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DOES ALL THE EXCITEMENT REALLY END AT MARRIAGE? AN ASSESSMENT OF SAME-SEX  
MARRIAGE LEGISLATION AND LGBT ACTIVISM

Kelsie Diaz

39 Pages

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the legalization of same-sex marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships with LGBT political participation and activism. There has long been a debate between several groups of LGBT activists on what the legalization of same-sex marriage will do to LGBT activism. Will achieving same-sex marriage ultimately hinder the movement or will it open new realms of possibility for change? This study aims to survey the arguments offered by a few prevalent sides of the same-sex marriage debate, then provide empirical information as support for one of those claims. This study will conduct a generalized ordinal logit of legalization and LGBT participation to offer evidence supporting an increase or decrease in in likelihood for political participation after marriage legalization. The results showed that living in a legalized state does not necessarily increase the likelihood of participation in the LGBT community. Instead, education and income were significant factors in addressing the likelihood of participation among the LGBT community.

**KEYWORDS:** LGBT; Marriage; Participation; Voting; State

DOES ALL THE EXCITEMENT REALLY END AT MARRIAGE? AN ASSESSMENT OF SAME-SEX  
MARRIAGE LEGISLATION AND LGBT ACTIVISM

KELSIE DIAZ

A Thesis Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Politics and Government

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2017

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DOES ALL THE EXCITEMENT REALLY END AT MARRIAGE? AN ASSESSMENT OF SAME-SEX  
MARRIAGE LEGISLATION AND LGBT ACTIVISM

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Antonio Diaz Sr. The man who told me I am too smart to stop going to school.

K.D.

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## CHAPTER I: A THEORETICAL DEBATE ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

### **What Has Same-Sex Marriage Done to LGBT Activism?**

There exists a long-standing debate among several sub-groups of LGBT activists on whether the goal of same-sex marriage is an end or a starting point for LGBT activism. Some LGBT activists believe same-sex marriage legalization should cause the public to take LGBT identities and opinions more seriously, thus creating more opportunity and space for inclusive, positive change in both public and private realms. Other groups of LGBT activists believe that same-sex marriage essentially signals the end of the movement for several different reasons. They consider marriage too exclusionary, and the fight for legalization would cause the movement to alienate many activists and groups within the LGBT community. They also believe that same-sex marriage campaigns use up so much money for advocacy, and there leaves no more monetary room for other campaigns and issues for the LGBT community. Does achieving same-sex marriage ultimately end the movement or will it open new realms of possibility for change? This study aims to survey several theoretical arguments considering the same-sex marriage debate and to examine what effect the legalization of marriage might have on LGBT activism. Chapter I will survey the theoretical arguments for and against same-sex marriage, and Chapter II will be a quantitative study aiming to provide empirical support for any elements of the arguments being addressed.

### **How Marriage Became a Main Goal**

Several authors have examined how and why same-sex marriage suddenly became a high salient goal in the 1990s (Egan, 2011; Warner, 1999; Taylor, 2009; Stewart, 2003;

Chauncey, 2009; Pierceson, 2014). The marriage battle used to be deemed unachievable before the 1990s, but once people started winning unexpected rights through small civil courts, it emerged as a main issue. How did marriage rights become so important to so many within the LGBT community, especially given the gay liberation movements in the 1970s worked closely with feminist movements to combat marriage as an institution altogether?

Pierceson (2014) describes how an official lesbian and gay movement began in the 1950s after WWII. At the time, “marriage was the last thing on the minds of these advocates” (p.25). An actual gay and lesbian movement did not take shape in the public sphere until the Stonewall Riots in 1969. Stewart (2003) supports this claim that the birth of gay liberation is often associated with the Stonewall Riots in 1969 in New York City. New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn and the inhabitants violently resisted them. The people defending the Stonewall Inn mostly consisted of then self-identified transvestites, butch lesbians, and gay teens. Following soon after was the first Gay Pride parade in 1970. Stonewall launched a new visibility of LGBT identities altogether.

Same-sex couples began to apply for marriage licenses in the 1970s, but they were denied in Minnesota, Kentucky, and Washington. Although these failures produced some disappointment, they also provided more motivation for LGBT marriage activists to pursue same-sex marriage legislation. In 1975, the Dixon Bill was proposed in Washington D.C. regarding “no fault divorce”. Because all the language in the bill was gender-neutral, same-sex couples began to use it to fight for marriage rights (Pierceson, 2014). The right to a no-fault divorce gave proof that marriage is a pursuit of happiness rather than an obligation. No-fault divorce meant that people could get married and divorced without many consequences. This

proves that Americans marry for happiness and self-fulfillment, and then can divorce without fault. Americans no longer needed to provide justification for divorce. Pierceson argues that the Dixon Bill triggered a long-lasting fight for marriage rights. Gay and lesbian couples are moving forward with their activism, and the Equal Rights Amendment, which Congress passed in 1972, gave them inspiration to seek equal protection and rights.

Chauncey (2009) believed there were three main developments, along with other intervening factors mentioned by Stewart, that caused the LGBT community to focus on marriage as a main goal for the movement. The three developments from the 1970s to 1990s that caused interest in marriage were the dramatic growth in acceptance of gays and lesbians, the devastating impact of AIDS, and the lesbian baby boom. Chauncey suspects that the Stonewall Riots had much to do with LGBT people coming into the public eye. Being in the public eye began to ensure greater tolerance and acceptance for LGBT relationships. The devastating impact of AIDS on the LGBT community also made couples want to have their relationships legally recognized for rights. Many people could not visit their partners in the hospital when they were sick because they were not considered family. Many individuals also lost their belongings and property if their partners died because they were not married. There was a lot at stake when the AIDS crisis struck the LGBT community, so the people tried their hardest to have their relationships validated by the state. The epidemic raised the question of “who counted as family” (p. 99).

When Chauncey refers to the lesbian baby boom, he means that lesbians were losing custody rights of their children from previous heterosexual relationships because same-sex relationships were deemed as unfit for parenting. Lesbians ran a better chance of keeping their

children from previous relationships if they lived with their partners and mimicked heterosexual relationships (Chauncey, 2009). This made many lesbian women want to pursue marriage licenses because then they would be able to keep their children. Therefore, widespread public tolerance, the AIDS epidemic, and child custody rights for lesbians sparked not just an interest, but a need for marriage rights in the LGBT community.

Pierceson (2014) describes how there were marriage victories in the 1990s in Hawaii, Alaska, Vermont, and Massachusetts. Although Hawaii repealed several marriage licenses between same-sex couples with a referendum in the late 1990s after they were initially approved, the same-sex weddings triggered even more activism for marriage.

Rimmerman (2014) argues the Christian right and social conservatives have massive influence on the direction of the LGBT movement. He contends that same-sex marriage campaigns were triggered by a spark in anti-gay ballot initiatives within religious right groups. Conservative groups and legislators proposed bills to ban same-sex marriage while simultaneously pressuring Democrat legislators to vote against same-sex marriage to keep their heterosexual voters' support. As Rimmerman states, "just as the far right had hoped, many otherwise liberal legislators voted for bills and infuriated gay and lesbian voters" (p. 105). Gay and lesbian groups spent most of their time persuading legislators to vote against anti-gay ballot initiatives, thus devoting most of their time and resources to marriage.

One of the most significant anti-gay pieces of legislation to come forward during the marriage battle was the Defense of Marriage Act, otherwise known as DOMA. Per Dolan (2013), DOMA part of the social conservative backlash to a growing gay and lesbian movement, and the bill was designed to, "paint gays and lesbians as deviants" (p. 114). Social conservatives wanted

to protect a traditional marriage and family dynamic, and the LGBT community would essentially destroy those traditional values. Many Republicans and Democrats alike embraced DOMA.

Vermont was the first official victory in making same-sex civil unions an actual law, and Massachusetts officially became the first same-sex marriage state in 2003. With these significant victories, same-sex marriage became a high priority issue in the United States. Stewart (2003) and Chauncey (2009) emphasize how same-sex marriage achieved salience through the possibility that Hawaii and Vermont were going to permit marriage licenses to gay couples in the 1990s as well. These two small court cases launched a whole campaign for marriage (Stewart, 2003; Chauncey, 2009).

After the cases in Hawaii and Vermont were won, San Francisco kicked off more marriage licenses and several other cities followed in the late 1990s (Chauncey, 2009). States fought for years over marriage legalization both statewide through civil courts and nationwide through direct legislation (Chauncey, 2009). Now as of June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015, after the Supreme Court ruled bans on same-sex marriage as unconstitutional, same-sex marriage was nationally legalized. LGBT couples are continuing to get married at rapid rates (USCB, 2015).

Although same-sex marriage has been nationally legalized, the LGBT community is still actively fighting for equal rights in several other social institutions (Human Rights Campaign, 2015). Large LGBT organizations are fighting for adoption rights, employment/workplace safety, and freedom of expression on behalf of the LGBT community. Same-sex marriage legalization was not the end of oppression for the LGBT community, and many people are still fighting for equality.

## **Marriage as an Opening for the LGBT Movement**

This section aims to survey the arguments in favor of same-sex marriage legislation. Many theorists argued that achieving same-sex marriage would ultimately cause society to consider LGBT individuals a part of mainstream society, thus taking their visibility in association more seriously. (Josephson, 2005; Bernstein, 2015; Rauch, 2004). Other theorists speculated that the LGBT community will be more accepted once they assimilate into heterosexual cultural practices (Sullivan, 2004). Lastly, few studies suggest that social movements could have an influence on future activism. Assessing these arguments in favor of same-sex marriage legislation could potentially help produce evidence and support for my study.

Josephson (2005) describes how some conservative LGBT activists believed same-sex marriage is the only reasonable goal for LGBT movements. Josephson states that these activists believe, “access to marriage will create a more mature gay culture, since...marriage leads to a fulfilled adult life that connects love, sex, and responsibility” (p. 272). By connecting love, sex, and responsibility, society would, hypothetically, begin to see LGBT people as more relatable and trustworthy. These conservative LGBT activists typically advocated for same-sex marriage because, “marriage would rein in sexual promiscuity, which would in turn make gays and lesbians better citizens” (p. 136). The goal was to assimilate and these activists believed, “allowing same-sex marriage would encourage traditional familial values among gay couples” (p. 136).

Much like Josephson, Bernstein (2015) believes that, “achieving same-sex marriage will perhaps open up even more space to expand the LGBT political agenda in pursuit of broad

intersectional goals of structural change, social justice, and the common good” (p. 334). Per Bernstein, marriage has a variety of normalizing and non-normalizing effects. It is normalizing in the sense that LGBT couples can participate in the same institution as do heterosexual couples. The normalizing effect will create a widespread acceptance of LGBT couples, making their issues more valid than they were before since they will be considered part of a community; something they may have not experienced before. If society can relate to LGBT couples, then they are more likely to be open to listening to their problems, thus being open to more change in the LGBT community (Bernstein, 2015). Jonathon Rauch agrees that marriage will open, “a new level of social acceptance” (p. 55). It is non-normalizing in the sense that it opens the door for policies recognizing alternative family forms in addition to heterosexual relationships. Policy changes to include alternative family forms brings more consideration and acceptance of LGBT identities.

Rauch (2004), a strong advocate for marriage equality, supposes that, “many homosexuals glorified the underworld as their salvation and mistook it for home” (p. 63). Rauch believes that queer culture is the perceived “underworld” and people settled there for a marginalized lifestyle when they thought that marriage was an unreachable goal. Rauch thinks those people are now too comfortable with their marginalized lifestyles so they do not wish to marry. Essentially, he is arguing that radical activists who oppose marriage are willingly embracing their own oppression, thus creating a marginalized lifestyle altogether. These authors imagined same-sex marriage would lead mainstream society to treat LGBT individuals with acceptance. The literature following addresses the impact of social movements on future activism.



Other pieces of literature have measured the impact of same-sex marriage campaigns on future activism. Taylor (2009) found, “powerful evidence that culture can be consequential not only internally, with implications for participant solidarity and identity, but for political change and further action as well” (p. 865). When Taylor refers to culture, she means that groups of people with the same morals and values can create social change, especially in times of injustice. Their movement to movement study suggests that, “activism around one campaign affects participation in subsequent movements” (p. 868). The activism inside one’s culture can create change and impact activism in the future. This offers evidence for my study on the basis that same-sex marriage legislation could have an impact on future LGBT movements to come.

Meyer and Whittier (1994) also mention a spill-over effect from the women’s movement to several different peace movements during the civil rights era. They believe that the women’s movement influenced future peace movements in the USA (1994). Current social movements have the potential to influence future activism within social movements.

Montgomery (2015) cites an example from Massachusetts, the first state to achieve full marriage equality. Even after marriage equality, activists continued to fight for more rights in other discriminatory realms. Montgomery states on behalf of Executive Director Kara Coredini, “the organization has leveraged its activist base and lobbying and electoral presence to advance priorities shared with its partner groups, working successfully for a trans-inclusive nondiscrimination bill, a commission on LGBT aging, and LGBT representatives on the first statewide commission on homeless youth” (p. 50).

Some arguments on same-sex marriage and activism suggest that same-sex weddings, protests, and the marriage equality movement could positively influence future movements for

LGBT rights. Other arguments favored same-sex marriage legislation because it is assimilating, which in turn creates acceptance of the LGBT community. Although this literature offers compelling arguments in favor of same-sex marriage, there are several disagreeing theorists on this subject, and they believe same-sex marriage will hinder the LGBT community.

### **Marriage as a Hindrance to the LGBT Movement**

Radical activists generally oppose marriage for two reasons. First, they argue that the exclusionary nature of marriage will cause the movement to lose allies and supporters. Second, they argue marriage activism has taken up so much money that other forms of activism are no longer possible. These arguments could potentially provide support for my study on same-sex marriage and LGBT activism.

Several theorists believe that the same-sex marriage goal is exclusionary because it only ends up benefitting a few privileged people instead of most of the LGBT community. By only benefitting a small number within the LGBT community, the fight for marriage rights might cause the LGBT movement to lose support from many people. In turn, this may discourage many LGBT individuals from identifying with the movement if they do not feel included in LGBT politics (Warner, 1999, Josephson, 2005; Taylor, 2009; Farrow, 2004; Taylor J., 2014; DeFillippis, 2016). Losing people within the movement will only make it weaker, thus hindering the movement altogether.

Michael Warner (1999) asserts that marriage sanctifies some at the expense of others. This means that marriage slaps on a label of legitimacy for couples and whoever does not have that label is less worthy. Josephson (2005) supports this argument by stating, "same-sex marriage...would provide benefits to more privileged members of the LGBT community, but

would disenfranchise others” (p. 273). Many same-sex couples that get married are often middle/upper class white men, forgetting the struggles that other LGBT individuals may endure besides getting married. Josephson believes, “many in the queer community would be further marginalized by the normalizing effects that marriage may bring to those in the community who are most like heterosexual married couples” (p. 274). If most of the people within the LGBT movement will not benefit from marriage equality, then they would be less inclined to support it. Bornstein (2010) asserts that marriage continues this privilege among white, middle class gay and lesbian couples while simultaneously inhibiting health care for many LGBT individuals that do not want to or cannot get married. Marriage carries many benefits, including tax breaks and more opportunities for better health coverage plans. There are many single LGBT individuals that deserve healthcare but cannot get it unless they are married. Kate Bernstein, in her letter LGBT leaders on marriage equality, protests that, “gay marriage might give some married gay people access to health care, tax breaks, and immigration rights. But shouldn’t our community be fighting for us all to have access to health care, whatever our ‘marital status?’” (p. 47).

DeFillippis (2016) also believes that the movement is losing allies due to its lack of attention on LGBT poverty as a prominent social issue. Focusing on marriage equality only benefits a small percentage of the LGBT community while others are left to deal with homelessness, sickness, and instability due to their lack of rights. Those who do not feel represented will not feel inclined to support the movement for marriage equality, thus losing widespread support for the community.

Farrow (2004) also assesses the issue that marriage equality is essentially anti-black in the LGBT movement. He observes that, “Atlanta LGBT citizens that opposed gay marriages were

black people” (p. 33). According to Farrow, black people are not represented because they are denied certain rights for either not wanting to get married or being unable to find a partner fit for long term romantic love and financial security. Everyone deserves the rights that come with marriage, but many people in the LGBT community cannot get access to those rights as single individuals, thus they do not wish to participate in the LGBT movement for marriage equality. Many people believe they deserve those rights anyway, and they should not have to get married to receive them. Farrow concludes with a powerful statement against the movement saying, “Americans are suffering and dying because they can’t get decent health care, and gays want weddings” (p. 75).

Several radical LGBT activists also criticize how marriage equality campaigns have sucked up so many resources and money that other campaigns and social services were unable to keep providing aid to the LGBT community (Conrad, 2015; Swan, 1997).

Conrad (2009) describes how, “the gay marriage movement has been sucking up resources like a massive sponge” (p. 60). It has been taking up so many resources that it has caused other LGBT social service groups and institutes to shut down because they do not get the same amount of funding that the marriage campaigns do, thus creating bitter attitudes among those that felt the LGBT community needed more help than just marriage equality. Some marriage campaigns have spent, “close to \$6 million over the duration of the campaign” (p. 61). Radical activists believe that money could have been spent on social services for LGBT people in poverty or without health care. Instead, the movement was campaigning for the right to marry for privileged individuals.

Swan (1997) describes how LGBT groups in states with legalized same-sex marriage have found all their funding diminished. When state governments see that marriage equality has been achieved, they reduce funding for several social services that aid LGBT communities because same-sex marriage legalization is perceived as the final fight for equal rights. However, there are still several issues to be addressed like racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination within the movement. Alcohol and drug addiction are serious problems in the LGBT community, and now the movement does not receive resources for those problems since marriage has been achieved (Swan, 1997). This decreased funding leaves people bitter about the movement, possibly causing them to abandon it altogether. Again, by sucking up all the funding for marriage equality, the LGBT movement is losing close allies and other services for LGBT people in need. If marriage campaigns exclude large groups of individuals within the movement and it uses up all monetary resources, then the movement may become divisive and unable to agree on strategies for activism.

This theoretical debate on whether same-sex marriage legalization will have a positive or negative impact on the LGBT community poses many questions for LGBT activism altogether. Same-sex marriage legalization could either impact future LGBT movements or it could potentially divide the movement altogether, capturing the decline of LGBT communities. It is immensely important to provide evidence in support for any of the arguments in the literature previously stated, and doing so could aid the LGBT community in their plans for future activism. My intent is to focus on a small part of this argument: political participation and voter turnout in the LGBT community with and without legalization of same-sex marriage, civil unions, and

domestic partnerships in 2010. I plan to conduct a quantitative study on same-sex marriage legalization and LGBT political participation. My results have the capacity to offer support for those in favor of same-sex marriage activism or those who are not.

## CHAPTER II: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE LEGALIZATION AND LGBT ACTIVISM

Given the theoretical debate above on same-sex marriage, I aim to assess the relationship between same-sex marriage legalization in 2010 and LGBT political participation. I want to provide evidence to support any part of the theoretical arguments regarding same-sex marriage stated above. If the LGBT community participates more in legalized states than in non-legalized states, then there may be evidence in favor of same-sex marriage legislation. If participation decreases with same-sex marriage legalization, then it could offer support for an argument against marriage.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between same-sex marriage legalization and LGBT political participation. As of 2010, 14 states had legalized same-sex marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships, so it is beneficial to compare how legalized and un-legalized states differ in participation rates among the LGBT community. My study will use Social Movement Spillover as a theoretical framework for my hypothesis.

Several studies have examined the spillover effects of social movements on one another (Meyer & Whittier, 1994; Sharon, 2014; Taylor, 2009). Social movements can either influence co-existing movements based on shared community goals, or they can influence future activism through policy change and solidarity in victory. Social movement spillover, as defined by Meyer and Whittier (1994), states that spillover, “considers the effects of social movements on each other” (p. 868). Meyer and Whittier continue shaping social movement spillover with their study on how the women’s liberation movements during the civil rights era highly influenced the peace movements during and after women’s movements. In their findings, they conclude,

“Social movements are not distinct and self-contained; rather, they grow from and give birth to other movements, work in coalition with other movements, and influence each other indirectly through their effects on the larger cultural and political environment” (p. 277). They also found that, “the effects of one movement have gone beyond its expressively articulated goals to shape the larger social movement sector” (p. 293). A study done by Taylor (2009) concurs with Meyer and Whittier and states that, “activism around one campaign affects participation in subsequent movements” (p. 865).

Social movement spillover can happen for a variety of reasons. It could be that many liberal movements often share the same objectives, so they end up influencing one another on their tactics and goals within their own movements. Social movements are then no longer mutually exclusive (Meyer & Whittier, 1994). Social movements also can personally affect individuals and their personal goals. Many people that participate in social movements often participate in future or co-existing movements based on their developed values and morals from being an activist (Meyer & Whittier, 1994). The last explanation for social movement spillover is the possibility of political opportunity after policy change. Meyer and Whittier (1994) found in their study that the women’s movement shifted assumptions on gender, officially making way for more women to participate in the political realm. More women in the political realm meant that they had more power over social change. Many of these women also supported the peace movement, so by achieving victories in the women’s movement, the peace movement was also able to mobilize based on shared values and new opportunities for policy transformation. Sharon (2014) supports this theory in stating, “one social movement precedes, and is causally related to, the later one” (p. 69).



Same-sex marriage is a big social movement, and it is bound to have spill over into other forms of activism for LGBT individuals, especially if same-sex marriage rights are achieved. First, it is logical to predict that same-sex marriage activism has visibility in many other social movements other than their own. Several other co-existing movements could hold the same values and goals as the same-sex marriage movement. With that, LGBT activism would be visible in many other social justice settings, creating more widespread support for several social movements. This could potentially influence political participation in the LGBT community because many social movement goals overlap. It could also be that the same-sex marriage movement personally affected people within it. Many participants could have joined several other social justice groups considering being an activist, or they plan to continue their activism once same-sex marriage is achieved. Lastly, a big political victory on same-sex marriage could potentially motivate people to participate more in politics. Several other social movements may be able to mobilize with same-sex marriage legalization because of their overlapping goals for equality. Most importantly, achieving same-sex marriage may trigger higher likelihood for political participation within the LGBT community if the movement generates social movement spillover.

Social Movement Spillover is being used to predict the outcome of my quantitative study. Therefore, legalization of same-sex marriage, domestic partnerships, and civil unions could increase the likelihood of political participation among the LGBT community.

## Hypothesis

The different sides of the marriage argument offer compelling arguments for what effects marriage equality might have on the LGBT community. I am aiming to assess the relationship between legalization and political participation among the LGBT community. I conducted a quantitative study with results that should shed light on the effect same-sex marriage could have on LGBT political participation.

My hypothesis for this study is: Legalization of same sex marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships increases the likelihood of LGBT political participation and voter turnout. I formulated my hypothesis based on literature supporting Social Movement Spillover, as described previously. The independent variable of interest is the legalization status of marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships in a state as of 2010. The two dependent variables are LGBT political participation and LGBT voter turnout.<sup>1</sup> I expect a positive relationship between legalization and LGBT participation and voter turnout, meaning legalization could have an impact on participation and voting rates among the LGBT community.

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<sup>1</sup> Voter turnout was not blended in with political participation because voter turnout alone could possibly be explained by legalization. Voting is the number one form of political participation in which people take part. Incorporating voter turnout within political participation may skew results to make it look like LGBT individuals attend rallies and campaign activities etc. more than they do. Therefore, voter turnout should be a dependent variable by itself.

## Method

### Sample

Data for this study is from the Social Justice Sexuality Project (2010), a national survey of LGBT individuals that examines their sociopolitical experiences around several themes such as identity, religion, health, and civic/community engagement. The sample consists of approximately 5,000 respondents through a convenience sample based on census data. There are 1,782 individual cases in legalized states. This data is highly relevant to what I am studying because some states had legalized same-sex marriage and some did not as of 2010. Since the data is strictly LGBT respondents, I can accurately assess how legalization of same-sex marriage influenced LGBT participation.

### Variables & Measures

Measurement for the independent variable of interest is the official legalization status of same sex marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships in 2010. Each state was split up into individual categories depending on if they were legalized, had civil unions/domestic partnerships, or not legalized at all. States with full legalization were coded as 2, civil unions/domestic partnerships as 1, and those without legalization were coded as 0 (See Table A2).

Political participation, the dependent variable, was measured by a grouping of questions like how often LGBT individuals have participated in political events, how often they participated in social and cultural events, and how often they have donated to political organizations. Political events were organized events such as rallies, marches, and other public

statements. Social events consisted of clubs, movies, support groups, and restaurants. Donating means donating to specifically LGBT organizations. All answers were coded as follows:

**Table 1.1: Descriptive Coding for Variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Legalization Status	.404	.574	0	2
Pride Festivals	2.096	.822	1	3
Political Events	1.783	.640	1	3
Social Events	2.285	.661	1	3
Donating	2.014	.683	1	3
Voting	.819	.385	0	3
Income	1.842	.750	1	3
Political Affiliation	1.339	.619	1	3
Religion	.634	.482	0	1
Education	.560	.496	0	1

**Table 1.2: Distribution of Political Participation**

	POL events	SOC events	Donate
Never	1622 (32.7%)	560 (11.3%)	1085 (21.9%)
Sometimes	2,620 (52.9%)	2,314 (46.8%)	2,475 (51.8%)
Often	578 (11.7%)	1,927 (38.9%)	1,154 (23.3%)
Missing	133 (2.7%)	152 (3.1%)	149 (3%)
<b>Total:</b>	4,953 (100%)	4,449 (100%)	4,863 (100%)

**Table 1.3: Distribution of Voter Turnout**

	Voter Turnout
Voted	3830 (77.3%)
Did Not Vote	847 (17.1%)
Missing	847 (17.1%)
<b>Total:</b>	5,524

Voter turnout is measured in terms of whether an LGBT person voted (1) in the 2008 presidential election or not (0)<sup>2</sup>.

Other independent variables are income, ideology, religion, and education. I chose these explanatory variables based on past studies on political participation and voter turnout. For example, Wolfinger finds, “college graduates vote more than high school graduates; white collar workers vote more than blue collar workers; and the rich vote more than the poor” (Wolfinger, 1980). It is necessary to study these demographic variables alongside my independent variable of interest to avoid any spurious relationships.

Receiving a bachelor’s degree or higher counts as graduating college. Political beliefs and practicing a religion were used specifically for this study because of the social circumstances and trends within LGBT communities. Many LGBT individuals identify with liberal ideologies, and many are non-religious (Social Justice Sexuality Project, 2010). It is useful to see how political ideologies and religiosity affect LGBT political participation. Income was split into three separate variables labeled high income, middle income, and low income<sup>3</sup>. Each variable was treated as a dummy variable so comparisons can be made between income categories for participation and voter turnout. Political ideology was re-coded as liberal, moderate, and conservative. Religiosity and college are coded as dummy variables. Practicing a religion and having a college degree are coded as 1, with all other categories being 0.

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<sup>2</sup> Voter turnout statistics are self-reported from the survey. People may be inclined to be dishonest about their voting habits to make it seem like they participate more than they do.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix for measurements and coding of all variables.

## Analysis

There are 14 states as of 2010 with legalized same-sex marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships. A generalized ordinal logit model<sup>4</sup> was used for attendance to political events, social events, pride festivals, and money donation to analyze results since the answer categories are ranked.<sup>5</sup> A binary logit model was used for voter turnout since the dependent variable has only two outcomes.

**Table 1.4: Legalization Status in States**

State	Legalization Status	Number of Individual Cases
Connecticut	Marriage	15
Washington DC	Marriage	118
Iowa	Marriage	7
Massachusetts	Marriage	75
New Hampshire	Marriage	2
Vermont	Marriage	2
California	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	800
Hawaii	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	262
Maine	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	3
Nevada	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	28
New Jersey	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	100
Oregon	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	71
Washington	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	36
Wisconsin	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	263
		<b>Total: 1,782 cases</b>

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<sup>4</sup> The categories “never” and “sometimes” in the ordinal logit are being compared to a base category of those whom participate “often”

<sup>5</sup> Select variables violated the Parallel Regression Assumption, so a generalized ordered logit is a better fit for analysis than an ordered logit.

## Results<sup>6</sup>

### Political Events

The results of Table 2.1 show that being in a legalized state does not have an impact on attending political events. They are more likely to NOT participate in political events if they live in a legalized state. LGBT individuals with a college degree are also more likely to participate sometimes in political events. This shows that having a college degree has an impact on the likelihood of political participation more than does living in a legalized state.

**Table 2.1: Ordinal Logit for Participation in Political Events**

Independent Variables	1(never)	2(sometimes)
	Coef. (Std. Error)	Coef. (Std. Error)
Legalization Status	.230 (.072)**	.163 (.095)
Income	.067 (.057)	-.111 (.085)
Education	.299 (.101)*	.298 (.085)**
Religion	.001 (.056)	.103 (.069)
Political Affiliation	.292 (.059)**	-.183 (.073)*

N=1,782 P<.05\* P<.01\*\*

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<sup>6</sup> Select variables violated the Parallel Regression Assumption, so a generalized ordered logit is a better fit for analysis than an ordered logit.

<sup>6</sup> Note: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to test any multicollinearity problems. All VIF scores are less than 5. Thus, there is no multicollinearity in this model. Refer to Appendix for VIF table.



Table 2.2 shows participation comparisons between people in legal states with and without a college degree. People with no college are less likely to participate often, and more likely to participate never. This shows that income potentially plays a significant role in political participation among the LGBT community. The results of a calculated prediction for LGBT individuals with and without education indicate that any given person is more likely to participate in political events if they have a bachelor’s degree versus high school. Those with a college degree are 15% likely to participate in political events often, and those without a college degree are only 12% likely to participate often.

**Table 2.2: Prediction Profile for People with Education vs. No Education in Legalized States**

	No College	College
Never	.298	.239
Sometimes	.583	.606
Often	.119	.154

**Social Events**

Table 3.1 also indicates that living in a legalized state is not related to participation in social events. Much like Table 2, people with a college degree are more likely to participate sometimes in social events. The unique finding here is that LGBT individuals with more liberal political beliefs are more likely to participate in social events, unlike political events.

**Table 3.1: Ordinal Logit for Participation in Social Events**

Independent Variables	1(never)	2(sometimes)
	Coef. (Std. Error)	Coef. (Std. Error)
Legalization Status	.041 (.121)	-.035 (.083)
Income	.100 (.069)	.033 (.034)
Education	.493 (.096)**	.266 (.056)**
Religion	-.127 (.105)	.044 (.065)
Political Affiliation	.414 (.092)**	.222 (.053)**

N=1,782 P<.05\* P<.01\*\*

Since college and political belief were both significant in the ordinal logit, it was useful to run a prediction assessment comparing liberal people with and without a college degree. Again, any given LGBT individual is more likely to participate in social events often if they have a college degree. Liberal LGBT individuals with a college degree are 45% likely to participate in social events, and those without a college degree are only 37% likely to participate.

**Table 3.2: Prediction Profile for Liberal People with Education vs. No Education**

	No College	College
Never	.116	.087
Sometimes	.508	.460
Often	.376	.452

## Donating

The only significant variable for donating money to LGBT organizations was income. This was expected since people with higher incomes typically have more money to spend on things other than vital expenses. Once again, living in a legalized state does not increase the likelihood to donate to LGBT organizations.

**Table 4.1: Ordinal Logit for Donating to LGBT Organizations**

Independent Variables	1(never)	2(sometimes)
	Coef. (Std. Error)	Coef. (Std. Error)
Legalization Status	.016 (.075)	.112 (.080)
Income	.449 (.061)**	.272 (.043)**
Education	.126 (.132)	-.082 (.081)
Religion	.046 (.072)	.287 (.078)**
Political Affiliation	.147 (.076)	-.097 (.108)

N=1,782 P<.05\* P<.01\*\*

Income was a highly significant variable for donating money to LGBT organizations, so I ran prediction assessments comparing low income and high income non-religious voters. People with high incomes are much more likely to donate to LGBT organizations often than

those with low incomes. This makes logical sense since people with higher incomes typically have more freedom with their expenses, thus donating to their political causes more often.

**Table 4.2: Prediction Profile for High Income vs. Low Income Non-Religious People**

	Low Income	High Income
Never	.284	.165
Sometimes	.551	.551
Often	.166	.285

**Pride Festivals**

Income and practicing a religion were both highly significant with respect to participation in pride festivals. LGBT individuals who are practicing a religion are more likely to participate never and sometimes in pride festivals. Those with a higher income are more likely to participate in pride festivals sometimes.

**Table 5.1: Ordinal Logit for Participation in Pride Festivals**

Independent Variables	1(never)	2(sometimes)
	Coef. (Std. Error)	Coef. (Std. Error)
Legalization Status	-.078 (.163)	.023 (.171)
Income	.052 (.066)	.155 (.059)**
Education	.012 (.055)	-.069 (.065)
Religion	.264 (.081)**	.309 (.101)**
Political Affiliation	.045 (.053)	-.004 (.040)

N=1,782 P<.05\* P<.01\*\*

Income and practicing a religion were significant when tested for participation in pride festivals. This shows that people who practice a religion are more likely to attend pride festivals than those who do not practice a religion. Income was also significant so I ran a profile comparing high income religious people to low income religious people. Of all people who practice a religion, those with higher incomes are still more likely to participate often than those with low incomes.

**Table 5.2: Prediction Profile for High Income vs. Low Income Religious People**

	Low Income	High Income
Never	.291	.248
Sometimes	.315	.304
Often	.394	.448

## Voting

Last, Table 2.5 shows the binary logit for voter turnout among states. All variables were significant for voter turnout except for practicing a religion and legalization status. An LGBT person with higher income is 1.5 times more likely in odds to vote than those with lower incomes, and someone with a college degree is over twice as likely in odds to vote than those without a college degree. The most peculiar finding here is that more liberal LGBT individuals are 20% less likely in odds to turn up to vote. With that, results show that liberal LGBT individuals and LGBT people who live in a state with legalized same-sex marriage are less likely to turn up to vote.

**Table 6: Binary Logit for Voter Turnout**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>MLE Coefficient (Std. Error)</b>	<b>Odds Ratio (Percentage)</b>
Legalization Status	-.277 (.169)	.758 (-24.2%)
income	.370 (.055)**	1.448 (44.8%)
Education	.879 (.154)**	2.408 (140.8%)
Religion	.177 (.103)	1.194 (19.4%)
Political Affiliation	.263 (.058)**	1.301 (30.1%)

N=1,782 P<.05\* P<.01\*\*

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between same-sex marriage legalization and LGBT political participation. As of 2010, 14 states had legalized same-sex

marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships, so it was useful to compare states with legalized same-sex marriage to those without same-sex marriage.

Previous literature predicted that legalization in the states could have an impact on LGBT activism (Taylor, 2009; Meyer & Whittier, 1994). These expectations were supported by Spillover Theory, which states that strong social movements have a large effect on future social movements due to victory and solidarity. My hypothesis was that legalization of same-sex marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships would increase LGBT political participation. There was no indication of a positive impact on political participation among the LGBT community once their state legalized same-sex marriage. Therefore, my hypothesis was not supported. In fact, some LGBT individuals were less likely to participate or vote if they live in a legalized state.

The variables that measured political participation were attending political events, attending social events, donating money to an organization, attending pride festivals, and voting. Living in a legalized state did not increase participation in any of these realms.

LGBT individuals that live in legalized states do not participate more in political events than those that live in un-legalized states. Surprisingly, they are more likely to NOT participate if they live in a legalized state. This goes against what I predicted to happen with legalization and participation. It is possible LGBT individuals may have thought they no longer needed to participate once their state legalized same-sex marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships. The LGBT community, and mainly LGBT organizations put marriage rights as a high priority issue on their agendas in activism. So, when same-sex marriage is legalized, LGBT individuals may feel like they have reached true equality, thus no longer feeling the needs to

participate in politics anymore. This potentially offers support for those in the LGBT community that argue legalizing same-sex marriage will have negative effects on the LGBT movement.

Having a college degree most influenced the likelihood an LGBT person would participate in political events. This is noteworthy because if education can influence the likelihood of higher participation in political events, then it is important to assess how education plays a role in political participation among the public.

Much like the results for political events, participating in social events and donating money to LGBT organizations were not impacted with the legalization of same-sex marriage. Again, having a college degree made LGBT individuals more likely to participate in social events and more likely to donate the organizations. This could potentially have something to do with gaining networks throughout college and thus, possessing more resources and social networks for communication. People with higher incomes also have more freedom when it comes to everyday expenses, thus they are more likely to spend extra money on donations to LGBT organizations. The unique finding about social events was that individuals with more liberal political beliefs are more likely to participate in social events, but not in political events. Liberal LGBT people have social networks but they do not organize and attend rallies.

People with a higher income and those who practice a religion were both more likely to participate in pride festivals. This is the opposite of what I predicted from people who practice a religion. However, many religious LGBT individuals often care about molding their churches to accept LGBT identities and sexualities, so that is perhaps why they attend more pride festivals.

Most variables were significant for voter turnout in the states. However, going against my hypothesis, LGBT individuals were less likely to turn up to vote if they live in a legalized



state. This could mean that many LGBT people do not feel the need to vote anymore if their state has legalized same-sex marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships. It could also mean that those in the LGBT movement opposing same-sex marriage no longer want to participate in LGBT politics due to exclusion or monetary reasons like stated in the literature.

Having a higher income and possessing a college degree influenced the likelihood of LGBT voter turnout. Voting is one of the number one forms of political participation in the public. My results contradicted the predictions of Social Movement Spillover. Instead, lower voter turnout rates after legalization ended up supporting a completely different side in the theoretical debate of same-sex marriage activism. LGBT individuals in legalized states were less likely to vote than those in states without legalization. This helps the argument that LGBT individuals may no longer feel the need to participate if their main goal has been reached. Therefore, LGBT individuals may stop turning up to vote since they have no single issue to work toward anymore.

Although my hypothesis was rejected according to the results, there are still many important findings that came from the study. Income and education are immensely important when considering who participates in the political realm and who does not. Those with higher educations and incomes are much more likely to participate in politics all around. It does not necessarily matter whether they live in a legalized state or not. It would be useful for future studies to assess a more detailed relationship between these variables and LGBT political participation.

One limitation of this research is that the data is a bit old. Although it is highly unique, it is from 2010. I would have better been able to assess my variables if my data were more recent.

New data would have made my study produce more representative and generalizable outcomes as well because then I would have been able to assess participation rates over time within different social circumstances. My data has no other data of political participation to compare, so my study could only assess a single moment in time. With that, I cannot assume an increase or decrease in participation over time. I can only, in theory, measure the rates of LGBT participation in various states in 2010, when some states had full or partial legalization and others had none. Having my data set from 2010 as well as another wave of data from 2015 would have helped me assess if there were an actual increase or decrease in political participation over time. I can show correlation between my variables, but not causation. Legalization and political participation could have been correlated, but it is not safe to conclude that legalization directly causes an increase or decrease in political participation among the LGBT community.

Future research should examine the relationship between legalization and political participation in a more contemporary setting, especially since the national legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015. It would also be useful to study participation on other single issue politics besides same-sex marriage rights in LGBT political groups. Lastly, qualitative research would help us understand the unique experiences of LGBT individuals and their relationships with politics. A personalized qualitative approach will give some insight on why LGBT individuals are participating or not, and what issues are important to them.

This study provides sufficient groundwork for future studies on same-sex marriage rights and LGBT political participation. On one hand, many radical LGBT activists may be correct when asserting that legalization would decrease LGBT political participation. This happened with voter turnout in the results. Although my hypothesis was not supported, findings indicated that LGBT

individuals are more likely to participate if they have higher incomes and college degrees. Income and education were both explanatory variables, but they had the strongest relationship with political participation.

This tells us that since LGBT individuals with education and higher incomes are more likely to participate, maybe there should be more social programs in education for marginalized groups like LGBT communities. Ensuring equal opportunity for LGBT individuals may have an influence on their education and income in the future.<sup>7</sup> Since education is strongly correlated with political participation, those with an education are more likely to participate. I cannot assume that once LGBT individuals achieve higher education they will automatically participate more in the political realm. I am just stating that the two variables are strongly related, so the chance of someone participating is much higher if they have more education. So, the start for activism is not necessarily legalizing same-sex marriage, but providing resources for LGBT individuals to succeed into higher education. In turn, those better opportunities may increase political participation altogether in the LGBT community.

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<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that political participation is not the same as voting. Voting is the most popular form of engaging in politics, giving the illusion that people may participate more than they do. The goal is to increase political participation, which are activities outside of just voting.

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## APPENDIX: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS & LEGALIZATION VISUALS

Distributions and codes and recodes of all variables

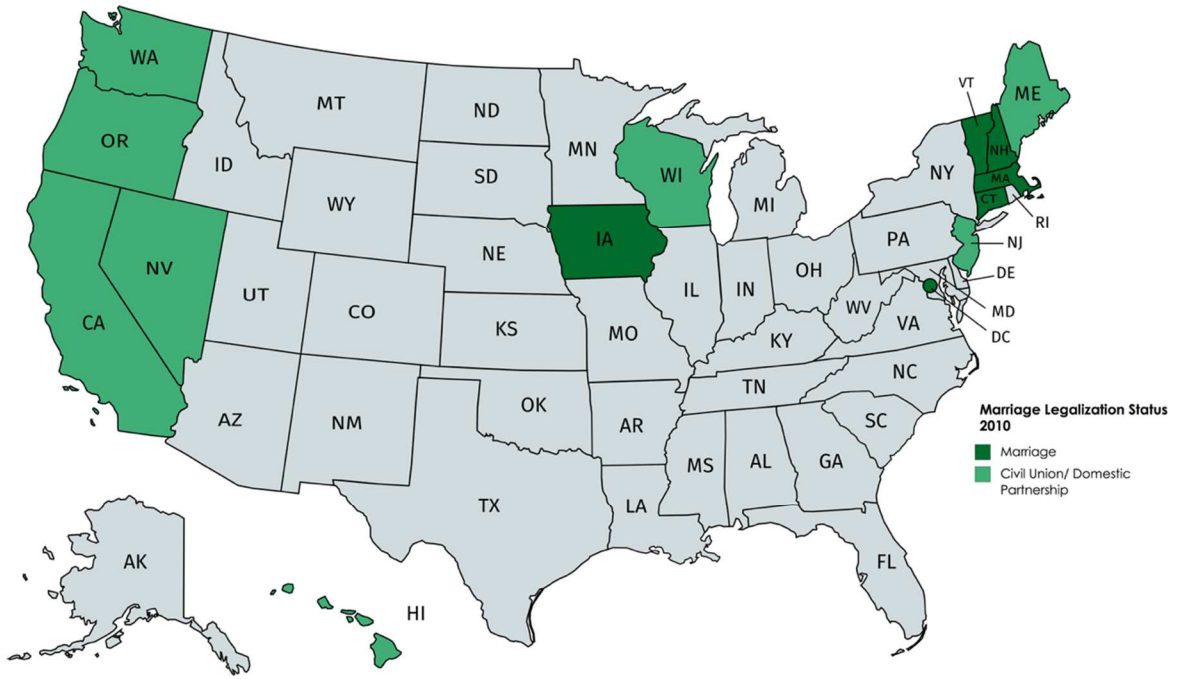
1	Never
2	Once or twice per year
3	About 6 times per year
4	About once a month
5	About once a week
6	More than once a week

These independent variables were recoded into 3 answer categories being “never”, “sometimes”, and “often”. The re-coded answer categories and distributions are as follows:

1	Never
2-3	Sometimes
4-6	Often

## State Legalization Status 2010

<b>State</b>	<b>Legalization Status</b>	<b>Number of Individual Cases</b>
Connecticut	Marriage	15
Washington DC	Marriage	118
Iowa	Marriage	7
Massachusetts	Marriage	75
New Hampshire	Marriage	2
Vermont	Marriage	2
California	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	800
Hawaii	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	262
Maine	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	3
Nevada	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	28
New Jersey	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	100
Oregon	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	71
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Wisconsin	Domestic Partnerships/Civil Unions	263
		Total: 1,782 cases



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