comparison to the eighth district of California—these regions have the lowest and highest share of LGBs, respectively. At $\beta x = -1$, respondents in MS-02 are 50% likely to support some form of relationship recognition, this is approximately, $\beta x = -2$ in CA-08. Respondents in CA-08 who are, at the individual level, more opposed to relationship recognition for same-sex couples than respondents in MS-02, are *more likely* to support it. Residents of CA-08 are more likely to support same-sex marriage even when they have the same individual-level characteristics as those in MS-02. The same type of people in MS-02 who reside in CA-08 are substantially different in the opinions they are likely to hold. These two districts do not substantially differ in their ideology, -0.481 in MS-02 and -0.515 in CA-08, though CA-08 is more affluent and urban. The largest difference between the two districts is the demographic composition: California's eighth district at this time period is comprised mostly of San Francisco while Mississippi's second district is the state's only minority-majority congressional district. The logistic regression lines in Figure 3 gradually move leftward from the top-left plot to the bottom-right. These shifts indicate how attitudes become more liberal in districts with more LGBs.

Figure 2.3: Average linear prediction of the individual level covariates, varying only the district effect in each state for each model, gray lines are 20 simulations to represent uncertainty in the estimate; the top-left panel is the district with the smallest LGB population and the remaining represent quantiles to the district with the largest LGB population



I also convey the results by holding all else equal and varying only the percentage of LGBs in a congressional district. In Figure 4, I hold individual-level covariates at their means and hold the other district covariates at their medians. I then vary the size of the LGB population to observe changes in individual likelihood to support relationship recognition and to see whether this also affects support for same-sex marriage relative to civil unions. Though these inferences are from a highly simulated version of reality, it is an informative characterization of the magnitude of the effect of the LGB population. I plot, in Figure 4, twenty posterior simulations in addition to a jittered scatterplot of all the respondents. The left panel is the first model predicting support for relationship recognition, and the right panel is the second model predicting support for same-sex marriage provided that respondents support some form of relationship recognition. As both figures

Figure 2.4: Average effect of LGB population holding the individual covariates at their means and the district covariates at their median income and ideology, with twenty simulations to represent uncertainty in the estimate



show, as the size of the LGB population increases, so too does the likelihood of supporting relationship recognition and same-sex marriage. The right panel of the figure conveys these findings plainly. Of respondents who support some form of relationship recognition, those with smaller populations of LGBs are more likely to favor civil unions, and this is significantly different from random chance (i.e., $p = .5$). Of those same respondents who support relationship recognition, larger LGB populations correspond to respondents increasing their probability of supporting same-sex marriage, and this estimate is also significantly different from random chance.

2.5 Discussion

Two previous studies examining whether the presence of LGB people promotes understanding or conflict find that some people are threatened by the presence of LGBs (Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2012, Gaines & Garand 2010). However, these studies may have limitations due to sample size and case selection. I make substantially different inferences by using a larger sample that covers the entire United States. I find that, contrary to these previous studies, contextual threat does not apply. I find a consistent, positive effect: a greater share of LGBs in a district corresponds with increased support for legal recognition of same-sex couples.

The results indicate that popular support for same-sex marriage begins to shift above the national average when the LGB population is at least 5.9 percent of the district, which is approximately one standard deviation above the average district population of LGBs. Support for same-sex marriage exceeds that of civil unions in congressional districts

when the LGB population is at least 10.8 percent of the district. As mass attitudes have changed on same-sex marriage (Baunach 2011, Baunach 2012), this measure has likely decreased.

Context is more consequential to LGB rights than what scholarship has traditionally presented. Gaines and Garand (2010) admit, For the general population, our results provide little evidence to support the inference of a direct effect of context (p. 564). Dyck and Pearson-Merkowitz (2012) also contend, For the majority of the population, the openness of gay populations in neighborhoods seems to have little additional effect (p. 752). The results from this analysis indicate that context matters regarding LGBs. In general, people are aware of their contexts, and Newman et al. (2013) find that peoples perceptions of their contexts are directly affected by objective measures of context. I expect that the findings would be similar for LGBs, which would indicate that people residing in areas with more LGBs would be aware of their respective contexts. This is especially the case because recent research finds that a person who identifies as LGB is more likely perceived by others as LGB regardless of that person actually coming out (Ambady et al., 2009; Freeman et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2007; Rule et al., 2008).

Allport (1979) makes the case that interpersonal contact reduces prejudice, which corresponds to increased support for the rights of social out-groups. LGB people face social stigma (Meyer 2003), and are rarely born into LGB communities (Sherrill 1996). The coming out process entails learning, finding, and creating such communities (Egan, Edelman & Sherrill 2008), and by doing so, LGBs form a group consciousness that makes them distinctive (Lewis, Rogers & Sherrill 2011). Creating such communities also promotes

opportunities for contact, which may occur in direct interactions or in less direct forms.

Having a greater presence, as represented by the percentage of LGBs in a congressional district, has a positive relationship with pro-LGB opinions. As people may be influenced by their surroundings, it would be compelling to subsequently understand how these varying contexts may affect the political situations for LGB people. Bishin (2009) makes the case that representatives are responsive to subconstituencies in their legislative districts. My findings indicate that there may be a mechanism through which out-group contact facilitates greater support for the rights of the out-group by lawmakers. Legislators may be responsive to their constituents with less concern for repercussion from their broader constituency. Subsequent research may further examine this mechanism, as it may further identify the conditions under which, and mechanisms through which, minority groups are politically influential.

2.6 Appendix

2.6.1 A. Selection Effects and District-Level Covariates

The argument that people who report knowing someone who is LGB is positively correlated with favorable LGB opinions may be due to selection, that LGBs select when to come out, may also extrapolated to higher levels of analysis: that LGBs migrate to more liberal districts, and I observe the positive effect due to LGBs residing in more liberal districts. I am suspect of this argument for two reasons: (1) Evidence of LGB migration is minimal, and LGBs, like the rest of the mass public, may not be aware of their congressional

district. (2) The controlling covariates should facilitate in parsing out the unique effect.

Migration patterns among LGBs are substantially different from the general public (Gates 2007). Explanations for migration largely are in regard to economic opportunities. In addition, Gates (2007) finds that LGBs are experiencing out-migration from urban centers, a trend that has also been documented among the general public. The LGB population increased most in the Southern and Mountain states where migration would be less to do with politics and political orientations of the surrounding area. These migration rates may be more to do with ceiling effects as opposed to other explanations.³ Empirical evidence nonetheless indicates that LGBs make residency decisions with motivations like those of the general public. However, it may well be the case that neighborhoods and other smaller geographies are influenced by neighborhood culture. In other words, LGBs may migrate similarly to the general public but may choose specific locations within geographies where they would feel safer. In addition, the covariates at the district level should facilitate in addressing the lack of balance among congressional districts with greater concentrations of LGBs and those with less. The problem of selection effects relies on a lack of balance on pre-treatment covariates between treatment and control groups.⁴ The logic of selection effects is that there are characteristics about some geographic regions that make some regions more likely to receive the treatment (i.e., higher populations of LGBs). Regression on observable covariates should satisfy the comparability of the observations. I select the controlling covariates at the district level to account for alternative explanations and sharpen the effect of the explanatory variable, and I observe an effect even with evidence of multicollinearity

³I thank one of my anonymous reviewers for making this observation.

⁴Though “treatment” and “control” would be more appropriate usage for a dichotomous variable as opposed to the continuous measure of percentage of LGBs, I use the language to facilitate in this discussion.

with the LGB population estimates and the other covariates ($\hat{\rho}_{\text{ideol}} = -0.26$; $\hat{\rho}_{\text{urban}} = 0.38$; $\hat{\rho}_{\text{med.inc}} = 0.18$).

As observed in this analysis, once the ideology of the district is controlled for, I have little reason to believe that the percentage of LGBs in a district would be operationalizing anything but the presence of LGBs in a district. And I believe this presence has little to do with political migration, especially when controlling for the ideological make-up of the district. However, regression is not the only way to observe balance between treated and controlled groups and may not necessarily be the best strategy. In the following, I reassess the findings using genetic matching (Diamond & Sekhon 2013), which subsets the data to most similar observations on covariates and then estimates treatment effects. Prior to matching, there are significant differences among districts on the observable covariates, and these differences are minimized after the matching process. I use the same covariates as in the initial analysis: DW-NOMINATE scores, percent urban, and median income.

In my re-analysis of the data, I use the NAES data in combination with the American Community Survey data to generate estimates of public opinion on relationship recognition by congressional district in a process known as multilevel regression and post-stratification (Warshaw & Rodden 2012). I cut the percentage of LGBs into two different levels of treatment, because the procedure can only match on a dichotomous treatment. I vary the cut-point to be the mean, median, mean plus one standard deviation, and mean plus two standard deviations. I then examine whether there is a significant and positive effect of having high concentrations of LGBs versus low levels of LGBs. The results in Table A.1 indicate that this is the case. Achieving balance on district covariates facilitates

in accounting for selection effects that would complicate comparisons across districts. This adds further support to the overall findings of the significance and direction of the effect of LGB populations on relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples.

Table 2.1: Effect of low concentrations of LGBs in districts to high concentrations on support for relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples, after matching on district ideology (DW-NOMINATE), percent of the population that resides in urban portions of the district, and median income of the district. Each column varies the cut-point determining low and high concentrated districts. Estimate is the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT).

Cut-point:	Mean (%LGB > 4.09)	Median (%LGB > 3.7)	Mean + 1 SD (%LGB > 5.86)	Mean + 2 SD (%LGB > 7.63)
Effect	3.5*** (0.9)	3.0*** (0.9)	5.0*** (1.0)	7.3* (3.0)
N _{Sample}	436	436	436	436
N _{Matched}	176	210	48	15

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

2.6.2 B. Summary Statistics of Variables

Table 2.2: Summary statistics at the data and district level used in the models

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
LGB	0.03	0.17	0	1
Female	0.57	0.50	0	1
Education	3.027	0.96	1	4
Black	0.08	0.27	0	1
Age	52.83	16.11	18	97
Age*Age	3051	1734.76	324	9409
Religiosity	1.89	1.34	0	4
Republican	0.29	0.46	0	1
Democrat	0.35	0.48	0	1
Evangelical	0.03	0.17	0	1
Income	5.74	2.05	1	9
District Level				
DW-Nominate	0.03	0.51	-0.922	1.36
Percent Urban	78.98	19.82	21.3	100
Percent LGB	4.09	1.77	1.4	16.6
Median Income	51,101.70	12,670.83	20,924	91,571

Chapter 3

Conditional Contextual Contact

and Threat: How Gay People

Affect the Opinions People Have

Abstract

To what extent are people affected by the presence of denser populations of minorities? There are two proposed explanations: normalizing contact and contextual threat. However, is it safe to assume that individuals are equally affected in one direction on this question? I explore the extent to which there are heterogeneous effects among the mass public who reside in varying levels of LGB population density. I find that, on average, people are positively affected by residing in regions with more LGB people; they are more likely to have favorable attitudes regarding relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples. However, theories of contact versus threat may not be mutually exclusive; both may occur. I find that some members of the mass public are negatively affected by the presence of LGB people, suggesting that some in the mass public experience threat. Overall, the results of this analysis facilitate in identifying how regions that have greater populations of LGB people generate polarized residents regarding the rights of that group.

Keywords: Intergroup threat, LGB rights, demography, public opinion.

3.1 Introduction

To what extent are people affected by the presence of denser populations of minorities? Previous literature has cited two potential ways that demography affects how people feel about minorities and situates their opinions about the rights of minorities. These theories are often presented as being at cross-pressures. The contact theory would predict that intergroup contact should promote greater understanding of minority populations, leading to reductions in prejudice and opposition to the rights of the minority. The contextual threat theory would predict that increased intergroup contact would incite fear, leading to decreased support for the rights of the minority. These literatures generally do not discuss how they both could be valid, leaving theoretical and empirical development wanting.

The effect of intergroup contact tends to result in greater understanding of the out-group by other members of society. Allport (1979) and other scholars elaborate on the contact hypothesis as the process through which individuals reduce their prejudice. Though Allport (1979) emphasizes situations where inter-group collaboration in equal roles facilitates in the reduction of prejudice, these conditions may not be necessary (Forbes 1997). Increased contact of whatever sort (and increased opportunities of contact) should foster positive change regarding prejudice toward members of the out-group (see also Pettigrew & Tropp 2008, Stein, Post & Rinden 2000). Studies on intergroup contact with lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people tend to show that personally knowing someone who is LGB is a positive correlate with favorable attitudes and opinions about LGB people (Barth & Overby 2003, Barth & Parry 2009, Barth, Overby & Huffmon 2009, Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2013, Garner 2013, Herek & Glunt 1993, Herek & Capitanio 1996, Lewis 2011,

Skipworth, Garner & Dettrey 2010). Though in this case, there has been an ongoing problem of selective contact. LGB people may choose whom to come out to, and this may inflate the effect of contact. Lewis (2011) shows that the positive effect of any form of LGB contact remains consistent across multiple permutations of how contact may manifest. While selection may still be a potential issue, Lewis (2011) indicates that this may be more about the size of the effect as opposed to its direction (see also Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2013, Skipworth, Garner & Dettrey 2010).

Political research, however, has generally observed greater support for theories of intergroup threat. White attitudes to diverse contexts result in negative responses as opposed to positive ones (Key 1949). A host of studies has continued to evidence intergroup threat (Baybeck 2006, Blalock 1967, Campbell, Wong & Citrin 2006, Glaser 1994, Glaser 2003, Hawley 2011, Siegelman & Welch 1993, Stein, Post & Rinden 2000). Contextual threat is generally understood as a product of intergroup competition (Blalock 1967). In-group members perceive the out-group as being linked to potentially damaging outcomes (Schlueter & Scheepers 2010). Contextual threat has also been evidenced in experimental frameworks by varying the level of competition with the out-group (Glaser 2003). Newman et al. (2013) also find that contextual measures from the U.S. Census do account for the way people experience and perceive their world. This validates the use of “objective” measures of social contexts, as other studies have found “subjective” measures to be endogenous to political attitudes (Martinez, Wald & Craig 2008, see also, Barth et al. 2009). For LGB people, studies suggest that contextual threat is also present (Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2012, Gaines & Garand 2010), at least for a subset of the population. These previous studies

conclude that contexts either are inconsequential to opinions on same-sex marriage or bear a negative relationship to opinions.

LGB population density may relate to the attitudes of the public because intergroup contact with minorities may be direct and indirect. For example, Enos (2014) randomized whether the *presence* of Spanish-speaking Latinos affected white attitudes on immigration policy. The treatment was not to engage in direct conversation with people but just to have indirect exposure to a minority group. Recent findings in social psychology suggest that people in general can infer a person's sexual orientation with minimal behavioral cues (Freeman et al. 2010, Johnson 2007, Nalini 1999, Rule 2008). This may mean that greater exposure to LGB people may operate similarly as other minority groups, where greater population density positively relates to opportunities for direct and indirect interactions.

I examine the extent to which contact theory and contextual threat theory apply regarding LGB people. As I have previously shown, there is a positive relationship between the population density of LGB people and the average level of support for relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples (Flores 2014). I particularly seek to reconcile the intergroup contact and threat hypotheses in order to understand the conditional nature of these theories. LGB people are a unique case for this analysis because, unlike other minority groups, LGB people are rarely born into their own communities (Sherrill 1996). This distribution provides an opportunity to examine variation across multiple contexts.¹

¹Though it should be noted that LGB people may migrate to more LGB dense areas, resulting in selection effects similar to selection effects in studies of individual-level contact. In my previous study, I used genetic matching to isolate the effect of context, and I found that after achieving balance among my observations, I still found a significant, positive effect. Also, Gates (2007) finds that migration patterns among LGB people do not significantly differ from the general public.

LGB people have previously been shown to only induce threat, at least for a subset of the population (Gaines & Garand 2010, Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2012) However, I find the opposite is the case in a different study (Flores 2014), and while other studies have concluded that context may not matter, I emphasize the importance of context in public opinion on gay rights. However, I only examined the main effect of context on attitudes on relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples, and I do not discuss how this effect may be conditional. Part of the motivation for this current study is to extend the findings from that previous work. I find, similar to previous research, intergroup contextual threat toward LGBs exists, but it does so only for a subset of the population. When extrapolated to the population of the region, I find that both intergroup contact and threat apply. This means that individuals residing in areas with greater LGB population density have differing interpretations of what that context means. I theorize that people motivate their perceptions of their contexts differently, and these different motivations condition the effects of context. As a result, both intergroup contact and intergroup conflict occur.

3.2 Contact/Context and Perception

How might intergroup contact and threat operate in tandem? There are two potential answers: differing levels of analysis and differing ways people perceive their contexts—though only the former has been theoretically developed and empirically assessed by a set of studies (Baybeck 2006, Stein, Post & Rinden 2000). The context and contact divide may be about the level of analysis. As Baybeck (2006) finds, contact may occur at a neighborhood

level of analysis while threat may occur at a higher level, which incorporates industrial centers. Intergroup threat occurs in contexts surrounding competition while intergroup contact occurs in different contexts. A similar line of reasoning has been made by Stein, Post & Rinden (2000) who elaborate how individual contact depends on context. Or at least, the chances of a respondent to know someone from a minority group are increased in regions with a greater population density of minority group members. Thus, individual contact is conditioned by contexts. Interactions with minority populations can simultaneously produce understanding and threat.

Another potential solution is that there are conditions under which some in the mass public may be threatened and others alleviated. For example, the influx of minority populations during a time of heightened national attention to that population may be sufficient to induce threat (Hopkins 2010). Social psychological research has explored the notion that people have varying ways of perceiving their contexts (Balectis & Dunning 2006). People have unconscious and conscious tendencies to perceive their environments differently. These differences can be motivated and biased (Balectis & Dunning 2006), similar to works on motivated reasoning (e.g., Taber & Lodge 2006, Taber, Cann & Kucsova 2009). Experimental research in social psychology indicates that the perceptions people have of ingroups and outgroups affect how much cognitive activity is employed by the brain (Ratner & Amodio 2013). The authors of that study conclude, “These findings show that social categories influence how we ‘see’..., thus providing insight into the process through which categorizations may lead to biased inter-group perceptions” (Ratner & Amodio 2013, p. 298). Similarly, people tend to perceive the exact same political information they receive

differently (Jerit & Barabas 2012, LaMarre, Landreville & Beam 2009). Individuals in the same context may perceive their own environments differently from one another.

Perception underlies the theory of intergroup threat, and “previous research clearly supports the assumption that *perceived* group threat increases anti-outgroup attitudes” (Schlueter & Scheepers 2010, p. 286, emphasis added). If perception underlies theories of intergroup threat and not all perceptions are created equal, then it is entirely possible for some in the mass public to be perceiving intergroup threat while others are perceiving intergroup contact. This is the other potential solution to the context/contact divide.

But what may motivate perceptions for some to interpret threat and others to interpret contact? A comprehensive literature exists about the set of “core predictors” of attitudes about LGB people and LGB rights, particularly on the issue of same-sex marriage (Brewer 2008, Gaines & Garand 2010). These core demographic predictors should be an initial area of investigation to determine the direction of heterogeneous effects of areas with greater LGB population density. In addition, recent research on heterogeneous effects of contact at the individual-level sheds light on how there may be differing effects of changing LGB contexts (Barth & Overby 2003, Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2013, Garner 2013, Skipworth, Garner & Dettrey 2010). Particularly, Skipworth, Garner & Dettrey (2010) identify that knowing someone who is LGB is moderated by ideology, identifying as an Evangelical Christian, region, and white Southern Evangelicals. Additionally, Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz (2013) find that there are partisan differences in the effect of knowing someone who is LGB, with no observable effect among strongly identified Republicans. Finally, Garner (2013) finds that knowing someone who is LGB *increases* ambivalence among conservative-leaning

respondents and *decreases* among liberal-leaning respondents.² So it would be safe to expect heterogeneous perceptions of contexts along the same lines among similar liberal-leaning and conservative-leaning respondents.

Given the current data, I investigate the potential for heterogeneous threat effects among the following conservative-leaning predictors: age, religiosity, if a respondent is black, or a Republican. And I investigate heterogeneous contact effects among the following liberal-leaning predictors: if a respondent is a female, has higher educational attainment, or is a Democrat. I also consider the potential effects of covariates that may not necessarily infer a leaning: respondents' income and the number of years they have lived in their residence. I make these additional considerations primarily for methodological reasons. Though, the number of years in residence may prove insightful regarding whether respondents who move to LGB dense areas or stay in LGB dense areas evidence contact or threat. One line of reasoning would expect that people who move to areas with more LGB people may do so out of comfort/desire to be in that environment, while the other line of reasoning would expect those that reside in these areas for a longer period of time have greater interactions with the community, increasing the magnitude of the effect.

3.3 Data and Methods

To examine the extent to which heterogeneous effects of LGB populations exist among the mass public, I use the 2008 National Annenberg Survey telephone sample, which consists of 26,141 respondents who responded to questions about the rights of LGB people.

²Conservative-leaning and liberal-leaning are defined as Evangelical/Non-Evangelical respondents, Conservative/Liberal respondents, or Republican/Democratic respondents, respectively, in Garner (2013).

The sample size of this survey provides analytical power for the examination of multilevel models and cross-level interactions, as most other surveys do not contain sizeable samples of groups in order to examine how effects vary by demographic type (e.g., African-Americans, Evangelicals, Democrats, and Republicans). This permits a much more nuanced analysis. As I have shown elsewhere, as the population density of LGB people increases, so does the likelihood of respondents to support relationship recognition rights of same-sex couples, and this pattern remains when I examine differences among relationship recognition supporters; denser LGB regions have higher likelihoods of supporting marriage recognition over civil unions. I add greater complexity in this analysis by demonstrating how these effects may be conditional on respondent characteristics.

3.3.1 Dependent Variable

The NAES surveyed respondents on their opinions regarding relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples. Respondents were able to indicate that they supported same-sex marriage (29%), civil unions (30%), or no recognition whatsoever (41%). Examining the potential for heterogeneous effects in opinions on relationship recognition and same-sex marriage specifically, allows for this analysis to complement the findings in previous works examining contextual effects on same-sex marriage (Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2012, Gaines & Garand 2010). As discussed in *Data Analysis*, I choose an analytical strategy that facilitates in analyzing the potential differences between opinions in support for relationship recognition and same-sex marriage. An opinion in favor of civil unions may carry a different meaning than an opinion in favor of same-sex marriage (e.g.,

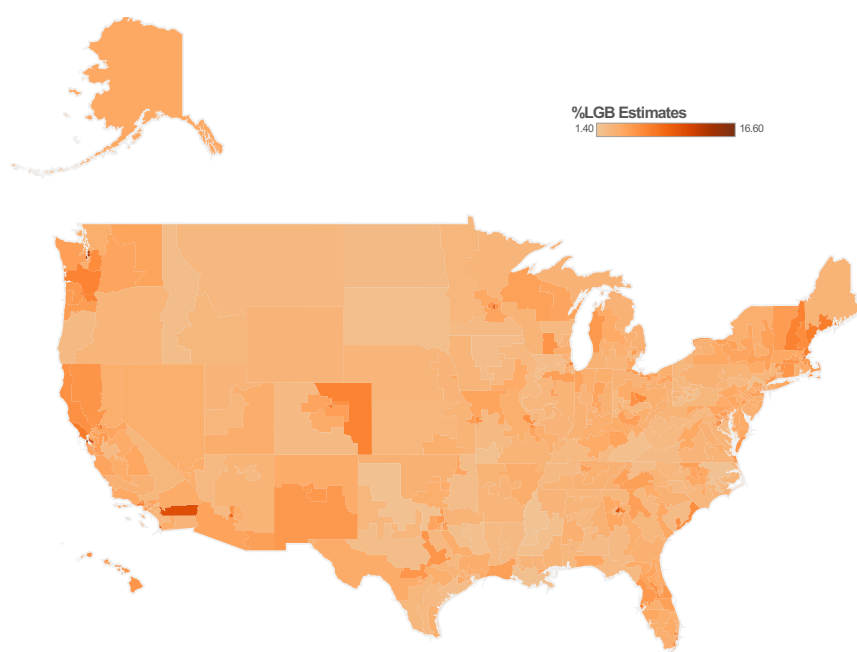
McCabe & Heerwig 2012).

3.3.2 Explanatory Variable

To measure varying contexts of LGB populations, I use population estimates of LGB people at the congressional district level. These estimates come from Gary Gates (2006), which are derived from statistical adjustments to the American Community Survey in 2006. These data previously have been used to assess whether legislators are more likely to represent LGB people as they garner a greater share of their legislative districts (Bishin 2009, Bishin & Smith 2013), and I previously have used these estimates to assess how context affects the average level of popular support for relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples (Flores 2014). These estimates are mapped in Figure 1, which provides greater detail about LGB population density by congressional district in the congressional districts for the 110th House of Representatives.

While measuring LGB populations has proven to be difficult in empirical research, the estimates from statistical authorities such as the U.S. Census with adjustments by Gates are the best available measure of this population to date, and they provide an ideal measure for this study. As provided by the SMART (2009) report, there are three key characteristics regarding sexual orientation: identity, behavior, and attraction. Social science researchers are recommended to select the appropriate characteristic of sexual orientation that theoretically fits their study. Gates's estimates are more clearly measuring respondents who identify as LGB, and identification has been shown to correspond with political changes among LGB people (Lewis, Rogers & Sherrill 2011, Egan 2012). Additionally, Gates's es-

Figure 3.1: The percentage of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals (LGBs) by Congressional District for the 110th session of Congress. Estimates range from 1.4% to 16.6% of the Congressional District.



estimates have been validated with a separate dataset provided by the Gallup organization, measuring identification with the LGBT community (Gates & Newport 2012). For the purposes of this study, estimates of those who identify as LGB are preferable, since identity adoption likely carries with it social and political changes unlike behavior or attraction (see Egan, Edelman & Sherrill 2008, Flores & Sherrill 2013*b*). Though these estimates may still have a measure of error in them, it is a necessary assumption that such errors are random.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

The model is one that examines whether a group level variable interacts with individual level variables, so I use quasi-Bayesian multilevel models that allow for a cross-level interaction.³ The dependent variable is one that examines popular support for different types of relationship recognition for same-sex couples or not supporting any form of relationship recognition. A study has indicated that reports of support for civil unions are conceptually distinct from support for same-sex marriage (McCabe & Heerwig 2012), but they are more similar than an expression of lack of support. In an experimental setting, respondents who indicate first that they do not support same-sex marriage have a stronger tendency to subsequently report supporting civil unions. This indicates that some respondents evidence some level of support for same-sex relationship recognition that makes them different from respondents who do not think that there should be any legal recognition.

I use a sequential logistic regression model to operationalize the linkages among opinions

³A fully Bayesian analysis would be most preferable for this sort of analysis because of the flexibility in Bayesian multilevel models with complex interactions (Gelman et al. 2014). However, complex models are computationally intensive, so a quasi-Bayesian approach provides benefits of Bayesian inference while not being fully Bayes. Such approaches have been justified in other work (Ghitza & Gelman 2013).

in favor of relationship recognition versus no recognition and opinions in favor of same-sex marriage versus civil unions. This model first estimates whether a respondent favors some form of relationship recognition, and then among those who favor some form of relationship recognition, I analyze whether this is support for marriage or civil unions. This procedure is similar to an ordinal logistic regression model, except that the coefficients are not constrained to be constant across conditions of the dependent variable. Additionally, I model cross-level interactions in a varying intercept, varying slope multilevel model. More specifically, I model the first step in the sequential model as in Equation 1:

$$\Pr(y_i = \text{Marriages or Unions}) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\alpha_{j[i]} + X_i\beta_{j[i]}) \quad (3.1)$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} \alpha_j \\ \beta_j \end{pmatrix} \sim \text{N} \left(\begin{pmatrix} \gamma_0^\alpha + \gamma_1^\alpha * u_j^{lgbpop} + \gamma_2^\alpha * u_j^{ideol} + \gamma_3^\alpha * u_j^{med.income} + \gamma_4^\alpha * u_j^{pct.urban} \\ \gamma_0^\beta + \gamma_1^\beta * u_j^{lgbpop} \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_\alpha^2 & \rho\sigma_\alpha\sigma_\beta \\ \rho\sigma_\alpha\sigma_\beta & \sigma_\beta^2 \end{pmatrix} \right).$$

I model multiple district-level covariates to estimate the average level of popular support (α_j) in a congressional district. This includes the central variable of interest, the percentage of LGB people in a congressional district, and district covariates: the average ideology of a congressional district (operationalized by the first dimension DW-NOMINATE score of the district's member of the U.S. House of Representatives), median income of the district, and the percentage of residents in a district that reside in urban areas. I model the effect of the individual-level covariates (β_j) to vary with the effect of the percentage of LGBs in the district as a covariate. This provides the cross-level interaction between individual-level

covariates and the district-level covariate (*lgbpop*).⁴ I then model the second step as follows for equation 2:⁵

$$\Pr(y_i = \text{Marriages} | \text{Marriages or Unions}) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\alpha_{j[i]} + X_i \beta_{j[i]}) \quad (3.2)$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} \alpha_j \\ \beta_j \end{pmatrix} \sim N \left(\begin{pmatrix} \gamma_0^\alpha + \gamma_1^\alpha * u_j^{lgbpop} + \gamma_2^\alpha * u_j^{ideol} + \gamma_3^\alpha * u_j^{med.income} + \gamma_4^\alpha * u_j^{pct.urban} \\ \gamma_0^\beta + \gamma_1^\beta * u_j^{lgbpop} \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_\alpha^2 & \rho\sigma_\alpha\sigma_\beta \\ \rho\sigma_\alpha\sigma_\beta & \sigma_\beta^2 \end{pmatrix} \right).$$

The same structure is applied in this model as in the previous one, and the only change is that the focus of this model is to examine variation among those who support some form of legal recognition for same-sex couples. At the individual-level, the controlling covariates include gender, age, age², income, religiosity, identifying as black, educational attainment, identifying as an Evangelical Christian, identifying as a Democrat or a Republican, and the years that a respondent has resided in the same place.⁶ As previously indicated, the individual covariates are interacted with % LGB to identify to what extent effects of contexts are conditioned by differing perceptions of that context.

3.4 Results

The results of the two models are presented in Figure 2, with the regression coefficients for the first model plotted above the regression coefficients for the second model

⁴Alternative specifications could also model the individual-level covariates by each of the district-level covariates. These models get increasingly complex, and statistical programs will crash with so many parameters and a large dataset. Including multiple cross-level interactions falls outside the scope of this inquiry.

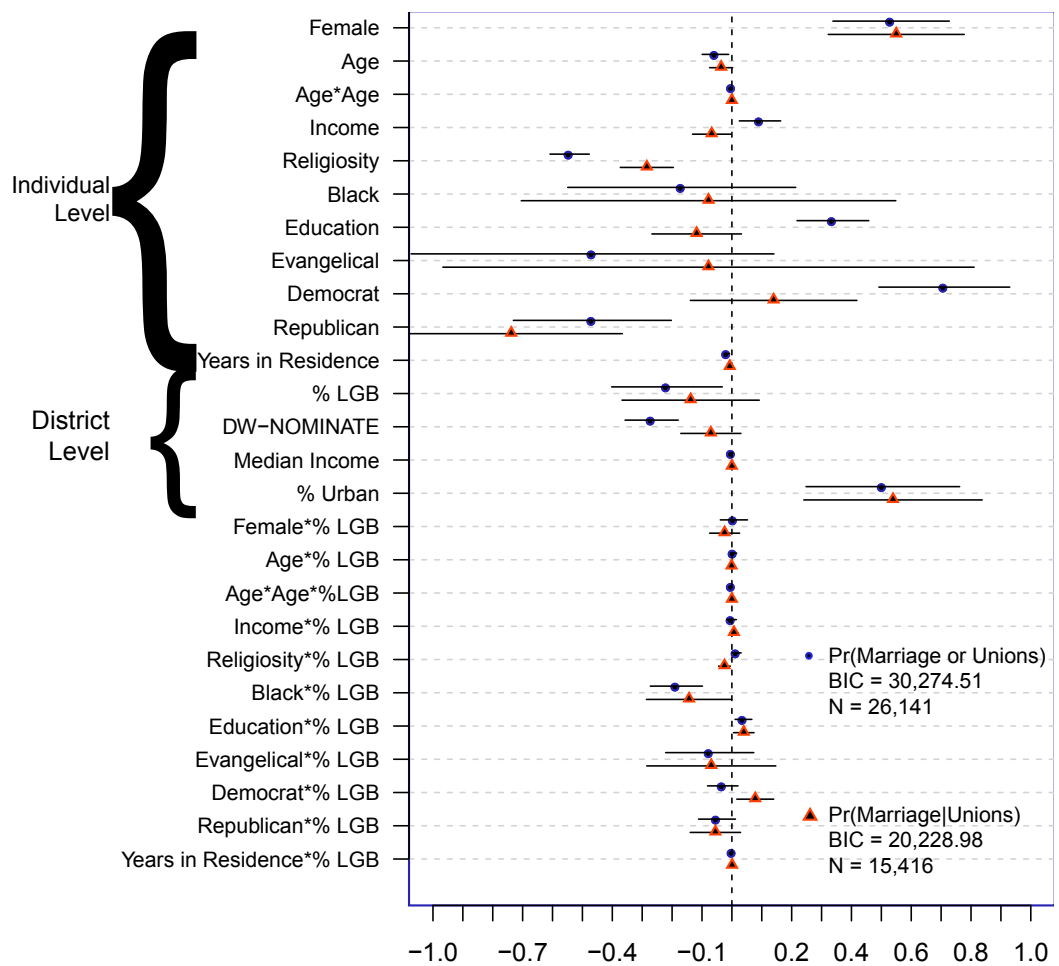
⁵Subsequent references to this model are referred to at times as Pr(Marriage); readers should note that this is Pr(Marriages|Marriages or Unions).

⁶Respondents who identify as LGB are removed from this analysis in order to clearly operationalize the concept of intergroup contact and threat.

for each covariate. The tails in the figure represent the 95% credible intervals. The first set of coefficients is the individual covariate effects, and the second set is the district covariate effects. The third set is the interactions between each individual covariate and LGB population density. Overall, the results indicate that the sequential logistic model is a valid approach to this data analysis. The magnitude (and in some cases the direction) of the effects differ substantially between an analysis of opinions in favor relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples and an analysis of whether such favoritism is for marriage or civil unions.

Individual covariate effects. Given the interactions, the individual covariate effects are the overall effects when there are no LGB people in a district. The interactive effects indicate how these effects change by contexts. By examining solely the individual covariate effects, there are some common findings. A gender-gap is evident in both models, indicating the women are more likely than men to favor relationship recognition and same-sex marriage in particular. Older respondents tend to be opposed to any form of same-sex relationship recognition than younger ones, and among those who are in favor, tend to be in favor of civil unions instead of same-sex marriages. Though it is difficult to understand why income may account for variation in marriage recognition rights for same-sex couples, the results indicate that more affluent respondents tend to support relationship recognition rights but tend to favor civil unions instead of same-sex marriage than respondents with less income. Respondents who more frequently attend religious services tend to reject the rights of same-sex couples to marry and favor civil over same-sex marriage than respondents who less frequently attend religious services. There are no significant differences between

Figure 3.2: Regression results from a multilevel logistic regression with varying intercepts, varying slopes, and cross-level interactions, the results were computed in **R** (v. 3.0.2), packages arm (v. 1.6-10) and lme4 (v. 1.0-4), and the segments represent 95% credible intervals



black respondents and others, though the effect in both models is negative. Respondents with greater educational attainment are more likely to support legal recognition than those with less education, but there is an insignificant tendency for those with greater educational attainment to support civil unions over marriage. A partisan divide exists with Democrats more likely to support legal recognition and Republicans less likely. The longer respondents reside in their homes tends to lessen the likelihood of supporting legal recognition.

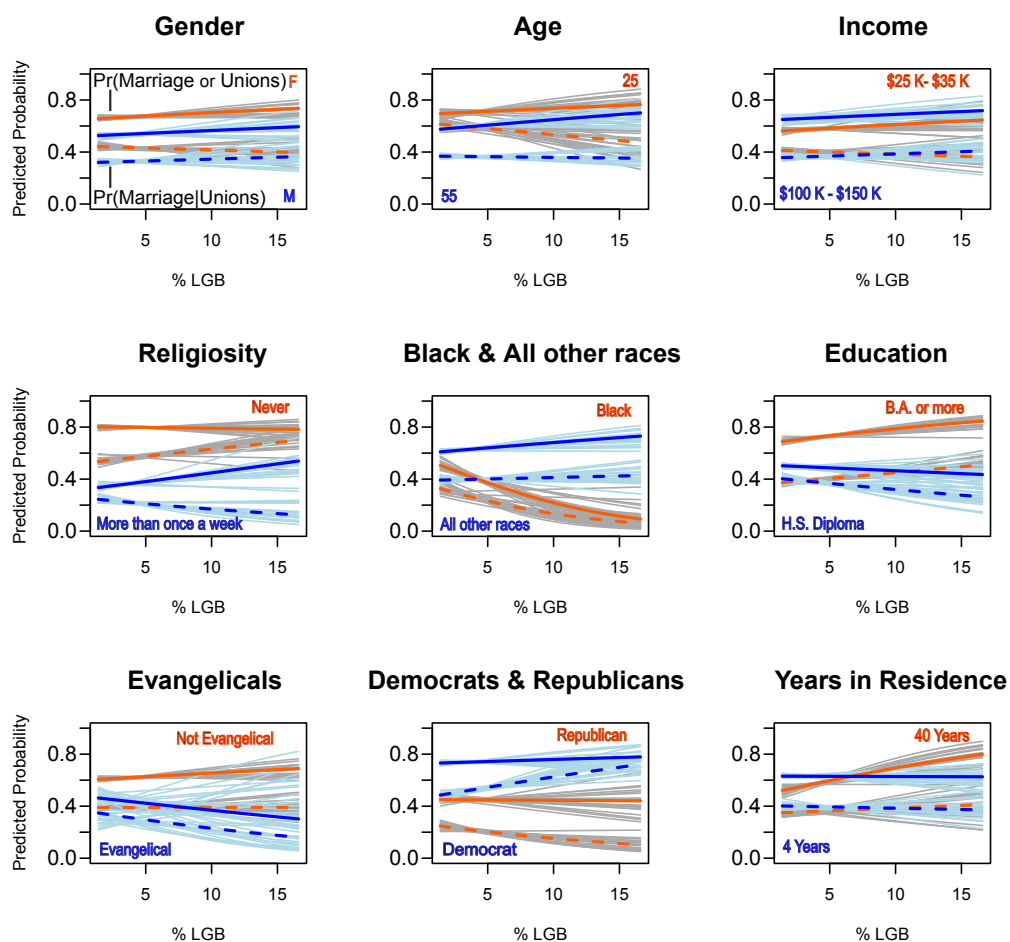
District covariate effects. Once interactions are included, it is difficult to interpret the main effect of % LGB without a meaningful reference group. If all the individual covariates are held constant, then the main effect of % LGB indicates that respondents who reside in denser LGB regions of the country are less likely to support legal recognition of same-sex couples, and among those who support some form, there is an insignificant tendency to support civil unions. As discussed in the next section, this inference is not uniform. Respondents who reside in more conservative districts are less likely to support legal recognition, and among those who support recognition, there is an insignificant relationship toward supporting civil unions over marriage. Respondents who reside in districts that are more urban tend to be much more supportive of legal recognition and same-sex marriage than those who reside in districts that are less urban.

Interaction effects. The interactions in Figure 1 indicate numerous null effects, which means that the estimated effect of % LGB may not be conditioned by many of the modeled demographic characteristics. Notable in the results are the significant effects of religiosity, race, education, and partisanship. Respondents who more frequently attend church and who reside in more LGB dense areas are *more likely* to support legal recognition

than frequent church attendees in less LGB dense areas. However, among supporters of some form of legal recognition, greater religiosity in more LGB dense areas results in a greater likelihood to support civil unions instead of marriages when compared to those in less LGB dense areas. Respondents who identify as black are less likely to support legal recognition and marriage as the percentage of their district is more LGB. Respondents with greater educational attainment who reside in LGB dense areas are more likely to support legal recognition and marriage than respondents in less LGB dense areas. Also, context matters for Democrats in that they are more likely to support legal recognition in LGB dense areas than Democrats in less LGB dense areas. I further examine the results of all the interactions, as null coefficients may not fully characterize whether and how these interactions operate (Kam & Franzee 2007). To investigate this, I post-estimate the likelihood of supporting legal recognition and same-sex marriage for all of the individual-level covariates in Figure 2.

As Kam & Franzee (2007) recommend, plotting covariate effects with interactions provides greater detail about the magnitude and direction of those effects, and an interpretation of solely the coefficients may result in inferential errors (p. 19–22). I predict the probability respondents support relationship recognition for same-sex couples and same-sex marriage by varying the % LGB (x-axis) for different demographic characteristics of the respondents. These curves are calculated by the average predictive comparison method, which calculates the effect of the variables of interest while averaging over the other covariate effects (Gelman & Pardoe 2007). The 3x3 plot in Figure 2 provides four estimated logistic regression curves in each panel. The colors of the curves reflect different demographic

Figure 3.3: The effect of LGB population density in a Congressional District by individual demographic characteristics averaging over all other covariates, darker lines are the average prediction and the lighter lines represent 20 simulations. The solid line is the probability in favor of relationship recognition versus all else, and the dashed line is the probability in favor of same-sex marriage versus civil unions. The colors represent different, comparable subgroups with the orange/blue text identifying the orange/blue lines.



groups, such as the top-left panel where orange curves are the predicted probabilities for women and blue curves are the predicted probabilities for men. In each panel, I provide a label for which demographic group is being represented by the color of the curve, and I title each panel to provide a contextual basis for comparisons. The solid curves are the predictions for relationship recognition, and the dashed curves are the predictions for favorability of same-sex marriage. Also plotted are 20 simulation draws from the regression model, which approximates 95% credible intervals about the prediction (Gelman & Hill 2007).

As evidenced in Figure 2, some demographic attributes are not conditioned by context. This is the case for gender and income. There are also demographic attributes that evidence varying effects due to the changes in context. This is the case for all the other demographic characteristics of the respondents. I will discuss each covariate in turn.

Age. When comparing the differences among respondents who are 65 years old and 25 years old, there is generally an age gap between the two groups, with the younger respondents more likely to support relationship recognition and same-sex marriage than older ones. These inferences change as context varies. There is a significant age gap among respondents in a low LGB context, but these gaps are no longer significant in high LGB contexts. As the LGB population density increases, any differences between 65 year olds and 25 year olds diminish. This observation also shows that 25 year old respondents in a context more LGB people are *less likely* to support same-sex marriage than 25 year-old respondents in a context with less LGB people, while there is not a measurable difference among 65 year olds.

Religiosity. Respondents who attend church more than once a week are less likely

to support relationship recognition for same-sex couples and same-sex marriage when compared to respondents who never attend church. Among respondents who never attend church, varying the LGB population density has no effect on their likelihood of supporting same-sex relationship recognition. There is, however, an observed effect among these respondents when it comes to same-sex marriage, where these respondents who reside in denser LGB regions are more likely to favor marriage. For respondents who attend church weekly, as the LGB population density increases there is an increase in the likelihood of supporting relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples. The effect is different among highly attendant relationship recognition supporters; as LGB population density increases, there is a *lower* likelihood to support same-sex marriage.

Race. There are minimal and insignificant differences between black respondents and respondents who do not identify as black in low LGB contexts. As the LGB population density increases, the effects diverge. Non-black respondents have a weakly positive trend to relationship recognition and same-sex marriage. Black respondents have a strongly negative trend to relationship recognition and same-sex marriage. This suggests that black and non-black respondents in high LGB contexts are distinct and polar on their views of same-sex relationship rights.

Education. Divergent effects of LGB population density are observed between respondents with a college degree and those with a high school diploma. As the LGB population density increases, support for relationship recognition and same-sex marriage increases among respondents with a college degree but decreases support among respondents with a high school diploma. The results indicate that respondents with a college degree in a

low LGB context are more likely to support civil unions than the same types of respondents in denser LGB contexts.

Evangelism. There is no observable effect among respondents who do not identify as Evangelical, but there are observable effects among respondents who do identify as Evangelical. As the % LGB increases, Evangelical respondents are less likely to support relationship recognition rights and same-sex marriage. The effect on relationship recognition is less stable than other inferences, but the effect on same-sex marriage evidences significant differences between Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals in dense LGB contexts.

Partisanship. Democrats are more likely to support relationship recognition and same-sex marriage than Republicans, regardless of context. Also, opinions on relationship recognition do not vary by LGB population density. Among respondents who do support relationship recognition, Republicans are more likely to support civil unions, and this likelihood increases as the LGB population density increases. For Democrats as the LGB population density increases, there is an increase in support for same-sex marriage instead of civil unions, while at the lowest LGB context Democrats are no more or less likely to support same-sex marriage versus civil unions.

Years in Residence. When comparing respondents who have resided 40 years in the same home versus respondents who have lived in their homes for 4 years, I find that there tends to be no contextual effect when determining the likelihood of supporting same-sex marriage. There is, however, an effect of context on relationship recognition among respondents who have resided in their homes for 40 years. As the LGB population density increases, respondents who have resided in their residence for 40 years are significantly more

likely to support relationship recognition rights for same-sex couples.

To summarize and connect these findings to intergroup contact and threat, Table 1 distills the findings from the empirical results. As Table 1 indicates, there is support for both intergroup contact and threat, suggesting that both theories explain variation in public opinion and that context matters in differing ways for subsets of the mass public. When it comes to relationship recognition, there are six instances of intergroup contact and four instances of intergroup threat. For opinions in favor of same-sex marriage versus civil unions, there are six instances both supporting intergroup contact and threat.

3.5 Discussion

While there have been many studies investigating to what extent out-group presence affects the opinions people have about the rights of that out-group, there have been few studies that seek to reconcile competing theories (exceptions being Baybeck 2006, Stein, Post & Rinden 2000). Other studies model conditional theories regarding varying LGB contexts (e.g., Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2012, Gaines & Garand 2010), but they do little to theorize why this may be the case. Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz (2012) approach this question with symbolic politics. For Evangelicals in the mass public, LGB people may be more of a symbol for antagonism because church-leaders have solidified the linkage between morality and homosexuality. Though explanatory of one finding, it may not encompass the breadth for why heterogeneous effects occur. These approaches have left theoretical development on the topic wanting, and empirical evidence is in need of theoretical understanding, providing a lens to understand modeling decisions and results.

Table 3.1: Summary of findings by demographic category and whether the result indicates intergroup contact or context in support (\checkmark), rejection (x), or no relation (-)

Demographic Group	Rel. Recognition		Same-Sex Marriage	
	Contact	Threat	Contact	Threat
Gender				
Male	-	-	-	-
Female	-	-	-	-
Age				
Young	\checkmark	x	x	\checkmark
Old	\checkmark	x	-	-
Income				
\$25K-\$35K	-	-	-	-
\$100K-\$150K	-	-	-	-
Religiosity				
Low	-	-	\checkmark	x
High	\checkmark	x	x	\checkmark
Race				
Black	x	\checkmark	x	\checkmark
All other races	\checkmark	x	\checkmark	x
Education				
H.S. Diploma	x	\checkmark	x	\checkmark
B.A. or more	\checkmark	x	\checkmark	x
Evangelism				
Evangelical	x	\checkmark	x	\checkmark
Not Evangelical	\checkmark	x	\checkmark	x
Partisanship				
Democrat	-	-	\checkmark	x
Republican	x	\checkmark	x	\checkmark
Residency				
Newly Moved	-	-	-	-
Long-time Residents	-	-	\checkmark	x

Empirical evaluations of intergroup contact and threat rely on the notion that people perceive their respective contexts uniformly. However, recent psychological studies suggest that this perspective may be myopic. People have the tendency to perceive their contexts differently (Balectis & Dunning 2006), and this variation may be biased to the preexisting values, norms, and other traits that vary among people who are in the same context. Perception is the process by which people understand the world around them, and people can motivate their perceptions to interpret the same setting differently (Jerit & Barabas 2012, LaMarre, Landreville & Beam 2009, Ratner & Amodio 2013). This suggests that while some in a context with denser out-group members would experience threat, others would experience contact.

The current study finds that there are differing interpretations of contexts due to the demographic attributes of respondents. For some of the respondents, residing in a dense LGB context produces polarized views regarding the relationship recognition rights of same-sex couples: examples being the differing effects of context among respondents with different levels of educational attainment—with respondents having a college degree more likely to perceive contact and respondents with a high school diploma perceiving threat. The college experience is generally associated with exposure to diversity, which likely permits college educated respondents to interpret diverse contexts differently than respondents who did not have that experience (Lottes & Kuriloff 1994). However, there is also some evidence that greater out-group presence creates conflict within the same demographic group. Among high religiosity respondents, residing in an area with more LGB people corresponds with an increase in support for the relationship rights of LGB people. However, the findings

also suggest that this is greater favor for civil unions, indicating that for respondents who frequently attend religious services, there is both an affirmation of rights and a reconciliation with religious creed.

My findings are consistent with recent empirical developments on differences among respondents who personally know someone who is LGB and the ways in which such personal contact affects them (Barth & Overby 2003, Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2013, Garner 2013, Skipworth, Garner & Dettrey 2010). Those studies find that some people are more greatly affected by having such contact while others are not. Additionally, Garner (2013) observes that the direction of the effects are potentially different, increasing ambivalence among conservatives (i.e., making them more uncertain about their opposition) and decreasing ambivalence among liberals (i.e., making them more certain about their support). Just as demographic characteristics alter the effects of personally knowing someone who is LGB, I find differing effects of varying contexts. I am also able to observe whether these differences manifest as support for relationship recognition rights or if differences really manifest along the lines of same-sex marriage. Context has no observable effect among Democrats regarding their support for some form of relationship recognition. As the Democratic Party has expanded its coalition to be inclusive of LGB people (Karol 2013), it makes sense that support bears no relationship to context. This is also consistent with a symbolic politics approach to these effects. However in 2008, the Democratic Party was quite unclear about its position on same-sex marriage, and the results indicate that context matters in situating the opinions of Democrats, with Democrats in denser LGB regions more supportive of marriage recognition.

A final point of discussion on these results are the effects observed for respondents who remained in the same residency for decades. The positive effect may potentially speak to two aspects about context. These respondents may have remained in their residency because they perceived their context as not threatening, while those who found their residency threatening may have out-migrated. The respondents who stayed may have also witnessed and interacted with LGBs reducing any potential for threat. Either way, it seems that the people who stay and witness a LGB presence form around them tend to be influenced by that presence. The LGB Rights Movement has conducted public education campaigns emphasizing “Why Marriage Matters,”⁷ and it would seem that respondents who have greater opportunities over the years would engage in conversations that elaborate on why marriage recognition matters to LGB people and why civil unions may not be satisfactory.

Out-group presence carries with it implications about the political opinions people have regarding that out-group. Though not uniform in its effects, it is clear from this analysis that both intergroup threat and contact occur. This reconciles the ongoing “competing” hypotheses of contact and threat suggesting that previous studies observing unconditional effects (or null effects) may have observed what the effect of context is on average, but the findings may not end there. What occurs on average may not be the case for some in the mass public. I find that minority group presence is both politically beneficial and harmful to minority populations.

⁷See www.whymarriagematters.org/ as an example, which is hosted by the advocacy organization, Freedom to Marry.

Chapter 4

How Do Subconstituents Matter?

Unpacking Demography and

Constituent Opinion on the

Representation of LGBT People

Abstract

Minority groups may never garner a majority in any legislative district, leaving them unlikely to be represented in legislative politics. A recent theory contends that when an intense group of citizens cares passionately about policy outcomes, representatives may opt to represent those interests contrary to the desires of the majority of their constituency. In the case of LGBT rights, this theory explains why some representatives choose to vote in favor of supportive LGBT policies. Minority groups, however, do not exist in a vacuum from a broader constituency, and their presence may affect the attitudes of those around them. I show that a mechanism exists whereby LGB people positively affect the attitudes of those around them, and this mechanism results in some legislators to be consistent supporters of LGB rights and devote greater energy on building such support. These findings indicate that the presence of minority groups alters the political environment, which provides greater opportunities for such groups to be represented and advance policies benefiting them.

Keywords: Representation, LGBT rights, subconstituency politics, Latent class analysis

4.1 Introduction

One thing I would certainly push strenuously is early introduction of both the repeal bill in the House and the Senate and every effort possible to have a growing number of cosponsors that signal clear additional support in the direction of repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act.

- U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin

Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender (LGBT) people will likely never garner a majority of the country, a state, or a legislative district in the United States. LGBT people are positioned to rely on the democratic process to develop and produce policies that will benefit and protect them. As a social minority, these benefits span from protections from workplace discrimination and hate crimes to the legal recognition of relationship status. These policies even matter for access to basic public accommodations such as the use of a bathroom, board a bus, and have equal access to housing. LGBT people have found some level of substantive remedy from the courts (e.g., *Romer v. Evans* 1996, *Lawrence v. Texas* 2003, *United States v. Windsor* 2013), and the post-*Windsor* legal battleground indicates that subsequent development on same-sex marriage policy will likely develop through the courts. On other policies, however, the legislative process has been the primary mechanism through which LGBT people have sought protections, particularly the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and similar statewide and municipal non-discrimination ordinances. This legislative dependence places a high priority on the actions of representatives, who are being asked to vote for the rights of a minority group.

A primary characteristic of pluralism is competition, which inherently biases the collective good over individualistic or minority interests. However, a democratic society is

consistently faced with a difficulty of balancing majority desire and respect for the rights of minority groups. This is especially the case for social minorities. For minority groups, in order to receive a policy that satisfies a particular interest may, at times, be the product of representatives who ignored popular sovereignty for the particular interests of the minority group (Bishin 2009, Bishin & Smith 2013). However, most studies find that is more common to find a direct relationship between majority constituent opinion and the attitudes of lawmakers (Miller & Stokes 1963). The voting behavior of members of congress are also responsive to constituent opinion, though at times may not be congruent to constituent desires (Krimmel, Lax & Phillips 2013, Lax & Phillips 2009*a*). How can a minority group ever receive substantive representation in such an environment?

When it comes to representation of minority group interests, there are four prevailing theories: majoritarianism, subconstituency politics, partisan politics, and electoral capture (Bishin & Smith 2013). Majoritarianism would predict that legislators would reflect the desires of the median voter, that is, the average level of popular support for an issue should reflect the voting behavior of the member of Congress. Several studies have fostered this belief (e.g., Wright, Erikson & McIver 1994). Subconstituency politics, on the other hand, proposes that representatives are responsive to the desires of an impassioned minority of constituents who are attentive to the actions of representatives on *specific* pieces of legislation over others, and representatives opt to make decisions based on the desires of these subconstituencies rather than the median voter. Since voters do not have uniform interests, it is logical for representatives to expand their electoral coalitions by doing this, especially if the group under question is a part of the party brand (Karol 2000, Karol 2013).

Partisanship may serve a different function. Lawmakers may additionally feel constrained by the party brand through direct and indirect control of the lawmaking process (Cox & McCubbins 1993, Cox & McCubbins 2005, Rohde 1991). A final theory is that of electoral capture, which posits that representatives have *no incentive* to represent minority groups in electoral conditions where the group would opt to reelect that candidate instead of any opponent (Frymer 1999, Smith 2007).

A previous study assessed whether members of Congress voted on the Defense of Marriage Act (1996) consistent with each of these four theoretical models (Bishin & Smith 2013). The authors found that a party-based model and electoral capture model were the *least* able to correctly predict the votes of members of Congress. The majoritarian and subconstituency politics models were both more explanatory, indicating that both theories potentially explain why some members of Congress chose to support DOMA. The authors subsequently show that public opinion and subconstituency politics had *independent* and significant effects on votes on DOMA, which indicated that both theories explain portions of the variation present.

What the previous study did not do was reconcile the two best-fitting models. Instead, both theories were valid in explaining the actions of legislators. According to Flores (2014), greater population densities of LGB people is related to how much local approval there is for the legal recognition of same-sex couples. That study suggests that it may be better to not consider majoritarianism and subconstituency politics as discrete theories. If subconstituents influence the environments around them, then this may provide a way to show *how* subconstituency politics operates. A representative may, at times, be repre-

senting a subconstituency *not* at the cost of the majority will. There may be mechanism through which subconstituents generate *greater* representation by influencing the broader constituency.¹ “Greater” representation in this context means that representatives will spend more energy on bills pertinent to a minority group.

Representatives may choose to devote greater energy on certain bills over others. The quote at the beginning of the chapter from U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin is representative of “greater” representation. Baldwin is the first openly gay Senator, and she discusses the energy she is devoting to a bill to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act. Representatives signal their support to colleagues, constituents, and advocacy groups with co-sponsorships, and they build and maintain reputations by consistently supporting certain bills throughout the lawmaking process (Crisp, Kanthak & Leijonhufvud 2004, Koger 2003). These signals also act to legitimate the efforts of social movements seeking policy change (King, Cornwall & Dahlin 2005). Representatives who co-sponsor bills in response to the desires of minority groups are clearly building a strong reputation for being supportive of a community that is not reflective of their entire constituency. While Senator Baldwin may have personal origins to her tireless advocacy on policies affecting LGBT people (e.g., Burden 2007, Haider-Markel 2010, Reynolds 2010), the representation and greater devotion of resources to LGBT-related policies are not isolated to LGBT representatives (Heersink & Short 2014, Karol 2013). Subconstituency politics has yet to integrate when and how representatives may devote and expend greater energy, and as I show in the next section, the theory is able to explain why some representatives are consistent co-sponsors while others

¹This mechanism may also backslash because the presence of minority groups induces greater threat among those around them (Enos 2014, Hopkins 2010). If so, then representatives may choose to represent subconstituents without consideration of the median voter, as would be predicted by subconstituency politics.

are not.

4.2 Symbolic and Substantive Representation

Greater energy on some pieces of legislation may be a symbolic exercise. It provides a signal to constituents that the representative is a steadfast supporter of some issues over others (Crisp, Kanthak & Leijonhufvud 2004, Koger 2003). However, most bills do not become laws, which means that co-sponsorships indicate what a representative “stands for” while floor votes indicate what a representative “acts for” (Pitkin 1967). Signals sent by co-sponsorships facilitate intra-legislative politics, by forming coalitions and networks that subsequently advance similar policies even if the current bill is known to fail (Harward & Moffett 2010). Symbolic actions facilitate greater opportunities for substantive policy.

Representatives, according to the subconstituency politics model, are expected to “appeal to intense groups of citizens” (Bishin & Smith 2013, p. 4). And they do so to satisfy electoral incentives: “politicians appeal to minority preferences over those of the majority when the benefit of advocating the minority’s position outweighs the cost of alienating the less interested majority” (Bishin 2009, p. 13). Given the previous discussion, these appeals can be varied with some representatives devoting greater energy in making these appeals over others. I theorize that this is because some representatives may be acting in response to an intense group citizens not overlooking their median voter, which provides them with an incentive to devote greater energy. If it is assumed that representatives most important interest is reelection (Mayhew 1974), then representatives face little electoral backlash (and may actually benefit) for advocating for a minority group. This also reconciles subcon-

stituency politics and majoritarianism: it is not either/or as opposed to a combination of the two theories that explain representative behavior.

Table 4.1: Elements of Subconstituency Politics

		Median Voter	
		Favor Policy	Oppose Policy
Subconstituent Desire	Favor Policy	Greater energy hypothesis	Bishin (2009)
	Oppose Policy	Bishin & Smith (2013)	?

In Bishin’s framework, the minority is consistently at odds with the majority, but this is only one of four scenarios, as detailed in Table 4.1. If a minority group desires a policy while the median voter does not prefer it, then a representative may seek to support the policy at the expense of the median voter. Also, a minority group may *not* want a policy while the median voter desires it; this negative power was explored in Bishin & Smith (2013) on DOMA. Table 4.1 also provides the possibility that *both* the subconstituent and the median voter agree on policy outcomes. If they both favor the policy, then legislators may find it to their benefit to expend greater energy on that policy. Table 4.1 also has an unobservable quadrant, and this is the case when both the subconstituent and median voter agree on not passing a policy. In this case, representatives have an incentive to not act and vote against the policy. The reason that it is unobservable is that not co-sponsoring and voting “no” are collinear.²

My theory re-places the median voter as important to the behavior of legislators.

This, however, does not displace minority groups. Minority groups affect their social and

²Though not of focus here, it may also be explored whether this scenario encourages lawmakers to expend more energy in building coalitions to oppose a policy. However, this scenario would seem only plausible on bills that make it to a floor vote. These are cases when the law may actually consequential to outcomes. My current treatment of energy is unidirectional in support of bills.

political environments, influencing the attitudes of others around them. Their presence, as subconstituents, offers a mechanism through which presence fosters understanding and greater support among the populace that then permits a representative to devote greater time, energy, and resources on policies affecting the minority.

I expect the following as consistent with a theory of subconstituency politics:

H1: As a subconstituency's population density increases in a legislative district, representatives will be more likely to co-sponsor and vote consistent with that group's desires.

I also expect the following as a primary mechanism that explains how subconstituencies gain influence and why some representatives expend more energy than others:

H2: Representatives will be more likely to devote greater energy on bills because subconstituent population density positively affects the environment around them.

The theory and hypotheses do not reject the notion that representatives may choose to represent a minority group while ignoring the interests of the median voter. However, it is under those circumstances that a representative will take the minimal amount of action to substantively represent the minority group. This way, the representative does not gain a solid reputation for devoting too much energy to a minority group that does not garner the favor of the majority of the constituency.

The hypotheses also emphasize the role of *mechanisms* that underly the relationship between subconstituencies and representative behavior. Legislators who expend greater amounts of energy ought to do so because of the mechanism from subconstituents to influencing the attitudes of the average constituent. This mechanism ought not be present for representatives who are shirking the majority in favor of the minority.

4.3 Analytical Strategy

The examination of these hypotheses requires merging numerous sources of data. To examine the robustness and stability of the effects, I examine two legislative sessions of the U.S. House of Representatives: the 110th and the 112th.

Actions on bills. I codified all LGBT-relevant bills in Congress and recorded whether the legislator took actions (co-sponsored or voted) on that bill at its last stage in the legislative process.³ These bills range in their topical focus on LGBT rights from marriage equality to non-discrimination and “don’t ask, don’t tell.” Each bill will be detailed in the following two sections. Since representatives can opt to take-up bills at different legislative stages, I examine how representatives acted on these bills only at their last stage. For bills that made it to a floor vote, this is how the representative voted. For bills that did not make it to the floor, it was whether representative was a co-sponsor of the bill.⁴

I measure energy on bills by latent class analysis (LCA). Since each action is dichotomous, LCA groups representatives into their most likely grouping based on these actions, and it is a “tool used to classify objects for further analysis” (Bakk, Oberski & Vermunt 2014, p. 520). The use of this analytical strategy is widely applied in political science (Feick 1989, Hill & Kriesi 2001*a*, Hill & Kriesi 2001*b*, Linzer 2011). I propose (and the data supports) three latent classes: (1) Always Supporters; (2) Floor Voters; and (3) Non-Supporters. The Always Supporters group contains all representatives who expend

³LGBT relevant bills were determined by whether they were used in the Human Rights Campaign, a prominent, national LGBT advocacy organization, Congressional Scorecards.

⁴The inclusion of whether the representative was a co-sponsor of bill that made it floor did not substantively alter the present findings. The motivation for the current strategy is twofold: (1) it is consistent with how the Human Rights Campaign scored legislators on LGBT issues and (2) it does not over-privilege the bills that made it to a floor vote, which other strategies would give them greater weight.

greater amounts of energy on LGBT rights by being consistent co-sponsors and voters in the favor of LGBT people. The Floor Voters group contains all representatives who consistently employ the minimal amount of energy to deliver policy to LGBT people by voting in their favor on the floor. The Non-Supporters group contains all representatives who consistently oppose LGBT rights by not being co-sponsors or not voting in favor of LGBT rights on the floor.

Subconstituency measures. I utilize two estimates of the LGB population to operationalize the presence of that subconstituency. For the 110th Congress, I use the population estimates by congressional district of LGB people as reported in Gates (2006). The report contains population estimates that are adjusted to minimize biases, since the U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, and American Community Survey do not presently ask people about their sexual orientation. For the 112th Congress, I use the adjusted measures of same-sex couples as reported in the 2010 U.S. Census Summary File 3. These estimates have also been adjusted to correct for “false positives,” which occur when an opposite-sex couple accidentally identifies as a same-sex couple (see O’Connell & Feliz 2011).

District opinion. To measure opinions on LGBT rights, I rely on estimates produced by multilevel logistic regression and poststratification (MRP). The estimation strategy has consistently been shown to validly measure subnational opinions from national polling data (Lax & Phillips 2009b, Warshaw & Rodden 2012). And social issues, like LGBT rights are least susceptible to estimation error (Buttice & Highton 2013). The estimation procedure requires large national samples with geo-codes available at the level of analysis that is to be poststratified. For the 110th Congress, I rely on a measure of public opinion on

relationship recognition from the 2008 National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES), which asked respondents whether they supported marriages for same-sex couples, domestic partnerships, or no recognition at all. I dichotomize this measure by combining marriages and domestic partnerships, which makes this measure support for legal recognition for same-sex couples. For the 112th Congress, I rely on a measure of public opinion on marriages for same-sex couples from the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES). The estimates were generated using Bayesian markov chain montecarlo (MCMC), with 100,000 iterations for each. All model parameters indicated successful mixing (i.e., $\hat{R} \approx 0$). To add district-level information to inform the estimates, I use the two-party vote share for the Republican presidential candidate in 2008 and 2012. These measures were significant in predicting average district support.

The core of the analysis is one of understanding *how* subconstituents gain influence. I expect that representatives who are classified as Always Supporters are so because there exists a mechanism from minority group presence positively influencing their surrounding environment. I also expect this mechanism to not exist for Floor Voters. Representatives who are Floor Voters are responsive to a subconstituency not because of their positive influence on the broader constituency. The examination of this requires an analysis of mechanisms. To do so, I use causal mediation analysis (Imai, Keele & Yamamoto 2010, Imai, Keele & Tingley 2010, Imai et al. 2011), which decomposes the effect LGB subconstituents on the likelihood members of Congress are Floor Voters or Total Supporters relative to Non-Supporters. This decomposition examines how much of the total effect of LGB subconstituents is accounted for by their positive influence on the broader constituency. I expect

for there to be a positive and significant mediation effect in predicting Total Supporters, which means that subconstituents positively influence their surrounding environment leading a representative to devote greater energy on LGBT-related bills. I also expect for their to be an insignificant and substantively small mediation in predicting Floor Voters, which would mean that they perform the minimal amount of energy to be responsive to a subconstituency without much consideration of the broader public.

I provide summary statistics for these variables and controlling covariates in Table 4.2. The controls include other contextual characteristics about the legislative district: the percent of the population that identifies as Born Again,⁵ that resides in urban areas, and that is black. I also account for legislator characteristics that may also determine likelihood of devoting greater energy on LGBT-related bills: partisanship, gender, and ideology.

⁵This population was estimated also using MRP.

Table 4.2: Summary Statistics for Covariates in this Analysis

Measure	110th House			112th House		
	Min	Max	Mean	Min	Max	Mean
LGB Pop. Density	1.4	16.6	4.09	0	2.7	0.50
Opinion	25.0	84.6	59.1	39.6	66.2	52.0
Born Again Pop. Density	4.9	69.2	24.4	8.9	69.8	31.4
Urban Pop. Density	21.3	100	79.0	21.3	100	79.0
Black Pop. Density	0.26	65.5	12.3	0.30	61.5	11.7
Democrat	0	1	0.54	0	1	0.45
Female	0	1	0.17	0	1	0.17
DW-NOMINATE	-0.92	1.36	0.03	-0.78	1.29	0.20

4.4 Study 1: 110th Session of the U.S. House of Representatives

The 110th session of the U.S. House of Representatives had six floor votes on LGBT-related bills and five LGBT-related bills that failed to make it to a floor vote, which are detailed in Table 4.3. Two bills that made it to a floor vote were supportive of LGBT rights and four were against LGBT rights. These bills focused on different aspects of LGBT rights.⁶ They dealt with sexual orientation and gender identity inclusion in employment discrimination, hate crimes, relationship recognition, and HIV treatment.

Each bill is coded such that if the representative acted in a way supportive of LGBT rights it was scored as a 1 and if not, then a 0. If the representative did not vote, then they were also coded as a 0, but this is only the case if the representative was actively serving.⁷

4.4.1 Results

As discussed, the latent class analysis classifies representatives into three groups: Total Supporters, Floor Voters, and Non-Supporters. The classification of legislators based on their actions on LGBT-related bills supports these groupings, as presented in Figure 4.1. Since the true number of classes is unknown *a priori*, it is recommended to select

⁶While Mucciaroni (2008) makes a compelling case to consider gay rights as a multidimensional construct, many of the actors across policies remains the same. At times, it is beneficial to consider how different policies (and different politics) actually cohere to a consistent and coherent set of players within an institution. The current analysis shows that there are a set of actors who are active within-institution players on LGBT issues in the policy process.

⁷There are rare cases that a representative filled a vacancy, so their actions on bills prior to their entry are coded as missing. Note that these representatives are not excluded since the analysis relies on expected maximization and allows for missing dependent variables.

Table 4.3: LGBT-Related Bills in the 110th Congressional Session for the House of Representatives

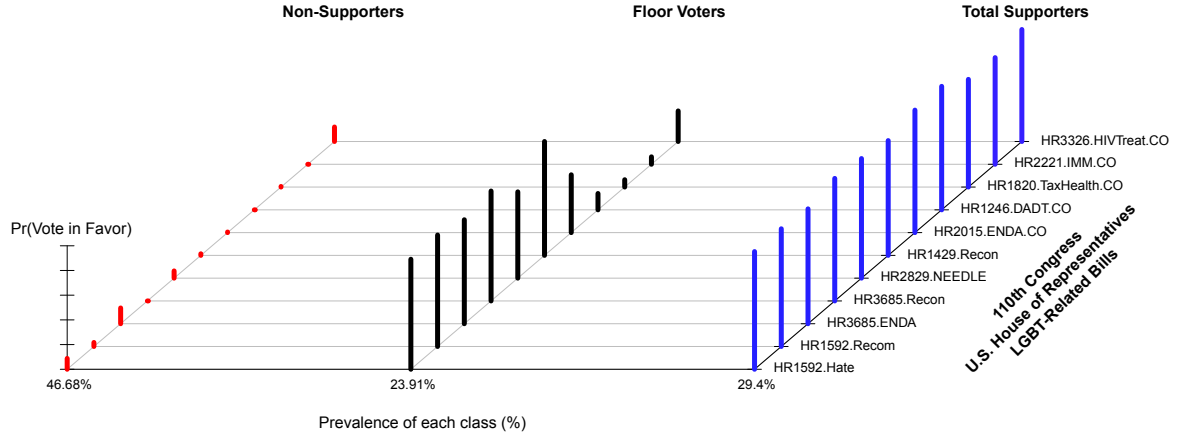
Bill	Title	FV/CO	Pro/Anti
H.R. 1590	Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act	FV	Pro
H.R. 1592	Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act Motion to Recommit	FV	Anti
H.R. 3685	Employment Non-Discrimination Act	FV	Pro
H.R. 3685	Employment Non-Discrimination Act Motion to Recommit	FV	Anti
H.R. 2929	Soulder Amendment to Financial Services Appropriations Act	FV	Anti
H.R. 1429	Improving Head Start Act Motion to Recommit	FV	Anti
H.R. 2015	Employment Non-Discrimination Act	CO	Pro
H.R. 1246	Military Readiness Enhancement Act	CO	Pro
H.R. 1820	Tax Equity for Health Plan Beneficiaries Act	CO	Pro
H.R. 2221	Uniting American Families Act	CO	Pro
H.R. 3326	Early Treatment for HIV Act	CO	Pro

Note: FV = Floor Vote; CO = Co-Sponsor

the number of classes that fit the model the best by producing the most optimal model fit (Nylund, Asparouhov & Muthén 2007). A three class model proved to be the most optimal, which is consistent with the theory. Figure 4.1 provides details on each of the three classes by how likely they are to take actions favorable to LGBT rights. Non-Supporters are highly unlikely to support any position favorable LGBT rights, Floor Voters are much more likely to take actions favorable on bills and motions that are floor votes and much less likely to co-sponsor pro-LGBT bills, and Total Supporters are highly likely to support LGBT rights both on the floor and in their co-sponsorships. Approximately, 46.68% of legislators were Non-Supporters, 23.91% were Floor Voters, and 29.4% were Total Supporters.

When it comes to explaining class membership, I regress class membership on the correlates previously discussed using multinomial logistic regression. The Non-Supporters

Figure 4.1: 3 Latent classes that characterize the voting patterns of legislators in 110th House on LGBT-related bills.



are the reference group in the model. I perform a mediation model in order to understand the mechanism from subconstituency and opinion to class membership. Equation 4.1 details the linear regression model on average public support for LGBT rights in a congressional district, and β_2 is the effect of LGB population density. This model also controls for district characteristics (e.g., population densities for Born Again Christians, African-Americans, and urban residents).

$$M_i^{\text{Opinion}} = \alpha_2 + \beta_2 * T_i^{\text{lgb.pop}} + X_i \zeta_2 + \epsilon_{2i} \quad (4.1)$$

The probability a representative is classified as a Floor Voter or Total Supporter is then modeled as in Equation 4.2. The direct effect of LGB population density is β_3 , the indirect effect γ , and the total effect (τ) is the summation of these two effects. This model controls for district characteristics and legislator characteristics.

$$Y_i^* = \alpha_3 + \beta_3 * T_i^{\text{lgb.pop}} + \gamma * M_i + X_i \zeta_3 + \epsilon_{3i} \quad (4.2)$$

The initial results are in Table 4.4. These results are uncorrected according to Imai, Keele & Yamamoto (2010), but they provide some general insight about the correlates of class membership. LGB population density positively relates to average district opinions. This is consistent with Flores (2014). As LGB population density increases, representatives are more likely to be “Floor Voters,” but the median voter is not a significant predictor. The opposite is found with “Total Supporters” where LGB population density is not a significant predictor but average district opinion is. These findings suggest that “Floor Voters” may be responding to a subconstituency while “Total Supporters” may be responding to the median voter who is positively affected by the LGB subconstituency.

The results also indicate that other contextual variables influence the average level of support in a district. Regions tend to be more supportive when they are more urban and when there are more Born Again Christians. Regions also tend to have lower support when the population has a larger share of African Americans. Urbanity also influences whether representatives are classified as Total Supporters, with more urban areas tending to increase the probability a representative is a Total Supporter. The only representative characteristic that influences their classification is their ideology. More conservative lawmakers tend to be much less likely to be Total Supporters and Floor Voters.

To further examine the mechanism from LGB population density to class membership, Table 4.5 provides the results of its total effect and that effect decomposed to its indirect path through average opinions in the district and its direct path. The results show that for “Floor Voters” a mechanism does not exist through the median voter, which means that representatives are more likely to be floor voters as LGB population density increases

Table 4.4: Mediation Regression and Multinomial Logistic Regression Results. Predicting class membership relative to being in the “Non-Supporters” group.

Variable	Opinion <i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	“Floor Voters” <i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	“Total Supporters” <i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)
<i>District Characteristics</i>			
LGB Pop. Density	0.02 (0.002)***	0.35 (0.025)*	0.22 (0.36)
Born Again Pop. Density	0.18 (0.038)***	-1.15 (2.65)	-0.57 (4.15)
Urban Pop. Density	0.38 (0.024)***	0.88 (1.92)	4.61 (2.56)**
Black Pop. Density	-0.002 (0.00)***	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.001 (0.03)
Opinion	–	2.89 (3.54)	19.32 (5.08)***
<i>Representative Characteristics</i>			
Party (Democrat=1)	–	-0.18 (0.60)	0.26 (0.76)
Female	–	0.17 (1.17)	0.13 (1.36)
DW-NOMINATE	–	-8.74 (1.26)***	-16.82 (3.63)***
Intercept	-0.80 (0.0018)***	0.45 (2.51)	-0.30 (3.66)
N		436	
AIC		1487.55	
BIC		1719.98	
Log-likelihood		-686.78	
Scaling Factor		1.0973	
Entropy		0.98	

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01 (one-tailed)

but not because of its effect on the average attitudes toward LGBT rights. This mechanism does exist for “Total Supporters,” which actually shows that representatives are more likely to be in this group because of this mechanism. The direct effect of LGB population density is negative, suggesting that the increased likelihood to be classified this way comes from the pathway through the median voter.

Table 4.5: Decomposing the Effect of Subconstituency Size

	“Floor Voters” <i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	“Total Supporters” <i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)
Indirect Effect ($\bar{\delta}[t : 1.4, 16.6]$)	0.945 (1.142)	5.753 (1.542)***
Direct Effect ($\bar{\zeta}[t : 1.4, 16.6]$)	-0.544 (1.174)	-5.216 (1.583)***
Total Effect ($\bar{\tau}$)	0.401 (0.236)**	0.537 (0.347)*

* $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$ (one-tailed)

4.5 Study 2: 112th Session of the U.S. House of Representatives

The 112th session of the U.S. House of Representatives had five floor votes on LGBT-related bills and five LGBT-related bills that failed to make it to a floor vote, which are detailed in Table 4.6. All of the bills that made it to a floor vote were against LGBT rights. The Republican Party had a majority in the chamber, so it is likely that bills brought to the floor would not be those supportive of LGBT rights. The most common type of bill that made it to a floor vote had to do with amendments to appropriations bills specifying that no funds provided in the bills will go to support LGBT people or same-sex couples. The bills that did not make it to the floor ranged in topical focus from marriage and couples rights to non-discrimination.

Table 4.6: LGBT-Related Bills in the 108th Congressional Session for the House of Representatives

Bill	Title	FV/CO	Pro/Anti
H.R. 4970	Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act	FV	Anti
H.R. 2219	Foxx Amendment to the FY 2012 Dep. of Defense Appropriation Act	FV	Anti
H.R. 2219	Huelskamp Amendment to FY 2012 Dep. of Defense Appropriations Act	FV	Anti
H.R. 5326	Huelskamp Amendment to the FY 2013 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Act	FV	Anti
H.R. 5856	King Amendments to FY 2013 Dep. of Defense Appropriations Act	FV	Anti
H.R. 1397	Employment Non-Discrimination Act	CO	Pro
H.R. 1116	Respect for Marriage Act	CO	Pro
H.R. 2088	Tax Parity for Health Plan Beneficiaries Act	CO	Pro
H.R. 1537	Uniting American Families Act	CO	Pro
H.R. 3485	Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act	CO	Pro

Note: FV = Floor Vote; CO = Co-Sponsor

Each bill is coded in the same way as in the previous section such that if the representative acted in a way supportive of LGBT rights it was scored as a 1 and if not, then a 0. Similarly, if the representative did not vote, then they were also coded as a 0, but this is only the case if the representative was actively serving.

4.5.1 Results

The latent class analysis classifies representatives into three groups: Total Supporters, Floor Voters, and Non-Supporters. The classification of legislators based on their actions on LGBT-related bills supports these groupings, as presented in Figure 4.2. Like the previous analysis, a three class model proved to be the most optimal, which is again

consistent with the theory. Figure 4.2 provides details on each of the three classes by how likely they are to take actions favorable to LGBT rights. Non-Supporters are highly unlikely to support any position favorable of LGBT rights, Floor Voters are much more likely to take actions favorable on bills and motions that are floor votes and much less likely to co-sponsor pro-LGBT bills, and Total Supporters are highly likely to support LGBT rights both on the floor and in their co-sponsorships. Approximately, 59.17% of legislators were Non-Supporters, 8.69% were Floor Voters, and 32.13% were Total Supporters. The class sizes suggest that both Non-Supporters and Total Supporters have increased in size since the 110th analysis, while Floor Voters have decreased. Given the increasing polarization in the 112th House, this may explain the decrease.

Figure 4.2: Latent classes that characterize the voting patterns of legislators in the 112th House on LBGT-related bills

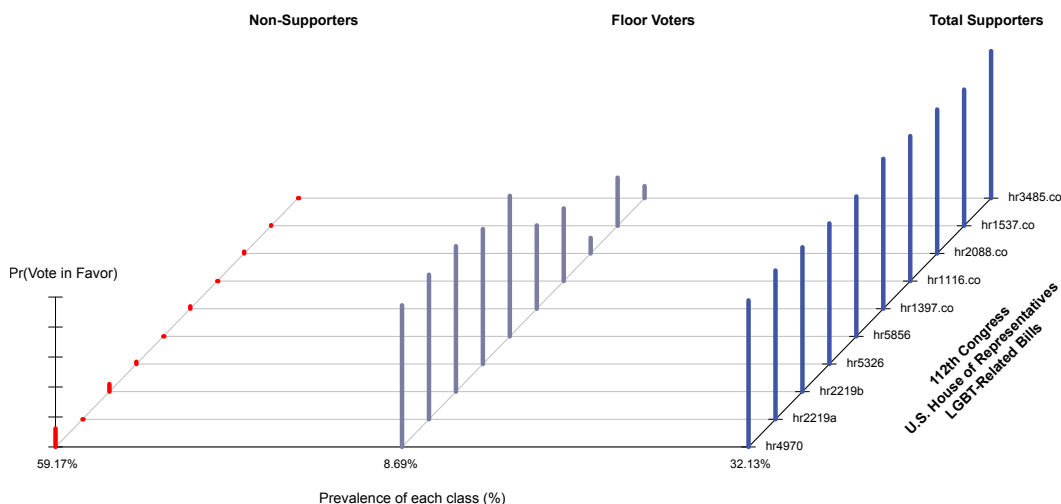


Table 4.7 provides the results of the linear regression on average district opinion on LGBT rights and the multinomial logistic regression on class membership. As LGB

population density increases, there is a greater tendency to support LGBT rights. This is consistent with the previous study. The uncorrected estimates of the multinomial logit suggest that LGB population density positively predicts membership into both Floor Voters and Total Supporters. Also, opinion appears to not have a significant effect. Since these estimates are uncorrected, the reported effect may not be trustworthy (Imai, Keele & Yamamoto 2010).

The other covariates in the model show that both urban and African American population densities positively relate to the average level of support for LGBT rights. Additionally, regional contexts affect the likelihood lawmakers are classified as floor voters and total supporters. Districts with a larger Born Again population density are less likely to have Floor Voters or Total Supporters. As the black population density in a district increases, districts are more likely to have Total Supporters. More representative characteristics than the previous study affect their classification as well. Republicans are more likely to be Floor Voters and Total Supporters, holding constant their gender and ideology. Women are also more likely to be Floor Voters and Total Supporters. Also, more conservative lawmakers are on average less likely to be classified into either supportive group.

To more accurately examine the mechanism from LGB population density to class membership, Table 4.8 provides the results of its total effect and that effect decomposed to the indirect path through average opinions in the district and the direct path. The results are consistent with the previous analysis. A mechanism does not exist through the median voter for “Floor Voters,” which means that representatives are more likely to be Floor Voters as LGB population density increases but not because of its effect on the

Table 4.7: Mediation Regression and Multinomial Logistic Regression Results. Predicting class membership relative to being in the “Non-Supporters” group.

Variable	Opinion <i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	“Floor Voters” <i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)	“Total Supporters” <i>b</i> (<i>s.e.</i>)
<i>District Characteristics</i>			
LGB Pop. Density	1.093 (0.844)*	4.176 (1.974)**	4.718 (2.038)**
Born Again Pop. Density	0.023 (0.019)	-0.085 (0.041)**	-0.172 (0.041)***
Urban Pop. Density	0.021 (0.012)**	0.024 (0.036)	0.014 (0.023)
Black Pop. Density	0.064 (0.014)***	0.028 (0.023)	0.037 (0.024)*
Opinion	–	0.061 (0.10)	0.084 (0.125)
<i>Representative Characteristics</i>			
Party (Democrat=0)	–	3.59 (2.793)*	9.157 (3.027)***
Female	–	5.723 (2.174)***	6.140 (2.099)***
DW-NOMINATE	–	-13.356 (4.813)***	-23.972 (5.167)***
Intercept	-0.696 (6.158)	0.45 (2.51)	0.455 (7.331)
N		434	
AIC		3833.899	
BIC		4053.844	
Log-likelihood		-1862.95	
Scaling Factor		1.0892	
Entropy		0.98	

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01 (one-tailed)

average attitudes toward LGBT rights. This mechanism does exist for “Total Supporters,” which actually shows that representatives are more likely to be in this group because of this mechanism. The direct effect of LGB population density is negative, suggesting that the increased likelihood to be classified this way comes from the pathway through the median voter.

The substantive effect of LGB population density appears to be quite large in comparison to the previous results, but this may also be due to the different measures, as one is of LGB *individuals* and the other is of LGB *couples*. The results do suggest that LGB population density matters more for the 112th Congress than the 110th.

Table 4.8: Decomposing the Effect of Subconstituency Size

	“Floor Voters” <i>b (s.e.)</i>	“Total Supporters” <i>b (s.e.)</i>
Indirect Effect ($\bar{\delta}[t : 0, 2.74]$)	0.094 (0.107)	26.854 (7.159)***
Direct Effect ($\bar{\zeta}[t : 0, 2.74]$)	3.55 (2.163)**	-22.922 (5.311)***
Total Effect ($\bar{\tau}$)	3.679 (2.11)**	3.925 (2.134)**

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01 (one-tailed)

4.6 Discussion

How do minority groups gain influence and representation in a majoritarian system? Previous studies show that legislators behave in a way consistent with a subconstituency politics theory of representation (Bishin 2009, Bishin & Smith 2013). The canonical version of this theory relies on the notion that representatives choose to respond to intense groups of citizens on particular issues contrary to the expressed desire of the median voter. This situation, however, is only one scenario. There are cases in which a represen-

tative is acting with a subconstituency and median voter not in disagreement. And it is under these conditions that a representative is able to devote greater energy and dedication to bills that are favorable to the minority group.

The logic underlying subconstituency politics still assumes that representatives have an incentive to be reelected. And reelection often requires solidifying electoral coalitions of groups that may have different interests (Fenno 1978, Karol 2000, Karol 2013). Representatives, however, still have an incentive to respond to the median voter (Downs 1957). On LGBT rights, there is clear evidence that average statewide opinion reflects whether states have pro-LGBT policies (Lax & Phillips 2009a). Bishin & Smith (2013) find that both majoritarianism and subconstituency politics *independently* perform well in predicting representative behavior.

The present study examines the potential for there to be a dependent relationship between subconstituency politics and majoritarianism in predicting the actions legislators take. This is because constituents do not live in a vacuum and are not outside of the broader legislative context. People tend to be influenced by their social and political environments (Enos 2014, Johnson 2001, Key 1949, Huckfeldt 1986, Stein, Post & Rinden 2000). LGBT presence on average increases public support for the rights of LGBT people (Flores 2014). Since minority groups influence their surrounding environments, it is possible to consider that their presence may bear a mechanism through which representatives have lesser or greater incentive to devote resources to minority groups.

On LGBT rights, representatives have tended to be a part of three distinct camps: (1) legislators who are highly unlikely to represent LGBT people at all; (2) representatives

who will do so only at the floor; and (3) representatives who will expend greater energy to consistently signal support for LGBT people. The level of energy legislators spend on certain bills, by cosponsoring legislation, helps build reputations (Crisp, Kanthak & Leijonhufvud 2004, Koger 2003), signals support for social movements (King, Cornwall & Dahlin 2005), and builds coalitions of supporters (Harward & Moffett 2010).

Both analyses presented in this study showed that representatives were more likely to devote greater energy on LGBT rights when minority groups positively affect their surrounding environments. This reconciles the independence between theories of the median voter and subconstituency politics, showing that the theories in tandem are predictive of the amount of energy a legislator devotes to LGBT rights. There are, however, a set of representatives who seek to represent LGBT people without much consideration of their median voter, which is in-line with subconstituency politics. The current study finds that under these conditions, representative devote less energy to reach out to these minority groups. It appears they are balancing the desire of a minority group while not shirking the median voter entirely. These representatives likely do not want to gain reputations for being overly supportive of an unpopular group.

LGBT people will likely never garner a majority of any legislative district. This means that they will have to rely on the legislative and judicial process to recognize rights that they assert. While the courts have provided some avenue of protection for LGBT people, there is considerable tiptoeing about acknowledging sexual orientation or gender identity as a protected status at the United States Supreme Court. This leaves greater rationale for other courts to rely on the political process to confer rights to this minority

group. The political process is commonly understood to be built against LGBT people. However, given their relative size to the population, LGBT people have been able to gain policies supportive of them. How is this possible?

According to a subconstituency politics theory of representation, lawmakers seek to represent intense groups of citizens. At times, this is contrary to the desires of the broader public and at others it is not. Table 4.2 provides a summary of average characteristics of legislators and their districts by how they were classified. It is clear that Total Supporters have districts with a larger share of LGB constituents and a constituency that is more supportive of LGBT rights. When the median voter is in favor of expanding policy to the minority group, lawmakers actually face an advantage to build reputations as supportive for a subconstituency. This enables them to devote greater energy on bills relevant to a minority group while not shirking the broader constituency. What is also clear is that minority group presence is able to influence the attitudes of the people around them. A greater presence may foster an opportunity to produce a warmer environment for the minority group, which provides mechanism through which minorities become politically influential.

4.7 Appendix: MRP for Congressional Districts

Multilevel regression and postratification is a technique to estimate levels of public opinion subnationally from national data. The estimates from this process have been examined for their reliability and validity in a series of studies (Buttice & Highton 2013, Lax & Phillips 2009*b*, Warshaw & Rodden 2012). In every case, using the technique is most valid when estimating opinions on social issues such as same-sex marriage. Though the process

Table 4.9: Summary of constituent and legislative characteristics by classification

Variable	Total Supporters	Floor Voters	Non-Supporters	Average
110th House of Representatives				
LGB Population Density	5.1	3.8	3.7	4.1
Opinion	69.8	56.2	53.9	59.1
% Democrat	89.1	73.1	21.6	53.7
DW-NOMINATE	-0.50	-0.27	0.51	0.03
112th House of Representatives				
LGB Population Density	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.5
Opinion	48.4	48.7	47.6	48
% Democrat	99.3	88.9	6.8	45.7
DW-NOMINATE	-0.43	-0.24	0.62	0.20

Note: Opinion for the 110th House is the combined support for domestic partnerships and marriages for same-sex couples while in the 112th House it is only for marriage.

is not without its critics (Buttice & Highton 2013), it remains the best available strategy to measure public opinion.

The process is twofold. First, a multilevel regression of large-N national survey data is estimated using basic demographic characteristics about the respondents and characteristics of the region of interest (e.g., presidential vote share, population densities of groups, percentage of the region that is urban, etc.). Second, the results of the regression are then applied to the demographic make-up of the district as reported in the U.S. Census microdata files.

For the first step, a multilevel logistic regression is fit:

$$\Pr(\text{Favor}) = \text{logit}^{-1}(\beta_0 + \beta_1 * \text{female}_i + \beta_2 * \text{black}_i + \beta_{12} * \text{female}_i * \text{black}_i + \alpha_{l[i]}^{\text{educ}} + \alpha_{m[i]}^{\text{cong.dist}});$$

$$\alpha_l \sim N(0, \sigma_{\text{educ}}^2) \text{ for } l = 1, \dots, 4;$$

$$\alpha_m \sim N(\beta_3 * \text{cd.pres.vote}_m + \alpha_{n[m]}^{\text{state}}, \sigma_{\text{cong.dist}}^2) \text{ for } m = 1, \dots, 436;$$

$$\alpha_n \sim N(\beta_4 * \text{s.pres.vote}_n + \alpha_{p[n]}^{\text{region}}, \sigma_{\text{state}}^2) \text{ for } n = 1, \dots, 51;$$

$$\alpha_p \sim N(0, \sigma_{\text{region}}^2) \text{ for } p = 1, \dots, 5.$$

The model results for each demographic group in each congressional district (θ_j) are then postratified to population estimates of the demographic make-up of each congressional district (N_j). To provide an estimate of public opinion that is generalized to each congressional district (θ_{cd}):

$$\theta_{cd} = \sum_{j \in J_{cd}} N_j \theta_j / \sum_{j \in J_{cd}} N_j.$$

I use the 2008 National Annenberg Election Survey for the 110th congressional district estimates. The question asked about relationship recognition for same-sex couples, and I coded opinions in favor domestic partnerships and same-sex marriage as 1, all else is 0. For the 112th congressional district estimates, I used the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey. The question was only opinions on same-sex marriage.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 detail the estimates by congressional district, and I plot the 95% and 50% credible intervals from the posterior distribution. Overall, the estimates have relatively narrow credible intervals, especially when considering that the estimates are for congressional districts. The intervals are on par with small area estimates using this strategy, which have been used to examine municipal representation (Tausanovitch & Warshaw 2014).

Figure 4.3: MRP Estimates for the 110th U.S. House of Representative Congressional Districts

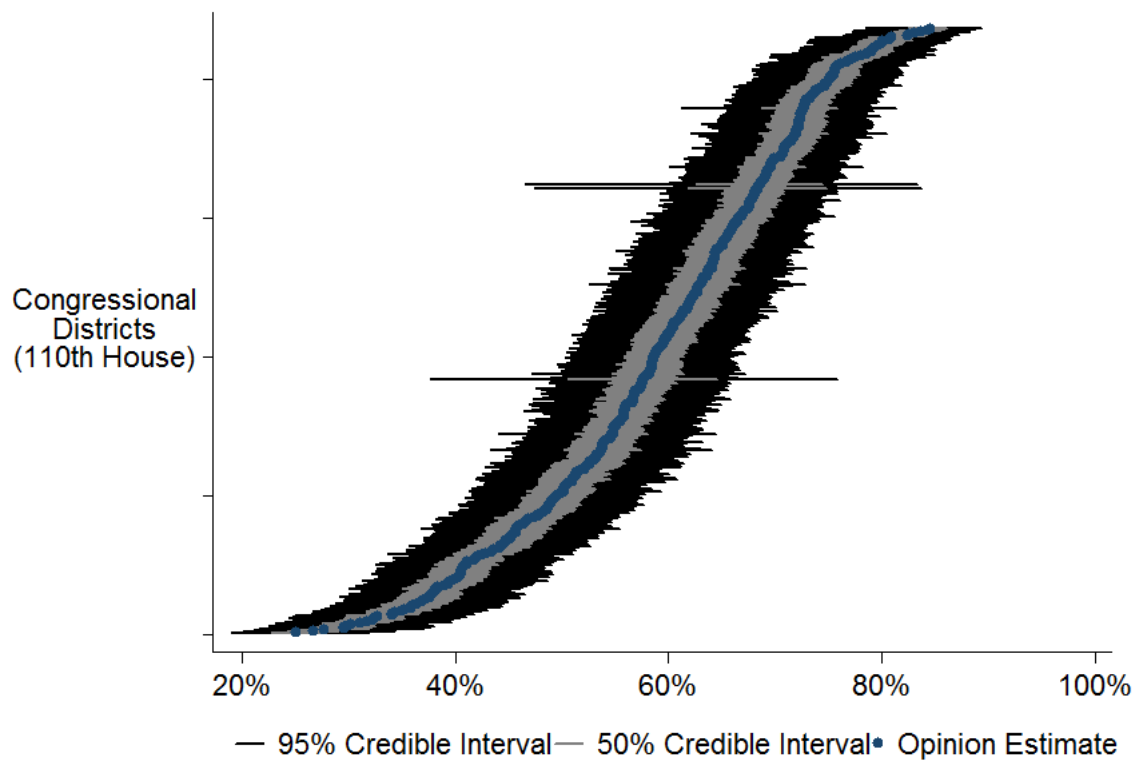
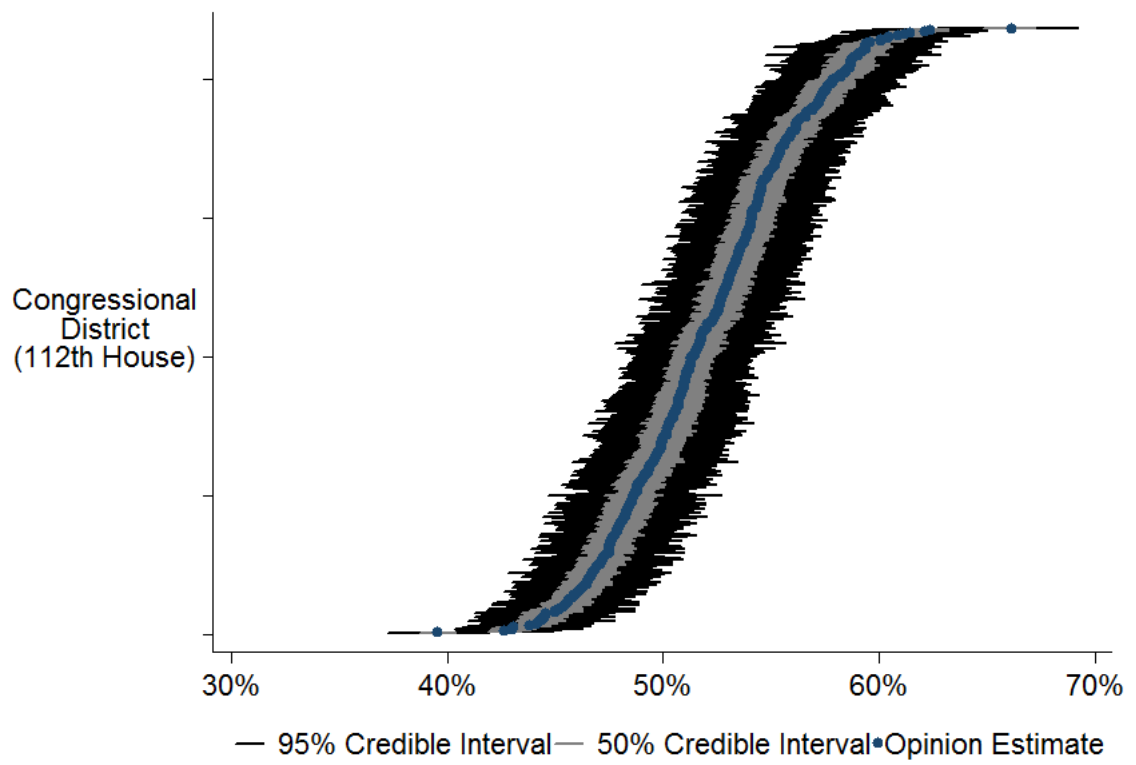


Figure 4.4: MRP Estimates for the 112th U.S. House of Representative Congressional Districts



Chapter 5

Controversy and Consciousness: Examining the Conditions and Mechanisms that Elevate Group Consciousness

5.1 Abstract

One of the unanswered questions in identity politics, especially among scholars of race and ethnicity, is under which conditions and through which mechanisms does an individual's group identity become personally meaningful.¹ How oppositional action fosters group consciousness is particularly interesting in addressing this issue. We seek to answer two questions: (1) What are the effects of oppositional controversies upon minority populations? (2) What mechanisms produce these effects? Theories of social movement and identity politics expect oppositional actions to increase the consciousness of the targeted minority group. We add to this by proposing a mechanism through which minority group members learn about controversies that then increase consciousness. Using a survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, we test our theory by exploiting exogenous variation in the location of Chick-fil-a Restaurants immediately following public controversies surrounding the company's Chief Operations Officer's giving support to anti-LGBT organizations. We find that LGBTs who resided closer to Chick-fil-a Restaurants sought out information from LGBT-targeted media that then led to higher levels of consciousness than other LGBTs. Our findings show how oppositional consciousness operates, and addresses an untested question in theories of identity and group consciousness.

Keywords: Group consciousness, LGBT politics, Intergroup threat, Causal mediation

¹Note: Manuscript co-authored with Kenneth Sherrill

5.2 Introduction

Theories and historical accounts of minority group politics indicate that when institutions or organizations take actions in opposition to a minority, an oppositional consciousness is formed among minority group members (Mansbridge 2001). Though oppositional consciousness is richly described and theorized, we have yet to see causal identification of the consequences of the experience of opposition on collective consciousness. We examine the consequences of opposition on collective consciousness by analyzing how controversies—actions that are taken by an organization targeting a minority group and which come to public awareness after the fact—relate to consciousness. We find that controversies increase collective consciousness and our findings have numerous implications for scholars of identity politics, social movements, race and ethnic politics, and sexuality and politics.

In social movement politics, controversies that target a group may incite members of that group to protest. This observation has time-and-again been documented in studies of protest (Mansbridge & Morris 2001, Stryker 2000, Tarrow 1998). Identity politics is one of the key mechanisms through which protests occur (Klandermans 2014). Similarly, in the literature examining the politics of race and ethnicity, identity politics is the theoretical framework that explains why racial and ethnic groups are politically distinct (Bowler & Segura 2012, Dawson 1994, Junn 2006, Sanchez 2006). Specifically, the level of collective consciousness that a group member has for the group as a whole has been shown to affect political mobilization (Miller et al. 1981). Finally, social and political psychologists observe that identity politics facilitates organizing the self into the political world (Brewer 2001, Huddy 2002). There may be conditions under which one aspect of one's identity becomes

primary in making social and political decisions. Controversies are largely treated in the literature as sufficient conditions for stirring collective consciousness (e.g., “critical events” in social movements, see Gamson 1988; Meyer and Staggenborn 1996; Staggenborg 1993; see also conflict in Miller et al. 1981; Tajfel 1982, pp. 15-16).

A sense of collective identity is an individual’s awareness of and connection to that person’s group identity. It fosters the personal significance of one’s group membership, and it enables people to link their individual fates to the group’s collective outcomes. A collective identity may remain dormant until contextual circumstances make it salient (Klandermans 2014, Turner et al. 1987). As Klandermans (2014) notes: “When a social identity becomes salient, there will be a shared collective identity and an increase in the strength of group identification. . . . Circumstances may force a collective identity into awareness whether people like it or not. . . .” (p. 4-5). For our purposes, we narrow our contexts to certain controversies. By controversy, we mean an elite actor’s actions that are made public and that seek to disadvantage a targeted group. In essence, oppositional consciousness is a process whereby the exercise of power by a dominant group results in the need for action by a subordinated or oppressed group. Identity “might become more salient during periods when political events are likely to affect the relative status” of groups (Sambanis & Shayo 2013, p. 299).

What remains left outside of empirical analysis is the process by which controversy leads to consciousness. In research analyzing protest, this process is largely left untested and theoretical. Junn (2006) argues that identification of the conditions and mechanisms of increasing group consciousness remains unexamined. Historical and qualitative accounts

document the developmental process of forming group consciousness (Mansbridge & Morris 2001, Walsh 2012). Quantitative work has largely consisted of surveys of individuals who are at protest rallies (e.g., Harris & Battle 2013, Jennings & Andersen 2003, Klandermans 2014), and thus has the potential for selection bias; these observations are selected on a dependent variable (i.e., protest). A recent study found that Africans are more likely to self-identify along the lines of race under electoral conditions that foster greater racial identification (Eifert, Miguel & Posner 2010). This indicates that the exercise of power—the allocation of resources—affects the salience of some identities over others (see also Walsh 2012).

A growing literature on the political distinctiveness of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people continues to develop theories about group consciousness in the face of social stigma. To date, scholars have observed evidence of group consciousness among LGBT people (Egan, Edelman & Sherrill 2008, Lewis, Rogers & Sherrill 2011); however, like other works of group consciousness, have yet to causally identify a mechanism that increases group consciousness. LGBT people provide a hard case for evidence of group consciousness and causal identification of adversity and consciousness. It is safe to assume that LGBT people are typically born into heterosexual and gender-normative households, which discourages the formation of a political consciousness as gay people. As Sherrill (1996) notes, LGBT people are born as if into a diaspora, making it much more difficult to form a community or have political influence matching that of other minority groups.

However, the development of a group consciousness involves a long and pervasive history of political powerlessness (e.g., Sherrill 1993, Sherrill 1996, Sherrill 1999, Stockdill 2001). LGBT people have turned what once a behavioral attribute that was shameful into

an identity of which they are proud (D’Emilio 1983). This affirmation of identity is the process of developing a group consciousness, and evidence of group consciousness exists among LGBT people (Egan, Edelman & Sherrill 2008, Flores & Sherrill 2013*a*, Flores & Sherrill 2013*b*). However, identities are rarely stable (see Huddy 2002), and most remain latent (Klandermans 2014). The literature posits that there are conditions under which identity salience can be increased. A previous study relying on a convenience sample of LGB people found that LGB people were more likely to turnout if their state of residence was one that had a same-sex marriage ban by popular vote in 2006 (Riggle, Rostosky & Horne 2009), indicating that there may be specific local political conditions that affect LGB political behavior. This paper investigates whether oppositional controversy can increase group consciousness. We subsequently investigate its causal effects on the political behavior of LGBT people.

5.3 A Theory of Controversy and Consciousness

The process from adversity or controversy and their linkages to protest, political distinctiveness, group cohesion, and political participation are theorized to operate through many mechanisms, but identity is the primary one. How does one learn about controversies? How does one perceive that a particular controversy affects the group with which a person identifies? One of the primary ways people learn about events is through mass media (Oliver & Meyer 1999, Zaller 1992).

When a controversy occurs, people seek out information regarding that controversy, and people who identify with the implicated group feel a need to learn how the group

is responding to it. The controversy activates the identity and increases its salience, and the learning process is a means to do so. Those who are most motivated to learn about the controversy should be those who have greater proximity to the controversy. This is because “place is a tool for understanding that people commonly use to make sense of many aspects of life” (Walsh 2012, p. 520). This is where proximity matters. Instrumental theories of identity contend that proximity also matters as the costs of information-gathering are lowered and as the perceived benefits of seeking information are increased (e.g., Olson 1965, Sambanis & Shayo 2013). For group members, this is a dual process of learning both about the controversy and about the group’s reaction. This process should increase the reliance on group-centric media because people seek out information in order to be able to decide and to act (Hutchings 2003, Lau & Redlawsk 2008, Popkin 1991). We also think that proximity is important; proximity raises the salience of group consciousness for proximate group members more than for those who are further away. Temporal proximity has been shown to correspond with increased salience of ethnic identities under certain conditions (Eifert, Miguel & Posner 2010).²

Collective consciousness is made salient through this process. The nature of the controversy should uniquely affect members of the group, especially if the controversy is more proximate to them.

²Interestingly, recent advances in cognitive science have found that people tend to think of temporal and spatial proximity in the same way (Parkinson, Liu & Wheatley 2014). This also provides support for our theory of proximity.

5.4 Data and Methods

We examine LGBT collective consciousness with data from the 2012 LOGO TV Presidential Election Survey commissioned by LOGO TV and conducted by Harris Interactive. These survey data were collected over two time periods: August 10–15 and October 23–28. The total number of respondents in the two surveys is 1,618. Harris Interactive uses unique online sampling strategies with a pool of LGBT respondents. Though some analytical frameworks are critical of the generalizability of online samples, the sampling should not affect the internal validity of our findings because we examine how exogenous controversies affect respondents in our sample by spatial proximity to a source of the threat. The effect of spatial proximity on our respondents does not depend on the sampling procedure.³

5.4.1 Exogenous Controversy: The Case of Chick-fil-a

Prior to when the survey was fielded, a series of events occurred surrounding actions and statements by Dan Cathy, Chief Operating Officer of Chick-fil-A. On July 18, Cathy made a public statement about same-sex marriage “inviting Gods judgment on our nation” (Collier 2012). Around the same time, it became public that Cathy made contributions to organizations opposed to LGBT rights, particularly to those opposed to same-sex marriage (Cline 2012; Williams, Vives, and Xia 2012). The controversy quickly escalated. It prompted a backlash from LGBT advocacy groups, such as the Human Rights

³The only conceivable way that spatial proximity would affect whether respondents were in the sample is if the controversy would cause a respondent to more likely participate in the survey. However, we do not think possibility would be unique to Harris Interactive, as other survey methods could be subject to the same criticism. This possibility would also reduce variation on our independent variable, which should reduce the likelihood of finding a significant result.

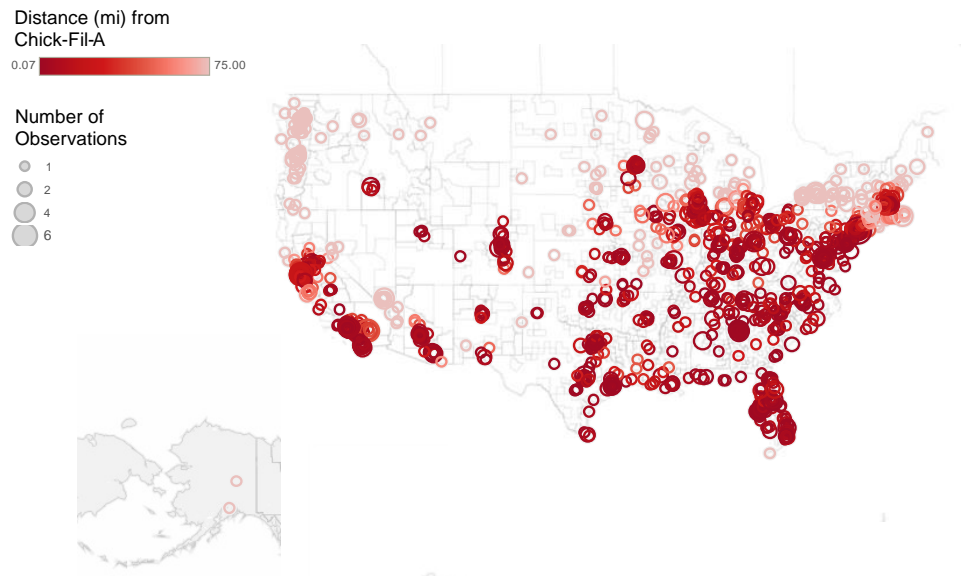
Campaign and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (e.g., Adam 2012, Rafter 2012), and LGBT activists held kiss-ins at many Chick-fil-a locations on August 3, 2012. The controversy continued to escalate when a gunman entered into the Family Research Council with Chick-fil-a sandwiches, and the gunman later admitted to being motivated by the political positions of the Family Research Council (Johnson 2013). The controversies were ongoing with supporters of the franchise holding a “Chick-fil-a Appreciation Day” on August 1, 2012, which reported the highest sales ever for the company in a single day (Bingham 2012). The issue continued to percolate throughout the 2012 campaign season, with many notable Republican politicians, such as Sarah Palin and Rick Santorum, vocally supporting the company on conservative news outlets and social media, and news agencies in general continuing to report the contributions the company had made.

For our purposes, we code the distance our respondents were from a Chick-fil-a restaurant by their respective zip codes. We correct these distances to be accurate to the restaurants that existed at the time of the controversy.⁴ Since our theory relies on proximity as a cause of information searching and higher consciousness, we exploit these distances as exogenous variation. Respondents who reside closer to a Chick-fil-a likely have had greater personal interactions with the restaurant, and they also have lowered opportunity costs to participate in the protests and/or witness them first-hand. We provide in Figure 5.1, a map plotting the number of respondents in a specific zip code, and their distance from the nearest Chick-fil-a.

We top code respondents who do not reside on the continental United States as

⁴Distances are collected from the Chick-fil-a website, and we excluded any restaurant that had an opening after the July 2012 controversy.

Figure 5.1: LGBTs in the sample are geo-coded by zip code. The size of the circle represents the number of observations in a single zip code. The color of the circle indicates how far respondents in that zip code are from Chick-fil-a.



having a distance equal to that of longest distance of the respondent who is in the continental United States. We log-transform this variable, as the distribution of the variable approaches normality after doing so. Such transformations at times are necessary when estimating effects from variables that have a skewed distribution (Benoit 2011). We also think that proximity may have its strongest effect among respondents who reside closest to Chick-fil-a and decay as distance gets wider, meaning that the difference between 40 miles and 120 miles may be less than that of 5 miles to 40 miles. This also means that proximity may have non-linear effects, which are better captured with the log-transformation (Benoit 2011).

5.4.2 Dependent Variable

Group Consciousness is a measure of identity salience that incorporates multiple dimensions of an individual's attachment to and strength of a shared fate with a group identity. Particularly Brewer (2001) identifies two key components of identity salience: person-based identity and group-identity. A person-based identity is the personal meaningfulness that individuals ascribe to an identity. A group-based based identity is an individual's perception of the interchangeability of the self and the group, in essence it is the level at which a person links her fate with the group. Mobilizing group consciousness is when both types of identities are salient.

We measure group consciousness using two items that operationalize the concepts of group-based and person-based identities. We model group consciousness as a latent variable that is the communality between these two measures. A latent variable framework transforms group consciousness into a continuous measure, so there can be gradations or levels of group consciousness. As social psychologists have discussed, identity salience is not dichotomous (Huddy 2002). In order for a latent variable with two items to be properly identified, we constrain the factor loadings of the two variables to be the same, and the results of the factor analysis are in Table 5.1. We observe that the construct of group consciousness is adequately measured by these two items. The latent variable framework provides a few benefits for us in our examination of controversy and consciousness, which we detail here.

Only the latter wave of the administered survey has questions pertaining to group consciousness. We run our initial estimation of consciousness using expected maximization

estimation, which does not require that all observations are observed for all of the variables, provided that the dependent variables are not missing due to some other unobservable covariate (Gelman et al. 2014, Little & Rubin 2002). We use all observations in our analysis, though only a subset of our sample answered the group consciousness questions. We can justify their use because the first wave is not intentionally excluded by an unobservable covariate (i.e., they are missing at random).⁵ Table 1 provides the responses of the factor loadings on this subset of the sample.

Table 5.1: Question wording and factor loadings for the measurement of Group Consciousness. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Measure	Wording	Factor Loading
Group-based identity	My own life is affected by what happens generally to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in this country.	0.853 (0.018)
Person-based identity	My membership in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community is an important reflection of who I am.	0.853 (0.018)
N		488

Note: Respondents were able to indicate strongly disagree to strongly agree on each item. To identify the construct properly, the factor loadings were constrained to be equal. Factor loadings are presented in standardized format to facilitate in interpretation. Generally, loadings above 0.7 indicate high measurement reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$)

We run our estimation using traditional structural equation modeling techniques, and extract the factor of group consciousness for all of our respondents. We use this measure, which is imputed for the set of respondents in the first wave as our measure of group consciousness. This process is considered a reliable and beneficial way to conduct secondary analyses on continuous latent variables (Asparouhov & Muthén 2010).

⁵Examinations of the controlling covariates we use in this analysis indicate no differences in the balance between the two samples. Additionally, Appendix A provides a re-analysis using only the second wave, and it provides similar results for the mediated effect and total effect of the distance from Chick-fil-a. The only component that is not significant is the direct effect, which adds even more empirical evidence for our proposed theory.

The factor model operationalizes identity salience in a much more theoretically coherent way. Scholars contend that identity salience is not dichotomous; there are gradations of identity salience. A continuous latent variable greater approximates degrees of identity salience as based on the combined levels of person-based and group-based identity.

5.4.3 Mediating Variable

We theorize that LGBTs who reside closer to a Chick-fil-a will have higher levels of group consciousness, and we theorize that this operates through a process of learning via media usage. We operationalize media usage by another latent variable that is the combination of the frequency of usage of LGBT media via print, online, and television outlets. In Table 5.2, we provide the factor loadings from the latent variable model, which indicate that these three measures form a single construct.

Table 5.2: Question wording and factor loadings for the measurement of LGBT Media Consumption. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Measure	Wording	Factor Loading
Print Media	In the past six months, how often have you read gay and lesbian publication such as newspapers and magazines?	0.873 (0.019)
Online Media	In the past six months, how often have you sought information or contacts on lesbian and gay websites and chat rooms?	0.701 (0.023)
Television Media	In the past six months, how often have you watched gay-centric TV programming?	0.742 (0.021)
N		1,618
Note: Generally, loadings above 0.7 indicate high measurement reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$)		

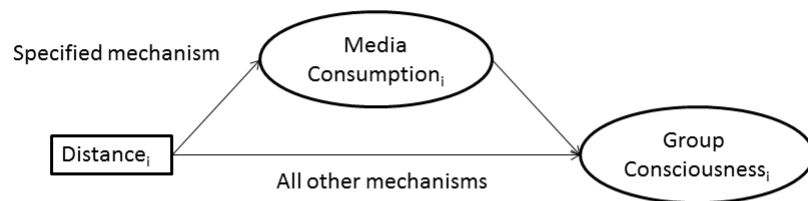
Though the questions in Table 5.2 ask about media usage in the last six months, we believe this approximates the most recent assessment of the respondents' usage of such

media. Gaskell & Wright (2000) find that respondents are relatively poor at accurately reporting the past, as they are more likely to attribute recent behavior as their traditional behavior (i.e., forward telescoping). These questions should more directly operationalize recent LGBT media usage. Like group consciousness, we first estimate the model and extract the factor for our subsequent analysis.

5.4.4 Data Analysis

While structural equation modeling and expected maximization may prove beneficial to addressing some of the data limitations and measurement of concepts, SEM does poorly in identifying causes (Imai et al. 2011). Our analytic plan is to estimate the causal effect of the distance from Chick-fil-a on group consciousness via media consumption, as in Figure 5.2. The specified mechanism is our estimate of the Average Casual Mediating Effect (ACME) and all other potential mechanisms is our estimate of the Average Direct Effect (ADE). This modeling framework then allows for the causal effect of distance to be decomposed to the theorized mechanism and all other mechanisms.

Figure 5.2: Analytical diagram from log-distance from Chick-Fil-A to group consciousness



To empirically examine this question, we use recent advances in estimating mediating effects (Kosuke et al. 2009, Imai, Keele & Yamamoto 2010, Imai, Keele & Tingley 2010, Imai et al. 2011, Imai & Yamamoto 2013). We also conduct sensitivity analysis to assess to what extent our findings are sensitive to assumptions of causal identification of the mechanism, and Imai, Keele & Yamamoto (2010) term such assumptions as sequential ignorability. There are two components to sequential ignorability that must be assumed in order for a causal mechanism to be identified. The first one is exogeneity, which we assume with the location of Chick-fil-a restaurants to that of our respondents. It is highly unlikely that the locations of Chick-fil-a restaurants are determined by some sort of gay magnet or by measures of LGBT group consciousness. The second component is “once we have conditioned on a set of covariates gathered *before* the treatment, the mediator status is ignorable” (Imai et al. 2011, p. 770). Since these are assumptions that must be made, we present after the results an assessment of how sensitive the results are to these assumptions. We thus examine the assumption of sequential ignorability by sensitivity and robustness checks.

5.5 Results

Our model is run through the R package `mediation`, which estimates causal effects via adjusted measures of causal estimates with boot-strapped standard errors as detailed in Imai, Keele & Yamamoto (2010). Since our measure is the log-normal distance from Chick-fil-a, we expect that respondents who resided further away to have lower levels of consciousness than respondents who resided closer, so we expect to observe negative effects. Since our data are observational, we control for a number of covariates to satisfy sequential

ignorability. Table 5.3 reports our results of the log-normal distance effect via mediation (through media consumption), the direct effect (all other mechanisms), and the total effect. We find that as the distance from Chick-fil-a increases, respondents have lower levels of LGBT group consciousness, and we find that this operates significantly through the mechanism of media consumption. We also observe a significant direct effect, indicating that the Chick-fil-a controversy may also reduce consciousness by other mechanisms (e.g., discussions at work involving the controversy that then makes an LGBT identity salient). We note that the effect via mediation is stable and robust even if we analyze the subsample that received the LGBT group consciousness items while the direct effect is not (see Appendix A).

Table 5.3: Causal effects of the logarithm of distance from Chick-fil-A on Group Consciousness. The direct effect is all other potential mechanisms, and the mediation effect is the specified mechanism through Media Consumption.

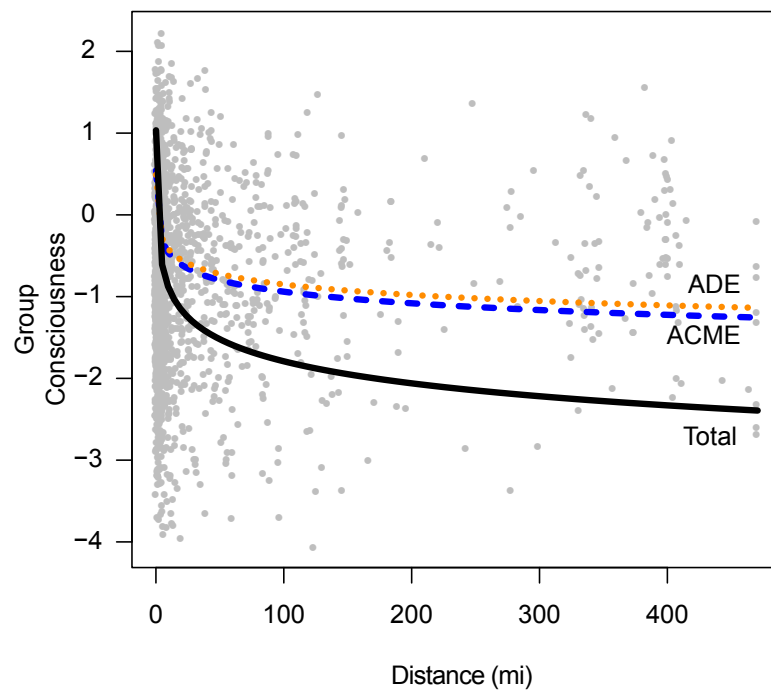
Effect	Estimate [90% CI]	P-value	$\rho = 0$
Mediation	-0.20 [-0.40, -0.01]	0.09	0.85
Direct	-0.18 [-0.29, -0.08]	0.01	-0.80
Total	-0.39 [-0.60, -0.17]	0.00	
Prop. Mediated	0.52 [0.08, 0.76]	0.08	
N	1,610		

Note: Mediation and direct effects are estimated using the Mediation package version 4.4 in R (Tingley et al. 2013). The model controls for the following covariates: gender, age, ideology, residing in a rural area, partisanship, religiosity, race, education, income, identifying as bisexual, population density by zip code, and U.S. Census regions.

We plot the effects of the distance from Chick-fil-a in Figure 3. We observe the effect is relatively strong, given the distribution of group consciousness. The effect is larger among small distances from Chick-fil-a than among large distances. This satisfies the use of the log-normal transformation, as it better identifies the causal link between the Chick-fil-a

controversies and consciousness. We find that when the distance increases from its minimum to its maximum, respondents have a .39 decrease in their measure of group consciousness. This effect may be potentially less, and the increase in distance from its minimum to its maximum may lower consciousness by 0.28 units, if we constrain our analysis to the second wave of the sample (see Appendix A). We plot the estimated effect in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3: Average Direct Effect (ADE), Mediation Effect (ACME), and Total Effect of the distance from Chick-fil-a on Group Consciousness.



5.6 Sensitivity Analyses and Robustness Checks

We examine the extent to which our results are sensitive to the assumption of sequential ignorability. Sensitivity analysis simulates the degree to which the results depend on causal identification assumptions that after controlling for covariates, the correlation among the error terms of the mediation model and the final outcome is zero (Imai et al. 2011). This correlation coefficient may not equal zero, which violates the primary assumption for causal identification. Sensitivity analysis assesses how the estimated effects change by allowing that correlation coefficient to take non-zero values. Imai et al. (2011) term the varying values of the correlation coefficient as the sensitivity parameter (ρ). A highly sensitive result would indicate that small deviations from the zero correlation assumption would lead to the reverse findings (i.e., instead of a negative effect we would observe a positive effect). A more robust result would not be as sensitive to this assumption.

We find that our main findings are not sensitive to the sequential ignorability assumption. The ACME effect we observe would remain in its expected direction unless the correlation among the residuals of the two models exceeds 0.85, and the average direct effect would require a correlation less than -0.8. These are relatively strong correlations, indicating that small or even medium violations of sequential ignorability would do little to alter our inferences. This is especially the case for our specified causal mechanism, which is still robust if we constrain our sample to the second wave of the survey (see Appendix A).

Another way to assess the validity of our argument is to examine whether other data sources provide support for our theory more generally. We provide multiple assessments from different data sources to investigate whether the linkage between the controversy, mass

media usage, and considerations regarding Chick-fil-a are valid. We examine to what extent the controversy stirred public interest in general, whether Chick-fil-a consumers have any measurable differences in their television viewing habits, and whether proximity to Chick-fil-a bears a relationship to perceived political importance among the general public and LGBTs.

Our first examination is with keyword searches using Google Trends data. We observe that over time, the Chick-fil-a controversy increased national interest in Chick-fil-a, and when broken down regionally, the greatest interest was generated among areas with greater proximity to Chick-fil-a restaurants. We convey this in Figure 5.4, which plots the variation of popular interest over time and by metropolitan centers. The second set of maps in Figure 5.4 overlays the map in Figure 5.1 in order to describe how information searching relates to proximity. Also plotted in Figure 5.4 are time series plots for the national average and four different urban centers, Atlanta, Houston, San Francisco, and Seattle. We choose these to maximize variation among the number of Chick-fil-a restaurants (Atlanta and Houston having among the most restaurants and Seattle and San Francisco the least) and San Francisco provides an indication of a gay urban center without a single Chick-fil-a in its borders. We observe that the greatest interest at the time of controversies was generated in the urban centers nearest a franchise than in urban centers that lacked them. While these data do not indicate who is searching for information at the time of the controversies, we can infer that the controversies did generate public interest and this interest is related to proximity to Chick-fil-a.

Our second examination is whether there is evidence of the controversies affecting

the consumer choices of Logo TV viewers. Behavioral economic research indicates that media coverage affects consumer choices (e.g., Kalaitzandonakes, Marks & Vickner 2004). We acquired data measuring Logo TV viewership and patronage of Chick-fil-a in the last 30 days from the market research firm GfK MRI. Logo TV provides programming that targets a viewership that is LGBT (and straight-ally), so we expect its viewership to be affected by the controversy. We plot the percentage of viewers who view Logo TV by their consumption of Chick-fil-a within the month in Figure 5.5. At the time point prior to the controversy, Logo TV aired a show that emphasized the lives of gay men living in the South titled, *The A-List: Dallas* and a parody titled, “Chow Down at Chick-fil-a,” which emphasized that it is fine to be gay and eat at the franchise. We find that there is a significant uptick in reports of going to Chick-fil-a at that time.⁶ A fascinating aspect of this finding is that the average Logo TV viewership did not change much over time, indicating that the factors that lead people to watch Logo TV corresponds with a change in consumer choices regarding Chick-fil-a. We also observe a significant downturn of Chick-fil-a consumption in the next time period, which corresponds to the controversy. Since the size of Logo TV viewership remains relatively stable, it is likely that its viewers stopped eating at Chick-fil-a. This finding indicates that there is a relationship among LGBT-oriented media, consumer choices, and controversies. These linkages further indicate that the controversy affected people with an affinity to the LGBT community.

Our third examination is whether proximity to Chick-fil-a oriented issues about Chick-fil-a as a perceived priority regarding LGBT people among LGBTs and the general

⁶Note that the sample size of Logo TV viewers population is small (N=753), and statistical significance is only observed for the weighted data but not for the unweighted data. The total viewership boasts a sample of 75,455.

public. The waves of the Logo TV Presidential Election Survey have samples of LGBTs and comparable general public samples. We examine whether respondents in both identified “Corporate support for gay rights (e.g., recent Chick-fil-a controversy)” as an issue of concern to LGBT Americans that is important to them. Respondents were only able to select up to three issues. In an earlier paper,, we observed that LGBTs with greater levels of group consciousness tended to place greater importance on same-sex marriage and workplace discrimination (Flores & Sherrill 2014). So we are suspicious as to whether we would observe a proximity effect to Chick-fil-a on naming Chick-fil-a as an important issue. The logic of having a salient consciousness would be to prioritize the interests of the group rather than personal interests, which at the time there was a great focus on marriage equality.

We regress proximity on naming this issue as a priority in logistic models for both samples and report the results in Table 5.4. We find support for proximity among our general public sample, indicating that the controversy did affect how the general public viewed issues related to LGBTs as important to them. Respondents in the general public residing closer to Chick-fil-a would have a greater likelihood of reporting corporate issues as an LGBT issue that is important them than respondents residing further away. We do observe a significant effect for our LGBT sample, but the results indicate that respondents further away from the controversies tended to indicate that corporate support as important to them. We interact this with respondents residing in the South to examine the extent to which internalization of the issue as important is conditioned by proximity and region. We find that LGBTs in the South who resided closer to Chick-fil-a tended to have a higher

likelihood to report that corporate support was an important issue than LGBTs in the South who resided further away. We find the opposite is the case for the general population sample.

Table 5.4: Logistic regression predicting whether respondents cited “Corporate support (e.g., recent Chick-fil-a controversy)” as an LGBT issue that is important to them, standard errors are in the parentheses.

Variable	LGBT Sample		General Population Sample	
Log-distance	0.11**	0.14**	-0.27*	-0.44**
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.21)	(0.23)
South	0.56**	0.85***	0.48	-1.33
	(0.28)	(0.036)	(0.97)	(1.45)
Log-distance*South		-0.22*		1.25*
		(0.17)		(0.72)
N	1,618	1,618	1,807	1,807
Likelihood ratio	30.75**	32.35**	40.61***	47.97***

Note: The model controls for the following covariates: gender, age, ideology, residing in a rural area, partisanship, religiosity, race, education, income, identifying as bisexual, and U.S. Census regions. One-tailed p-values are indicated by *p < .10, **p < .05, ***p < .01.

5.7 The Effect of Group Consciousness on Political Behavior

Now that we have observed that the distance from Chick-fil-a increases group consciousness and that our theorized mechanism operates. We return to questions of political behavior of LGBTs: Do LGBTs with greater levels of group consciousness participate in politics in more ways? Do LGBTs with greater levels of group consciousness express that they would make voting decisions based upon the candidates pro/anti-LGBT positions? Do LGBTs with greater levels of consciousness have stronger identification with the Democratic Party? In short, our answer to all three is yes.

We re-analyze the effect of the log-distance from Chick-fil-a—this time using Group

Consciousness as the mediator and changing the dependent variable to questions of political participation, candidate support, and partisanship.⁷ In the second wave of the survey, respondents were asked about whether they participated in politics in multiple ways (see Appendix B for details about these question items). We combine responses to these items to create an index of political participation (Cronbachs $\alpha = 0.73$). In both waves, respondents were asked whether they would be more likely, less likely, or no more nor less likely to support a candidate who would support five different pieces of legislation that are supportive of LGBT rights (see Appendix B). We combine these responses to form an index of support for pro-LGBT candidates (Cronbachs $\alpha = 0.89$). We finally examine whether respondents identify as Strong Democrats versus all else.

Group Consciousness is likely to play a role in political participation in general (Miller et al. 1981), and we suspect that oppositional consciousness may have been what caused LGBs to turn out at greater levels in contexts of same-sex marriage direct initiatives than LGBs not in that context (Riggle, Rostosky & Horne 2009). We also suspect that group consciousness facilitates LGBT political distinctiveness, as a series of studies has evidenced distinctive LGB political behavior (Egan 2012, Egan, Edelman & Sherrill 2008, Lewis, Rogers & Sherrill 2011). It would be expected that LGBTs with higher levels of group consciousness would more strongly support LGBT-supportive candidates and also more strongly identify with the Democratic party, as the party has owned the issue of gay rights and has been an emerging ally of same-sex marriage supporters (e.g., Egan 2013).

We report the results of the analysis of LGBT political behavior from the log-

⁷Appendix A also provides re-analysis of these results using only the second wave sample, which directly received the questions on Group Consciousness. We observe significant effects in each case, but there are varying levels of sensitivity to the inferences depending on the political behavior under examination.

distance of Chick-fil-a, operating through Group Consciousness (mediation) and all other mechanisms (direct) in Table 5.5. We observe in each case significant mediation effects on every outcome in the expected direction. Respondents who reside further away from a Chick-fil-a have lower levels of Group Consciousness, and this significantly affects their political participation, their support for pro-LGBT candidates, and their likelihood of identifying as a strong Democrat. These results have varying levels of sensitivity, indicating that some may be more sensitive to causal identification assumptions than others. The least sensitive model is that of partisanship. Partisanship colors the political behavior of many individuals (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960, Green, Palmquist & Schickler 2002), and we reported elsewhere that the combined relationship between consciousness and partisanship accounts for a large share of the political distinctiveness of LGBT people (Flores & Sherrill 2013*b*). Table 5 also shows weaker support for the direct effect of distance from Chick-fil-a. This indicates that, for most of the political behavior indicators, the specified mechanism through Group Consciousness is the primary way through which the controversy affects these outcomes.⁸

5.8 Discussion

Students of working class consciousness often speak about factory workers throwing a monkey wrench into the assembly line. Proximity to the source of grievance often structures the target of righteous indignation over the violation of fundamental human dignity (Lupsha 1971). LGBT people, however, often lack the functional equivalent of the factory system for the development of collective consciousness and the expression of shared

⁸Note also that if the analysis is constrained to only the second wave, we only observe significant mediation effects.

Table 5.5: Effect of the log-distance through Group Consciousness (mediation) and all other mechanisms (direct) on differing measures of political behavior.

Effect	Estimate [95% CI]	P-value	Sensitivity: ρ where effect is 0
Political Participation Index			
Mediation	-0.02 [-0.05, -0.003]	0.03	0.15
Direct	0.007 [-0.14, 0.14]	0.88	0.05
Total	-0.02 [-0.16, 0.12]	0.85	
N	458		
Support Pro-LGBT Candidate Index			
Mediation	-0.03 [-0.04, -0.01]	0.00	0.25
Direct	0.07 [0.02, 0.13]	0.02	0.60
Total	0.04 [-0.02, 0.11]	0.17	
N	1,618		
Pr(Strong Democrat)			
Mediation	-0.007 [-0.01, -0.002]	0.00	0.45
Direct	-0.006 [-0.01, 0.01]	0.92	-0.05
Total	-0.008 [-0.02, 0.008]	0.31	
N	1,618		

Note: Mediation and direct effects are estimated using the Mediation package version 4.4 in R (Tingley et al. 2013). The model controls for individual demographic covariates: gender, age, ideology, residing in a rural area, partisanship (except in the partisanship model), religiosity, race, education, income, identifying as bisexual, and U.S. Census regions.

grievances as well as for finding the targets of collective anger over shared injustices. Rather, these grievances often are experienced individually and shared later, if at all.

Grievances are better characterized as a result of what M. Kent Jennings termed “pain and loss” (Jennings 1988). “A...source of pain and loss consists of willful human action resulting in the intentional harming of others,” and controversies likely cause pain and loss leading to the voicing of grievances (Jennings 1988, p. 7). Jennings & Andersen (2003) find that personal experiences of pain and loss positively affect political action among AIDS activists (LGB and straight alike). The political effects of pain and loss depend on the “kinds of people most directly affected,” and those affected structure the reaction of a group arrayed by social acceptance and political power (Jennings 1998, p. 8; see also

Schneider and Ingram 1993). The emergence of LGBT-oriented means of communication and increases in coverage of LGBT-relevant events by mainstream media enables processes through which a shared identity and consciousness can be made more generally salient within the LGBT community. In fact, the ongoing breadth of LGBT media facilitates the formation of community among LGBT people, and it is an important component of identity formation (e.g., Harper & Jamil 2009). Controversies spur outrage, as people seek redress for being wronged, and at times, shared consciousness is the vessel for feeling outrage and seeking redress. Our data demonstrate how proximity to controversies—specifically, actions seeking to limit the right to marry—generate and intensify the sense of shared fate that leads to more salient group consciousness and political action. Media exposure and the search for information are integral parts of this process. Ironically, those people who are most anxious to deny equal rights to LGBT people set off a process by which LGBT people become the agents of their own liberation.

To our knowledge, this study is the first to identify the causal process through which a controversy increases group consciousness. We have also identified how this process affects the political behavior of LGBTs in their political participation, expressions of candidate support, and partisanship. Other scholars have observed that there is a “sexuality gap” between LGB people and heterosexual people (Egan 2012, Schaffner & Senic 2006). This gap may increase for those with higher levels of group consciousness, and we provide evidence that the political distinctiveness for LGBTs is attributable in part to group consciousness (Flores & Sherrill 2013*b*).

Political identities become salient when exertions of power lead people to think of

the world through the group-lens of those identities. When the exertion of power focuses on a specific aspect of a persons identity, that aspect provides the lens through which one perceives the world. These salient identities are consequential to political behavior. As one aspect of identity becomes more salient, the people who share that identity become a more cohesive group. The attachment to that group situates the individual in the political conflict. LBGTs distribution about the population would ordinarily situate them as being less capable to coordinate, agree, and/or be politically powerful due to competing interests coming from multiple identities reflecting the diversity among those who identify as LGBT (Sherrill 1996). We find that, as opposed to traditional circumstances, extraordinary circumstances can position the identity of LGBT people, in a way that truly evaluates whether circumstances are for the good of the group—one that allows gay people to ask the question, “What does this mean for the gay people?” (see Sherrill 1996).

5.9 Appendix

5.9.1 A. Re-Analysis using Only the Second Wave

Since only a subset of our sample responded to the group consciousness questions and we impute the rest via expected maximization, we re-analyze the data with only the observations that are observed completely on all variables. This is the data that comes from the second wave of the LOGO TV Presidential Election Survey. In our re-analysis, we find as reported in Table 5.6 that the specified mechanism through media consumption remains significant. The finding is slightly more sensitive than what was presented in

the manuscript, though the sensitivity parameter still indicates that a strong violation of sequential ignorability would need to be observed in order to reverse our findings ($\rho > 0.70$).

Table 5.6: The effect of the log-distance from Chick-fil-a through Media Consumption (Mediation) and all other mechanisms (Direct) on Group Consciousness using only the survey data from the second wave.

Effect	Estimate [95% CI]	P-value	Sensitivity: ρ where effect is 0
Mediation	-0.076 [-0.13, -0.02]	0.01	0.70
Direct	-0.011 [-0.07, -0.04]	0.69	-0.15
Total	-0.09 [-0.17, -0.01]	0.04	
N	458		

Note: Mediation and direct effects are estimated using the Mediation package version 4.4 in R (Tingley et al. 2013). The model controls for individual demographic covariates: gender, age, ideology, residing in a rural area, partisanship, religiosity, race, education, income, identifying as bisexual, and U.S. Census regions.

We also re-analyze the effect of the log-distance from Chick-fil-a on supporting a candidate who is favorable to LGBT legislation and the likelihood of being a strong Democrat. The mediation effect is the effect of the distance from Chick-fil-a on Group Consciousness affecting the political outcomes. We continue to observe significant mediation effects, and the results are slightly less sensitive than the full sample analysis.

Table 5.7: The effect of the log-distance from Chick-fil-a through Group Consciousness (Mediation) and all other mechanisms (Direct) on political behaviors using only the survey data from the second wave.

Effect	Estimate [95% CI]	P-value	Sensitivity: ρ where effect is 0
Support Pro-LGBT Candidate Index			
Mediation	-0.04 [-0.08, -0.003]	0.03	0.30
Direct	0.008 [-0.11, 0.12]	0.89	0.005
Total	-0.03 [-0.15, 0.09]	0.61	
Pr(Strong Democrat)			
Mediation	-0.009 [-0.02, -0.0007]	0.02	0.40
Direct	-0.007 [-0.04, 0.02]	0.65	-0.40
Total	-0.02 [-0.05, 0.01]	0.27	
N	458		

Note: Note: Mediation and direct effects are estimated using the Mediation package version 4.4 in R (Tingley et al. 2013). The model controls for individual demographic covariates: gender, age, ideology, residing in a rural area, partisanship (except in the partisanship model), religiosity, race, education, income, identifying as bisexual, and U.S. Census regions.

Figure 5.4: Google Trends data mapping information searching on Chick-fil-a over time and by metropolitan areas (similar to Metropolitan Statistical Areas). Trends are also plotted for urban centers and the national average.

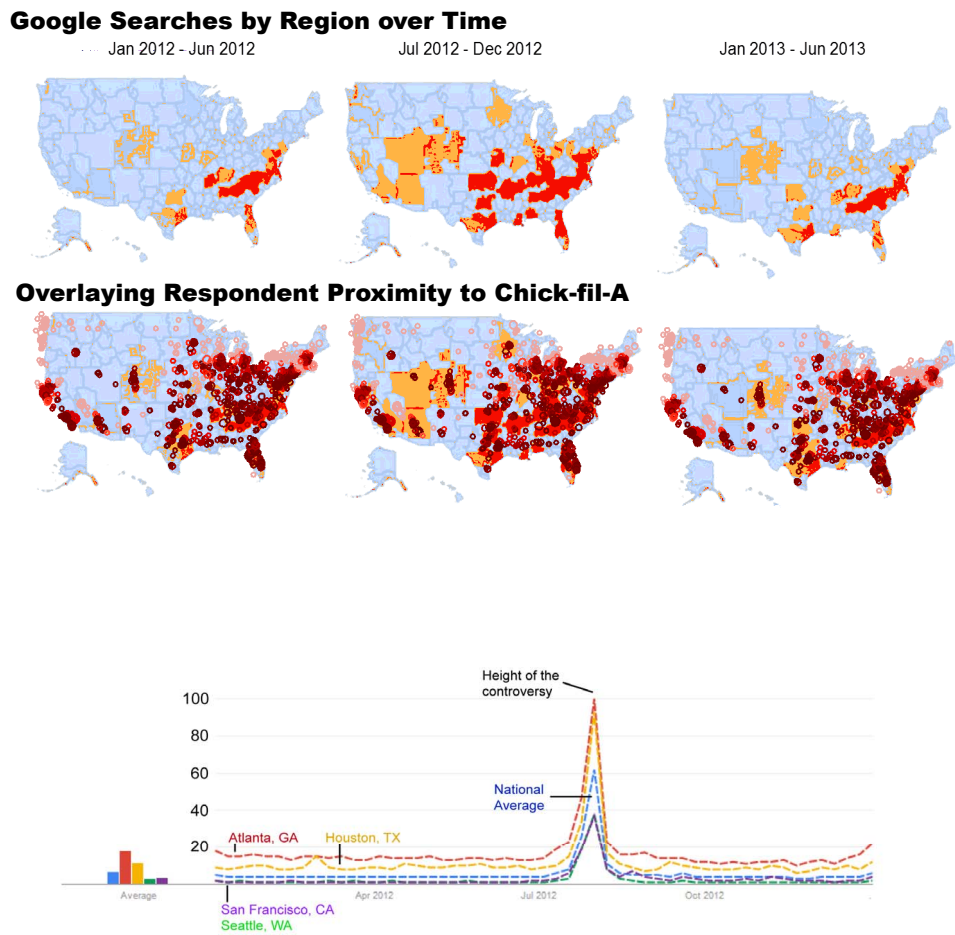
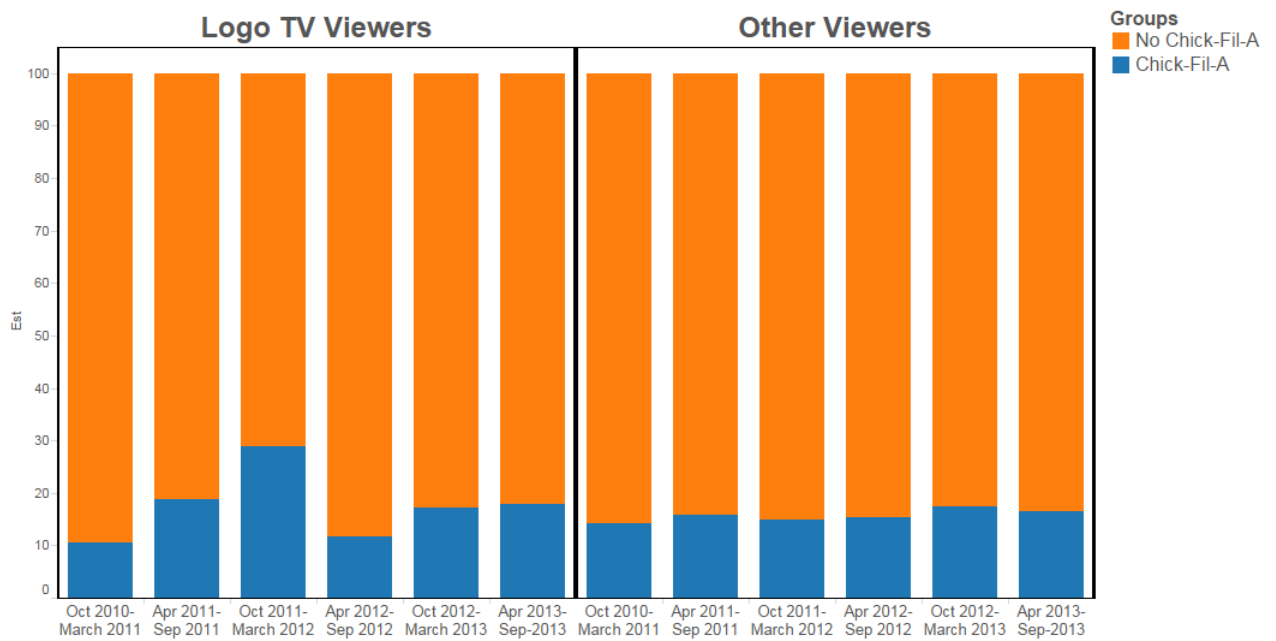


Figure 5.5: Logo TV viewership by Chick-fil-a patronage from market research data is plotted against time to indicate the trend in Chick-fil-a consumers of these viewers. The dashed lines indicate the average viewership of Logo TV.



Chapter 6

Conclusions

This concluding chapter will address the following: (1) the research questions will be reviewed and answers provided based upon the previous chapters; (2) the implications from the previous chapters and minority group politics are discussed; and (3) a broader discussion is provided about the implications of the previous chapters on social and political change.

6.1 Research Questions and Answers

I described the previous research on prejudice and minority group interactions as at a crossroads. Social groups interacting with one another may induce threat or understanding. When or how one might occur over the other is generally less understood.¹ This leaves a number of open questions:

¹Hopkins (2010) is one attempt to reconcile this; however, citeasnounEnos:2014 lies in stark contrast on the same issue of immigration policy.

1. Why is it that scholars have both found intergroup conflict and contact to occur?

While some attempts have been made to reconcile when minority groups may induce threat or understanding (Baybeck 2006, Stein, Post & Rinden 2000), the approach has been to define the level of the analysis. For LGB people, this relates to individual intergroup contact versus group-level threat. At the individual level, knowing someone who is LGB is a positive correlate with political attitude. At a group level, being where more LGB people are is, according to previous studies, a negative correlate. My initial examination was to reassess the group level findings with data that provides both a breadth and depth that was not available to the previous studies (Gaines & Garand 2010, Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz 2012). Gaines & Garand (2010) had restrictions due to sample size, which limits both the geographic variation and analytical power of their study.² Dyck & Pearson-Merkowitz (2012) focused on exit polls, which have their own limitations (Best & Krueger 2012), and cases where a same-sex marriage ballot initiative took place, which may have been strategically chosen (Stone 2012). With an analysis of survey data that is more broad, I find that the average effect of LGB population density on attitudes toward the relationship recognition of same-sex couples is positive and significant.

Since my findings diverge from the previous study, I also wanted to investigate why we came to different conclusions. In light of recent findings regarding motivated perception, I consider the extent to which these potential differences may have to do

²It should be stressed that the authors acknowledge this in their study. Since they were examining a multitude of determinants on attitudes toward same-sex marriage, they had to balance breadth across numerous key explanatory variables within the analysis.

with differing ways people tend to perceive their environments. And by doing so, I show that the previous studies and my own may be more consistent as opposed to divergent. The two previous studies used heterogeneous effects to examine how the presence of LGB people leads to threat for a subset of the public. I also show that similar subsets tend to be threatened while others are not.

2. Is it possible to reconcile these theories?

My second empirical study also adds a theoretical contribution in how the previous studies have conceptualized intergroup threat and contact. These previous studies have all relied on the way people tend to perceive their surrounding environments, but they did not recognize that perception can be motivated and biased. People may subjectively recognize their environment similarly to objective measures as provided by the U.S. Census (Newman et al. 2013). They may, however, not be interpreting such contexts uniformly. Consider that people who view *The Colbert Report* may view his political orientation as either liberal or conservative depending on whether the viewer is liberal or conservative (LaMarre, Landreville & Beam 2009). People create meaning of their environments based on their subjective perceptions of the objective environments in which they are (Balectis & Dunning 2006, Ratner & Amodio 2013).

3. What are the political consequences of intergroup contact?

The political consequence I investigate is the amount of effort legislators place on the rights of minority groups. For some minorities, their population size relative to the general public will seldom permit them to be a majority of any jurisdiction. For

LGBT people, this is the case, with their population at maximum garnering 16.6% of a congressional district. The importance of this question is both about the allocation of resources and the ability to operate in daily life events. LGBT people in 29 states may still lose a job or be denied housing based solely on that characteristic.³ For LGBT people and other minority groups who seldom have the size in numbers to compete in the democratic process, it is important to understand why and how they might be politically influential.

Expanding upon the previous chapters and the work of Ben Bishin (2009), I investigate how social environments affect political outcomes. I find that, consistent with subconstituency politics theory, lawmakers are more likely to support LGBT rights as LGBT people garner a larger proportion of the legislative district. I also find that intergroup contact affects how much energy legislators devote on LGBT-related bills. By devoting greater energy, lawmakers are building reputations and networks that facilitate in future passage of supportive LGBT policy. Even if the current bill may fail, the devotion of energy establishes the core of legislators who will subsequently be primary in passing similar policies.

Intergroup contact does not just facilitate in creating a more positive social environment. The social context relates to how much representation minority groups receive. It permits lawmakers to build reputations that they otherwise would not build. The LGBT rights movement has had its cycles of movement strategy from insurgency to within-institution approaches (D'Emilio 2000). Contemporary perspectives would de-

³Some municipalities in these 29 states have passed ordinances that prohibit denying services or employment based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

scribe the current cycle as one that is within-institutions, which means that coalitions and actions of lawmakers will continue to be consequential for the political gains of the LGBT movement. It also means that LGBT people and their presence in legislative districts is a source for political change.

4. What happens to minorities in environments that become politically threatening?

As opposed to how intergroup interactions may affect the majority, I also investigate how minority groups respond intergroup threat. LGBT people are less likely than other groups to be politically influential (Sherrill 1993, Sherrill 1996). LGBT people are much less likely to be born into LGBT households, and they have a more difficult time forming communities due to their as-if random distribution about the population. This makes it much less likely for those who identify as LGBT to form a community or consciousness that is politically influential. I find that the existence of intergroup threat forges identity salience. This explains one potential way LGBT people are able to form a collective consciousness. Heightened consciousness of one's group membership affects political participation and cohesion. Threats facilitate in making identities salient that then relates to these outcomes.

6.2 Implications

These findings substantively discuss LGBT rights and the presence of LGB people, which poses questions about the normative understandings of outness and social change. The findings also theoretically implicate other minority groups and attitudes about their

rights.

6.2.1 Context, Contact, or What?

For LGBT people, coming out has been considered as one of the most politically influential acts a person who is LGBT can do. Herek & Capitanio (1996) viewed being gay or lesbian as “concealable,” which facilitated in them avoiding stigma. Recent findings, however, question how concealable being lesbian or gay may actually be. These findings indicate that existing in an a social environment as a LGB person may carry with it inter-group interactions, even if the LGB person is or is not “out.” By having presence, LGB people may be agents of social change. I show that greater presence is related to positive attitude change.

I also showed that this was not uniform for all members of the mass public. Some subpopulations may be threatened by the presence of LGB people. This is the case for Evangelicals, those whose frequently attend religious services, African-Americans, and those with less educational attainment. This also means that the presence of other minority groups may have differing affects on their environment. This encourages more nuanced and deeper understanding of *who* gets threatened by minority groups and who may actually be experiencing contact.

6.2.2 The Representation of Minority Groups

This social and political environment also relates to the representation of minority groups. Many previous studies have studied constituency influence on the actions lawmakers

take. Previous studies have also investigated how varying social contexts may also influence the behavior of representatives. Studies have also investigated how both of these factors may influence policy outputs. What has been less considered is the relationship among these factors on the actions legislators take. I show that the social and political environment is affected by the presence of minority groups, and this environment allows representatives to devote greater resources to the minority group. As it may be rare for some minorities to ever be sizeable enough to be politically influential, their ability to be among environments that are affected by their presence increases their ability to be politically influential and receive policies that acknowledge them.

The heterogeneous effects of contact also implicate the potential for future studies. If lawmakers tend to view portions of their constituents as important at certain times, then how might coalitions influence their actions? The present study only investigates the role of minority presence on the average level of support for the minority group. However, a subconstituency politics theory of representation also considers that partisanship facilitates in creating coalitions. It may be easier, for example, for Democratic representatives to be responsive to a LGB subconstituency because the party considers LGBT people as more ideologically proximate to their coalition. If this is the case, then the political environment lawmakers may be responding to is not how the presence of LGBT people influences the median voter as much as it influences the average voter of a representative's reelection constituency (Fenno 1978). For other minority groups, it may then be important to consider the potential mechanism of minority presence, its influence on *certain* constituents, and its relation to the actions lawmakers take.

6.2.3 Group Cohesion and Political Threat

The social construction of difference and identity is both a function of individuals and institutions. Given an individual's cognitive limits, it is improbable that they are acting in every social and political interaction with one or more identities as consistently and equally salient. Conflict is essential to the structure of political discourse:

There are billions of potential conflicts in any modern society, but only a few become significant. The reduction of the number of conflicts is an essential part of politics. Politics deals with the domination and subordination of conflicts. A democratic society is able to survive because it manages conflict by establishing priorities among a multitude of potential conflicts (Schattschneider 1960, p. 64, emphasis original)

Conflict is also central to how people structure their political identities. The conflict that emerges in places that become politicized results in minorities structuring their identities in away that makes that identity more salient. In this way, conflict exercises what Lukes (1974) would consider to be power's third face: the ability to cognitively structure an individual's perception of the surrounding social and political environment (see also Gaventa 1982).

6.3 Identity Politics and Political Change

Traditional approaches to mass political behavior treats individuals as independent actors in the political process. These approaches acknowledge group-based dynamics within individuals. Consider the classic two schools of thought epitomized in *Voting* and *The American Voter*.

In *Voting*, an individual's group membership is central to their likelihood to vote and vote choices. While the authors tend to take a highly individualistic approach to

understanding the process of voting, inherent in group membership is the understanding of social networks and local environments that foster cohesion: “Intentions supported by one’s social surroundings are more predictably carried out than are intentions lacking such support” (Berelson, Lazarsfeld & McPhee 1954, p. 283). Groups are inherent and central to the study.

In *The American Voter*, an individual’s group membership is central to their political distinctiveness, cohesion, and ability to be politically effectual by their proximity to parties. To these authors, “[g]roups are real because they are *psychologically* real, and thereby affect the way in which we behave... Group members do not makes political decisions in a psychological field limited to group forces, any more than non-members make decisions in a vacuum” (Campbell et al. 1960, p. 296, 300). While the authors spend time discussing when and how political distinctiveness may be politically effectual, the authors do not further consider how the vacuum may operate differently.

Both studies contend that groups matter to politics, and it is theoretically and empirically difficult to separate the individual from the social group and political environment. The present studies consider how the formation of groups creates different social environments that facilitate in political change. By altering the social environment, minority groups may facilitate in lawmakers advocating for policies on their behalf. Additionally, the social environment affects minorities, forging salient identities that create politically distinctive groups. As stated, the central thesis of these studies is that political opinions and behavior is explained, in part, by an individual’s surrounding social and political environment.

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