Evaluating Modern Presidential Approval Ratings Through an Assessment of Pro-Inclusive LGBT Executive Policy

Frances Messina
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Edwardsville, Illinois, USA

Abstract
At the 2016 Republican National Convention, former president Donald Trump promised to protect and support LGBT constituents, which was met with record low approval ratings. This observation led to the theorization that irrelevant of public statements, presidential approval ratings are determined by LGBT-inclusive executive policy. Using data from Gallup Polling and public documentation of executive policies, I employed an ordinary least squares regression to determine the statistical significance between the measures. This research provides evidence that pro-inclusive LGBT executive policy is not the driving factor of presidential approval for the general American population. The findings from this study imply that there is a disconnect between the general American population and the LGBT population, as well as the existence of performative allyship that is present amongst the general American population.

At the Republican National Convention of 2016, Donald Trump was set to accept the Republican Party nomination for presidency (Keneally 2017). Throughout Trump's 2016 United States presidential campaign, the LGBT community was promised the support and protection of their rights under his administration (Cahill et al. 2018). Trump reiterated this sentiment when he gave his acceptance speech at the convention, stating, "As your president, I will do everything in my power to protect our LGBT citizens from the violence and oppression of a hateful foreign ideology." (Keneally 2017). His statement came after the fatal mass shooting that took place on June 12th, 2016 at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The tragedy at PULSE Nightclub took the lives of 49 individuals and left

53 people wounded (Stults et al. 2017). Despite promises of safety and security, the LGBT community reacted negatively to President Trump's sentiments by having consistently low approval ratings of his presidency (GLAAD 2020).

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, traditionally known as the acronym 'LGBT,' is recognized for its unique contribution to American politics. The impact of the community is visible within the policymaking, public opinion, and social movements in the American political landscape (Mucciaroni 2011, 17). The LGBT community, despite being miniscule in size compared to the general American population, has proven to be a powerful force in presidential elections and throughout presidential terms (Weber 2021, 3). In the notable 2012 reelection of President Barack Obama, the strength of the community vote was visible in their ability alter election results in the states of Ohio and Florida to be in favor of the Democratic candidate (Gates 2012). LGBT American voters are more politically engaged than the general public (Perez 2012, 6), more likely to hold liberal ideals, consider themselves Democrat, and support the legal recognition of same-sex marriages (Egan 2012, 599).

The ideologies and activism of the LGBT community reveal a significant influence on the political system; specifically, at a national level (Weber 2021, 3). According to the Household Pulse Survey that is conducted by the Census Bureau, probability surveys suggest that roughly 20 million adults in the United States could be LGBT, and millions more may even identify with terms outside the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender realm (Human Rights Campaign 2021). Despite probability models that suggest the expansive size of the LGBT community, collective data on this demographic is still underestimated, for reasons such as individuals choosing not to disclose their identities or for the limitations that exist with random selection surveying (Human Rights Campaign 2021). Prior research on the LGBT community suggests that LGBT Americans presidential approval ratings are influenced by pro-inclusive policies

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(Worthen 2020, 263-284; Thompson and Turnbull-Dugarte 2021, 3-4).

While utilizing the understanding of the impact of inclusivity specific to the ever-growing LGBT community, this study employs a more general approach. By examining the general American population, this study seeks to understand why data suggests that Americans have become increasingly supportive of the LGBT community through the favoring of nondiscrimination policies (PRRI, 2022); support for same-sex marriage (Gallup, 2023); and the opposition to legislation that prohibits discussion about the LGBT community in American classrooms (Deliso 2022), yet do not always include LGBT-related issues in their overall evaluation of the president (Cavari 2019, 799; Gallup 2023). Prior research suggests that policy evaluation of a president is a leading factor in how individuals evaluate a presidents overall handling of their job (Cavari 2019, 799). This paper examines an expansion of these thoughts through the observation of executive policy–Executive Orders, Memorandums, and Proclamations–and the impact that pro-inclusive LGBT executive policy has on presidential approval ratings. This study concludes that the general American population, while becoming increasingly more likely to support an advancement of LGBT rights, tend to evaluate a president's handling of their job on more outlying factors than strictly the creation of pro-inclusive LGBT executive policies.

This research draws this thesis from the findings of different studies, which have shown that the formulation of LGBT-inclusive policies and reiteration of pro-LGBT sentiments from a president leads to more positive feedback from LGBT voters toward the president (Worthen 2020, 263-284; Thompson and Turnbull-Dugarte 2021, 3-4). Other studies have found that presidential approval ratings–a gauge of beliefs on how a president is handling their duties–are impacted by numerous different factors, such as identity politics (Clarke et al. 2005; Olson and Warber 2008), major events (Newman and Forcehimes 2009; McDonald 2022), partisan politics

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(Lebo and Cassino 2007), and economic affairs (Berlemann 2015). This study investigates the correlation between pro-inclusive LGBT executive policy and presidential approval ratings, while using public support for legally recognizing gay marriages, LGBT-inclusive State of the Union addresses, party affiliation of the president, and public opinion on moral acceptability of gay and lesbian relations. This paper interprets these findings under the impression that the evaluation of a president's handling of their job by the general American population is determined more by external political factors than a president's presence or absence of pro-inclusive LGBT executive policy.

The next section showcases literature that presents the numerous different economic, environmental, and political factors that impact presidential approval ratings. This literature reveals the absence of research to be done on pro-inclusive LGBT executive policy being a determinant of presidential approval ratings. The review of prior works also investigates pro-inclusive LGBT policies and the impact that they have on the health and well-being of LGBT Americans. Following the review of prior literature, a theoretical framework will outline how observations of former president Donald Trump led to a theorization that presidential approval ratings of the general American population is determined by LGBT-inclusive executive policy. This paper will then discuss the findings and results of the study, while elaborating on the data and methodology that was utilized to receive such findings and results. Following finding and results, I will discuss the implication and importance of the research. Ending with a conclusion, the paper will discuss the collective research and the findings.

Review of Prior Works

Literature that seeks to understand the determinants of presidential approval ratings investigates the impact of significant political actions and major worldly events. The literature that is attempting to acknowledge the causes behind presidential approval

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ratings traditionally uses these studies to discern patterns in an increase or decrease in presidential approval ratings after a politically significant occurrence. The occurrences and impactful factors that researchers investigate include a variety of topics: identity politics (Clarke et al. 2005; Olson and Warber 2008); major events (Newman and Forcehimes 2009; McDonald 2022); partisan politics (Lebo and Cassino 2007); and economic affairs (Berlemann 2015). These academic studies recognize that presidential approval ratings fluctuate depending on prominent political factors during a presidency. This literature has made the rise and fall of presidential approval ratings dependent on political trends and events but does not acknowledge the impact of issue prioritization and direct executive actions. Using this approach to understand the fluctuation of presidential approval ratings dismisses the way in which individuals prioritize specific political issues. The way a president addresses these prioritized issues through their rhetoric or policy formulation affects their overall presidential approval ratings.

Amnon Cavari (2019) studies how individual Americans evaluate and rate their overall approval of the president. He theorizes that issue prioritization affects the way in which individuals evaluate a president's policy performance, and therefore affects overall presidential approval ratings. Cavari utilized cross-sectional individual-level data supplied from the Roper iPoll which asked respondents three separate questions about issue priorities, presidential approval, and policy evaluations. Cavari incorporated aggregate time-series data control variables–personal and environmental factors, election year indicators, and who the president in office is at the time–and deployed an ordinary least squares regression model to find the correlation between the variables (Cavari 2019, 807-808). According to Cavari, Americans–individually and collectively–have issues that they prioritize, whether it be because of personal ideology or because of the political state and conditions the country is experiencing at the time. Because of this idea of issue prioritization, "people are expected to meet their needs for cognitive

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expediency by assessing the president on his performance in only a small number of policy spheres that matter to them most." (Cavari 2019, 801). Simply, the way in which Americans form their overall approval rating of a president is dependent on their evaluation of a president's policy regarding issues that hold a lot of weight to them. He found that individuals grant higher performance ratings to presidents based on their presidential actions surrounding an issue they prioritize. These higher performance ratings correlate to higher overall presidential approval ratings. Oppositely, when a president dismisses issues that an individual prioritizes, they may grant lower performance ratings to a president, which therefore correlates to lower overall presidential approval ratings. Throughout his study, Cavari focuses on foreign affairs and the economy as the two main issues that Americans prioritize. While these issues do embody the main focuses in regard to American politics, this research does not include many of the other large issues that the country faces. There are other major issues, such as Civil Rights, gun regulation, and climate change—that Americans prioritize, and utilizing them in this study would strengthen Cavari's argument about the correlation between issue prioritization and presidential approval ratings.

James N. Druckman and Justin W. Holmes (2004) investigate the direct impact that a president's rhetoric has on overall presidential approval ratings. They theorize that presidential approval ratings are affected using issue priming and presidential rhetoric. According to Druckman and Holmes (2004), priming is the way that the media attention and exposure on certain issues is the cause of people becoming more concerned with said issue. This concern is associated with how people will then evaluate a president's overall job performance. To study this phenomenon, Druckman and Holmes (2004) used a survey of 265 college-aged participants to formulate a dataset about political knowledge and priming. The surveyors conducted an initial questionnaire that asked students questions about their overall approval of President Bush. They conducted another questionnaire after broadcasting President Bush's State of

the Union address. This was an attempt to examine if there were differences in the way in which students' answers to the questionnaire were significantly different before and after watching the presidential speech. According to Druckman and Holmes (2004), they were able to conclude that "the survey confirms the result that the president can prime the issue criteria underlying his own approval evaluations." They found that through the act of priming, presidents can influence their own approval ratings through their rhetoric and issue priming. When the media focuses heavily on certain issues, it influences individuals to subsequently shift their focus on these specific issues while often pushing others to the back of their prioritization list. President's will then utilize this political phenomenon to strategically formulate speeches and proclamations to advantageously impact their agenda. This specific tactic, referred to as presidential priming, is the way that a president will tactfully focus their personal rhetoric around issues that are going to successfully render support and approval from citizens. Presidents focus on these issues because it will display their strengths to their audience which will generate higher overall approval ratings. Throughout this study, Druckman and Holmes (2004) provide strong, detailed evidence on their theory that presidential approval ratings are dependent on issue priming and presidential rhetoric. However, their study was conducted before many politically altering happenings. The first Black president, before the Trump and Biden presidencies, before the January 6th insurrection, and before the 2008 economic recession. These important events inevitably affected–and continue to affect–the rhetoric, issue priming, and overall approval ratings of presidents. By not including these and other historical events in the study because of time differences, it is possible that this study's conclusion could now be altered.

In regard to pro-inclusive LGBT policies, scholars believe that such policies have an impact on the health and well-being of LGBT Americans. Studies determine that the mental and physical well-being of LGBT individuals are dependent on policies that

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recognize and validate their identity, experience, and overall existence. Scholars that have examined pro-inclusive LGBT policies such as: same-sex marriage rights (Fingerhut et al. 2011); LGBTQ-supportive school policies and practices (Kaczkowski et al. 2022); access to gender-affirming care (Tordoff et al. 2022) have attested to the theory that pro-inclusive LGBT policies are associated with improved health outcomes within the LGBT community. Wojciech Kaczkowski, Adina C. Cooper, Jingjing Li, and Leah Robin (2022) discuss the impact that pro-inclusive LGBT policies have within a school setting. The researchers examined an array of LGBT-supportive school policies and practices, such as: providing LGBT-relevant curriculum in classes, aiding students in finding out-of-school health care providers, and prohibiting harassment based on identity. (Kaczkowski et al. 2022). The researchers found that there is a strong association between LGBT-inclusive policies and decreased likelihood of negative sexual health outcomes. They conclude that "most LGBTQ-supportive school policies and practices were associated with lower odds of adverse sexual health outcomes for LGB and heterosexual students." (Kaczkowski et al. 2022). Conclusively, this literature supports the implementation of pro-inclusive LGBT policies as a mechanism of improving the health and well-being of those within the American LGBT population.

Theoretical Framework

Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign and presidential term, former president Donald Trump displayed conflicting ideologies regarding the LGBT community. Trump referred to himself as "gay-friendly," (Ballantine 2017, 13); vowed to fight for the LGBT community (Keneally 2017); and, at first, recognized the controversial North Carolina transgender bathroom bill as potentially problematic for forcing individuals to use the restroom that was reflective of the sex declared on their birth certificate (Keneally 2017). Despite these inclusive sentiments, former president Donald Trump conceived a low average presidential approval rating; lower

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than the eleven presidents who served before him and below the historical average presidential approval rating (Newman and Otto 2022, 210). Trump's stance on the LGBT community is deemed to be conflicting and confusing, as his public statements showcase an inclusive, pro-LGBT agenda, while simultaneously lacking pro-inclusive LGBT executive policy throughout his term (Ballantine 2017, 13). With this absence of pro-inclusive LGBT executive policy throughout former president Trump's term (Cahill et al. 2019, 3-28), along with record-low presidential approval ratings (Newman and Otto 2022, 210), it leads to the query of the impact that the presence of pro-inclusive LGBT executive policies may have on presidential approval ratings, despite public statements made by presidents. The prospective answer can be reflected in Laura R. Olson and Adam L. Warber's (2008) research regarding a different category of identity-based politics–religion–in which they state:

> Religion is highly relevant to the American presidency. Not only do presidents appeal to specific religious constituencies for electoral and policy support, but ordinary Americans also appear to respond to presidents differently on the basis of their religious affiliation, commitment, and beliefs. Republican presidents clearly enjoy greater approval from highly religious Americans (Olson and Warber 2008).

Olson and Warber (2008), in such context, refer to the impact that religious affiliation, religious commitment, and religious beliefs have on presidential approval ratings in the United States. They find that religious identity is utilized by presidents to render support and approval from constituents (Olson and Warber 2008). They recognize that Americans of different religious affiliation are still impacted by the religious affiliation, commitment, and beliefs of the president (Olson and Warber 2008). However, Republican presidents, according to the findings, receive higher approval ratings from Americans–specifically, evangelical Protestants–who find their religion a valuable

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element within their daily lives (Olson and Warber 2008). Such high approval may be credited to the way in which evangelical Protestants typically lean more conservative in their morals and voting habits, in the same way that Republican presidents tend to be more sympathetic toward traditional religious values (Olson and Warber 2008; Pew Research Center 2005). The findings of Olson and Warber (2008) contextualize the influence that identity politics–specifically, religion–has on the approval and support of a president.

Research on the LGBT community within different societal realms, such as health and wellness (Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health Issues and Research Gaps and Opportunities 2011, 3); LGBT aging (Choi, S.K. and Meyer, I.H., 2016, 1-37); and political participation (Perez 2014, 1-2; Thompson and Turnball-Dugarte 2021, 1; Perrella et al. 2012, 89-91), is limited. Limited research on the minority community may be attributed to the issues that are tied to ensuring that such research is ethical and informed, while simultaneously following local and federal guidelines for studying the population (Mustanski 2011). Along with strict guidelines for researchers, there may also be an underestimate of the LGBT population, as a person may be uncomfortable answering specific questions regarding their sexual or gender identity (Meyer 2019). Such limited research on the LGBT population highlights the distinction between different the population and other minority communities.

According to Herek (2012), there are differences between the minority status of race and the minority status of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation may be more concealable to the public eye compared to racial identities (Herek 2012) and race is typically more strongly linked to socioeconomic status (Herek 2012). Apart from social characteristics of these identities, there are also differences in the measuring of political activism of race and sexual gender identity. National exit polls, or a questionnaire given by pollsters to voters after they cast their ballot, were first issued in 1972 (Bowman and Goldstein 2022, 2). A measuring of how White, Black, and Hispanic

individuals voted in elections from 1972 to 2020 is available, whereas the LGBT measure did not begin until 1996 (Bowman and Goldstein 2022, 7-18). The list of differences that exist amongst minority statuses highlight the necessity to observe the political impact of the LGBT community from a distinct lens. This observation utilizes the political stances and participation of the LGBT community to understand how strong the connection between the general American population and the American LGBT may be, as well as how this connection is reflected in collective presidential approval ratings.

From these observations, I formulated a theory that irrelevant of public statements, presidential approval ratings are determined by LGBT-inclusive executive policy. To test this proposed theory, this paper offers the following hypotheses that use presidential approval ratings from 2003 to 2022 as measures for presidential approval ratings of the American public. The hypotheses are as follows:

> *H1: In a comparison of presidential approval ratings from 2003-2022, Americans will be more likely to support presidents who establish pro-inclusive executive orders than presidents who establish either no pro-inclusive executive orders or anti-LGBT executive orders.*

> *H2: In a comparison of presidential approval ratings from 2003-2022, Americans will be more likely to support presidents who establish either no pro-inclusive memorandums or anti-LGBT memorandums.*

> *H3: In a comparison of presidential approval ratings from 2003-2022, Americans will be more likely to support presidents who establish pro-inclusive establish either no pro-inclusive proclamations or anti-LGBT proclamations.*

Methodology

To assess presidential approval ratings of Americans, I examined data that was provided by Gallup through their Presidential Job Approval Center. The researchers from Gallup collect data via

surveying over the telephone on a three-day basis. Gallup provides presidential approval data from 1938-2022, which therefore justifies selecting presidential approval ratings from 2003-2022 as a measure of the dependent variable, which is presidential approval ratings of the American population. The Gallup survey questions the responder if they approve, disapprove, or have no opinion on the President's handling of their job. Since the Gallup poll gathers responses that include nonresponses or disapproval, presidential approval is measured by those who only responded that they approve of the president. By providing a direct answer to what the approval ratings of a president may be, conceptual clarity and validity of the dependent variable– presidential approval ratings–is provided. Gallup's measures of public opinion and formulated datasets are made available to the public. This gives the measures that Gallup uses a sense of reliability, as another researcher can use the same data from Gallup to replicate this research.

To assess pro-inclusive LGBT executive policy, I examined Executive Orders, Memorandums, and Proclamations. Executive Orders, Memorandums, and Proclamations are presidential mechanisms that clarify, set, or change certain policies meant to manage federal government operations. These presidential mechanisms are used to direct the federal government and the president's administration to develop strategies to fix or alter an outlined issue. Pro-inclusive LGBT Executive Orders, Memorandums, and Proclamations are policies and actions that come directly from the president and seek to protect, support, and advance the rights of the LGBT community. For example, President Obama and President Biden utilize Proclamations to spread awareness about LGBT Pride Month and the long history behind such. When assessing these measures of the independent variable, it is shown that some presidents largely utilize these presidential mechanisms to advance pro-inclusive LGBT policies, whereas other presidents minimally utilize their presidential mechanisms to advance pro-inclusive LGBT policies. Pro-inclusive LGBT policy that is enacted

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by the previously stated presidential mechanisms will directly affect the American LGBT population by either clarifying, setting, or changing certain policies that the federal government will operate with. According to Abagail A. Graber in the Congressional Research Service Report Executive Orders: An Introduction, these presidential directives, "if issued under a legitimate claim of authority and made public… could have the force and effect of law." (Graber 2021, 20). This affirms that this measure of presidential documents and policies has conceptual clarity and validity in regard to measuring pro-inclusive executive LGBT policies. When assessing this measure, using public documentation from the White House Archives, Federal Register, and the American Presidency Project to find the official collective list of Executive Orders, Memorandums, and Proclamations by each president from 2003 to 2022 would give these measures reliability, as another researcher could replicate this research using these measures.

To accurately assess the impact that pro-inclusive LGBT policy has on presidential approval ratings across the years of 2003-2022, I examined surveys and public presidential documentation. This study looks at presidential approval ratings beginning in 2003, as it was a monumental year for LGBT Americans in an advancement towards equality through the use of pro-inclusive LGBT policy. 2003 was the year in which the Supreme Court case, Lawrence V. Texas (2003), was decided. The decision from this court case ultimately decriminalized same-sex relations in the United States (Rosenbaum and Burke 2003, 559-561). The dependent variable is presidential approval, in which I created a new dataset using the average percentage of approval garnered throughout the twenty-year span. The independent variable is pro-inclusive LGBT executive policies, in which I created a new dataset using the number of each pro-inclusive LGBT policies that a president formulated within a respective year, in which Executive Orders, Memorandums, and Proclamations are their own separate measure.

According to Cavari (2019), there are other factors that

impact presidential approval ratings over the years. To account for these potential external factors, I used four separate covariates: Public Support for Legally Recognizing Gay Marriages, LGBT-inclusive State of the Union Addresses, Party Affiliation of the President, and Public Opinion on Moral Acceptability of Gay and Lesbian Relations. Data on the public opinion for legally recognizing same-sex marriages was accessed through Gallup polling, where respondents were asked, "Do you think marriages between same-sex couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?" (Gallup 2023).

The percentage of respondents who expressed that they believe same-sex couples should be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages, was added to the new dataset. Data of LGBT-inclusiveness of State of the Union addresses was gathered by analyzing all of the publicly documented statements via The White House website and The White House Archives and the amount of times a president referenced the LGBT community in a positive manner. Party affiliation of the president was coded "1" when Republican and coded "2" when Democrat. Data on the public opinion on the moral acceptability of gay and lesbian relations was accessed through Gallup polling, in which respondents were briefed, "Next, I'm going to read you a list of issues. Regardless of whether you think it should be legal, for each one, please tell me whether you personally believe that in general it is morally acceptable or morally wrong. How about gay or lesbian relations?" (Gallup 2023). The percentage of respondents who deemed such relations to be morally acceptable were communicated within the new dataset.

After data collection, I employ ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions to reveal the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, while also accounting for the covariables. As referred to in The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, regressions are to be utilized to "measure the relationship between our independent variable of interest (X) and our dependent variable (Y)" and therefore address the "uncertainty to make inferences about

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the underlying population." (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 171). I utilized a multivariate regression, which Kellstedt and Whitten recognize as any "interesting dependent variable caused by more than one factor." (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 52).

I expect a statistically significant and positive relationship for my assessment of pro-inclusive LGBT policies impact on presidential approval ratings for the select presidential terms which measure the dependent variable. I expect that presidents with higher and stronger approval ratings will have more pro-inclusive LGBT policies during their presidential term. Conversely, presidents with lower and weaker approval ratings will have less, if any, pro-inclusive LGBT policies during their presidential term. I also expect that if there is a positive relationship between these variables, I will be able to portray through graphs and models, how pro-inclusive LGBT policies affect the American populations political thought and ideologies.

These findings, if true, will show that pro-inclusive executive LGBT policies impact the way in which the American people participate politically. Pro-inclusive executive LGBT policies affect the how LGBT Americans and the general American population will view the government; specifically, the president. A result of LGBT Americans satisfaction or dissatisfaction with how a president utilizes their presidential powers to enact pro-inclusive LGBT policies is the way in which they vote for a president and share their overall approval or disapproval of the job being done. This is important politically because American leaders in positions of power can impact the experiences of all Americans, and more specifically, LGBT Americans (Garrison et al. 2018, 131). The impacts on life experiences affect the ways in which LGBT Americans and the American population as a collective will behave politically in terms of voting patterns, running for office, and mobilizing to advocate for equality.

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Results

      The findings on the correlation between presidential approval ratings of 2003-2022 and pro-inclusive LGBT executive policies are presented graphically and empirically. Figure 1 displays the average approval rating of each year, beginning in 2003 and ending in 2022, in the form of a bar graph. The bar graph presents the visible variation within presidential approval ratings. Figure 2 displays the amount of pro-inclusive LGBT executive orders, memorandums, and proclamations in a pie chart. The distinction between types of policy allows for a visible variation of the policy that presidents utilize most frequently.
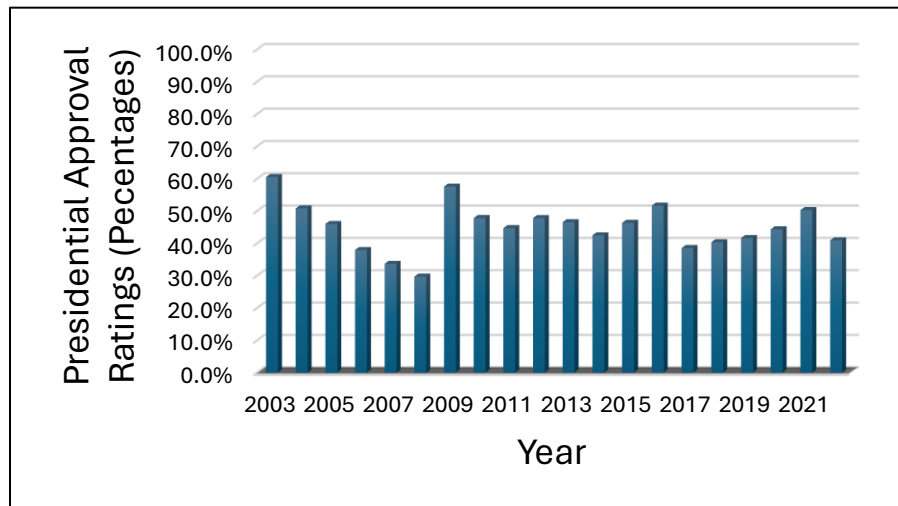

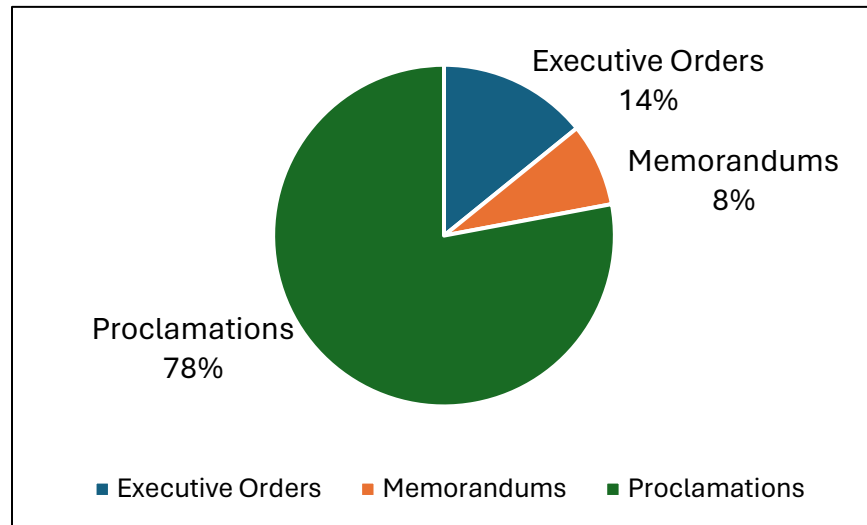**Figure 1. Presidential Approval Ratings by Year**

Figure 2. Pro-Inclusive LGBT Policies, 2003-2022

The ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is presented in Table 1. Contrary to the expected findings, the regression model presents a statistically insignificant relationship between presidential approval ratings and pro-inclusive LGBT executive policy. This insignificance is made visible through a "goodness-of-fit" measure, or the R-squared of the regression model: ($R^2 = 0.27$). Similarly, the Significance of F (Prob>F) also produced a high, statistically insignificant number: (0.60). Table 1 shows that Executive Orders, Memorandums, and Proclamations are statistically insignificant as their P-values are above the 0.05 threshold (Executive Orders: 0.84, Memorandums: 0.63, Proclamations: 0.61). Similarly, the covariants provided also produced statistically insignificant P-values: (Public Support for Legally Recognizing Same-Sex Marriages: 0.73, Inclusive State of the Union Address: 0.36, Party Affiliation of the President: 0.38, Public Opinion on Moral Acceptability of Gay and Lesbian Relations: 0.93).

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Table 1. OLS Regression of Presidential Approval Ratings by the Number of Annual Pro-Inclusive Executive LGBT Policies

Executive Orders	-0.01
	(0.01)
Memorandums	0.02
	(0.03)
Proclamations	0.00
	(0.01)
Public Opinion on Gay Marriage	-0.46
	(0.73)
Inclusive State of the Union Address	-0.01
	(0.02)
Party Affiliation	0.02
	(0.07)
Public Opinion on Moral Acceptability of Gay and Lesbian Relations	0.30
	(0.93)
Intercept	0.47*
	(0.17)

Note: OLS coefficients reporter with standard errors in parentheses.
n = 20, Years 2003-2022, $R^2 = 0.27$, * = $p < 0.05$

Contrary to the expected findings of the relationship between the dependent variable, independent variable, and the covariants, the

statistical insignificance of these measures reveals that the relationship between the observed variables supports the null hypothesis. The null findings suggest that presidential approval ratings are not heavily impacted by pro-inclusive LGBT executive policies (Executive Orders, Memorandums, and Proclamations), nor the external factors of Public Support for Legally Recognizing Same-Sex Marriages, Inclusive State of the Union Address, Party Affiliation of the President, Public Opinion on Moral Acceptability of Gay and Lesbian Relations. However, Table 1 illustrates that there is a statistically significant finding–the intercept variable.

According to Diana Mindrila and Phoebe Balentyne (2013), the intercept in a regression is a constant number as well as the value of the dependent variable when the independent variable is equal to zero. In other words, it is when the y value when x=0 (Mindrila and Balentyne 2013). The value of the intercept from this research is displayed in Table 1, with a statistically significant P-value<0.01. In terms of this specific research, it refers to the value of presidential approval ratings from 2003-2022 when all other variables (Executive Orders, Memorandums, Proclamations, Public Support for Legally Recognizing Same-Sex Marriages, Inclusive State of the Union Address, Party Affiliation of the President, Public Opinion on Moral Acceptability of Gay and Lesbian Relations.) have a value of zero. The P-value of the intercept being statistically significant means that there is an outlying factor that was not observed within this study that has a larger impact on presidential approval ratings.

Discussion and Implications

As the findings and results from this study and prior research suggests, the American population prioritizes national issues that do not include the advancement of LGBT rights or the state of the LGBT community. According to a poll conducted by Pew Research Center (2023), the current top ten problems facing the country are inflation, health care, partisanship, drug addiction, gun violence, violent crime, the federal budget, moral values, illegal immigration,

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and the quality of public schools. This is a lack of issue salience implies that there is a disconnect between the general American population and the LGBT population (Medina and Mahowald 2023), as well as the existence of performative allyship that is present in the American population (Kutlaca and Radke 2022).

LGBT acceptance is indeed at an all-time high in American society (Pitofsky 2022). However, there is an obvious disconnect between the general American population and the LGBT community that is visible within the statistics regarding discrimination against the community (Medina et al. 2021; Singh and Durso 2017; and Durkee 2023). According to Medina and Mahowald (2023), despite the existence of some LGBT protections on a state level and federal level, there are gaps and loopholes that also exist within these laws that ultimately leave many LGBT Americans without legal protection from discrimination (Medina, et al., 2021). This discrimination is visible in different areas of life for LGBT Americans, such as workplace discrimination (Singh and Durso 2017); LGBT bullying in school (Almeida et al. 2009); and in healthcare (Bonvicini 2017). In the workplace, an estimated 11 to 28 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual workers report that they lost promotions because of their sexual orientation; similarly, 27 percent of transgender workers reported that they experienced missed opportunities because of their gender identity (Singh and Durso 2017). LGBT youth also report high levels of discrimination; in a study conducted by Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, and Azrael (2009), 31.3 percent of the surveyed LGBT students reported perceived discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The healthcare system is no different than the school system and the workplace; 19 percent of surveyed transgender and gender non-conforming respondents of a 2011 survey reported that they were refused medical care (Bonvicini 2017).

The disconnect of the general American population and the LGBT population is visible in the forms of discrimination that LGBT Americans are still succumbed to. The discrimination and homophobia itself can be attributed to different moral standards that

stem from political affiliation (Arnsdorf et al. 2023) or religious affiliation (Barnes and Meyer 2013). Political affiliation has been recognized as being a factor in the moral acceptability of the LGBT community, as Conservatives and Republicans are less likely to be accepting of same-sex marriage compared to Democrats and Liberals (Statista 2023). In recent years, Republicans have been criticized for their anti-LGBT sentiments in local, state, and federal governmental realms (Arnsdorf et al. 2023). The impact that religion has on LGBT relations can be reflected in the research conducted by David M. Barnes and Ilan H. Meyer (2013), in which they state:

> Most American religious denominations have taken proscriptive action against sexual minorities, condemning same-sex behavior as sinful, barring LGBs from spiritual leadership positions (or requiring their celibacy in such positions), and refusing to sanction same-sex union ceremonies. The three largest American religious denominations, the Roman Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the United Methodist Church, which represent approximately 35 percent of Americans' religious affiliations.

Despite the observed increase in the acceptance of the LGBT community by the general American population (Pitofsky 2022), there is still wide ranges of opposition to the advancement of LGBT rights (Arnsdorf et al. 2023). This opposition can be attributed as being a cause of the disconnect between the LGBT community and the general American population that is visible in the statistic insignificance between pro-inclusive LGBT executive orders and presidential approval ratings.

Another implication of the findings is the phenomenon known as performative allyship, which Maja Kutlaca and Helena R.M. Radke (2022) refer to as, "easy and costless actions that often do not challenge the status quo and are motivated primarily by the desire to

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accrue personal benefits." In other words, it is the inauthentic show of support for social causes with the ultimate goal of bettering one's reputation or image (Kutlaca and Radke 2022). The use of social media has become grounds for such political activism and participation to flourish (Velasquez, A. and LaRose, R., 2015). It can be visible through the simple acts of changing a profile picture, using filters, or sharing posts that certify an individual's stance on a certain political topic (Kutlaca and Radke 2022). These actions are typically deemed as lack-luster; that is, unless they are backed by a devotion to social change, which is hefty work that requires extensive time, energy, and potential consequences (Kutlaca and Radke 2022). Carmen Morris (2020) refers to this social phenomenon as an individual or collective "talking the talk, without walking the walk." Performative allyship does indeed come with consequences; according to Maja Kutlaca and Helena R.M. Radke (2022), such actions may result in disengagement of the disadvantaged group as well as a decrease in their overall well-being. A lack of genuine concern for the disadvantaged group paired with a motivation for personal gain results in the status quo remaining stagnant (Kutlaca and Radke 2022). Without a genuine motivation for social change and the advancement of LGBT rights, pro-inclusive LGBT policy is less likely to be deemed a salient issue in a president's agenda.

The LGBT community faces discrimination in numerous avenues of life, from workplace discrimination (Singh and Durso 2017), to LGBT bullying in school (Almeida et al. 2009), and in healthcare (Bonvicini 2017). Alongside the different forms of discrimination, the LGBT community is also susceptible to performative allyship from those seeking moral high ground (Kutlaca and Radke 2022). This reality that exists in the lives of LGBT Americans can, and should be, the responsibility of the general American population to alter. Studies suggest that LGBT allies are critical in the advancement of LGBT rights and in the protection of the community (White 2018). The Human Rights Campaign (2022), a prominent LGBT advocacy group, defines what it is to be an ally, in

which they state:

> To be an ally means listening to and elevating all LGBTQ+ voices, including and especially LGBTQ+ BIPOC voices, who have historically been ignored or subject to ridicule in popular culture. Recognize and call out media that portrays LGBTQ+ BIPOC people negatively or leaves them out entirely. Elevate LGBTQ+ BIPOC voices by promoting their art, hiring and promoting them at your job, voting for LGBTQ+ BIPOC candidates and allies who push for pro-equality and racial justice platforms, and spotlighting their voices whenever possible. Continue to share the rich and diverse narratives that highlight their unique experiences.

A devotion to LGBT equality by LGBT allies is essential in changing the negative realities that many in the community face. LGBT inclusivity, as well as the inclusivity of all minority populations, consequentially fosters a more equitable, united, vibrant, and resilient United Stated of America (PolicyLink 2016, 1).

Conclusion

Despite the public statements that presidents or presidential candidates make, the policies they formulate or alter may be contradictory. Such observation led to a questioning of the presence of pro-inclusive policies and the impact that they may have on presidential approval ratings, which are the effective way in which polls and research are able to gauge how the American population evaluates a president based on the handling of their job as president. LGBT policies were the focus of this research, as the LGBT community is a unique population when it comes to policymaking, public opinion, and social movements in the American political landscape (Mucciaroni 2011, 17). Such research, however, found that while pro-inclusive LGBT policy does indeed affect different political aspects of the LGBT community and its allies, it is not a leading
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impactful factor in the general American population's evaluation of the president. There are outlying factors and variables that Americans deem salient that take priority over strictly LGBT-inclusive policy and agendas, which ultimately impact their approval ratings of presidents. This study concludes that the general American population tends to evaluate a president's handling of their job on different outlying factors than the creation of pro-inclusive LGBT executive policies.

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