



## **TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES**

### **Same-Sex Marriage Legislation in the United States and Television Series: An Analysis of *Glee***

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## **Abstract**

Same-sex marriage was legalized in the United States in 2015 as a consequence of a shift in the public opinion regarding its acceptance. This shift coincided with the emergence of television series with LGBT characters in leading roles. The objective of this project is to examine the positive effect that one of these series, *Glee*, might have had in that legalization. For this purpose, the most relevant theoretical approaches, such as those based in the contact hypothesis or the parasocial interaction theory, have been analyzed. This analysis has led to the conclusion that there is an agreement on the beneficial effects of televised depictions of homosexual characters, albeit recognizing that this exposure is not the only factor responsible for the shift in public opinion.

**Keywords:** *Glee*, same-sex marriage, public opinion, parasocial interaction, contact hypothesis.

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## 1. Introduction

The choice for my final project has been motivated by the dramatic changes that have recently taken place in both the legal treatment of same-sex unions in the United States, and in the depiction of LGBT characters in films and in television fiction. Roughly since the election of Barack Obama as president in 2008, the political landscape has completely transformed. Just a decade ago, gay marriage had no public support neither from the leaders of the republican or democrat parties, nor from the public opinion. Because of that, the prospect of the legalization of same-sex marriage in the whole country seemed implausible to me, and yet that happened in 2015. Also, regarding the characterization of homosexual characters, as Albertson puts it in *A Perfect Union? Television and the Winning of Same-Sex Marriage*:

Gay men and lesbians had appeared sporadically on broadcast network television throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but were relegated to guest stars and one-off special episodes (Becker, 2006; Walters, 2001). And, as media historian Steven Capsuto notes, they typically fell into two categories: “violent sociopaths and saintly victims of prejudice.” (5)

That is not the case anymore. Since the beginning of the new millennium, television viewers have witnessed the appearance of gay and lesbian characters who do not fall into those two categories; *Will & Grace*, *Modern Family* and *Glee*, to name just a few, entered the mainstream with leading gay and lesbian characters whose roles were more appealing and relatable to the general public. Or, at least, not less so than those of their heterosexual counterparts.

Indeed, the changes alluded to are reflected in multiple opinion polls, which provide a particularly interesting insight into the topic of this assignment: in the mid-nineties, these polls, as will be discussed in section 3.2. (“Public opinion shift”), showed that more than 60% of Americans opposed same-sex marriage; in 2015, more than 60% approved it. A reversal of this magnitude in such a short period of time cannot be explained by a single factor, and a full-scale analysis of the causes for that would go far beyond the purpose of this

project. However, popular culture has always been a galvanizer for political change, and, when it comes to same-sex marriage, it has certainly been no different. The exploration of this fact has been one of the key points in this TFG.

Academically speaking, I have taken into consideration the significance that gender and queer studies have attained by becoming extremely influential in the last decades. Gender studies are nowadays part of the curriculum of all the top learning institutions in the Western world and generate an enormous amount of interdisciplinary critical debate among scholars. This debate permeates not only all sorts of academic fields, but also a multitude of social institutions and, most relevantly for this project, it is now irreversibly incorporated into the agenda of most political parties and campaigns.

Concerning the relationship of this TFG with relevant courses in the degree of *Estudios Ingleses*, the first that comes to mind is *Mundos Anglófonos en Perspectiva Histórica y Cultural*, which, among other topics, offers a political and historical description of the United States. Same-sex marriage, though, was not in the syllabus when I took that course, but the political and legal structure of the United States was. This structure is relevant because it allowed some states, as was the case of Massachusetts, to put forward an independent legislation on marriage years before other states, or the federal government, did so. Also, the courses *Comentario Literario de Textos Ingleses* and, especially, *Género y Literatura en los Países de Habla Inglesa*, offered helpful tools for the understanding and analysis of literary and non-literary texts where gender and sexuality are thoroughly discussed.

This TFG has its focus on the impact that popular culture has had on the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States. Popular culture encompasses a great variety of manifestations, and I have narrowed it down to television series. These series can reach very large audiences and, as a consequence, they are also potentially capable of prompting behavioral and attitudinal changes in a large number of citizens. This project analyzes the opinion-switching capabilities of those series in which same-sex characters and same-sex marriages are central to their plots. It also analyzes how these capabilities could have affected the legislative changes that led to an equal marriage bill being adopted nationwide. In order to keep this objective within the scope of a TFG, I have limited my case study to a single series, *Glee*. This

series addresses the topic of same-sex marriage directly, and has achieved considerable popularity. In addition, its run has coincided with the advancement of the political recognition of same-sex marriage in the US. For these reasons, *Glee* is the cultural manifestation that suits this project best.

With this in mind, the hypothesis of this project is that the TV series *Glee* has exerted a positive influence on the normalization and legalization of same-sex marriage. In order to develop this hypothesis, the first order of business has been to investigate the state of the art. It has come to no surprise that there is a considerable number of academic works which have been very useful in my analysis of *Glee*: the interaction between same-sex marriage and TV series in general has been extensively scrutinized by authors and critics. Also, as the sources I have made use of show, the series *Glee* is specifically included in the explorations of many of those scholars. None of these sources, however, provide an analysis that is centered on the exploration of *Glee* and its effects on the legalization of same-sex marriage. This is precisely what this TFG is about. In other words, the conclusions of this project have been reached by using those sources in order to put *Glee* center stage, not diluted in a melting pot with other series as the current state of the art has it. The objective, therefore, has been to put forward an original analysis that would lead to the validation, or not, of the hypothesis that has been formulated.

I have considered that the most appropriate initial approach to the topic of this project is to provide an outline of the history of same-sex marriage in the United States. This makes sense because, in a way, the US history and the plot that unfolds in *Glee* can be read as two parallel stories that take place in different scenarios but, at the same time, contain multiple contact points that make them intertwine. During Barack Obama's presidency, the nation was exposed to an intense political and social discussion of same-sex marriage. This was, in turn, reflected in the depiction of same-sex marriage in *Glee*. As a result, *Glee* cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration the way its storyline is anchored in the reality of its time and country. For this reason, section 3.1. ("Outline and plot"), which follows the historical context, is dedicated to outlining the series' plot by focusing on the subplot that deals with same-sex marriage. At the same time, that section highlights the "meeting points" of reality and fiction.

The methodology required, as its first step, a critical viewing of the series' 121 episodes. Each segment that has been deemed significant for the specific purposes of this project has been singled out. The next step has been to search for, and compile, an adequate bibliography for my analysis, which required a careful selection process. In this process, I have tried to make sure that the opinions and arguments of the scholars and authors that I contrast provide a multiplicity of points of view and come from varied theoretical approaches. Certainly, my hypothesis claims that the influence *Glee* has exerted is positive, but no conclusion could be considered of any value if I did not provide contrasting arguments in my analysis.

The government and lawmakers of America would not have undertaken the task of legalizing such a socially controversial issue as same-sex marriage without the backing of the public opinion. Given the importance of this, the next section ("3.2. Public opinion shift") is entirely dedicated to provide the evidence that supports this shift. What follows then is the analysis of the theory and literature that serves as the backbone for this project, and the exploration of the conclusions that the scholarly debate has provided. In the last subsection ("3.4. Making a difference"), I have explored how some scholars tackle the possibility that, aside from influencing their audience's opinions, TV series can also have a direct effect on the actual implementation of same-sex marriage legislation. Finally, after this analysis, my own conclusions follow.

## **2. Same-sex marriage in the United States. A brief history**

### **2.1. Legal framework and first attempts**

In order to make sense of the history of same-sex marriage in the United States, it is necessary to understand the political framework within which it has evolved. The supreme law of the United States is the federal Constitution, but, as a federation of fifty states, each individual state also has its own constitution. As Mauk and Oakland points out in *American Civilization: An Introduction*:

The USA has a hierarchy of law. The federal Constitution is the country's supreme law. Acts of Congress signed by the President as well as state and local laws must conform to it. State and local laws must in addition

conform to the state constitution. This legal hierarchy led the federal Supreme Court to assume the role of final interpreter of the US constitution through “judicial review.” (118)

All fifty states have their own civil codes in their constitutions, which means that they all have their own legislations concerning marriage. The federal Constitution does not explicitly mention equality marriage in its wording. However, the Fourteenth Amendment contains the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause. These clauses combine to state the following: “...nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” These clauses, eventually, turned out to be crucial in the legal battle for the adoption of same-sex marriage in all the states of the Union, as will be explained below.

In 1993, as Hirshman explains in *Victory: The Triumphant Gay Revolution*:

Hawaii became the first state in history to rule in favor of same-sex marriage. The ban, the court held, violated the equal-protection clauses of the state constitution (...) The opponents of same-sex marriage went ballistic, fearing that two judges on the supreme court of a bunch of islands could impose same-sex marriage in every one of these United States. This was not crazy; the federal Constitution requires that “full faith and credit shall be given in each state to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of every other state.” States have some leeway to reject a sister state’s proceedings if they violate local public policy, *but states usually recognize marriage judgments*. That’s why teenagers from Dogpatch could enforce their marriages in the heart of Manhattan and why people used to fly to Nevada for a few weeks and come back divorced. The country was confronted with the prospect of planeloads of homosexuals returning to Utah from Hawaii with suntans and wedding bands. (ch. 8; emphasis added)

This ruling in Hawaii, and the fear, amongst same-sex marriage opponents, that it could lead to same-sex spouses claiming the same federal benefits as all married couples, led to the passing of the Defense of Married Act (DOMA) in 1996. This was a United States federal law that, for federal purposes, defined



marriage solely as the union of a man and a woman. This law, significantly enough, was signed by President Bill Clinton, a democrat. DOMA, however, didn't have any effect on the states' legislative capabilities. In the following years, the same-sex marriage debate was in full force all over the country, and legal battles were fought in almost every state. Some states legalized same-sex unions, but many others banned them in their constitutions.

## **2.2. The Obama years**

When Barack Obama became President of the United States in January 2009, only two states, Massachusetts and Connecticut, allowed same-sex marriages. It is worth mentioning here that in May of that year, the first episode of *Glee* aired on the Fox network. And it is also interesting to point out that, as Stanton remarked in a 2008 article (when Obama was still a presidential candidate): “As yet, NO presidential candidate has endorsed gay marriage, even though sizable portions of Democratic primary voters do. Barack Obama opposes it due, he says, to his Christian beliefs.”

Despite his initial rejection of gay marriage, Obama was a public defender of LGBT rights. Stemming from the Clinton presidency, the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy denied serving members of the armed forces to talk openly about their homosexual orientation and barred anyone who did from joining the military. Obama had opposed this policy as a presidential candidate, and, in December 2010, he signed the bill that repealed it.

Obama’s changing opinion on this matter culminated in May 2012, when he became the first President of the United States to unambiguously voice his full support for same-sex marriage. In a *Time.com* article, Katy Steinmetz wrote:

After Vice President Joe Biden announces his support for same-sex marriage, Obama is forced to move up a planned announcement of his change in position. In an interview with ABC’s Robin Roberts, Obama says he has changed his mind. “At a certain point,” he said, “I’ve just concluded that — for me personally, it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that — I think same-sex couples should be able to get married.”

In 2013, in a very significant civil rights case (*United States v. Windsor*), the Supreme Court of the United States overturned the section of the DOMA that had denied the federal recognition of same-sex marriages. This ruling declared that the interpretation of the terms “marriage” and “spouse” to refer only to opposite-sex partners was unconstitutional under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Finally, in June 26, 2015, in another civil rights case, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Supreme Court ruled that the fundamental right to marry applied also to same-sex marriages, and, therefore, any state ban against them was unconstitutional. With that ruling, same-sex marriage was, from then on, legal nationwide. Obama applauded that decision. On that same day, he proclaimed: “Today we can say in no uncertain terms that we have made our union a little more perfect.”

One of the states that were affected by the *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling was Ohio, the state where *Glee* is set. Until then, only marriages between a man and a woman were legal there. The fictional gay marriages in *Glee* aired four months before that court ruling. These marriages had to be performed in a different state, just like they would have to be in real life. This is just one example of *Glee*’s frequent juxtapositions of reality and fiction that were mentioned in the introduction above. A further exploration of these juxtapositions is developed in section 3.1. (“Outline and plot”).

### **3. A case study: *Glee***

*Glee* was not the first American TV show that featured gay characters in leading roles. In 1997, *Ellen*, a very popular sitcom, saw the first primetime character declare her homosexuality. Ellen DeGeneres, who played the main role, also came out in real life. This created a great amount of controversy about the morality of homosexuality and about the exposure of gay characters on TV shows. In fact, the public outcry prompted ABC, the show’s broadcaster, to place a parental advisory at the beginning of each subsequent episode. The ratings of the following season dropped and then the show was cancelled. This pioneering show was almost immediately followed by *Will & Grace*, a very

successful series in which two of the main characters were openly gay. After that, gay couples became increasingly common in primetime television in shows like *Six Feet Under*, *Orange is the New Black*, *Queer as Folk*, *Modern Family*, and many others. *Glee* also achieved great popularity. It received multiple awards, including two Golden Globe awards for Best Television Series – Musical or Comedy. Many of its episodes featured famous guest actors, such as Gwyneth Paltrow, Britney Spears, Gloria Estefan, Carol Burnett, Whoopi Goldberg, Ricky Martin, and many others. The cast also released several soundtrack albums that reached number one in many countries. In sum, since the end of the nineteen nineties there has been an unprecedented presence of homosexual characters on television, which have had the result of erasing the invisibility of this collective from the public view. *Glee* has been a prominent example of this new trend.

### **3.1. Outline and plot**

*Glee* aired on the Fox network between 2009 and 2015. The series consists of six seasons and 121 episodes. Aimed primarily at a young audience, this musical comedy focuses on the lives of a group of outcast teenage students at a fictional high school in Ohio. However, the topics it addresses go far beyond its comedic surface. The main characters are all categorized as "outsiders" for a variety of reasons, which include not being heterosexuals (gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders), belonging to non-white ethnic groups (Blacks, Asians, Latinos, Jews), or having a physical or intellectual disability. For these reasons, they are routinely bullied by other students. The Glee club, a music club, is the space that joins them together under the guidance of their teacher, Will Schuester (performed by Matthew Morrison). In the Glee club, music serves both as a medium for expressing the students' feelings and as an exploration of the issues that are dealt with in each episode.

The plot revolves around Mr. Schuester's attempts at keeping the Glee club alive despite the attempts made by another teacher, Sue Sylvester (Jane Lynch), to eliminate it. In order to save it, the students must compete against other glee clubs in local and national show choir contests and keep winning

awards. They need to be successful so that the school principal can ascertain the value of the club, which is constantly on the brink of being dismantled.

Many controversial social issues are explored in *Glee*, such as bullying, teenage pregnancy, domestic abuse, abortion, school shootings, suicide, etc. Same-sex marriage is one such prominent issue, as it affects the lives of several of its leading characters. *Glee's* treatment of this matter evolves substantially as the plot advances, and it becomes much more relevant in the final two seasons. As a consequence, this paper also examines the evolution of this process.

Among the *Glee* club students, three of them are homosexuals: two boys, Kurt Hummel (performed by Chris Colfer) and Blaine Anderson (Darren Criss), and a girl, Santana Lopez (Naya Rivera). In addition, Brittany Pierce (Heather Morris) is bisexual. In the beginning, none of them are open about their sexuality, and this is their major struggle at this point. For the first two seasons, therefore, the sexuality of the characters is openly addressed, but same-sex marriage is only mentioned in rare instances. One such instance occurs in the episode "Original Song" (season 2; episode 16), when three judges for a show choir contest discuss a duet that has been performed by two boys. One of the judges remarks: "My hairdresser is a gay, and for fifteen years, he's been with his partner, also a hairdresser. I see no reason why they shouldn't be allowed to marry and raise a family of beautiful wigs." To that, another judge replies: "Oh, boys shouldn't do a duet. The last thing we need to do is send a message to children that 'gay is okay.' It is not a legitimate lifestyle, and last time I checked, it's not in the Constitution." The reason why same-sex marriage is still not a major theme during the first two seasons is the character development of the gay students. For now, they are still coming to terms with how to integrate their sexual identities into their social world.

Coming out as gay is one of the main challenges that the homosexual boys and girls have to deal with in the first place. All of them have to tackle this challenge from their own personal circumstances, and this is not always a straightforward task. Coming out is not an easy choice for Kurt, particularly, as he is verbally and physically abused by the very masculine boys in the football team. Not only is Kurt an effeminate boy, but he is also a member of the *Glee* club, which makes him one of the primary targets of their violence. One of the

most aggressive and threatening characters towards Kurt is David Karofsky (Max Adler), a member of the football team who constantly insults him with homophobic slurs and makes his existence miserable. Ironically, Karofsky is revealed as being also a closeted gay who is deeply troubled with himself and cannot accept the disclosure of his homosexuality. He also came to terms, later in the series, with his own sexuality, but only after a suicide attempt. Kurt is also weary of his blue-collar father's reaction. Eventually, however, the boy comes out to him and, surprisingly, Mr. Hummel tells him that he knew all along that he was gay and that he loves him just as much. There are other instances when characters have to open themselves to their families and friends, with different results. Brittany and Santana both date boys and are proudly promiscuous, but they are also secretly in a relationship with each other. Even though the revelation of this fact is positively accepted by their fellow students, Santana must face the much tougher stance of her beloved grandmother, who disowns and repudiates her. Brittany's parents, on the other hand, react joyfully when she casually announces: "Santana and I are getting married" ("What the World Needs Now"; season 6; episode 6). Although nothing has ever been revealed about Brittany's parents' knowledge of her sexuality, or about her relationship with Santana, none of this seems to be a surprise to them.

Not every interaction between homosexual and heterosexual characters is marked by abuse and violence. In *Glee*, the normalization of same-sex relationships is frequently displayed. During a scene in the episode "All or Nothing" (season 4; episode 22), Blaine asks his straight friend, Sam, to help him propose to Kurt, and tells him that, "I was kind of hoping that you would be my best man." Although Sam's reaction to his friend's marriage is not good, this is not on the grounds of him being against same-sex marriage, but because of Blaine's youth. He tells him, "dude, we're in high school. You're not ready to get married, and I'm not letting you." There is also a student, Rachel, who has two fathers and they are always mentioned without their homosexuality being discussed or of any relevance, even after they make their first appearance in season three, in the episode "Heart" (season 3; episode 13). This positive depiction of homosexual relationships as harmonious and unproblematic is directly linked to some of the theories that are explored in section 3.3. ("Theoretical framework"). For some of the scholars that are referenced in that

section, this positive depiction also entails a positive reaction on the part of the viewers toward gay people in real life.

As the series progresses, so do the relationships between the homosexual characters. Once they are no longer hiding their sexual identities, they are free to openly display their love. Kurt falls in love with Blaine in season two and they start dating in the episode "Original Song" (season 2; episode 16). Brittany and Santana reaffirm their relationship with each other in "Pot o' Gold" (season 3; episode 4), when Santana asks Brittany if they are on a date and she replies that she thought that they were already dating. It is at this point that same-sex marriage becomes an all-pervasive issue in the series, and, most interestingly, it parallels the political debate that is in full swing in the real-life political arena.

The timeline could hardly be more coincidental. The first season began during the first year of Barack Obama's presidency, and the final episode aired just three months before the *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling. In the first episode of season three, "The Purple Piano Project", Jacob Ben Israel, a student who runs a school gossip blog, is interviewing other students and asking them, "what do you want to be when you grow up?" To that, Kurt answers, full of hope, "married by thirty, legally!" Season three aired between 2011 and 2012, and, during that time, both the President and the Vice President of the United States publicly voiced their support for the legalization of same-sex marriage.

The sense that this cause was advancing towards an actual realization was reflected in this third season. In "On My Way" (episode 14), Mr. Schuester asks the students about big things they are looking forward to. Blaine says, "I'm looking forward to marriage equality in all fifty states", and Kurt looks forward to watching his dad "make a difference in Congress." This last remark makes sense because of the fact that Kurt's father had recently become a United States Congressman, and he is actively defending the right of homosexual people to marry. Later, in "Wonder-ful" (season 4; episode 21), he tells Blaine, his future son-in-law, "gay rights has been my top issue, even though it makes me wildly unpopular with my distinguished colleagues. They're on the wrong side of history, so screw'em." *Glee* is, with this character, mirroring what is actually happening in Congress during that time of fierce debate on marriage equality. At the time, some Republican representatives had repeatedly tried to

introduce an amendment to the Constitution (the Federal Marriage Amendment), that would define marriage as the union of a man and a woman. These attempts were unsuccessful, though. The sense of hopefulness is also very tangible in the following lines by Mr. Schuester as he was praising a performance by Santana of the Bee Gee's song "If I Can't Have You":

Incredible. And I could see exactly where you were going with it. This was more than just a beautiful love song to Brittany. It's also a powerful way to convey your dream that marriage equality will someday be a reality for everyone, and you're off to law school to make it happen! Amazing. ("Saturday Night Glee-ver"; season 3; episode 16)

*Glee's* stance on same-sex marriage has been one of full support, as has been publicly acknowledged by the show's creators, Brad Falchuk, Ian Brennan and Ryan Murphy. The latter, in his acceptance speech for the Family Equality Council award, proclaimed that: "with *Glee* I wanted to write about something personal, something about gay characters, something about creating your own kind of family no matter who you are or where you live" (quoted in Peters). In season four, Blaine has decided to propose to Kurt, and reacts with these words to an opposing opinion: "you sound exactly like the rest of the world, saying that 'it's not time yet.' Well, you know what? People like me have been hearing that for hundreds and hundreds of years. This is happening. I am gonna ask Kurt to marry me" ("All or nothing"; season 4; episode 22). Later, in the same episode, Blaine is looking for a ring to propose, and he finds, in the ring seller, an old lady, an example of the kind of family he hopes to found. When he warily tells the seller that the ring he wants to buy is actually for his boyfriend, her natural reaction is to inquire, "tell me about your man", to which he says, surprised, "really?" The following dialogue then ensues:

RING SELLER. Is he your soulmate?

BLAINE. Yes, he is.

RING SELLER. I met Liz when we were eighteen. . . . We've been together ever since. . . . True love is true love.

BLAINE. My friends have been giving me so much flak.

RING SELLER. If we all had listened, we wouldn't be moments away from the Supreme Court finally telling us that we are just as crazy and awesome as everybody else.

This interaction has a profound impact on Blaine. He decides that the proposal he wants must not be an ordinary one. He wants it to be a "cultural statement". In "Love, Love, Love" (season 5; episode 1), he proclaims that,

Our generation is at a turning point. People everywhere, except, like, Russia, are beginning to see that it doesn't matter who you are or where you're from or even what God you believe in. They're beginning to see that people really aren't all that different.

By then, Kurt is studying in New York City, where both in real life and in the series, same-sex marriage is already legal. Blaine is very excited by it: "It's historic, and soon I'm going to be in New York to see it." ("Wonder-ful"; season 4; episode 21)

Not everyone is so happy by how the events are turning, though. In the episode "Homecoming" (season 6; episode 2), the school's most popular club is now the conservative Tea Party Patriots. Upon learning about this, a student asks, horrified, "what is happening to America?" To this, the leader of the Tea Party Patriots responds,

I'll tell you what's happened. We've grown up in the biggest economic depression since the 1930s. Our mission is to fix the mess that Barack Hussein Obama created before he and the homo-elite turn this country into a Muslim welfare state.

This clearly echoes the homophobic discourse that right-wing politicians were using in the media at the time. But, by contrast, the public was already favoring same-sex marriage. This will be further detailed in section 3.2. ("Public opinion shift"). In the series, this fact is also present; Sue Sylvester, when asking Kurt and Blaine if they will join Brittany and Santana in a double wedding, remarks: "So what do you say, fellas? Will you give America what at least fifty-two percent of it will legally tolerate?" ("A Wedding"; season 6; episode 8). Brittany even referred to the causes for the public support in "What the World Needs Now" (season 6; episode 6): "You know, the *New York Times* said, um, half the increase in support of gay marriage is due to generational turnover. That's what smart people call 'crazy uptight bitches dying.' You guys lost, okay?"

Finally, in season six, in "A Wedding" (season 6; episode 8), the two couples marry in a double wedding. They cannot do it in their home state of



Ohio, though. As Santana puts it, "Gay marriage is illegal in Ohio but legal in Indiana. Makes absolutely no sense." In Indiana, same-sex marriage became legal on October 6, 2014. Neighboring Ohio, however, had to wait until June 26, 2015. So, when this episode aired on February 20, 2015, the only way to have their characters legally married was to have the ceremony celebrated in a different state. A rural barn in Indiana was the unglamorous venue for the event, which was officiated by Burt Hummel, Kurt's father, the congressman. During the ceremony, he explains,

Twice in my life I've been lucky enough to meet the love of my life. And both of those times, I've married that love. And I knew I was lucky to be able to do that. But I didn't know how lucky until I had to drive over the state line to come here to officiate the weddings of these two loving couples.

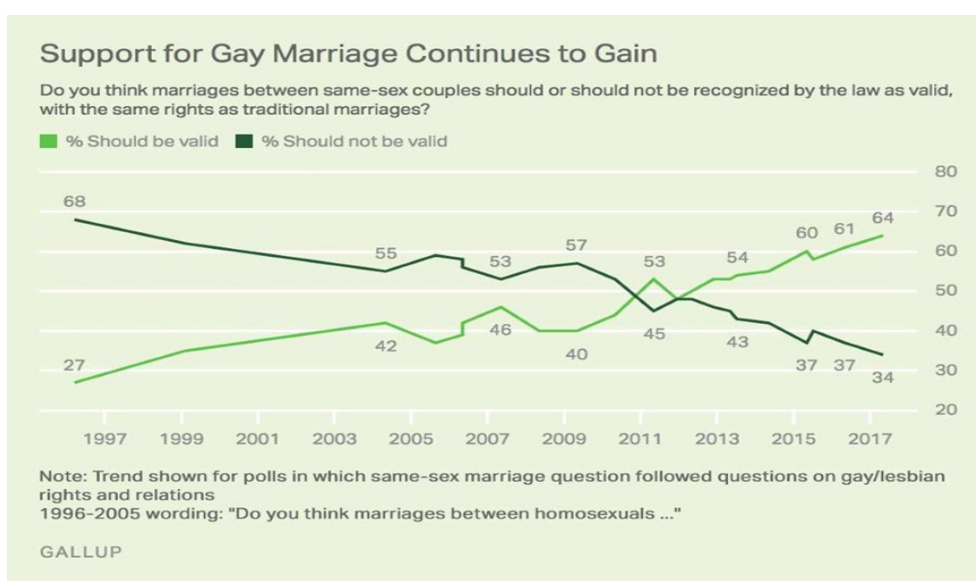
Shortly afterwards, with the following words, the two couples become legally married:

And now, by the power vested in me by the Internet and the state of Indiana and under a God who for sure if he believes in love, then he fully endorses the loving marriages of these two wonderful couples, I now pronounce you wife and wife and husband and husband. You may kiss one another.

In *Glee*'s plot there is a complex and varied treatment of sexual minorities. From the uncertain and difficult position of its LGBT characters in the first two seasons, to the happy ending resulting in their marriages, there is a visible similarity with the actual struggle of many LGBT Americans of its time. In *Glee*, as well as in the American society, some characters suffer abuse and discrimination. Also, for some of them, things are easier. The correlation between fiction and reality is further extended to the different legal circumstances of same-sex marriages in the states of Ohio, Indiana and New York.

### 3.2. Public opinion shift

The outline in the previous section reveals how *Glee* makes LGBT characters visible to the American viewers. In the introductory section of this TFG this increased visibility was linked to a growing acceptance of homosexuality. The next question to be asked now is: how has the public opinion actually evolved when it comes to its acceptance of same-sex marriage? The best way to test this is to resort to opinion polls. The following chart, published by Gallup<sup>1</sup>, is especially revealing:

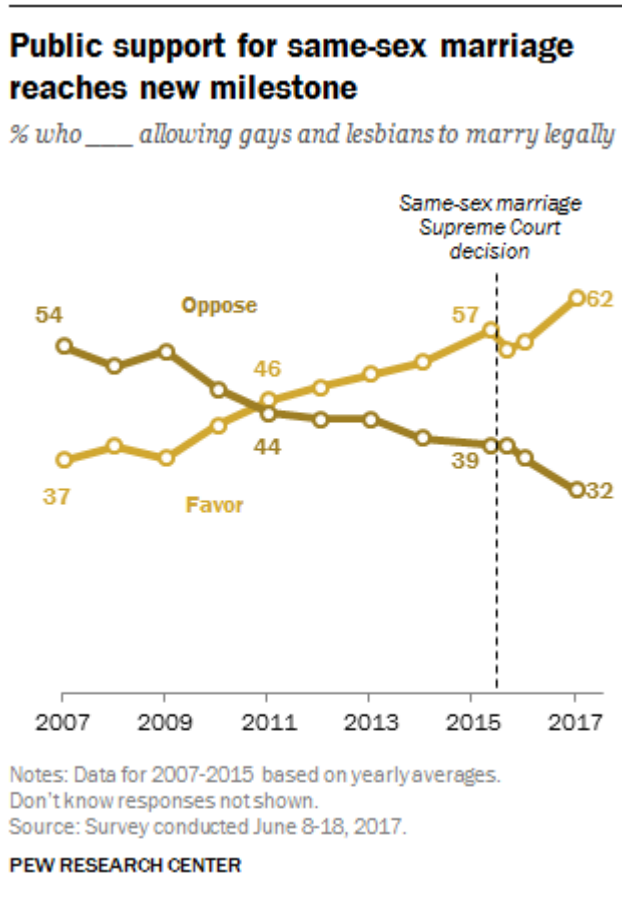


This chart shows the trend in the support for the legalization of gay marriage in the United States between 1996 and 2017. Sixty-eight percent of Americans were against this legalization in 1996, while only twenty-seven percent were in favor. The figures representing the percentage of people who think gay marriage should not be legal continue to be higher than those representing the opposite option until the year 2011. That year, the majority of Americans supported gay marriage for the first time. In 2017, the number of supporters rose to sixty-four percent. Over the span of twenty years, the trend had almost completely reversed. As McCarthy states in the *Gallup.com* article from which

<sup>1</sup> From: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/210566/support-gay-marriage-edges-new-high.aspx>

this graph was extracted: "Majority support for gay marriage would not come until May 2011, about a month before New York became the sixth state to legalize it. Since then, support for legal same-sex marriage has steadily climbed, with consistent majorities in favor of it since late 2012."

Other polls show similar results. Pew Research Center<sup>2</sup> published the following one in June 2017:



The data in the chart above also depict an increasing trend in the support of the legal recognition of same-sex marriage. Here, too, the year 2011 marks the turning point. That year, the number of supporters overtook the number of opponents for the first time.

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<sup>2</sup> From: <https://www.people-press.org/2017/06/26/support-for-same-sex-marriage-grows-even-among-groups-that-had-been-skeptical/>

Already in 2013, a Pew Research Center article (“Growing Support for Gay Marriage”) stated that: “The rise in support for same-sex marriage over the past decade is among the largest changes in opinion on any policy issue over this time period.” Andrew R. Flores compiled a list of opinion polls published in the United States asking if marriages between homosexual men or homosexual women should be recognized by the law, or a similar wording. He listed 156 polls conducted between 1989 and 2014. They were taken from a large variety of sources, including newspapers, TV and radio stations, magazines, universities, etc. In eighty-nine of those polls, the “oppose” answer was prevalent, with the option “favor” getting the most responses in sixty-five; in the remaining five, both “favor” and “oppose” yielded similar results. But the most revealing fact that can be extracted from this research is that the vast majority of the negative results were obtained before 2011 (eighty out of the eighty-six). Conversely, almost all the favorable polls (all except four) were conducted between 2011 and 2014.

The reasons for these changes were outlined by Ayoub and Garretson in 2014. These authors noted that the public opinion shift concerning the perception of homosexual people was exceptional in its magnitude, and provided an extensive list of possible determinant causes:

One of the most prominent and consistent factors found to contribute to this change is the entry of a younger, more socially liberal cohort into the public arena (Lewis and Gosset 2008; Loftus 2001). Other prominent causes of more liberal attitudes include increased contact with gay people (Herek 2003; Lewis 2011), *a rise in the portrayal of gay people in news and fictional media* (Riggle, Ellis, and Crawford 1996; Schiappa, Greg, and Hewes 2006; Garretson 2014a and 2014b), the proliferation of the idea that homosexuality has its roots in biology instead of lifestyle choice (Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008), and favorable shifts toward gay people in the positions taken by political elites (Reynolds 2013; Ayoub 2014a). (1; emphasis added)

This “rise in the portrayal of gay people in news and fictional media” suggests that series like *Glee* may have had an actual impact on the opinion shift. The visibility of gay and lesbian characters in *Glee* is remarkable, as has been explained in section 3.1. (“Outline and Plot”).

Garretson (2009) makes an interesting observation regarding causation. Since the rise in the portrayal of gay characters in news and fictional media occurred at the same time as the public acceptance of gay marriage, could this rise be caused by changing public sentiments and not the reverse? (104). To answer that, he used an experimental design that confirmed that “individuals liberalize their attitudes [become acceptant] when they view a representation of a lesbian or gay individual and not the other way around” (104). This representation, however, cannot be isolated from the context in which it appears. For instance, he explains that “when lesbians and gays appear on TV with well liked politicians, it causes attitudes to liberalize” (104). Incidentally, the cast of *Glee* did appear on several occasions on television with the popular Obama family. For instance, in 2010 and 2011 they were welcomed in the White House to celebrate the annual Easter Egg Roll (“*Glee* Cast Celebrates”); they also performed at an Inauguration Ball in 2013 (“*Glee* Live at Inauguration”).

Three main ideas can be extracted from this section. In the first place, the polls demonstrate that the American people’s opinion has evolved dramatically towards an acceptance of same-sex marriage. Secondly, the visibility of LGBT characters on television is largely responsible for this shift. And, finally, *Glee* has been a major contributor to the visibility of these LGBT characters. The reasons underlying the powerful influence of televised media are addressed in the following section.

### **3.3. *Glee* and the influence of the media on public opinion**

In order to analyze whether *Glee* has exerted a positive influence or not, an exploration into the nature of the notion of media influence needs to be undertaken. This section, therefore, deals with the theoretical approaches that provide an academic basis for this subject. In particular, the disciplines of social psychology and communication studies are the areas in which the most relevant scholarly literature has been produced.

Schiappa, Gregg & Hewes (2005), in an article called “The Parasocial Contact Hypothesis,” provide an especially significant insight. In order to

formulate their hypothesis, they built upon Allport's contact hypothesis and Horton and Wohl's notion of parasocial interaction, both of which have been discussed extensively in the social science field:

One of the most important and enduring contributions of social psychology in the past 50 years is known as the Contact Hypothesis (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). Credited to Gordon W. Allport (1954), the Contact Hypothesis, or Intergroup Contact Theory, states that under appropriate conditions interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. Coincidentally, two years after Allport's book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, was published, Horton and Wohl (1956) argued for studying what they dubbed *para-social interaction*: "One of the most striking characteristics of the new mass media—radio, television, and the movies—is that they give the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer." (92-93)

Although both Allport's and Horton and Wohl's works are outdated now, their theories are still very influential and form the basis for much of the theoretical discourse that has been taking place since then. For this reason, it is important to outline the basic principles of both the contact hypothesis and the parasocial interaction theory.

The contact hypothesis has been best described by Schiappa et al. In the same article mentioned above, they stated that "The basic rationale for the Contact Hypothesis is that prejudice can be reduced as one learns more about a category of people" (93). Allport called the categories of people against which prejudices were held "out-groups", and, at the time, his theory was mostly applied in relation to the segregation of African Americans. Later, it was expanded to include other out-groups, including homosexual people. Allport's contact hypothesis does not apply to every type of contact between groups. He advanced a set of conditions for the contact to be effective and beneficial. He considered that prejudice:

may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom, or local atmosphere), and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception

of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups. (281)

This narrative can be applied to *Glee*'s "out-groups". They all strive to reach the same goals as everyone else, to succeed in their careers and to have a happy normalized life with their loved ones. They also seek, and finally achieve, institutional and social support (see section 3.1. "Outline and plot"). The contact hypothesis, however, does not focus on the contacts between TV viewers and TV characters. This is where the parasocial interaction theory comes into play.

Horton and Wohl's parasocial interaction theory, or PSI, analyzes the interaction between televised media and TV viewers. In the authors' view, there are many similarities in the way televised characters are experienced as compared to real-life interpersonal exchanges. As they suggested,

What para-social roles are acceptable to the spectator and what benefits their enactment has for him would seem to be related to the systems of patterned roles and social situations in which he is involved in his everyday life. (221)

Perse and Rubin described parasocial interaction as "the perceived interpersonal relationship on the part of the television viewer with a mass media persona" (59). Or, as Conway & Rubin put it, television viewers "develop an affinity with the persona they watch on television" (449). The effects, according to Garretson, can be positive, as "contact with individuals through television can erase the space between citizens and show people new worlds and lives, displace negative stereotypes, and bring people together" (103).

Schiappa, Gregg & Hewes, in their formulation of the parasocial contact hypothesis (PCH), blended those concepts and contended that the positive effects that the contact hypothesis suggests can be applied to the bonds that viewers develop toward media characters. In their article, they specifically tested their theory with two TV series depicting homosexual men, and with a stand-up comedian who is a "male transvestite" (92), but they also include other minorities in their assertions, as they "contend that parasocial contact can provide the sort of experience that can reduce prejudice, particularly if a majority group member has limited opportunity for interpersonal contact with minority group members" (97).

The television series they exemplify in their paper (*Six Feet Under* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*) can be extrapolated to include other LGBT-themed series, such as *Glee*. The results of the three tests they conducted led them to conclude that “parasocial contact was associated with lower levels of prejudice” (92). The study about *Six Feet Under* involved a group of students viewing ten episodes, and their levels of prejudice against homosexuals dropped up to fifteen percent. In an article called “Can One TV Show Make a Difference? *Will & Grace* and the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis”, they tested PCH on this show. Two of the hypothesis they formulated anticipated that, “The greater the viewing frequency of *Will & Grace*, the lower the level of sexual prejudice toward gay men” (5), and that “The greater the level of reported parasocial interaction with gay characters on *Will & Grace*, the lower the level of sexual prejudice toward gay men” (6). The results they drew from their investigations expressed “significant support for all hypotheses” (10), but the authors also admit that “viewers with strongly held negative attitudes about homosexuals are unlikely to watch *Will & Grace*, just as they are unlikely to seek out interpersonal contact with homosexuals” (11). The same could be said about *Glee*, then; if the PCH were taken into account when analyzing the show, it would be safe to affirm that it does contribute to improve the positivity of the viewer’s perception of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. However, homophobic individuals would hardly be tempted to watch *Glee*, a series in which such themes are explored.

The PCH is not the only approach into the positive effects of the media’s portrayal of prejudiced groups. Shade, Kim, Jung and Oliver take the notion of “elevation” and apply it specifically to *Glee*. They conducted a social scientific experiment in order to examine if “narratives from *Glee*, that feature the struggles of stigmatized characters paired with musical performance, have the ability to improve attitudes toward stigmatized groups through feelings of elevation” (3). They describe elevation, citing Haidt, as:

a warm, uplifting feeling that people experience when they see unexpected acts of human goodness, kindness, and compassion. [this] makes a person want to help others and to become a better person himself or herself. (3)



As *Glee* does indeed feature stigmatized groups, including, among others, gays and lesbians, the authors hypothesized that the feelings of elevations that the series elicited would lead to favorable attitudes and positive behavioral intentions towards those stigmatized groups. They also contended that the musical element of *Glee*'s narrative would further contribute to increase those feelings of elevation. The results of their experiment were quite conclusive: "Overall, what was evident from this study is that viewing stigmatized group narratives from *Glee* has a range of positive and prosocial effects on the audience" (12).

These beneficial effects have been acknowledged by other authors. According to Skinner-Thompson, Law and Baran:

The correlation between an increase in LGBTQ people "coming out" on television and at the cinema with the rise of jurisdictions recognizing the importance of non-discrimination based on sexual orientation, including through the media portrayals had a softening effect on theretofore negative attitudes toward queer individuals. (134)

They are not alone in this affirmation. For Kelley, the recent increase in the acceptance of homosexuality "has been largely driven by popular culture" (330). He also acknowledges the existence of other factors, but affirms that "popular culture—particularly movies and television shows—has undoubtedly been a key component" (330). For Garretson, the support of the Democratic Party and the increase in the number of lesbian and gay portrayals on television were two events that "affected public opinion in a positive fashion starting in the mid-1990s and continuing to today in America's liberalization of attitudes toward homosexuality" (103).

Of course, not everyone agrees on the positivity of this increased exposure of homosexual characters on television. A backlash has also occurred. As Langlois and Wilkinson remark, "in many ways, it appears that the greater the progress made in relation to establishing LGBT rights as a human rights norm, the more intense resistance to this trend becomes" (250). It does not come as a surprise that religious and politically conservative groups vocalize their rejection of homosexuality, but as the same-sex debate became one of the prominent topics during the Obama administration, the opposing voices were louder than ever. *Glee* was not immune to this condemnation. Ben

Shapiro, writing for *Fox News*, criticized the “subversive offensiveness” of the show and added that *Glee* viewers “are under the misimpression that *Glee* is family friendly. That’s what makes the show so subversive.” (“*Glee*’ Trumped by ‘The Lion King’ and Rated G?”). Van Houten, writing for a Christian right association, said, “children and young people are easily indoctrinated to accept the sympathetic portrayal of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender) lifestyle pushed by *Glee*.” In 2012, Obama said in an interview with *ABC*’s Robin Roberts that his daughters had influenced him on changing his stance on same-sex marriage: “You know, Malia and Sasha, they have friends whose parents are same-sex couples ... it wouldn’t dawn on them that somehow their friends’ parents would be treated differently”. This prompted Bristol Palin, the daughter of former Alaska governor and a political rival of Obama, Sarah Palin, to write:

Sometimes dads should lead their family in the right ways of thinking. In this case, it would’ve been nice if the President would’ve been an actual leader and helped shape their thoughts instead of merely reflecting what many teenagers think after one too many episodes of *Glee*.

These homophobic backlashes are too numerous to list, and, according to Ayoub and Garretson, “backlashes against LGBT rights, *when they become visible*, are common. These backlashes can lead certain segments of society to mobilize in resistance, and scholars have noted that violence can also increase in response to visibility.” (28; emphasis added)

Garretson has no doubts concerning the effects of the changing media on the opinions of the American people:

What is certain is that both television and the media matter in affecting change. When sexuality liberalized in the 1960s, attitudes toward gays were left behind. When more lesbian and gays forged a collective identity, public opinion barely budged. When psychiatric and media elites declared that lesbians and gays were not mentally ill, the public seemed to turn a deaf ear. But when a president supported lesbian and gay people, the public started listening. Finally, when lesbians and gays characters started streaming into homes in the mid 1990s, the message broke through. Tolerance grew and government policies shifted. Changing media had changed minds. (166)

### 3.4. Making a difference

It may have changed minds, but, as Kelley asks, “Does watching movies, television shows, and other forms of popular culture affect judicial decision-making?” He then asks the same question in relation to the legislative and executive levels. This is a crucial question, as judicial decisions can actually influence legislative action. In this regard, Salzmann comments that,

Judges assimilate the same information from newspapers, books, television, and movies that the rest of society sees. And in turn, judges use that information, coupled with their own personal beliefs, to make decisions. (15)

She goes on to explain that, in reality, some popular culture references have already been used in actual court proceedings, like some of John Grisham’s novels or Bob Dylan’s lyrics (16-18). Kelley provides some more examples in which TV shows have been also referred to in legal proceedings, such as *24*, *The Simpsons* and *All in the Family* (311). He affirms that, “although it is exceedingly difficult to unequivocally prove that popular culture directly led to the changes in the law, it is undoubtedly true that popular culture is a markedly important vehicle for change” (311). In his opinion, as legislators and executive officials are elected by the public, they are even more susceptible to be affected by popular culture in their decision making:

Whether they are informed or not, legislators draft and enact laws responding to demands of their constituents; therefore, voter perception of proposed and enacted legislation is an important consideration. As a result, the impact of popular culture on voters will likely be transposed into law. (318-319)

Kelley agrees that television shows, in particular, have had an effect in the promotion of gay marriage, and notes that the fact that the “substantial increase in the number of gay married couples portrayed on television in recent years” is “marking a clear trend” (325). He affirms that this growing number of shows “have cast gay individuals and marriages as a type of new normal for a modern American society” (326). He quotes Gail Shister referring to *Modern*

*Family* as the Obama administration's "cultural touchstone on the issue [of gay marriage]" (326). President Obama was pressured to shift his position on gay marriage, Kelley argues, by the influential "Hollywood lobby" that "has been particularly active in the gay marriage arena" (328). This author provides the example of the creation of the gay rights campaign NOH8 ("No Hate"), which was actively supported by *Glee* star Jane Lynch, among other celebrities (328). He also adds that "it is no coincidence President Obama announced his newfound position on gay marriage one day before a multimillion dollar fundraiser hosted by George Clooney" (329).

In sum, both Saltzman and Kelley agree that popular culture does have a practical effect when it comes to implementing judicial and legislative changes. This suggests that *Glee* might have contributed to the advancement of the same-sex marriage cause. As was discussed in section three ("A case study: *Glee*"), even the president of the United States was well aware of *Glee*'s importance and influence as a significant cultural product.

#### **4. Conclusions**

When I set about working on this project, I hypothesized that *Glee* could have contributed positively to the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States. This legalization took place in 2015, almost at the end of the second term of the presidency of Barack Obama. During his presidency, the opinion of the American people regarding same-sex marriages underwent a major shift towards its acceptance. Coincidentally, the series *Glee*'s six seasons aired from 2009, the year Obama took office, to 2015, the year same-sex marriage became legal nationwide. The representation of LGBT characters on prime-time TV in the United States was, by then, very common. This was due to a trend that started in 1997, with the show *Ellen*, and had been increasing exponentially since then. For the first time, many popular TV series put those characters center stage and presented them, also for the first time, in a positive light and not restricted to the former negative portrayals that stereotyped and misrepresented them. *Glee* is a very significant example of this new wave of TV series due to its huge popularity, for its portrayal of gays and lesbians in leading

roles, for having these characters lead the same complex and richly varied lives as the rest, and for its prominent treatment of same-sex marriage.

*Glee*'s plot follows the lives of several high school students who are members of the school's Glee club. This music club is a haven for the less popular kids, and it provides them with an environment where they can express their struggles through music. These students are considered outcasts by the rest because they are either not straight, not white or have some sort of physical disability. Outside the club, they have to face harassment and physical violence on a daily basis. As the series progresses, these outcasts slowly reach maturity and learn how to accept and love their own differences. Season after season, the rest of the characters also change their views toward them. The homosexual characters also evolve significantly: in the beginning, some of them cannot even accept their homosexuality and try to hide it; in the last season, they marry their homosexual partners.

The evolution of the LGBT characters in *Glee* runs parallel to the evolution of same-sex marriage in the United States during the same period of time. The viewers of the series witnessed the gay couples' desire to have their relationship legally recognized. At the same time, real-life gay couples were fighting for the same thing. This was a debate that was taking place in fiction and in reality, and it resulted in a happy resolution in both worlds.

The positive evolution of the behavior of many of the straight characters towards the gay ones has a parallel in reality as well. The adoption of the same-sex marriage legislation would have not been possible if it did not have the backing of the public opinion. In this project, I have researched this evolution by analyzing the results of dozens of opinion polls. The opinion shift in the acceptance of this new type of unions is strongly evidenced by the empirical data provided by these polls. The year 2011 marks the first year when a majority of Americans responded favorably when they were asked if they supported same-sex marriage. Andrew R. Flores made a compilation of 156 polls published between 1989 and 2014. From that compilation, it can be extracted that, before 2011, the vast majority of the polls yielded a negative result. After that year, almost all of them showed that the public opinion was in favor of legalizing gay marriage. Statistically, there is no doubt about the

scientific validity of these data. A dramatic shift had taken place. What were the causes that prompted it?

Ayoub and Garretson provided multiple factors that might have contributed to the shift in public opinion. A rise in the portrayal of gay people in fictional media is, according to them, one of the main reasons. Garretson confirmed this with an experiment that led him to affirm that the visibility of gay characters on TV contribute to a greater acceptance of these characters by the viewers. Schiappa, Gregg & Hewes have provided the theoretical framework that underlies the potential effect that televised media has on the acceptance of previously marginalized groups: the parasocial contact hypothesis (PCH).

In order to formulate their hypothesis, Schiappa et al. blended Allport's contact hypothesis with Horton and Wohl's notion of parasocial interaction. The contact hypothesis states that prejudice towards a marginalized category of people is reduced when knowledge about this category is increased through positive contact. The parasocial interaction theory defends that TV viewers develop an affinity with the characters on the screen which is similar to what they experience with real-life people. The PCH claims that the beneficial effects of the contact hypothesis can also be applied to the relationship between television viewers and the characters that appear on their screens. When marginalized groups are characterized positively in a popular TV show, the majority group should experience a reduction in their levels of prejudice. Schiappa et al. reached their conclusions by conducting a series of tests that involved exposing the participants to different TV shows in which minority groups were part of the main cast. In one of these tests, the participants were asked to watch an LGBT-themed series (*Will & Grace*). After this exposure, the authors concluded that the level of prejudice towards gay men had been reduced considerably.

Haidt's notion of elevation has also been used to explore *Glee*'s beneficial effects towards minority groups. For Haidt, elevation is an uplifting feeling that can be experienced when witnessing acts of human kindness. This, in turn, inspires a personal desire to better oneself. Shade et al. applied this concept to *Glee* and concluded that the series' narratives, combined with its musical component, had a positive effect on the reduction of the audience's prejudices.

The influence of television shows go beyond that of changing their audience's point of view. For Kelley and Salzmann, these shows can also affect the judicial and executive levels. Salzmann argues that judges assimilate the information they gather from popular culture, and that they can use this information to make their decisions. Kelley affirms that TV shows have already had an effect in the promotion of gay marriage. The Obama administration, he explains, was pressured to advance the same-sex marriage cause due to the influence of powerful Hollywood activists.

As a conclusion, I will recapitulate first the established facts that I used as a starting point. Same-sex marriage became legal in the United States in 2015. This legalization was preceded by a dramatic shift in the opinion of the American people. This shift, in turn, was preceded by the irruption of a new wave of gay characters and themes on television, such as *Glee*. These are the facts, but has *Glee* actually exerted a positive influence, or has this coincidence with the public acceptance and legalization of same-sex marriage been just that, an unrelated coincidence? This does not seem to be the case. *Glee*'s characters, in light of the parasocial interaction theory, have been subjected to a "relationship" with their viewers that is very much akin to that of a social, face-to-face interaction. Furthermore, the experiments of Schiappa et al. make a strong case for their parasocial contact hypothesis. This would suggest that, if applied to *Glee*, this relationship with the viewers would be positive and would help reduce negative views on homosexuality. It would probably have helped in increasing their support for same-sex marriage as well. Other experiments, including Shade et al.'s concerning elevation, also yielded positive results in the analysis of the audience's attitudes towards *Glee*'s stigmatized groups. Other scholars studied in this paper agree with the correlation of the increased exposure of gay characters with the increased acceptance of homosexuality. Some of them, like Kelley and Salzmann, have even argued that, beyond this positive effect on the viewers' perception, these beneficial effects have an impact on the lawmakers' actions. This fact, they argue, eventually leads to the implementation of actual legislative changes.

In my research, I have also found negative scholarly criticism towards the depiction of homosexuality in *Glee*. For the most part, this criticism is related to the reproduction of the same gendered roles as those presented in

heterosexual depictions. This paves the way for future research, as heteronormativity is beyond the scope of this TFG.

Not everyone is pleased with seeing their TV screens suddenly populated by homosexual individuals who are projecting their lives to the world just as heterosexual characters do. *Glee* is not likely to have had a profound effect in changing conservative right-wing attitudes. However, this series is not an obscure product aimed specifically at an LGBT audience; in fact, it reached a viewership of millions in the primetime slot for six seasons. Therefore, it is very likely that many of those viewers developed a parasocial interaction with the gay and lesbian characters in the series and that this fact made them change their views on same-sex marriage.



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