

How Cohesive are Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals in the United Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Politics Department

April 6, 2018

timothylai@nyu.edu



NYU

GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF ARTS & SCIENCE

Overview

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation
Conclusion

1 Background

2 Research Question & Hypothesis

3 Data & Empirical Strategy

4 Findings

- Predicting Party Choice
- Party Positioning
- Ideological Self-Placement
- Policy Preferences
- Political Participation
- Conclusion

Background

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

- In the United States, nationally representative samples have included measures of sexual orientation (Egan, Edelman & Sherrill 2008; Egan 2012; Hertzog 1996; Bailey 1999).

American Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals (LGBs)

- Loyal Democrats
- Identify as Liberal
- Have distinctive policy preferences: immigration, environment, gun control
- Are politically cohesive as a group (Egan 2012).

However little is known about the behavior of LGBs in other countries

Background

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

- In the United Kingdom (UK), the British Election Study become the second country to include a measure of sexual orientation as part of its demographic questionnaire.
- David Cameron and the Conservative Party rebranding & "socially-liberal" conservatism (Bale 2008, 2011; Dorey et. Al. 2011; Evans 2009; Hayton 2012).
 - Electoral motivation for equality issues and gay marriage.
 - Same-sex marriage passes in 2013 under Conservative – Liberal Democratic government.

Research Question & Theory

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation
Conclusion

The Puzzle:

- 1 How politically cohesive are lesbians, gays and bisexuals (LGBs) in the United Kingdom?
- 2 What explains variation in group cohesion between LGBs in the UK & US?

Theory & Hypothesis:

On partisan formation: "As elites become **ideologically more distinct** voters more easily choose a party identification concordant with their views .." (Levendusky 2004:2)

On polarization: "As political parties come to stake out more **distinctive** issue-based **positions**, partisan polarization should follow..." (Stoker & Jennings 2008: 620)

Hypothesis

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

H1: *Where political parties take **divergent positions** on the policy area of interest to the group, political cohesion should be **greater**. Where political parties take **similar positions** on the policy area of interest to the group, political cohesion among the group should be **less**.*

Data & Empirical Strategy

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

Conceptualization:

Political cohesion

- Distinct group: policy preferences, partisanship and electoral choices

Data:

- *British Election Study Internet Panel Wave 6*
- Nationally Representative Sample: Over 25,000 respondents
- 25,323 (93.56%) identified as straight
- 1,631 (6.44%) identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Data & Empirical Strategy

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

Methods:

- Cross-tabulations between straight and gay voters on policy questions
- Multinomial probit modeling to predict vote choice and partisanship
- Textual analysis of Party Manifestos

Vote Share of LGBs & Straights: U.S

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

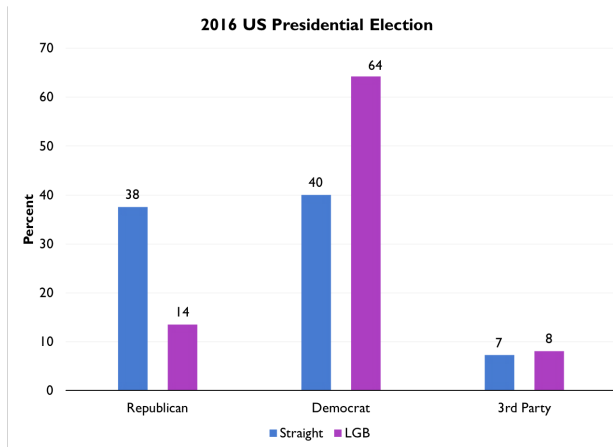
Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion



Source: American National Election Study (2017)

Vote Share of LGBs & Straights: U.K

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

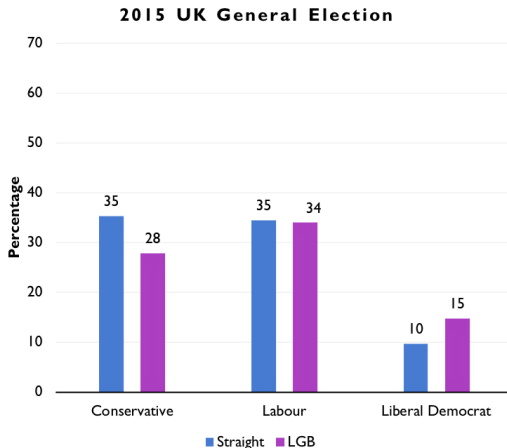
Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation
Conclusion



Source: British Election Study Internet Panel Wave 6 (2017)

Predicting Party Choice

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

Coefficients of Multinomial Probit Model of Party Choice in the 2015 General Elections

	(1) Conservative	(2) Labour	(3) Liberal Democrat	(4) Other Parties
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual	0.0769 (0.107)	-	0.467*** (0.105)	0.249*** (0.0944)
Observations	10,601	10,601	10,601	10,601

Standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Notes: Table reports coefficients of multinomial probit regressions with recalled party choice as the dependent variable. Voting for Labour held as the base outcome. The model includes respondent's self-placement on the Left-Right dimension, personal income, education, age and gender as covariates.

Source: *The British Election Study Internet Panel Wave 6* (2017)

Predicting Party Choice

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

Marginal Effects of Multinomial Model of Party Vote Choice in 2015 General Election

	(1) Conservative	(2) Labour	(3) Liberal Democrat	(4) Other Party
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual	-0.0328 (0.0231)	-0.0675*** (0.0220)	0.0714*** (0.0200)	0.0289 (0.0217)
Observations	10,601	10,601	10,601	10,601

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Notes: Table reports marginal effects of multinomial probit regressions with recalled party choice as the dependent variable. The model includes respondent's self-placement on the Left-Right dimension, personal income, education, age and gender as covariates. Covariates are held at its mean.

Source: *The British Election Study Internet Panel Wave 6* (2017)

Party Manifestos on Gay Rights: 2015 General Elections

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

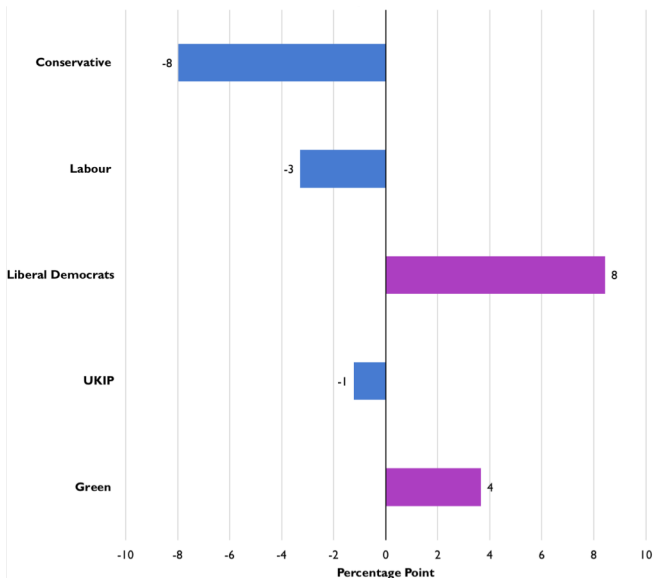
Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

Policy Promise	Liberal Democrats	Labour	Conservative
Pardon those convicted under historical legislation criminalizing homosexuality	Yes	-	Yes
Enact pro LGBT Foreign Policy	Yes	Yes	-
Protect the Human Rights Act	Yes	Yes	-
Extend LGBT relationship benefits	Yes	-	-
Allow LGBT blood donation	Yes	-	-
Tackle homophobia and transphobia in schools	Yes	-	-
Ban homophobic chants at sporting events	Yes	-	-

Percentage Point Difference between LGBs and Straights: Party Identification



How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation
Conclusion

Ideological Self-Location of LGBs and Straights

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

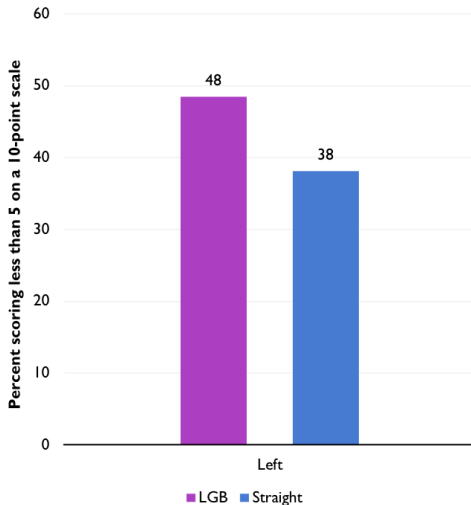
**Ideological
Self-Placement**

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

Self-location on Left - Right Scale



Percentage Point Difference between LGBs and Straights: Equality of Opportunity

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

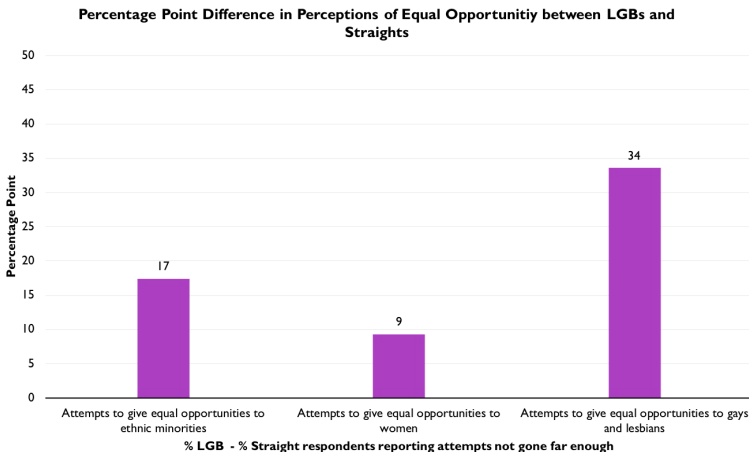
Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion



Percentage Point Difference between LGBs and Straights: Environment & Immigration

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

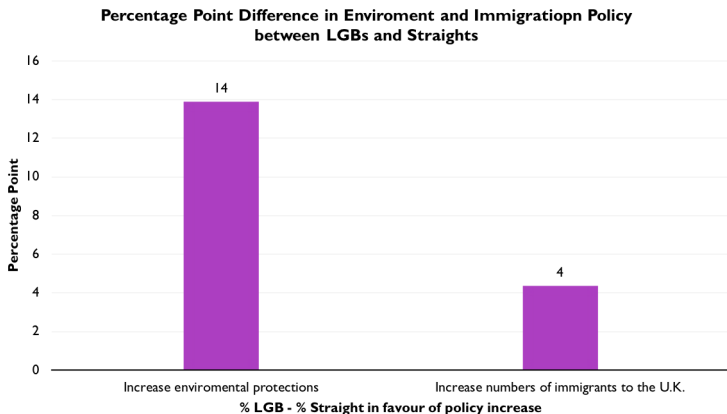
Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion



Percentage Point Difference between LGBs and Straights: Political Participation

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

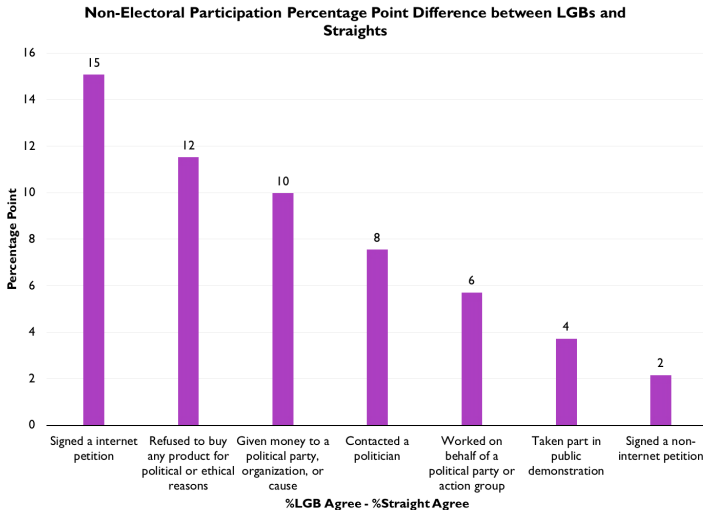
Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion



Conclusion

How Cohesive
are Lesbians,
Gays and
Bisexuals in
the United
Kingdom?

Timothy Lai

Background

Research
Question &
Hypothesis

Data &
Empirical
Strategy

Findings

Predicting Party
Choice

Party Positioning

Ideological
Self-Placement

Policy
Preferences

Political
Participation

Conclusion

British LGBs are politically cohesive to a degree:

- In comparison to the straight population, LGBs are more likely to:
 - Locate on the Left; Be more politically active; Prefer greater environmental protections & equality in society
 - 7 percent more likely to vote Liberal Democrat

However:

- Diffuse LGB electoral support
- Political parties on both the Left and Right in the UK formally support LGBT equality
- Liberal Democrats make more policy promises to LGBT voters
- Despite Conservative re positioning, LGBs tend to hold partisan identities on the Left