Power in a Union: How Unexpected Group Partnerships Form

Boris Heersink and Matthew J. Lacombe

While scholars have focused extensively on the consequences of partnerships between interest groups, less attention has been paid to the historical dynamics shaping when, how, and why such groups unite. This is especially true of "unexpected" partnerships, which unite groups with seemingly little in common. Such partnerships are important, as they can reshape to an unusual degree which actors, issues, and ideas "fit together" politically. We address the puzzle of how unexpected group partnerships form through case studies of previously non-existent alliances between labor unions and the gay/lesbian rights movement in the United States and United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s. Using these cases, we produce a theory arguing that unexpected partnerships are a product of a favorable political opportunity structure—present when each group experiences shared threats and mutual vulnerabilities—and the actions of entrepreneurial group leaders, who forge cross-group identities, accentuate shared ideological convictions, and build institutional ties.

Partnerships between organized groups representing very different constituencies are crucial features of politics. And yet, while extant scholarship has explored lobbying coalitions in which groups—including those that are politically distant—coordinate in response to legislative proposals, less attention has been paid to the dynamics shaping how such distant groups come to form deeper, broader bonds that extend beyond particular legislative episodes and form the basis of durable joint efforts. One functional explanation is that such partnerships facilitate a mutually beneficial exchange of political "goods." That is, groups work together simply because it makes each better off (Salisbury 1969). But how and why do such coalitions form and hold together over time? After all, there are countless groups that theoretically could unite, yet do not. Moreover, such partnerships are difficult to cultivate and potentially costly; in joining them, groups cede strategic autonomy, link their reputations together, and incur substantial coordination costs (Hojnacki 1997). It is important, then, to focus not just on the functions unexpected partnerships serve, but also on their political development—the historically contingent factors shaping the processes through which they emerge and outcomes they produce: What conditions incentivize previously distant groups to work together, which actors drive the process, and how do they establish durable cross-group bonds?

We address these questions through two case studies—one in the 1970s United States and one in the 1980s United Kingdom—of the formation of partnerships between labor groups and gay rights[1] activists, which we use to learn more about how and why previously disconnected groups can build long-term cooperative relationships. While both groups are now part of well-established coalitions, at the time there were no major pre-existing ties between them, and actors on each side expressed skepticism about the compatibility of their groups' members. Yet despite these doubts, members of the Bay Area gay community in the United States worked closely with unions in the 1970s to advance a boycott directed at Coors Brewing, and gay activists in the United Kingdom buttressed the strike efforts of the National Union of Miners.[2] These joint endeavors—which had important short- and long-term effects—are notable because in both cases the potential for a working relationship between labor and gay rights groups was not obvious. As one United Kingdom activist describes it, labor and gay rights activists "brought two communities together who, on the face of it, had nothing in common. Two communities of which, before the strike, people would have said, 'Why should they make common cause? Surely that's doomed?'" (Tate et al. 2017, 238).

Our assessment of how these groups were able to nonetheless make common cause uses a "deviant case" strategy. As Seawright (2016) shows, cases in which outcomes that would *not*, based on existing theories, be predicted nonetheless occur are useful for identifying previously undertheorized causes of those outcomes.

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Along these lines, we build a new framework for understanding the development of unexpected group partnerships by analyzing two similar instances in which partnerships arose *despite* being highly unexpected. Although further study is needed to assess the generalizability of our argument and refine our theoretical framework, our findings suggest that these partnerships can be developed through multi-faceted processes that durably reconstitute the social and political meaning of membership in each group.

We argue that both partnerships were products of conducive political opportunity structures, which created conditions used by entrepreneurial leaders to build ties between group members. Specifically, we identify two crucial contextual factors. First, union members and gay activists faced threats from the same political adversaries, providing a motivation to work together. Second, both groups were vulnerable in ways that rendered them unable to address these threats alone. These conditions provided an opening for political entrepreneurs, who then downplayed cross-group differences and cultivated collective identities, articulated shared ideological convictions, and built cross-group institutional ties.

Crucially, these partnerships can have long-lasting effects; by establishing durable linkages between the groups, they encouraged unions to include sexual orientation in non-discrimination clauses in their contracts and labor-aligned parties to incorporate LGBT interests into their coalitions. Such outcomes illustrate the potential stakes of unexpected partnerships; *because* they bring together groups with few pre-existing ties, they reshape to an unusual degree which actors, issues, and ideas "fit together" politically. Our findings, while narrow in scope, therefore shed light on the antecedent group-based dynamics that can lay a foundation for the entry of new, previously unconnected groups into coalitions and, eventually, influence elections, policymaking, and public opinion.

Cultivating Unexpected Group Partnerships

Existing work has, directly and indirectly, examined group coalitions—an important topic since, as Wang, Piazza, and Soule (2018, 168) have noted, "[social] movements are rarely staged in isolation of each other." Work on group formation and mobilization suggests that the likelihood of coalitions forming may depend on the political opportunity structure that groups confront (e.g., Meyer 2004); this includes, for example, scholarship on the role of "disturbances"—threatening social, political, or economic shifts—in spurring group-based action (Truman 1951). Elsewhere, Bawn et al. (2012) argue that durable coalitions of organized groups are the defining feature of parties. Meanwhile, others examine how lobbying coalitions pursue particular legislative goals (e.g., Hojnacki 1997; Holyoke 2009; Mahoney and Baumgartner 2015; Heaney and Leifeld 2018). Finally, historical, case-driven work has examined how consequential political outcomes were products of group cooperation. Sometimes these coalitions united groups with similar interests but different memberships or strategic approaches; various LGBT rights organizations, for example, collaborated in support of same-sex marriage (Solomon 2014), and in the 1980s environmental organizations formed a "Group of Ten" to coordinate action (Bosso 2005).

But in other cases, such efforts united groups with seemingly little in common—and did so in ways that extended beyond just coordinated lobbying activities. As McConnaughy (2013) shows, the success of the women's suffrage movement was partially a product of coalitions that suffragists built with labor groups and farmers. Similarly, Schickler (2016) argues that the Democratic Party's shift on race was encouraged by a partnership between civil rights activists and unions. These were groups that, over time, built a shared set of policy preferences and political institutions, but were not, when their relationship began, straightforward matches.

While existing literature explores instances of "strange bedfellows" (Phinney 2017), there is no comprehensive answer as to how and why particular groups without pre-existing ties end up working together—even, at times, developing long-term partnerships. And these partnerships constitute a puzzle: Given the challenges associated with uniting discordant groups, the wide range of groups that could theoretically cooperate but never do, and the fact that these efforts may be more costly than beneficial, how and why do particular groups with few pre-existing ties come together?

What do we mean by *unexpected groups partnerships*? *Partnerships* refer to more than fleeting instances of lobbying cooperation on behalf of specific legislation. Although they may originate through such undertakings, partnerships (in our definition) consist of longer-term efforts on behalf of shared interests, values, and goals. Following Karol (2009, 9), we define *groups* as "self-aware collection[s] of individuals who share intense concerns about a particular policy area," which can be represented by one or more organizations but are not necessarily "reducible to … them." Finally, we argue a partnership is *unexpected* when it meets two criteria. The first relates to groups' partisan orientations. If each group is closely aligned with the same political party, then a partnership is not unexpected, as they have pre-existing incentives and means to work together. The second relates to perceived compatibility. In an unexpected partnership, group members perceive themselves as incongruous in important ways (socially, ideologically, etc.). When partnerships form despite both conditions being met, we consider them unexpected.[3]

These types of coalitions are unlikely to be the most common, if only because of the higher opportunity costs

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related to forming them relative to alliances with groups for which there are existing connections. But they do occur and can have important consequences. For instance, the New Right movement—the rise of which fundamentally altered the Republican Party—brought together socially conservative Christians and free-market oriented business interests who had few prior connections and viewed each other with suspicion. Similarly, the formation of the Republican Party in 1854 was a product of an alignment between strange bedfellows, including nativists, disaffected Whigs, and abolitionists, each of which had reasons to oppose the Kansas-Nebraska Act (Brooks 2016). As these cases suggest, unexpected partnerships are noteworthy not just because they unite strange bedfellows, but also because they are potentially influential; by bringing together previously unconnected groups, they reflect a consequential, durable shift in the status quo. Elucidating the processes that lead to such shifts is not just of historical interest, but important for understanding how contemporary patterns of political conflict originated.

We explore collaborative efforts launched by two previously unconnected groups: unions and gay rights advocates in the United States and United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s. When these groups began their partnerships, there were no strong pre-existing ties between them. Although gay individuals—including some who feature in our cases—were active union members, gay union membership did not mean workers were supported by their unions. One gay labor organizer active in the 1960s, who remained closeted but nonetheless saw his career trajectory hindered by rumors about his homosexuality, was quoted by Miriam Frank saying that "you couldn't be openly gay and expect to maintain a job in the union" (2014, 51). Similarly, British labor unions were seen as hostile towards gay rights. One gay activist recalled that "within the union and left-wing political community, there was an awful homophobic attitude that homosexuality was alien to working-class people." Others described unions as "shockingly bad" on gay rights, and spotlighted the miners' union as being particularly "hostile to gay issues" (Tate et al. 2017, 93-94, 122).

Yet, both countries witnessed notable instances in which faltering labor-led boycotts and strikes were bolstered once gay/lesbian activists joined the cause. In the United States, Bay Area gay rights groups popularized and expanded a boycott against Coors Brewing Company by the Teamsters and AFL-CIO. In the United Kingdom, Lesbians and Gays and Support the Miners (LGSM) provided crucial support to the struggling strike efforts of the National Union of Miners (NUM). Developing independently, each case produced durable partnerships with important downstream consequences. Indeed, in both countries they helped prompt initiatives institutionalizing recognition of gay and lesbian workers within unions and the incorporation of LGBT groups into labor-aligned political parties.

Relying on archival materials, oral histories, and secondary accounts, we trace the processes through which these partnerships were formed. In-depth studies of "deviant" cases (i.e., those with unexpected outcomes on the dependent variable given their scores on theoretically relevant independent variables) are useful for identifying new causal pathways to outcomes of interest—in this instance, the formation of group partnerships (Seawright 2016). Following this logic, we conduct within-case analyses of two observed instances in which group partnerships that would *not* be expected to form nonetheless did and build a theoretical framework for explaining why and how unexpected partnerships are forged.

This framework incorporates both the political opportunity structure and coalition-forging efforts of political entrepreneurs. The former captures exogenous developments that (unrelated to the actions of entrepreneurs) produce conditions incentivizing collaboration. The latter captures actions taken by entrepreneurial group leaders to use such conditions to build cross-group ties. The emergence of partnerships between previously unconnected groups can be viewed as products of critical junctures—moments in which prior constraints are loosened, enabling new outcomes to arise. The contextual factors that provide openings for cooperation constitute what Soifer (2012, 1574-1575) describes as *permissive* conditions—which disrupt the status quo and increase the agency of political actors—while the efforts of entrepreneurs constitute *productive* conditions—which "determine the outcome that emerges from the critical juncture." In short, altered political conditions provide openings for new partnerships to form, but political entrepreneurs must then use such openings to develop them.

The first part of our framework (see figure 1) pertains to the political opportunity structure. We argue that two permissive conditions, occurring in conjunction, encouraged partnerships to form. First, each group faced threats from shared adversaries (Van Dyke and Amos 2017; Staggenborg 1986). In the United States, threats came from Coors—which mistreated workers generally and targeted gay employees particularly—and the New Right movement, which received funding from the Coors family and promoted anti-labor and anti-gay positions. In the United Kingdom, the Thatcher government advanced politics independently inimical to both labor and gay/lesbian causes. Additionally, both groups faced hostile conservative media and police mistreatment. The commonality of these threats provided opportunities for collaboration.[4]

The second component was mutual vulnerability. As Hanegraaff and Pritoni (2019) argue, interest groups are most likely to engage in coalition building when they question their own influence. Given the potential costs

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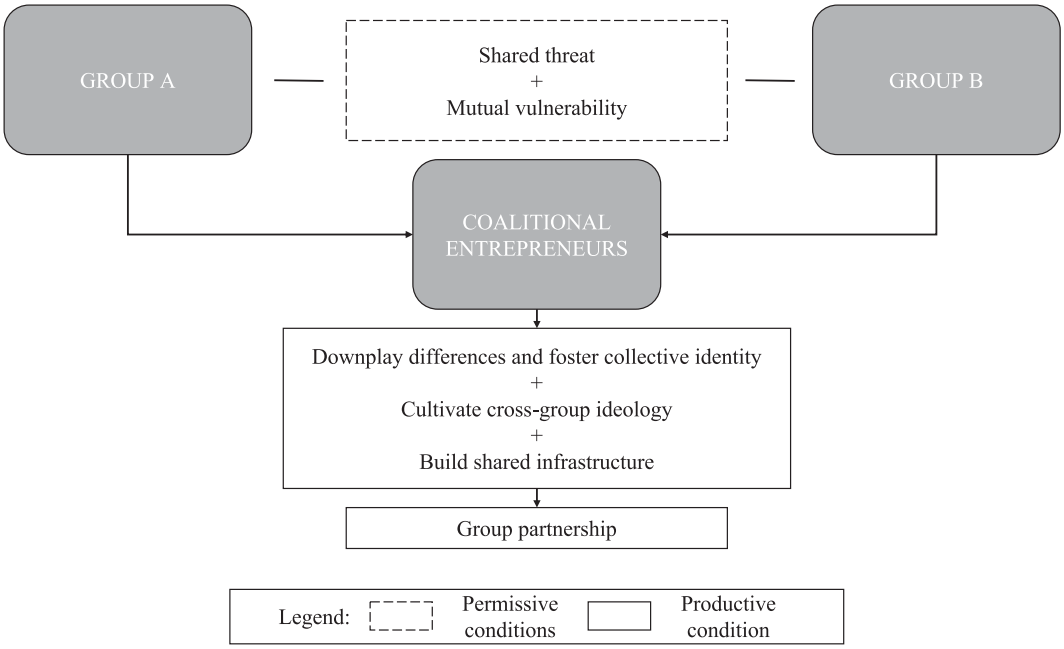
Figure 1
Permissive and productive conditions for unexpected group partnerships



of a partnership—negative reputational effects, backlash among members, reduced independence, or potential failure—launching joint efforts with new partners requires necessity; even when groups face shared threats, they still have good reason to address them individually if possible. In both cases that we assess, labor struggled to tackle the threats it faced alone. Coors affiliates were successful at strikebreaking and labor-led boycotts of Coors beer stalled. In the United Kingdom, anti-labor laws enabled the Thatcher government to limit the NUM's effectiveness. Labor's inability to achieve its goals alone or with existing allies incentivized it to find new partners. Meanwhile, gay advocacy groups in both countries were in early stages of their political development and envisioned long-term gains from building ties with other groups. As a result, despite concerns about the negative attitudes of some union members towards gay people, gay/lesbian groups believed assisting labor was an opportunity to enhance their own standing, draw attention to their causes, gain a valuable ally, and secure greater protections in the workplace. To be sure, some of the gay activists had existing sympathies with the left and believed in the broader goal the unions were fighting for, but even they saw strategic value in building coalitions to further their community's rights.

These factors constituted permissive conditions that encouraged partnerships but were insufficient for them to form. Once the right permissive conditions were present, a third factor—a productive condition—proved crucial: entrepreneurial leadership. Existing work shows that entrepreneurial leaders play a pivotal role in mobilizing collective action via the formation of new organizations (Salisbury 1969; Nownes and Neeley 1996). The importance of entrepreneurial action also applies to the formation of new partnerships: we show that entrepreneurs took advantage of the conditions noted earlier and forged durable partnerships. Their actions were crucial to overcome the roadblocks their alliances faced and to keep them going when they ran into challenges.

They did so in each of our cases by relying on three types of actions. First, they used common threats to draw attention away from differences between their members and build common cross-group identities. Collective identity, in Taylor and Whittier's (1992, 105) words, consists of "the shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests, experiences, and solidarity." Such identities are forged through collective struggle—producing a sense among individuals that they are part of a group with a distinct consciousness and boundaries—and are crucial to social movement mobilization. Similarly, social psychologists argue that politicized collective identities develop when individuals become aware of shared grievances and attribute them to common adversaries (Simon and Klandermans 2001). In both cases, entrepreneurial group leaders encouraged these dynamics by emphasizing that gay/lesbian individuals and workers

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faced threats from the same foes, while portraying their members as sharing positive qualities that distinguished them from their shared enemies. Second, entrepreneurial leaders accentuated shared ideological convictions. Rather than portraying each group as fighting common enemies on behalf of distinct causes, group leaders linked gay and labor rights together as part of a political worldview emphasizing fairness, freedom from oppression, and opposition to a system that serves elite interests. Finally, leaders established institutional linkages to facilitate collective action. These included new organizations devoted to joint gay-labor efforts, fundraising and social events, shared political intelligence and human capital, and alignment of the material incentives of group members through greater inclusion of gay people in unions.[5]

In doing so, groups built lasting personal connections between members that were supported by institutions, enabling further cooperation and creating a situation in which they were not engaged in a political quid pro quo, but instead became part of a common struggle.

Forging Partnerships: Case Studies of the Coors Boycott and U.K. Miners' Strike

Tracing the processes that led to partnerships between labor and gay rights activists in the United States and the United Kingdom, the case studies below discuss 1) how the permissive conditions outlined earlier (shared threat and mutual vulnerability) produced a context in which each group could work together; 2) how political entrepreneurs took advantage of such conditions and forged partnerships; and 3) the short- and long-term effects these partnerships had.

The Coors Boycott: Uniting "Sissies and Archie Bunkers"[6]

By the early 1970s, Coors Brewing Company had long been accused of engaging in anti-labor practices. These included pre-employment polygraph tests—which sought to root out workers with pro-union sentiments by inquiring about their loyalty to the company and their support for "subversive" causes—as well as the use of hardball tactics that made unions representing Coors' workers less effective (such as clauses giving the brewery wide discretion to terminate workers) (Baum 2001).[7] In addition to their company's policies, Coors family members supported numerous conservative and anti-union causes associated with the New Right movement (Baum 2001).[8] These efforts drew increasing public scrutiny as the New Right gained prominence and Coors-supported politicians, including Richard Nixon, gained power (Brantley 2020). Moreover, they coincided with a decline in the power of unions as a result of changing economic and political conditions (Cowie 2002; Ferguson and Rogers 1986).

In 1973, against this backdrop and amidst stalled contract negotiations, the Teamsters Local 888—representing Bay Area beer truck drivers—launched a strike against Coors and its affiliated distributors. The effort had little success, as Coors and the distributors engaged in brutal strikebreaking efforts, including hiring a security company to intimidate and physically attack drivers (Brantley 2020; Frank 2014).[9] As a result, the Teamsters launched a local boycott of Coors beer, but this too met with little initial success outside the labor community (Brantley 2020). With the boycott flagging, Teamster leader Allan Baird—a lifelong resident of the Castro District, which had become the center of San Francisco gay life—set out to reinvigorate it. Serving as boycott director, Baird sought out a new ally to rejuvenate the effort: Harvey Milk (Shilts 1982).

Baird had identified Milk, a gay rights activist, Castro business owner, and aspiring politician, as "the spokesperson for [San Francisco's] gay community" (Shilts 1982, 83). By incorporating Milk into the effort in late 1973, Baird hoped to convince gays and lesbians in San Francisco to join the boycott against Coors.[10] Milk was quickly joined by Howard Wallace, who Baird recruited in 1974 after meeting him while handing out pamphlets promoting the anti-Coors effort. Wallace, a gay activist and union member who moved to San Francisco in the 1960s, was an experienced organizer who had been active within a wide range of leftist movements and organizations.[11] Wallace became central to the effort, as his prior activism and distinctive background enabled him to "play a unique role" by providing him "bits of commonality … that a lot of people had experienced."[12]

While Baird's attempt to incorporate the gay community into the boycott made sense numerically, his appeals were still surprising. In the early 1970s the U.S. gay rights movement was in a nascent state: the 1950s saw the "Lavender Scare"—resulting in the firing and prosecution of (suspected) gay government workers—and sodomy remained a felony in every state until 1960. Gay and lesbian activists in the United States started organizing in the 1950s—with the most notable example being the Mattachine Society—but the bigger, more visible breakthrough—the Stonewall riots—occurred in 1969, while the American Psychological Association removed its classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder only in 1973 (Meeker 2001; Klarman 2013; Faderman 2015). With many gays still closeted, they still lacked a major, visible movement. Indeed, upon hearing about its involvement in the boycott, one Coors family member reportedly asked, "What the hell is a gay community?"[13]

But the weakness inherent in the gay rights movement at the time meant that Baird's appeal was much welcomed, as Milk and other gay rights activists were desperately seeking political allies. Indeed, Milk believed forming partnerships with other groups was crucial to the gay rights

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struggle: "If we want others to help us in our fight to end discrimination we must help others."[14] The Coors boycott proved a long-term endeavor that provided an opportunity to do exactly that; although, in the short term, the Coors struggle mostly centered on labor's goals, over the longer term an alliance with unions had the potential to bring substantial visibility and recognition to the gay rights cause. While their direct relationship with the Teamsters ended in 1975, gay rights activists continued the boycott for years after. They did so because Milk believed that if "the gay community continues, or even leads, the boycott" then "the labor groups fighting Coors will understand who their friends are and what it means to join together fighting for a common goal." Building these "bridges with other groups" would create allies "who in turn will start to fight for our rights too" and produce greater recognition for gay rights by "trigger[ing] other groups and communities to joining in the struggle."[15] Milk was not alone in this assessment: Wallace noted that "we need allies badly,"[16] while other gay activists recalled that before joining the Coors boycott "we didn't have [allies]—it wasn't predictable that we'd have anybody … . The allies thing is so important."[17]

The fact that both groups were in positions of weakness represents one permissive condition that helped a partnership form. However, success was not guaranteed, as there was clear hesitancy about the viability of an alliance. Although early gay activists had modeled their approach off the Communist Party—suggesting their outlook could fit with the labor movement—they eventually settled on a strategy unrelated to class struggle (Meeker 2001). And, even if there were ideological compatibilities, both groups were socially distant, with members of each holding stereotypical images of the other. Wallace—using tongue-in-cheek language—summarized the problem as unions being like "Archie Bunkers" and the gay movement consisting of "sissies": "you want to unite sissies and Archie Bunkers. That might be a good idea [politically] but that doesn't make a lot of sense [personally]."[18]

Similarly, Milk noted that "it may be hard for many gays to go to the help of the union" as a result of the homophobic views of some union members, while also stressing that the union had admitted to past mistakes.[19] Indeed, only a few years prior the AFL-CIO refused to endorse George McGovern in the 1972 presidential race, partially due to a belief that Democrats should not welcome gay people and supporters of sexual liberation; AFL-CIO president George Meany complained about having to listen to "the gay lib people … the people who want to legalize marriages between boys and boys and legalize marriages between girls and girls" (Cowie 2002). The Teamsters in particular had a "reactionary image"[20] that made them unlikely partners in a gay-labor alliance, with members "not much inclined toward advocacy of gay liberation" (Frank 2014, 77).

Thus, for a successful gay-union partnership to form, entrepreneurial leaders in both groups would need to bind together their respective communities. One strategy was to spotlight the other permissive condition: shared threat. The boycott leaders were helped by the fact that the Coors company and family was not just anti-union but also anti-gay. For example, the Coors lie detector tests not only asked prospective workers about unions but also their sex lives: "one question demanded: 'Are you a homosexual?' If you answered 'yes,' that terminated your application. Another demanded 'Are you pro-union?' If you answered 'yes,' that terminated you, too."[21] Milk and Wallace realized they could mobilize the gay community by informing them of Coors's policies, and the polygraph test became a major messaging tool to unite the groups: Wallace noted that "[knowledge of the polygraph tests was] all we needed—and it united us."[22] By presenting Coors as anti-union *and* anti-gay, the Teamsters and gay rights activists were able to argue that—in Milk's words—"we are all victims of the same oppression."[23] Throughout the period 1973–1977, Milk bashed Coors as an enemy of both labor and gays—dismissing it as "bigoted" and "unsympathetic towards *any* minority,"[24] and comparing Joseph Coors to "a Hitler."[25] Writing in the local gay newspaper *Bay Area Reporter* in 1975, Milk noted that, just as no Jew would "buy the greatest of products if Hitler was the salesman," gay people and workers should not "buy one bottle of Coors beer."[26]

While not subtle, these attacks were aimed at downplaying concerns about differences between unionists and gays and building an understanding that people in both groups were part of a shared battle. This task was made easier by the Coors family's public involvement with the conservative movement; as historian Allyson Brantley puts it, when the "Coors name became synonymous with the New Right," the boycott could be framed as "a prominent method of resistance" and "an accessible means of building solidarity and mounting a challenge to the New Right, via Coors" (Brantley 2020, 287). "Every time you drink a Coors," Wallace said, "the money goes to the most extreme right-wing organizations and politicians such as the John Birch Society, the Moral Majority and the Heritage Foundation."[27] As another activist put it, "we … contribute to our own oppression when we drink Coors beer."[28] The boycott, according to Milk, was evidence that the gay community and labor groups are "fighting toward a common goal" of "ending discrimination… . The time is here when all who are discriminated against in any way should join forces—it's a common battle."[29] From the union side, Baird noted that "when gay people face discrimination in employment all working people are less secure in their jobs,"[30] a sentiment supported by another union leader who said that "the Coors issue should concern anybody interested in retaining free choice, freedom of speech, anything on those lines."[31]

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Combining the two angles produced a coherent argument that unions should care about gay workers, and gays/lesbians should care about unions. Wallace, as a gay man and union member, was particularly well-positioned to make this argument, combining "class and sexual politics" (Brantley 2020, 278). In March 1978, when Coors tried to disrupt the burgeoning gay-union partnership by adding "sexual preference" to its company non-discrimination clause, Wallace countered that this move "will have no teeth unless there is unionization … . Without bargaining rights, the employees have no recourse but to follow the day-to-day dictates of the management."[32]

Notably, the effort was not limited to workers and gay/lesbian people. Milk, writing in 1977, noted that "old man Coors has a record … of being against every minority, especially the women's movement. He uses his Coors profits to foster his bigotry against Gays, Blacks, Latinos, women."[33] In attacking Coors on policies that affected multiple groups, the boycott leaders tried to create and defend a new political ideology that stood in stark contrast to the one advanced by Coors.

Labor and gay rights activists also built new institutional infrastructure to coordinate and sustain the boycott. In 1973, Milk enlisted Wayne Friday—a writer for the *Bay Area Reporter* and president of the San Francisco Tavern Guild, an organization of gay bars and liquor wholesalers.[34] And leaders from both groups began attending each other's events: Wallace marched in the San Francisco labor parade, and union officials attended gay rights events.[35] The leaders also tried to link their communities by setting up members of the gay community with union jobs. Baird and Milk believed it was particularly important to bring gay drivers into Teamsters 888 (Shilts 1982). At Milk's insistence, the gay workers applying were open about their sexuality: "I'm going to send you down open gays to your office … and they're going to apply for a job … . They're not going to come in and just say, 'I'm Johnny Jones looking for a job.' They're going to say, 'I'm gay and I want to be a union beer driver.'"[36] The inclusion of gay workers in the Teamsters' ranks carried a symbolic meaning that encouraged shared identity among members of each group and, more concretely, aligned their material interests; rather than being distinct from each other, there would now be visible crossover among each group's members. Appropriately, the first gay person to drive for the Teamsters was Wallace.[37]

Finding himself at the center of the action, Wallace took numerous additional steps to establish shared infrastructure between the groups. In 1975, he co-founded Bay Area Gay Liberation (BAGL), which sought to "advance lesbian and gay liberation by reaching out to potential allies within the labor movement." The organization brought together hundreds of activists on behalf of leftist causes (Hobson 2016, 13, 79).[38] Wallace invited Baird to a BAGL meeting, giving him an opportunity to build support for the boycott among the gay community. Following Baird's pitch, BAGL voted unanimously to support the effort and the organization started advocating for it in its newsletters[39] (Hobson 2016, 79). Before long, gay activists not only worked union jobs, but even held labor leadership positions.[40]

Together, the efforts of Baird, Milk, and Wallace helped expand and intensify the boycott. Baird was impressed: "one thing I learned about the gay community is that once they lock into something they can stop any product they want."[41] Wallace concurred that the boycott "took off very rapidly … . Harvey and I were pushing it before BAGL, but BAGL gave it a *big* push … . You had these militant activists … and they hit the bars at the end of a meeting, they'd go out and hit every bar in town with leaflets and stuff, and say, 'Hey, get rid of that shit!'"[42] The involvement of the Tavern Guild also paid off, and Coors beer was removed from more than a hundred bars in the area.[43]

Setbacks occurred and the partnership did not always develop smoothly: most notably, the Teamsters ended their formal involvement in 1975 due to disagreements among regional leaders within the union, some of whom were not supportive of the coalitional efforts that had been established. Despite this challenge, the boycott—sustained by organizations like BAGL and fortified by bonds built between workers and gay activists—continued in the years that followed (Brantley 2022). As a result, the anti-Coors effort—which received a boost when AFL-CIO brewery workers in Golden, Colorado, went on strike in 1977—continued well into the 1980s. By the late 1970s, the boycott had spread nationwide and new participants acknowledged the importance of the early involvement of the gay community in San Francisco (Brantley 2020; Frank 2014). Indeed, AFL-CIO leader David Sickler, speaking to a crowd at the 1978 Gay Freedom Day celebration, told the audience that "you have given the Coors company a taste of what Gay power is like. Coors has been suffering and they have tried to buy you off. They found out that you are not for sale."[44] Ultimately lasting fourteen years, the boycott did enduring harm to Coors' image and market share, which in California alone dropped from a high of 40% to just 14%.[45]

Importantly, and as Milk and Wallace predicted, the partnership between gay rights activists and Teamsters in 1973–1975 produced durable ties between the two groups that extended beyond the boycott. This included continued collaboration between some of the same actors. In the 1970s, California unions, working with BAGL, began signing contracts that included sexual orientation in non-discrimination clauses and endorsing legislation protecting gay workers, thereby meaningfully improving workplace protections for gays/lesbians.[46] And these pro-gay actions were clearly connected to the boycott: in announcing some of these new developments, Baird stressed that the Teamsters were "grateful for the wide

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support the gay community has given the Coors Beer Boycott."[47] Meanwhile, in 1978 unions joined gay rights activists like Milk in opposing the anti-gay Briggs Initiative, which called for firing homosexual teachers. Unions portrayed the initiative as harmful not just to "the legitimate rights of gays" but also to "job security and violations of freedom of the individual under the First Amendment"[48]—again combining gay rights and union positions.

Unions also supported Milk's campaigns for elected office. In 1975, Milk, running for a spot on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, received the endorsement of not only the Teamsters, but numerous other Bay Area unions. Although Milk did not win that year, his campaign was considered a success: Milk narrowly missed victory (finishing seventh in a race that awarded seats to the top six finishers) and established himself as a formidable political actor (Shilts 1982). In 1977, Milk—again supported by Teamsters and other unions[49]—was victorious in his next race for the Board of Supervisors (Brantley 2022). The election of Milk—one of the first openly gay elected officials in U.S. history—had long-term impacts that extended beyond the Bay Area, providing visibility, momentum, and legitimacy to the incipient gay rights movement, of which Milk became an icon after his assassination in 1978.

The years since have solidified the relationship between organized labor and the gay rights movement. As labor leader John Sweeney has noted, the Coors boycott encouraged unions to "build broad and diverse coalitions that could unite around a common agenda" (Sweeney 1999, 35). In 1983, Wallace and union leader Nancy Wohlforth created the Lesbian-Gay Labor Alliance (LGLA), a national organization which expanded recognition and protection of LGBT individuals within unions. This organization evolved into Pride at Work which, since 1997, has been an officially recognized affiliate of the AFL-CIO active on behalf of LGBT causes (Sweeney 1999; Frank 2014). Moreover, LGBT advocates are now—as unions have been for many decades (Schlozman 2015)—aligned with the Democratic Party and have been incorporated into its coalition (Karol 2012). While many factors contributed to the dynamic process through which LGBT groups became aligned with the Democratic Party (Proctor 2022), the Coors boycott—by linking gay rights to the most powerful group in the party at a very early stage—helped set the stage for this development.

While the union-gay partnership built around the Coors boycott had a wide-range of important consequences, its emergence was contingent on the convergence of numerous factors. As figure 2 illustrates, the partnership required the presence of permissive conditions—shared threats from Coors and an inability to address those threats alone. Because of the lack of pre-existing connections between the groups and their members' perceived incompatibility, however, partnership also required entrepreneurial leaders to find creative ways to bring them together; by building a cross-group identity, linking it to a shared set of ideological convictions, and institutionalizing it organizationally, they succeeded at not just rallying short-term collective action, but also forming deeper, more durable ties across groups.

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners: The U.K. Miners' Strike, 1984–1985

The 1984–1985 miners' strike was one of the longest strikes in the history of the British coal industry. The National Coal Board (NCB)—responsible for managing the coal industry—started closing mines in the United Kingdom in the 1960s. Initially cooperative, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) began to oppose closures and held two successful strikes in the early 1970s. In 1972, Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath caved to the NUM's demands after a six-week strike (Hughes 2012). Two years later, in response to another strike, Heath called a general election, which he presented as a contest between "Parliament and the elected government" and "one particularly powerful group of workers" (Roe-Crines 2020, 360). The strategy failed: Conservatives won more votes, but Labour received more seats and remained in government until 1979.

While in opposition, Conservatives, now led by Margaret Thatcher, produced a study aimed at "[maneuvering] the nation out of the position where it is vulnerable to monopoly unions in vital industries."[50] To undermine coal strikes in particular, Conservatives planned to build up coal stocks (preempting strike-related electricity blackouts) and to pass legislation limiting protests, expanding riot police, and cutting off welfare benefits to strikers.[51] Back in power after 1979, Conservatives began executing these plans, passing legislation limiting picketing to workers at the premises of their own employer, permitting employers to fire striking workers, and allowing courts to sequester union funds if they engaged in unlawful strikes.[52] Internally, the government was clear about its goals: Ferdinand Mount, head of Thatcher's policy unit, wrote a confidential memo urging the government to "neglect no opportunity to erode trade-union membership."[53] As a result, the Thatcher government constituted a severe threat to labor, especially the NUM.

Simultaneously, the Thatcher government also threatened the UK gay rights movement. Parliament had decriminalized homosexual acts in 1967, but the age of consent remained higher for same-sex couples and required sexual acts—including solicitations—to occur "in private,"[54] making them illegal if more than two people were present. Police harassment and raids on gay clubs were common, as it remained illegal for men to dance closely together

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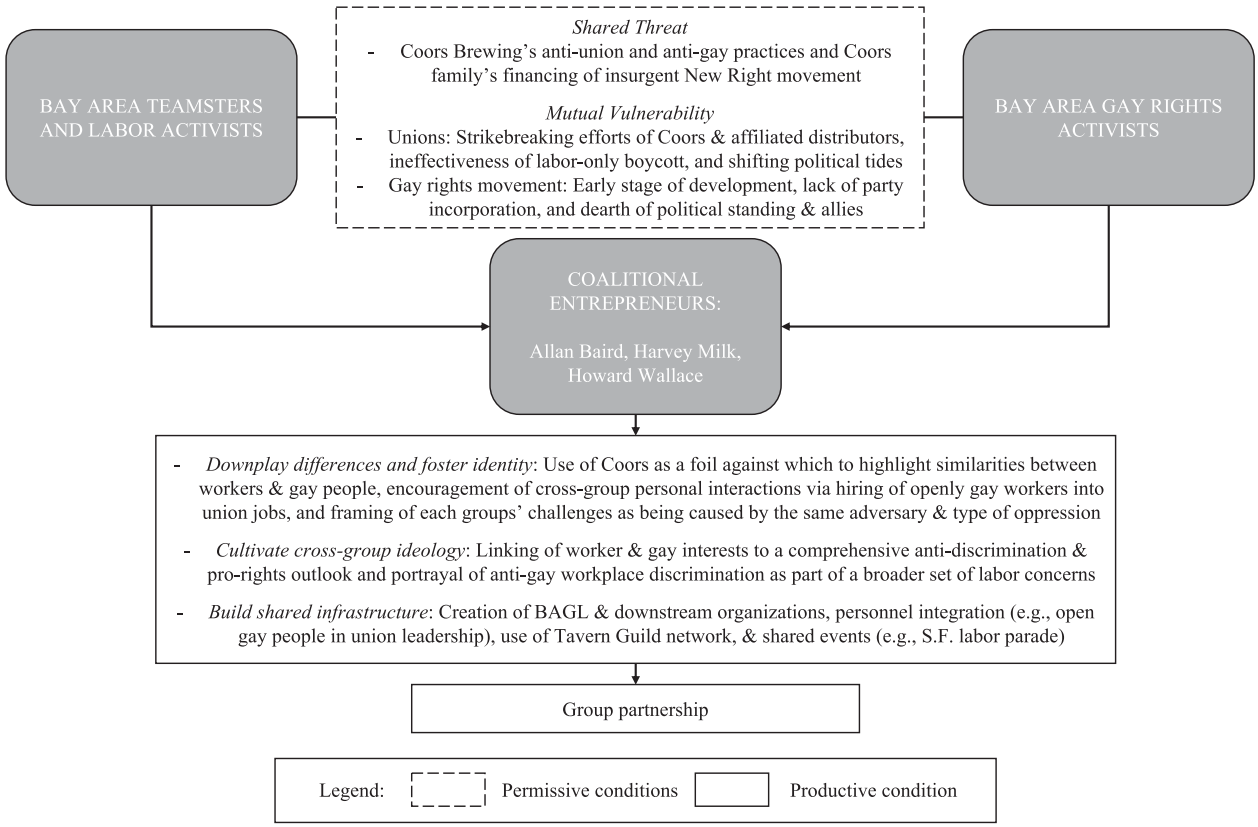
Figure 2
Teamsters and Bay Area gay rights activists partnership



(Tate et al. 2017, 53). Under Thatcher, these hostilities increased. In 1984, customs officials raided Gay's The Word—a major gay bookstore and hub for left-leaning LGBT Londoners—based on an antiquated law criminalizing importation of "obscene" materials—such as novels by Tennessee Williams, Christopher Isherwood, and Gore Vidal.[55] Even more concerning was the emerging AIDS crisis, which conservative politicians and media used to attack gay men as dangers to society.[56] Combined, the United Kingdom gay rights movement in the mid-1980s found itself in a clear position of vulnerability.

While unions and gay rights activists had a shared enemy in the Thatcher government, a partnership was not a foregone conclusion. Indeed, gay activists who were active in unions said there was a strong preference—in the words of gay activist Ray Goodspeed—to not "talk about gay stuff because the workers don't like it" and that "there was an assumption that homosexuality was a purely middle-class issue and something of an affectation" (Tate et al. 2017, 90-91). Similarly, gay activist Mike Jackson argued that within "the union and left-wing political community, there was an awful homophobic attitude that homosexuality was alien to working-class people; that it was a middle-class thing and … middle-class homosexuals were corrupting working-class men" (Tate et al. 2017, 94).

Meanwhile, the Labour Party had not yet embraced gay rights either (Tobin 1990). While the decriminalization of homosexual acts in 1967 occurred under a Labour government, the bill was a conscience vote in all parties, and its roots laid with a committee formed under Conservatives and a bill sponsored by a Conservative member of parliament. Labour Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, during debate of the bill, described homosexual men as suffering from a "disability" and carrying "a great weight of shame all their lives."[57] In the years that followed, Labour continued distancing itself from gay rights, and LGSM members believed "the Tories were anti-gay but so was Labour" (Tate et al. 2017, 87-88), that the party had "no appetite … for gay rights at all," its leaders had "antipathy towards gays," and that embracing the issue would "re-enforce the message that the Conservatives were pushing. That Labour had lost touch with ordinary people" (Tate et al. 2017, 88-89).

Thus, a gay-union partnership required work to overcome distrust and tension. The impetus for such cooperation was the start of a new miners' strike following a series

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of government-ordered pit closures. In 1983 alone, 23 pits were closed with 21,000 jobs lost. With the NCB internally proposing additional closures that would eliminate nearly one-third of mining jobs, miners began a strike on March 12, 1984 (Moore 2015). Unlike the strikes of the 1970s, the NUM this time found itself in a clear position of weakness. The new Conservative legislation limited the union's ability to coordinate among workers at different pits. Meanwhile, the government had built up its energy reserves—meaning few Brits experienced power interruptions during the strike—and press reports of the strike were mostly negative. Finally, the NUM itself was divided; because the bulk of closures fell in Wales, there was no guarantee a nationwide strike would be approved by members in England. NUM president Arthur Scargill thus avoided calling a vote—undermining popular perception of the strike, union cohesion, and the NUM's legal protections. Indeed, NUM funds were successfully sequestered just weeks into the strike (Kelliher 2021, 82).

Striking miners quickly ran out of financial reserves, forcing them to seek support elsewhere. Dai Donovan, a coal washery worker and union activist from the Dulais Valley in Wales, described seeing people in London "collecting money in buckets at the side of the road, and there were £5 and £10 notes in them. It turned out they were miners, collecting money for the Kent coalfield. And I thought, 'We should do that'"[58] (Tate et al. 2017, 116). While having miners collect money in London was an option, a more effective approach was building relations with local groups in the city. To achieve this, the Neath, Dulais, and Swansea Valleys Miners' Support Group attempted to "set up a system of support groups there who collected money regularly …. We called it 'twinning'" (Tate et al. 2017, 128).

"Twinning" relied on political entrepreneurs from mining communities building "direct personal and political relationships … between people from London" and other areas "and the British coalfields" (Kelliher 2021, 2). As human geographer Diarmaid Kelliher notes, the groups were diverse, combining traditional left-wing organizations (trades councils, trade unions, the Labour Party), radical political groups (communists and anarchists), as well as "feminist groups, Black organisations, … musicians, students, unemployed workers and many others" (Kelliher 2021, 5). One of these was a new organization of gay/lesbian activists: Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. Founded by Mark Ashton and Mike Jackson after collecting money for miners during the London pride march in July, the group aimed to organize "amongst Lesbians and Gay men in support of the National Union of Mineworkers in its campaign against pit closures and in defence of the mining communities [and] to provide financial assistance for miners and their families during the national miners' strike" (Tate et al. 2017, 127). Throughout the strike, LGSM members—as many as 50—did weekly collections outside London gay pubs, clubs, and stores—thereby representing support collected by and *from* gays and lesbians in the city.[59]

Although successful in raising money, LGSM initially had nowhere to send the funds. While many members had backgrounds in left-wing politics, none had direct connections to mining communities (Smith and Leeworthy 2016; Tate et al. 2017, 106-107). Eventually, an LGSM member reached out to Communist Party organizer David Richards, who informed Dulais Valley union activist Hywel Francis that a "group of gays had been raising money but couldn't make a link with a mining community that was prepared to recognise and respect them" (Tate et al. 2017, 129-130). The recognition and respect component was non-negotiable and part of LGSM's strategy. Indeed, in an op-ed LGSM wrote that "many will say that the miners are notoriously anti-gay but, if they see us actively supporting them, showing solidarity with them, their attitudes will change … . There may soon come a day when people like the miners will come to our aid"[60] (Tate et al. 2017, 140). Francis had no problem with this requirement and instructed Donovan to meet with Ashton and Jackson in London. After this, LGSM officially requested to "twin" with the Dulais Valley support organization.

While the Dulais Valley organization voted to accept this request, a successful relationship was not guaranteed. There is disagreement among those present about how the request was initially received in Dulais (some remember participants laughing as the LGSM letter was read out[61]), but there was hesitancy among the miners to publicly associate with a gay group. To overcome this, leaders built shared organizational infrastructure enabling members on both sides to build genuine connections. One component of this strategy was having groups visit Dulais and stay with miner families (Francis 2015). While a common element of "twinning," it was not obvious LGSM would be included: Donovan asked the group to visit in September but did so without confirming with the support group at home, and some members expressed concern about having gays/lesbians visit the community. While Francis "told them the decision was done and they'd have to put up with it; to just get on with it," discomfort remained (Tate et al. 2017, 172). Local activist Sîan James recalled a neighbor "saying that she was going to report us to the council because we were all going to get AIDS" (Tate et al. 2017, 179). And, while many LGSM members were excited about meeting the miners, some skipped the visit because they were afraid of facing rejection on the basis of their sexuality. Those that did visit felt a "certain amount of anxiety over what the response would be like … . 'What kind of reception will we get? Will the people there feel awkward about us staying?'" (Tate et al. 2017, 177).

Despite this, the LGSM delegation filled "two Hackney Community Transport buses and a beat-up old

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Volkswagen" (Tate et al. 2017, 180). The gay activists were split up in homes across the area and, on Saturday night, the mining community and LGSM activists met at the local welfare club. Christine Powell of the support group recalled "the club was packed that night" but no "antagonism: I think the atmosphere was 99 per cent curiosity … . People here didn't think they had ever met a gay" (Tate et al. 2017, 185). And any initial awkwardness soon passed: LGSM member Jonathan Blake remembers "somebody applauded and it was extraordinary. We were welcomed with such warmth and such generosity: really welcomed. And from there, it was bingo and dancing all the way" (Tate et al. 2017, 188).

Crucially, the Dulais visit allowed both groups to identify shared values and common enemies. Powell recalls, "we talked about the strike and we slagged off Thatcher" (Tate et al. 2017, 192). But the shared experiences were deeper than mere dislike of Thatcher: for example, both groups now experienced semi-regular police harassment due to the police acting aggressively against picketing miners (Kelliher 2021, 132). The visit also allowed people in both groups to learn about the others' lived experiences in a way that produced genuine personal bonds. Talking to the gay and lesbian activists exposed those in the mining community to a reality many were unaware of. Francis recalls that "the gays … had horrendous problems compared with us, and it was vital to acknowledge with gratitude what they were doing for us, and build the relationship so we could understand each other's communities" (Tate et al. 2017, 193-194). LGSM members also became more invested: Gethin Roberts noted the visit meant "the money in my bucket on a collection outside a gay pub in London would feed a family I knew in Dulais for a day or so" (Tate et al. 2017, 197-198).

In the months that followed, LGSM members and the Dulais community continued efforts at building a shared identity. Members of LGSM returned to Dulais, while women[62] in the mining support group made multiple visits to London. Meanwhile, LGSM maintained its fundraising efforts, donating £20,000 to the Dulais support group. The biggest haul came from Pits and Perverts, a concert in London featuring gay and lesbian performers, including headliner Bronski Beat. The event attracted over 1,000 people, raised £5,000, and produced write-ups in music magazine *NME*, resulting in more donations and linkage of gay rights and support for the miners' strike in the public image.[63] The Dulais group largely used the money for food packages in their own communities and other communities in Wales. The one exception was the purchase of a van directly by LGSM to help the women's group in Dulais deliver food parcels and connect with other groups in the area. Dulais' Jayne Francis-Headon recalls "the van was vital in enabling us women to collect clothing and food for distribution. It opened up huge opportunities for us as a community but it also epitomized everything LGSM did for us" (Tate et al. 2017, 234).

Importantly, the Dulais Valley support group openly acknowledged LGSM's support. For example, the van had an LGSM logo displayed on its side.[64] Striking miners also often wore LGSM badges, going (as Jackson described it) "on picket lines all over Britain—facing up to big, burly coppers and other big, burly miners—wearing a gay badge" (Tate et al. 2017, 246). This public embrace signified how successful LGSM and the Dulais support group had been in overcoming initial hesitancy and building a shared ideological viewpoint. Donovan summed this up in his speech at the Pits and Perverts event, telling the gay/lesbian activists present that "you have worn our badge, 'Coal not Dole,' and you know what harassment means, as we do. Now we will pin your badge on us; we will support you. It won't change overnight, but now 140,000 miners know that there are other causes and other problems. We know about blacks and gays and nuclear disarmament, and we will never be the same" (Tate et al. 2017, 216).

Despite this coalition between miners, gays/lesbians, and other groups, the 1984–1985 strike failed. After months without pay and no sign that the government would give in, miners began to break the picket line. By February 1984, one local union official illustrated the situation by wondering whether "the last striker [has] the right to call the last but one a 'scab'" (Francis 2015, 68). On March 1, the union in South Wales voted to return to work without an agreement with the government. The end of the strike left miners and LGSM members "despondent" as it not only meant defeat but also introduced concerns about the longevity of the new partnership. Dave Lewis of LGSM remembers having "a bit of anxiety because some people could argue that the relationship had been one-way. They needed our support and we gave it to them. I hoped that it would come the other way but we didn't actually know whether it would" (Tate et al. 2017, 246).

But it did. In July 1985 miners were invited to march alongside LGSM in London Pride. The union delegation consisting of miners and their families was so large LGSM were asked to lead the march. And while a public embrace of gay rights was important, the miner union did more. At the annual Labour Party conference in 1985, gay activists attempted to pass a resolution pledging the party to support gay rights for the first time. With the public backing of the NUM, the resolution passed. Gay rights activists believed the NUM's support was pivotal: LGSM-member Paul Canning remembers that "the [Labour] leadership hadn't wanted to touch this issue with a barge pole" but when "well-respected unions like the miners—and they *were* well respected throughout the Labour movement back then—back you, others fall in line" (Tate et al. 2017, 254). And the support lasted. In

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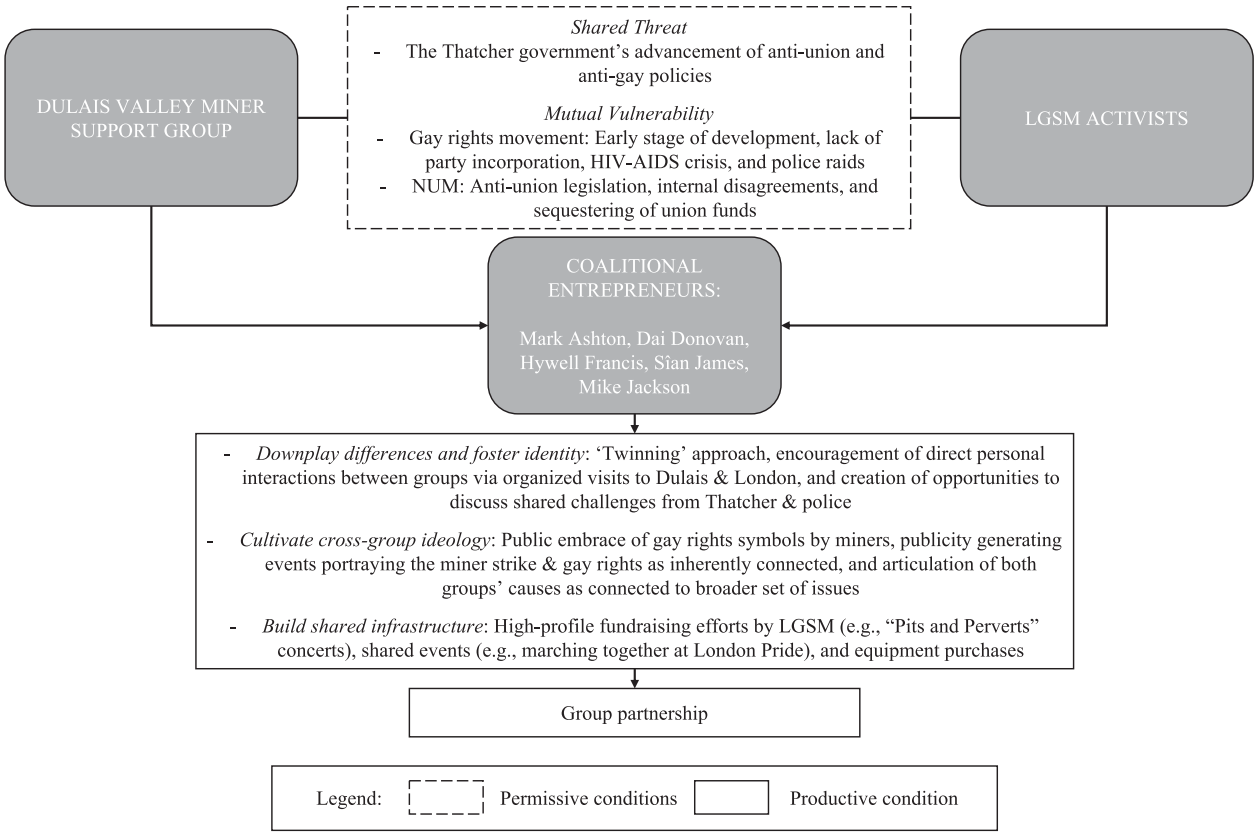
1988, the NUM came out publicly against legislation from the Thatcher government that would prohibit the "promotion" of homosexuality in schools. As Kelliher notes, while union opposition to Tory legislation could have come about regardless of LGSM activity, the lasting bonds with the Dulais area in particular were evident. In 1985, for example, James lobbied actively at the Labour conference in support of the aforementioned gay rights resolution. And in the late 1980s a representative of its Women's Support Group wrote Jackson that they "have not forgotten the solidarity, and the moral and financial support the Lesbian and Gay Communities gave to our families during the Miners' Strike of 1984/85 … We will do all we can in our area to publicise and campaign against the implications of the Bill" (Kelliher 2021, 179-180).

The inclusion of gay rights into mainstream left-wing politics in the UK cannot be connected solely to the activities of LGSM, as many other activists and organizations were active in unions and the Labour Party at the time and were working to achieve these goals. At the same time, the gay/lesbian activists that formed LGSM made a difference. NUM's—traditionally not liberal on social issues—support for gay rights in 1985 and beyond was directly connected to the support LGSM had provided miners during the strike. But this partnership—as summarized in figure 3—required the presence of both permissive conditions and dedicated coalitional entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

Groups often form coalitions to advance their political goals—in some cases uniting distant groups that are seemingly unlikely allies. In this paper, we explore how such unexpected partnerships can form through two similar cases. In both the Coors boycott and the miners' strike, partnerships formed between labor and gay rights groups —groups that, at the time, saw themselves as incompatible. Yet, in both cases, labor and gay rights groups had common enemies that bound them together. Additionally, each group was vulnerable, finding itself unable to address the threats it faced alone. These conditions, while crucial, were by themselves only *permissive* for coalition building; actually *producing* these partnerships required political entrepreneurs to work together. These creative leaders made group members aware of each other's struggles, built unifying identities, cultivated shared ideological

Figure 3
Dulais Valley miner support group and LGSM partnership



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convictions, and established infrastructures that enabled durable cooperation. As a result, these partnerships extended beyond the specific contexts in which they began—over time, the actors involved expanded their partnerships to the broader political communities they were part of.

The Coors boycott and miners' strike were not solely responsible for the incorporation of gay rights into mainstream left-wing movements in both countries—something that many different activists and organizations contributed to.[65] Nonetheless, these cases show how such processes develop; both are indicative of how "strange bedfellows" in politics can come together in ways that end up having effects that go well beyond the specific events that united them in the first place. These partnerships have the potential to be unusually consequential. Indeed, since they, by definition, bring together groups that lacked unifying partisan orientations and perceived themselves to be incongruous, unexpected partnerships require entrepreneurs to alter the political terrain in ways that eventually shift broader patterns of political conflict. They stand out because they disrupt existing patterns and arrangements, introducing the possibility of radical shifts in how political conflict is organized.

Our research design—focused explicitly on cases in which unexpected or "deviant" outcomes occurred—enables us to gain new insights into how partnerships between seemingly strange bedfellows can occur. Nonetheless, we stress that a cost of this approach is that we cannot make strong claims about generalizability; as such, additional work is needed to examine how well our theoretical framework applies to other cases. Our hope is this paper provides a starting point for such work. As noted earlier, unexpected partnerships are hardly unique to our cases. The relationship between unions and civil rights organizations that developed in the 1930s was, as Baylor (2013, 112) notes, "anything but a foregone conclusion" at the time. Both groups, however, had mutual vulnerabilities that incentivized collaboration. The CIO needed to include Black workers in order to combat strikebreaking efforts while civil rights activists were motivated to find allies to gain political clout (Schickler 2016). Meanwhile, Southern Democrats—who sought to both maintain white supremacy and limit the reach of pro-labor policies—comprised a foe common to both groups. Group leaders subsequently built ties using similar strategies to those we see in the Coors and LGSM cases: producing shared identities by focusing on class solidarity, advancing an ideological framework combining economic and racial liberalism, and establishing shared organizations for engaging in collective action. Similarly, women's suffrage groups built unexpected alliances that contributed to their goal—a move that was costly in the short-term but ultimately enabled them to broaden support for their cause (McConnaughy 2013).

As these examples suggest, our argument also sheds light on how underrepresented groups in society can increase their political representation through cooperation with others. In forming unexpected partnerships, groups can expand the number and diversity of constituencies backing their policies, achieve greater exposure and public recognition for their causes, gain new access to political institutions and leaders, and join a durable network of allies. In some cases—including the two we explore—these partnerships can also more directly lead to greater economic rights and workplace protections.

Finally, our study underlines the importance of historical processes that produce features of politics that are eventually taken for granted. While it may seem self-evident to contemporary observers that specific issues and ideas "fit together," such alignments are products of developmental processes dependent on particular circumstances and actions taken by political actors (Noel 2013; Karol 2009). Our findings underscore the notion that important aspects of American politics have "deep historical roots" (Milkis 1999, x) and that, in order to understand contemporary politics, scholars should remain focused on the developmental processes that led to them.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1 The activists discussed here self-identified as gay and lesbian and we adopt their terminology.

2 Notably, both unions were controversial and distinctive within the labor movements. The Teamsters had conflicts with the AFL-CIO and were more conservative. The NUM was led by Arthur Scargill, who was controversial due to his radical politics. However, these distinctive qualities do not render these unions unsuitable for our purposes. The Teamsters' conservativism makes their alliance with gay rights activists even more unexpected, and gay rights activists spotlighted the NUM as being particularly hostile to gay rights (Tate et al. 2017, 22).

3 The lack of perceived compatibility applies *prior* to the creation of a partnership. This does not necessitate

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there being no underlying rationale that *could* be used to link the groups together. That is, a partnership can be unexpected even if there is an underlying logic uniting them.

4 The emergence of new threats is a well-documented group motivation to undertake fresh efforts to protect themselves and find allies (Hojnacki 1997; Patashnik 2019).

5 In our cases, all three actions were crucial for establishing cross-group ties, but elsewhere entrepreneurs might successfully cultivate partnerships by taking some combination of them. Most crucial is that entrepreneurs find creative ways to overcome the barriers that exist due to the groups' perceived incompatibilities.

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8 "The New Right's Strong Ambition Is Fueled by Huge Mail Campaign," *New York Times*, December 4, 1977, 73; Richter, Paul, "Coors' New Brew: Taking Out the Political Aftertaste," *Los Angeles Times*, September 27, 1987.

9 Allan Baird, April 11, 1995, Interview with Miriam Frank, Miriam Frank Oral History Collection, Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, tape 1.

10 Baird, Miriam Frank Oral History Collection tape 1.

11 Laird, Cynthia, "Labor Leader Howard Wallace Dies," *Bay Area Reporter*, November 20, 2012.

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13 Ibid, tape 1.

14 Milk, Harvey, "Teamsters Seek Gay Help," *Bay Area Reporter*, Volume 4, Number 24, November 27, 1974.

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22 Wallace, Miriam Frank Oral History Collection, tape 6.

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29 Milk, "Milk Forum: Reactionary Beer."

30 Baird, Allan, "Letters," *Bay Area Reporter*, Volume 5, Number 8, April 17, 1975.

31 "The Union View: The Coors Controversy," *The Advocate*, November 16, 1977: 14-15.

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33 Milk, "Milk Forum: The List!"

34 Baird, Miriam Frank Oral History Collection, tape 1; Bajko, Matthew S., "News Ex-B.A.R. political editor Wayne Friday dies," *Bay Area Reporter*, October 12,2016.

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37 Ibid.

38 Palmer, Waiyde, "Howard Wallace, Icon of LGBT & Labor Activism, Has Died at 76," Hoodline, November 15, 2012; Laird, "Labor Leader Howard Wallace Dies."

39 Wallace, Miriam Frank Oral History Collection, tape 6.

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58 This section relies heavily on an LGSM oral history compiled by Tim Tate (Tate et al. 2017).
59 The London organization inspired similar groups across Britain. While some members of LGSM provided advice they generally were not otherwise involved (Kelliher 2014).
60 The LGSM position was not universal in the gay community: one *Capital Gay* letter asked "How much support [the members of LGSM] would receive from the miners if the situation was reversed" and argued that money "could be spent on better, more needed causes such as our gay defences, our gay old and lonely, our AIDS victims" (Tate et al. 2017, 141-142).
61 Sîan James recalls that after the mention of LGSM "there was … a nervous laughter that went around the room." Francis stresses that "at no time, then or subsequently, were any openly homophobic attitudes expressed in our locality" (Francis 2015, 111) but acknowledged "the minutes of the meeting show that clearly there was some kind of frisson about the idea" (Tate et al. 2017, 132).
62 Francis notes the real relationship was between LGSM and "the women activists within the support group" who "[built] and [sustained]the alliance with LGSM" (Francis 2015, 114). Gender also played an important part in intra-LGSM relations: some women involved left LGSM and founded Lesbians Against Pit Closures (LAPC). While LGSM and LAPC organized events together, its creation resulted in a decrease in lesbian participation in LGSM. Stephanie Chambers—who remained—recalls "meetings where I was the only woman and it felt as if I was the lesbian in Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners" (Tate et al. 2017, 228).
63 "No to Maggie Thatcher!" *Body Politic*, no. 111, 1985, Archives of Sexuality and Gender, Gale; "Pits and Perverts," *Gay Scotland*, no. 19, March–April 1985, Archives of Sexuality and Gender, Gale.
64 Jayne Francis-Headon remembers "some of the men in the support-group" opposed the LGSM logo because of "the stigma of having a gay logo on the van." (Tate et al. 2017, 232-233). The logo did raise eyebrows. Francis recalled "the LGSM logo [attracted] curious glances" and in "more rural parts, they covered the bloody sign so people couldn't see it" (Tate et al. 2017, 233).
65 An extensive literature debates why parties embrace gay rights. While globally left-wing parties often support gay rights, scholars argue this is dependent on the presence (or absence) of a church-state cleavage, rather than an inherent compatibility between leftist ideology and support for gay rights (see Engeli, Green-Pedersen, and Larsen 2013; Siegel and Wang 2018; Siegel, Turnbull-Dugarte, and Olinger 2022.

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