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“Call It What You Want”: The Impact of Fan Characteristics on Political Views

Christopher Fanick

A DEPARTMENT HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AT TRINITY UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION WITH  
DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

DATE: APRIL 22, 2019

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## **Abstract**

In October 2018, Taylor Swift for the first time explicitly engaged in political dialogue by promoting the Tennessee Democratic Senate and House of Representative candidates, Phil Bredesen and Jim Cooper, in the midterm elections through an Instagram post. In the post, Swift also condemned racial discrimination, gender inequality, and those who look down on homosexuality, and by doing so, inspired 102,000 people under 30 to register to vote via vote.org within 48 hours after the post. This study attempted to provide insight into whether the level of fans’ parasocial interaction with Taylor Swift correlated with their political views by administering a web-based survey, regarding perceptions of Taylor Swift and political views, to 913 respondents. Political party largely acted as the most statistically significant correlation for how an individual felt about a particular topic, but fan strength did correlate more significantly with believing in homosexual acceptance in society and was the second-most significant correlation relating to the other two topics, belief in the presence of racial discrimination and belief in gender inequality. Gender and age were statistically significant on most issues (excluding age related to gender equality), but did not have large effect sizes. Political party has long been thought to be a significant predictor, so it is not a surprise that such a result occurred here, but fan strength’s significance suggests that Taylor Swift’s influence on individuals may sway their political leanings as well.

## **Introduction**

In 2003, Taylor Swift convinced her family to move from Pennsylvania to Nashville to pursue her dreams as a country artist. In the ensuing 15 years, she has continuously topped charts, won awards, and dominated cultural conversation in a way that few artists have ever managed (Blair, 2017). One of the hallmarks of Swift’s career is that she has largely stayed out of the political fray (Smith, 2018). However, in October 2018, Swift for the first time explicitly engaged in political dialogue by promoting the Tennessee Democratic Senate and House of Representative candidates, Phil Bredesen and Jim Cooper, in the midterm elections through an Instagram post (Smith, 2018). In the post, Swift also condemned racial discrimination, gender inequality, and those who look down on homosexuality, and by doing so, inspired 102,000 people under 30 to register to vote via vote.org within 48 hours after the post (Smith, 2018). This adjustment of Swift’s public persona to accommodate the political realm is a shift for Swift’s career, but the impact that the post had on political activity also exhibits the power over fans that someone in Swift’s position holds. Determining the effect she has on her fans, particularly concerning the issues that Swift enumerated in her Instagram post, helps to show how influential celebrities can be in the political realm, even given the other factors that influence political opinions.

## **Literature Review**

### **Interpretive Contexts**

Swift’s rise as a musical artist led to a groundswell of popularity around which a rabid fandom coalesced. Swift is the third most popular person on Twitter with over 84 million followers. Many of her Twitter fan pages also have strong support, with upwards of 180,000

followers each. (Swift, 2018; Web, 2018; Joyce, 2016). According to Nielsen, Swift’s fanbase is about 59 percent female, with a third of that number being over the age of 50, which is in line with other pop sensations such as Ed Sheeran and Sam Smith (Owsinski, 2015). Even as she has shifted from the country girl next door to a global pop artist, Swift’s fandom has grown at every stage and, now, some individuals’ full-time jobs are devoted to cultivating and sharing news about Swift (Tiffany, 2018).

### *Traditional Fandom Studies*

Notions of fandom have changed significantly over time. Originally, the term referred to religious membership, but was later conceptualized as the cult-like following of a particular person or dogma (Jenkins, 1992). Scholars have often unintentionally characterized fans as either “obsessed individual[s]” or as part of “the hysterical crowd” (Jenson, 1992). Throughout early media research, “fans [were] characterized as deviant,” which allowed both researchers and average people to demonize fans as “other” (Jenson, 1992). However, media fan studies have also helped to debunk many of the negative stereotypes previously associated with fandom. It is now understood that audiences of all kinds bring their own interpretive frameworks to popular media and form social and interpretive connections with the work (Sullivan, 2013).

Stuart Hall (1973) conceptualized how audiences can have an active role in interpreting media texts by creating a wide range of meanings based upon individual experiences. Hall stated that an intended “authorial (encoded) meaning” for a work exists, but that the meaning could be understood (decoded) by the audience in three ways: “dominant/hegemonic interpretation, negotiated interpretation, and oppositional interpretation” (Hall, 1973). A “dominant/hegemonic interpretation” of a “communicative event” means that the individual accepts the intended

authorial meaning of the work without question (Hall, 1973). Generally, this means that the meaning fit into the decoder’s previous frameworks of knowledge and the decoder chose to utilize the encoder’s intended meaning. An individual who takes a “negotiated interpretation” of a work accepts some of the encoder’s meaning, but disagrees with and discards portions of that meaning (Hall, 1973). Therefore, an individual negotiates within themselves and decides what portions of a work to accept. Finally, an individual who takes an “oppositional interpretation” of a work disregards the encoder’s meaning (Hall, 1973). The individual conceives of their own interpretation of the work and utilizes this framework to understand what the work is actually saying. Although the encoder’s intended meaning does matter because it creates the framework through which the audience chooses its meaning, the audience, and therefore fans, have the power in this type of media relationship (Hall, 1973). The amount and type of understanding that a fan has of a particular work determines the persuasion impact that artists have on these fans. Without the fans’ understandings and chosen interpretive meanings, nothing an artist does has any impact, which allows fans to maintain some semblance of power as an interpreter of content.

## **Parasocial Relationships**

### *Traditional Parasocial Relationship Literature*

When fans become enamored with a celebrity, the parasocial relationship developed helps the non-famous individual add meaning to their own life through the celebrity (De Backer, 2012). The celebrity becomes a visual representation of experiences that individuals hope to have, and as a result, the fan attributes credibility to the content of the messages coming from the celebrity (De Backer, 2012). However, it is not just the parasocial relationship, but the strength of this relationship that affects how individuals interact with content coming from celebrities.

Strong parasocial relationships have been found to be similar to an individual's relationships with friends or good neighbors (Gleich, 1997). Eyal and Dailey (2012) also found that, although these parasocial relationships are weaker than those with close friends, family, and romantic partners, parasocial relationships are particularly desirable because they can be shared and become a common connection with friends and family. In this way, parasocial relationships do not compete with in-person relationships, but instead supplement them and help individuals grow (Eyal and Dailey, 2012).

Parasocial relationships with and media representations of celebrities create the opportunity for individuals to identify and agree with the positions publicly put forth by celebrities. In advertising, the parasocial relationships that create emotional investment on behalf of the fan can be leveraged to increase the fan's feelings about brands and products (Hung, 2014). The aspirational and playful feelings associated with the celebrity help to create a powerful motivator that creates significant effects (Hung, 2014). These feelings can be extended to political feelings as well. The identification of the individual with the celebrity helps to align their political beliefs with the celebrity's because the fan begins to see issues through the worldview of the celebrity (Soukup, 2006). Instead of expressing their own political opinions and beliefs, a devoted fan may instead use the iconic representation of the celebrity to promote the cultural values aligned with that celebrity (Soukup, 2006). Additionally, celebrities can help to shift political debates beyond the traditional binarisms and create more structured and targeted political discourse (Street, 2012). Beyond that, celebrities have the ability to enhance the political activities of their fans and, by endorsing or espousing a particular position, can alter the opinions of those who identify with them (Street, 2012).



*Taylor Swift and Parasocial Relationships*

Fans separate themselves into sections of “real” and “casual” fans within fan communities, creating fan hierarchies who interact with works in unique ways (Sullivan, 2013). This selection and internalization of media materials of all kinds also helps fans to distinguish themselves as a unique subculture that is separate from the mainstream (Jenkins, 1992). Media forms, such as pop music, that typically promote fandom are often viewed as lower tiers of content by larger sections of the public, which allows fans to coalesce around a particular sub-identity and create their own culture (Jenkins, 1992)

Swift’s fan community (the Swifties) is highly interconnected because Swift looks out for her fans and her fans then look out for each other. Swift flips the traditional “stan (stalker-fan)” relationship by engaging in a practice known as “taylurking” (Collins, 2018). Swift pops up in Instagram comments, reblogs her fans’ posts on Tumblr, and even sends packages to her fans’ homes after following them anonymously online for years. She actively seeks out her fans, which sets her apart from other artists, and creates a community where fans feel included and are a part of her life. In turn, Swift’s fans follow her example and support other members of the fan community. For example, Swift fans have raised money to send other Swifties to see Swift on tour and to buy merchandise for an 8-year-old burn victim (Collins, 2018). The self-perpetuating cycle of connection leads to Swift’s fan community feeling included in her work and life, with Swift is at the center of this experience.

However, although Swift tries to incorporate all her fans and remain uncontroversial, Swift’s blonde hair and blue eyes have also resulted in her anointment as an “Aryan Goddess” by the alternative-right (alt-right) movement (Donnella, 2016). Nazi memes of Swift have appeared

online since 2006, but, beginning in 2013, the alt-right, specifically The Daily Stormer — an alt-right message board and website, started to praise Swift’s “sculpted Aryan form” (Sunderland, 2016; Donnella, 2016). Swift’s “Aryan” image allowed the alt-right to use her as a “neo-Nazi sleeper agent,” which they viewed as an avenue for normalizing their ideas (Van Leusden, 2017). The alt-right reinterpreted and recontextualized her songs in a way that suggested that the music supported fascist beliefs, and Swift’s silence on the issue until November 2017, in addition to her public political neutrality allowed the alt-right’s theories to spread into the public conscience (Van Leusden, 2017).

Building upon this research and in conjunction with the topics addressed in Taylor Swift’s political Instagram post, this study addresses the following hypotheses related to fan strength and affinity for Taylor Swift:

- H<sub>1a</sub>: The stronger an individual’s self-identification as a Taylor Swift fan, the more likely he/she/they support the idea of homosexuality in society.
- H<sub>1b</sub>: The stronger an individual’s self-identification as a Taylor Swift fan, the more likely he/she/they believe that racial discrimination still needs to be addressed in society.
- H<sub>1c</sub>: The stronger an individual’s self-identification as a Taylor Swift fan, the more likely he/she/they believe that gender equality still needs to be addressed in society.

## **Age and Parasocial Relationships**

### *Age and Parasocial Relationship Literature*

These parasocial relationships with celebrities are further pronounced in younger individuals because of the emotional impacts of adolescence and the increased number of contact points these fans have with their chosen celebrity. Giles and Maltby (2004) found that

adolescents essentially use celebrities as a second group of pseudo-friends, which helps the adolescent become increasingly autonomous. As autonomy from the parent becomes a larger part of the adolescent's life, the role of the celebrity grows because the adolescent is able to rely on the stability of the attachment (Giles and Maltby, 2004). Ilicic, Baxter, and Kulczynski (2016) helped to further explain these ideas when they found that the feelings of autonomy and relatedness encouraged by celebrities become less influential in older consumers. These kinds of self-determination needs strengthen younger people's attachments with celebrities, which in turn encourages attachment to the things that the celebrity promotes (Ilicic, Baxter, & Kulczynski, 2016). As a result, younger people are more susceptible to the messaging of celebrities because the celebrity fills a more significant parasocial need for younger people than for their elders.

Younger individuals, especially those who have grown up with social media, are particularly connected to celebrities because they are able to constantly interact with the celebrity through social media. According to Pew Research Center (2018), on Youtube, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram, 18-24 year-olds are the predominant users, while those 25-29 are the dominant age range on Facebook. On each of these social platforms, the older a person gets, the less likely they are to use a particular platform, which decreases their number of potential interaction with a celebrity (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Social media allow celebrities to promote their brand in an authentic way, and this continuous barrage of information helps to strengthen social ties (Marwick, 2013). It also allows the celebrities to showcase “ideals,” such as their lifestyle or social ideas, that otherwise might have remained hidden beyond more mediated forms of communication (Marwick, 2013). Social media have created the idea of self-branding because

the celebrity now controls the messaging in a way that was not previously possible (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017).

### *Age Differences on Political Views*

According to Pew Research Center (2018), age acts a divide that delineates how an individual views each of the issues addressed by Swift’s Instagram post — homosexuality, racial discrimination, and gender equality. Regarding homosexuality, individuals in the 18-29 year-old age range believed that “homosexuality should be accepted in society” 83% of the time, while the percentage progressively dropped for each older range, culminating in only 58% of those 65 and older believing it should be accepted (Pew Research Center, 2018). For racial discrimination, a majority (54%) of 18-29 year-olds believed that racial discrimination is the “main reason many blacks can’t get ahead” (Pew Research Center. 2018). That percentage is progressively lower in each older age group, with only 33% of those 65 and older holding that position (Pew Research Center, 2018). Finally, for gender equality, millennials (18-36 year-olds) believe 52% of the time that men have it easier than women in our country, while only 31% of the silent generation (72-89 year-olds) believe that is the case (Horowitz, Parker, & Stepler, 2017). For each issue, younger individuals identify with Swift’s stance on the issue, while older people are less likely to hold a similar stance.

### *Age and Celebrity Connection — Taylor Swift*

In a study conducted by Music Machinery, a blog written by Paul Lemere, director of The Echo Nest — a music intelligence and data platform, Swift was one of 11 artists who were preferred by both the 13-year-old and 64-year-old demographics (Lamere, 2014). Additionally, on Facebook, Swift is the fourth most-liked living artist with approximately 72 million likes

(“Music Fan Demographics,” 2018). However, for both men (44 percent) and women (46 percent), 18-24 year-olds emerged as the largest fan demographic for Taylor Swift (“Music Fan Demographics,” 2018). Each ensuing, and therefore older, subsection encompassed a smaller percentage of Taylor Swift fans so, although Swift may be popular with older individuals, the majority of her demographic is between 18 and 34 years-old (“Music Fan Demographics,” 2018).

This past research on the connections between age and celebrity messaging suggests three more hypotheses:

- H<sub>2a</sub>: Younger fans of Taylor Swift will be more likely than older fans to support the idea of homosexuality in society.
- H<sub>2b</sub>: Younger fans of Taylor Swift will be more likely than older fans to believe that racial discrimination still needs to be addressed in society.
- H<sub>2c</sub>: Younger fans of Taylor Swift will be more likely than older fans to believe that gender equality still needs to be addressed in society.

## **Music and Politics**

### *Musicians and Politics*

Although politics is just now intersecting with Swift’s career, the link between musicians and politics has existed in American culture since the country’s founding. William Billings, before and during the American Revolution, created an anthem, “Chester,” for the Revolution that called for Americans to place their trust in God to hold strong against the British (Billings, 1770). In more contemporary history, during the Great Depression and post-war years, artists like Woody Guthrie utilized Western style folk music to protest perceived inequalities and

political wrongdoings. Guthrie, in particular, penned “This Land is Your Land” partially as a response to President Herbert Hoover’s lack of response to the Great Depression (Corbyn, 2011). As the twentieth century rolled on, other styles of music were used to fit political messaging. Rock music became part of a counterculture in the 1960s and 1970s that expressed political themes. In the early 1960s, Bob Dylan wrote about the urgency of civil rights and the changing mood of the baby boom generation, while the late 1960s and early 1970s featured John Lennon writing about an open border, free religion world (Dreier, 2011; Chilton, 2018). The late 1960s also featured Arlo Guthrie singing about the injustices of American war efforts abroad in “Alice’s Restaurant,” and Phil Ochs attempting to enliven resistance to the Vietnam war by declaring the war over in his music (Grady, 2018; Just, 2017). While the 1960s and 1970s focused largely on government and wartime resistance, contemporary pop and hip-hop music’s political messaging appears to focus more on election and domestic issues. Katy Perry, in her 2017 single, “Chained to the Rhythm,” utilized disco-pop to create a social commentary. While upbeat on the surface, “Chained to the Rhythm” spoke of a world trapped in a cycle of “repetition and ignorance,” and the single’s release came on the heels of Perry actively campaigning on behalf of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election (Bruner, 2017). In 2018, Childish Gambino released “This is America,” and the song’s lyrics and music video directly analyzed the “inevitability of destruction” and “deplorable [stereotyping]” that is prevalent in American culture (Yates, 2018).

Although it is often difficult to determine the direct political effect that music has on fans, the Live Aid concert in 1985, which included a performance by Queen, raised more than \$125 million for famine relief in Africa (“Live Aid,” 2019). The concert, which was held in London,

inspired American artists, including Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, to record “We are the World,” which raised more than \$44 million for African famine relief (“Live Aid,” 2019). The success of these two endeavors led to a series of “Live 8” concerts in 2005, which attempted to shine a light on global poverty issues before the G8 summit, which was and is a meeting of the most powerful countries in the world (“Live Aid,” 2019). Shortly after, the G8 voted to cancel the debt of 18 of the world’s poorest nations, make AIDS drugs more accessible, and double aid levels to Africa, showcasing the power of music and musicians (“Live Aid,” 2019). Beyond music and performances, musicians have also set up political organizations to engage voters, including Rock The Vote — an organization endorsed by more than 300 musicians that has signed up more than six million voters (Newman, 2016). At every stage of American and world history, musicians have attempted to address and revitalize political discourse by legitimizing messages and creating organizations that get people involved. As evidenced by the contemporary releases and efforts by the nation’s most popular artists, that trend is not going away.

#### *Musical Influence on Party Identification*

Although musical preference has never been causally linked to political preferences, studies have found various correlations between music and party identifications. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) suggested that social identities are not fixed, but instead are created at the intersections various social structures, such as race, ethnicity, and tastes, among others. As a result, individuals create their identities, including their political beliefs, through a variety of factors that affect their daily social experience. Music, as a social structure, has particular influencing potential because it has the ability to create sub-cultures. Kruse (1993) found that music allows individuals to refuse the labels that the larger sections of the population place upon

them and create their own identity within their grouping. Through identification with music, individuals can reject cultural assumptions and instead utilize music as a fundamental aspect of their identity. Street (2012) suggested that music, in particular, is part of the way we think politically because, in responding to and evaluating music, we give expression to our tastes and our political values and ideas. Music plays a constitution in our moral beings and, therefore, our political ones as well (Street, 2012). These understandings of identification within music are confirmed in popular genres. Perry (2004) found that hip-hop music is rooted in the historical, cultural, and linguistic community from which it originates, and that it educates the listener about that community. Therefore, depending on the individual’s perspective and own identities, those within the community and the music itself could be viewed either as a “wasteland or garden” (Perry, 2004). Country music features a similar conception of sub-cultural identity. Willman (2005) stated that country music connects with its audiences because it’s honest about how real people “think, love, and live.” In listening to country music, individuals create identities within the commonalities that it presents, including those related to politics (Willman, 2005). Although hip-hop and country music represent opposite ends of the political spectrum (Democrat and Republican, respectively), each allows individuals to create their identities from creating a sub-culture rejecting the monolith of the other (Perry, 2004; Willman, 2005). The subcultures create a worldview with which fans can identify and celebrities can frame messages within the subcultures to influence fans to assimilate with content and political views.

## **Political Identification**

### *Political Differences*



According to Pew Research Center (2018), a clear divide existed related to how each party relates to the issues brought up in Swift’s Instagram post — homosexuality, racial discrimination, and gender equality — with Democrats being far more likely to identify with Swift’s stance on the issue. For homosexuality, 83% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning individuals believed that “homosexuality should be accepted by society,” while only 54% of Republicans and Republican-leaning individuals believed the same thing (Pew Research Center, 2018). Regarding racial discrimination, 64% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning individuals believed that racial discrimination was “the main reason many blacks can’t get ahead,” while only 14% of Republicans and Republican-leaning individuals identified with the same viewpoint (Pew Research Center, 2018). Accordingly, the Democratic party tends to have more black voters, while the Republican party is significantly more white (Pew Research Center, 2018). Finally, regarding gender equality, 73% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning individuals believed that “significant obstacles still make it harder for women to get ahead than men,” and only 34% of Republicans and Republican-leaning individuals mirrored that belief (Pew Research Center, 2018). Relatedly, Democrats tend to believe in helping others through reform, which leads to an individual believing that there are still obstacles to be overcome. Republicans tend to believe in hands-off, do-it-yourself government, which leads to an individual generally believing in self-determination (Suh, 2014).

#### *Foundation of Political Beliefs*

These individual political opinions do not exist in a vacuum. Individual political opinions begin to be formed from what individuals learn from their parents and then expand based upon circumstantial factors in their lives (Bianco & Canon, 2018). For example, a strong correlation

exists between an individual’s party identification and the political ideology of their parents (Bianco & Canon, 2018). Additionally, this effect is stronger if the family is highly politicized and acts to reinforce beliefs over time (Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009). Once a baseline political identity is established based on parental beliefs, individuals can and do revise their political opinions based upon their experiences and social factors. However, once an individual chooses a political party, the group influence becomes a dominating factor in how individuals process social policy and react to events. Individuals, regardless of actual policy content or their own ideological beliefs, will depend upon the stated position of their party almost exclusively, given that they know what the stated position of the party is (Cohen, 2003). People create a conception of their political party and create a set of assumed factual qualities and moral connotations that the individual supports for the policies that the party espouses (Cohen, 2003). Despite these factual discrepancies, individuals often deny being influenced by political groups (Cohen, 2003). However, they still believe that other individuals are influenced by party-line beliefs, particularly their political adversaries (Cohen, 2003). People like to believe that they utilize rational, individualized decision-making when forming their political beliefs, but evidence suggests that myriad factors cultivate those opinions (Cohen, 2003).

#### *Mass Media Influence on Political Beliefs*

Another influencer of political ideology is the mass media, which simultaneously informs and influences opinion. Early political socialization research relegated media influence to a secondary role behind familial and peer influences, but, as early as 1968, a study found that newspapers produced more gains in political knowledge than other sources, such as parental influence, and simultaneously shaped opinions (Chaffee, Ward, & Tipton, 1970). Conway,

Wyckoff, Feldbaum, and Ahern confirmed these findings and stated that children take political direction and information from passive and active sources, and most of the passive experiences occur because of exposure to mass media (1981). The level of exposure and types of programming impact the influence of media, but overall the study found that news media use and political knowledge have causal effects on each other (Conway, Wyckoff, Feldbaum, & Ahern, 1981). As new forms of media, particularly social media, began to dominate cultural conversation, individuals turned to these platforms in order to inform their political opinions. Young citizens, in particular, utilize platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to cultivate political knowledge and to remain civically engaged (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014). Individuals no longer are constrained to traditional political institutions or political figures for their knowledge and opinions; they now have a global network to consider, which allows for a wider range of political discourses (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014). Media’s impact on political socialization is shifting into other forms, but its presence remains, particularly as younger, more media-literate generations grow into voting age.

#### *Taylor Swift and Political Identification*

According to Facebook, Taylor Swift’s fan demographics lie evenly split (50-50) between Democrats and Republicans, even in the wake of her Instagram post (“Music Fan Demographics, 2018). In fact, before her Instagram advocacy, one study found that Taylor Swift fans were more likely to oppose same-sex marriage (19.7%) than fans of other artists, such as Lady Gaga, Tupac Shakur, and David Bowie (Jones, 2018). Swift appeals across the political divide, which makes the recent political discourse surrounding her pertinent to future research.

This study further investigates on topics found in the literature with the following three hypotheses related to political party identification:

- H<sub>3a</sub>: Taylor Swift fans who self-identified as Democratic will be more likely than fans who self-identified as Republican and Independent to support the idea of homosexuality in society.
- H<sub>3b</sub>: Taylor Swift fans who self-identified as Democratic will be more likely than fans who self-identified as Republican and Independent to believe that racial discrimination still needs to be addressed in society.
- H<sub>3c</sub>: Taylor Swift fans who self-identified as Democratic will be more likely than fans who self-identified as Republican and Independent to believe that gender equality still needs to be addressed in society.

### **Gender Differences**

Finally, in examining the differences in gender, in terms of both understanding politics and celebrity, it is clear that women perceive both issues far differently than men.

#### *Political Gender Gap*

Women tend to hold more liberal views than men on a general level (Pew Research Center, 2017). More women than men believe that homosexuality should be accepted, more women than men believe that women's rights are still not equal to men's in the United States, and more women than men believe that racial discrimination is still not being addressed adequately (Pew Research Center, 2017). Women in the United States also vote more than men, are more likely to vote for Democrats than men, and are increasingly involved at every level of the government (Wilcox & Shanes, 2004). The Center for American Women and Politics found that,

in every presidential election since 1996, more women have voted for the Democratic candidate than the Republican one, and women and men have differed on their preferred candidate in every election, except for the 2008 election (2017). As a whole, women tend to be more progressive than men, and the resulting gender gap is exhibited in political views and at the voting booth.

### *Women and Parasocial Relationships*

Since identification with celebrity is a parasocial relationship, congruence plays at least partial factor in the effectiveness of the celebrity’s relationship with the fan. Edwards and La Ferle (2009) found that women tend to rate female celebrities as more trustworthy, in this case in relation to product endorsement, and men tend to rate male celebrities as more trustworthy. Additionally, Moschis (1985) found that women are more receptive to information from social agents than men. Similarity plays a key role in all forms of parasocial celebrity relationships as fans are more likely to identify with and form these relationships with celebrities of the same age group, gender, and race (Kosenko, Binder, & Hurley, 2016).

### *Taylor Swift and Gender Differences*

Based on information from Spotify, Taylor Swift is popular among both genders, but is significantly more popular with women (Lamere, 2014). When looking at Top 40 artists, Swift appears on the list for both men and women, but for women Swift ranked eighth, while with men, Swift fell all the way to thirty-seventh (Lamere, 2014). Additionally, Swift ranked sixteenth in the Top 40 without accounting for gender differences, but fell twenty-sixth when those factors were taken into account (Lamere, 2014). Swift is significantly more popular with women than men, but her reach does span large portions of both genders.

Given that the literature shows that female fans are simultaneously more likely to hold liberal-leaning views and identify with a female celebrity, this study puts forth three final hypotheses:

- H<sub>4a</sub>: Female fans of Taylor Swift will be more likely than male fans to support the idea of homosexuality in society.
- H<sub>4b</sub>: Female fans of Taylor Swift will be more likely than male fans to believe that racial discrimination still needs to be addressed in society.
- H<sub>4c</sub>: Female fans of Taylor Swift will be more likely than male fans to believe that gender equality still needs to be addressed in society.

## Methods

During a five-week period in February and March 2019, 913 individuals, who self-identified as Taylor Swift fans, participated in a web-based survey. The survey was posted on Reddit (r/TaylorSwift; r/Conservative; r/country; r/Music; r/hiphopheads; r/PoliticalDiscussion), Taylor Swift forums (taylor.boards.net; fanforum.com), as well as Facebook through personal posts. Each forum was selected to reach participants who could be statistically representative of the United States based on their musical tastes or political viewpoint. Individuals were only eligible to participate in the survey if they self-identified as a consenting adult (18 or older), a citizen of the United States (because questions of voting behavior were included), and a Taylor Swift fan.

### *Close-Ended Survey Questions*

In addition to basic demographic information (age, ethnicity/race, etc.) participants were asked about their perceptions of Taylor Swift and their political views. Excluding the eligibility

questions, all questions were optional. Therefore, by design, all variables linked with the non-mandatory questions obtained slightly different response rates. For example, questions about LGBT acceptance ( $n = 912$ ), racial discrimination ( $n = 913$ ), and fan strength ( $n = 917$ ) all generated different numbers of responses. All instances of missing variables within responses were dropped for the purposes of statistical testing. When comparing responses to political questions based on fan strength and age (both ordinal variables), independent sample t-tests were conducted. When comparing responses to political questions based on gender (a nominal variable), a chi-square test was performed.

### *Political Typology*

Respondents were asked close-ended questions adapted from previous research on political typologies conducted by the Pew Research Center (2014). All participants were asked 17 questions from Pew Research Center’s political typology quiz. These included questions about the economy, domestic issues, international affairs, government spending, and political identification. Each question required respondents to choose between two diametrically opposed responses to a policy issue. Based on the individual’s responses to these questions, either a chi-square test or independent sample t-test was performed to compare the responses with other demographic factors.

### *Who is Responding?*

All respondents were asked to share their age, gender, race/ethnicity, annual household income, state residency, and size of the city in which they were a resident. To test the hypotheses that female fans of Taylor Swift would be more likely to support homosexuality and believe that gender inequality and racial discrimination still exist, chi-square tests were performed.

*How Strong of a Fan are They?*

In order to measure the strength of an individual’s affinity for Taylor Swift, individuals were asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, with one being “barely a fan” and five being “biggest fan ever,” how much of a Taylor Swift fan they were. To test the hypotheses that stronger fans of Taylor Swift would be more likely to support homosexuality and believe that gender inequality and racial discrimination still exist, independent sample t-tests that did not assume equal variance were performed.

*How Old are They?*

In order to categorize participants’ ages, each individual was asked to indicate their current placement within a set of given age ranges (18-24, 25-34, 35-49, 50-64, 65-79, 80 and over). To test the hypotheses that younger fans of Taylor Swift would be more likely to support homosexuality and believe that gender inequality and racial discrimination still exist, independent sample t-tests that did not assume equal variance were performed.

*What Political Party are They?*

Participants were also asked to classify themselves as either Democrat, Republican, or Independent. To test the hypotheses that younger fans of Taylor Swift would be more likely to support homosexuality and believe that gender inequality and racial discrimination still exist, chi-square tests were performed.

*Open-Ended Responses*

In order to expand the breadth of the survey, three open-ended questions (two related to Taylor Swift and one related to political typology) supplemented the close-ended measures. The Taylor Swift-related questions allowed individuals to talk more about their Swift fandom by



asking “Why are you a Taylor Swift fan?” and “What was the first Taylor Swift song you ever heard?” The political typology question asked individuals to “describe [their] political beliefs in [their] own words.” In response to each question, 981 responded with their first Taylor Swift song heard, 912 responded with why they were a Taylor Swift fan, and 651 explained their political beliefs.

## **Results**

### *Fan Strength*

**LGBT Stances.** In support of  $H_{1a}$ , the study found that fans who believed that “homosexuality should be accepted by society” ( $M = 4.06$ ) also had higher levels of self-identified fan strength with Taylor Swift than those fans who believed that “homosexuality should be discouraged by society” ( $M = 3.39$ ;  $p = <.001$ ). Of those surveyed, 845 (92.1%) Taylor Swift fans believed that “homosexuality should be accepted by society,” while only 72 (7.9%) believed “homosexuality should be discouraged by society.” The effect size was the largest of those related to fan strength ( $d = .5411$ ).

Insert Table 1 Here

**Racial Discrimination.**  $H_{1b}$  was supported. Researchers found that the higher the level of self-identification as a Taylor Swift fan, the more likely the belief that “racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days.” Those who believed that “racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days” ( $M = 4.11$ ) had higher levels of fan self-identification with Taylor Swift than those who believed that “blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition” ( $M = 3.75$ ;  $d = .3515$ ;  $p = <.001$ ).

Insert Table 2 Here

**Equality for Women.** Higher levels of self-identification as a fan of Taylor Swift ( $M = 4.08$ ) also correlated with believing that “there are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men,” in accordance with  $H_{1c}$ . Those who believed that “the obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now largely gone” ( $M = 3.85$ ) had significantly lower levels of self-identification as fan of Taylor Swift ( $p = <.001$ ).

Insert Table 3 Here

#### *Age of Fans*

**LGBT Stances.** Each age grouping was assigned a numerical value with 1 equaling 18-24, 2 equaling 25-34, 3 equaling 35-49, 4 equaling 50-64, 5 equaling 65-79, and 6 equaling 80 or older. In support of  $H_{2a}$ , those fans who believed that “homosexuality should be accepted by society” ( $M = 1.80$ ) were younger than those fans who believed that “homosexuality should be discouraged by society” ( $M = 2.37$ ;  $p = .001$ ). The effect size was the largest of those related to age ( $d = -.4146$ ).

Insert Table 4 Here

**Racial Discrimination.** Those fans who believe that “racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days” ( $M = 1.74$ ) were younger than those fans who believed that “blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition” ( $M = 2.09$ ), which supports  $H_{2b}$  ( $d = -.3112$ ;  $p = <.001$ ).

Insert Table 5 Here

**Equality for Women.** Responses did not support  $H_{2c}$ . Fans who believed that “there are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men” ( $M = 1.82$ ) were

not statistically significantly younger than those who believed that “the obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now largely gone” ( $M = 1.90$ ;  $p = .272$ ).

Accordingly, the smallest effect size related to age occurred ( $d = .0800$ ).

Insert Table 6 Here

### *Political Party*

**LGBT Stances.** As stated by  $H_{3a}$ , fans who self-identified as Democratic were more likely than those who self-identified as Republicans and Independents to believe that “homosexuality should be accepted in society” ( $\eta^2 = .427$ ;  $p = <.001$ ). Of those who believed that homosexuality should be accepted, 59.3% said they were Democrats, 11.2% said they were Republicans, and 29.5% said they were Independents. Conversely, of those who believed that “homosexuality should be discouraged by society,” only 5.6% said they were Democrats, while 66.7% said they were Republicans and 27.8% said they were Independents.

Insert Table 7 Here

**Racial Discrimination.** In support of  $H_{3b}$ , fans who self-identified as Democratic were more likely than those who self-identified as Republican and Independent to believe that “racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days” ( $\eta^2 = .609$ ;  $p = <.001$ ). The effect size was the largest of those related to political party. Of those fans who believed that “racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days,” 70.6% said they were Democrats, 3.1% said they were Republicans, and 26.4% said they were Independent. Meanwhile, of those who believed that “blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition,” 16.1% said they were Democrat, 47.1% said they were Republican, and 36.8% said they were Independent.

Insert Table 8 Here

**Equality for Women.** Self-identified Democratic fans of Taylor Swift were more likely than self-identified Republican or Independent fans to believe that “there are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men” ( $\nu = .475$ ;  $p = <.001$ ), supporting  $H_{3c}$ . Of those who believe that “there are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men,” 68.6% said they were Democrats, 6.4% said they were Republicans, and 25% said they were Independent. Of those who believed that “the obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now largely gone,” 22.7% said they were Democrat, 37.7% said they were Republican, and 39.6% said they were Independent.

Insert Table 9 Here

#### *Gender*

**LGBT Stances.** In support of  $H_{4a}$ , female fans of Taylor Swift were more likely than male fans to believe that “homosexuality should be accepted by society” ( $p = .043$ ). Of those who believed that “homosexuality should be accepted by society,” 66.2% were female and 32.2% were male. Of those who believed that “homosexuality should be discouraged by society,” 62.0% were female and 32.4% were male.

Insert Table 10 Here

**Racial Discrimination.** Female fans of Taylor Swift were more likely than male fans to believe that “racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days” ( $\nu = .128$ ;  $p = .002$ ), supporting  $H_{4b}$ . Of those who believed that “racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days,” 28.3% were men and 70.2% were women. Of those who believed that “blacks who can't get ahead in

this country are mostly responsible for their own condition,” 41.2% were male and 56.8% were female.

Insert Table 11 Here

**Equality for Women.** Finally, in support of the final hypothesis,  $H_{4c}$ , female fans of Taylor Swift were more likely to believe that “there are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men” ( $p = <.001$ ). The largest effect size related to gender occurred ( $\eta^2 = .273$ ). Of those who believed that “there are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men,” 24.1% were male and 74.3% were female. Meanwhile, of those who believed that “the obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now largely gone,” 51.3% were male and 46.8% were female.

Insert Table 12 Here

## **Discussion**

This study attempted to provide insight into whether the level of fans’ parasocial interaction with Taylor Swift correlated with their political views. By decoding messages from Swift (Hall, 1973), fans created parasocial relationships with Swift that varied in strength. Taylor Swift’s one political Instagram post provided a test case to determine whether more traditional factors, such as age, gender, or political views, or self-identified fan strength, an indicator of parasocial interaction, more significantly correlate with an individual’s position on the issues addressed in the post — homosexuality, racial discrimination, and gender equality.

### *LGBT Stances*

In the case of whether an individual believed that “homosexuality should be accepted by society” or “homosexuality should be discouraged by society,” Swift fans overwhelmingly

(92.1%) believed that it should be accepted, which contrasts with a study done before the Instagram post in which 81.3% believed that same-sex marriage should be allowed (Jones, 2018). On the topic of homosexual acceptance, self-identified fan strength was the most significant predictor ( $d = .5411$ ) of one's position, even ahead of political party ( $v = .427$ ). Swift's Instagram post and large-scale acceptance of homosexuality likely impacted this result. Prior to Swift's post, individuals would not have known Taylor's stance on the issue, which may have led to the previous results. For example, one respondent stated that their pre-Instagram post affinity for Taylor stemmed from the fact that she “stayed out of politics.” However, after the post, it is clear that a parasocial relationship with Taylor Swift entails identifying with someone who believes that homosexuality should be accepted. As one respondent stated, Taylor's “involvement in the LGBTQ community” now exists in public discourse. Age was also a comparable predictor of whether an individual accepted homosexuality ( $d = -.4146$ ), which makes sense since younger people are more likely to be accepting of homosexuality than older people (“Views on Homosexuality,” 2017; Pew Research Center, 2018). Additionally, it is possible that, because these individuals are younger and have grown up with Taylor Swift, their parasocial relationship with her is more meaningful and therefore more impactful, as supported by Ilicic, Baxter, & Kulczynski (2016). Further, these individuals are more likely to be on social media, where Taylor Swift is prevalent, which further suggests why fan strength, rather than the more traditional political party factor, was more significant (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

### *Racial Discrimination*

Political party ( $v = .609$ ) took the place of fan strength as the most significant predictor of an individual's view on whether racial discrimination was the main reason why black people are

unable to get ahead and, in fact, acted as the most significant correlation of the study. Fan strength ( $d = .3515$ ) and age ( $d = -.3112$ ) still played statistically significant roles, but political party mattered far more. First, the Republican party tends to be significantly more white, while the Democratic party tends to have significantly more black voters within it, according to Pew Research Center (2018). Additionally, political party is, in itself, a significant predictor of how an individual feels about certain topics, no matter what the actual policy position is. These results are conducive with other research, such as that done by Cohen (2003). However, fan strength, which still has the second-most significant effect size, may be less significant in relation to racial discrimination because Taylor Swift is white. Parasocial relationships allow fans to identify with the celebrity and take their content as if it was coming from a friend. However, Swift, as a white woman and one who has been co-opted by white supremacists as an icon of Aryan beauty (Donnella, 2016), does not exemplify racial equality and instead must speak about it from an outside perspective. Given that most (75.5%) of the people who responded to the survey were white themselves, compared to only 2.21% who were black, it becomes difficult for the parasocial relationship to explain an issue that largely does not impact either the fan or the celebrity involved. Parasocial relationships help to supplement an individual's daily experiences and grow as an individual, but it may be more difficult for the needed type of discourse to occur when both individuals involved have not experienced the phenomenon (Eyal and Dailey, 2012). Political party may start to dominate other factors, as in this case, when individuals do not have experience with the subject and instead default to the party's generally accepted norm (Cohen, 2003).

### *Gender Equality*

Political party ( $\nu = .475$ ) repeated as the most significant correlation related to whether an individual believed that most of the obstacles preventing women from getting ahead as easily as men still existed. Fan strength ( $d = -.2530$ ) and gender ( $\nu = .273$ ) also acted as statistically significant correlations to this position. Political party and gender are inextricably linked, given that women tend to be more Democratic, while men are more Republican (Pew Research Center, 2018). The differences that occurred here may have appeared for a multitude of reasons.

Republicans tend to believe in hands-off, do-it-yourself government, which leads to an individual generally believing in self-determination (Suh, 2014). Meanwhile, Democrats tend to believe in helping others through reform, which leads to an individual believing that there are still obstacles to be overcome (Suh, 2014). Therefore, there may be a greater divide between Republicans and Democrats on this issue because it is related to a fundamental tentpole of each party.

Additionally, the duality of the question in which individuals have to choose between extremes may have lessened the divide between gender. The gender wage gap is a statistical truth that more than two out of three people in the United States understand (Thomas & Ness, 2018) so it may be more difficult for even men to believe that there are not still obstacles in the way of women (Vagins, 2017).

Fan strength, in this case, may be less significant because of Taylor Swift’s success. The question was phrased as “there are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men,” but Taylor Swift is in a position of power, which may make messages of inequality feel a little more hollow when coming from her. For example, one respondent stated that they only appreciated her for female empowerment purposes “back in her early years.” As a result, it may be less likely that fan strength impacts this issue because fans of Taylor Swift have



seen her succeed, which means that women can succeed, making the message that Taylor espouses different from the reality that she presents.

Of the factors examined by the study, the only non-statistically significant factor was the correlation between age ( $p = .272$ ) and an individual's view about whether “there are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men.” Although this was unexpected, it is possible to understand when considering that age is not directly tied to gender issues, in the same way that both gender and political party are. Age affects experiences, but does not necessarily define them. Older people, as supported by Ilicic, Baxter, and Kulczynski (2016), are less impacted by parasocial relationships because their increased autonomy and experiential knowledge helps to lessen their reliance on the celebrity. This increased reliance on individual experience may provide an explanation for why people of all ages may choose to care, or not care, about gender equality. As discussed earlier, older people (women especially) have faced these issues for years and understand they are not resolved. Individuals have had different life experiences as they age, even within the same time frame, which may lead to a more even spread across ages on both sides of the issue, despite the overall lean toward believing that more obstacles still exist for women to get ahead than exist men.

## **Conclusion**

In accordance with previous research, political party is a significant predictor of how an individual will answer related to policy issues. However, it is not always the most significant correlation. This study found that, in relation to homosexual acceptance in society, the strength of self-identification as a Taylor Swift fan can act as a more significant correlation than even political party. Political party was the second-most significant correlation related to this issue,

but fan strength’s place as the most significant correlation implies the importance of parasocial relationships and the influence of celebrity.

Political party largely acted as the most statistically significant correlation for an how an individual felt about a particular topic, but fan strength did correlate more significantly with homosexual acceptance and was the second-most significant correlation relating to the other two topics. Gender and age were statistically significant on most issues (excluding age related to gender equality), but did not have large effect sizes. Political party has long been thought to be a significant predictor, so it is not a surprise that such a result occurred here, but fan strength’s significance suggests that Taylor Swift’s influence on individuals may sway their political leanings as well. Particularly given the previous relative lack of homosexual acceptance from Taylor Swift fans before the Instagram post, these findings may suggest that Taylor Swift’s influence can shift her fans’ perceptions on issues. As implied by these findings, political party still likely reigns supreme in political discourse, but the power of celebrity and parasocial relationships cannot be discounted as insignificant, given these findings.

It is important to note that this study began as an attempt to understand how individuals related their perceptions of Taylor Swift’s music to a variety of political preferences. As a result, the survey was not initially constructed with Taylor Swift’s parasocial impact in mind. Replication of this study may refine or reduce the questions further in order to more directly target the posed hypotheses. Additionally, the close-ended nature of the fan strength question restricted identification of qualitative fan understandings. This study attempted to remedy this with open-ended questions related to Swift, but future researchers should consider strategies for

extending the breadth of this close-ended measure to include direct open-ended questions that address fan strength and the reasoning behind it.

This study adds to our understanding of how various factors determine an individual’s beliefs. As found by other studies, political party is significant and plays a role in the political beliefs that an individual forms. However, this study found that other factors, such as fan strength, can play even more statistically significant roles, given the power of parasocial relationships and celebrity influence. Age and gender both also are correlatively significant to an individual’s beliefs, but political party and fan strength play stronger and more significant roles in predicting an individual’s belief pattern.

Future research should investigate the reasoning behind an individual’s self-identified fan strength and whether fan strength’s role in political views, as shown in this study, extends beyond Taylor Swift and into the realm of other celebrities. The lack of qualitative understanding, which this study limitedly addressed, allows for some opaqueness to exist regarding how individuals self-identify their parasocial relationships. Additionally, the factors surrounding Taylor Swift’s Instagram post created a perfect storm for her influence on her fandom so understanding whether other celebrity parasocial relationships can also influence individuals is important in understanding whether this effect is general or specific in nature. Research into these areas will further illuminate the potential influence of celebrity on politics.

Limitations of this study partially stem from the lack of causation illuminated by the results. All of the tested hypotheses related to correlations between four specific fan characteristics and three specific political views. Other non-surveyed or tested factors may also significantly impact an individual’s beliefs, such as race, income level, living location, or

religion. This study is not able to cast light beyond its tested scope. Additionally, the sample, while large, is not necessarily representative of the general population, given that responses were solicited and were from social media and forums. These platforms lean younger and more Democratic in their usage (Smith & Anderson, 2018), which led to significantly more young people and Democrats answering the survey. Future studies could attempt to glean a more representative sample of the United States population to make the study increasingly generalizable.

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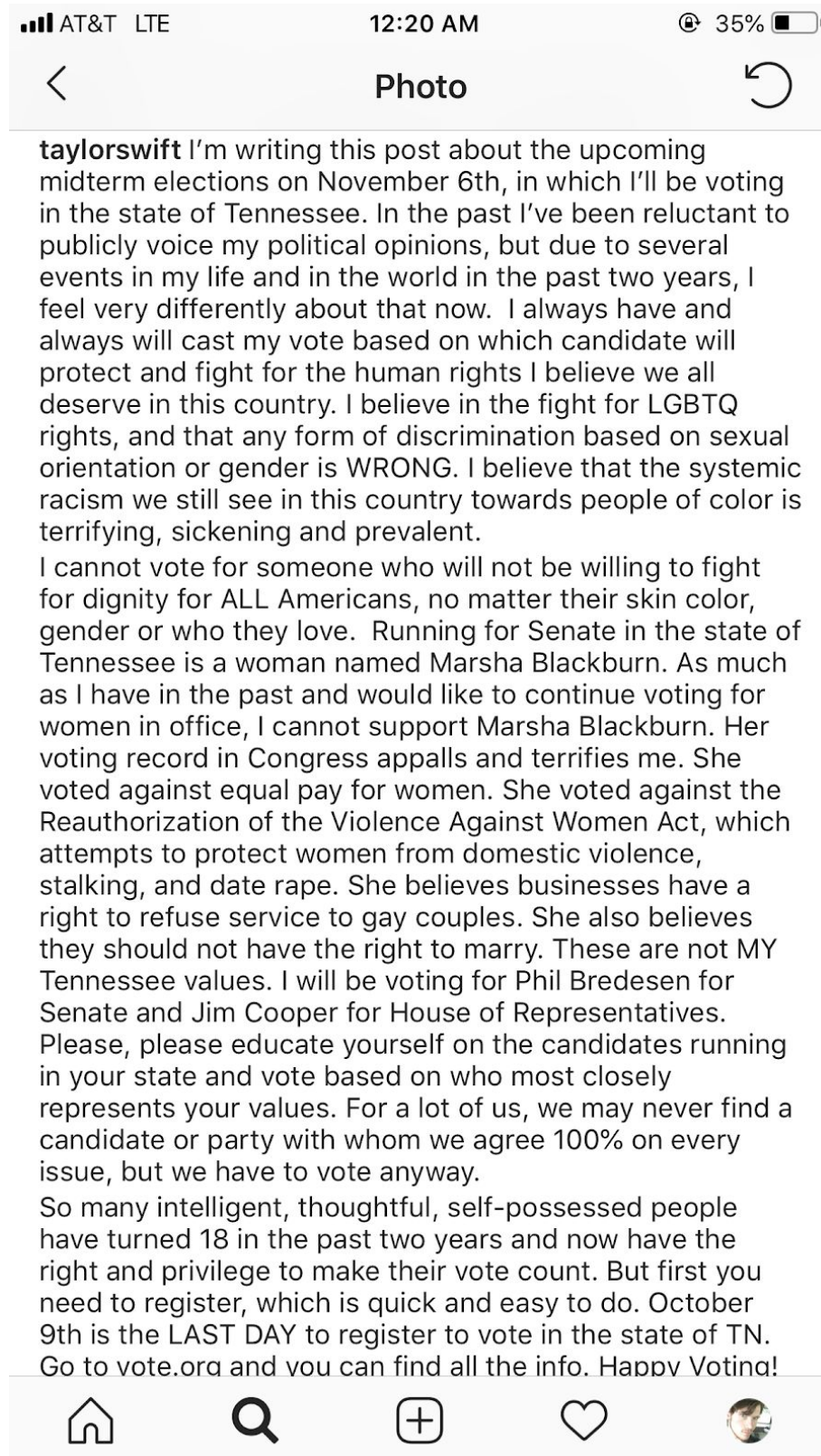
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Appendix A: Taylor Swift’s Instagram Post Endorsing Democratic Candidates





Appendix B: Data Tables

**Table 1 – Fan Strength: LGBT Stances**

	Homosexuality should be accepted by society			Homosexuality should be discouraged by society			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>				
Fan Strength	4.06	.876	845	3.39	1.273	72	4.403	76.832	.5411*	<.001

**Table 2 – Fan Strength: Racial Discrimination**

	Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days			Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>				
Fan Strength	4.11	.839	657	3.75	1.097	261	4.799	386.600	.3515*	<.001

**Table 3 – Fan Strength: Equality for Women**

	There are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men			The obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now largely gone			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>				
Fan Strength	4.08	.908	641	3.85	.971	274	-3.502	913	-.2530*	<.001

**Table 4 – Age: LGBT Stances**

	Homosexuality should be accepted by society			Homosexuality should be discouraged by society			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>				
Age	1.80	.967	842	2.37	1.407	71	-3.351	75.685	-.4146*	.001

**Table 5 – Age: Racial Discrimination**

	Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days			Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>				
Age	1.74	.932	657	2.09	1.169	257	-4.225	389.666	-.3112*	<.001

**Table 6 – Age: Equality for Women**

	There are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men			The obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now largely gone			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>				
Age	1.82	.982	642	1.90	1.105	269	1.101	453.66	.0800*	.272

**Table 7 – Political Party: LGBT Stances**

	Homosexuality should be accepted by society				Homosexuality should be discouraged by society				$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>
	Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	<i>n</i>	Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	<i>n</i>				
Political Party	59.3%	11.2%	29.5%	840	5.6%	66.7%	27.8%	72	165.930	2	.427*	<.001

**Table 8 – Political Party: Racial Discrimination**

	Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days				Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition				$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>
	Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	<i>n</i>	Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	<i>n</i>				
Political Party	70.6%	3.1%	26.4%	652	16.1%	47.1%	36.8%	261	338.415	2	.609*	<.001

**Table 9 – Political Party: Equality for Women**

	There are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men				The obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now largely gone				$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>
	Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	<i>n</i>	Dem.	Rep.	Ind.	<i>n</i>				
Political Party	68.6%	6.4%	25%	640	22.7%	37.7%	39.6%	273	206.282	2	.475*	<.001



**Table 10 – Gender: LGBT Stances**

	Homosexuality should be accepted by society			Homosexuality should be discouraged by society			$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>
	Male	Female	<i>n</i>	Male	Female	<i>n</i>				
Gender	32.2%	66.2%	842	32.4%	62.0%	71	8.133	3	.094*	.043

**Table 11 – Gender: Racial Discrimination**

	Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days			Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition			$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>
	Male	Female	<i>n</i>	Male	Female	<i>n</i>				
Gender	28.3%	70.2%	657	41.2%	56.8%	257	15.005	3	.128*	.002

**Table 12 – Gender: Equality for Women**

	There are still significant obstacles that make it harder for women to get ahead than men			The obstacles that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now largely gone			$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>
	Male	Female	<i>n</i>	Male	Female	<i>n</i>				
Gender	24.1%	74.3%	642	51.3%	46.8%	269	67.734	3	.273*	<.001

\*Small Effect Size = .20; Medium Effect Size = .50; Large Effect Size = .80

\*\* Not-included: Sample sizes for Transgender and Other = >15