

Dalton Valette

“The Dangerous Faggot” or A Gay Man with Different Opinions

A Political Science Thesis

By Dalton Valette

Abstract

This thesis will be arguing that one of the factors pulling the political ideology of American conservatism to the right is an influence from white gay men which can be seen in the far-right's history of homoeroticism and conservative's emphasis on "Othering." This ideological shift has been seen thanks to the rise of individuals such as Milo Yiannopoulos, who has advocated his far-right ideologies on a nation-wide tour known as "The Dangerous Faggot Tour." His appeal in America is evident because his brand of conservatism appears to be new, however Europe has seen various incarnations of this ideology in its recent past, this is just the first successful importation of those beliefs to America. This thesis analyzes the American Midwest where a case study was conducted describing a stop on "The Dangerous Faggot Tour." It is on this tour one can see how religious right conservatism can bleed into far-right conservatism. By looking at the history of conservatism and identifying four distinct branches of conservatism, one can identify how the far-right branch of conservatism emerged thanks to a long-standing homoerotic history originating in Nazi Germany in the 1930's. There is an appeal to the far-right for white gay men who promote militarized and intellectual superiority over "Others" whom they deem as inferior, be it because of race, gender, ideology, or socio-economic status. This appeal then can help accelerate the ideological pull of conservatism to the right.

Acknowledgements

This research and the findings and observations made through this case study could not have been made possible without the contribution, insight, and help from these individuals and institutions. For this, the author is thankful beyond words.

The Baldwin Honors Program, Michael Collina, Dean Palo Cucchi, Peter Dahl, Stephen Dunaway, Aaron Eberhart, the Honors Faculty Advisory Committee, David Gardner, Chase Grindberg, Kara Gravley-Stack, James Hala, Louis Hamilton, Bjorg Larson, Jinee Lokanneta, Minnesota State University, Leah Nadel, Ben Norman, North Dakota State University, Jamal Omar, Carson Parish, Kim Rhodes, Marc Roberts, Lee Sartain, Milo Yiannopoulos, and Carlos Yordan.

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Introduction

This thesis started thanks to a bad date and a statistic. Let us look at the statistic first. In November 2016, Donald Trump won the presidency. To many Trump's victory was a surprise. The populist driven, New York billionaire who had never held public office or served in the armed forces was most well-known for his real estate ventures and his hosting of NBC's *The Apprentice*. He was prone to gaffs, controversy, and intimidation tactics along the campaign trail that normally would have derailed other candidates. Some were quick to even assert Trump was a fascist (Bergen 2015). And yet, Trump managed to secure 304 electoral votes and ascend to the presidency. While this win may have been surprising for perhaps even a majority of the American people, what surprised me most was a *New York Times* article published two days after the election detailing that 14% of those that voted for Trump identified as members of the LGBTQ community (Huang 2016).

Now for the date. This was the second date with a man whom I had gone on a good date with the week before. We had not talked politics or political ideology much on the first date, but on the second date we did. This proved to be eye opening to me. This openly gay man was an early supporter of Trump, having voted for him in the New Jersey primary, favored strict immigration legislation and the jailing of Hillary Clinton thanks to her involvement in the Benghazi scandal. He also opposed equal pay for women and health services for women while also opposing gay marriage, calling it a scam only for "birthers" (a gay slang term for heterosexuals). In addition, he embraced various conspiracy theories such as 9/11 being an inside job and that the shootings at both Sandy Hook and the Pulse nightclub were staged with actors. There was not a third date. However, I was fascinated with how and why this man had these ideological beliefs and where he got them from. He surely was not alone, so was there a

commonality in these men and women's beliefs and could I trace their origins? I was of the initial impression that gay individuals would be more liberal and accepting towards others given that they themselves have faced persecution and being ostracized predominantly by those on the conservative ideological spectrum, so the 14% figure and this bad date surprised me.

Recently there have been more openly conservative LGBTQ members such as Bret Easton Ellis, Mary Cheney, Caitlyn Jenner, and Milo Yiannopoulos, and massive Republican sponsored movements such as Gays for Trump at the 2016 Republican National Convention. There was some sort of appeal to the right, even when a majority of the right wing and the position of the Republican Party has favored traditional marriage between a man and a woman.

But maybe this was an anomaly. Trump certainly was at least. However, when looking at census data from 2000 and 2010, the states with the highest increase in same-sex households were reliably Republican states with Utah being the state seeing the highest increase with a 73.03% (United 2016). This should not be horribly surprising given that more Democratic leaning states may already have had a sizeable same-sex population, however, the dramatic increase is a sign that areas that have been conservative staples are becoming states perhaps with a more tolerant environment for individuals. Unlike race or gender which is discernable to the naked eye, sexual orientation is hidden diversity, and with individuals now feeling safe and content saying who they are shows signs of progress for acceptance and tolerance in states many view as being the exact opposite based on political leanings.

While Utah may have seen a massive spike in same-sex households over the decade, North Dakota was a state that saw a dramatic *decrease*, holding the distinction as being the state with the second largest drop in same-sex households with a 20.5% decrease (United 2016). What was it about North Dakota that saw such a dramatic change? And, why then did the neighboring

state of Minnesota see an *increase* of 11.6% over the same time-period (United 2016)? These statistics, the number of LGBTQ persons voting for Trump, the growing outspokenness of these ‘conservative homosexuals,’ and a bad date were all the determinants for this research.

But is this conservatism that is now being accepted and practiced by large portions of the LGBTQ populous a blip? Is it simply just an extreme faction that holds no bearing on establishment Republicans in America? Or is this something else entirely? And still, where did this come from and why should we care about this?

This thesis will be looking at the shifting dynamics of conservatism and its relationship to and with the LGBTQ community in order to explain why conservatism may appear appealing. The thesis is divided into three parts. Part one takes an in-depth look at British provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos and analyzes his ideology and why it matters and comparing it with other European LGBTQ conservatives. Part two looks at the results of a case-study in North Dakota and Minnesota in December 2016 which centered on a stop on Yiannopoulos’ controversial “The Dangerous Faggot Tour.” The third and final part sees how this factor, that is of Yiannopoulos and other LGBTQ provocateurs, has influenced conservatives shift to the right.

This is what I postulate: American conservatism is seeing an accelerated ideological shift to the right thanks to factors such as LGBTQ provocateurs like Yiannopoulos who have imported European conservative beliefs which critique the framework of classical conservatism and is aided not only by a history of homoeroticism within the far-right but also conservatives belief of “Othering.”

Part One: Milo and the Provocateurs

To truly understand what made Milo Yiannopoulos the “Dangerous Faggot” he is today (and why he even bestowed himself this controversial title), we have to go back to his upbringing. Born Milo Hanrahan (Yiannopoulos serves as a pseudonym) on October 14, 1984 in Kent, a small town in Southern England, Yiannopoulos faced adversity at a young age. At six, his parents divorced. Outwardly, he shows no sign of remorse for his father, who later became an absentee parent. “I was admiring and also terrified of my dad, which is exactly the relationship you should have with your father—and your boyfriend. You should look up to them but also be very worried,” he said (Moore 2016). He has since compared his father to Tony Soprano and has hinted at the possibility his father is involved in the Greek mob (Stein 2016). Currently, he refers to Donald Trump as “Daddy.”

His mother, who never accepted his homosexuality, went on to remarry. Yiannopoulos’ step-father was abusive, both verbally and physically and wished the boy out of the home. Seeking refuge, Yiannopoulos turned to God, being raised a devout Catholic. (However, when accused of anti-Semitism Yiannopoulos is quick to mention his maternal grandmother, who was Jewish, despite never having offered any evidence to back this claim (Stein 2016)). In discussing, albeit briefly, his childhood traumas, Yiannopoulos said, “Everybody has bad shit happen to them, and you either use it to turn yourself into a star or you become a victim. And I don’t have time for victims...If you allow the bad things in your life to define you, you will only ever be a parasite” (Moore 2016). Notice how just as Yiannopoulos was beginning to open up, he reverted back to calling other people, fellow victims, equals to his own pain, “parasites,” and so elevated his own status.

Yiannopoulos attended the University of Manchester before dropping out and then went to Wolfson College, Cambridge before dropping out there as well. It was at Manchester that Yiannopoulos began writing scathing theater reviews in the school paper under the pseudonym Milo Andreas Wagner. The reviews were targeted towards fellow students and called out their inability to perform. Fellow students were “terrified” to read his reviews (Moore 2016).

Later, Yiannopoulos co-founded *The Kernel*, an online tabloid about technology which he edited and wrote for before selling it in 2014. Seeing his success from *The Kernel*, Steve Bannon, executive chair at *Brietbart News* hired Yiannopoulos as a news writer and eventually he made his way up in the ranks to News Editor. Bannon said of Yiannopoulos, “What I love about Milo is he is such a hard worker...Milo has such a big heart that even people he disagrees with, he can get along with. That’s why I think that he’s going to have real longevity” (Moore 2016).

Addressing Yiannopoulos’ sexuality, Bannon said, “Sexual preference doesn’t drive everything, and I think that’s what Trump is saying. Trump offers up a vision for America where everyone can kind of work together. I also think he takes very seriously things like radical Islam, which, to me, is the number one threat to gay people in the world that we cover extensively at *Breitbart*. There’s been no broader acceptance of Milo than the readership at *Breitbart*” (Moore 2016). Note this focus on “radical Islam.” There is a targeting of an “Other” here to bolster Yiannopoulos’ own standing at *Breitbart*.

Yiannopoulos has never publicly said when he first came out but he said telling his mother led to her resenting him and his changing of his surname. Yiannopoulos is no gay rights advocate, however. When asked if being gay is inherently wrong, Yiannopoulos said,

“Something somewhere inside of me says yes” (Luckhurst 2016). As well, at an event Bucknell University, Yiannopoulos said, “I would rather choose to be straight...if I could change it, take a pill and could, maybe not now, as I'd lose a lot of mileage.” At the same event, Yiannopoulos said he would not want to raise kids in a homosexual household and would like to try conversion therapy (Bucknell 2016).

Nevertheless, Yiannopoulos is, conversely, one to fully weaponize his sexuality. He has been profiled in *Out Magazine* in a piece titled, “Send In the Clown: Internet Supervillain Milo Doesn't Care That You Hate Him” which generated controversy for not being critical of his extremist views and comparing his “antics” to those of a cartoonish villain only doing what he does for a good kick. *Pink News* claimed *Out Magazine* made bigotry look “trés trendy” (Duffy 2016). This internet villain persona is something Yiannopoulos has adopted with a badge of honor, now selling t-shirts with his likeness dressed as Kylo Ren, the antagonist in *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens*. Yiannopoulos frequently talks about his love for “black cocks” and confesses “I'm a ridiculous gay man with blonde hair who never stops talking about black penis” (Rutgers 2016). He carries around rainbow flags on his person. As well, the event that catapulted Yiannopoulos into the limelight was his hosting of a Breitbart sponsored “Gays for Trump” event at the Republican National Convention in 2016. He came out wearing a bulletproof vest with a tank top underneath and a rainbow machine gun saying “WE SHOOT BACK” to discuss gun rights. He spoke about favoring open carry laws in the aftermath of the Pulse shootings in Orlando, Florida. “You know what, love doesn't win, an AK-47 wins,” Yiannopoulos said. It was there too that Yiannopoulos first openly said, “I'm a gay man with different opinions” (Duffy 2016).

During the summer of 2016, alongside the RNC rally, Yiannopoulos made headlines attacking *Ghostbusters* star Leslie Jones. In a review of the movie, Yiannopoulos called Jones, “a hot black dude” later going onto CNBC to “clarify” his comments by saying she looks “remarkably like one of my ex-boyfriends” (Moore 2016). Fans of Yiannopoulos took to Twitter to post comparisons of Jones to a gorilla, launching violent and racist-based threats. As well, hackers seized control of Jones’ personal website and published nude photos of her.

On July 19, 2016 Twitter stripped Yiannopoulos of his Twitter account for violating their terms of service. Twitter suspended Yiannopoulos’ account @Nero, paying homage to his favorite world leader. His @Nero account at its height had over 338,000 followers and while briefly he had a new Twitter account, @OfNineHostages. He does not currently have one. Following his barring from Twitter, he has expanded his social media influence onto Facebook where his official page has over 2.3 million likes and Instagram account with over 313,000 followers. He uses these platforms now to promote *The Milo Show*, a weekday hour long show that is set to launch January 29, 2018 where membership begins at \$47.50 yearly. He also appears on *The Info Wars* to promote Icuren, a non-FDA approved liver cleanser.

Between the two media-grabbing headlines of Leslie Jones and “Gays for Trump”, Yiannopoulos shot to becoming something of an alt-right celebrity in America. He was an unabashed, uncensored gay man with far right Republican sentiments who hated the media, while working as a part of the conservative media, who called universities “havens for PC culture” yet spoke almost exclusively at them, and who championed himself as second-wave feminist whose idols include Madonna and Mariah Carey (Moore 2016), yet said feminists are liars and the idea of a patriarchy is a conspiracy theory (Minnesota 2016) and sells shirts on his personal website saying “Feminism is Cancer” and “I’m with the Patriachy” with an arrow

pointing towards the crotch. The contradictions surrounding Yiannopoulos appear to have no end or avoid criticism by his supporters. More than anything, he appears to say and do actions purely to get a rise from people. Yet one consistency can be seen with some of his most popular items he sells; those aligning himself with Donald Trump, and the alt-right.

Heidi Beirich, at the Southern Poverty Law Center said, “Milo is the person who propelled the alt-right movement into the mainstream,” (Stein 2016). The alt-right is an intensely nationalistic conservative Republican movement that morphed out of the Tea Party which itself rose to prominence in 2010. Largely confined to an online presence, the alt-right has been promoted by Trump and *Breitbart News* who see it as a break from the conservative establishment. Those a part of the alt-right criticize establishment conservatism as having abandoned their base. Yiannopoulos has said what sets the alt-right movement apart from other fringe right groups such as those aligned with fascism, white supremacy, and the Ku Kluk Klan is “intelligence” (Nuzzi 2016). Though critics of this such as Olivia Nuzzi writes, “If it salutes like a Nazi, you can safely call it one” (Nuzzi 2016). To counter arguments that he is racist and harbors white supremacist beliefs, Yiannopoulos states he only dates black men (Rutgers 2016). Yiannopoulos and his boyfriend, who is black, married in 2017. This is after Yiannopoulos has said gay marriage should not be made legal in the United States and is “a bit of a sham” (NDSU 2016). Adding more to the contradictions about Yiannopoulos’ stance on fascist issues and regimes, while openly stating he is not a fascist, he has worn various Nazi clothes and jewelry such as Iron Cross necklaces, shared images of himself reading biographies of Adolph Hitler, and shared various Holocaust related memes hailing Hitler’s “victory” over Jewish people (Benedict 2016).

He certainly is one of a kind. At first glance. However, Yiannopoulos may not be so much an anomaly but simply a part of a new cultural wave within conservatism. Before diving the impetus of gays aligning with far-right conservative thinking, we need to understand a little bit about conservatism itself, define it, and look briefly at its history.

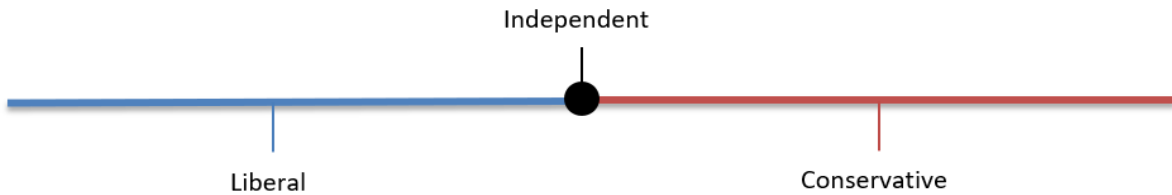


Figure 1: The Political Ideology Spectrum

Conservatism itself is one of two major political ideologies, the other being liberalism. The political ideology spectrum is shown in Figure 1. A closer look at conservatism shows how four distinct branches of conservatism have formed, all of which though promote a return to a better point in time in the past and a targeting of an “Other” for the problems of the present. The four branches are what I call classical conservatism, economic conservatism, religious right, and far-right as identified in Figure 2.

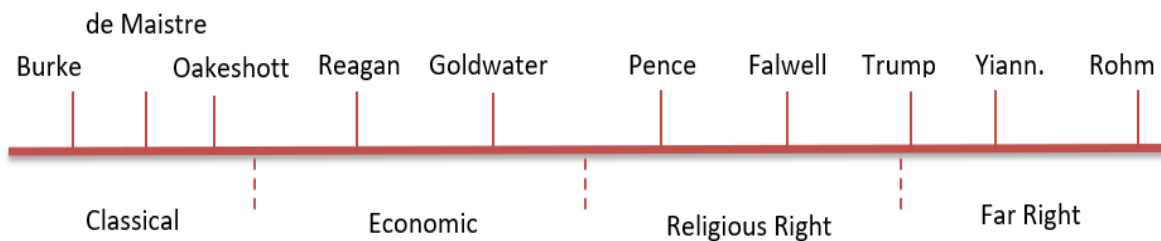


Figure 2: The Conservative Spectrum

Classical conservatism, and conservatism itself, was formed by Edmund Burke who critiqued the French Revolution (1789-1799) and disagreed with liberalist thinkers. Burke argued humans were not rational and were dictated by their emotions. The most important aspect of classical conservatism is stability and a desire to conserve past traditions and norms. Fear of upheaval and quick changes that could result in dire consequences is tantamount to classical conservative belief. There is variation within classical conservatism such as reactionaries like Joseph de Maistre but they still ascribe to the same classical conservatism principles of stability and conservation of the past. Economic conservatives link conservatism with fiscal responsibility and limited government. Politicians such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher ascribed to this belief and it became the leading conservative ideology in the later half of the 1900s.

However, during this era that characterized the federal government as the enemy and championed the private sector, the third branch of conservatism formed, the religious right. The religious right saw leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Roberston rise to prominence. Those ascribing to religious right conservatism believed in a Christian-based, overwhelmingly protestant, belief system wherein policy proposals should focus on social issues and be tied with a narrowly tailored Christian moral code. It is with this conservatism where we see a more aggressive, oppositional group emerging. Despite Jimmy Carter ascending to the presidency in 1976, the first evangelical Christian to hold that office, Carter was not apart of the religious right and following the election, after Christians feeling let down by Carter's presidency, turned towards further right conservative ideology to promote their agenda through organizations such as the Moral Majority (Kristof 2017).

The final branch of conservatism is the most extreme which is the far-right. Groups such as the Tea Party and the alt-right align here as well. The Tea Party and the alt-right, however, are

different entities. The former was a largely economic based faction of the Republican Party which peaked in 2010, which saw Republicans gain six seats in the Senate and 63 seats in the House of Representatives, the largest swing in the House since 1948. While this group was economic based in nature, championing reductions in the nation debt and the deficit, I place them in the far-right branch of conservatism because of their rhetoric which spawned racist conspiracy theories about Barack Obama's birth certificate and pervasive nationalist sentiment. At the farthest end of the far-right, fascist groups such as the National Socialist German Workers' Party better known as the Nazi Party sit. Individuals included Adolph Hitler in the 1930s and 40s, but more recently, Alex Jones, Ann Coulter, and Milo Yiannopoulos ascribe to this ideology to varying degrees. This thesis will be looking at and detailing the ideology of each of the four branches of conservatism, the focus is going to be on the far-right and on Yiannopoulos' ideology and why it, as the farthest right end of the conservative spectrum, is appealing to white gay men.

Yiannopoulos' brand of provocative, alt-right pro-gay stances may be foreign to Americans, yet when one looks back to Europe, we see a decades long history of similar tactics. For all his bravado and self-righteousness, Yiannopoulos is far from the only right-wing provocateur, nor will he be the last. He is one in a long string of ideologically extreme conservative men who have European roots who galvanize support not only thanks to their beliefs but because of their persona.

For a modern perspective on shifting perspectives of conservatism and pro-gay policies, we have to look at Pim Fortuyn. Fortuyn was an openly gay sociology professor from the Netherlands who promoted extreme anti-Islam and anti-immigration policies (Staff 2002). He first entered the political scene in 1992 with his publication of "Aan het volk van Nederland," or

“To the people of the Netherlands,” an essay in which he declared he was the successor to controversial Dutch politician Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol (Koenis 2017). In 2001, Fortuyn was elected *lijsttrekker* (leader) of the Livable Netherlands Party but was dismissed from the party shortly after for his controversial anti-immigrant views. In response, Fortuyn formed his own party, the Pim Fortuyn List (LPF) and managed to recruit most of the followers from Livable Netherlands to the LPF (Osborn 2002). Fortuyn “put the fear of God” into the Dutch establishment due to his controversial views and his sudden, populist rise and, his successes (Osborn 2002).

After his party existing for only a few months, the LPF managed to secure 36% of the district council seats in the Netherlands’ second largest district, Rotterdam. For the first time since World War II, the reigning Labor Party lost its majority party status in the district (Koenis 2017). Just as he was heading into the general election where he would run for Prime Minister, Fortuyn was assassinated. He was shot in the head and chest in a parking lot after giving a radio interview on May 6, 2002. His assassination was the first in modern Dutch history for a politician with Ab Melkert, the incoming head of the Labor Party, saying, “It’s a low-point for our democracy” (Osborn 2002).

Fortuyn championed immigration bans against Muslims and fiscal conservatism. He said Islam should be a religion not “imported” into the Netherlands and that it was lagging behind Western culture. He cited Muslim country’s treatment of gay individuals as a means to justify this ban saying, “In Holland, homosexuality is treated the same way as heterosexuality. In what Islamic country does that happen?” (Osborn 2002). The continued use of targeting Muslim’s, this “Othering” by conservatives from Yiannopoulos and now Fortuyn was telling. Similarly, Fortuyn was accused of harboring pro-Nazi sentiment (Dreher 2002). Between

Yiannopoulos and Fortuyn's respected accusations of fascist sentiment, there appeared to be a trend of far-right provocateurs and homoeroticism.

Fortuyn was also unapologetically flamboyant and braggadocious, helping with his meteoric rise in Dutch politics. "Under the watchful gaze of his black-clad, dark-skinned bodyguards, the flamboyant, white-skinned and shaven-headed homosexual who aspires to be the Netherlands' next Prime Minister outlines his views on immigration," *The Guardian* wrote when covering Fortuyn and later detailed how the scene may have looked "surreal or even fictional" (Osborn 2002). Fortuyn would openly visit "darkrooms" for casual sex with men while on the campaign trail, drove around in an enormous black Jaguar with his two small dogs and his boyfriend while blasting the soundtrack for the opera "Aida" (Kolbert 2002). And when accused of racism against Arab individuals, Fortuyn said, "I don't hate Arab men—I even sleep with them" (Kolbert 2002). This is nearly identical to Yiannopoulos' response when about being called a white supremacist.

But gay conservatism in Europe did not stop with Fortuyn's assassination. In fact, despite his deeply controversial views that led to his assassination (his assassin claimed to have killed Fortuyn out of fear for Muslim and other minorities rights in the Netherlands (Koenis 2017)), Fortuyn became a martyr for the gay right. His followers even tattooed a noted saying of his, "At your service," on themselves. His burial in the Netherlands, and then subsequent exhumation and reburial in Northern Italy, was broadcast live across Dutch news channels with his casket was covered in letters from mourners (Kolbert 2002). What followed with Fortuyn's death was a new wave of an alliance between gays and far-right Europeans; a new branch of conservatism was appearing.

In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders, a slick, blonde haired far right candidate leads the Party for Freedom (PVV). The PVV is a nationalist party focused on immigration issues. In 2006 after the party's inception, the PVV became the fifth largest party in the Dutch parliament. It has only grown over the years when in 2017, after securing 26 seats, it became the second largest party represented in the Dutch parliament (Kirk 2017). This was after polls, such as those from *The Telegraph*, said the PVV was expected to win 10 seats. Wilders and the PVV aim to ban the use of the Quran, remove the Netherlands from the European Union ala "Dutchxit," and ban the building of mosques and architecture that resembles Middle Eastern architecture (Kirk 2017).

Wilders flaunts his nickname as the "Dutch Trump" and embraces his cartoonish depictions as a supervillain of the Netherlands. In the same vein as Yiannopoulos and Fortuyn, Wilders is an individual who has reached out to the LGBTQ community for support through the use of fear mongering of Islam. If Islam is targeted as an enemy for this community, then they will back the right's rhetoric. This was the focus of a large *Deutsche Welle* piece which followed a young, gay, self-identified "liberal-minded" supporter of Wilders (Facsar 2017). Something to note, as far as comparisons between Fortuyn and Wilders is concerned: family members for both men had been described them as being raised "quite spoiled" and said they enjoyed their power and personal wealth (Marsh 2017).

Beyond the Netherlands, we can look at Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD) Party to see how the far right has become a growing attraction for gay people. Alternative Homosexuals is a group formed by outspoken gay activists to support the AfD, even though the official platform of the party dictates a desire to preserve a "classical family model" (Staudenmaier 2017). Alternative Homosexuals in fact support the AfD's stances on issues such as reducing the teaching of homosexuality and gender spectrums in classrooms to "stop the

gender madness” (Staudenmaier 2017). Alexander Tassis, the head of Alternative Homosexuals identifies with the majority of the AfD’s positions and wishes, as a proponent for AfD, to then influence and articulate changes to the party’s position such as allowing LGBTQ parents to adopt, he cited the need for “survival” against Islam immigrants as his main reason for supporting AfD. The party, similar to the Dutch PVV, promotes an isolationist agenda which exclude immigrants. The difference between AfD and the PVV, however, is the AfD focuses on diminishing LGBTQ rights and openly does not support fringe causes or support groups such as Alternative Homosexuals. This doesn’t deter the group and Tassis has stated, “(There) are dumb comments in every party” (Staudenmaier 2017). The AfD’s stance on LGBTQ issues becomes even more unusual considering their party leader is a lesbian.

Fortune Magazine introduces Alice Weidel by stating, “Ask most people to picture a German right-wing populist, and their mental image would probably not be one of a much-traveled, multilingual consultant to startups. Still less an openly gay woman with two children in a same-sex union” (Smith 2017). While not being nearly as provocative as other nationalist leaders such as Fortuyn or Wilders, Weidel has been happy to discuss her sexual orientation within the AfD, citing her leading the party as a sign of its tolerance to others.

She is a banker at Goldman Sachs, lived in China for six years and speaks Mandarin, and is in a relationship with a Swiss-Sri Lankan bisexual film producer. “I read everyday that the AfD is a homophobic party and it is not,” Weidel said (Haartz 2017). However, as she attempts to soften the AfD’s image, her rhetoric remains in line with other right-wing provocateurs. She joined the party following German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s decision to open Germany’s borders to a million refugees in 2015. She is quick to denounce Muslims and Islam and wishes to pass legislation to bar Muslim’s from serving in the German Bundestag (Haartz 2017). To show

how great of a political impact she has had in recent year, an entire legal case focused on her. This case involved freedom of speech and went all the way to Hamburg State Court in *Alice Weidel v. Extra 3 (2017)*. The court ruled, unusual for Germany given its censorship of free speech relating to Nazi sympathy, that a comedian's comments calling Weidel "a Nazi slut" is not hate speech but satirical speech (Lomas 2016). Despite attempts to "soften" the image of the far-right, Weidel still targets Muslims for her rhetoric. At the end of the 2017 election, Merkel won her reelection campaign and the AfD came up short, placing third, a devastating loss after stumbling behind center-right and center-left parties (Elwazer 2017).

Presently, there have been five heads of government who have been LGBTQ. Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir was the first openly lesbian leader in the world, becoming Iceland's Prime Minister in 2009 and serving until 2013. She was aligned with the Social Democratic Alliance party. Following her was Elio Di Rupo who served as Belgium's Prime Minister from 2011-2014 and was a Socialist. Currently, Xavier Bettel is the Prime Minister of Luxembourg having served since 2013 and he is aligned with the Democratic Party.

After Bettel, however, we see a shift. The first three elected lesbian and gay leaders were apart of center-left or left parties. The current Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland, Leo Varadkar, was elected in 2017 and is a part of the Fine Gael Party, a center-right party. He is one of the youngest heads of states at 38-years old, is Indian-Irish, and his election was focused on "Taking Ireland Forward" (Fox2 2017). Varadkar is striking given that, unlike Fortuyn, Wilders, and Weidel before him, he won. Secondly, he is biracial. And most crucially to this, beyond his own sexual orientation and connection with other LGBTQ groups in his country, his platform was not overtly centered on immigration policies.

The Fine Gael Party turned its attention to the “forgotten Irish” (Fox2 2017), targeting rural, elderly, and middle-class voters across Ireland. The party wishes to upheave the current welfare system with Varandkar saying, “welfare cheats cheat us all” (Fox2 2017). He also wishes to slash taxes for the middle class of Ireland and, in a surprising move to shift to the left, wishes to hold a referendum on abortion in 2018 to make it legal in the predominantly Catholic country (Fox2 2017). While his campaign does not focus on immigration, it does address it, and his stance is aligned with hard right leaders. With the backing of Ireland’s Indian community, he has called for a ban on unemployed immigration and aims to deport unemployed immigrants (Fox1 2017). This disproportionately targets the influx of Muslim immigrants to the country, interesting to note given the majority of Ireland’s Indian population is not Muslim, but Hindu. So, while he did not run on immigration policies, nor policies that directly targeted persons of Islam specifically, the “Othering” was still present wherein a group of individuals are targeted for the woes of the present. Varandkar is an unusual breed of LGBTQ leader, one that leans right but does not embroil himself in far-right policies or rhetoric explicitly.

He is different from the most recent LGBTQ leader, Ana Brnabic who was elected in 2017 as Serbia’s first woman and first lesbian Prime Minister. This is in a country that is predominately socially conservative thanks to the influence of the Orthodox Church (Radovanovic 2017). Brnabic is affiliated with the Serbian Progressive Party which despite its name, is only progressive in that it wants to see Serbia admitted to the European Union. Otherwise, the party is nationalistic and populist driven. Its main goal is to have Kosovo, which declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and has been struggling to claim sovereignty since, be reintegrated into the country by any means necessary, including ignoring a brokered deal from 2013 at a tentative recognition of an armistice (Vasovic 2013).

Cynically, it has been rumored Brnabic was appointed despite the socially conservative country to appease other European nations and show tolerance towards LGBTQ members with her appointment being only for tokenism. Brnabic may be facing an uphill battle as the country appears divided over same-sex issues with numerous other politicians claiming homosexuality is akin to incest and the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, stating he has no intention to attend pride events (Radoscanovic 2017).

What both Varandkar and Brnabic represent is a changing of the guard, of sorts. We see openly LGBTQ individuals no longer serving as oppositional party members but as elected leaders. Their success as leaders and promoting their agenda has yet to be seen, both were elected in 2017 after all, but this should be regarded as a major shift in European conservative ideology when it comes not only to LGBTQ rights but to conservative LGBTQ leaders. Why? Beyond simply winning in elections, we have seen a slow shift in ideology as well to secure success.

The successes of Varandkar and Brnabic show that shifting tone away from overt immigration-based rhetoric is perhaps crucial to secure victory. The oppositional candidacies of provocative pro-LGBTQ leaders of Europe in the past have largely arisen out of fears of immigration, in particular from predominantly Muslim countries. There is an antagonist relationship in Europe between LGBTQ rightwing leaders and the Muslim community. PJ Media, a conservative American news and commentary blog, puts it bluntly saying, “Alarmed by Islam, Europe's Gays Are Moving to the Right” (Bawer 2017). They directly say that Islam alone is the reason for seeing a shift in gay ideology in Europe and why LGBTQ members are becoming more infatuated with right politics.

However, I believe this is inaccurate. Islam is a driver for a branch of conservatism, not for the whole of conservatism's beliefs. There is, however, a continued use of "Othering" throughout the conservative spectrum, the far-right which has been growing in popularity as of late has targeted Muslims as their "Other" but different branches of conservatism did not target Muslims. While both Varandkar and Brnabic did not run campaigns focused on stocking Islamaphobia, they did target an "Other" to distance themselves from the far-right, "cheaters" of the welfare system in the case of Varandkar and rebels from Kosovo for Branbic.

This is the European ideology that Yiannopoulos adheres to. It is in many ways more socially liberal than American conservatism, or had been in the past, yet it focuses on a desire to go back to a better time in history while placing the errors of the present on an "Other." While his is much more openly about provocation than others, his beliefs resemble something that is not out of the mainstream for far-right proponents. It certainly is not aligned broadly with the mainstream, but it is not something that is unheard of nor, overall, too shocking. Simply his methods and access to the internet make him unique and able to obtain a greater level of influence than others before him. The European brand of conservatism being promoted by LGBTQ leaders, or even political parties who indoctrinate the LGBTQ community, is one founded on principles of security and superiority, with the farthest members of the conservative ideology such as Yiannopoulos using present fears of Islam to their advantage. So while Yiannopoulos' ideology may appear foreign and uncategorizable compared with other conservative pundits in the United States, it is not unfamiliar to Europe. He is just one in long stream of modern European conservative thinkers who are, in many ways, reacting to previous branches of conservatism which associated morality with tradition, not with morality and

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superiority (more on this in Part Three). Yiannopoulos is simply the first European to successfully import this new brand of conservatism critique to the United States.

He managed to do so, with success and controversy, thanks not only to his work at *Breitbart*, but with his “The Dangerous Faggot Tour.” And I wanted to see first-hand what this was all about.

Part Two: A Case Study in North Dakota and Minnesota

“The Dangerous Faggot Tour” was a nation-wide bus tour throughout 2016 that Yiannopoulos created which would drive across the United States, stopping at universities and colleges. Once there, Yiannopoulos would speak about a range of subjects such as his sexual orientation, conservatism, liberalism, religion, race, promote his own brand, *Breitbart*, and Donald Trump. The derogatory name of the tour was given by Yiannopoulos to “annoy liberals” (Bucknell 2016).

As the tour went across the country, controversy quickly followed. Numerous stops at universities were cancelled given protests that were to ensue at the campuses. Riots would often break out and it wasn't uncommon for the clubs that hosted Yiannopoulos, more often than not the school's College Republicans, to be slapped with security increase charges should the event take place. This would hinder the clubs financially from hosting the event. Yiannopoulos himself received countless death threats throughout the tour.

I had been planning on attending ‘Milo Takes NDSU,’ a stop along “The Dangerous Fagot Tour” at North Dakota State University in Fargo when ten days prior to the event, the NDSU College Republicans released the following statement,

NDSU College Republican members,

IMPORTANT NEWS:

On behalf of Chase Grindberg and the rest of the Executive Board:

It was decided on December 2nd at a Special Executive Board meeting called by President of NDSU College Republicans, Chase Grindberg, in a 6-0 vote that we will **no longer** be hosting Milo Yiannopoulos on December 16th at NDSU. We came to this conclusion on the grounds that we don't have adequate funding to cover the cost of safety as well as time conflicts that were overlooked. We saw it appropriate to inform you all first but know we will be posting on the Facebook page and taking adequate measures to cancel the event. We apologize to anyone that this effects negatively and will be allocating refunds to those who have purchased tickets. NDSU College Republicans wants to demonstrate safety for all students and feel that this is the most responsible decision regarding the current safety questions at qhand. If you personally have any questions or are asked questions you don't know how or feel comfortable answering please let Chase Grindberg or myself know. Again we thank you for being so involved and excited about the events we put on, this one, however, isn't possible at this time.

The NDSU College Republicans statement was diplomatic compared to Yiannopoulos's who on his Facebook page, condemned the protests and threats made by protestors. He connected his cancelled event to the protests at the North Dakota Access Pipeline saying, "Normally I have no problem being shot in the face by masked assailants but in this case we couldn't risk student safety. I might have to go visit these ridiculous troublemakers at the pipeline itself. Anyone know where I can buy a water cannon?" (Nolan1 2016).

Luckily, I found that Yiannopoulos was planning on speaking at Minnesota State University-Mankato (MNSU) the day before he was planning on speaking at NDSU. After contacting Yiannopoulos' team and the College Republicans at MNSU, I managed to attend that event and continued with my plans to interview students and faculty at NDSU. With this situation, I could compare the two states and how the events did and would have transpired. I was more confident that the MNSU event would not face a similar fate as the NDSU event given a *Breitbart* article published before hand stating, "Milo event at Minnesota State University hit with security fee increase." The piece condemned the tactics that had been done in the past at university events along "The Dangerous Faggot Tour" which were similar if not identical to the tactics utilized by NDSU. The event organizer at MNSU said in the piece, "This was I believe a tactic to have us cancel the event because they don't think we can raise that money and we will but then they just got benefit of draining us of more of our resources." He continued saying, "We want the bullying of conservatives on liberal campuses to stop" (Nash 2016). The following day after the publication of the article, Yiannopoulos stated on his Facebook page the university was moving ahead with hosting him. With this in mind, I was confident the MNSU event would not be cancelled and I could head to the Midwest to analyze the fascination this conservative region had with not only with Yiannopoulos but his own new branch of far-right conservatism as well.

Before heading to the Midwest, I happened to be reading *Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States* and in it I began noticing a trend. The crimes that were committed either onto other LGBTQ people or onto heterosexual people by members of the LGBTQ community (or at least those perceived to be members of the community) were overwhelmingly in one region—the Midwest. The first noted violent crime perpetuated by members of the LGBTQ persons took place in 1942. Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, two University of Chicago students, who had sex occasionally with one another, convinced fourteen-year old Bobby Franks to get into their car. They then beat his head in with a chisel, stuffed a rag down his throat and taped his mouth to suffocate him, stripped him, splashed his genitals, hands, and mouth with hydrochloric acid and then wedged his body into a culvert. They were arrested the following day and headlines sensationalized the killing by saying, “SLAYERS ‘KING’ AND ‘SLAVE’—Loeb ‘Master’ of Leopold Under Solemn Pact Made: Sex Inferiority Is Factor.” Leopold was released from prison in 1958 and Loeb was killed in prison in 1956 by a fellow inmate who plead a “homosexual panic” defense that Loeb attempted to make a sexual advance towards him. The prisoner was acquitted after an hour of deliberation and the court burst into applause (Moguel 20-44).

This was only the beginning. John Wayne Gacey was based in Illinois, Jeffery Dahmer and Ed Gein both committed their crimes in Wisconsin, and Aileen Wurnos was in Michigan. These were all killers who were LGBTQ or targeted LGBTQ people and were based in the Midwest. Midwest LGBTQ killers even perpetuated in entertainment with the villain James “Buffalo Bill” Gumb in *The Silence of the Lambs* residing in Ohio. *Boys Don’t Cry* which details the life and subsequent rape and murder of Brandon Tenna, a trans man, takes place in Falls City, Nebraska.

And sensationalizing crimes surrounding LGBTQ persons, more often than not when they are the presumed perpetrator, continue to this day. “The fact that they (presumably predatory LGBTQ persons) exist, moving into and through public spaces, is reason enough to fear and contain them” (Mogul 2011). This was in response to a 2007 *The O’Reilly Factor* segment called “Violent Lesbian Gangs: A Growing Problem” which looked at lesbians attacking straight men and speculated an underground network that recruited children as young as 10 into homosexuality. It became apparent that there was something incredibly wrong with this picture. What was prompting such violence by LGBTQ persons or creating false narratives about LGBTQ centered crimes?

Perhaps it was the harsh laws in-place throughout the area that prompted rebuke. There was a massive arrest of “sexual deviants” in the 1950s in Sioux City, Iowa which saw the arrests of male dance teachers, beauticians, cosmetologists in the dozens. There was the decade long “bag a fag” operation led by the Michigan State Troopers in the 1990s which arrested hundreds of gay men for “lewd conduct.” There was a 207% increase in hate crimes towards LGBTQ persons as seen in Wisconsin between 2007 and 2008 (Mogul 2011). Then there is the recent passing of the 2015 Indiana’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act which legalized discrimination of LGBTQ persons based on religious affinity. But the harsh laws against LGBTQ persons and the inability to offer protection couldn’t be the only reason behind this intensely volatile nature. The South is privy to hardline legislation and abandoning the needs of minorities, such as in the case with North Carolina’s 2016 “Bathroom Bill” which targeted transgender persons for discrimination in the most private of settings.

This was because I believe the Midwest had a more focused religious right conservative culture than the South. The religious right with socially conservative beliefs, it appeared,

prevailed in the region and it specifically target LGBTQ persons as the “Others.” This is evidenced by the higher than average number of hate crimes with Ohio, North and South Dakota, Michigan, and Minnesota having more than six hate crimes per 10,000 people (more states in one area than even the South) (Crandall 2017), the legislation passed (Filipovic 2016), and location for various religious right institutions such as Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council.

Seeing a new perspective and gaining a better understanding of the Midwest culture, I readied myself for Fargo, North Dakota. I would stay there for a few days before embarking on a five-hour drive to MNSU in Mankato, Minnesota to attend the Yiannopoulos event.

To me, Fargo appeared to be more a large town spread out over a massive area of flatland. Easily the most concentrated buildings are those within the NDSU campus but beyond the anomaly of the campus, the buildings and business are vastly apart from one another. Flying in, I gazed out the window of the small plane and looked at the vast sea of white. Across the open fields, crosses were a common sight. I discovered the buildings serve as a refuge from the harsh weather. Taking wind chill into account, the temperature upon my arrival on campus was -25 Fahrenheit. When I was there, Fargo was listed as being colder than Mars (Lange 2016).

Beyond crosses and close calls with frost bite, what else was common was a military presence on the NDSU campus. The gymnasium had recruitment centers for Army ROTC and Air Force ROTC on every one of the three floors in the building. Numerous other buildings such as the Memorial Student Center (MSC) had recruitment offices. When eating in the MSC I observed the most common gear worn by the male students was camouflage gear, more often than not adorned with ARMY STRONG across the front. There was an intense, omnipotent presence of hyper masculinity thanks to the militarization of the campus. I also noticed only one

student of color. There were some Asian workers at the Panda Express but beyond that, there was no diversity. This was ironic given the new center for Diversity Initiatives was just on the floor above in the same building. Religious infused art was placed throughout the building with many of the paintings in the MSC evoking a classical Western motif blended with crosses.

After I had finished people watching and ate my lunch, I sat down with Kara Gravley-Stack, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator and Coordinator for LGBTQ Programs who formally worked as the director of the Gender and Sexuality office at NDSU. Shortly after arriving on campus, Gravley-Stack observed some hate speech on campus directed towards those in the 10% Society. In the early 2000s, the Pride/ Alliance went by the coded language of the 10% Society so as to not draw attention as an LGBTQ affiliated group. While the club was more than welcome to host events and meetings on campus, Gravley-Stack noted, they never did as they didn't feel safe meeting on campus and they never advertised their meetings. This should be unsurprising given not only the history of the LGBTQ community in the Midwest but also in its present situation with the rise of anti-LGBTQ laws going into effect in places like Indiana and also the rise in hate crimes (Moguel 217).

Realizing the underground nature of the LGBTQ community, Gravley-Stack and others began researching safe space programs and began implementing them. Since then, the 10% Society had become the Pride Alliance and has increased its visibility, held events on campus, and the university developed a Pride network connecting out faculty members. Still, she said, improvements can be made and, seeing as how the university's health insurance doesn't provide coverage for birth control, they aren't likely to now start providing coverage for surgeries or transition services for transgender students. Establishing safe zones on campus has been a crucial part to allowing greater acceptance on campus, Gravley-Stacks said.

Offering an example on how safe spaces at NDSU can be beneficial for LGBTQ persons, Gravley-Stack said there have been instances in the past when a student came out to their family and their family then said they would no longer support them financially. The university wanted to have someone in financial services the student could go to them about what may happen in the process of refiling their financial aid in a safe space with an ally. This ally was someone who has gone through the training and is certified. The training is done entirely online.

The efforts that Gravley-Stack has done appear to run counter to what Yiannopoulos often advocates for. Yiannopoulos has made it no secret he abhors safe zones and those who champion them, mocking Rutgers University (while at Rutgers), “you're like Hitler's Austrian art college” for being the alma mater of Jessica Valenti, a blogger and outspoken feminist who helped create safe spaces while attending Rutgers. “I like fun and free speech can be fun,” he said. It should be noted too that Rutgers University is where 18-year old Tyler Clementi committed suicide in 2010 following the release of an unconsented video his roommate took of him and another man and used the video to torment and cyberbully Clementi. The safe-zone policies that were enacted at Rutgers which Yiannopoulos mocked were implemented shortly after Clementi’s death.

However, while Yiannopoulos, “spreads a message that is fairly contradictory to the things that I personally am committed to at the institution,” Gravley-Stack said, she said part of the school’s mission is to preserve free speech. “When a speaker comes on campus, the first reaction is, ‘Why are you letting this person speak on campus?’ and really the only campuses that can deny that person are private campuses which don’t work under the same free speech guidelines...We can’t dictate what they [speakers] will say.” She said if there is a legitimate organization on campus, such as the NDSU College Republicans, that’s bringing a speaker, the

university as a public institution has to allow it. There were concerns about the “tenor” of his talk but with the event being cancelled, the issue of Yiannopoulos was null and void.

“I don’t know if that’s part of the Midwest culture, but I tend to encounter people who may not be one to sign an ally pledge form or advocate for rights for LGBT people but I think there is a general sense, ‘I won’t judge.’” There is what she noted as ‘North Dakota nice’ or ‘Minnesota nice’ where someone is nice, but just to your face. She did see that the presidential campaign helped a lot of negativity bubble up. This included more students facing discrimination and harassment. Some students have been victims of physical assault, but the numbers are significantly lower than those who have been subjected to comments made about them or being excluded from particular groups. This shouldn’t be too surprising when you account for North Dakota and Minnesota’s overwhelmingly white populous with the states white population both at around 90% (Humes 2010) and the nearly 80% of the population adhering to a Christian faith (Wormald 2015). This seems to perfectly fit into the conservative mindset of the religious right conservatism which preaches greater religiosity and a targeting of LGBTQ persons.

I kept this North Dakota and Minnesota atmosphere in mind when I met up with Ben Norman, the Editor in Chief (EIC) of the twice weekly published school newspaper, *The Spectrum*. Norman is a senior at NDSU having grown up in the small town of Barnesville, Minnesota and is studying education. He’d been working at *The Spectrum* all four years of his college career.

“Basically I just keep the boat afloat,” Norman said after listing a dozen or so responsibilities as EIC. “I like to compare ourselves (at *The Spectrum*) to a very skeletal staff that’s missing a couple bones. We could use another twenty staff members. We do what we can and I think we do it pretty well.”

I met with Norman in a diner a few minutes outside campus called The Shack. While in The Shack, I noticed, similarly to the students at NDSU, a majority of the patrons in the diner were wearing camouflage clothes though significantly more were wearing NDSU apparel. My meeting with Norman was on a football game day between NDSU and James Madison Dukes so this may have explained it.

“We like football. If you want some culture, some true culture you should go tailgating. It gets insane,” Norman said. “There’s so much drinking. There’s just so many happy people. It’s just such a joy. People are insane when it comes to tailgating. And we’re so isolated from everybody else where people think ‘Wow we’re the best fans in the world.’ We love football and it helps being excellent at it.” This wasn’t from a possible inflated sense of pride in the NDSU Bison’s. NDSU was on the verge of securing a six year streak in the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) champions for Division I Football. And while Fargoans may love their football, they seemed to love drinking even more.

“You can’t have a conversation here about culture in Fargo or NDSU without talking about drinking. We embrace it probably because we don’t have much else to embrace. ‘Yeah it’s cold here. Uff da. Yeah we drink here.’... We pride ourselves maybe a bit too much in that actually,” Norman said. This was true. Fargo is the fifth “drunkest city” in the nation, looking at the percentage of the population that drinks in excess of four drinks a day, behind Appleton, Oshkosh-Neenah, Greenbay, and Madison, all those in Wisconsin (Harthorne 2015).

When looking more closely at the general culture of the area Norman described it as being quiet, conservative, and Christian based. Similarly, to what Gravley-Stack said about the environment of the Midwest, Norman said, “It’s very much, don’t disturb the peace. You don’t want to do things to upset your neighbor. Be polite and be courteous.” And while the area was

Christian based, it wasn't one that ascribed to hostility towards those who, for example, said 'Happy Holidays' as opposed to 'Merry Christmas.' With this conservatism and attachment to religiosity came underpinnings of quiet institutionalized racism and sexism which Norman believed was due in large part because of people not understanding white privilege correctly. As well, it was just how people were born and raised in the area. Parents were like that and they raised their kids then with similar mindsets. This branch of conservatism perfectly aligned with that of the religious right, though in a more muted context given the apathy towards the "war on Christmas" and LGBTQ rights. Neither entirely for them nor against them. This religious right mentality then led to a generational passing of an overall apathetic attitude towards protest. This was striking considering while I was talking with Norman, protests had been going on for months at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation surrounding the North Dakota Access Pipeline. This, according to Norman, was unusual.

"We don't protest," Norman explained. "We have our opinions but up here it's very 'don't step on people's toes.' We're so passive aggressive up here. We don't really want to stir the pot. So when people do stir the pot, people like to just tweet about it, maybe, some just quietly hold in these feelings and will maybe tell their best friend at two am. We don't like controversy, we don't like conflict at all. We'd rather just quietly stew instead."

Such an atmosphere then may be unusual for a speaker such as Yiannopoulos to be scheduled to speak at, especially too when considering that the event was cancelled citing safety concerns with violent protests. Norman explained that he was skeptical about the proclamation by NDSU College Republicans for the cancellation and the insinuations it had to do with the protests at Standing Rock. He said few, if any, students from NDSU went to Standing Rock to protest because of the Midwest mentality to avoid stirring the pot. He said he's skeptical of a lot

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of things and said that perhaps the College Republicans had “intel” he didn’t possess, but he had another theory for the cancellation. He felt the official statement was a “cop out” as he believed the event itself just may not have been a success. He said the venue and timing were questionable, it was poorly publicized, and few people even knew it was going on. “Twitter was upset about it for a day and then got over it...Which stinks for you! As you were going to be one of the 14 people there.”

So even with conservative principles, a predominate Christian presence, little diversity, and an hyper masculine based mindset, there was a perhaps begrudging acceptance or a ‘polite homophobia’ on campus. While Yiannopoulos may not be coming to campus, it would have been interesting seeing how large of a role his sexuality would have played in his talk and possible backlash. One person, though, who had been “very very against” Yiannopoulos coming to campus was none other than the President of NDSU College Republicans, Chase Grindberg.

Grindberg, a sophomore studying crop and weed science and agriculture business at NDSU was a member of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity and described himself as a moderate Republican who initially was a Jeb Bush supporter, then for Marco Rubio, and then briefly Gary Johnson until, “I did some more research and he’s kind of stupid. He’s not very smart.” The President of NDSU College Republicans is, “still not behind Trump” and is one who favors establishment candidates. Grindberg said, “I just can’t vote for somebody that lies and says stuff just to pander to audiences.” He confessed he didn’t vote in the Presidential election but voted down ballot.

While Grindberg and I were talking, this time back in the MSC, a number of students came by Grindberg and my table and greeted Grindberg warmly and he returned the kind gesture. “I don’t know how we became such a nice state or such a nice town I guess we just are,”

Grindberg said when I asked about the frequent friendly interactions. “That’s the way we are...It doesn’t help anybody when you’re mad or stressed.”

So, Yiannopoulos, and his provocateur nature was hardly a speaker Grindberg wanted to promote or even bring on campus. Grindberg detailed two reasons why he was opposed to Yiannopoulos coming to NDSU: his work and Yiannopoulos himself.

Grindberg is an intern for North Dakota’s Senator John Hoeven. Hoeven is a moderate Republican and Grindberg stated he had to be “hands off” with organizing the event due to the controversies around Yiannopoulos and he didn’t want Hoeven’s name to be associated with Yiannopoulos. But the greater of the reasons for Grindberg’s reluctance was he just didn’t like Yiannopoulos.

“I’m just going to tell you the facts, I’m not going to give you BS on it,” Grindberg said. “I listened to a podcast with Milo and Joe Rogan back in July I think, I was just listening to it, and thought ‘This guy is actually crazy.’” (In the podcast, Milo disparaged fat people, claimed global warming was a conspiracy theory, transgender people do not have fully formed frontal lobes, and said it was best to nuke Canada and that Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister, “has a face that is begging to be cum on” (PowerfulJRE 2016)). But, in the coming months, Grindberg said he became more open minded to hosting him.

“I started to warm up to the idea because it was a small money maker to have some money flow into our organization for trips and what not so that was kind of a positive about that.” Grindberg said he appreciated the chance to offer a different perspective of conservative issues. Being a gay individual on the right, “as far right as they come,” Grindberg said, would offer a new idea of what a Republican could be.

In the beginning, when an event page was created at the start of the semester there wasn't any kind of blow back that Grindberg saw. Tensions around Yiannopoulos coming to campus didn't emerge until shortly before the event was going to take place when members of the College Republicans began receiving death threats and other very violent messages that were directed towards Yiannopoulos and those planning to attend the event. When asked who were sending these messages Grindberg said, "I'm not going to generalize but it was most people on the way far left...and there were a lot from the Dakota Access Pipeline where we felt a lot of people were coming from since, they weren't associated with NDSU at all and they weren't students, they were all more grown individuals and since we thought, back in August when we made the event, we had no backlash but because of the protests and all that was going on in Bismarck which is about two and a half hours west and there were thousands of people out there protesting the pipeline and just because Milo is Republican, he's a speaker, he was pro-pipeline and what not, they began throwing threats our way."

After the threats, the university said they had to increase security at the event, which was proving difficult given that the football game, which everyone was taking very seriously as, "There's not really anything else to get excited about here," and commencement was going on that same night. NDSU College Republicans couldn't afford the price increase of security and due to threats received, voted to cancel the event.

"So it wasn't really a criticism of Milo it was people's safety attending the event," Grindberg said. After having to cancel the event, Grindberg was surprised to find people were mad that the event was cancelled, perhaps even more upset that it was cancelled then that it was initially going to happen. "There were a lot of people when we cancelled it who were very very

mad and upset with us as an organization that we cancelled it which was kind of unexpected.” Grindberg said they were expecting anywhere between two to three hundred people.

Now, it was time to talk with the orchestrator of Yiannopoulos’ event at NDSU. Jamal Omar has been an avid fan of Yiannopoulos and in particular his fight for free speech. This couldn’t be more evident than a July 2016 *Breitbart* news article featuring him and his family where, after introducing his father, Nidal Omar, to Yiannopoulos and his free speech views, Nidal Omar chalked “FREE MILO” outside their family owned mosque in Fargo in solidarity with Yiannopoulos following his Twitter barring (Nolan2 2016). *Breitbart* hailed the family as “Patriotic Muslims.” The photo used in the piece showed Omar next to the “FREE MILO” chalk out front and Omar wearing a “Make America Great Again” hat and Trump t-shirt. The news piece, not an editorial piece, stated, “As Jamal aptly demonstrates, it’s quite possible to disagree with someone’s views on your religion while still accepting their right to criticize it” (Nolan2 2016).

I could tell that Omar was unlike most the people I had talked with in North Dakota. He would go onto long tangents about topics and while in one moment we would be discussing the cancellation of the Yiannopoulos event, the next he would be talking about law schools and his work in STEM. (Omar is studying Medicine at NDSU).

Omar expressed deep admiration for Yiannopoulos and his advocacy for free speech. He said Yiannopoulos’s provocative speech is on the fringe but, “When you address free speech as on the fringe or under attack then you’re willing to attack any kind of speech, anyone, even the leftish fringe, all the way back to that fringe, that puts all freedom of speech on the line.”

When detailing his own beliefs in possible relation to Yiannopoulos, Omar explained, “Conservatism holds individuals accountable for themselves and, I’m a Muslim, the irony, it’s

like I think true conservatism doesn't hold myself accountable as a Muslim it holds myself accountable as what I will do when I go out this room and not what my group of people will do. Ronald Reagan preached individualism and that's one of the biggest things that turned me on towards conservatism." In defining himself, though, Omar said he views himself more as a "right-wing degenerate" who is also "a free thinker."

Where Omar disagreed with Yiannopoulos was the wording and phrasing of Yiannopoulos' arguments. He said they were often not "graceful or scientific" even if they were correct. "I think if he actually phrased it the way it was meant to be phrased, he wouldn't be getting as much flack." He used the example of when Yiannopoulos said birth control makes women unattractive. (This was in relation to a *Breitbart News* piece Yiannopoulos wrote in December 2015, "Birth Control Makes Women Unattractive and Crazy.")

"Is that how I would have phrased it? No. But I'm pro-birth control and everything, I want to make that clear for the record, but when they came out with the men birth control they were going to say it made men irritable, men gain weight, acne and all this stuff, the people who generally posed Milo kind of hoped on and said 'Oh see women have to deal with it but men don't,' but isn't that what he just said though?"

Asking about Yiannopoulos' sexuality and his views on the LGBTQ community at large, he said he doesn't believe a person is born gay. But he also believes a person is not born straight. Their environment is what shapes them. Omar stated, "Do I think there are people, sorry if this offends you, do I believe there are 78 different genders, like obviously not. I think people just want to bang whoever they want and let people bang whoever they want whatever they want unless they're kids or animals. But I mean for like the sake of it I think you can put straight,

bisexual, homosexual, asexual, I do believe asexuality is a thing but do I believe that, I don't even know what the other thing is."

I asked Omar about what his thoughts were on Yiannopoulos' views regarding Islam, which he has called the greatest threat to gay men's safety. Omar said he calls himself a moderate Muslim and does not follow the Islam that others follow such as ISIS or ones who condone child marriage, which is often the type of Islam Yiannopoulos seems prone to attacking. "Is Islam as an ideology evil? Obviously not. I mean I'm sitting here talking with someone who disagrees with me ideologically from what I infer from your experiences, but I don't have a problem with you, I really don't have a problem with what you believe, and I understand you have your own beliefs. But that's where we also need to address the problem with being on the fringe as an issue and sometimes to combat the fringe you need to be on the fringe."

Steering the conversation to the Yiannopoulos event, Omar said he wanted to bring him because he really likes "pushing buttons." He said in the month leading up to the event, the university began receiving very cryptic messages and eventually people with unknown numbers began contacting him and threatening him and his family. He as well observed that the attacks at Ohio State University on November 28 resulting in one death and 13 injured played a role in deciding to cancel. "These people were really out there," he said.

"Am I salty about it? Of course I'm salty about it," Omar said about the cancellation. Omar said that another student at NDSU was now hoping to bring Yiannopoulos to campus and he gave them his blessing to pursue bringing him. It is still unknown if Yiannopoulos will speak at NDSU anytime soon.

Grindberg and Omar represent two conflicting conservative ideologies. Grindberg was a part of the "establishment" conservatism as he would say, however I would associate him with

classical conservatism. Grindberg positions himself on the left end of the conservative spectrum. This was done by supporting an establishment much as Burke and other conservative thinkers in the 1800s supported the established monarchy government and even targeting the protests of the Keystone Pipeline, similar to the revolutionaries that Burke criticized during the French Revolution. Meanwhile, Omar adhered to the far-right conservative ideology. He fashioned himself as a moderate Muslim, so he could be accepted and even lauded by members within the conservative party just as Yiannopoulos has utilized his sexual orientation to his advantage. Omar distancing himself from Muslims while also promoting a superiority belief in intellect just as other far-right members do such as the case with Nazism and the superior race beliefs, Omar becomes a perfect example of a far-right member. Even when a Muslim man becomes a member of the far-right, he still targets Muslims as the “Other” and a cause for the errors of the present.

But now, it was Yiannopoulos’ time to speak and he was confirmed for speaking at MNSU, so I readied myself for a stop on “The Dangerous Faggot Tour.”

After several hours of driving, I arrived at MNSU in Mankato, Minnesota and headed to the Centennial Student Union (CSU). Parked right outside the CSU, hidden partially by a brick wall and some cars, was Yiannopoulos’ tour bus, painted in black with Milo’s name in red on the front, the Breitbart logo to the side, a massive picture of a silver haired Yiannopoulos and another cartoon of Yiannopoulos being carried on a throne by four shirtless muscled men with “The Dangerous Faggot Tour” painted across the side in stark white. Notice the hyper masculinity in having the four muscled men be shirtless and the superiority in having himself being carried by them.

The CSU was impressive, with a modern/ futuristic appearance, glass and sharp angles surrounding the exterior of the architecture with splashes of the university color, purple, here and

there making it out as a neat and stylish building. All across the dining area were canvases celebrating Ramadan, Dashain, Diwali, Epiphany, Hanukkah, Vesak, America Indian Heritage Day, Kwanza, and Christmas. However, inside the futuristic and cool student center, there was something noticeable missing—students.

“Thankfully,” David Gardner, Interim Assistant Director of the MNSU LGBT Center said, “the only positive about this event is that the campus is fairly devoid of students.”

Gardner, an openly gay man, greeted me in his office decorated with rainbow flags, posters detailing upcoming LGBTQ events on campus, and Obama/ Biden election pins. His office, located in the LGBTQ Center in the CSU, was conveniently just down the hall from the Ostrander Auditorium where the Yiannopoulos event was to be taking place in a little less than three hours. Garner, and others in and around the LGBTQ Center seemed all too aware of what was coming their way soon enough.

“I’m not a big fan of him,” Gardner said, “but the university has allowed this event to take place.” The university had received significant criticism for allowing Yiannopoulos to attend the campus and briefly attempted to prevent the event by increasing the security costs. After further backlash about this from Yiannopoulos’ team and MNSU’s College Republicans, the university scrapped the fee increase. This has been a frequent occurrence among universities that have had scheduled stops on “The Dangerous Faggot Tour.” Gardner, though, was getting ready to help host another event off campus at the Coffee Hag, serving as an event for inclusivity and diversity.

The campus itself had seen a “slow build-up” to Yiannopoulos’ visit, but it appeared that it wasn’t the students who were more concerned about it, or even talking about his appearance, but individuals in the upper levels of the school faculty and staff. Gardner noticed that there was

very little advertising for the event itself and the greatest form of marketing was through word of mouth. But that word of mouth has not cumulated into massive student led protests. It had led to a quiet, somber atmosphere on the campus, similar to the student's reaction to the presidential election earlier in the year, Gardner noted.

Even with two hours before the doors opened, people began lining up outside the auditorium. The line gradually began increasing in size and this is where I managed to have the most in-depth conversations and interviews with Yiannopoulos fans. There were roughly 150 students in attendance of the event and of those, I counted nine women. There was one black male and two Asian-Americans. Everyone else was a white male. Unusually, though, of the nine women in attendance, seven were mothers with their sons, many of them saying they thought going to see Yiannopoulos would be a "fun mother-son bonding time." None of the women were of minority races.

One of these women, Laurie, was with her son, Tom who had traveled from the "very left" St. Paul to see Milo. Laurie, a middle-aged white women said that while she didn't like Yiannopoulos' vulgar language, she liked what he preached.

"He managed to articulate things that are difficult for others to articulate," she said. "His articulations are resonating. It's difficult to capture what we all believe in this area, but he managed to do just that."

Similarly, her son said he enjoyed Yiannopoulos' "straight forward" attitude. Tom was a well-dressed, stubble clad college student (not a student at MNSU) with a shaved head. This "straight forward" attitude was counter to how both of them felt the Democrats message rang out in this 2016 election.

“The Dem’s message just wasn’t there. It didn’t resonate. It fell flat over and over again,” Laurie said. Tom as well said that Trump simply managed to logistically out-campaign Clinton in the last months of the election, which his mother agreed. Despite the failings of the message the Clinton camp presented, Laurie said she was surprised that Trump won. Tom disagreed.

“It was after seeing him in Minnesota at one of his rallies,” Tom said. “If you can get six, seven, thousand people in Minnesota to come hear you speak, you’re doing something right.”

Indeed, the Trump rallies that populated the Midwest during the campaign cycle were frequent highlights for people’s conversations. The vast majority of the people I interviewed attending the Yiannopoulos event had been to at least one Trump rally, often citing it as the highlight of their year. There was a deep appeal not only for seeing their candidate in the flesh but also being in an energetic environment that those rallies promoted. He wasn’t just another politician, he was an icon, and a man who wasn’t afraid to upset the established order. This is exactly what Yiannopoulos too presents himself as being, one who is different and wholly unique, unabashed, and best of all, dangerous.

The provocative nature of what Yiannopoulos said and did was one of the great appeals to a 22-year-old named Blair. Blair was a tall, white man with a scrappy red beard and a thick parka making him appear twice as large as he was. Blair did not have a college education, and did not seem inclined to pursue one based on monetary constraints and personal “un-interest.” He was working now at Walmart after having to sell the family cows. Blair was more than happy, even eager, to talk about his views and interests in Yiannopoulos and Trump.

“He just pisses liberals off so much and I love it,” Blair said. “And it’s so hard for them to argue with him. Kind of hard for lefties to argue with a gay guy...an alpha male type too who’s super smart. He’s broken through a demographic stereotype.”

Blair described himself as being a “middle ground” between a conservative and a libertarian, but leaned towards libertarian. “Just because of the religious stuff on the right yah know?” Now being more libertarian, he said this made him more open to LGBTQ people. He had friends and family who were gay or lesbian and didn’t have a problem with Yiannopoulos’ sexuality. This was a frequent question I asked those in attendance. Did Yiannopoulos’ sexuality impact their views on him? Not one person I talked with said his sexuality bothered him, and with many noting that his being so openly gay served to benefit him and make him more interesting.

While rattling off the various news outlets that he read, watched, or listened from the “usual suspects” such as *Breitbart* and *Fox News* but also more “alt-news” such as *The New Americana*, Blair looked around and sarcastically asked, “Where are all the protestors?”

Another young man, shorter, clean shaven, and wearing a red “Make America Great Again” hat chimed in and said, “Too cold to protest.” I was anticipating some protests, but the protests that did occur were, in comparison with others that have happened at Yiannopoulos events, pithy. There was one sign laid out front that said “Breitbart RACIST Go HOME MILO.” And later in the Yiannopoulos lecture, a protestor jumped on the stage (more on that later). Despite this lack of aggressive rebuke, those few encounters were met with swift condemnation. There was as well mocking of the “safe space open mic night” in town as well as some gentle nudging and finger pointing by a group of men at a young woman with pink hair saying, “nice libtard right there.”

Then, an MNSU senior with shoulder length platinum hair wearing a “Make America Great Again” dark blue shirt under a black blazer, glittering gold crucifixes, black skinny jeans, and bedazzled shoes walked past. The student, who wished to go by Milo Jr., seemed to be the

perfect person to talk to about being gay and being a Republican. Unfortunately, Milo Jr. didn't offer much insight into his thinking. When asked directly, "Why are you a Republican?" he responded, "Because Rachel Dolezal is a Democrat." Milo Jr. made a point of rerouting every key point back to the NAACP chapter president Rachel Dolezal whom he claimed he was related to.

I talked with a number of other Milo fans before the doors to the auditorium opened and many of them stated similar, if not identical, responses to those already recorded. Milo's sexuality had no negative impacts on their views, though they didn't align with 100% of his own views they agreed on the necessity for free speech and by censoring Yiannopoulos, one had the capacity to censor all speech. No one I spoke with in attendance at the Yiannopoulos identified as liberal or Democrat. (Though one older man who was 47 said he had been a Democrat before Ronald Reagan).

One final fan I talked with, though, stood out to me. He was a young man with no college education by the name of Josh who had a thick brown goatee, wore a brown shirt that said "Gun Owners Alliance" with the outline of a revolver on it, and had cerebral palsy. His views were similar to others I had talked with. He was a conservative Republican, received his news from friends, and didn't care about Yiannopoulos' sexuality. He did have more openly anti-Islam sentiment stating, "Islam is not a religion of peace, it's a cult of war and they need to be banned." I asked him, as a final question, what his thoughts were on Trump mocking a reporter with disabilities and he said, "I didn't hear that." When I informed him that in fact, Trump did mock a disabled reporter he said, "I don't believe that because my friends would have told me."

Then, it was time for Yiannopoulos to make his entrance. The tall, slim Englishman had his usually dyed platinum blonde hair its normal shade of dark brown with only the tips being

platinum. He wore a black faux leather jacket with gold trim and “True Religion” embroidered in gold across the right pec. He had tight fitting camo pants and underneath the leather jacket he wore a cartoonish elf sweater. On stage, Yiannopoulos was greeted with rapturous applause and passionate embraces from the President and Vice President of the MNSU College Republicans. Yiannopoulos headed for his podium and began tossing out gifts to members in the audience. The gifts varied from masquerade masks to Santa Claus hats, to a copy of Donald Trump’s *Crippled America*, mockingly Bernie Sander’s *Outsider in the White House* (to which Yiannopoulos said, “Should change the title now to just *Outsider*”) and *The Vagina Monologues* which he saw was a gift and then tossed it behind him saying, “No one wants this.” After the gift giving, Yiannopoulos gleefully shouted, “Merry Christmas! That should trigger all the liberals here.” This was similar to the thinking that Jamal Omar said when interviewing him stating, “Is there a ‘War on Christmas’? Yeah, like I once said, ‘I love saying “Merry Christmas” because it really irks some people and some people just get really overjoyed.’ I really like just pushing buttons and saying ‘Merry Christmas’ is really a button pusher.”

Yiannopoulos then dove into talking about how recently he had become somewhat of a “feminist icon” after an incident at the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee. When there he singled out a transgender student and utilized “violent words” that ended up in such intense harassment that the student dropped out of the university. Yiannopoulos called himself a “feminist icon” because now he was protecting women in their restrooms from having to confront confused men in drag. “If you can’t take a joke, how are you going to take getting your dick cut off?” Yiannopoulos asked.

Standing behind the lectern, fidgeting again with his sunglasses before switching to his reading glasses, and with the aid of his PowerPoint, it dawned on me that Yiannopoulos, for all

his chastising of universities serving as liberal havens and the perpetrators of fanatic leftist beliefs, fashioned himself as a professor. But he was the “cool professor.” The one who gave out treats and made jokes with and at his audience, but most important of all, he was the one in possession of the knowledge that others lacked. He was the only one who was right and he was doing his duty to spread the truth. And the truth was, there is a war on Christmas.

Citing Breitbart’s 45 million readers as proof (Breitbart actually has, on average, seven million readers (Malone 2016)), Yiannopoulos argued that a small minority (the left) were attempting to “destroy joy and fun and mischief” related to Christmas and that the left was a bunch of “winging morons.” Yiannopoulos argued that “Merry Christmas” was the most triggering phrase he has ever said and one is not supposed to say it in public places. He said that the 66% of millennials who say that they prefer saying “Happy Holidays” over “Merry Christmas” are “retards.” (Yiannopoulos never said where he got this number but I found he was most likely citing a PRRI poll (Cox 2016)). He argued that Trump’s recent comments at an event in Grand Rapids, Michigan where Trump said, “We’re going to start saying ‘Merry Christmas’ again” was a gift from god.

The rest of his talk focused on a barrage of compliments towards Christianity, in particular Catholicism saying, “Catholics are right about everything” and to Trump whom he said, “looks like a God” while also spouting various insults, all of which he made in “good fun.” These insults were targeted towards the Royal family (“Princess Diana—slut. She was! You think Harry is Prince Charles”? [He] looks like a gonad.”), 9/11 victims (“The left makes out that Santa and his reindeer took down the Twin Towers.”), diversity (“Diversity means no white people. No straight people. No normal people really.”), and the media’s coverage of Indiana’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act, (“[Memories Pizza] was totally fucked by the cunts in the

media”). Regarding Islam, in perhaps the most controversial moment, Yiannopoulos showed a mocking image of Muhammad as the meme Pedobear, a cartoon pedophile bear, wearing a “terrorist beard” as Yiannopoulos stated and was placed mockingly on a Starbucks coffee cup which had been criticized as stripping away Christmas imagery.

When the image of Muhammad was shown, a young man leaped onto the stage. He looked out onto the audience, who booed him, and yelled out, “How can you listen to this fascist?” Yiannopoulos didn’t engage with the protestor. The protestor flipped people off as he left which sparked the ire of the MNSU College Republicans Vice President, a tall blonde haired white man in a tailored three piece grey suit with a striped red tie, who stood up and shouted at the protestor, “Pussy!” as he was leaving the auditorium.

Yiannopoulos had a tendency to tout one justification or one actual fact in his soliloquies and then use that to say other, nonsensical, often times conspiracy filled tangents that usually worked themselves around to attacking the left, attacking universities and education, or emphasizing the need to say “Merry Christmas.” And as he held his crucifixes up high in the air (“To ward off feminists”), championed Jesus as a leader of capitalism and joy and merriment and mischief, and touted that the two drivers for “The Dangerous Faggot Tour” were capitalism and family values (both exemplified through Christmas), Yiannopoulos seemed to not only deem himself a professor, the sole seer of truth in a lie filled world, but also as a prophet, who spread the word of “Daddy” (Donald Trump) and Jesus Christ from on high to all his followers for the good of America. America was after all, “the greatest country in the history of civilization.” This quote came with a rapturous applause and booming chants of, “USA! USA! USA!”

As the event began winding down, and as Yiannopoulos affirmed time and time again the war on Christmas was real and that the essence of Christianity, self-sacrifice, was something

ignored by the left, my mental capacity to stay focused was at an end. While I had spent countless hours watching Yiannopoulos' speeches, interviews, and reading his social media posts and news pieces, it was entirely different being in the room with him and his fans than it was to watch them on a screen or read his Tweets or Facebook posts, particularly within the Midwestern context

There is a fascinating culture to the Midwest which favors a rural, agricultural based lifestyle while ideologically promoting religious right sentiment that is not as prone to violence or nationalist sentiment as the far-right conservative ideology. However, there are signs of the Midwest being receptive to far-right ideas. From the military centric fashion and recruitment centers to its racial demographics that are far less diverse than other regions to Trump and now Yiannopoulos frequently visiting the area, the Midwest becomes a perfect spot for identifying the appeal of the far-right for LGBTQ persons and straight persons alike.

This speech Yiannopoulos gave at MNSU was unlike his usual ones. I reviewed over 30 campus speeches that Yiannopoulos delivered across the country at college campuses. These speeches were mostly apart of his "The Dangerous Faggot Tour" but others occurred before the tour officially began in 2016. The speeches were key in understanding Yiannopoulos' own political ideology. I thought of utilizing further excerpts of his speeches throughout this thesis, however I believe that is not necessary to understand his views and antagonistic nature towards various groups nor do his speeches offer any further insight into his political ideology that I have not already detailed in either this part or part one.

The formats of his speeches were relatively the same each time. Yiannopoulos would talk anywhere between 30-60 minutes depending on the presence of protests (which were more common in his coastal school visits) and then would take questions from the audience. In his

speeches he would target various groups of people and mock them only then to articulate his justification for criticizing these groups of people, usually relying on outdated science or simply false statistics that sounded potentially correct. The groups he typically targeted were feminists, effeminate gay men, liberals, Democrat politicians, atheists, obese people, women, racial minorities but most notably Muslims.

This was most prominent in his MNSU speech focusing on the “war on Christmas.” In every speech I reviewed, Yiannopoulos directly targeted Muslims. Muslims were Yiannopoulos’ and the far-right’s “Others.” This is evident when seeing the intense anti-Muslim rhetoric throughout and the continued intentionally antagonist usage of ‘Merry Christmas.’ By continuing to overly emphasize the Christian-based holiday, heteronormative norms and cultures are “protected.” They are “protected” from the religion of Islam. By condemning the use of ‘Happy Holidays,’ Yiannopoulos is pushing for a continued use of “Othering” against Muslim and not an acceptance of them. Should others say ‘Happy Holidays,’ they acknowledge and accept the religiosity of those potentially different from themselves, which is opposite to what conservatives principle of “Othering” necessitates seeing as the problems of the present be targeted by an external, often disenfranchised group, never viewed internally.

I argue what makes Yiannopoulos a conservative and what unites the four branches of conservatism is not only their call to a return to an era of the past that was presumably better, but a group of people in each branch of conservatism has an “Other” which can be the target of blame for the faults of the present and in the case of the far-right, that “Other” is Muslims.

Part Three: Evolving Conservatism by LGBTQ Members

What I was able to see in Fargo and Mankato was a wide spectrum of conservative views. There were classical conservative views held by the likes of Chase Grindberg and more far-right views held by Jamal Omar and Yiannopoulos. It became apparent that a deeper understanding of the conservative spectrum was necessary to find the origins of conservatism and its evolution over the decades.

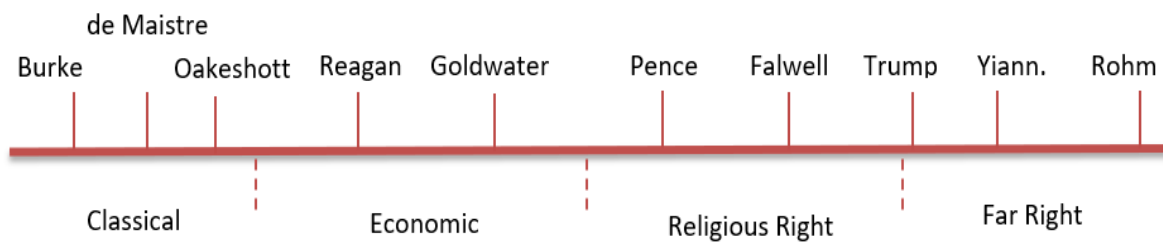


Figure 3: The Spectrum of Conservatism

This spectrum of conservatism can be visualized in Figure 2 wherein one reads left to right, left being the most liberal thinkers and right being the most conservative. Note, the lines separating each of the branches are dotted. This is to emphasize that these are not rigid placements and some elements seep into the other branches. For example, Donald Trump, I would argue, falls into the far-right conservatism branch however his ideology also promotes evangelicalism and has strong support throughout the conservative Christian population of America.

The father of conservatism is Edmund Burke whose writings primarily focused on conserving a traditional way of life in the wake of the French Revolution which he critiqued as being misguided. The Irish political thinker wrote that unlike the liberalist thinkers at the time, humans were not rational beings and were controlled by their emotions. Cited in Terrence Ball's

Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal, “I am bold enough to confess, that we are generally men of untaught feelings; that instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree, and, to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted, and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them” (Ball 2017).

This thinking then led to fear of revolutions, a fear for upheavals of the norms, for the ramifications of those actions could send individuals, and a society down a darkened path. Conservation of traditions or customary norms of the past is the bedrock for the conservative ideology and no one emphasizes this belief more so than Burke. Burke writes this plainly by saying, “By thus wise prejudice we are taught to look with horror on those children of their country who are prompt rashly to hack that aged parent in pieces, and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds, and wild incantations, they may regenerate the paternal constitution, and renovate their father’s life” (Ball 2017).

Since Burke though, we have seen changes and an evolution in the mainstream conservative ideology. Most noticeably there was a shift to the right thanks to the likes of Joseph de Maistre who was a “reactionary” believing it was necessary to restore or return to an earlier way of life, which for de Maistre was a return to prerevolutionary France. The Sardinian (present-day Italy) philosopher argued that the constitution of a nation is not kin to something else that could be manufactured like a watchmaker manufacturing a watch (Ball 2017). This original document is, in many ways, sacred and cannot be properly altered given that, “No important and genuinely constitutional reform ever established anything new” given that the rights that have been designated in the already existing document. Basically, de Maistre argues amendments, changes, or addendums are simply the original rights reworded so it is always best

to go back to the old way since the new offers nothing of particular value. This is even furthered by de Maistre's belief in the universality of the monarchy.

Notably, the French Revolution cast out the monarchy of Louis XVI so this view that a monarchy was necessary was radical in its day. de Maistre's stated, "Men are born for monarchy. Of all forms of government, Monarch is the oldest and most universal...Monarchical government comes so naturally to men that they unwittingly equate it with sovereignty itself (Ball 2017).

de Maistre was a pull to the right, but so was British philosopher Michael Oakeshott. Many scholars align him and Burke for classical conservative ideology, however I am more inclined to include him besides de Maistre. I believe a "line-up" of Burke, de Maistre, and Oakeshott based not only on their respective active years (1730-1797), (1753-1821), and (1901-1990) respectively, but also on ideological shifts of conservatism to the right shows how the initial ideology of Burke has become more right-wing in approach. Oakeshott, meanwhile, argued that conservatism "is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the inbound, the near to the distant, the sufficient to the super abundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss" (Ball 2017) and is "averse from change which appears always, in the first place, as deprivation" (Ball 2017).

This resistance to change is akin to de Maistre and Burke before him, but takes the extra step that bleeds into the conservative thinking of others later in the 20th century about government's role and importance. "Government, then," Oakeshott said, "as the conservative in this matter understands it, does not begin with a vision of another, different and better world, but

with the observation of the self-government practices even by men of passion in the conduct of their enterprises” (Ball 2017).

Despite the differences between these three conservative voices, they all ascribed to classical conservative beliefs. Stability was the foundation of their shared ideology. They also all possess their own unique “Other,” a group that they could pin their frustrations on for destroying the morality, values or political stability of that time. In this case, the “Other” for classical conservatism were broadly revolutionaries. These typically were individuals who were younger age-wise and fought for radical change quickly. This was the basis after all for Burke’s founding of conservatism and condemnation of liberalism and the further right movements of conservatism and their reactions to revolutionaries with de Maisters and Oakeshott. Today, there are not necessarily revolutionaries fighting against a monarchy as what happened in the French Revolution, but they are fighting against an establishment government and demanding action on particular issues to take place as soon as possible. A revolutionary for a classical conservatism today could include the March for Our Lives protestors who protest for gun reform in the wake of the February 14, 2018 shootings at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida or, as was the case for Grindsberg, the Keystone Pipeline protesters.

Now conservatism began to radically change, forming its new branch, in the late 20th century following the ideas of “backwards” government (a government that does not aim to better society with risks or over-reaching programs but one that returns back to past days of glory) thanks to the influence of conservative leaders such as Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. This is when economic conservatism began.

Goldwater was lambasted in 1964 during his presidential run for being too conservative, thanks to his beliefs such as the federal government overreaching in its *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and vocal critiques of various branches in the federal government which had become, “out of touch with the people, and out of their control” (Goldwater 1960). Yet Goldwater is not as far right as the conservative spectrum goes nor was he alone in his ideology. Two decades later, Reagan and Thatcher’s shared ideology could best be surmised in Reagan’s memorable inaugural address quote, “In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem” (Groote 2011). An interesting point of diversion between the two is their relationship with the gay community. Thatcher was one of the few conservatives who in 1967 voted to decriminalize male same-sex intercourse while Reagan is remembered today for having ignored the HIV/AIDS epidemic during his term (Tatchell 2017). European conservatism was already showing some more accepting policies towards LGBTQ persons.

What this new economic branch of conservatism brought was a dramatic shift to the right and a focus less so on the original principles of the conservation of the past, but a complete preservation of the way of life while also emphasizing the most minimal government intervention. Previous iterations of conservatism such as that seen by de Maistre emphasized the need for a strong figurehead and executive and while Reagan and Thatcher too looked at a strong executive they never would have advocated for an expansion of government or a return to a government era which had a large federal government. In many ways the conservatism of Goldwater and Reagan was a reaction of its own to the progressive liberal governments of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman which saw dramatic government expansions.

Economic conservatism aimed to bolster the private sector and diminish the influence of, as proponents of this branch of conservatism called them, “welfare queens.” Throughout the

1970s, 80s, and 90s, the “welfare queens” served as the economic conservatives “Other.” Reagan ran on a policy in the 80s to overhaul the welfare system. He sharply criticized individuals who he believed took advantage of the welfare system for selfish purposes, basically swindling the federal government (Levin 2013). The term “welfare queens” is a racialized and sexist tinged slang used to belittle those who lived in impoverished communities and relied on government assistance. Economic conservatism rose to prominence in no small part because of their intense criticism of lower socio-economic classes.

Following the rise of economic conservatism and dissatisfaction with Jimmy Carter’s presidency and more liberal interpretation of evangelical faith, the religious right entered the fold. In 1979, Southern Baptist minister and televangelist Jerry Falwell founded the political organization, the Moral Majority. The impetus for this formation was Falwell touring America with “I Love America” rallies to galvanize Christian individuals to become more active in politics and take a step away from the fiscal policies that economic conservatism focused on and look more at social issues (Banwart 2013). This was also used for Falwell to gauge the general public’s attitude on certain social issues and then form the Moral Majority. This organization which was run by Falwell and Pat Robertson advocated for a traditional family lifestyle, ardent opposition to abortion, drugs, and gay rights, favoring prayer in school and conversion of Jews and Catholics to their brand of conservative Christianity (Banwart 2013).

The Moral Majority became a major political force in the 1980s and supported Reagan’s presidency in both 1980 and 1984 while in 1988, with Reagan termed out, helped run Robertson for President. However, after this election, the Moral Majority collapsed and other groups such as the Family Research Council, Christian Coalition, and Focus on the Family emerged to fill in the religious right leadership role. Both Falwell and Robertson went on to found and head

universities, Liberty University and Regent University respectively following the collapse of the Moral Majority. Falwell, until his death in 2007 remained an active commentator and critic of gay rights, going so far as to say gays caused 9/11 (Ambinder 2001). Robertson, in turn, has continued to preach and has been an ardent critic of progressive social issues saying, “Feminism encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians” (Bentz 2013).

For those ascribing to the religious right ideology of conservatism, the “Other” is easily identified as the LGBTQ community. Falwell, Robertson, even Mike Pence today who would ascribe to this ideology, all are openly hostile towards members of the LGBTQ community and seek to not only eliminate the rights of non-heterosexual persons but to also criminalize them from engaging in any sort of acts. Pence was governor of Indiana when the state passed the legalization of discrimination against LGBTQ persons based on religiosity and has supported the use of gay conversion therapy (Stack 2016). This is the ideology that is most prominent in the Midwest. It is why then that Trump and Yiannopoulos with their far-right beliefs were able to energize the masses because it maintained some familiarity ideology-wise while also advocating for something new, something more extreme. This is a far cry from the “Minnesota nice” attitude that was prevalent in the region. It is interesting then to see how the far right, its influence not only in America but throughout Europe as well, has been welcome to gay men, though. This, I argue, is in part in recent years as its own reaction to the religious right, just as conservatism itself was a reaction to liberalism.

Now, with the rise of the alt-right in America, we see a new branch of conservatism solidified, one that has almost begun to bend the spectrum based on its seemingly contradictory beliefs from that of its original inception, being brandished by the likes of Trump, *Breitbart*, and

Yiannopoulos. From Burke to Yiannopoulos we see a near complete transformation of conservatism from its origins to today. However, this radical shift and extreme breakage with other forms of conservatism in modern times should come as no surprise to those who study history.

This ideology has its roots in Europe thanks to a long history of homoeroticism within the right. It's difficult to pinpoint exactly when this affinity to far-right policies and gay individuals first began but for brevity purposes I will begin by looking at the rise of fascism within Europe in the 1930s. During the Holocaust, some 10,000 gay men were executed in concentration camps and thousands more across Europe were jailed, beaten, castrated, or deported for their sexuality. The gruesomeness inflicted towards gay men during this era would seem to have firstly distanced gay men from being associated with fascism and secondly have been concocted by heterosexuals. However, many within Adolph Hitler's inner circle were gay. This included Ernst Röhm who was an early supporter of Hitler but eventually turned into a rival due to Hitler's fears of Röhm seizing power within the Nazi Party for himself (Hari 2008).

Röhm, who was obsessed with homoeroticism brought on by the first World War, in which he was left scarred on his face from a bullet wound, wished to capture the eroticism of heroic, masculine men fighting to the death for their country again with Nazi expansion. Röhm and Hitler bonded over their shared hatred of Jews and service during the first World War. Hitler was aware of Röhm's sexuality as Röhm was openly expressive about his love for gay bars and Turkish bath houses. He and Hitler both believed in a superior race though Röhm believed that gay men were superior to straight men, pointing to the Spartans and Alexander the Great as examples of inherent superiority (Hari 2008). Militarization and the romanticizing of it continue to this day, as seen in North Dakota and Minnesota with the intense military presence on college

campuses. This perhaps served as one of the gateways for persons in the Midwest to be receptive to far-right conservative views championed by Röhm and later Yiannopoulos.

Röhm expected his subordinates to be as openly homoerotic as he was and helped design the uniforms worn by the Nazi soldiers, working closely with Hugo Boss to tailor the outfits, particularly those worn by the Sturmabteilung (SA) of which Röhm was a part. Röhm made his various gay lovers such as Edmund Heines and Karl Ernst fellow SA commanders and it was believed that the majority of men within the upper echelons of the SA were outwardly gay. All the while, though, they would advocate for masculine homosexuality while condemning “hysterical women of both sexes,” referring to feminine gays (Hari 2008).

Röhm and numerous other members of the SA, though, were arrested and executed in 1934 during what became known as the Night of the Long Knives. History professor Lothar Machten argues that this mass execution was done due to Hitler’s own secret sexuality and that Hitler himself was a homosexual and became jealous of the success of the SA and other openly gay men while he himself had to remain in the closet (Reich 2001).

Thanks to the influence of Röhm and the affinity towards fascism for gays, groups following World War II sprung up across Europe such as Gays Against Semitism (GAS) and the Aryan Resistance Corps (ARC). These groups exalted a similar philosophy that Röhm and the SA dictated—white men are better than other races, and gay white men are the “masters of the master race” (Reich 2001). Disturbing films such as 1999’s *Skin Flick* and 1998’s *Apt Pupil* highlight the continued prevalence of this philosophy where gays and fascism are intertwined.

The former is a gay pornographic film produced and directed by Bruce LaBruce, a member of ARC, focuses on an upper class interracial couple being terrorized by gay skin heads

who masturbate to *Mein Kampf* and target effeminate gay men (Kerner 162). Obviously, with this being a pornographic film, it was not aimed at the masses nor towards a general populous. This could easily be written off as a fringe group with little influence on gay culture or the general public's view of gay men. However, mainstream films such as *Apt Pupil* show how these beliefs have entered the mainstream.

Apt Pupil is based on a Stephen King novella which looked at the relationship between a high school student and his in-hiding elderly neighbor who was once a high-ranking Nazi. The boy became infatuated with Nazism and blackmailed his neighbor into revealing and reenacting graphic details of concentration camps. The novella features homoerotic themes throughout and fetishization of Nazism, however the film, directed by gay filmmaker Bryan Singer, emphasizes this even more. There were scenes filmed that were not included in the novella focusing on young white men in locker rooms being spied on by the teenager protagonist, prolonged shots of knives before being used to stab someone emphasizing their phallic nature, and a different ending which involved blackmailing a closeted, effeminate gay teacher so the protagonist can continue living out his fantasies of Nazi sponsored blood-shed and homoeroticism (Kerner 87). In the novella, the protagonist is killed by police after he is caught murdering a teacher. This is all highlighted in Aaron Kerner's book *Film and the Holocaust: New Perspectives on Dramas, Documentaries, and Experimental Film* which, didn't focus exclusively on gay portrayals in relation to fascism, but did identify that continued prevalence of homoerotic links between fascism and Nazi ideology.

Tom Hart from the University of Oxford has posited that gay men are drawn to fascism due to the idea of fantasizing a masculine male figure (the dictator) as their lover and the linkage between homosexuality and fascism is not unusual once we stop talking about sexuality purely

through a leftish mindset. “Once a decade or so a tabloid newspaper will reveal the expected images: the young, muscular men marching in order; the paramilitary uniforms; the nationalism; the closely cropped haircuts; and, at their head—the leader, their lover,” (Hart 2017).

This thinking would appear to hold credence given Yiannopoulos’ “relationship” with Donald Trump. As mentioned previously, Yiannopoulos is fond of calling Trump “Daddy” and has in several occasions brandished stylized military garbs, akin to those worn by SA officers in the 1930s. On the side of his “The Dangerous Faggot Tour” bus he had shirtless, muscled gay men carrying him. Yiannopoulos too critiques leftish views of sex and chastises liberals on numerous topics including ideas of sex and for approving of effeminate gay men and transgender individuals. However, Hart’s ideas are dependent on the notion that gay men are drawn to masculine, domineering figures. This in many ways could be argued as excluding LGBTQ provocateurs such as Fortuyn and Yiannopoulos who, while none the less brandished their rightist ideologies, were extremely open and proudly flamboyant, characteristics counter to the masculine male archetype. Yiannopoulos, with his dyed hair, slender frame, high voice, and dabbling in drag culture would not be a right-wing leader that the likes of Röhm would approve of.

Jane Ward, meanwhile, writes in her book *Not Gay: Sex Between Straight White Men*, that, “Sex between straight white men allows them to leverage whiteness and masculinity to authenticate their heterosexuality in the context of sex with men. By understanding their same-sex sexual practice as meaningless, accidental, or even necessary, straight white men can perform homosexual contact in heterosexual ways” (Ward 2015). Ward’s analysis on the relationship between homosexual relationships between straight men can be utilized to look at homoeroticism experienced within the far-right in that, similarly, they have a commonality

(whiteness) that elevates them over others and reaffirms their own status. This could be inherently why fascism, as Hart defined it is inherently “gay.” The bonding between men in such a hyper-masculine state that fascism promotes not only perpetuates homosexual behavior but solidifies shared ideological beliefs. This can be why, too, straight men are drawn to fascism as well as gay men, to reaffirm their own extremist beliefs.

More so than Hart’s analysis, Ward’s idea would explain why today’s LGBTQ right-wing leaders can attract heterosexual individuals too. It’s a fair assumption that the majority of those on the conservative spectrum identify as heterosexual, but without the homoerotic history, we may not have experienced a pull to the far-right by LGBTQ leaders and white gay men in particular. Ward’s argument, however, does not dive deeper into why the far-right is homoerotic or why far-right LGBTQ persons continue to pull conservatism to the right. I argue this pull comes from the idea of superiority and a necessity for an “Other” to place the problems of the present on. This idea comes from the belief that gay men, particularly white gay men, are attracted to fascism and the far right of the conservative spectrum because of a desire to feel superior. This can be seen in the rhetoric and behavior of Röhm, Fortuyn, and Yiannopoulos. This is what separates them ideologically from conservative thinkers of the past such as Burke and de Maistre. These new gay conservative provocateurs do not base their ideology on the standard tropes of conservatism which Burke defined as stability but in a hierarchical structure wherein white men are superior and gay white men are the superiors of the superior.

In the 1930s, this “Othering” which helped solidify the hierarchical structure of superiority was targeted towards Jews. Over six million Jews lost their lives during the Holocaust. There was unfathomable hatred and persecution against them for not being apart of the superior race and for that matter, the superior sexual orientation. Today, this has changed.

The “Othering” of the far-right has now targeted Muslims. This adds a more complex layer to the persecution by the far-right seeing how transnational feminism now plays an integral role in better understanding the reasoning for the targeting of Muslims.

Anti-Islam sentiment originated before the 9/11 attacks, however it didn’t reach its pinnacle of its growing acceptance by mainstream conservatives until after the attacks. Now, there was justification. The same type of justification used by the conservative George W. Bush administration which Yiannopoulos, Fortuyn, and Röhm, there was now a reason for the “Othering;” justification for retribution for an attack on American soil. However, this saw a systemic oppression of Islam in America and the Middle East by individuals and by the controlling government.

This can be witnessed with the use of torture against inmates at Abu-Ghraib prison. Here, there is not only a degradation of the religion and of the individuals, but a perpetuation of white, masculine domination. It is no coincidence inmates at Abu-Ghraib were subjected to sexual humiliation and were forced to wear women’s underwear or be sexually assaulted by white female guards conforming to masculine tropes, and by gun barrels. There is literally a raping of a racially and religiously inferior, feminized subordinate by a dominate, masculine, militarized person or object (Hersh 2004).

As well, when one understands transnational feminism as opposed to American centric feminism, one can see the intersecting roles race and gender play. American feminists were quick to shield the three white women who were charged with torturing individuals in Abu-Ghraib, however as Basuli Deb argues, transnational feminism sees a more complicated picture which better understands, “the personal and collective stakes for white imperial women in the

torture of brown male bodies as the ‘enemy other,’” (Deb 2012). Deb argues liberal feminist thought ensures a continued patriarchal and unmoving superior male structure which allows select women, such as white women, to enter the “structures of privilege” (Deb 2012) while barring others, in this case “Othering.”

This approach can be seen by the exclusion of other minority groups, particularly Muslims who challenge Americanized feminist viewpoints, from far-right conservative discussions and leadership positions while allowing white gay men to be leaders of it. This was superiority structure within the far-right was first seen in Europe with leaders like Röhm and Fortuyn and then imported to the United States thanks to the likes of Yiannopoulos and further spread by others such as Trump, and Steve Bannon.

This examination of the conservative pull by gay leaders explains several questions that people have raised about the recent rise of the likes of Yiannopoulos and the prominence today of conservative homosexuals. One major question facing the rise of Yiannopoulos has been, why are there no extremist rightwing lesbians? The reason is because of how and why conservatism has shifted to the right.

There have been prominent women conservatives in the past. One could look at Ayn Rand, Margaret Thatcher, and Phyllis Schlafly, whose final book published posthumously was *The Conservative Case for Trump* in 2016. However, lesbian conservatives are few and far between, the most widely known today arguably being Mary Cheney, daughter of Vice President Dick Cheney, who serve as the vice president for consumer advocacy at AOL. Beyond a public feud between Mary Cheney and her older sister Liz Cheney on the subject of gay marriage while the elder Cheney ran for Senate in Wyoming (Blake 2013), Cheney has kept her political views

relatively private and could hardly be called a far-right conservative akin to Yiannopoulos. This is because of the superiority structure this branch of conservatism is based on. Again looking at transnational feminism as illustrated by Deb, lesbian equivalents of Yiannopoulos would need to abandon their feminine identity, most certainly need to be white, and embrace a masculine, militarized persona in order to be accepted into these ranks.

This also explains why within this branch there is a singular “Other” that can be targeted above all others. The singular “Other” for the modern far-right is those of the Muslim faith. The “Other” has evolved from Jews in the time of Röhm to Muslims in the present day. It is because like Jews, Muslims are a minority whose religiosity is opposed to that of Christianity and their followers, overwhelmingly, are not white men but persons of different races and ethnicities. They challenge the racial, religious, socio-economic, and sexual superiority that far right gay leaders like Röhm, Fortuyn, and Yiannopoulos ascribe to.

One might expect gay individuals to be more accepting towards others given that they themselves have faced prosecution and being ostracized, even by those of the same conservative ideology in the form of the religious right, however this is not the case because they believe they are superior to others. The prosecution they face is merely out of jealousy from inferiors. In a piece published by *Breitbart*, Yiannopoulos outlined this superiority structure believed by gay conservatives by stating at the University of Pittsburg;

“Historically, homosexuals have been massively over-represented not just in the arts but in all the various corridors of intellect, power and influence. The British Establishment, in particular, has long relied on gay geniuses. Consider Alan Turing, Oscar Wilde and John Maynard Keynes. OK, maybe not that last one. Elsewhere in the world, the story is the same. Abraham Lincoln was almost certainly at least bisexual. And then there are figures from remoter history, such as notorious bum bandit Alexander the Great. It seems that wherever you find human greatness, gays are joyfully abundant. That’s at least in part because gay men are smarter: we test higher for IQ than our heterosexual counterparts. Intelligence allows us to “transcend” our evolutionary programming, according to evolutionary psychologist Satoshi Kanazawa, which may explain the correlation between homosexuality and high IQ” (Yiannopoulos 2015).

Fortuyn, Yiannopoulos, and Röhm all believe this. This is why they feel comfortable targeting effeminate gay men, as Yiannopoulos targets in the same piece mentioned above by stating “brash, glitter-drenched Pride queens” ought to be pushed back into the closet (Yiannopoulos 2015), Muslims, and transgender individuals. This superiority structure is surrounded in a conservative approach to masculinity wherein individuals who do not adhere to the hegemonic ideals of masculinity or are not actively hyper masculine, which are often ascribed to the Romanized images surrounding Spartans or Alexander the Great. For the long history that the right has with homoeroticism, there is also a long history of oppressing femininity and targeting those who advocate for a change of the hegemonic masculine ideals.

This is the crux of what makes far-right conservatism not only fascinating but one that could, in my opinion, be more dangerous than any seen in the past. This brand of conservatism that Yiannopoulos espouses is far removed from the classical Burke arguments and yet it is not something entirely different that could be disassociated from Burke or conservatism itself. One of the biggest arguments I hear when discussing Donald Trump, for instance, and his own political ideology is that he is not a true conservative or a true liberal but is something new entirely. I disagree. I believe that he adheres to the same ideology that Yiannopoulos, Fortuyn, Röhm and others have promoted but is the first president to do so because this is new to the United States. It is a modern critique of Burke’s foundations of stability and modesty, surrounded by a belief of inherent supremacy and a targeting of an “Other.”

Straight men too, such as Gert Wilders and Donald Trump, are drawn to this and this is how this belief has entered the mainstream as opposed to remaining a fringe ideology. We now have leaders who adhere to this ideology as opposed to other forms of conservatism. This is why too, I believe, Trump rallies that peppered the Midwest and the Yiannopoulos “The Dangerous

Faggot Tour” proved to be such a success to his supporters and such a controversial event too. That’s why when I met with people in North Dakota and Minnesota numerous people detailed their love for Trump rallies and for Yiannopoulos.

Now would Yiannopoulos personally align himself with Röhm, an openly gay Nazi from the 1930’s? Probably not. Nor would I imagine he would actively seek to affiliate himself with the violent white supremacist protests in Charlottesville, North Carolina that occurred in August 2017. (Of note with these protests, we saw a continuation of the targeted “Othering” of Jews at these protests with many white men shouting “Jews will not replace us” which is clearly remnants from the Nazi-era “Other” targeting of Jews) (Green 2017). None the less, he is in the far-right branch of conservatism with them. His rhetoric, speeches, attitude, ideology, statements, and “The Dangerous Faggot Tour” designed specifically to instigate aggression from others places him besides these individuals.

This belief system is new and exciting to Americans because it has never been successfully implemented here before. But this has been done in Europe. This is an importation of those old beliefs that Fortuyn and others had and this was done thanks to Yiannopoulos and other gay provocateurs. A long history of homoeroticism within the right aided in this as seen by the likes of Röhm that has continued today as seen in various mediums from fashion and film to successfully bring this superiority brand of conservatism to the United States.

Conclusion

Now, the million-dollar question is, what happens next? With the far-right now all consuming the Republican Party and becoming the mainstream ideology in America, what can be done to potentially combat this, or have we passed the point of no return? I offer two scenarios that could happen in the coming years which I call the Rubicon and the Redemption.

In 49 BCE, Julius Caesar and the 13th Legion, after explicit orders not to by the Roman Senate, crossed the Rubicon River in northern Italy. This event led to the rise of Caesar's dictatorship rule and the reformation of Rome as an imperial empire (Redonet 2017). The Rubicon scenario for conservatism is this, where too little, too late has been done to stop this ideological acceleration to the right. This can easily be identified in recent events such as the Republican National Committee investing in and promoting a defamatory website called LyingComey.com with the intent to discredit former FBI Director James Comey as he embarks on his book tour which openly criticizes the current Trump administration, associating Trump to a mob boss (Comey 2018). This is showing an embrace by the formerly antagonistic RNC to Trump's penchant for name calling and a continued effort by Trump to attack the top law enforcement agency in the country, a far cry from the "law and order" politics which had been promoted by the likes of Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon (Zeit 2016). Events such as those seen in Newnan, Georgia in April 2018 where neo-Nazis dressed in military regalia burned 18-foot-tall swastikas at a white supremacist rally and received muted condemnation highlight not only the growing influence of the far-right but the willingness by classical, economic, and religious right conservatives to let the far-right control mainstream conservatism. Distressingly, we may very well see more militant and violent rallies targeting minority groups, greater animosity to bipartisanship and cooperation by the right, continued spreading of conspiracy-

based propaganda, and in the long term, a dramatic weakening of American institutions and America's place as a liberal democracy. This is the Rubicon scenario.

The Redemption scenario sees what has been seen in the past within conservatism and offers myself, and hopefully us all knowing the history of conservatism and the branches of it, hope. We very well could see a reaction to the current events. Just as classical conservatism emerged as a reaction to the French Revolution, just as the reemergence of the far-right was a reaction to the rise of the religious right, there could be a reaction from more moderate conservatives within the Republican Party to pull mainstream conservatism to the center. This could be seen following the 2018 midterm election and the 2020 presidential election. It is anticipated Democrats will make significant gains in 2018, how significant will determine the plausibility of a reaction. Should Republicans face crippling losses, potentially losing the Senate and or the House of Representatives, in a midterm that would have to be historic, the appeal of the far-right as the mainstream ideology would be weakened. A continuation of this weakening appeal would be if Trump declines to run in 2020, is for whatever reason unable to run, or faces a primary by another Republican for the presidential nomination. The Republican Party would have to retool, review an autopsy of the election(s), and react. A reaction against the far-right conservatism which would pull to a more ideological centered stance for the mainstream would be the Redemption scenario. I hope this is what happens. However, I caution, either scenario is possible. And the sheer possibility of the Rubicon scenario is something that should alarm all.

Should Redemption happen, anti-Muslim rhetoric would need to be condemned and pushed to the fringe, not something acceptable within the mainstream. This "Othering" of Muslims would need to end and targeting other minority groups for their racial, gender, socio-economic status would also need to be changed or abandoned. This would address a flaw in

conservative ideology which throughout its existence has necessitated “Othering” on a group of people and perhaps a more internal recognition of the errors of the present could become a part of the ideology.

What will happen to Yiannopoulos too? Will he survive the most recent onslaught of criticisms which include his speech at University of California—Berkley which was criticized as the “most expensive photo-op in California history” (Veklerov 2017)? Or what of the intense backlash he faced, including the pulling of his book *Dangerous* from Simon and Shuster and his resignation from *Breitbart* following the revelation of comments Yiannopoulos made about condoning pedophilia (Hersher 2017)? Is it possible for him to exert his presence beyond simply selling non-FDA approved liver medication on *The Info Wars* (Merlen 2017)?

It’s hard for me to see how any of these could destroy his career. He self-published his book and it debuted as a *New York Times* bestseller, despite negative reviews and claims from *Buzzfeed News* that the book itself was entirely ghost written (Bernstein 2017). He still manages to entertain hundreds of thousands of people through his social media presence. Yiannopoulos himself may not enter the mainstream of the American or even conservative consciousness and he himself may very well fade away in time, but his ideology, that of the far-right already has and will continue to remain. The only question is to what extent will it remain.

We have seen the impact of this conservative pull to the right and will feel the impact of it for decades to come. This is thanks in large part to the influence of gay provocateurs importing their critique of classical conservatism which is possible thanks to a long history of homoeroticism in the right from Europe to the United States and the conservative notion to scape goat “Others” for the errors of the present.

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