From the Closet to the Campaign Trail: Navigating Disclosure of Sexual Orientation in Campaign Media Content by Openly Lesbian Political Candidates in the Oregon 2022 Election Cycle

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From the Closet to the Campaign Trail:
Navigating Disclosure of Sexual Orientation in Campaign Media Content
by Openly Lesbian Political Candidates in the Oregon 2022 Election Cycle

by

Bridget D Volk

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in
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and
Political Science

Thesis Advisor
Dr. Jack Miller

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A gay person in office can set a tone, can command respect not only from the larger community, but from the young people in our own community who need both examples and hope.

~ Harvey Milk, 1977

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Introduction

The United States has a long and troubled history of exclusion of marginalized groups in elected government positions. At the founding of the nation, the only people permitted to hold office and vote were (typically heterosexual and cis-gendered) property-owning white men. As other groups such as women and people of color won suffrage and began to run for office, members of marginalized groups began to make progress toward representation in elected positions. This progress has remained slow, with white men today still holding around 60% of elected positions, despite making up only 30% of the US population (“Research and Analysis of the 2020 Primary Elections” 2021).

There is a large and constantly growing body of research around the obstacles that women and people of color face in US electoral contests, but the existing research around openly LGBTQ politicians and political candidates remains small. This is due in large part to the relatively small number of openly queer people who run and are elected to office. The first openly gay person to run for public office was Jose Sarria, who ran for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1961. He lost his race but his effort inspired other members of the LGBTQ community to run for public office. By 1990, there were 20 openly gay or lesbian elected officials in office throughout the country, and by 2002 that number had risen to over 200 (Haider-Markel 2010). As of 2022, there were over 1000 known out LGBTQ elected officials in the United States, making up around 0.2% of elected politicians (LGBTQ Victory Institute 2022). This number remains far below the threshold of reflective representation, which refers to the percentage of elected officials in a demographic group matching or ‘reflecting’ the percentage of that group in the general population. This would require around 7% of elected positions to be held by LGBTQ people, but the current numbers still represents a nearly a 100%
increase in openly queer politicians over only the past four years (LGBTQ Victory Institute 2018).

Reflective representation has two components, descriptive and substantive. Descriptive representation refers to a member of a group winning an office. Thus, if a member of the LGBTQ community is elected, there is descriptive representation for that community regardless of what policies or issues that person supports. Substantive representation refers to the elected official pursuing policy goals that are aligned with the group they represent. For example, if a queer elected official pushes for marriage equality or anti-discrimination laws that include sexuality and gender identity as a protected category, that is substantive representation (Haider-Markel 2010). Most leaders of marginalized groups hope to achieve both descriptive and substantive representation so that members of the community see themselves reflected in those who hold positions of power (descriptive) and experience an increase in protections or rights resulting from the policies pushed by their elected representatives (substantive).

The 2022 election was historic in terms of LGBTQ representation, with over 1000 known openly queer people running for office, and at least one openly queer person running in all 50 states and the District of Columbia for the first time in the nation’s history (LGBTQ Victory Fund 2022a). While the 2022 election may have been disappointing for partisan observers, as it did not offer a “red wave” nor a “blue wave,” queer activists across the nation celebrated a “rainbow wave,” with over 430 queer candidates winning their elections, including the two first openly lesbian governors in the nation, elected in Oregon and Massachusetts. Lesbian and bisexual women fared particularly well, with a 64% win rate (LGBTQ Victory Fund 2022b).
Literature Review

With a growing number of out candidates running and winning elections, there is an exciting new opportunity to study the strategy behind queer campaigns, and to explore how queer candidates navigate building a public image that celebrates their identity in a deeply heteronormative, and at times outright homophobic, political and societal culture. Research into the mechanisms of LGBTQ campaigns offers an opportunity to provide data and guidance for future queer political leaders considering taking their first steps toward candidacy, and can add a new perspective to the existing literature around members of marginalized groups and the obstacles they must overcome in order to be elected. Much of the existing literature around queer candidacy is in an early stage, with many contributions coming from queer focused political action campaigns such as the LGBTQ Victory Fund and LPAC, who conduct surveys and keep records of political candidates. Other notable contributors include Donald Heider-Markel, a professor of Political Science who has written a book and numerous articles about the history and experiences of LGBTQ politicians, and Ewa Golebiowska, who studies group stereotypes in electoral politics, with a focus on stereotypes of gays and lesbians.

Nearly all of the current scholars of LGBTQ electoral politics have had to frame their research as an extension of the existing research on female and non-white candidates running for office, since the literature on queer candidacy is so scarce. This is appropriate, as modern queer candidates are now facing a similar set of obstacles as female candidates and candidates of color did a in the past, but much new research will need to be conducted before there is a comparable body of literature for this particular marginalized group as there is for groups such as women and certain racial or ethnic minorities.
Most of the obstacles faced by openly gay politicians are centered around group stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes in the minds of voters. Women and racial minorities are still working to overcome these sorts of stereotypes, which can lead to voters being less likely to elect them to certain positions of power. For example, data shows that voters assume African-American candidates are more liberal and more focused on minority rights, and that women are more competent in roles associated with ‘feminine’ characteristics such as education, but are not competent in traditionally ‘masculine’ areas such as national defense (Haider-Markel 2010).

Ewa Golebiowska has done extensive research on the group stereotypes assigned to LGBTQ candidates. She finds that the most common assumption that voters make, which is often encouraged by opponents running against queer candidates, is that the candidate is only focused on LGBTQ issues (Golebiowska 2002). This framing of candidates as single-issue candidates can be harmful to campaigns. Other stereotypes include the idea that homosexuals are perverse and particularly pedophilic, which leads to some opponents drawing on child molestor fears in order to decrease support for the LGBTQ candidate (ibid.). Haider-Markel’s book on queer campaigning provides a comprehensive overview of political representation of LGBTQ people. Haider-Markel, like Golebiowska, spends significant time discussing common stereotypes and their effect on electoral outcomes. Haider-Markel’s research finds that about 10% of voters surveyed felt that an LGBTQ candidate would be less honest than a straight candidate, around 20% thought they were less moral than a straight candidate, and a shocking 26% of voters stated that even if an LGBTQ candidate was the candidate that most shared their own views on political issues, they would “definitely” or “probably” vote for a different candidate (Haider-Markel 2010) (See Appendix A for full survey results). Additionally, extant
literature shows that many Americans perceive LGBTQ people to be less moral, less religious, and less patriotic than heterosexuels. Further, they tend to assume that members of the LGBTQ community are generally more liberal or left-leaning.

My research focuses on a new area in LGBTQ political studies, the strategy behind narrative building and disclosure of sexual orientation during the campaign stage of running for high elected office. Openly gay politicians face a unique struggle in how they navigate creating a public persona, as they must find a balance between celebrating their identity and representing the LGBTQ community while trying not to alienate voters who may hold some implicit bias against homosexuals or subscribe to stereotypes about the character and capacity of queer people.

**Project Overview**

My work is a qualitative study, focusing on the 2022 campaigns of two out Oregon lesbians as case studies; Tina Kotek’s gubernatorial campaign and Jamie McLeod-Skinner’s run for the US House of Representatives. Tina Kotek is a well-known politician who has been involved in Oregon politics since 2007, when she was elected for the first of eight consecutive terms as the Oregon State Representative of the 44th District. She served as majority leader for the Oregon House of Representatives from 2011 to 2013, and served as Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives from 2013 to 2022 (VoteSmart 2023b). In the 2022 election, Kotek ran against Republican Christine Drazen and Independent Betsy Johnson in the gubernatorial race, ultimately winning the office of Oregon Governor.

Jamie McLeod-Skinner also has significant political experience, serving on the city council in Santa Clara, CA, from 2004 to 2012, as well as being the city manager of Phoenix, OR, from 2016 to 2017 and the Interim City Manager of Talent, OR, in 2020 where she assisted
in wildfire damage relief. McLeod-Skinner ran unsuccessfully for US Representative of Oregon District 2 in 2018 after winning the Democratic primary, and for Secretary of State in 2020 (VoteSmart 2023a). In the 2022 election, the focus of this project, McLeod-Skinner ran against Republican Lori Chavez-DeRemer for a seat in the US House of Representatives for Oregon’s 5th District after beating out Democratic incumbent Kurt Schrader in the primary. She ultimately lost this race.

These two case studies were chosen for a few reasons. First, both campaigns were high profile races that were deemed “toss-ups” up until election day. Oregon District 5 has a slight Democratic Party lean, with Biden winning by an 8.9% margin in the 2020 election (Politico 2021). The state of Oregon leans farther left than District 5. Although the party breakdown of voters shows Non-Affiliated or Independent voters as the largest party in Oregon, with 34.46% of registered voters, and the Democratic Party and Republican Party only have 34.36% and 24.39% respectively, the state in its entirety voted 56.5% for Biden in the 2020 Presidential election, showing a margin of 16.1%, almost double that of District 5 (CNN Politics 2020; Jaquiss 2022). Kotek ultimately won her race with a 3.4 point margin over her Republican opponent, while McLeod-Skinner lost hers by a 2 point margin (New York Times 2022).

In the state of Oregon, about 26% of residents either oppose or strongly oppose same-sex marriage, despite it having been legalized nationally over a decade ago (although this figure is down 9 percentage points since pre-legalization) (“PRRI – American Values Atlas” 2021). While Oregon has long been at the forefront of LGBTQ rights and protections, and elected lesbians to legislative seats as early as the 1990’s, the state includes a significant conservative population, whom recent data shows are significantly less likely to support LGBTQ candidates, even those candidates who align closely with their own political ideologies (Haider-Markel 2010).
Second, both elections were races between non-incumbent female candidates, meaning that the data will not be skewed by issues of gender or incumbency. Although my research does not offer any findings broadly applicable to all queer candidates in the US, the objective is to shed some light on the obstacles and opportunities of cis-gendered lesbians running for office, as well as providing a closer look at the strategy and calculations made during queer campaigns as out candidates attempt to build and solidify their personal narrative and public image as it relates to their sexuality.

**Methodology**

Central to my thesis is media analysis focused on publicly available information and content created by each campaign. I analyze specific content created by both campaigns, paying close attention to mentions of sexual orientation and identity and applying existing literature on campaign advertising and strategy to these cases. The first section of this paper looks at each candidate’s campaign website, with a focus on the candidate biography section, and I do a close reading of how and when each candidate chooses to ‘come out’ in their biography. The second section of this paper looks at social media posts. I have selected two posts from each candidate, all of which were cross-posted on their campaign Twitter page, Facebook page, and Instagram page. I use existing recent literature on campaigns and social media to inform my analysis. The third section focuses on television advertisements created by the campaigns. For each candidate I have chosen two TV advertisements to look at in depth, and analyze them using concepts from existing literature about political advertising as a guide. I made the decision to use only two posts and advertisements from each campaign because that is all that is necessary to capture the tone and structure of television advertising and social media posting across each campaign. I have carefully selected each advertisement and post based on their proximity to the queer identity of
the candidates, and their reflectiveness of how each campaign navigates the issue in general. The final section of this paper looks at the appearance and dress of each candidate, and draws from existing literature about campaign apparel for both male and female candidates. While both male and female candidates often work within a framework of appropriate campaign clothing choices for their gender, there is no existing literature on how gay or lesbian candidates typically dress, so this portion of the paper attempts to draw new conclusions outside of the existing binary.

**Campaign Websites**

The campaign website is an essential component of modern political campaigns. As early as 2004, data shows that 81% of major party House candidates and 92% of major party Senate candidates had some form of campaign website (Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin 2007). Today, one would be hard pressed to find a political candidate without an internet presence and website running at virtually any level of office. Websites provide candidates with opportunities for online fundraising, volunteer coordination, informing voters of policy positions and “presenting an idealized depiction of the candidate’s personal character” (Parkin 2012). While candidate websites vary in the material they include, a near constant of the candidate website is the biography section. An analysis of gubernatorial and Congressional campaign websites from 1998-2004 found that 91% of candidates provided a biography section in their website, with some campaign websites consisting solely of a biography and photograph (Schneider, Foot, and Nardi 2006). For openly queer political candidates, the biography section is especially important, as it provides the candidate with an opportunity to come out to voters and establish a positive narrative around their sexual identity. Many openly queer politicians and candidates have expressed that they have a desire to disclose their sexual orientation at the earliest point possible,
thereby removing the risk of being outed by adversaries or being seen by voters as disingenuous or inauthentic (Kluttz 2014; McLeod-Skinner 2023).

**Kotek Campaign Website**

My analysis of Kotek’s campaign website shows that she is careful to frame her sexual orientation in a way that is appealing to voters. In order to inoculate herself against assumptions of dishonesty or furtiveness, she makes a point to ‘come out’ to readers of her biography in a straightforward manner. She uses three unique rhetorical strategies in the coming out section of her biography. The first is emphasizing positive aspects of her character, a common tactic for political candidates, who frequently run “character campaigns” which attempt to highlight and juxtapose the positive aspects of their character against the character of their opponent (Jack Miller 2020). For example, a challenger may run a campaign emphasizing their honesty and morality when the incumbent has experienced recent scandals or allegations of corruption. Kotek uses her coming out story to suggest that the experience made her stronger and more resilient, characteristics that are generally positive and encouraged in political leaders. The second strategy she uses is tying her identity to policy. Kotek emphasizes her early activism in college and her successful movement to introduce domestic partnership rights for faculty and students. Finally, Kotek uses normalization, mentioning her wife in a formulaic statement that mirrors a heterosexual candidate’s inclusion of their spouse in their biography. The first two rhetorical strategies are used regularly by political candidates regardless of their sexual orientation, although Kotek uses them in a queer context. The strategy of normalization is not a concern for heterosexual candidates, whose relationships are ‘pre-normalized’ by society.

Tina Kotek’s campaign website, entitled “Tina for Oregon,” includes a biography of the candidate under the tab “Meet Tina” (See Appendix B for full text of the biography page). The
biography is around 650 words long, with sections separated by photographs, banners, and quotes from the biography set in large colored font. After an introductory sentence describing her experience and reason for running for the seat of Governor, she provides a brief family history, framing her own story inside the story of her grandparents who emigrated to the US from Eastern Europe, and her parents who were first-generation Americans. The text is then interrupted by a pair of family photos, and moves on to the narrative of how Kotek ended up in Oregon. In the third paragraph of the biography, Kotek comes out to her readers, opening the paragraph with the sentence “I also came out as a lesbian in my early twenties and it was liberating” (“Meet Tina - Tina for Oregon” 2022). In the coming out paragraph, Kotek highlights the “resilience” she gained through the experience of coming out to various groups and people, and states that “coming out became a personal responsibility to undermine hatred and bigotry” (ibid.). Kotek closes the coming out paragraph by connecting her sexual orientation to the broader struggle for equality for the LGBTQ community, highlighting her activism in support of domestic partnership rights at the university she attended. The biography continues on for the rest of the page, including one photograph of a young Kotek smiling in a selfie with her wife, Aimee. In the background of the photo, two small rainbow flags and a rainbow placard are visible, presumably referencing the rainbow associated with the flag of the LGBTQ community. In italics at the bottom of the page, it states “Tina and her wife Aimee have been together for 17 years. They live in North Portland with their two dogs.” (ibid.).

In the biography, Kotek’s campaign is calculated in how they represent and frame her sexuality. The biography is careful to include only a single paragraph about Kotek’s sexual orientation, following the structure of coming out to voters, explaining how it makes her stronger, speaking against “hatred and bigotry,” and closing by connecting Kotek’s lesbianism to
her track record of activism and enacting change. The sentence at the bottom in italics works to normalize homosexual relationships and families, mirroring the typical heterosexual candidate biography, which is usually formulated as *Candidate X lives with their spouse Y and their children in Town*. For example, Kotek’s Republican rival in the gubernatorial race closed her biography with the statement “Christine and her husband Dan live in rural Clackamas County with their three children.” (“About - Christine Drazan” 2021), and her Independent opponent includes the statement “Betsy and her husband John Helm have been married 35 years and have worked side by side in both business and public service. They live in Scappoose.” (“Meet Betsy - Run Betsy Run” 2022). The “Meet Tina” section allows Kotek to come out to voters in a straightforward manner, but avoids emphasizing her sexual orientation or allowing any conclusions to be drawn that Kotek primarily represents or focuses on LGBTQ issues. In fact, the repeated mantra of the campaign, which appears five times on the biography page alone, is that Tina is for *every* Oregonian, with the clear implication that Kotek will not act in her own narrow interests, but rather in the interest of the entirety of the constituency if elected to the office of Governor. This is standard rhetoric for nearly all candidates, but is particularly important in the context of a queer candidate running for office due to voter concerns about their primary focus being LGBTQ issues.

**McLeod-Skinner Campaign Website**

McLeod-Skinner’s website uses only one of the rhetorical strategies used by the Kotek campaign. McLeod-Skinner does not directly address her sexual orientation anywhere in the biography section of her website, but rather relies heavily on normalization, including images of her wife and the same formulaic statement about her spouse that Kotek and most heterosexual candidates use. It is important to note the differences in emphasis considering the demographics
of voters in each race. Kotek can afford to be more open and celebratory about her queerness because Oregon is such a reliably blue state. McLeod-Skinner’s district is much closer to the center of the political spectrum than Oregon as a whole, so she chooses to include mentions of her wife in order to avoid the appearance of hiding something, but does not delve into the details of her coming out story or her relationship to her sexuality. Data shows that there is strong preference among voters who are older, conservative, and Republican for a queer candidate to be more private about their sexual orientation, so it is wise for the McLeod-Skinner campaign to avoid accentuating her queerness in campaign media (Haider-Markel 2010).

McLeod-Skinner’s biography page on her campaign website, entitled “Meet Jamie,” is significantly shorter than Kotek’s, coming in at a little under 300 words (See Appendix B for full text of biography page). The biography is made up of three body paragraphs and two closing sentences. The paragraphs focus on McLeod-Skinner’s childhood, career achievements, and education, respectively. The first closing sentence asks readers to support her run for Congress, and the final closing sentence takes a similar structural role as the italicized section at the bottom of the “Meet Tina” page. This sentence reads “Jamie lives on a gravel road in rural Central Oregon. Jamie is a stepmom and lives with her wife in Central Oregon where they raise dogs, goats, and chickens. In her spare time, she enjoys hanging out with family and hiking with her dogs.” (“Meet Jamie” 2022). The only photograph in the biography appears at the bottom of the page. It pictures the candidate on the right side, an older man in the middle, and a woman on the left. The man and woman wear lapel buttons from the McLeod-Skinner campaign, which read “Jamie.” The caption of the photograph labels the subjects, “Jamie, her step-dad Hank, and wife Cass” (“Meet Jamie” 2022).
In an interview for this project, McLeod-Skinner repeatedly referred to the ‘opening line’ she uses when introducing herself as a candidate in any forum: “I live in Central Oregon, finished high school in Southern Oregon, and my wife’s family has been ranching in Eastern Oregon for over 100 years” (McLeod-Skinner 2023). The candidate described how including a mention of her wife at the earliest opportunity, and linking that relationship to her connection to the state of Oregon, and thus her potential supporters, helps to “inoculate” McLeod-Skinner from potential attacks from opponents who may use the lack of disclosure as evidence of a dishonest candidate. In Kluttz’s study of openly LGBTQ politicians, he found this pattern holds for nearly all out candidates; “Sexual disclosure mitigates the risks associated with outness. By preemptively acknowledging and defining their controversial identity, out candidates remove risks of outing by adversaries and the effectiveness of heterosexist strategies” (Kluttz 2014).

While McLeod-Skinner does not dedicate any portion of her campaign biography to her experience as a publicly known lesbian, or any advocacy or activism she has undertaken in support of the LGBTQ community, her mirroring of the traditional heterosexual candidate’s mention of spousal relationships seems to work to normalize and de-politicize her identity. In my reading, by addressing her sexual orientation only in the formulaic endnote, McLeod-Skinner runs the risk of being a candidate who tries to downplay her sexual orientation (a rational decision when running in a split district that leans conservative), but her inclusion of her wife in the large, sole photograph on the about page illustrates her unwillingness to play down that essential aspect of her identity, no matter what the electoral consequences may be.

In this section I analyzed the biography entries of each candidate’s campaign website, and found some similarities between the rhetorical strategies used by both campaigns. The differences between how Kotek’s and McLeod-Skinner’s campaign biographies deal with
disclosure of sexual orientation can likely be attributed to the differing demographics of the electorate. The pages certainly have substantial differences, but they include important similar elements, especially in the context of coming out to voters. Each candidate features a photograph of themself with their same-sex spouse on their biography page, and each closes their biography with a formulaic candidate statement about their personal life. Voters are encouraged to simply accept that each woman has a wife instead of a husband, and not jump to conclusions about what that means about the candidate and their political priorities. Kotek stated in her biography that it was important to her to come out in her twenties as a way to “undermine hatred and bigotry” (“Meet Tina - Tina for Oregon” 2022). Similarly, although McLeod-Skinner makes no mention of her coming out story on her campaign website, she expressed in an interview that she came out in the 1980’s partially in response to high suicide rates among the queer and trans community during that time; “We were going to address it and make people see us as human beings. And to also give kids, or younger people, a sense of hope for the future.” (McLeod-Skinner 2023).

Both candidates are very aware of the importance of taking a stand against hatred and homophobia in order to protect and provide hope to other members of the LGBTQ community. While Kotek includes a dedicated section about her membership in the LGBTQ community and McLeod-Skinner does not, Kotek’s coming out section is brief, again suggesting to voters that neither candidate is a true identity candidate who will focus on LGBTQ issues, but rather that they are constituent oriented candidates who happen to be queer. The normalization of their identities, and caution about emphasizing that identity too heavily is almost certainly reflective of the demographics of the districts each candidate was running in. Both Kotek and McLeod-Skinner seem acutely aware of the risk of highlighting their sexual orientation in this context, even in a blue state, and make sure to frame their same-sex relationships in
heteronormative structures and terms. However, Kotek is clearly less cautious, due to the demographics of her electorate.

**Social Media Posts**

With the rise of the internet, another important aspect of modern political campaigning is social media. Either Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or a combination of the three are used in most high profile races. Social media allows a variety of new opportunities for campaigns, including the ability to communicate directly with the public, and to control messaging without interference or distortion by journalists and media outlets (Peng 2021). Essentially, “social media platforms allow politicians to circumvent news gatekeepers to raise their profiles and directly communicate with citizens” (Auter and Fine 2018). Social media also provides candidates with the ability to create and build a public image of themselves that they think will align with voter preferences. This practice of curated self-presentation has become a key part of campaign social media, as data continuously demonstrates that voters care as much or more about the personality, traits, and characteristics of candidates as they do the candidate’s policy proposals or political parties (McGregor, Lawrence, and Cardona 2017).

Existing political science research includes an approach that breaks down personalization of politicians into two categories; individualization, which refers to the focus on specific candidates rather than parties and institutions, and privatization, referring to the tendency to depict candidates as private individuals rather than representatives of the public (Peng 2021). Both individualization and privatization are found widely across campaign social media posts, as it “helps politicians emotionally connect with viewers and foster favorable impressions” (Peng 2021). In fact, an analysis of Twitter posts by US House of Representatives candidates found that around 29% of posts fell into the “personal” category (Evans, Cordova, and Sipole 2014).
Authors of a recent article on social media use by gubernatorial candidates argue that “participating in social media virtually requires constructing a representation of oneself”, in contrast to simply utilizing media as a professional tool to take stances on political issues or mobilize voters (McGregor, Lawrence, and Cardona 2017).

There is also substantial research on political advertising via social media, with an emphasis on the ability of social media websites to decrease the cost of advertising and allow candidates to target specific segments of the electorate based on the demographic data provided (Fowler et al. 2021). In this project, I will not be looking at paid advertising created for social media by the candidates, but rather individual non-promoted posts, which I have selected based on their reference to the sexual orientation of each candidate.

Both Kotek and McLeod-Skinner utilize Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with a majority of posts cross-posted across platforms. In general, Kotek references her status as an out lesbian much more frequently than McLeod-Skinner, who includes only a handful of posts that mention LGBTQ issues or reference her relationship with her wife. Both candidates' posts are subject to blatantly homophobic and hateful comments, regardless of whether the post actually mentioned their sexuality, and each candidate noticeably increased the percentage of posts that include photographs or mentions of their respective wives after the election cycle had ended. Each candidate posted images of themselves attending a Pride parade in Oregon during the month of June, but I have chosen not to analyze these posts as they were rather formulaic, and Pride posts are virtually required content for any out political candidate. However, I have included images of the Pride posts in Appendix C. For each candidate, I selected one post in which they explicitly addressed their sexuality, and one post that included a mention of their same-sex spouse.
**Kotek Social Media Posts**

The posts I selected from the Kotek campaign’s social media show a continuation of the pattern we began to see in the website analysis. Kotek references and celebrates her membership in the LGBTQ community, and acknowledges the fact that her run for office is historic due to her sexual orientation, but she continues to take steps to get ahead of any assumptions that she is primarily focused on LGBTQ rights and issues. In the first post, Kotek challenges the stereotype that queer people have a tendency to be dishonest or disingenuous, and in the second she challenges the assumption that queer people are non-religious or immoral. She appeals to a Democratic Party platform issue for this election cycle that aligns her own identity, the protection of queer and trans youth. Kotek again uses the strategy of normalization when referencing her spouse. When mentions of Aimee are included in social media posts, they occur in a sandwich between an affirmation of her religious faith and reference to her loyalty to the Democratic Party. Overall, she uses these social media posts to frame herself as a loyal Democrat, a good Christian, and an honest politician who cares about children, while distancing herself from many of the common stereotypes associated with LGBTQ candidates.

**Post 1: Openly and Authentically**

The first post from the Tina Kotek campaign I have selected is a post from the @tina4oregon instagram page, posted on July 21, 2022 (See Appendix C for image of the post). The post features a quote from Kotek reading, “I’m not running to be the first. But let me say this; I’m really proud to be running, openly and authentically, at a moment where the extreme right is once again going after the LGBTQ+ community, especially our kids.” (Tina Kotek for Governor 2022a). The text follows the formatting of other posted quotes from Kotek, with the same font and style, except that in the place of a light blue border (the color associated with the
Kotek campaign) there is instead a rainbow border. The words “openly and authentically” are set in larger, italicized font, and colored the Kotek campaign shade of blue. The context of the post is likely referring to Florida’s “don’t say gay” bill, which was frequently referenced in news and culture during this time period after going into effect on July 1, 2022 (Strauss 2022).

Kotek is careful in framing her priorities and her sexuality in this post. She opens by emphasizing that she is *not* running simply to be the first openly lesbian governor, working to de-emphasize her identity, even in the context of a post about LGBTQ rights. The highlighted words, “openly and authentically” again accentuate that Kotek is not an identity candidate, she is simply representing herself in an honest and genuine way. The honesty and authenticity of queer candidates is frequently questioned, since not coming out can be interpreted by voters as hiding something or pointing to an ability to keep up long term lies. The post continues by blaming the opposing party (“the right”) which Kotek is running against, and closes with a focus on protecting children, a cause that nearly every voter can support, although different ideologies lead to different opinions about what protection is needed. In this Instagram post, even though the subject is the LGBTQ community, Kotek distances herself from the potential criticism that she is simply self-interested, or running to protect her own rights or further the “gay agenda.” Kotek instead emphasizes her honesty, demonizes the opposing political party, and calls for protection of queer and trans youth, all of which would be appealing to any Democratic or left-leaning voter, even those with some implicit bias against members of the LGBTQ community.

*Post 2: Oregon Cake*

The second post from the Kotek campaign was posted to Instagram and Facebook on November 5, 2022, three days before the election. The image posted is a clearly homemade cake
in the shape of the state of Oregon, covered in white frosting with a blue border, placed on a blue bordered paper plate (See Appendix C for image of the post). The caption of the post reads “The end of a campaign is a team effort! Our church in North Portland has been doing a meal train for Aimee and me to make sure we get dinner. Delicious food and love coming our way, including this cake!” (Tina Kotek for Governor 2022b). The caption closes with a blue heart emoji. I selected this post for analysis because it is one of the rare mentions of Kotek’s wife, Aimee. Whenever Aimee is mentioned on social media, the context and framing appears to be very carefully crafted. The caption of the post emphasizes teamwork and love, encouraging any readers of the post to feel a sense of kindness, acceptance and open-mindedness. Aimee is mentioned in the same sentence as the church that Kotek attends, immediately limiting the ability of followers to make assumptions about the lack of religious beliefs and morality that is often associated with being a member of the LGBTQ community. There has long been a sense of conflict between Christianity and queer folks, so the Kotek campaign takes the opportunity to get ahead of any accusations or assumptions of immorality or atheism, and emphasizes a facet of the candidate which is widely relatable and agreeable to most voters: her faith and Christianity. The blue color of the heart emoji, the icing, and the paper plate the cake is placed on all work to remind followers that Kotek is the Democratic Party nominee for Oregon governor. No matter the personal beliefs or stereotypes that voters hold, most prioritize voting for their party over their personal dislike of a candidate’s personality, habits, or lifestyle.

In both posts selected, Kotek acknowledges her membership in the LGBTQ community, but simultaneously distances herself from her lesbian identity, highlighting parts of her personality that would be more agreeable to voters who may be distrustful of openly queer politicians, or who hold assumptions that queer candidates are only running to further their own
interests and the interests of the LGBTQ community. Kotek highlights her faith, her honesty, and her commitment to protecting all Oregonians and their children, rather than her identity or struggles as an out lesbian in the public eye. In fact, no post on any social media platform by the Kotek campaign discusses any challenges or obstacles faced by the candidate due to her sexual orientation; rather, it is always framed as either normalized fact or a character trait that makes her more resilient and willing to fight for justice and equality.

**McLeod-Skinner Social Media Posts**

Again, we find that McLeod-Skinner’s social media posts reflect the more conservative tilt of her district in comparison to the whole state of Oregon. It was challenging to find posts that referenced McLeod-Skinner’s membership in the LGBTQ community. In the posts selected, the queerness of McLeod-Skinner and her marriage appear muted. McLeod-Skinner relies heavily on normalization, including an image of herself with her wife, but no caption indicating who Cass is. In the posts selected, McLeod-Skinner, like Kotek, highlights the historic nature of her run due to her sexuality, and also references protecting queer and trans youth in order to align with Democratic voters. McLeod-Skinner’s reference to her wife comes in a post that challenges assumptions of unpatriotic beliefs held by queer folks, as well as stereotypes of LGBTQ people being ‘outsiders’ in their communities.

**Post 1: HRC Endorsement**

The first post I selected from the McLeod-Skinner campaign is a tweet posted to the @JamieforOregon Twitter page on July 6, 2022, announcing that McLeod-Skinner was endorsed by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an LGBTQ rights organization (See [Appendix C](#) for image of the post). It includes an image from the HRC that reads “HRC is proud to endorse Jamie McLeod-Skinner for U.S. House (OR-05) 2022.” The text is set on a blue background
featuring stars reminiscent of the US flag, a stylized rainbow which includes a black and a brown stripe (commonly associated with supporting BIPOC LGBTQ folks), and the HRC logo. The caption of the tweet reads “This endorsement is personal for me. My family and I have benefited from @HRC’s commitment to equality. If elected, I would be the first LGBTQ+ member of Congress from Oregon. I proudly join @HRC in fighting against discriminatory laws & protecting our LGBTQ+ youth. #OR05” (Jamie McLeod-Skinner for Oregon 2022b).

This tweet was one of only a few mentions of the LGBTQ community on McLeod-Skinner’s social media. Again, it comes in the context of laws being passed across the nation which targeted queer and trans youth, including the Florida “don’t say gay” bill. Endorsements are an important informational heuristic in all elections, especially for voters with low political sophistication or in low-information elections. “When groups endorse candidates, they send a cue to voters where the candidate stands either generally or on a particular issue dimension” (McDermott 2006). Voters who align with the mission or interests of a particular group or organization, such as the HRC, will see the endorsed candidate as aligning more closely with their own interests. The endorsement in this case does double duty, acting as both a standard campaign communication aimed at low-information voters, and highlighting McLeod-Skinner’s status as an identity candidate. In this instance, McLeod-Skinner may already be seen as aligning with the LGBTQ rights movement simply from her disclosure of her own sexual orientation, but the endorsement from the HRC shows that McLeod-Skinner is committed to supporting the cause, and will provide substantive representation as well as descriptive representation. In this tweet, McLeod-Skinner thanks the HRC for both their endorsement and their support of her own rights as a lesbian, and acknowledges how their work has supported herself and her family. She acknowledges her status as an identity candidate by stating that she will be the first LGBTQ+
member of Congress from Oregon, if elected, and closes the tweet by appealing to voters’ interest in protecting queer and trans youth. An interview with the candidate revealed that McLeod-Skinner wrote and crafted the majority of her own social media content, so we can assume that this tweet came directly from McLeod-Skinner herself (McLeod-Skinner 2023). In the tweet, McLeod-Skinner is less cautious and reticent about emphasizing her membership in the LGBTQ community than she is in the majority of the campaign’s social media posts. She instead chooses to highlight her ‘firstness’ and her commitment to protecting the rights of her community. Unlike Kotek, she does not explicitly state that she is not running to be the ‘first’, but does tie her firstness into a promise to fight for rights and protections for the LGBTQ community. Similarly to Kotek, McLeod-Skinner closes the tweet caption with a mention of queer youth, a group whose protection was a focus of the Democratic Party during this election cycle (Riley 2022; Flores 2022).

Post 2: Independence Day

The second social media post I have selected for analysis is a Twitter post from the @JamieforOregon Twitter account which was cross-posted to the campaign’s Instagram and Facebook pages on July 5, 2022 (See Appendix C for image of the post). The post features an image of McLeod-Skinner with her wife, Cass. Both women are smiling widely in the selfie, with a night sky in the background. The caption of the post reads, “Began yesterday at a great pancake breakfast in Lake Oswego (kudos to all the Lions Clubs for your great work) and ended it back home in Central Oregon, watching the fireworks in Redmond where the locals go (if you know, you know).” (Jamie McLeod-Skinner for Oregon 2022a). This caption varies slightly across social media platforms, but the central points are the same.
The post includes a rare photo of McLeod-Skinner’s wife, and it seems that the message was carefully crafted to avoid any hateful comments or stereotype-based assumptions from viewers. The post emphasizes the communities that make up the district of voters (Lake Oswego, Redmond), and describes how the candidate celebrated Independence Day on the 4th of July. The caption of the photo does not name Cass, or acknowledge that the two women in the photo are spouses. The post describes the candidate first attending a classic Independence Day celebration in one part of her district (the pancake breakfast) and then returning to her hometown in the district to watch a local fireworks display, another classic 4th of July tradition. McLeod-Skinner emphasizes her roots in the community by telling viewers that she watched the fireworks from the spot “where the locals go,” and drives that point home further with the parenthetical, “if you know, you know” (Jamie McLeod-Skinner for Oregon 2022a). One assumption frequently held about members of the LGBTQ community is that they are unpatriotic, and some queer activists and journalists have publicly questioned if the LGBTQ community owes the country any patriotism, considering that the rights of queer folks are far from guaranteed in the nation (Martinez, Gray, and LaBarbera 2012). In this Independence Day post, McLeod-Skinner uses her actions rather than her words to invoke patriotism, and takes the opportunity to include her wife (thus acknowledging her own status as an out lesbian) in a post that interposes Cass between patriotic activities and community involvement, insulating the couple from assumptions or accusations of unpatriotic views or outsider status. Cass is placed in the role of supportive politician’s wife, attending celebrations with constituents to celebrate the birth of the nation.

In this section, I considered two posts from each candidate, the first of which acknowledged their ‘firstness’ as lesbians if elected, and the second of which included a mention of their same-sex spouses. In the first post, each candidate emphasized their identity, but tied it to
the protection of queer youth, and implied that they were running not to be the first, but to provide equal rights and protections for all voters of their district. In the second post, each candidate mentioned their wife in a post that focused on a personal value which is frequently questioned in openly LGBTQ people, their religious faith and their patriotism respectively. While these posts have a clear identity politics element to them, they are also carefully crafted to align with standard campaign communication practices such as highlighting endorsements and connecting the candidate’s lived experiences and character strengths with their policy position. This social media analysis shows a continuation of the pattern found in the web page analysis: the candidates are each choosing to frame their sexuality as taking a lower priority than their policy goals and political ideology, but they are willing to acknowledge their orientation in order to get ahead of perceptions of dishonesty, or to challenge other commonly held stereotypes about the beliefs and lifestyles of queer folks.

**Television Advertising**

Television advertising in political campaigns represents the most visible part of any modern political campaign. It has occupied a primary spot in US electoral politics since the 1950’s, when Presidential candidate Dwight Eisenhower created the first televised political campaign ad (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha 2006). Today, spending on television advertising constitutes about 45% of a congressional candidate’s campaign budget (Sides, Vavreck, and Warshaw 2022). Television advertising is particularly important in down-ballot races where voters have less information. Data shows that the primary benefit of television advertising is to provide voters with information about the candidate, which can help shift their attitude if they perceive the new information to be positive and aligned with their own ideology or values (Sides, Vavreck, and Warshaw 2022). Exposure to television ads and other forms of campaign advertising increases
the information that voters have about campaign issues and candidate positions, and ultimately, the larger the quantity of successful television advertising a candidate does, the larger their share of the vote (Sides, Vavreck, and Warshaw 2022; Kaid and Holtz-Bacha 2006).

Political Science scholars break television advertising into two categories, “issue ads” and “image ads”. Issue ads focus on policy issues or general community concerns, such as social welfare programs, the economy, taxes, or foreign policy. Image content, on the other hand, is dedicated to building a political brand, and highlighting the qualities of a candidate such as experience, personality, or positive characteristics (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha 2006). Data shows that image ads lead to a higher recall of information by potential supporters, that is, a viewer is more likely to remember a candidate whose ad includes a personal story and focuses on their character, over a candidate whose ad focuses on a policy issue (Kaid and Sanders 1978). Further, including emotional content in television advertising, whether positive or negative, tends to elicit an emotional response in the viewer in their evaluation of the candidate (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha 2006). Negative emotions and negative advertising appear to produce the highest level of voter recall, and lead to the greatest reduction in “don’t know” responses by viewers in reference to the question of supporting or not supporting the candidate (ibid.).

**Kotek Television Ads**

In order to analyze how the Kotek campaign depicted Kotek’s sexual orientation in television advertising, I have selected two advertisements published to the campaign Youtube page that are relevant. The first video, “Tough,” is the earliest video advertisement posted online, and shows a surprising embrace and focus on Kotek’s lesbianism and her same-sex marriage. The second video, “Won’t go back,” was posted nearly ten months later, as a response to the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*. It reflects a marked difference between earlier and later
campaign communications, as mentions of Kotek’s sexuality greatly diminished as the race progressed. In the first video, Kotek proudly references her sexual orientation and her ‘firstness’ as a public lesbian throughout her political career. In the later video, the messaging around queerness is much more subtle, and the emphasis returns to the focus found in later communications, which centers all and everyone. While “everyone” is certainly intended to include the LGBTQ community, it is equally intent on avoiding any feeling of exclusion by the non-LGBTQ community, who make up the overwhelming majority of the electorate.

Video 1: “Tough”

This video advertisement, which was also aired on television, was one of the earliest ads created by the campaign. It is the oldest video published to the campaign Youtube page, uploaded on January 12, 2022, about four months after Kotek officially announced her run (See Appendix D for transcript of “Tough”). A shortened and slightly altered version of the same ad, entitled “Called,” was published three months later on April 12, 2022, which implies that the messaging of this ad was important and central to the Kotek campaign strategy (See Appendix D for transcript of “Called”). The video opens with an image of Kotek standing in a natural setting as she says “My name is Tina Kotek. But I’ve been called a few things over the years” (Tina for Oregon 2022a). The video then flips through a diverse cast, including a young mother, a construction worker, a teacher, a small business owner, and a lesbian couple with their daughter, who each list things that Kotek has been called: food bank and children’s advocate, State Representative, budget wiz, policy geek. After these descriptions, the video moves back to the opening shot of Kotek, where she is joined by her wife Aimee. They stand arm in arm in the forest as Aimee says, “I call her wife” (ibid.) The two share a tender look, and the video continues flipping through the cast. The next descriptor is “Ally,” and the following descriptor is
“Madam Speaker.” A young woman with short hair and a collared shirt adds, “First lesbian in the country to get that one” (ibid.). After a few more descriptions (determined, unstoppable, la jefa, tough) the video returns to the shot of Kotek in the forest, saying “And then there were some other words for tough…that women get called…” and clears her throat. Kotek states “Those were the days that I really knew we were getting things done. And that’s what’s always mattered to me, making a real difference to help people” (ibid.). The video goes on to list some of Kotek’s achievements throughout her career (carefully citing sources and quoting news articles to back up any claims made), reference some of the problems the state is currently facing, and closes with Kotek describing how much she loves every part of Oregon. The final sentence is a voiceover by Kotek saying “Join us and we’ll do the tough stuff together.”(ibid). This advertisement is an excellent example of image based advertising, as the focus of the video is highlighting the personality traits and characteristics of Kotek that the campaign believes will appeal to voters, including, in this case, Kotek’s sexuality.

The advertisement is remarkable in that it purposefully emphasizes Kotek’s sexual orientation multiple times throughout the video. The first mention of Kotek’s lesbianism is voiced by her wife, Aimee. In the video, Kotek does not personally come out to voters, but allows her wife to take the lead. The tender moment shared between them on screen shows viewers that Kotek is proud of her relationship and her identity, but again does double duty as a normalization tool. It is easy to imagine a heterosexual candidate using their spouse or child in an advertisement to emphasize the fact that the candidate is a husband, wife, mother or father. The normalcy of the moment, despite its overt and unapologetic queerness, helps to assuage any fears that a viewer might have about Kotek and her lifestyle being ‘abnormal’ or ‘strange,’ adjectives frequently attributed to homosexual relationships when described by people with bias.
against the LGBTQ community. The couple shows obvious love and care toward each other on camera, emphasizing that their relationship is stable, supportive, and arguably heteronormative, despite being a same-sex relationship (See Appendix D for image of this frame).

After Aimee discloses Kotek’s homosexuality to viewers, an African-American man describes Kotek as an “ally,” a term frequently associated with active support of the LGBTQ community, but also used in the context of other minority groups. Immediately following that, a young woman who visually fits the lesbian stereotype, sporting short hair and a collared shirt, reminds viewers that Kotek was the first lesbian in the country to be Speaker of a House of Representatives. The featuring of a same-sex female couple with a child as one of the constituent character vignettes in the advertisement further drives home the point that Kotek is unwilling and uninterested in playing down her queerness during her campaign (See Appendix D for image of this frame). The inclusion of Kotek’s statement about “other words” that she has been called and the pointed throat clearing are obviously meant to point toward misogynistic slurs, but leave room for a reference to homophobic slurs as well, especially considering the emphasis on Kotek’s sexuality in the immediately preceding portion of the video.

Unlike the posts and biography analyzed in the prior sections of this paper, Kotek is loud and proud about her connection to the LGBTQ community. At multiple points across the video, Kotek emphasizes her queerness as a central characteristic of herself and her personality. However, the relationship between Kotek and her wife falls into the category of same-sex relationships that the majority of heterosexuals find most comfortable, as it mirrors a heterosexual relationship. Kotek and Aimee visually fit the stereotypical and heteronormative image of a married lesbian couple, with Kotek acting as the ‘husband’ and Aimee acting as the ‘wife.’ Kotek is cast as the ‘male’ of the relationship with her short hair, her masculine clothing,
and her taller stature, as well as her political achievements and body language toward Aimee. Aimée is cast as the ‘female’ of the relationship with long hair, makeup, jewelry, and other femme features. Her body language mirrors the female in a heterosexual couple posing for a photo as she stands slightly in front of Kotek and leans toward her. Aimée plays the role of the classic politician’s wife throughout the campaign’s content, appearing as demure, domestic, feminine, and focused primarily on supporting her spouse’s political ambitions.

Despite the heteronormativity of the public relationship, which may or may not be reflective of the interactions between the two women in their private relationship, it is notable that Kotek goes out of her way to emphasize her lesbianism and her pride in this early advertisement. In later advertising and media content created by the campaign, Kotek becomes noticeably more distant from her identity as a lesbian, and stops featuring her marriage so centrally. In the abridged version of the same advertisement, “Called,” which was published four months later, the clip with Aimée is conspicuously absent from the video, although the segment about Kotek being the first openly lesbian Speaker of the House remains. This video represents an important window into how the strategy around disclosing and featuring Kotek’s sexual orientation progressed throughout the months leading up to election day.

*Video 2: “Won’t Go Back”*

The second video selected, “Won’t go back,” was written and created in response to the Supreme Court overturning the landmark abortion access case *Roe v. Wade* at the end of June 2022 (See Appendix D for full transcript of the video). The video, posted on September 30, 2022, to the campaign Youtube page, features a diverse cast of young women, appearing to be between the ages of late teens to mid thirties. The women included have different skin colors, body types, and styles of dress, and are each featured sitting on a wooden stool in front of a plain
white background. The video opens with each woman using an adjective to describe their emotions: “shocked, frustrated, dehumanized, heartbroken, freaked out, devastated” (Tina for Oregon 2022b). The video describes the state of abortion access in the United States following the overturning of Roe, and then turns to attacking Kotek’s Republican opponent, Christine Drazen, for her support of anti-abortion bills. Each allegation against Drazen is again backed up by quotes with citations written across the screen. The video goes on to remind viewers that Kotek acted as a leader in passing the strong abortion protections that Oregonians currently enjoy, and closes by encouraging voters to show up at the polls to vote for Kotek on November 8th. Kotek’s voice is not used at any point in the video, but still images of her are featured, surrounded by signs or shirts with pro-choice slogans such as “Abortion is healthcare” and “I stand with Planned Parenthood,” as the women featured in the video continue their voiceover (See Appendix D for images of Kotek in this video). One portion of the video includes the voices of multiple women, spliced together to create a sentence, saying “Tina Kotek knows that everyone… everyone… everyone should have the freedom and power to control their own body” (ibid.).

This advertisement is a clear appeal to emotion, as abortion access quickly became a central point of all Democratic campaigns following the Supreme Court decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health. Kotek continues emphasizing her alignment with the goals of the Democratic Party platform, and any reference to the LGBTQ community that the campaign had previously been making was quickly overshadowed by pro-choice messaging. Although obviously women of all sexual orientations require reproductive healthcare, access to abortion is typically framed as an issue that only affects cisgendered heterosexual women, despite the efforts of LGBTQ groups to redirect that type of messaging (GLAAD 2022). Throughout the campaign,
Kotek does not seem to emphasize the fact that LGBTQ people will also be affected by the Supreme Court decision across the United States. Instead, she returns her focus to the messaging of all, every, and everyone that is present in her website biography page during this time. The closest that Kotek comes to referencing the LGBTQ community during this late stage of her campaign in her media messaging is by the implied inclusion of that community in the use of indefinite pronouns (all, everyone), and the featuring of young women with alternative hair and clothing styles which could be argued to be queer-coded.

**McLeod-Skinner Television Ads**

The two videos that I have selected from the Jamie McLeod-Skinner campaign were both published to the campaign Youtube page shortly before the November 8 election day, on October 31 and November 3. In comparison to the advertisements posted by the Kotek campaign, McLeod-Skinner noticeably censors any mention or reference to her sexual orientation. Both advertisements selected are distinctly focused on appealing to rural, conservative leaning voters who may be distrustful of the Democratic party, and traditionally are less supportive of same-sex marriages and LGBTQ rights. McLeod-Skinner appears intent on distancing herself from the Democratic Party establishment. One of the strategies used to do this is avoiding any mention of her sexuality, which could lead to allegations of “wokeness,” an issue that moderate or conservative leaning voters seemed to find particularly distasteful in this election.

**Video 1: “Stick”**

The first advertisement, “Stick,” posted to the McLeod-Skinner campaign Youtube page on October 31, 2022, is primarily focused on portraying McLeod-Skinner as a candidate who is aligned with the goals and values of rural voters in Oregon’s agriculturally focused District 5 (See **Appendix D** for full transcript of “Stick”). The thirty second advertisement opens with a
shot of McLeod-Skinner’s chicken flock pecking through a muddy yard. The camera follows a pair of legs clothed in worn blue jeans and mud-covered work boots as they splash through the yard. As the boot makes contact with a puddle, throwing up droplets of muddy water, a voiceover by McLeod-Skinner’s says, “My opponent’s extremist backers have been slingling a lot of mud at me” while a popup text on the screen points toward the boots, labeling them “Jamie McLeod-Skinner’s $#*+ kickers” (Jamie McLeod-Skinner 2022a) (See Appendix D for image of this frame). This statement is followed by a shot of the now clean work boots stepping up onto a backyard hay feeder, as McLeod-Skinner announces, “But their lies aren’t stickin’” (ibid.). The video goes on to highlight the fact that McLeod-Skinner’s Republic opponent, Lori Chavez-DeRemer, is a multimillionaire who cut taxes for the rich, and a 2020 election denier who has supported the claims of January 6th insurrectionists. Each of these claims are stated in voiceover by McLeod-Skinner and written in large text, imposed across the muddy yard. While the advertisement is primarily focused on depicting Chavez-DeRemer in a negative light, it includes mentions of McLeod-Skinner’s policy priorities, including wildfire mitigation, access to abortion, and lowering living costs for urban and rural constituents. The video closes with a shot of the candidate defiantly lifting her booted feet onto the table in front of her as she states “I’m Jamie McLeod-Skinner, and I approve this message to fight for you” (ibid.).

In an interview with the candidate, McLeod-Skinner repeatedly emphasized the need to appeal to the rural demographic that make up the majority of the newly redrawn OR District 5, especially after her Republican opponent attempted to frame her as a ‘liberal from San Francisco’ and ‘one of them’. Many spectators viewed these phrases as a thinly veiled appeal to homophobic ideologies (Walcer 2022). McLeod-Skinner herself also described these ads as an attempt to stir up voters’ homophobia (McLeod-Skinner 2023). The noticeable absence of any
reference to McLeod-Skinner’s queerness seems to be tied to her appeal to rural voters, who traditionally lean more conservative. A recent Pew Research Center poll found that over half of rural voters across the United States agree with the statement that it is a “somewhat bad or very bad thing for society that same-sex marriage is now legal” (Mitchell 2018). Although McLeod-Skinner dresses in an arguably lesbian way, utilizing the traditional dress of male candidates rather than female candidates (a concept that I will explore more fully in the following section), this apparel choice also allows her to be viewed as a tough, hardworking rural Oregonian, especially in a video that lacks the context of her sexuality. This was clearly an angle that the McLeod-Skinner campaign was intent on playing up, as evidenced by her statements about her Democratic Primary rival Kurt Schrader’s “very soft hands” which McLeod-Skinner indicated were reflective of a person who does not “work for a living” in a candidate joint interview (Mesh 2022).

Video 2: “Always”

The second video I have chosen for analysis, “Always,” was posted to the campaign Youtube page just five days before the general election, on November 3, 2022 (See Appendix D for full transcript of “Always”). While “Stick” was primarily a negative advertisement focusing on McLeod-Skinner’s Republican opponent, “Always” falls clearly into the image advertising category. The thirty second video features many of the same clips from “Stick” of McLeod-Skinner chatting inaudibly with voters, but the voiceover by McLeod-Skinner describes her strong character assets and positive personality traits, as well as appealing to the viewer’s emotion. The video opens with the statement “Always leave a place better than you found it. That was my working mom’s advice to me” (Jamie McLeod-Skinner 2022b). The remainder of the video emphasizes McLeod-Skinner’s public service, both as a volunteer in “war-torn
countries” and “back home in Oregon” (ibid.). The visuals of the advertisement focus on McLeod-Skinner in more formal masculine apparel, chatting with constituents, assessing reconstruction efforts after a wildfire, and leaning against a wooden fence post with an Oregon sunset and farmhouse in the background. The video closes with McLeod-Skinner facing the camera, her arm on the weathered fence, declaring “I’ll leave Congress better than I found it” (ibid.).

Once again, there is no mention or reference to McLeod-Skinner’s sexual orientation in this video, which was published very near the end of the campaign. While none of the video advertisements from the McLeod-Skinner campaign explicitly express the candidate’s connection to the LGBTQ community, it appears that like Kotek, McLeod-Skinner diminishes even subtextual references to her lesbianism or same-sex marriage as election day grows closer. In the video clips that are featured during McLeod-Skinner’s voiceover, we see her wearing pastel button downs, chatting with families in their backyards, and a consistent featuring of both blue and purple, the colors associated with the Democratic party, and with more moderate candidates respectively, since purple is a mixing of the colors of the Democratic and Republican parties. The color purple is highlighted by the background of tall lavender plants in one clip of McLeod-Skinner talking with constituents, while the color blue is highlighted by the solid blue camping chairs and apparel in a second clip. Although purple, or specifically lavender, is a color commonly associated with lesbianism (i.e. “The Lavender Scare”), McLeod-Skinner indicated that the color choice was in reference to cross-partisan unity rather than homosexuality. In this election day lead up video, McLeod-Skinner seems highly aware of the conservative tilt of her district, as well as the growing lead by her Republican opponent (Cochrane 2022), and does her best to seem moderate, and representative of the moderate rural voters that make up the majority
of the electorate. McLeod-Skinner emphasizes that she is running on behalf of all members of her district, and aligns herself with moderate or even conservative voters by emphasizing that she is ready to “take on anyone, even [her] own party” in order to fight for the issues that are important to her potential future constituents (Jamie McLeod-Skinner 2022b).

Overall, McLeod-Skinner’s video advertisements appear to purposefully play down her sexuality and connection to the LGBTQ community, as a strategy to appeal to the more conservative and moderate voters that make up her district. While Kotek is running in the state of Oregon, which is a reliably blue state, and can thus afford to play up the historic nature of her run as it relates to her sexual orientation, McLeod-Skinner in her more closely divided district knows that any emphasis on her lesbianism will almost certainly lose her important swing votes. Both women emphasize their commitment to all Oregon voters, not just the liberal and leftist voters who traditionally hold power in much of the state and in the urban areas. This commitment to ‘every’ Oregonian requires both candidates to play down their sexual orientation as election day draws closer, in order to avoid being seen by moderate and swing voters as too far left, simply due to their immutable identity.

**Appearance and Dress**

Since Margaret Thatcher’s rise to power, along with her infamous ‘power suits,’ political science researchers have become more and more interested in the way that political candidates choose to dress and alter their physical appearance, and what effect that has on voter perceptions of the candidate and corresponding electoral outcomes (Rosenberg et al. 1991). Much of this research has focused on female candidates, as our patriarchal society places greater emphasis on women’s appearances, and as a result the general public tends to be more attentive and critical toward the apparel choices of female candidates.
Recent research finds that although gender stereotypes remain a constant in the US electoral system, “recent developments suggest that female politicians may not suffer disproportionately from appearance-focused coverage.” (Hayes, Lawless, and Baitinger 2014). Nevertheless, there remains a set of traditional candidate outfits that are utilized by most campaigns, based on situation and gender. Seminars focused on candidate styling for women break down apparel suggestions into categories: jeans and a nice top for canvassing, slacks and feminine blazer for fundraising, a business style dress and heels for a cocktail party, and the same dress with a blazer for a town hall meeting (Rosana 2017). Other recent analysis of female candidate apparel shows that voters find candidates more suited for office and even more trustworthy when they are dressed in formal feminine attire over casual attire, and that this preference is stronger in conservative leaning voters (Kurtovic 2022).

Male candidates, on the other hand, have had their campaign attire substantially less scrutinized by political science researchers, but they typically adhere to a dress code that has become expected by the public. The traditional options include formal (navy suit, white collared shirt, red or blue tie), semi-formal (khakis and a collared shirt, rolled up sleeves), or outdoorsy (jeans, fleece vest) (Friedman 2022; Rosen 2014). Male politicians in Oregon also include a look made famous by former Governor John Kitzhaber, which includes jeans and cowboy boots, sometimes accompanied by a cowboy hat, bolo tie, or flashy belt (Tankersley 2021). This look can be especially advantageous when political candidates from urban areas want to appear more in touch with their rural electorate.

While the dress codes for female and male candidates are fairly static, there is no singular dress code for LGBTQ candidates, especially masc or butch lesbians who are used to wearing more masculine clothing in their everyday life. These women are typically referred to in queer
culture as “masc-presenting lesbians,” and both of our candidates fall into this category. Both Kotek and McLeod-Skinner exhibit a new candidate dress code that can potentially be utilized by other masc-presenting lesbian or bisexual candidates, which combines the male and female apparel customs. Obviously, the two candidates had important differences in how they chose to dress on the campaign trail, which seemed closely related to the demographic they were trying to target, but they shared some similarities. The aesthetic choices made by the Kotek campaign are especially important to look at for future female LGBTQ candidates, as Kotek successfully won the election and went on to become one of the two first out lesbians to be elected Governor in the United States. For each candidate, I have selected three images which I categorize as formal, semi formal, and casual in their attire.

*Kotek Appearance*

![Kotek's formal attire](image1)
![Kotek's semi formal attire](image2)
![Kotek's casual attire](image3)

Kotek’s attire closely mirrors the traditional male candidates’ dress code. In formal settings she often wore dress pants and a blazer with a crisp button down, although she was not pictured wearing the tie that is traditional of male candidates. In semi formal settings she mirrored the khaki and sport coat or khaki and rolled up sleeves look that is traditional of male candidates, and in casual settings she wore a down jacket that is a staple in most Oregonian’s
closets, paired with straight cut jeans. Kotek also wore casual T-shirts and was occasionally pictured in a yellow raincoat.

Her masculine attire and haircut lent an air of competence that is often automatically attributed to men who are running for office, and she seemed careful to appear at public events wearing similar clothing as was pictured in her official campaign materials. Kotek’s campaign also noticeably changed her physical appearance by dying her hair completely white or gray, as opposed to the salt and pepper hair that she seems to naturally have, and made sure that her hair was always freshly cut. She wore neutral looking glasses throughout the campaign, an accessory commonly associated with intelligence (See Appendix E for additional images of Kotek’s campaign apparel).

*McLeod-Skinner Appearance*

In congruence with the pattern noticed in the previous sections, McLeod-Skinner appears to be more focused on appealing to rural, conservative voters than Kotek is. In an interview, she indicated that her casual attire, which is featured in her campaign advertisements, was loosely based off of former Governor John Kitzhaber’s “cowboy” look. McLeod-Skinner never appeared as formally dressed as Kotek, as she was attempting to appeal to a group that may be more distrustful of people with a formal business look, or who may be wary of a woman dressing in a
fully masculine outfit. Throughout the campaign, McLeod-Skinner’s appearance seemed geared
toward indicating that she was unafraid of hard work, and would never compromise her rural
roots just to fit in with the DC elite. Her attire closely matched the messaging put out by the
campaign regarding the rural/urban divide in the state and in District 5 in particular (See
Appendix E for additional images of McLeod-Skinner’s campaign apparel).

Both women seemed to take the traditional male campaign wardrobe as their baseline,
rather than the traditional female campaign wardrobe, and then adjusted the masculine garments
to their own preferences. As both candidates could be considered masc-presenting lesbians, it
would be unlikely to see them wearing a dress in their personal lives, and neither wore
traditionally feminine clothing such as dresses, skirts, or heels on the campaign trail.

McLeod-Skinner voiced that she was attempting to give potential supporters a look that
they were familiar with, but in a slightly different “form,” as it was on a female candidate rather
than a male candidate (McLeod-Skinner 2023). Kotek appears to be following a similar strategy.
Because one candidate won their election and the other lost, it is impossible to say whether the
general strategy behind their appearance, of appropriating the male candidate wardrobe, was an
advantage or a handicap, but the fact that Kotek made history as one of the two first lesbian
governors ever elected in the United States shows that her apparel choices alone were either
successful or did not lead to any significant electoral disadvantage.

It should be noted that this type of analysis risks reproducing misogynistic structures.
Especially as recent literature shows that society is finally beginning to shift away from
evaluating female candidates based on appearance and apparel, it is important to be particularly
careful to not reduce the campaigns of two very competent and qualified candidates into a discussion of “what were they wearing”.

**Conclusions**

Throughout this analysis, we have been able to see patterns and similarities within each campaign in terms of how each candidate addresses and represents their sexual orientation. Kotek can consistently be observed being more open about her sexuality and her connection to the LGBTQ community, most likely due to the less conservative lean of the state of Oregon overall. On multiple occasions, Kotek used her coming out story and the historic nature of both her candidacy and her previous government experience as a way to signify positive personality traits such as strength, resilience, and a history of activism. However, as the campaign progressed, Kotek became less outspoken about her sexuality and used images of her wife and quotes about her lesbianism less frequently. Near the end of the campaign, nearly all Democratic electoral races became focused on the issue of abortion access, after the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* at the end of June. This issue seemed to overshadow and quell references to Kotek’s lesbianism, as abortion is commonly considered an issue that primarily affects cis-gendered heterosexual women. This led to a shift toward language such as “all” “every” and “everyone” when addressing voters, which certainly includes the LGBTQ community, but deliberately avoids excluding non-LGBTQ people. Throughout the campaign, Kotek seems to use her knowledge of heteronormativity to make herself and her relationship seem more familiar and comfortable to voters who might hold implicit biases. She does this by presenting a heteronormative but homosexual marriage to the public, and dressing in apparel that is traditional for campaigns, although she flips the gender expectations of campaign garb.
McLeod-Skinner is consistently less transparent about her sexuality, most likely as a result of the more conservative swing voters in her district to whom she needed to appeal in order to win the House seat. She mentions her sexual orientation only rarely in campaign media, and usually with the purpose of inoculating herself against any allegations of dishonesty or furtiveness. McLeod-Skinner’s relationship with her wife could also be argued to fall into a stereotypical or heteronormative presentation, with McLeod-Skinner as a masc-presenting lesbian and her wife as a femme woman. The candidate relies heavily on normalization when referencing her connection to the LGBTQ community or her same-sex marriage. McLeod-Skinner appears more focused on overcoming the urban/rural divide rather than the gay/straight or ally/homophobe divisions.

Both women seem to become less open as the campaign season progresses, perhaps in response to polling, or perhaps due to other variables. They are each careful to be up front about their sexual orientation, particularly in their initial campaign media, as is typical of most openly gay politicians. LGBTQ candidates are under particular pressure to maintain a standard of honesty and transparency, as they are frequently stereotyped as being less honest due to time spent in the closet, and the belief that failing to disclose one's sexual orientation is equivalent to lying. Both candidates seem to avoid featuring their wives too frequently during the campaign. Based on the quantity of blatantly homophobic comments visible on the campaigns’ social media, it would be reasonable to assume that this was in part to protect both the candidate and their spouse from unnecessary exposure to hateful speech and bigotry. Mentions or images of the candidates’ wives are often placed in a context that challenges negative stereotypes about queer people, and when references to Aimee and Cass are made, the women are usually put in the role of the traditional politician’s wife. Throughout the campaign, media content had to play two
simultaneous roles, first as traditional campaign materials such as endorsements or advertisements, and second as highlighting and normalizing the candidate’s queer identity.

I am hopeful that as time progresses, this initial look into campaign media content of lesbian politicians, where I find that they must play down their sexual orientation in order to appeal to more voters and not be seen as single-issue candidates, will become less relevant as LGBTQ politicians become more common. This is a process we have begun to see among other identity candidates such as women and people of color, who today are able to run on issues or character rather than identity. There are some clear limitations to my analysis, namely that it is qualitative and limited in the number of candidates I use as case studies. Future research could utilize a quantitative approach across a larger group of LGBTQ political candidates, as the number of out politicians running is increasing greatly every year. While this paper is a preliminary analysis of just two queer campaigns, the upcoming decades will hopefully allow for studies that look at the progression of queer campaign media over time.

While it has been nearly four decades since Harvey Milk made history by becoming a prominent gay politician elected to office, we are only now starting to see the widespread acceptance of openly queer politicians beginning to take hold in society. Kotek made history in 2022 by becoming the first lesbian ever elected as a governor of a US State, and her historic win is the beginning of what will hopefully be a long legacy of queer people running and winning high electoral offices. In an interview conducted for this thesis, McLeod-Skinner described the process of electing LGBTQ politicians as a “relay race” (McLeod-Skinner 2023). Any out politician must come face to face with the reality that what they are doing is dangerous, but with every new member of the LGBTQ community who decides to put their own life on the line and
expose themselves to hate and prejudice, they reduce the risk for the next queer person who decides to run. As McLeod-Skinner told me:

“Internally, it's terrifying. But at the same time you know you need to do it, because people did it for me before. It's just my turn to do it for others….We literally stand on the shoulders of those that come before us. There's those who sacrificed and took tremendous risks so that we could be where we're at today. I'm so grateful. I remember them” (McLeod-Skinner 2023).
Appendices

Appendix A

These tables, included in Donald Haider-Markel’s book *Out and Running* show attitudes concerning gay and lesbian political candidates based on poll results. Table 2.4 was compiled by Haider-Markel from a 2003 Scripps Survey Research Center Poll, and can be found on page 42. Table 2.10 was compiled by Haider-Markel from a 2006 Zogby America Poll for the LGBTQ Victory Fund, and can be found on page 51.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.4</th>
<th>Attitudes Concerning Gay and Lesbian Political Candidates (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think about how honest the typical candidate for Congress is. By comparison, how honest would a ________ candidate be compared to the typical candidate for Congress?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay Male</td>
<td>Lesbian Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much more honest</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat more honest</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat less honest</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much less honest</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.10</th>
<th>Attitudes on Gay and Lesbian Candidates, March 2006, Zogby Poll (percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If an openly gay or lesbian candidate were to run for state legislature in your district and they were the candidate that most shared your views on political issues would you ________?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely vote for the gay or lesbian candidate</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably vote for the gay or lesbian candidate</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably vote for someone else</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely vote for someone else</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2. Let’s say there’s a candidate who ran successfully for state legislature in the last election and you supported them because he or she shares your views on most political issues. What if you later found out this candidate is gay or lesbian? Would you ________? |
| Definitely still vote for this person | 31.2 |
| Probably still vote for this person | 23.2 |
| Probably vote for someone else | 10.7 |
| Definitely vote for someone else | 11.2 |
| Or are you not sure? | 3.7 |

| 3. Let me read you the opinions of two people. One person says that a gay candidate does not share our views and would focus too much on gay issues. Another says sexual orientation is not important to the job as long as the candidate has a strong record of getting things done for everyone in the community. Do you ________? |
| Strongly agree that gay candidate does not share our views | 13.2 |
| Somewhat agree that gay candidate does not share our views | 8.8 |
| Somewhat agree that sexual orientation is not important | 49.4 |
| Strongly agree that sexual orientation is not important | 49.4 |
| Neither/nor sure | 6.8 |

| 4. Let me read you the opinions of two people. One person says that a gay candidate does not share our views and would focus too much on gay issues. Another says sexual orientation is not important to the job as long as the candidate has a strong record of getting things done for everyone in the community. Do you ________? |
| Strongly agree that gay candidate does not share our views | 16.1 |
| Somewhat agree that gay candidate does not share our views | 8.3 |
| Somewhat agree that sexual orientation is not important | 25.9 |
| Strongly agree that sexual orientation is not important | 46.3 |
| Neither/nor sure | 8.2 |

| 5. I am going to read you the description of two candidates for office. Please tell me which candidate you would be more likely to vote for — A or B? |
| Candidate A | Candidate B |
| Sexualorientation | Notsexualorientation | 19.6 |
| Not sure | 9.3 |

Source: Compiled by the author from a national poll of likely voters conducted by Zogby America, March 14-16, 2006, for the Victory Fund.
Appendix B

The first two images are screen captures of McLeod-Skinner’s campaign website, under the “Meet Jamie” tab. The images reflect the website as of October 27, 2022.
The next four images are screen captures of Kotek’s campaign website, under the “Meet Tina” tab. The images reflect the website as of October 30, 2022.

ONE OF US

Jamie McLeod-Skinner is a small business owner and Regional Emergency Coordinator. Raised by a single mom when she was young, Jamie watched her mom work three jobs at times to put food on their table. Jamie paid her own way through college and law school — so she knows how tough it is to make ends meet. That’s why she focused her career on rebuilding communities and protecting our natural resources. A former union member, Jamie is an outspoken advocate for Oregon’s working people, family farmers, urban and rural communities.

Jamie began her public service managing the repairs of schools and hospitals in Bosnia and Kosovo before returning to the U.S. to manage refugee resettlement programs, work in city and regional planning, and serve on a city council. She has led organizational change, mediated community disputes, helped develop affordable housing, and managed teams through crises. In 2021, Jamie led wildfire recovery efforts as the City of Talent’s Interim City Manager, bringing in millions of dollars in aid and emergency housing.

Jamie holds a bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering, a Master’s in Regional Planning, and a law degree with a focus on Natural Resources Law. She serves as an elected board member of the Jefferson County Education Service District and was appointed by Governor Brown to serve on the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.

As a rural Oregonian, Jamie understands the importance of water, natural resources and agriculture. In Congress, she will fight for rural communities.

Jamie lives on a gravel road in rural Central Oregon. Jamie is a stepmom and lives with her wife in Central Oregon where they raise dogs, goats, and chickens. In her spare time, she enjoys hanging out with family and hiking with her dogs.

Jamie, her step-dad Hank, and wife Cass
We all deserve opportunity. That’s why I fight for every Oregonian.

Through my professional experience as an advocate for those in need, and serving in the State House where I’ve proudly led as Speaker, I have carried the value of service instilled in me by my parents to get real results for Oregonians.

My grandparents came from Eastern Europe in the early part of the last century to find opportunity and a better life. My parents were proud first-generation Americans. They were able to provide me and my siblings with a stable and supportive upbringing because my dad had the benefit of a college degree he had earned by going to night school courtesy of the GI Bill, making him the first person in his family to go to college. My parents believed in hard work, being informed citizens, and encouraging their children to follow their dreams.

I moved to Oregon from the East Coast in 1987, and found a place where I could truly be myself. I fell in love with the beauty of the state and the openness of the people. I eventually finished my undergraduate degree at the University of Oregon, graduating without student debt because of a Pell grant, work study assistance, and affordable tuition.

I also came out as a lesbian in my early twenties and it was liberating. While it wasn’t always easy, each experience coming out to others strengthened my resilience. For me, coming out became a personal responsibility to undermine hatred and bigotry. But it was bigger than me as an individual, so while getting my graduate degree, I fought for and won domestic partnership rights for faculty and students at the University of Washington.
When I returned to Oregon after graduation, I took a job at the Oregon Food Bank. I was attracted to their mission to end hunger, not just feed people. And because I was raised as a person of faith with a belief in the inherent value of everyone, I knew I had found my calling as an advocate for others. I listened and learned and fought for ways to reduce food insecurity — like a strong minimum wage, housing assistance, and access to health insurance. I continued my advocacy for children when I joined Children First for Oregon as their policy director.

My experience working at nonprofits on behalf of Oregon’s most vulnerable led me to run for public office and serve in the Oregon Legislature. In my first term, I rewrote the state’s poverty program for low-income families while also playing a key role in making historic progress for the LGBTQ+ community by passing statewide protections and access to benefits.

In 2013, I was honored to be elected by my peers to be the Speaker of the House. In nearly a decade leading the Oregon House, I am proud of the progress we have made together. From expanding economic security for more families, combating climate change, and working hard to get us through an unprecedented pandemic, my time in the legislature has been dedicated to fighting for Oregonians.

Together, we have changed Oregon for the better. But it will take real leadership to confront the challenges we now face — from the pandemic to the homelessness crisis to climate change.

I will be a leader who puts people first, who prioritizes justice and equity, who brings people together and inspires all of us to reach for a better future.

Our communities need proven leadership that they can depend on. We need a Governor who is ready to get to work on day one, a Governor who knows that actions speak louder than words.

That’s why I’m running for Governor.

There’s more to be done to build a future of opportunity and justice for every Oregonian. By working together we can reckon with the legacies of injustice and inequality to build a great future for our state.

I will be a leader who puts people first, who prioritizes justice and equity, who brings people together, and inspires all of us to reach for a better future.

I hope you’ll join me.

Tina and her wife Aimee have been together for 17 years. They live in North Portland with their two dogs.
Appendix C

The following images are of the social media posts mentioned in the “Social Media” section of this paper, as well as Pride Month posts made by each campaign.
Jamie McLeod-Skinner for Oregon
@JamieforOregon

This endorsement is personal for me. My family and I have benefited from HRC’s commitment to equality. If elected, I would be the first openly LGBTQ+ member of Congress from Oregon. I proudly join @HRC in fighting against discriminatory laws & protecting our LGBTQ+ youth. #OR05

Human Rights Campaign
7:02 PM - Jul 6, 2022
62 Retweets 7 Quotes 157 Likes 1 Bookmark

Jamie McLeod-Skinner for Oregon
@JamieforOregon

Began yesterday at a great pancake breakfast in Lake Oswego (kudos to all the Lions Clubs for your great work) and ended it back home in Central Oregon, watching the fireworks in Redmond where the locals go (if you know, you know).

(Cass McLeod-Skinner))
10:08 AM - Jul 5, 2022
14 Retweets 1 Quote 51 Likes
March with Jamie at Portland Pride!

This year, Jamie will be featured in the Portland Pride Parade! We’re looking for volunteers to walk with her throughout the parade route as she drives her Jeep. Join us on June 19.

Some details still TBD. We will have Pride-themed swag.

The parade steps off at NW Couch St and NW 8th Ave, traveling east down NW Couch St. Once the

60 likes
JUNE 16, 2022
Log in to like or comment.

Over the weekend, I had the honor of participating in Albany Pride -- speaking to the assembly and marching in the parade. The community support was amazing: Mayor Alex Johnson II was there, State Sen. Sara Gelser was there (of course), the City and community-based organizations -- including the Linn Benton NAACP Branch -- had booths, and Albany Police Department were stationed at every intersection to protect the

76 likes
JUNE 28, 2022
Log in to like or comment.
Happy Pride! We had a great time marching with @ronwyden and all the great folks with @basicrightsoregon. Let’s fight for an Oregon where everyone feels loved and welcomed.

Edited - 46w

Jesus, we all saw what the last braindead governor did, what makes you think she will be any different you 🙄’s. Lookin real goofy if you think she’s a good fit at all.

45w 2 likes  Reply

Picture 3/3 is my fave all time pride pic!! 😍😍😍😍

45w Reply

444 likes
JUNE 19, 2022
Log in to like or comment.
Appendix D

This appendix includes transcripts, links, and images from the video advertisements referenced in the “Television Advertising” section.

Link to “Tough”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4XzR3fK7C0
Link to “Won’t Go Back”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yF1SKKKKJ8U
Link to “Called”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-fh6ogm64s
Link to “Stick”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85ECpYhaKw
Link to “Always”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-8IcT__Wvc

Transcript “Tough”

My name is Tina Kotek. But I’ve been called a few things over the years. Food bank and children’s advocate. State representative. Budget wiz. She’s a little bit of a policy geek. I call her wife. Ally. Madam speaker. First lesbian in the country to get that one. Tina is determined. Unstoppable. La Jefa. Tina Kotek? She’s real tough. And then there were some other words for tough…That women get called…[clears throat] and those were the days that I really knew we were getting things done. And that’s what’s always mattered to me, making a real difference to help people. So even when some said it was impossible… We made record investments in education and affordable housing. Passed paid sick leave. Expanded background checks for gun purchases. Raised the minimum wage. She got Oregon on the path to 100% clean energy. And protected reproductive healthcare here, no matter what happens at the Supreme Court. We’ve made a start on a better future for all Oregonians. But it is not nearly enough, especially as the pandemic and historic wildfires have changed our lives. From homelessness to climate change, it’s one thing to talk about our problems, it’s another thing to make the tough calls to actually get things done. And that's why I’m running for Governor. Whether your hometown is big or small, if you love the coast, the mountains or the high desert. We all deserve good schools, an affordable place to live, and clean air and water for our children, and their children too. I’m so proud to call Oregon home. I love our state. Because here we don’t just talk about a better future, we do the hard work to make it happen. Join us and we’ll do the tough stuff together.

Transcript of “Called”

My name is Tina Kotek, but I’ve been called a few things over the years. Food bank and children's advocate. State representative. Budget wiz. Ally. Madam Speaker. First lesbian in the country to get that one. Tina is determined. Tina Kotek? She’s real tough. And then there were some other words for tough… That women get called…[clears throat] and those were the days that I really knew we were getting things done. We made record investments in education and affordable housing. Passed paid sick leave. Expanded background checks. Raised the minimum wage. And protected reproductive healthcare here, no matter what happens at the Supreme Court. But it is not nearly enough. Especially as the pandemic and historic wildfires have changed our lives. It's one thing to talk about our problems, it's another thing to make the tough calls that actually get things done. And that's why I'm running for governor. We all deserve good schools,
an affordable place to live, and clean air and water for our children and their children too. Join us and we’ll do the tough stuff together.

**Transcript “Won’t Go Back”**

Shocked. Frustrated. Dehumanized. Heartbroken. Freaked out. Devastated. When I found out the supreme court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, I felt gutted. All over the country, Ohio, Texas, Oklahoma, Idaho, new abortion bans and restrictions. I know that without a strong pro choice governor like Tina Kotek, Oregon could be next. Tina is running against Christine Drazen. She sponsored a bill that could jail doctors who provide abortion. And Drazen is endorsed by extremist groups that want to ban abortion. Tina knows that everyone…everyone…everyone…should have the freedom and power to control their own body. Tina passed the strongest abortion access law in the country. And Tina is the only candidate endorsed by Planned Parenthood PAC of Oregon. That's why on November eight, I’m voting for Tina Kotek. I'm voting for Tina Kotek. Tina Kotek. I’m voting for Tina Kotek. Paid for by friends of Tina Kotek.

**Transcript “Stick”**

My opponents' extremist backers have been slingin' a lot of mud at me. But their lies aren’t stickin’. Because folks know who I’m fighting for. While my opponent is a multimillionaire who cut taxes for the rich, I’ll take on the special interests to lower costs for working people from rural to urban areas. I’ll work for folks worried about wildfire, and families who deserve a safe community. And unlike my extremist opponent, I know Trump lost and that women have a fundamental right to abortion. I’m Jamie McLeod-Skinner and I approve this message to fight for you.

**Transcript “Always”**

Always leave a place better than you found it. That was my working mom’s advice to me. So I went to war torn countries to rebuild schools. Back home in Oregon I brought people together, increasing funding for local police to keep us safe and leading wildfire recovery efforts. Now I want to make Congress work for folks like us and I'll take on anyone, even my own party, to fight inflation and price gouging. We’ll lower costs on healthcare and prescription drugs. I’m Jamie McLeod-Skinner and I approve this message. Because I’ll leave Congress better than I found it.
Image of Tina Kotek and Aimee Kotek from “Tough”

Image of LGBTQ family featured in “Tough”
Image of Tina Kotek from “Won’t Go Back”

Image of Jamie McLeod-Skinner’s boots from “Stick”
Appendix E

The following images are of typical apparel that each candidate wore throughout the campaign, including casual, semi formal, and formal looks. All images were taken from campaign social media accounts.
Works Cited


Jamie McLeod-Skinner for Oregon, @JamieforOregon. 2022a. “Began Yesterday at a Great
Pancake Breakfast in Lake Oswego (Kudos to All the Lions Clubs for Your Great Work) and Ended It Back Home in Central Oregon, Watching the Fireworks in Redmond Where the Locals Go (If You Know, You Know).” Twitter. https://twitter.com/JamieforOregon/status/1544367712666730496.

———. 2022b. “This Endorsement Is Personal for Me. My Family and I Have Benefited from @HRC ’s Commitment to Equality. If Elected, I Would Be the First Openly LGBTQ+ Member of Congress from Oregon. I Proudly Join @HRC in Fighting against Discriminatory Laws & Protecting Our LGBTQ+ Youth. #OR05.” Twitter. https://twitter.com/JamieforOregon/status/154486444063372674?ext=HHwWhMCtoKBu_AqAAAA.


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