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Longo, Cordelia

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**Uncanny valley: LGBTQIA+ American university students' support for the pro-Palestine
movement**

Cordelia Longo

s4277821

International Organization

Jeffrey Michaels

Nicolas Blarel

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Abstract: This thesis explores the question: “Why are some LGBTQIA+ American university students pro-Palestine?” It uses theory on values-based and bottom-up public opinion on foreign policy from Rathbun et al. (2016) and Kertzer and Zeitzoff (2017), hypothesizing: 1) Those who prioritize decolonization will believe in Palestinian (as opposed to Jewish) indigeneity, and 2) Those with leftist views will hold pro-Palestine beliefs. A survey is conducted on 54 participants from universities across the U.S. This thesis uses the Pearson correlation coefficient, other quantitative data analysis, and thematic analysis. H1 and H2 are confirmed, and self-transcendence values are found in the sample. Some participants see their own queerness and transness as being connected to the movement, while others view their identity as completely separate from their support for the pro-Palestine cause. However, support for decolonization and leftist politics in the LGBTQIA+ American student community does not completely explain why there were no protests or encampments for other similar conflicts that would have utilized the same values and foreign policy beliefs.

Introduction

In the months after Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, some American LGBTQIA+ students joined the pro-Palestine movement (Prager 2024). This sudden outpouring of support from these students was perplexing, given the LGBTQIA+ community's historical activism for self-preservation. Their support now aimed at Palestine, whose intolerance and documented violence against gay and transgender (trans) people contrasts Israel's documented acceptance and protections of LGBTQIA+ rights (Estrin and Musleh 2024).

A senior official of Hamas, the ruling party of Palestine, once referred to the UNRWA's instruction to treat people of different genders and sexualities equally as “promoting deviance and moral decay” (Amnesty International n.d.). In Palestine, homosexual activity or expression is illegal and punishable by ten years in prison (Human Dignity Trust n.d.; Estrin and Musleh 2024). LGBTQIA+ solidarity with Palestine seems incongruous with the community's history of prioritizing self-preservation against intolerance (We Are Casa 2023). Yet, since the October 7, 2023 attack against Israel, LGBTQIA+ students in the U.S. have actively demonstrated support for Palestine.

This recent phenomenon of the LGBTQIA+ student community's passionate defense of a culture which threatens LGBTQIA+ rights and existence is puzzling, and research on Western support for Palestine after 2023 is limited. Therefore, I aim to help fill the gap in research on LGBTQIA+ U.S. students' support of Palestine after October 7 and answer the following question: Why are some LGBTQIA+ American university students pro-Palestine? Note that protests and other forms of participation are not wholly representative of a pro-Palestine stance, but the most visible part of a broad spectrum of evidence.

I define LGBTQIA+ American university students as any American citizens who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, two-spirit, questioning, intersex, or pansexual, and attend a four-year college or university in the United States (Bloomington Pride n.d.). Through the lens of bottom-up and values-based public opinion on foreign policy, I examine the topic of leftist political concepts and their association with the LGBTQIA+ community and support for decolonization. American leftist politics is centered around the annihilation of systems of oppression and a focus on anti-capitalism (Flores-Robles et al. 2025). I use this definition to describe leftist political concepts in the thesis, focusing specifically on anti-capitalism.

The definition of the pro-Palestine movement in this thesis is gathered from recent academic articles about the movement. It includes: solidarity with Palestine, especially in the academic context; a demand for schools to divest from Israeli companies, call for a ceasefire, and stop the “genocide” in Gaza (Buheji and Hasan 2024, Browne, Weizman, and Matchain 2025; Ross 2021). Adding to this definition are student groups’ own statements and stances: National Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a leading organization of the student pro-Palestine movement, claims to stand against “violence, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism in all of their forms” (National Students for Justice in Palestine n.d.). The second prominent element of the pro-Palestine movement is Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions n.d.). BDS’ purpose is to create a collective boycott of Israeli goods and services, as well as divestment from Israeli companies, and sanction of anything Israeli (BDS n.d.). I relegate my research to the United States because the phenomenon of campus protests erupted these past two years on American Ivy League campuses.

By answering this research question, I hope to contribute to both the academic and policy realms. Academia's coverage of the movement from a public opinion lens is scarce. This research could inform political scientists of what motivates LGBTQIA+ students to join social and political movements. It may help policymakers frame messages to fit LGBTQIA+ student audiences and constituents more effectively. By studying which issues this population cares about, politicians may be better equipped in decisions to either attract or neglect the community.

I provide an overview of previous literature, including public opinion on foreign policy, student and LGBTQIA+ protest movements, and the pro-Palestine movement. I then delve into literature about two specific manifestations of foreign policy values, because previous literature on the movement points in this direction: the LGBTQIA+ commitment to decolonization, and involvement in leftist politics. In the theoretical framework section, I use the theories of values-based and bottom-up public opinion on foreign policy to examine these elements. I then survey 54 LGBTQIA+ university and college students across the U.S to answer the research question. I analyze the data using thematic analysis for the open-ended questions, and quantitative analysis for the closed-ended questions. Finally, I discuss the survey findings, limitations, and future implications for research.

Previous Literature

Public opinion on foreign policy

Research pertaining to public opinion on foreign policy is composed of three main conceptualizations. The top-down school hypothesizes that the public gets its opinion and views on foreign policy from political elites (Berinsky 2007; Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017; Lipset 1966b); the bottom-up theory posits that this does not tell the full story. The public sometimes disagrees with party leadership, and other elements contribute to views on foreign policy (Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017). Therefore, the top-down theory is disproven. The third school is based on the assumption that the public is too irrational and disorganized when it comes to forming public opinion that it is unable to hold educated foreign policy opinions (Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017; Lippmann 1955; Almond 1950). This thesis positions itself in the school of Kertzer and Zeitzoff, the bottom-up view of public opinion, because elites are not the only element that shape individuals' foreign policy positions (2017).

Additionally, Rathbun et al. state that individuals' values contribute to their foreign policy views (2016). This thesis utilizes both the values-based and bottom-up schools to solve the puzzle of LGBTQIA+ support for the pro-Palestine movement.

Student protest movements

Over the past one hundred years, student protests on campuses have occurred, but there have only been a couple instances of mass mobilization of American students against governmental foreign policies, and only one quite like the pro-Palestine movement.

Following World War II, anti-war student groups appeared in America. Some were communist and socialist youth groups that eventually died out during a wave of conservatism (Lipset 1966a). In the 1960s, northern white students became inspired by the sit-ins and protests organized by the Black population in the south and set up their own groups in support of the Civil Rights Movement (Lipset 1966a).

Students protesting the Vietnam War saw their movement as a moral issue; they felt American troops had no reason to get involved (Schreiber 1976). Schreiber and Schuman (1972) agree. The rest of the public viewed war as inevitable. Though the young student protesters were outspoken, most white youth were generally supportive of the war (Lunch and Sperlich 1979). This goes against the popular belief that most youth protested America's role in Vietnam.

LGBTQIA+ activism and protest movements

During the Vietnam War, LGBTQIA+ participation in the anti-war movement varied. Likelihood of participation depended on age and whether people were radical or liberal. LGBTQIA+ youth sided with the anti-war movement, but LGBTQIA+ organizations rarely stated their stances (Suran 2001). Additionally, most older and liberal gay people, as well as LGBTQIA+ organizations, did not speak out for fear of being “othered” to a greater extent, prioritizing self-preservation (Suran 2001). While the activism against the Vietnam War was not related to lgbt rights, it was about the self-preservation of the lives of American youth.

After Stonewall, LGBTQIA+ protests and political demonstrations continued centering self-preservation. Aside from pride parades, the 1970s brought a demonstration against the mayor of New York City and a campaign to remove homosexuality from the *DSM-I* (Ghaziani, Taylor, and Stone 2016). During the AIDS crisis, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) held a demonstration protesting the price of anti-HIV drug AZT (Ghaziani, Taylor, and Stone 2016). The 1980s featured the LGBT march on Washington, giving ACT UP visibility and displaying the unity and diversity of the community (Ghaziani and Baldassarri 2011). The 1990s and 2000s brought continued self-preservation activism for marriage equality and transgender and disability rights, including activist Sylvia Rivera (and the greater trans community)’s ongoing fight against anti-trans violence (Fountain-Stokes 2021).

The Pro-Palestine Movement

Literature on public opinion regarding the post-October 7, 2023 pro-Palestine movement is scarce at the time of writing. One of the articles currently available via databases showed those who leaned left had an unfavorable view of Israel, and a positive view of Palestine (Owiredu 2024). The opposite can be said of those who leaned right (Owiredu 2024). This study obviously did not differentiate between LGBTQIA+ and straight or cisgender participants.

Another article details the LGBTQIA+ community's history with Israel and its recent foray into the pro-Palestine movement (Yoav 2025). However, it does not examine LGBTQIA+ involvement with the pro-Palestine movement from a foreign policy/public opinion perspective. I aim to use this exact angle to contribute to research on the post-October-7 world.

Leftist politics and commitment to decolonization

In order to understand the rest of the concepts presented in this thesis, it is necessary to look at literature pertaining to two concepts. First, the LGBTQIA+ community has historically been committed to decolonization. Second, it has a bond with leftist politics. Both of these factors can help explain the LGBTQIA+ pull toward the pro-Palestine movement.

One of core beliefs of the movement is that Israelis colonized modern-day Israel-Palestine. SJP's stated position against colonialism, and BDS's belief that Israelis are settlers and colonizers (National Students for Justice in Palestine n.d.; Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions n.d.), imply that the movement sees the Jewish citizens of Israel as colonizers. Therefore, it is imperative that the literature concerning decolonization and indigeneity are dissected to understand LGBTQIA+ participation in the movement.

Alexander Stoffel argues that the LGBTQIA+ community has, historically, embraced anti-colonial and anti-capitalist sentiments (2022). Due to LGBTQIA+ people's history of support for decolonization, and the belief among some that Israel is not the Jewish ancestral homeland, but rather a 'colonial state,' Hunt and Holmes imply that participants in the movement see supporting the Palestinian cause as a form of indigenous allyship (2015). Lauria Morgensen shares this view, claiming queer and trans individuals carry residual resentment toward the U.S. for displacing and committing genocide against Native Americans (2011). This thesis positions itself in line with Lauria Morgensen and Stoffel, given that both SJP and BDS say they condemn colonialism, imperialism, and genocide.

Robert Wistrich (2015) views political Zionism as an anti-colonial movement, framing Jewish people as the original inhabitants of Judea (Wistrich 2015). Tessler (2009) claims indigeneity lies only with Palestinians, who he says descended from Canaanites and Philistines. Historical and archaeological evidence shows Arab migration to present-day Israel-Palestine took place despite continuous Jewish connection to the land; this occurred after the Babylonian and Roman empires' capture of Judea, Egyptian enslavement, Assyrian rule, and other conquests and immigrations which dispersed the Jewish people, forming the diaspora (Berthelot 2021). Archaeological evidence suggests that present-day Israelis and Palestinians both share a connection to the land (Gannon 2019). Despite this, some academics claim aligning with Israel's existence is a form of supremacy rather than collective peoplehood (Gordon 2024).

The second historical bond LGBTQIA+ people have is with leftist politics. Stoffel argues that because LGBTQIA+ people were already demonized and deemed radical by the public, some decided to embrace radical queer politics (2022). However, others were liberal and fought for rights such as marriage equality, rather than taking more radical stances, such as rejecting

marriage as a whole (Issenberg 2021). According to discourse among LGBTQIA+ historians and academics, the community was split between liberal and leftist politics (Hekma, Oosterhuis and Steakley 1995).

New queer groups that formed after the revolt at Stonewall were leftist (Hekma, Oosterhuis and Steakley 1995). Unlike the LGBTQIA+ rights groups in the years following World War II, the post-Stonewall groups embraced anti-capitalism (Hekma, Oosterhuis and Steakley 1995). To them, leftism seemed less restrictive of their freedom compared to liberalism (Hekma, Oosterhuis and Steakley 1995). Leftists are visible on university campuses today, where SJP and other student groups claim to stand against capitalism (National Students for Justice in Palestine n.d.).

American activism in the 1960s propelled leftist campaigns in support of Palestine in the 1970s (Fischbach 2020). In fact, many of the prominent leftists of the Weather Underground Organization (WUO), a militant left-wing collective, showed support for the Palestinian Liberation Front and other groups, as well as disdain for American imperialism (Fischbach 2020; Berger 2006). SJP also stands against imperialism (Students for Justice in Palestine n.d.).

Theoretical Framework

At its heart, the puzzle of LGBTQIA+ student involvement in the pro-Palestine movement is about public opinion. According to Rathbun et al.'s theory, individuals' values drive their foreign policy views (2016). By looking through the lens of the theories of values-based foreign policy positions and the bottom-up framework of public opinion (Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017; Rathbun et al. 2016), this thesis reflects on the LGBTQIA+ community's commitment to decolonization and its involvement with leftist politics. Though these historical ties were established before 2023, these two elements can explain why some of the community is invested in the pro-Palestine movement.

Scholarly research on public opinion is laden with theories regarding the determinants of foreign policy positions. Building upon Schwartz (1992), Hurwitz and Peffley (1987), and Rokeach (1972), Rathburn et al. find that Schwartz's categories of values— self-transcendence, self-enhancement, openness to change, and conservation— align with their respective foreign policy stances. Self-transcendence values like universalism (compassion for others) and benevolence (compassion for one's community) are tied to cooperative internationalism, an ideology which centers working together as allies and caring for those in other countries (Rathbun et al. 2016; Schwartz 1994). LGBTQIA+ involvement in the pro-Palestine movement in particular calls for universalism, self-transcendence and cooperative internationalism, seeing as the concern for people in the Middle East takes putting aside their usual discernment about other cultures' attitudes toward gay and trans people.

Leftist Politics

Leftist politics focus on “identity-based oppression,” (Flores-Robles et al. 2025, 22) including economic justice. Those who align with leftist concepts such as socialism, communism, and mutual aid fit this description (Yuri et al. 2021). Seeing as these are economic concepts and are associated with leftist politics, I refer to socialism, communism, and mutual aid as leftist political concepts.

As Rathbun et al. (2016) show, values can place people in different camps when it comes to foreign policy. Values can also dictate where people fall regarding their political orientations (Dimdins et al. 2023). LGBTQIA+ people on the left are of interest here. The left is composed of both liberals and leftists, but leftists reject the liberal order, while liberals value reform. Leftists do not associate themselves with liberals or the center left.

Not all leftists view the conflict as a racial struggle between those they see as non-white people, gentiles, and “white” Jews. However, some of the literature on the leftist political identity does frame the conflict as one about decolonization, or a story of native land that has been colonized by Jewish people, who some leftists view as white (Hersh and Royden 2023). This argument is central to the theoretical framework, for it is a possible link between leftists and the U.S. pro-Palestine protests today. It has been established that LGBTQIA+ people tend to be liberal (Worthen 2018). However, due to historical queer involvement in leftist political spaces, it is possible they are more likely to be leftist (Hekma 1995). Drawing on the theory of values-based public opinion, universalism is a self-transcendence value that leftists and liberals may be more likely to have (Jost, Goya-Tocchetto, and Kay 2023). In particular, leftists’ support of communism and socialism, two economic systems which theoretically guarantee economic

equality, and show a commitment to universalism. Cooperative internationalism is a foreign policy stance formed from these values.

Concepts such as mutual aid, communism, and socialism exist in the leftist political realm. Communism is an advanced form of socialism, and refers to a system in which the people own the means of production and consumption (Holzer 2015). Socialism is a broader term and aims for a society that uses public instead of private ownership (Britannica 2025). Mutual aid recently gained attention from Generation Z during the COVID-19 pandemic (Skyer, Roth and Reed 2025). It refers to the concept of community exchange of financial and material support.

LGBTQIA+ Commitment to Decolonization

The LGBTQIA+ community's commitment to decolonization could play a role in its support for Palestine. In Schwartz's values framework, this can be characterized as universalism (1992). The framing of Palestinians as a displaced indigenous people could motivate an otherwise indifferent community to become pro-Palestine.

"The Queer International" (TQI) is a term coined by Sarah Schulman, an anti-Zionist scholar, in reference to Joseph Massad's idea of the Gay International (Schulman 2012; Stelder 2018, 49). TQI is concerned with power structures that oppress people. This struggle resonates with other oppressed groups (Schulman 2012; Stelder 2018). Schulman views the conflict as a consequence of Jewish people's supposed colonization of Palestine. This idea of decolonization and imperialism may stem from Hamas's framing of the issue as a "Zionist" problem, as the Hamas charter from 1988 targets "Jews," "Judaism," "Israel," and "Zionists" (Yale Law n.d.). And so, to the LGBTQIA+ American students who support the pro-Palestine movement, Zionists

go against the self-transcendence value of universalism, and against cooperative internationalism.

I now delve into the survey part of this research, connecting decolonization and leftist political concepts, as discussed in this section, to the theories of values-based and bottom-up public opinion. Decolonization and leftist political concepts are viewed here as topics that require self-transcendence values to support. My hypotheses are: Because of the LGBTQIA+ community's commitment to decolonization, H1: Those who prioritize decolonization will believe in Palestinian (as opposed to Jewish) indigeneity. Second, because of LGBTQIA+ leftists' history of cooperative internationalism, H2: Those with leftist views will hold pro-Palestine beliefs.

Methodology

This thesis seeks to answer the question, “why are some American LGBTQIA+ university students pro-Palestine?” by examining the LGBTQIA+ commitment to decolonization and leftist politics via the theories of values-driven and bottom-up foreign policy views.

A common approach in research on public opinion on foreign policy is the use of surveys (Smeltz 2022; Almeida, Fernandes, and de Sá Guimarães 2021; Kasey, Crabtree, and Horiuchi 2024; Dimdins, Montgomery, and Sandgren 2023; Prather 2024). Additionally, the research question itself has to do with the LGBTQIA+ Americans students' participation in the movement after October 7. Thus, a survey is the preferable source of data collection. Interviews and

in-person experiments are too time-consuming and expensive (Rhee, Crabtree, and Horiuchi 2023).

Using qualitative and quantitative data from an 11-question survey of 54 subjects, this survey seeks to investigate LGBTQIA+ university student involvement in the pro-Palestine movement across the U.S. The size of the sample was determined by the study's time frame, as there happened to be 54 people who took the survey. To obtain the sampling frame, the thesis used the Campus Pride Index, an online tool which partners with GLAAD and the National LGBTQ Task Force. Not all schools responded in a timely manner, so I used a second resource: the Princeton Review's list of LGBTQIA+-friendly colleges (Princeton Review n.d.). The Campus Pride Index rates colleges from one to five stars, based on inclusivity of each university's policies and level of commitment to LGBTQIA+ belonging. Results were filtered using the site's five-, four-, and three-star options corresponding to each region. The regions were West, Southwest, Midwest, South, Mid-Atlantic, New England, and Alaska/Hawaii. No schools from the Alaska/Hawaii region were contacted because of their small populations. There was some overlap between the Index and the Princeton Review list. A total of 42 universities' LGBTQIA+ clubs were contacted via email, phone, and Instagram DM and sent a link to the survey. 19 college LGBTQIA+ clubs passed the link on to participants. The number of individuals who received the emails and messages were not counted, but the response rate of the schools was 45%.

This thesis uses quantitative analysis to analyze trends in participants' views, as well as thematic analysis via qualitative research of open-ended survey questions. All data used in the descriptive analysis section is listed in tables 1.6-2. The only encounter with (partial) non-response bias in this survey is the people who decided not to fill out the last two questions,

perhaps due to being in a hurry. Because this research happened over three weeks, no reliability tests were conducted. However, future studies should conduct reliability tests to ensure accuracy.

The survey is written with research on survey data in mind. While some scholars in the field claim that offering “don’t know” answers on surveys encourage people to truly think before they give up on choosing an answer (Pasek and Krosnick 2010; Mondak and Davis 2001), others dispel this, explaining that pushing for an answer other than “don’t know” forces them to guess (Sturgis, Allum, and Smith 2008). This thesis approaches this topic with a degree of caution. One survey question in this thesis uses the “don’t know” option.

Alwin and Beattie (2016) find that short, concise questions on surveys are most easily understood by participants. The longer the question, the less factual the respondents are in their answers. This survey uses that research to craft 11 concise questions. The full questionnaire appears on page 41.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Though the ideal sample size would have been over 100 participants, the time frame only produced 54. As such, the sample is not representative of the entire American LGBTQIA+ student population. It is unclear whether these trends exist across the entire American LGBTQIA+ university student community. However, future research could establish a clear pattern in a larger sample size. Another limitation is the timing of the survey—conducted almost two years after the start of the war, it is uncertain whether the correlations between variables and participants’ identification with the pro-Palestine movement will last.

Ethics

The survey was anonymized via Google Forms. To limit multiple responses, only one response per person was accepted, an option given on the Forms website. A consent question was asked at the beginning of the survey, reassuring participants that their answers would not be tied to them in any identifiable way. Research data was collected from Google Forms and placed into a Google Docs document, which was accessed via Google Drive. All data was collected using the participants' response numbers, never their names or emails.

One particular risk in this survey is coverage error. Coverage errors occur when some people are left out of the dataset due to how researchers go about sampling (Plutzer 2019). By contacting colleges' LGBTQIA+ groups directly to send out the survey, this thesis automatically excludes those who did not attend or sign up for notifications from the clubs. Only the most active participants in the schools' queer and trans groups contributed to the dataset.

Operationalizing traits and stances

This thesis investigates the potential relationship between involvement in the pro-Palestine movement, leftist political concepts (mutual aid, communism, and socialism), and views on decolonization, through the lens of bottom-up and values-driven public opinion (Rathbun et al. 2016; Kertzer and Zeitsoff 2017).

Question one asks participants for their consent. Question two asks about participants' gender identities and sexual orientations for demographic purposes. The possible responses are:

lesbian, bisexual, transgender, gay, pansexual, queer, asexual or aromantic, two-spirit, intersex, questioning, and other (write-in).

Questions three through eight are multiple-choice questions. Participants check the boxes they identify with, and each answer/box is assigned a specific number of points. The final score participants receive is called the pro-Palestine score. Answers aligning with the pro-Palestine movement score higher than answers not aligning with the movement. Some of these draw from the literature on decolonization and SJP and BDS websites, while other questions ask about participation in the movement.

Schulman's concept of The Queer International (2012) emphasizes LGBTQIA+ solidarity with groups of people who have faced similar hardships and struggled to gain their rights. LGBTQIA+ commitment to decolonization is historical (Hunt and Holmes 2015). SJP's website explicitly states they are against colonialism in all forms, alluding to their view of Palestinians as the sole indigenous people (National Students for Justice in Palestine n.d.). Given this, question three asks whether subjects believe Palestinians or Jews have a rightful claim to indigeneity in the land mass currently known as Israel-Palestine. Two pro-Palestine points are assigned to the answer "Palestinians," as this narrative is seen in the pro-Palestine movement (Schulman 2012). One point is assigned "both." Zero points are assigned to the answer "Jews."

Question four asks about protest and event attendance. One pro-Palestine point is assigned for "yes," (protest/event attendance) and zero points are assigned for "no," (no protest/event attendance) since attendance is a way of gauging involvement in the movement.

Some people who align with leftist politics hold anti-capitalist concepts like mutual aid, communism, and socialism in high regard (Holzer 2015). Queer people are involved in these politics because of their desire for a better world (Hekma 1995; Dimdins et al. 2023). The

literature on leftist politics, in conjunction with the political activity of past pro-Palestinian groups, informs question five (Fischbach 2020; Stoffel 2022). Participants select the concepts they believe would make the world a better place. These options are: “mutual aid,” “decolonization,” “communism,” “socialism,” and “none of these.” Out of these options, the term “decolonization” pulls from the literature on LGBTQIA+ commitment to indigenous causes. Because of the ties between leftist politics and the LGBTQIA+ community, asking about affiliation with these leftist political concepts is a way to test this relationship. In the context of bottom-up and values-driven public opinion theories on foreign policy, this question takes the value of universalism and assigns it to communism, socialism, and mutual aid. Thus, another point system is established: One leftist point is assigned for each of the three leftist concepts: communism, socialism, and mutual aid.

Question six asks participants about their political identity. Answers are “conservative,” “moderate,” “liberal,” or “left.” Once again, this question could either prove or disprove the relationship between the leftist identity and affiliation with the pro-Palestine movement. “Leftist” earns one leftist point, while “liberal,” “conservative,” and “moderate” earn zero.

Question seven asks who the participants think the responsibility of the events of October 7, 2023 lie with: “Israel, via the actions of the IDF,” “Palestine, via the actions of Hamas,” or “don’t know.” This is another question that will disprove or prove a correlation between the leftist score and the pro-Palestine score. Two pro-Palestine points are given for “Israel,” zero are given for “Palestine,” and zero are given for “don’t know.”

Question eight asks whether participants have taken part in the BDS movement. Answer options are “yes, and I still do,” “yes, but I stopped,” and “no.” This is used to prove or disprove

the leftist and pro-Palestine score correlation. Two pro-Palestine points are given for “yes, and I still do,” one is given for “yes, but I stopped,” and zero points are given for “no.”

Question nine asks, “If you feel a strong affinity with the pro-Palestine movement, how or why is your queerness/transness connected to this type of activism? (Brief answer, three sentences maximum).” The goal of this question is to answer the research question through the lens of self-transcendence values and a connection to indigeneity. There are no points assigned to questions nine and ten because these questions are not measured using quantitative analysis.

Question ten asks, “If you do not feel a strong affinity with the pro-Palestine movement, why not? (Brief answer, three sentences maximum).” It can confirm or deny the LGBTQIA+ connection to self-transcendence, and give insight as to whether people who identify with these values care about Palestine. Question 11 asks where participants go to school.

I ask these questions because it is puzzling that these self-transcendence values inspired action for Palestine, but not for similar conflicts happening in the same time frame (Russia/Ukraine, Yemen/Saudi Arabia, the Congo, with civilian deaths, starvation, and displacement). These questions can help give insight into participants’ thought processes and political identities. The goal is to get information about their beliefs, motives for protesting, and how they believe their identities as LGBTQIA+ people relate to their stance on this conflict.

The correlation between the leftist concepts score and the pro-Palestine score is analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient model. This allows the chart to show a line pointing upward, indicating a positive relationship between the two variables, or a line pointing downward, indicating a negative relationship between the two variables.

Responses to the qualitative questions (nine and ten) are analyzed via a bubble chart, depicting similarity between messages. The thematic elements, such as “colonized,” or “oppression,” are spaced according to their similarities and differences.

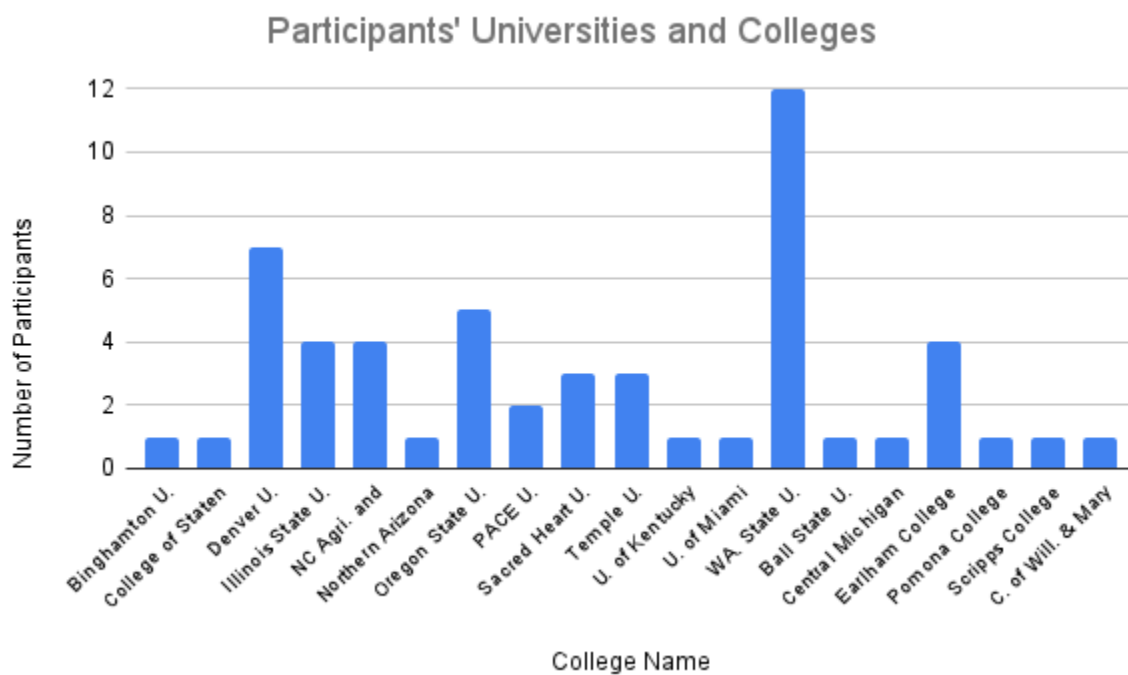


Figure 1.0

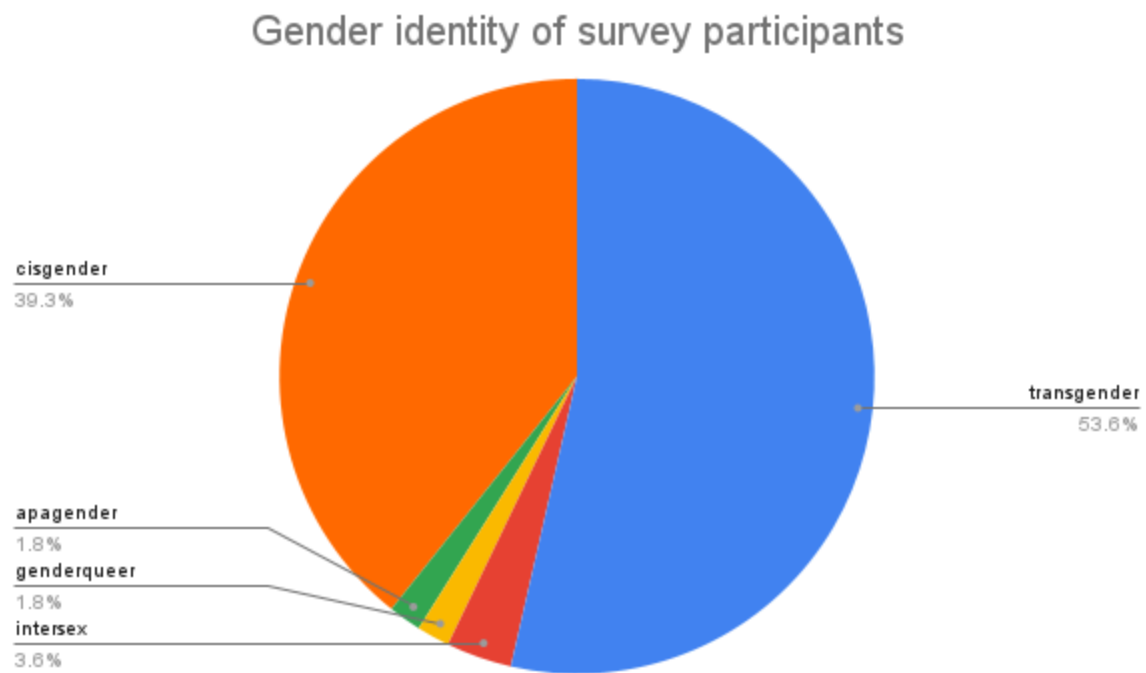


Figure 1.1 (Participants were allowed to choose multiple options. “Transgender” identity includes “nonbinary.”)

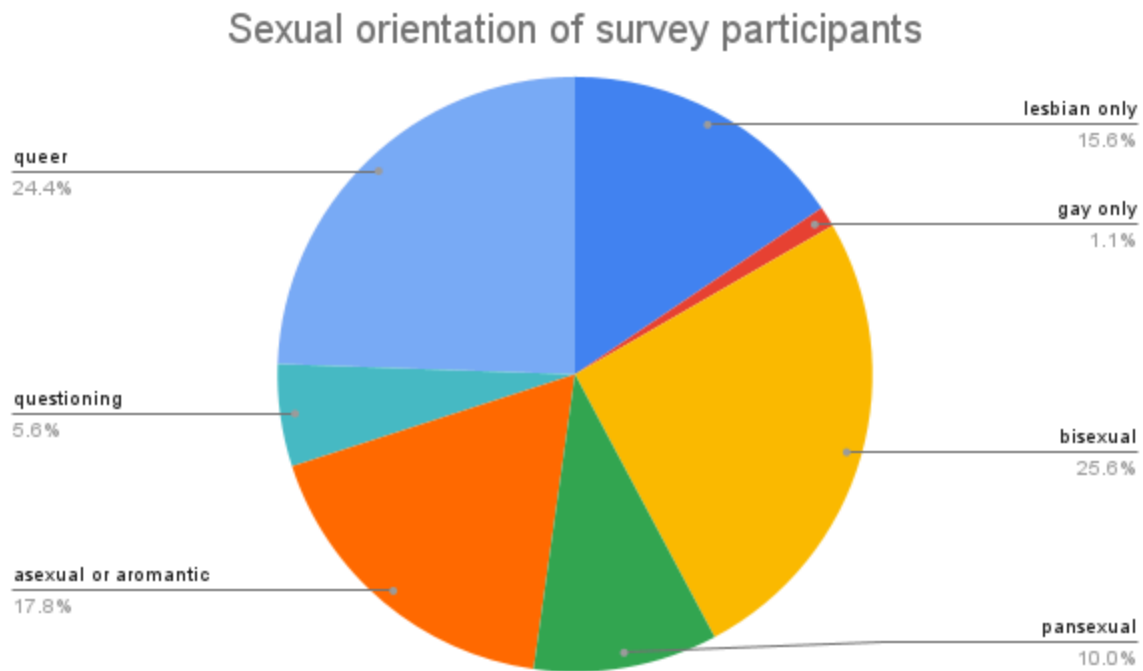


Figure 1.2 (participants were allowed to choose multiple options. Those who selected “lesbian” or “gay” along with another option, such as “queer,” were counted as “queer.”)

Quantitative data: H2

To answer the question “Why are some LGBTQIA+ American university students pro-Palestine?” this section on quantitative data aims to prove H2: Those with more leftist views will hold pro-Palestine beliefs. The Pearson correlation coefficient formula is used because its purpose is to evaluate a correlation between two variables (University of Texas Austin n.d.). In the Pearson correlation model, X represents each participant’s leftist score. This is calculated using the questions and point system in table 1.5. Y represents each participant’s pro-Palestine score, shown in Table 1.6. For the Pearson correlation equation, there is no independent or dependent variable, as this part of the data focuses on two variables which may influence one another or simply have a correlation. In the bigger picture, however, especially in regard to the

research question, the leftist score is the independent variable, while pro-Palestine scores are the dependent variables.

$$r = \frac{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Datasets for the 54 participants are entered into Google Sheets. R is calculated by plugging in the total leftist (x) and pro-Palestine scores (y) for each participant, along with the CORRELL function, applied to original data. $\bar{x}$ represents the sum of all x values, and $\bar{y}$ represents the sum of all y values. x_i represents an x value, while y_i represents a y value. All x and y values are plugged into the equation. See these values in table 1.4.

Because several of the sets were duplicates, adding a random multiplier to each data point resulted in a useful jitter offset (Random jitter for leftist scores: =B2+RAND()• 0.1; Random jitter for pro-Palestine: =C2+RAND()• 0.1). B2 and C2 correspond to the datasets for X and Y. R=0.96, showing a high, positive correlation between leftist and pro-Palestine scores. This can be seen in Figure 1.7.

Leftist scores and pro-Palestine scores (side-by-side)						
Response #	Leftist (1), liberal (0)	Communism (0,1)	Mutual aid (0,1)	Socialism (0,1)	Total leftist score	Pro-Palestine score
1	1	0	1	0	2	3
2	0	0	1	1	2	3

Leftist scores and pro-Palestine scores (side-by-side)						
3	1	1	1	1	4	3
4	1	0	1	1	3	7
5	1	0	1	0	2	4
6	1	0	1	0	2	4
7	1	0	1	1	3	4
8	1	1	1	1	4	7
9	1	0	1	0	2	7
10	0	0	0	0	0	4
11	1	0	1	1	3	6
12	1	0	1	1	3	7
13	1	0	1	0	2	6
14	0	0	1	0	1	2
15	1	0	1	1	3	5
16	0	0	1	0	1	1
17	1	0	1	1	3	4
18	1	0	1	1	3	6
19	1	0	1	1	3	7
20	1	0	1	1	3	7
21	1	0	1	1	3	6
22	1	0	1	1	3	4
23	0	0	1	1	2	6
24	1	1	1	1	4	7
25	0	0	1	1	2	6
26	1	0	1	1	3	7
27	1	0	1	0	2	5

Leftist scores and pro-Palestine scores (side-by-side)						
28	1	1	1	1	4	6
29	1	0	1	1	3	1
30	1	0	1	0	2	5
31	0	0	1	1	2	7
32	0	0	1	1	2	3
33	1	0	1	0	2	1
34	0	0	1	1	2	1
35	1	0	1	1	3	1
36	0	0	1	0	1	3
37	1	0	1	1	3	7
38	0	0	1	1	2	4
39	0	0	1	1	2	3
40	0	0	1	1	2	4
41	1	0	1	1	3	7
42	0	0	0	1	1	3
43	1	0	1	1	3	6
44	0	0	1	0	1	5
45	1	0	1	1	3	7
46	1	0	1	1	3	7
47	1	0	1	1	3	6
48	1	0	1	1	3	6
49	1	0	1	0	2	7
50	1	1	1	1	4	5
51	0	0	1	1	2	5
52	1	1	1	1	4	6

Leftist scores and pro-Palestine scores (side-by-side)						
53	0	0	1	0	1	1
54	0	0	1	1	2	7

Table 1.4

Leftist Scoring Method				
Do you believe, if adopted, that the following concepts would make the world a better place (check all that apply)?	Mutual aid: 1 point	Communism: 1 point	Socialism: 1 point	Total score (ranging from 0-4)

Table 1.5

Pro-Palestine Scoring Method	
Question 2: Who do you believe has a rightful claim to indigeneity in the land mass currently known as Israel-Palestine?	Both: 1, Jews: 0, Palestinians: 2
Question 3: Have you attended a pro-Palestine protest or event in the last two years?	Yes: 1, No: 0
Question 8: Do you feel the responsibility for	Israel, via the actions of the IDF: 2, Palestine,

Pro-Palestine Scoring Method	
the events of October 7, 2023 lies primarily with:	via the actions of Hamas: 0, Don't know: 0
Question 9: Have you taken part in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement?	Yes, but I stopped: 1, Yes, and I still do: 2, No: 0
Total score	(ranging from 0-7)

Table 1.6

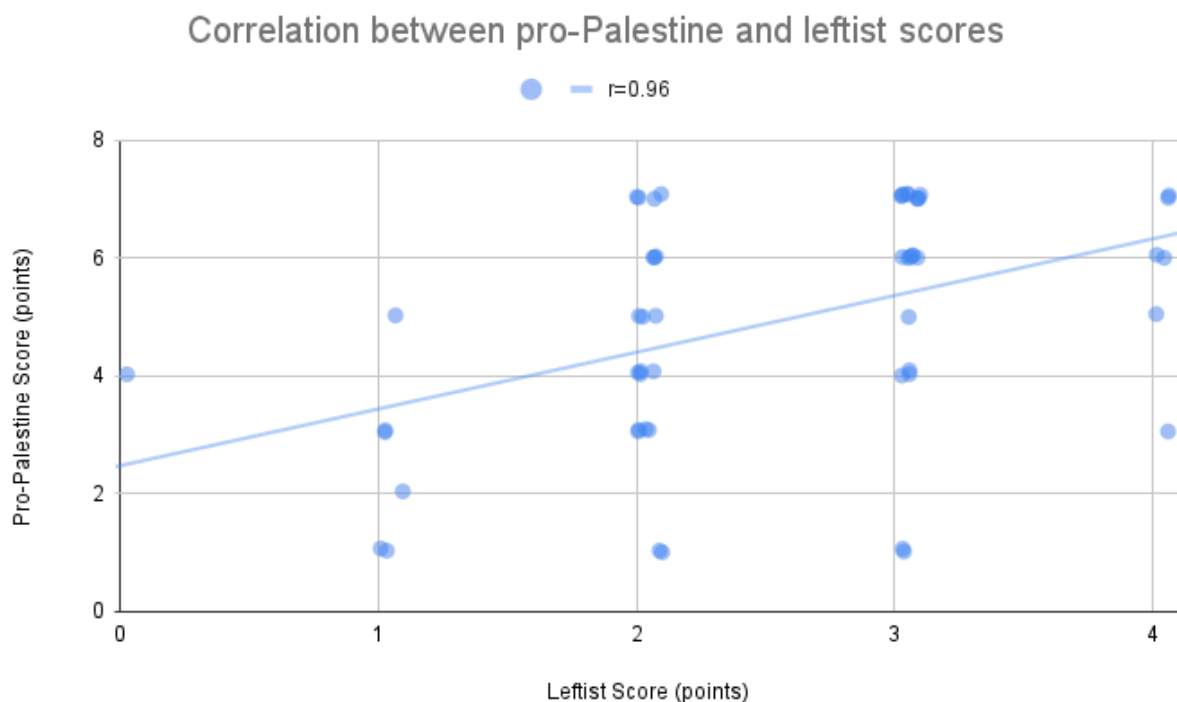


Figure 1.7: pro-Palestine scores and leftist scores

One potential limit to this model and equation is the small sample size. In larger studies, the data points may be clustered closer together as opposed to being spread far apart. However, Pearson is the correct model, because others, such as Kendall's Tau, are only for nonlinear relationships.

More than half of the participants scored 5-7 points on the pro-Palestine test, indicating a solid pro-Palestine stance. The high positive correlation between pro-Palestine and leftist scores proves, at least in this small sample, that LGBTQIA+ people's leftist scores increase in relation to their pro-Palestine views. This confirms H2: Those with more leftist views will hold pro-Palestine beliefs.

Quantitative data: H1

To calculate the scores for belief in indigeneity, this survey utilizes Google Forms results, taken from answers to multiple-choice questions. It also uses simple arithmetic, most often division, to divide the demographics into separate ratios based on protest attendance and other factors. For this question, belief in Palestinian indigeneity is the independent variable, while pro-Palestine scores are the dependent variable.

Descriptive analysis

Indigeneity and decolonization

In the survey, opinions on indigeneity leaned more toward Palestinians. 54.55% said indigeneity belonged solely to Palestinians, while 45.45% believed both Jewish and Palestinian people were indigenous. Additionally, Palestinian indigeneity signaled protest/event attendance: Of those who had attended a pro-Palestine event in the last two years (61.1%), 63.64% believed

only Palestinians were indigenous. 14.81% of total participants had not attended, but believed only Palestinians were indigenous. The drive of LGBTQIA+ students to defend what they view as indigeneity seems to motivate them to protest and attend events.

Decolonization was prioritized among participants. Respondents who supported decolonization (90.7%) outnumbered those who did not support decolonization (9.26%, including one moderate). In this study, LGBTQIA+ individuals cared about decolonization and indigeneity, confirming their self-transcendence values. 57.41% of all participants believed only Palestinians were indigenous *and* thought decolonization would make the world a better place. Those who said both Jewish and Palestinian people were indigenous and that decolonization would make the world a better place made up 33.33% of the sample. 0% said the same about decolonization while also selecting Jews as the only indigenous people. This confirms H1: Those who prioritize decolonization will believe in Palestinian (as opposed to Jewish) indigeneity.

In summation, the sample as a whole did support decolonization, believed Palestinians had at least some right to the land, and attended protests. Schulman (2012)’s TQI, Rathbun et al. (2016) and Kertzer and Zeitzoff (2017)’s values-oriented and bottom-up public opinion theories can explain this self-transcendence and care for the cause. In comparison to the above data, a Pew Research survey found that 33% of American young adults were more sympathetic toward Palestinians (Silver 2024). While my study does not measure sympathy, indigeneity may confirm who participants view as worthy of sympathy and support.

Views on decolonization correlating to indigeneity	
World would be better with more decolonization, considered only Palestinians to be indigenous	31 respondents

Views on decolonization correlating to indigeneity	
World would be better with more decolonization, considered both Jewish and Palestinian people to be indigenous	18 respondents
World would be better with more decolonization, only Jews indigenous	0 respondents
World would be better with more decolonization, total	49 respondents
Did not think the world would be better with more decolonization	5 respondents

Table 1.8

Protest/event attendance and views on indigeneity of Palestinian and Jewish people	
Had not attended at least one pro-Palestine event/protest over the past two years, both Palestinians and Jews indigenous	13 respondents
Did attend at least one pro-Palestine event/protest, both Palestinian and Jewish people indigenous	12 respondents
Had not attended at least one pro-Palestine event/protest, only Palestinians indigenous	8 respondents
Did attend at least one pro-Palestine event/protest, only Palestinians indigenous	21 respondents

Table 1.9

Qualitative analysis

This section of the thesis uses thematic analysis of questions 10 and 11 to discover trends. It takes an inductive approach, comparing the results to the hypotheses. Those who felt they had an affinity with the pro-Palestine movement had a wide range of themes, though there was some overlap. Those who felt they did not have an affinity with the movement generally said that they did not know enough about the conflict to participate in the movement. The following analysis categorizes themes among both groups.

Strong affinity (represented by Figure 2.1)

Oppression of Palestinians

In total, 41 people had an affinity with the pro-Palestine movement. The oppression of Palestinians was a common theme. While some respondents said their queerness or transness was linked to Palestinians' struggle for freedom, others expressed that their queerness or transness was separate from the way they viewed the conflict. In the words of one respondent, "I strongly feel that if I am to be liberated from the forms of oppression that I face, then others should be too." Overall, participants cared about those who, in their eyes, experienced colonization. This survey data shows that most of the sample cared about this conflict even though it was happening across the world. Participants were able to apply universalism and cooperative internationalism to people of Palestine.

Queer struggles linked to Palestinian struggles

Four people mentioned their oppression as queer people in relation to the oppression of Palestinians. One elaborated, saying oppressors believe they are “immortal [sic] or righteous” and carry out acts of violence on the oppressed. Perhaps subconsciously, these respondents see the conflict through the lens of “oppressed” and “oppressor.” This supports the notion that LGBTQIA+ people, especially leftists, join social movements to attempt to annihilate forms of oppression (Flores-Robles et al. 2025), and could be seen as universalism. It confirms Schulman’s concept of the Queer International (Schulman 2012; Stelder 2018) and a commitment to solidarity.

Connection to U.S. politics

Four respondents connected the concept of oppression of Palestinians to events in the U.S. Two in particular mentioned the oppression of minorities, likening the Palestinian struggle to the discrimination and attacks that non-white and LGBTQIA+ people face. This confirms the idea of cooperative internationalism (Schwartz 1992; Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), is a word that describes the ways different facets of a person’s identity intersect. In the context of the survey, two respondents said intersectionality could be applied to the struggle of Palestinians. Considering how left-leaning most participants were, it is not surprising that the concept came up in responses (Asmelash 2023).

Other responses

There were a few elements that did not overlap with more prominent themes. One individual said the conflict was the result of people's bigotry. Several viewed the conflict as Israel committing a genocide. One participant said the conflict reminded them of the Martin Niemöller quote "First They Came," a confession from a former Nazi supporter who regretted his silence during the Holocaust (Holocaust Encyclopedia 2023). Respondents with a strong affinity with the pro-Palestine movement had a variety of reasons for their solidarity. Not every participant answered the short answer questions.

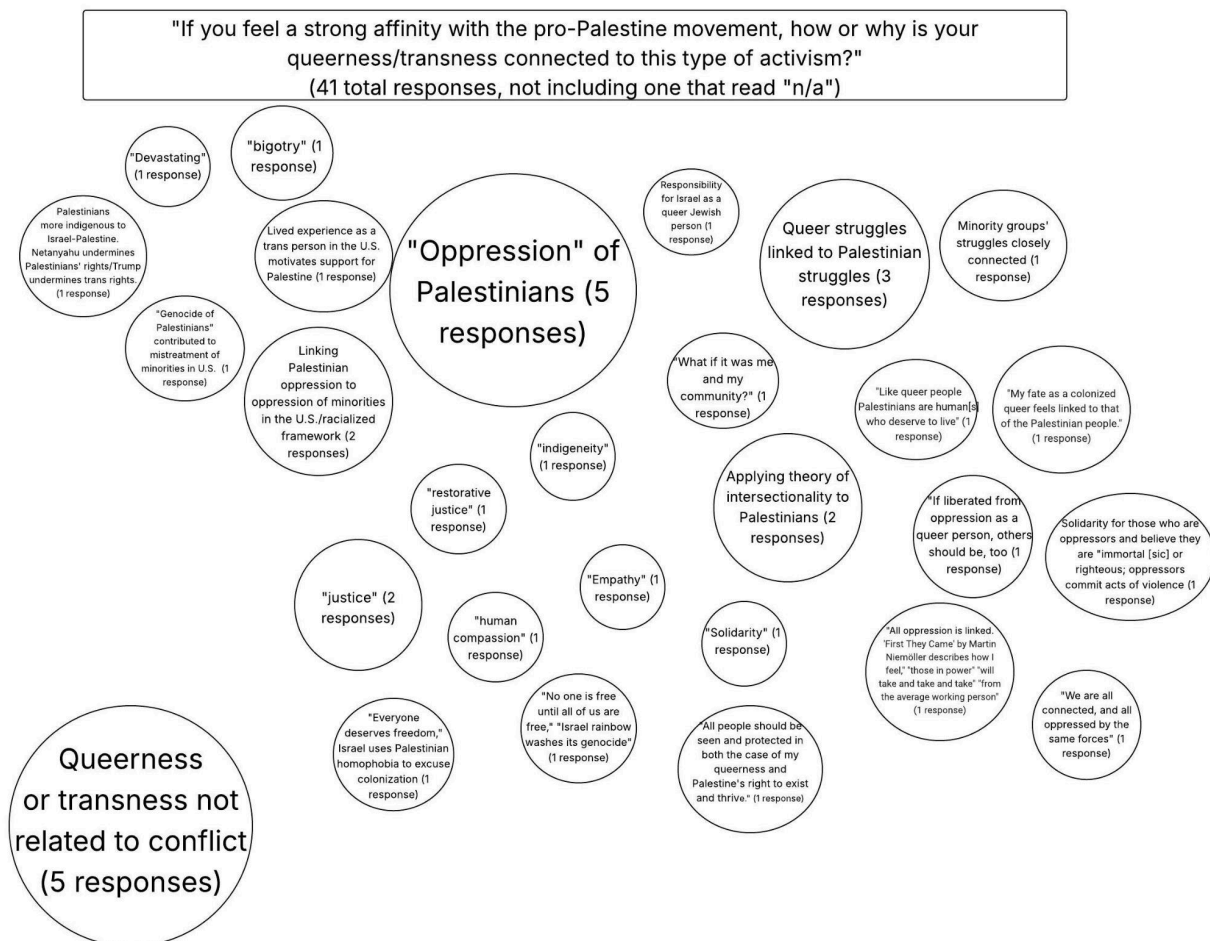


Figure 2.1

No strong affinity

Not enough information about the conflict

In total, seven people selected this option. Four people expressed that they did not know enough about Israel-Palestine. One of these respondents said they lean toward the Palestinian side, though they see “evil on both sides.” Another believed “nobody should be killed.” Some participants chose to draw parallels between Palestinians and American minorities. Others mentioned they did not feel an affinity for the movement because Hamas targets civilians. One of these respondents recognized Hamas’s anti-LGBTQIA+ extremism, yet believed Israel’s response was disproportionate. In summation, most respondents to this question felt they did not have enough information about the conflict.

Overall, the support for Palestine is expected, because there is a clear prioritization of self-transcendence applied to this conflict. However, if the American LGBTQIA+ student community’s values can explain their commitment to leftist politics and decolonization, and thus their foreign policy stances, why is there no outrage over other conflicts similar to Israel and Palestine? Russia’s war with Ukraine, for example, did not drive LGBTQIA+ students to pitch tents on university lawns. There seems to be a missing puzzle piece, though both hypotheses were confirmed.

Conclusion

This thesis explored a recent phenomenon: involvement in the pro-Palestine movement among LGBTQIA+ American college students following the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas. Using survey responses from 54 participants and theory on public opinion, it tested the prevalence of leftist politics and decolonization. The Pearson correlation coefficient model proved a high positive correlation between leftist scores and pro-Palestine scores. For the more descriptive aspect of this thesis, I conducted qualitative research using thematic analysis on open-ended survey answers, and found a divide between those who view their trans or queer identity as a reason to join the pro-Palestine movement and those who view it as separate from joining. This survey does show signs of high support for the movement compared to most young American adults.

My work builds upon Rathbun et al. (2016) and Kertzer and Zeitzoff (2017)'s theories of bottom-up and values-based public opinion on foreign policy. It confirms both hypotheses, H1: Those who prioritize decolonization will believe in Palestinian (as opposed to Jewish) indigeneity, and H2: Those with more leftist views will hold pro-Palestine beliefs.

The main finding was that most participants supported the self-transcendence value of universalism. However, Palestine is the one foreign policy issue that LGBTQIA+ people have come together to support to this degree, despite its leadership's clear stance on gay and trans people. While this research aimed to solve the puzzle, only future research looking back on the movement will unravel the mystery.

Limitations

Though this study covered a new phenomenon and contributed somewhat to the political science world, it was extremely limited in its scope, outreach, and findings. It would have benefited from a larger sample size to test more social and political trends related to views on Palestine. Furthermore, more answer options to the survey questions would have made room for more variety across the data.

In addition, this thesis used the Pearson correlation coefficient model to prove one hypothesis. A better study would have measured multiple correlating factors, not just leftist and pro-Palestine scores. Finally, a comprehensive survey would have included a breakdown of demographics such as women and men as well as transgender and cisgender.

Future Research

This thesis uses pre-existing theories of public opinion to establish and investigate a phenomenon. It connects these theories to the Israel-Palestine conflict, and may prepare future researchers to look into the LGBTQIA+ community's opinions on other foreign issues. It focuses on this demographic's commitment to self-transcendence values, which could open the door for more studies on the political psychology of LGBTQIA+ people. Societally, it brings awareness to LGBTQIA+ involvement in the pro-Palestine movement.

Future research should investigate the psychological pull toward the pro-Palestine cause, as well as political factors that lead a person to support the movement. Scholars of sociology and

LGBTQIA+ studies should also cover this topic, as it is brand new. Even from a political science perspective, there is much more to be learned and discovered.

Larger studies should test the relationships outlined in this thesis, particularly the correlation between leftist politics and the pro-Palestine stance. Additionally, they should look into other traits outlined by Schwartz (1992) and test those against other social and political movements.

Appendix: Survey Questions

1. Disclaimer: Your participation in this survey will remain anonymous. Your data will not be saved, and any written answers will not be tied to you as an individual-- they are for research purposes only.

☐ Check here if you understand and consent.

2. Please check the boxes that you feel best match your identity at this moment in time.

☐ Lesbian

☐ Gay

☐ Bisexual

☐ Pansexual

☐ Transgender

☐ Queer

☐ Asexual or aromantic

☐ Two-spirit

☐ Intersex

☐ Questioning

☐ Other...

3. Who do you believe has a rightful claim to indigeneity in the land mass currently known as Israel-Palestine?

☐ Palestinians

☐ Jews

- ☐ Both
4. Have you attended a pro-Palestine protest or event in the last two years?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
5. Do you believe, if adopted, that the following concepts would make the world a better place (check all that apply)?
- ☐ Mutual aid
- ☐ Decolonization
- ☐ Communism
- ☐ Socialism
- ☐ None of these
6. How would you define your political identity?
- ☐ Left
- ☐ Liberal
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ Conservative
7. Do you feel the responsibility for the events of October 7, 2023 lies primarily with:
- ☐ Israel, via the actions of the IDF
- ☐ Palestine, via the actions of Hamas
- ☐ Don't know
8. Have you taken part in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement?

☐ Yes, but I stopped

☐ Yes, and I still do

☐ No

9. If you feel a strong affinity with the pro-Palestine movement, how or why is your queerness/transness connected to this type of activism? (Brief answer, three sentences maximum).
10. If you do not feel a strong affinity with the pro-Palestine movement, why not? (Brief answer, three sentences maximum).
11. What university or college are you attending?

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