THE EQUALITY AGENDA: HOW STATE-BASED LGBT ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS DEFINE A 21ST CENTURY MOVEMENT WHILE CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE FROM THE GROUND UP

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Abstract

The Equality Agenda: How state-based LGBT advocacy organizations define a 21st century movement while campaigning for change from the ground up
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Social movements provide rich sites of investigation, ideal forums through which to examine the various communicative processes that influence the quest for social change. Research of the gay movement has investigated these communicative processes, but often from the perspective of national movement organizations and national discourse. Most of the fundamental rights and protections central to the movement, however, exist at the state level. Accordingly, this dissertation explores how state-focused LGBT advocacy organizations organize and execute their communication strategies and examines if, how, and the extent to which state-focused media reflect those strategies in their coverage of issues facing the LGBT community.

Interviews with leaders from state LGBT advocacy organizations in Massachusetts, Ohio, North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Iowa, and Washington (state), and an interview with the executive director of the national federation of state-based LGBT advocacy organizations, provide important insight regarding 21st century LGBT advocacy and the crucial role of the state lens in the gay movement. State organizations currently campaign for inclusive laws around four core policy areas: non-discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition. Their philosophy posits that change occurs from the ground up; substantive change at the state and national level first requires a critical mass of support in local communities. By using LGBT citizens and allies as community spokespersons, and

communicating authentic, personal stories of the LGBT experience, state-based LGBT advocates establish a constant and consistent drumbeat of messaging—with a variety of stakeholders—that reinforces LGBT issues as mainstream concerns.

The interview findings provided a benchmark from which to analyze state-focused print media coverage of the LGBT community. Coverage supported participant comments regarding the challenges and opportunities they experience working with the media. Media sometimes use inappropriate terminology and juxtapose inappropriate counterpoints, but they present the personal, authentic LGBT story and the positive, inclusive messages of equality as communicated by organizational spokespersons. Media also capitalize on opportunities to present the more radical voice, which often appears in the form of an anti-LGBT counterpoint. Most importantly, the content analysis reinforced the merit of communication strategies focused on change from the ground up, not the top down.

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Anyone who knows me knows my love for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I pursued my Bachelor's, Master's, and now Ph.D. degrees at UNC, at different times, for different reasons, and in different capacities. At each point, Carolina revealed for me new worlds and possibilities that I never imagined, and my Carolina education continues to shape who I am as an individual and a scholar. My life will always be connected intimately to this great university, and for that I am eternally humbled and grateful.

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As I write these acknowledgements, my grandmother, Rita P. Mundy, is one month away from celebrating her 104th birthday. And I can't help but think about the role my two grandmothers played in getting me to this point. In her youth, my Grandma Mundy left Mexico with her family for the United States. She raised two sons as a single mother in El Paso, Texas while commuting daily to her job at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. My mother was nine years old when her father died, leaving my Grandma Greene to raise three girls on a farm in eastern North Carolina. My grandmothers did what they did for the future of the family, not for themselves. And they did so regardless of circumstance. I would not be here without their sacrifices.

My grandmothers passed this ethic to my parents. My parents worked in order for my brother and I to have the best education possible, to be exposed to things they never were, and to have opportunities they never had. Their relationship, and their devotion to me, reflects the very definition of unconditional love. I am unable to express in words my gratitude for their love and my wonderful life; all I can do is dedicate this dissertation to them. Similarly, my brother has been at my side, without question, without asking anything in return, at each step. He is my hero in so many ways. I hope he knows how much I appreciate and admire who he his, and his role in getting me to this point.

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"To get the bad customs of a country changed and new ones, though better, introduced, it is necessary first to remove the prejudices of the people, enlighten their ignorance, and convince them that their interests will be promoted by the proposed changes; this is not the work of a day."

~ *Benjamin Franklin, 1781*

Chapter I: Introduction & Background

On June 16, 2008, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom married longtime gay rights activists Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. The couple waited more than fifty years to be able to marry, and a California Supreme Court decision allowing marriage equality suddenly made that opportunity possible (*In re Marriage*, 2008, 43 Cal. 4th 757).[1] Approximately 18,000 same-sex couples married before the state's citizens subsequently voted to overturn the new law, but because of Martin and Lyon's prominence in the LGBT community as pioneers of the modern American gay movement, they had been selected as the first same-sex couple in California to receive a marriage license (Buchanan, 2008).[2] In 1955, Martin and Lyon helped found the Daughters of Bilitis, the nation's first lesbian advocacy organization. Each woman served as president and editor of that organization's magazine, *the Ladder*, which launched in 1956 as one of the first LGBT publications in the United States (Gallo, 2006). In the 1960s, they became the first out lesbian members of the National Organization for Women (Gallo, 2006), but left that organization in the 1970s in open protest of its homophobic policies. In 1972, Martin and Lyon published their first book, *Lesbian/Woman*, detailing lesbian life in America. A health clinic for lesbians—Lyon Martin Health Services—opened in 1979 and was named in honor of the couple's work on behalf of the lesbian community (Mieszkowski, 2008). And their work as openly gay journalists was honored in 2005 when they were

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[1] Six individual lawsuits seeking marriage equality for same sex couples comprised this case.

[2] "LGBT" stands for Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexuals, and Transgender individuals. Going forward, LGBT will be interchanged with the term "gay" to facilitate flow of language. It is not done to alienate or prioritize a single group.

inducted into the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association Hall of Fame (www.nlgja.org, 2008).

On August 27, 2008, a little more than two months after their wedding, Del Martin died at the age of 87. Phyllis Lyon commented at her wife's passing, "Ever since I met Del 55 years ago, I could never imagine a day would come when she wouldn't be by my side. I am so lucky to have known her, loved her and been her partner in all things…. I am devastated, but I take some solace in knowing we were able to enjoy the ultimate rite of love and commitment before she passed" (Gordon, 2008). The significance of their story goes well beyond the rite of marriage. Their story is that of the modern American gay movement. It provides important context for any project—such as this one—that researches the gay movement. As Kate Kendell, executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, explained, "At a time when being openly gay cost you everything you cared about, they were. And they took risks and spoke out from the 1950s on in a way that I certainly do not believe I would have nor would most of us." In commenting on their wedding, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom added, "What we want, the narrative coming out of it, is about them and what they represent - their story, their history. This is really where it all started" (Buchanan, A1, 2008).

The modern gay rights movement emerged in the first half of the 20th century; urban gay communities emerged before the 1930s (Chauncey, 2004). As Martin and Lyon's story demonstrates, however, post-WWII events effectively paint a picture of the myriad issues to which the gay movement has responded, the variety of tactics movement members have used, and the decades required to exact social change. In one of the earliest victories for the gay movement, in 1958, the Supreme Court legalized the gay press (*ONE Inc. v. Olesen*). In the 1960s, awareness regarding continued police brutality against gay citizens occurred only when New York's gay citizens stood up, physically retaliated, and mobilized the community into organized activism during the 1969 New York City Stonewall Riots (Carter, 2004). In 1973, the American Psychological Association removed homosexuality from its list of disorders partly because of successful work by LGBT advocates with the APA (Conger, 1975; Kisseloff, 2007). The increased presence of LGBT characters on network and cable television throughout the 1990s reflected the increased presence of gay men and women working at senior levels *in* television (Streitmatter, 2009). And Massachusetts' 2003 decision to legalize same-sex marriage (*Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*) resulted, at least in part, from gay rights organizations simply introducing same-sex couples and their families to state legislators (Mundy, 2006). Each milestone has furthered the fight for LGBT equality and representation in the United States. As a result, the gay movement has been successful, to a degree, in addressing the basic goals of most social movements: to form around an issue of injustice, mobilize individuals around that issue, inspire action on behalf of that issue, and seek to influence a society's customs, belief systems, and practices in a way that legitimizes that issue (Blumer, 1939; Gamson, 1995; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Snow & Benford, 1992).

The example of the gay movement—and that of Martin and Lyon—also demonstrates the potential of social movements as rich sites of investigation, ideal forums through which to examine the various communicative processes that influence the quest for social change. In fact, researchers have emphasized that two key areas of mass communication scholarship—public relations and media framing—would benefit from a renewed focus on social movements. Both areas of scholarship address the central role of legitimacy in communication, including how organizations communicate in order to establish legitimacy for an issue or set of issues, and how media wield a degree of power by ascribing degrees of legitimacy to certain organizations and issues.

This dissertation employs the example of the 21st century gay movement in order to respond to these calls. By introducing new ideas to social discourse and facilitating the free flow of information, social movements provide a unique opportunity to examine how public relations scholarship can inform strategic campaigns for social change (Heath, 2008). Applying public relations to social movements returns the discipline to its roots, away from what has become too much of a corporate focus. Moreover, as Heath explained, the individuals and organizations that compose social movements are fundamentally concerned with securing cultural legitimacy for their issue, and "Public relations has long been seen in theory, research, and application as a discipline that can or must help an organization to be, and be seen as, legitimate" (p. 8). Put another way, applying public relations to the process of social change informs how social movements can build agendas that legitimate important social issues for targeted publics (Reber & Berger, 2005; Snow & Benford, 1992).

In this same vein, scholars have argued that it is imperative to investigate the legitimacy of social movements and social issues as conveyed through the external lens of the mainstream media. Arguably, media are the primary cultural force that ultimately can legitimize or delegitimize a movement's cause and, as a result, can either propel or derail a movement's agenda (Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). Therefore, while studying the public relations strategies of a movement provides an internal perspective regarding the communicative processes of social change, studying mainstream media's coverage of a movement's organizations and issues provides an external perspective regarding the extent to which those strategies are successful. As Carragee and Roefs (2004) explained, social movements provide a key challenge to hegemonic values, but the first step in challenging hegemony is to influence how media cover movement issues. Media framing research, for example, helps elucidate the power dynamics that influence the public discourse, which affect a social movement organization's ability to shape the dialog around a certain issue. As Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) argued, the transaction between a social movement and the mainstream media is actually a "struggle over framing" (p. 118).

This dissertation is not a media framing study, but some of the principles apply. Research that applies both public relations and media framing principles to the investigation of social movements provides complementary perspectives to understanding the communicative processes that influence social change: the internal strategy for change as designed by a social movement's members and the external reflection of that strategy as observed through the lens of the media. This dissertation responds to both perspectives. Using the apt example of the gay movement, this project will examine how gay rights organizations organize and execute their communication strategies and if those strategies result in a transfer of salience in media coverage. Specifically, this dissertation—grounded by social movement, public relations, and media framing scholarship—investigated the communication strategies used by state-based gay rights organizations and investigated, if, how, and to what extent media convey the salience of those organizations' messaging priorities. Moreover, by studying several different state-based organizations, I was able to compare communication strategies in a variety of operational contexts and the ways in which those strategies have been conveyed by the media.

To that end, I asked employees from a selection of state-based gay rights organizations—through in-depth interviews—to outline their organization's communication goals, identify their key publics, explain the central communication tools they employ, and walk through the organization's messaging strategies. I then performed a qualitative content analysis of state-specific media content to determine if the salience of the respective organizations' messaging priorities, as explained by participants, was evident in mainstream media. The myriad issues facing the LGBT community provided the requisite foundation for this analysis. I therefore compared and contrasted how organizations have accommodated individual issues in the context of broader campaigns and identified those issues that appear to resonate more, or less, with mainstream media. Along the way, I was particularly interested in how organizations have modified these strategies (if at all) in order to accommodate the timely, high profile issue of same-sex marriage.

The comparison between state-specific organizations and state-specific media was an important aspect to this study. As Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) explained, movements do not represent a "unified actor" but "an array of actors" (p. 115). Each movement actor has a different strategy and different perspective regarding how to deal with the media. As a result, not only do a movement's actors often attempt to influence the media independently, but they also are affected—positively and negatively—by their cohorts' simultaneous attempts to influence the media.[3] Each state presents a unique operational context, and each movement organization must determine how to navigate that context. Strategy and mission depend, to an extent, on the individual organization. Accordingly, comparing individual organizations provides important insight regarding the overall movement.

I focused specifically on state-based LGBT advocacy organizations for explicit reasons. Media often refer to *a* gay rights movement or *a* campaign for gay rights. But the gay movement is not led by one national spokesperson, nor is it run out of a brick-and-mortar headquarters. The movement is not guided by a unified communication strategy. In

[3] The authors define social movements, in general, as "a sustained and self-conscious challenge to authorities or cultural codes by a field of actors—organizations and advocacy networks—some of whom employ extra-institutional means of influence" (p. 115).

fact, the gay movement is composed of many voices: nonprofit organizations, individuals, loosely formed groups and alliances, corporate supporters, friends, families, and community allies. New community acronyms such as LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning), Intersex, and Allies/affirming), speak to the breadth of the movement and the range of its constituents. Movement organizations speak for individuals who want their identity to matter and advocates for individuals who do not want their identity known. And the LGBT community is a minority that spans all minorities; the community comes together in different ways and at different times to help wage multiple, simultaneous campaigns that span local, state, regional, and national interests. As gay rights group Equality North Carolina explained, "We, the LGBT community, are a single cloth with many threads. Moreover, we're part of the larger tapestry of our families and friends and allies" (ENC News, 2009).

The movement, therefore, is not so easily defined. Nevertheless, state-based gay rights organizations provide an effective and potentially provocative way to define and explore various aspects of the gay movement. Today's key gay rights battles—such as marriage, adoption, bullying laws, and health benefits—are being waged primarily at the state level and are being fought by state-based gay rights organizations. As the Equality Federation—the national federation of state-based LGBT advocacy organizations—summarized:

> The overwhelming majority of protections for lgbt people in the United States exists not at the federal level, but through laws passed by state legislatures…. Despite the critical importance of state-based work to achieve equality, the majority of resources in the lgbt movement are concentrated at the national level – not in the organizations doing the lion's share of work at the state level. And while the Federation supports federal efforts to achieve equality, our mission is to ensure that we have strong and well-resourced organizations in every state and territory. We believe that equality begins at home. History also teaches us that we cannot make progress at the national level until we have made significant progress in the states. (EqualityFederation.org).

Each state-based organization faces similar issues, but each state requires a specific strategy in order to accommodate its unique cultural and legislative demands. Moreover, these state-based initiatives provide an opportunity not only to compare individual campaigns, but also to construct what these campaigns, in concert, indicate regarding the broader, national movement for LGBT equality.

Ultimately, the campaigns waged by state-based LGBT advocacy organizations must establish legitimacy for the concerns of the LGBT community–legitimacy for the LGBT identity itself. In other words, investigating how state-based LGBT advocacy organizations communicate for legitimacy cannot be divorced from how organizations portray the identity of the LGBT individual and the identity LGBT community as a whole. Certainly, entire bodies of research explore ways to understand identity and identity formation. The aspect that guides this dissertation, however, is that of group identity—based in social psychology's Social Identity Theory—and how social movement organizations' communication strategies help establish a positive social identity for its constituents (Tajfel, 1978a, 1978b; Turner, 1978). As Alcoff (2006) explained, a productive society does not result from citizens negating the unique self in deference to a collectively accepted identity. A productive society, instead, results from groups and organizations that embrace and promote individual difference. A movement's identity therefore is very much related to the communication strategies that movement organizations choose as they attempt to build a certain agenda and positively influence policy and culture. Likewise, the dynamics that permeate the movement's interaction with the media also shape what is understood about that movement's identity.

It therefore is important to distinguish the modern gay rights movement as a new social movement (NSM). As Huesca (2001) explained, new social movements are known by their “identity formation as a locus of coordinated action and their de-emphasis of group access to institutional resources or adherence to overarching ideologies” (p. 416). New social movements are characterized by a power structure in which fluid networks of actors distribute information across a variety of communication channels (Atkinson, 2008). New social movement scholars argue that traditional social movements are associated with Marxist notions of systemic economic change; new social movements reflect the 1960s post-industrial shift toward movements based on questions of culture, politics, and identity. Traditional social movement scholars have argued, however, that traditional social movements already have answered many of the theoretical questions raised by new social movements and that many organizations that represent new social movements do not reflect the characteristics that distinguish them from traditional social movements (Pichardo, 1997). Research investigating the specific function of new social movements therefore is needed. Buechler (1995) argued:

> New social movement theory speaks to the macrolevel of structure and context; resource mobilization theory addresses the mesolevel of organization and strategy; and social constructionism accounts for the microlevel of identity and grievances. Theoretical progress within and between these paradigms is most likely to occur by identifying points of convergence and divergence between these levels and framing critical questions across these paradigms.”(p. 460)

More importantly, Buechler added that new social movement research has been able to answer “why” but has not effectively addressed questions of “How.”

In order to understand what drives these strategies—to answer the question of “how”—it is important first to understand the history of the gay movement. The history provides important insight regarding the influences that have shaped what is known in the media today, as *the* gay movement. To that end, below I provide a historical background of the gay movement, an outline of the current issues facing the gay movement, and a detailed profile regarding current campaigns for marriage equality. This background outlines the internal and external dynamics that influence today's campaigns and the media coverage of those campaigns and reinforces the focus on state-based gay rights organizations.

Background

1. Historical Context

The past of the gay rights movement directly informs present gay rights campaigns. As historian George Chauncey (2004) argued, it is impossible to understand why today's campaigns are so important—indeed why they are possible—without first understanding the legacy of discrimination faced by the gay community. He explained,

> Erasing the history of antigay discrimination makes it easier to argue that gay people do not need or deserve the most basic civil rights protections. Erasing the history of gay political disfranchisement makes it easier to vilify gay people as a powerful, conspiratorial class whose struggle for full equality threatens the American dream instead of fulfilling it. And forgetting this history weakens the gay movement internally as well, because it cannot understand where it is today unless it understands how it got here (p. 12).

A visible, active gay community emerged in the early 20th century (Chauncey, 1994). Scholars consistently point to World War II, however, as a critical turning point for the gay community; WWII provided the impetus for a new gay consciousness in the United States (Berube, 1989; Chauncey, 1994; D'Emilio, 2002). The War uprooted millions of Americans, introduced previously isolated gay individuals, and provided less restrictive social outlets through which these individuals were able to explore and practice their sexuality – outlets not available at home. WWII awakened a modern gay identity and helped establish a more active and definitive gay community (Berube, 1989).

As a result, at the War's end in August 1945, many gay citizens did not return home; they migrated to new gay communities that were emerging across the United States in major urban areas, especially port cities (Berube 1990). The country was not prepared or willing, however, to accommodate the newly visible gay citizen. The return to normal life was an adjustment for everyone returning from WWII, but "For lesbians and gay men, it meant witch hunts, bar raids, arrests, and a retreat to the closet" (Berube, 1989, p. 391). In fact, Chauncey (1994) argued that post-WWII American culture actually created the closet. The metaphor did not exist before the war. By 1950, fear of the gay community precipitated government campaigns aimed at weeding out all suspected or known gay government employees. This fear paralleled post-war concern over Communism, and gay citizens became a prime target of the McCarthy hearings (Chauncey, 2004). As a result, the McCarthy's witch-hunts dismissed more individuals presumed or known to be gay than individuals presumed or known to be Communist. President Eisenhower's Executive Order 10450 issued in April 1953—which defined homosexuality as a "sexual perversion" and directed that being gay was grounds for immediate dismissal—reflected this sentiment.

The gay community, however, began to organize. One of the first post-WWII gay rights organizations, the Mattachine Society, emerged in the early 1950s. Reflective of the post-WWII 1950s era of conformity, the Mattachines sought assimilation into mainstream society and encouraged Society members and the gay community to hide their sexuality (Gross, 2005). Shortly thereafter, gay rights icons Del Marin and Phyllis Lyon, along with several other women, founded the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), the first lesbian "social-political" organization in the United States (Schultz, 2001, p. 380). Similar to the Mattachines, the DOB encouraged members to educate society and seek the decriminalization of homosexuality, but to do so in ways that conformed to mainstream culture. For the DOB, it was important for women in the gay community to demonstrate overt femininity. With the Mattachine and DOB's leadership, inroads were made, and important gay rights battles were begun, such as the fight over the 1954 seizure by police of the gay publication, *One*, and the claim that because it was written for a gay audience, it was obscene (Streitmatter, 1995).

The movement in the 1960s battled discrimination and brutality by police in major cities such as Los Angeles and New York, an era highlighted by the 1969 Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village, New York (Carter, 2004; D'Emilio, 2002: Streitmatter, 2009). The Riots were important, but not because they marked the beginning of the gay rights movement as some authors suggest (Carter, 2004). As evidenced above, they were *not* the beginning of the movement. But the Riots reflected a shift in the movement's tactics away from the 1950s era of assimilation and the call for conformity. By the end of the 1960s, the gay movement had become a more vocal, active force no longer encouraging assimilation with mainstream society.

With this new focus on a positive gay identity, the gay movement began fighting crucial battles in the 1970s. In addition to the APA's 1973 removal of homosexuality from its list of psychological disorders, activists throughout the decade fought Anita Bryant's well-funded campaigns that sought to repeal local ordinances protecting gay citizens from discrimination (Chauncey, 2004). At the end of that decade, the country's first openly gay major political figure, Harvey Milk, was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors but then assassinated by fellow supervisor Dan White. Milk's murder garnered the lightest possible sentence, manslaughter, and a brief seven-year jail term, of which White served only five years (Faderman, 1991). The lax sentence, in May 1979, prompted rioting in San Francisco—the White Night Riots—and issued a renewed call to action for the gay community.

The last two decades of the 20th century juxtaposed some of the lowest and highest points of the gay movement. The AIDS crisis in 1980s severely affected the gay community. But this "gay plague," as it was known at the time (Flowers & Langdridge, 2007), focused unprecedented attention on the gay movement. Gay activists, community allies, and media coverage of the crisis forced the mainstream to take notice of previously ignored citizens (D'Emilio, 1989; Streitmatter, 2009).[4] Attention turned more positive in the 1990s with an increase in gay characters on television, and gay plot lines in movies (Streitmatter, 2009). And while the increased inclusion in pop culture pointed to the growing position of the gay community as a popular and trendy market niche, policy challenges such as Don't Ask Don't Tell and the Defense of Marriage Act reminded gay rights organizations and activists of the work to be done at the outset of the 21st century.[5]

2. Current Issues

Because of these past struggles, gay citizens enjoy a more-inclusive environment today that was unimaginable a generation ago. Entertainment media incorporate what now could be considered the obligatory gay character or plot line (as evidenced by soap operas and situation comedies). Gay women and men serve in local, state, and national political office. Corporations now compete for the gay market rather than ignore it; major public relations firms such as Fleishman-Hillard have developed LGBT divisions that provide services to LGBT-friendly clients. And the Human Rights Campaign reported in February

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[4] Blood donation guidelines developed by the Red Cross in the 1980s—which ban blood donations from men who have had sex with men at any point from 1977 forward—remain to this day. (See blood donation guidelines, Redcross.org.)

[5] Don't Ask Don't Tell bars gay individuals from serving openly in the military. Individuals in the military who are found to be gay are still discharged dishonorably (public Law 103-160, 10 U.S.C. 654; http://dont.stanford.edu). The Defense of Marriage Act stops short of amending the Constitution, but stipulates a federal definition of marriage as between a man and a woman. DOMA also stipulates that individual states are not required to honor marriage laws from other states, thus reinforcing marriage as a state issue. (http://www.domawatch.org/index.php)

2009 that 286 of the Fortune 500 companies now provide domestic partner benefits (HRC State of the Workplace, 2009). Steep challenges remain, but these advances demonstrate the movement's ability to incrementally achieve cultural legitimacy and inclusion.

Today's legislative context, however, reinforces the choice to design this dissertation around state-based gay rights organizations. Certainly, national organizations are fighting critical gay rights battles such as the repeals of Don't Ask Don't Tell and Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), and the passage of federal hate-crimes legislation in the form of the Matthew Shepard Act.[6] Beyond a federal mandate allowing gay citizens to serve openly in the military, however, the key provisions and enforcement of the core gay rights battles currently being fought exist at the state level. For example, Julie Nemecek—co-chair of state-based gay rights organization Michigan Equality—echoed the Equality Federation's perspective regarding the need for a focus on state legislation. She explained in the context of the Matthew Shepard Act, "The federal law allows the federal government to assist or take over when a local law enforcement agency is unwilling or unable to prosecute a violent crime against LGBT people, among others" (Carreras, 2009). Similarly, DOMA primarily addresses what states can and cannot do in terms of recognizing other states' marriage laws. The actual provision of marriage still exists at the state level, as do regulations regarding adoption and hospital visitation rights. As a result, national organizations are beginning to use their resources and reach to help state-based campaigns. The Human Rights Campaign, for example, helped Equality North Carolina mobilize for a vote on a state anti-bullying bill, (Solmonese, 2009), and has used its resources to help fight for marriage equality in California

[6] The Matthew Shepard Act is a national hate crimes law that includes sexuality and gender identity provisions. Without these provisions, punishments for hate crimes based on perceived or known sexuality would not be governed necessarily by the same legal standards. (Officially named the Matthew Shepard and Kames Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, the act passed and was signed into law October 22, 2010 as a rider to the National Defense Authorization Act for 2010, H.R. 2010).

(Solmonese, 2008), Maine (Solmonese, 2009), Iowa (Solmonese, 2009), and New Hampshire (Solmonese, 2009).[7]

3. Marriage

Campaigns for marriage equality have become a cornerstone in the broader public debate over gay rights and is perhaps the most public and contentious issue facing today's gay movement. Nationally, the U.S. government passed the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which stops short of amending the U.S. Constitution to ban same-sex marriage, but prohibits federal recognition of same-sex marriage and prevents states from having to recognize same-sex relationships that are legal in other states. The key battles that are providing marriage equality for LGBT citizens continue to be fought, however, at the state level. In 1971, Minnesota became the first state to hear a legal challenge to marriage filed by a same-sex couple, and consequently the first state to deny marriage rights to same-sex couples (Soule, 2004). In 1973, a same-sex couple suing for marriage in Kentucky also failed in its attempts. In 1996, the Hawaii Supreme Court decided that a ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional. Two years later, though, Hawaii's citizens overturned that ruling by voting in favor of a constitutional amendment banning marriage equality (Dupuis, 2002).

The current, more widespread push for marriage equality largely stems from the 2003 Supreme Court ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas*, a case in which the Supreme Court struck down state sodomy laws on the basis that they violated privacy provisions in the U.S. Constitution. Cahill (2004) explained that the decision—as written by Justice Kennedy—emphasized that "the sate cannot single out gay people for harassment and discriminatory treatment simply because of 'moral disapproval' of homosexuality" (p. 2). Moreover, the court emphasized the

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[7] The Human Rights Campaign, as explained on its Website, "represents a grassroots force of over 750,000 members and supporters nationwide. As the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization, HRC envisions an America where LGBT people are ensured of their basic equal rights, and can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

need for respect of gay couples; saying a gay couple's relationship is limited to sex is saying heterosexual couples also are only about sex. This language indicated to gay rights leaders and same-sex couples that the Court recognized the need for respect and protection of same-sex relationships (Cahill, 2004; Chauncey, 2004; Dupuis, 2002). Accordingly, couples began challenging state laws that prohibited same-sex marriage. Their efforts have met limited success, however, as those groups opposed to same-sex marriage have waged well-funded and organized campaigns of their own that have resulted in 30 individual state constitutional bans on marriage equality (The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2009).

None of these amendments has been more contentious—or more widely covered in the mainstream media—than the 2008 passage of Proposition 8 in California, which banned marriage equality for same-sex couples. The story began in February 2004 when San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples (Rosenfeld, 2007). In August of that year, however, the state's Supreme Court voided the 4,000 same-sex marriages that occurred during that time, ruling that Newsom had overstepped his jurisdiction.[8] Almost four years later, in May 2008, the court then ruled that prohibiting same-sex marriage was unconstitutional.[9] Same-sex couples began to marry, but just a few months later, California citizens voted to overturn the Court's ruling and amend the constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage – this time leaving more than 18,000 newly married couples in limbo. State-based gay rights groups, in concert with national organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union, sued for invalidation of the

[8] This ruling is different from saying that same-sex marriage itself is unconstitutional. The court ruled solely on the fact that Newsom overstepped his jurisdiction. The case was more about his jurisdiction than a judgment regarding marriage.

[9] Same-sex couples were allowed to marry beginning June 17, 2008

Proposition on grounds that it illegally revised the constitution. This time, the Court upheld the ban though it did preserve the legal status of the 18,000 couples that were able to marry between May and November 2008. Today, LGBT advocacy groups are planning to return the issue to the 2012 ballot, while groups opposed to marriage equality are beginning campaigns to void the married status of the 18,000 same-sex couples whose status was preserved by the Court.

The news for the gay community, however, is not all bad. In 2003, Massachusetts became the first state to allow full marriage for same sex couples (*Goodrich vs. Dept. of Public Health*). In October 2008, the Connecticut Supreme Court made that state the second to legalize same-sex marriage. Vermont granted civil unions for same-sex couples in 2001, as did New Jersey in 2007 and New Hampshire in 2008. In April 2009, Vermont's legislature voted to replace its civil union law with full marriage rights. When Vermont's governor vetoed the bill, the legislature then voted to override the governor's veto. That same month, Iowa became the fourth state to provide marriage equality with a unanimous ruling by the state Supreme Court (*Varnum v. Brien*, 2009). In May 2009, the Maine legislature voted for full marriage rights for same sex couples (Law LD 1020), though six months later—similar to California's experience—that state overturned the law with a referendum banning marriage equality. In June 2009, New Hampshire's legislature—similar to Vermont's example—voted to replace its civil rights benefits with full marriage rights (House Bill 436-FN-LOCAL). Finally, in March 2010, the District of Columbia began extending full marriage protections to same sex couples, as stipulated in the District's Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality Amendment Act of 2009 (Bill 18-482).

State-based LGBT advocacy organizations have played an important role in each of these campaigns, and they have done so in the midst of broader agendas that include issues such as health care as well as protections against hate crimes and employer discrimination based on sexuality. Marriage is just one issue gay rights organizations must address, but it provides a good example of how organizations must execute long term campaigns for positive visibility that seek substantive social change. The history of marriage across states and the various dynamics facing individual organizations along the way are important because they reinforce the importance of the state's lens.

What the experience of past and present gay rights leaders tells us is that change for the gay movement is incremental and takes time. It also demonstrates that while the issues have changed since persecution under McCarthyism, the primary function of gay rights organizations remains the same: to speak on behalf the LGBT community while communicating for social change. In essence, though a gay rights organization's employees may not be trained as public relations professionals per se, their role is very much that of the community's strategic communicator. They must train organizational leaders and educate constituents with consistent messages that proactively engage the broader debate regarding a host of gay rights issues, and they must do so in a way that forges a positive connection between the community and those stakeholders the community is trying to influence. Organizations must craft their messages in a manner that accounts for perspectives that both support *and* oppose the gay community's objectives. A communication campaign seeking protections for the LGBT community therefore must tell the gay community's story of struggle and its history of discrimination while shaping that story to accommodate current issues. The way that story is told, and reflected, is crucial.

The state-specific lens provides important methodological possibilities regarding how to study conceptually unwieldy social movements and how to isolate and investigate the communication processes that undergird the process of social change. As Heath (2008) proffered, social movements are the 21st century source of new ideas. The intersection of social movements and media create the locus through which those ideas can be exchanged and a cultural dialog established. It therefore is important to examine the communication dynamics that influence a movement's pursuit of social change. This project is a first, exploratory step to that end and integrates complementary mass communication perspectives in order to tease out the internal and external dynamics that seek to influence society's customs, belief systems, and practices. The next chapter introduces the relevant concepts found in social movement, public relations, and media framing literature that provide the foundation for this research.

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

Social movement, public relations, and media framing literature synthesize in explicit and consistent ways the challenges facing the gay movement and the objectives of this dissertation. Specifically, they each address the centrality of legitimacy to processes of communication. Social movement research, such as this investigation of state-based LGBT advocacy, must respond to the challenges presented in the literature. Specifically, given the guidance of new social movement theory, how does a movement organization representing a diverse constituency develop an actionable collective identity, use that identity to construct messages that legitimates that identity, communicate in a way that legitimates that identity in the eyes of the media, and ultimately influence the agenda that informs public interpretation of that identity? In this chapter, I first outline the theoretical grounding provided by social movement research. I then demonstrate how core aspects of public relations literature reinforce the application of public relations principles to the study of social movements. Finally, I examine how media serve as a legitimizing force, which includes media framing studies of social movements and how pubic relations research can benefit from understanding media framing processes.

Social Movements / Social Change

It is important first to place the gay movement in the context of social movement scholarship, outline the traditionally accepted life cycle and stages of social movements, and explore the challenges facing identity-based 21st century movements. Doing so provides effective points of comparison for the gay movement. This review first will outline the roots of social movement scholarship in the study of collective behavior and demonstrate how today's social movement scholars continue to study collective behavior. The literature then outlines the operational challenges to modern, identity-based social movements and the possible ways to resolve those challenges. At the crux of this literature is the notion that social movements, as products of collective behavior, are continually defined and redefined by the members who comprise it. As a result, the process of social movement formation is seen as a dynamic process rather than an objective observable phenomenon.

1. The Dynamics of Collective Behavior

Although the study of social movements can be traced to mid-19th century works that explored the behavior of crowds, scholars have identified the work of Robert Park, and his focus on "collective behavior," as the field of study's definitive beginning (Turner & Killian, 1987). Park's work in the early 20th century repositioned how scholars perceived collective behavior, away from the assumption that it was necessarily an irrational or pathological phenomenon and toward the notion that collective behavior was an instrumental source of productive social change. Since that time, the investigation of social movements has become more nuanced. Some scholars have investigated the tactics that social movements employ in order to promote collective action and mobilize constituents (Gamson, 1995; Snow & Benford, 1992). Additional scholars have focused on the roles that resource deprivation (e.g. Gurney & Tierney, 1982) and resistance (e.g. Ganesh, Zoller, & Cheney, 2005) play in precipitating collective action. And research continues to contemplate why certain social movements succeed, why others fail, and how media contribute to their fate (Bradley, 2003; Gitlin, 1980; Rhodes, 2006; Springer, 2005).

Each of these perspectives is important to this dissertation, and to any project exploring the various dynamics that influence collective action. At the core of most social movement research, however, is a general understanding regarding the lifecycle and stages through which social movements move. As Herbert Blumer (1939), a student of Park's, explained that movements typically begin as *general* social movements—movements that are unorganized, lack control, and slow moving. As these movements coalesce, they become *specific* social movements, or movements that have crystallized around a specific issue, or set of issues, and have organized a plan of action. Specific social movements operate with set objectives and benefit from clear leadership and a defined membership. Moreover, Blumer explained that the transition from a general to a specific movement occurs in four stages of development: social unrest, popular excitement, formalization, and institutionalization. The first of these stages reflects a *general* social movement, a movement that still lacks organization and coordination. At this point, certain movement members begin to focus on a particular issue (or issues) and demonstrate emerging restlessness around that issue. In the second stage of popular excitement, these movement members begin to consider the possible actions that could resolve the issue. At this point, there is "a sharpening of objectives" (p. 259). Formalization of a social movement occurs when that movement adopts specific guiding principles and begins adhering to definitive leadership. Finally, as a movement institutionalizes, an operational structure emerges and communication strategies are implemented.

Stewart et al. (2001) echoed Blumer's (1939) premise but suggested a slightly more robust life cycle that moves from genesis, to social unrest, enthusiastic mobilization, maintenance, and ultimately termination. Similar to Blumer, the stages of social unrest and enthusiastic mobilization reflect a movement's transition from a general, unorganized social cause to organized, member-driven action with defined leadership, objectives, and action plan. Stewart et al., however, added an initial "Genesis" stage in order to reflect a fledgling movement's often naïve assumption that once the social issue is brought to cultural and political leaders' attention, steps will be taken to appease the movement's concerns. The move to social unrest, for Stewart et al., occurs when a movement realizes that institutions are unwilling to change in order to accommodate the issue. That said, Stewart et al. argued that once a movement coalesces through the social unrest and enthusiastic mobilization stages, they inevitably move into a maintenance stage, at which point a movement is no longer led by a defined leadership but still maintains an active agenda. Once the objectives have been realized, however, a movement gradually ends and ultimately is terminated.

A comparison of these stages to the experience of the gay rights movement provides insight regarding the unique challenges facing movement organizations. For example, from the 1950s through the mid-1990s, the gay movement followed Stewart et al.'s traditional movement trajectory. The *genesis* of the formal advocacy movement began in the 1950s—characterized by the assimilationist strategies of groups such as the Mattachines. In the 1960s, building up to and following the Stonewall Riots, the movement moved into *social unrest*, directly confronting discrimination by formal institutions and replacing the 1950s assimilationist mindset. Throughout the 1970s, different organizations formed and the movement was characterized by a more structured activism, including organized protests, parades, and demonstrations, as well as political and legal battles. In fact, two the organizations that emerged during that time, Lambda Legal and the Gay and Lesbian Taskforce (both founded in 1973), remain at the forefront of the 21st century movement.

By the 1980s—in the wake of the community's AIDS crisis—the gay movement's voice had been established, and movement leaders were balancing social unrest with *enthusiastic mobilization*. LGBT advocacy organizations mobilized community supporters and straight allies. Hollywood became involved in fundraising, and the emergence of organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign Fund in 1980 (now the Human Rights Campaign), and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in 1985, indicated an organized, formal movement that was beginning to harness resources and develop strategic campaigns. With this foundation, the movement entered the 1990s, balancing enthusiastic mobilization with *movement maintenance*.

In the process, while Blumer (1939) and Stewart et al. (2001) both addressed the role of a clearly defined leadership as a core characteristic of a mobilized and organized social movement, there has not been a single leader of the gay movement. Admittedly, between the 1950s and 1990s, multiple leaders emerged in varying capacities who have helped guide the movement at different times. They each have helped mobilize and unify movement supporters in a variety of ways around a variety of causes. For example, the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis led the early days of the movement, but the more active movement that emerged in the late 1960s spurred multiple gay rights organizations based on specific issues, geographic regions, strategies, and constituencies (Carter, 2004). In the late 1970s, Harvey Milk became a martyr for the American gay identity. I would argue that the AIDS crisis, and perhaps the face of Rock Hudson himself, helped lead the movement during the 1980s.[10] Ellen DeGeneres became an important part of the 1990s LGBT voice in pop culture when she acknowledged her sexuality on national television. Therefore, while the movement closely mirrored Stewart et al.'s (2001) life stages between the 1950s and

[10] Rock Hudson was the quintessential masculine Hollywood movie star who, in the early 1980s, revealed he was suffering from AIDS. His resulting death became a marker of the crisis for the decade, and it was later revealed that he had lived a closeted life of a gay man throughout his Hollywood career. Not only did he provide an important, legitimate face for the AIDS crisis, he represented the struggle facing many men of that era who had been forced into secret lives.

1990s, the movement never coalesced around the literature's call a single movement leader or leader organization.

Stewart et al.'s (2001) termination stage also proves challenging for the gay movement. It is problematic to point to a single social issue and make the claim that the issue's resolution will effectively terminate the need for the social movement (Chauncey, 2004). For example, Chauncey compared the gay movement's current battle for marriage rights to the late 1960s civil rights battle for interracial marriage. He explained that in the lead up to the 1967 Supreme Court decision in *Loving vs. Virginia*, which declared bans on interracial marriage unconstitutional, both sides of the debate exaggerated the significance of granting marriage equality for interracial couples. Certainly, discrimination against African Americans did not end because of the Supreme Court's decision. Accordingly, Chauncey argued that if the two sides in the same-sex marriage debate exaggerate the significance of granting same-sex couples the right to marry, then the push for many other important gay rights may lose their place in the movement. In a different example, once the second-wave women's movement tied its agenda to equal access and pay in the workplace—and once society deemed those goals met—the women's movement lost momentum. As a result, many important women's issues were left unresolved because of the singular focus on women's rights in the workplace (Bradley, 2003). In other words, it is problematic not only to argue that a social movement has a definitive termination, but also to evaluate the success of a social movement by tracking the success of a single social issue.

Given the challenges of neatly fitting the gay movement within these traditional frameworks, then, it may prove more effective to study the gay rights movement by studying the impetus for collective action itself. Blumer (1971) argued, for example, that social movement scholars too often research a social movement's response to a social problem rather than the problem itself. Instead, social problems should be considered products of collective definition; problem definition determines the creation, context, and trajectory of the social movement. The ways social problems are defined therefore provide effective ways to investigate social movements. From this perspective, a social movement can be understood in terms of the 1) emergence of a social problem, 2) legitimation of that problem, 3) mobilization of action on behalf of that problem, 4) development of a specific plan to address that problem, and 5) implementation of that plan.

For example, the emergence of state LGBT advocacy in the early 21st century directly responded to the emergence of specific issues at the turn of the century, and indicates an important shift in movement priorities and strategy. Several key events comprise a marker around which the modern gay movement deviated from the traditional trajectory of social movements. Following years of progress in terms of media exposure, public acceptance, and policy advances, several events occurred in the mid-1990s, which heralded the need for a revised strategy. In 1993 and 1996, Congress passed Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT) and Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), respectively. These laws essentially mandated discrimination against the LGBT community. They were significant setbacks for the gay movement, especially given they were signed into law by a popular Democratic president whom the gay community had championed. Two years later, in 1998, Matthew Shepard—because of his sexuality—was beaten and left for dead on a fence in Wyoming. In death, he became a new symbolic leader for the movement, a martyr similar to Harvey Milk who had been killed twenty years prior. The end of the 20th century therefore revealed legislative challenges at the national level and reminded LGBT advocates that substantial work was still needed in terms of fundamental protections at local levels. That said, at the outset of the 21st century, the Supreme Court's 2003 decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* struck down state sodomy laws in support of a same-sex couple's right to privacy. The Court's decision, however, came only after a majority of similar decisions already had been made at the state level. The Supreme Court did not act until the majority of states already had done so.

Ultimately, this shift provides another important distinction between traditional social movement models and the gay movement's experience. While national movement organizations continue to mobilize and maintain collective action, the state-based movement experienced a genesis in the early 21st century. In fact, although there are several older state-based advocacy organizations, most state-based organizations have existed for ten years or fewer. The introduction of the state lens provides a new perspective to social movements, and my findings will demonstrate how participants provided important insight regarding the implications of this new perspective to the overall movement.

2. The challenges to collective behavior

The dynamics of collective behavior influence how state-based LGBT advocacy organizations operationalize their role as the gay community's advocate. And investigating these organizations' communication strategies informs how they define the movement and the social problems they address. In this regard, the modern gay rights movement reflects key challenges presented in classic social movement research. As explained, however, identity provides the impetus for action in the gay movement. Yet, the diversity of identity within the LGBT community also presents key challenges to collective behavior.

In order to address these challenges, it is imperative first to define how identity is addressed in the context of social movement literature. As Hogg, Terry, and White (1995) explained, microsociological approaches to identity study how identity forms around various, structured behavioral roles performed by individuals in society. From this perspective, "as a reflection of society, the self should be regarded as a multifaceted and organized construct"

(p. 256). As I explained earlier, however, I am more interested in macrosociological perspectives of identity. As Tajfel (1978) explained—from the perspective of Social Identity Theory—an individual's social identity is "that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 63). The social category or group to which a person perceives she/he belongs determines how that person self-identifies (Chen, 2009). Individual identity, then, is tied directly to the identity of the social group or organization that represents the individual. For example, LGBT advocacy organizations must communicate a positive social identity of the gay community in their respective campaigns for change.

Given that the gay movement represents a minority that spans all other minorities, its focus on identity therefore presents three unique challenges to collective behavior. As Gamson (1992) cautioned, the very notion of new social movements is problematic because a focus on identity risks privileging certain identities over others. This is a risk for gay movement organizations, which address a variety of issues and represents a diversity of movement actors and constituents. The literature's prerequisite of a collective, actionable identity therefore raises three important questions: how does a broad, diverse social movement account for individual difference; how do local social movement organizations navigate the broader objectives of the overall social movement; and given these considerations, how is it possible to evaluate the success of new social movements.

The first challenge to "collective identity" reflects a theoretical dilemma regarding how to account for *individual* identity within a broad social movement. For the gay community, identity has been tied to sexuality. In the early 1970s, gay and lesbian studies addressed sexuality as a product of social construction, which argues that what we know about an identity is based in a specific time and place, and is constructed with a socially determined lens that reflects a specific context (Epstein, 1994; Seidman, 1994). Beginning in the 1980s, however, queer theory developed in response to social constructionism and argued that identity is too unstable and too fluid to fit into concrete social categories. Thus, while social constructionism challenged essentialists' promotion of rigid, transhistorical identity, queer theory challenged social constructionist attempts to define specific, socially determined categories of identity. In the process, however, queer theory's premise presented a problem for the study of the gay movement. In short, how can the gay community—if based on indeterminable, fluctuating, unstable identities—form an actionable social movement? Moreover, how can a movement composed of countless, unstable identities even be studied? As Epstein explained, "Recent studies of social movements… have emphasized the critical importance of collective identity as something whose existence cannot simply be assumed by the analyst of the social movement. Yet queer politics raises perplexing questions about the relations between identity and action" (p. 198-199). Similarly, Joshua Gamson (1995) asked, "If identities are indeed much more unstable, fluid, and constructed than movements have tended to assume—if one takes the queer challenge seriously, that is—what happens to identity-based social movements such as gay and lesbian rights?" (p. 391).

Queer theory's challenge regarding the possibility of a stable identity therefore raises questions regarding the very possibility of the gay rights movement as a singular, objective focus of study. A second challenge to collective identity therefore moves from the individual to the organizational level, and asks how local social movement organizations respond to the needs of diverse constituents while accommodating broader social movement objectives. Deluca (1999a, 1999b) and Gamson (1995, 1996) outlined key considerations new social movements such as the modern gay movement must address. Deluca's study of the environmental movement, for example, demonstrated that for broad social movements operating simultaneously at the local, national, and international levels, a tenuous relationship exists between localized needs and collective identity. Often, local organizations must privilege localized needs over broader, collective goals of the social movement. At other times, these organizations take advantage of "tactical moments," points at which local organizations find commonalities with the broader movement in order to further collective change (Deluca, p. 210). Once the moment has passed, these organizations can refocus on local needs. Gamson's (1996) study of New York-based gay and lesbian film festivals echoed the notion that local social movement organizations are part of broader social movement communities. Organizations become an active part of these broader communities, but privilege their local context over the collective mission when needed. More importantly, Gamson argued that any organization claiming to represent something as diverse as the gay and lesbian community has a steep challenge. They often must privilege the needs of their individual constituents in lieu of advocating for broader movement community goals.

The current marriage debate provides a good example. Specific legislative contexts guide state-based gay rights organizations, and these organizations' constituents often demand a specific course of action. Several California-based organizations, for example, must determine when to place another proposition on the state ballot in an attempt to reverse the marriage ban. One coalition of organizations that support gay rights—the Courage Campaign—reported that 82.5% of its constituents support a return to the polls in 2010 (Jacobs, 2009). A second organization, Equality California, determined—based on feedback from its constituents—that 2012 was the best option (Kors, 2009). Both organizations acknowledged that there was a degree of discord regarding the best date.

Despite the difference, however, both organizations emphasized that the broader community was unanimous in the need for a new ballot initiative at some point. These organizations also emphasized that they would advocate for their constituents' preferences while working with the broader gay rights community in California. The Courage Campaign explained, "The final decision to actually go back to the ballot will be made in collaboration with our partner organizations and allies in the growing California movement for marriage equality. And the Courage Campaign will fully support that people-powered consensus" (Jacobs, 2009). Equality California, though committed to 2012, stated, "We will work with our partners – including those who support 2010, those who support 2012 and those who want to wait until a later date – to do all the things we must do to win" (Kors, 2009). If nothing else, these two organizations demonstrate the delicate balance between localized interest and collective decisions, between preserving organizational priorities while supporting the collective identity of California's gay rights community as demonstrated through the campaign for marriage.

California's emphasis on the broader goals of the gay community also demonstrates the third challenge for new (identity-based) social movements: how do you identify and evaluate those social movements that are most successful. If the first challenge for new social movements concerns how to accommodate individual difference and the second challenge emphasizes the balance between the localized movement organization and the overall movement, this third challenge addresses how to assess a social movement in its entirety. Ganesh (2003, 2005), for example, suggested that researchers should evaluate a social movement based on its *potential* for action by assessing the movement's goals, expectations, communication processes, and standpoint.[11] The goals of a movement indicate the degree to which the multiplicity of internal voices, identities, and localized agendas influence the broader movement objectives. How a movement defines its expectations for success indicates the scope of the movement. Third, social movement organizations must communicate messages of legitimacy and accountability, and reflect the multiple voices that comprise the movement. Finally, and a central factor for each of these criteria, movements must be aware of their standpoint. Movements and the organizations that comprise them must acknowledge those voices and goals that are excluded and those that are privileged. In the process, movement organizations must realize that communication can never be completely internal or external; in the process of communicating externally, the organization is constantly redefining its collective identity.

Ganesh et al.'s (2005) framework informs this dissertation in important ways. It responds to the key challenges facing new social movements by focusing on how the individuals and organizations within the social movement interact with the movement. It also provides a tangible framework for evaluating the 21st century identity-based movement by focusing on the movement's potential. Most importantly, this perspective reinforces the use of public relations to examine social movements. In fact, the study of a social movement's goals, expectations, communication processes, and reflexive standpoint echoes the fundamental public relations process of research, planning, communication, and evaluation taught in introductory public relations textbooks (Guth & Marsh, 2003; Heath & Coombs, 2006). First, Ganesh's model supports foundational definitions of public relations that focus on gaining mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its publics

[11] Again, I argue that it is important to define the movement by the organizations that comprise it rather than referring to the movement as an empirical object of study, but Ganesh's perspective is valuable conceptually.

– relationships that speak for the needs and image of the organization while remaining accountable to stakeholder interests. Second, Ganesh's (2003) focus on legitimacy and accountability in the communication process parallels key tenets of public relations scholarship. He specifically argued that a social movement should communicate for both organizational legitimacy and accountability, in which legitimacy proves an organization's worthiness of existence and accountability helps ensure that an organization remains answerable to its constituents. Balance between the two is imperative. An organization that focuses too much on legitimacy reflects a narcissistic mindset that privileges organizational image over substance. An organization that does not communicate in order to reinforce its legitimacy, on the other hand, lacks the cultural relevance to make its voice heard, regardless of the substance. This emphasis also reinforces Blumer's (1971) earlier call for a better understanding of the process of legitimation of social problems by social movements. Major public relations paradigms consistently emphasize that communication strategies promoting organizational legitimacy can help achieve mutual understanding and harmony between organizations and publics (Grunig, 2001; Ledingham, 1998; Dimmick et al., 2000; Habermas, 1987). Finally, Ganesh's focus on a social movement's goals and expectations supports public relations research focused on agenda building. Organizations that are able to craft an effective message and then communicate that message in a way that influences the public agenda—most often through the mainstream media—demonstrate a long-term potential to achieve organizational goals and shape public debate on an issue.

Additional scholars reinforce Ganesh's (2003, 2005) emphasis on the communicative dynamics of social movements and the importance of examining a movement organization by studying that organization's strategic communication processes. Tilly (2008), for example, argued that effective social movement organizations employ tactics such as campaigns, a repertoire, and WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment) displays. Social movement campaigns must strategically communicate specific claims that address a movement's identity as a collective body, its standing as a legitimate force, and the movement's program for change. A social movement's repertoire refers to the key tactics a movement employs to communicate its claims, or performances—as Tilly calls them—such as parades, protests, and public meetings. WUNC displays lend legitimacy to the movement's cause and to the campaigns used to communicate the movement's claims. In all, Tilly's framework emphasizes the processes that communicate a movement's identity, the tactics that mobilize a movement's constituents, and the displays that lend legitimacy to the movement's cause. Blumer (1939) added that social movements 1) create agitation around a certain issue, 2) develop an esprit de corps among individuals and groups that support action on the issue, 3) develop morale among members, 4) form a guiding ideology regarding how to address the issue, and 5) identify the tactics that can be employed to create change.

Tilly's (2008) and Blumer's (1939) perspectives both reinforce Snow and Benford's (1992) call for collective action that 1) inspires action, 2) attracts members and resources, and 3) legitimates the group's claims and work. Their perspective also echoes Gamson's (1995) argument that collective action requires messages of injustice, agency, and identity, where "injustice" highlights a social wrong, "agency" encourages action on behalf of that injustice, and "identity" communicates a movement's unified "we." I will detail Gamson and Snow and Benford's research in a review of framing literature, but I introduce their perspectives here to demonstrate that the foundational principles guiding how social movements are studied, as evidenced by Blumer in the 1930s, remain applicable today. Moreover, key tenets of social movement theory, as outlined above, echo key tenets of public relations scholarship. Although these classic social movement perspectives do not explicitly address public relations' call for a post-implementation step of evaluation, they provide the requisite foundation for how social movements communicate for change. Blumer (1939), Snow and Benford (1992), Gamson (1995), and Tilly (2008) each study social movements as a study of the communicative processes and tactics used to establish collective identity, mobilize for collective action, create awareness around a social injustice, and exact social change.

Accordingly, the next section outlines in detail how public relations informs social movements, which is the focus of this dissertation. The first section of literature will address the repeated calls by public relations scholars for research that studies social movements through the public relations lens. The second section provides a general overview of key public relations models, and their conceptualization of the organization/public relationship. I then will outline these models' consistent focus on legitimacy, and how that informs the current study. The final section will outline how agenda building reflects public relations in action and the importance of agenda building to the modern gay movement.

Public Relations

As a field dedicated to the communicative practices that promote collective understanding between organizations and publics, the public relations lens is appropriate for studying social movements (PRSA mission statement, PRSA.org). As Heath (2008) explained, "Change, strain, mobilization, confrontation, negotiation, and collective decision making are timeless aspects of the human experience. Public relations and issues management are functional approaches that organizations can take toward the evolution of policy" (p. 15). In fact, public relations emerged in the first half of the 20th century from the traditions of rhetoric and public address used in campaigns for social change. Public relations fueled the democratic process by helping to present and foster new ideas and opinions in the hopes of improving society. Heath argued that social movements are the 21st century sources of new ideas and opinions; they are a crucial check for democratic societies because of their focus on a society's power resources and distribution. Twenty-first century perspectives regarding public relations, however, have shifted away issue advocacy and power management and toward the corporation and the strategic relationship between the formal organization and the media (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; Heath, 2008; Reber & Kim, 2006). It is important to remember, however, "public relations… has also traditionally been used by the have-nots to fight in power struggles against the haves" (Heath, 2008, p. 5). Social movements, such as the gay movement, therefore provide appropriate forums through which to return the field to its roots and investigate how public relations may be used to advocate for social change. As Dozier and Lauzen (2000) cautioned, however, social movements are *not* organizations; applying public relations principles to the study of social movements proves difficult. That said, "The imperative in public relations practice is to find an organization or organizations to represent the movement, once that movement reaches sufficient critical mass to affect the organization's success or failure" (p. 13). My focus on state-based gay rights organizations addresses this criterion.

Given the resources available to today's social movements the time is ideal to investigate how social movement organizations employ public relations principles; the riots and demonstrations synonymous with the 1960s gay movement increasingly have been replaced with better-organized community events, non-combative protests, political lobbying, fundraising efforts, and media relations campaigns. This is partly due to the increasing availability of online tools—emails, Websites, twitter, and social networking for example—that were not available to 20th century civil rights movements. They provide additional access and exposure once reserved for traditional, more formal organizations. As Reber and Kim (2006) argued, "Activist organizations have an inherent fiscal disadvantage compared to the corporate and governmental interests that they frequently seek to influence, but the Internet may level that playing field (p. 316). Consequently, today's state-based organizations that comprise the modern gay movement are able to execute large-scale, professional advocacy campaigns that were unthinkable just a few years ago. It is important, then, to explore the public relations tools available to these organizations, especially given the growing call by public relations scholars to apply public relations to the study of social movements (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; Heath, 2008; Reber & Kim, 2006). To that end, the following review will outline how public relations research has addressed the different roles of the organization and public, emphasized legitimacy as a core component to the communication process, and leveraged agenda building as a key tool for communicating an organization's goals and influencing the public consciousness.

1. Navigating the organization-to-public dynamic

Although the investigation of state-based gay rights organizations responds to gaps in public relations research, it is important first to emphasize that these organizations are not traditional, brick and mortar, corporate-run organizations. In fact, I argue that gay rights organizations reside at the intersection of the public and private spheres. As demonstrated in the social movement literature, these organizations must reconcile the private lives of gay individuals, the collective objectives of the organized gay community, and the public realm in which they are reconciled. Accordingly, a communication campaign representing the gay community requires an organizational strategy, but it must implement that strategy with a public voice.

This delicate balance reflects a key challenge addressed in public relations research: how to address the organization-to-public dynamic. Grunig and Hunt (1984), for example, posited the two-way symmetrical communication model, which privileges the traditional organization's perspective and encourages balance between the organization and its publics. This model tasks organizations with scanning the environment for socially accepted ways of acting to ensure demonstrable adherence to social norms and expectations. The model does not account for inherent power inequities between dominant organizations and their publics, however, and asserts that symmetrical communication provides a self-correcting framework that resolves issues through collaboration between organizations and their publics (Grunig, 2001). For example, Grunig —in a discussion of the past, present, and future of the two-way symmetrical model—defended his five-step public relations model for activists (Grunig, & Grunig, 1997). This model asks activists first to employ the situational theory of publics and outline external groups that share similar interests with the activists. The second step leverages those allies in an effort to build coalitions and grow the movement. Grunig then argued for the activists' use of two-way symmetrical communication techniques with the targeted organization and emphasizes that activists should resort to asymmetrical techniques—such as media advocacy and government lobbying—only if the targeted organization does not respond to the two-way symmetrical efforts. Activists should return to symmetrical practices, however, once they garner attention from the organization in order to search for a "win-win solution" (2001, p. 19).

There are two major problems with this model. First, it assumes that activists target only one organization at a time – that a social movement has the luxury to design a campaign that targets one organization (or one type of organization). Second, to place the end goal as a "win-win" situation for both the organization and the social movement trivializes the very reason of the activists' communication goals and reinforces the model's privileging of the powerful organizations. Social movements target organizations that wield a degree of power; these organizations often restrict or challenge the very cause for which the activists are fighting. Consequently, this model proves idealistic from the gay movement's perspective, but it raises important questions regarding how to cultivate a productive dialog between organizations and publics that not only have different perspectives regarding social acceptability, but also have very strong beliefs regarding the "appropriate" balance of power. As the model now stands, there is a disconnect between the public relations goal of communicating to shift moral standards versus communicating despite them; between communicating to shift the power relationship versus communicating in spite of it.

In contrast, Jurgen Habermas' (1979a, 1979b, 1987) theory of communicative action privileges the public's role in forging collective understanding. Habermas (1993) argued that effective communication is achieved through rational discourse as reflected through the "ideal speech situation," a context that requires "freedom of access, equal rights to participate, truthfulness on the part of participants, absence of coercion in taking positions, and so forth" (p. 56). Although not a public relations scholar per se, his perspective is important for mobilized social movement organizations. For example, Burkhart's (2007) call for consensus-oriented public relations emphasizes Habermas' criteria for effective communication: "Intelligibility (being able to use the proper grammatical rules); Truth (talking about something the existence of which the partner accepts); Trustworthiness (being honest and not misleading the partner); and Legitimacy (acting in accordance with mutually accepted values and norms)" (p. 250). Certainly, the same critique of idealism waged against the two-way symmetrical communication model also could be waged against Habermas. For Habermas, however, the goal of communication is in *pursuing* the ideal. His theory goes beyond the actual substance of ideal conversation and focuses on the process of its pursuit. Grunig, in the Excellence Study, did distinguish between two-way symmetrical communication as a positive rather than normative model. But Habermas squarely focuses on the pursuit of the ideal.

The most apt framework for the gay movement is the relationship management premise, which focuses on the organization-to-public relationship: "the state which exists between an organization and its key publics, in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural, or political well-being of the other" (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62). The relationship management premise encourages organization-public relationships grounded by trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment with the goal of achieving long-term mutuality (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). In addition, these quality relationships must demonstrate: reciprocity, credibility, mutual legitimacy, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding (Dimmick et al., 2000). Relationship management acknowledges that an organization and its publics have set expectations of each other – expectations that if not fulfilled, or if incongruent altogether, could jeopardize a critical relationship (Coombs, 2000). It shifts the role of public relations away from an out*put* driven toward an out*come* driven public relations process and focuses on maintaining the quality of an organization-public relationship (Ledingham, 2003). The gay community's objectives are congruent with those of relationship management because the organized gay public must establish productive relationships—regardless of the power inequities—with its publics. Ultimately, what is key for the gay movement is relationship management's assertion that public relations strategies should focus first on relationship quality rather than the output of that relationship.

Evaluating the two-way symmetrical model, theory of communicative action, and the relationship management premise demonstrate the challenge public relations practitioners face in terms of acknowledging and addressing power differentials between organizations and publics. Gay rights organizations must address this challenge as they develop communication strategies. How it is resolved in the context of public relations, however, is difficult given the field's current focus on the traditional corporation. As organizations that demonstrate characteristics of the organization and public, state-based gay rights organizations must pull from each of these models and find common ground. And as the next section will demonstrate, this common ground can be found through the pervasive communicative focus on legitimacy.

2. Legitimacy

Despite the different approaches to balancing the organization/public dynamic, each of these frameworks places legitimacy—defined as an organization's conformity "to rule or principle" (McClean, 2005) or "accepted rules and standards" (Gove & Merriam-Webster, 2002)—as a cornerstone of the public relations process. Certainly, Grunig's (2001) call for environmental scanning to ensure adherence to socially acceptable ways of acting supports this definition. As Burkhart (2007) explained regarding Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action, legitimacy is "acting in accordance with mutually accepted values and norms" and is a core requirement for the ideal speech situation, (p. 250). And in the context of relationship management—as Dimmick et al. (2000) argue—mutual legitimacy is a key marker of quality relationships between organizations and publics.

The two-way symmetrical model of communication, theory of communicative action, and relationship management's focus on legitimacy also supports key tenets of social movement scholarship: Blumer's (1971) call for a focus on the processes of legitimation and

Ganesh's (2003) call for communication practices that balance messages of legitimacy and accountability. Understanding legitimacy's place as a core tenet of good communication practice therefore is an important consideration for social movement organizations. As Heath (2008) explained, one of public relations core functions is to manage the legitimacy of an organization. It is surprising then, that little research addresses exactly how public relations can be used to help manage legitimacy. Patel, Xavier and Broom (2005) argued, "organizational legitimacy has not been recognized widely by public relations scholars as a long term goal of building organization-public relationships" (p. 1-2). In other words, legitimacy has been mentioned consistently as a cornerstone of effective communication, but research has failed to address it as active part of the public relations process. Research needs to actively investigate how public relations creates productive dialog between organizations and their publics, dialog that helps organizations legitimize their actions and enhance organizational adjustment and response.

As evidenced by the criteria espoused by these core communication models, however, public relations' current, albeit limited focus on legitimacy presents a key problematic assumption: the existence of a given set of socially accepted standards. It is risky to assume the presence of universal standards. Although consensus on values and norms are possible in a homogeneous society, Haas (2001) argued, "it is problematic in a modern heterogeneous society, such as the United States, associated with considerable value dissensus" (p. 424). In other words, is it even feasible to assume the existence of universally understood and agreed upon definitions regarding what is and is not socially acceptable? Moreover, is it not problematic to place this assumption as a core tenet of strategic communication models? Ellis (2002) argued that the notion of legitimacy is challenging primarily because of the blurred lines between norms and ethics. Norms exist externally and should not be imposed as constraints on individuals' behavior. Conversely, ethics should be relegated to issues of private autonomy (Ellis, 2002, p. 282). In short, norms are limited to social behavior while ethics inform individual, private behavior. This distinction is important in the context of the gay experience. When external mandates intrude onto personal conceptions of the good life, what is and is not determined to be legitimate is based on opinions of individual ethics rather than productive social discourse. Many of the gay movement's campaigns are about making the distinction between social norms and individual ethics, between the freedom to exist as a unique individual, and the fear of being silenced because of that individuality.

I submit that a primary purpose of social movement campaigns is to address the very definition of "socially acceptability." Gramsci (translation 1971) cautioned, the prerequisite of universal standards fosters hegemonic ideals that only reinforce the status quo and social acceptability as determined by traditionally powerful individuals and groups. Society only benefits, however, from a more pluralistic perspective. As Alcoff (2006) argued, "The acknowledgement of the important differences in social identity does not lead inexorably to political relativism or fragmentation. [Rather] it is the refusal to acknowledge the importance of the difference in our identities that has led to distrust, miscommunication, and thus disunity" (p. 6). It is this challenge of achieving social acceptability in an environment often devoid of symmetrical communication opportunities that represents perhaps the steepest hurdle for the gay community and arguably for any civil rights movement. To that end, gay rights organizations must heed Habermas' call for legitimacy as a *product* of productive social discourse and they must execute communication campaigns that contribute to that discourse and to the collective cultural definitions of what is and is not socially acceptable. In this regard, the gay movement's objectives reinforce the importance of legitimacy as a central tenet of public relations. The process of managing legitimacy provides a key tactic to effectively manage relationships with targeted organizations.

Embedded in the assumption of universal standards is the notion that the only time an organization must worry about its legitimacy is in response to a crisis. Metzler (2001) argued, for example, that an organization's legitimacy determines its right to exist, and that external communication not only should demonstrate an organization's willingness to adhere to social norms, but also should respond to and accommodate public concerns. During a crisis in which an organization is perceived to have misled or harmed the public, the organization must demonstrate—through good public relations—its sincere willingness to regain the public's trust and adhere to social norms and expectations. Public relations' guidance is limited because research assumes that an organization begins with legitimacy, and possesses legitimacy until a crisis brings it into question; advice is limited to how these organizations reestablish legitimacy during a crisis, not how to establish it as part of a proactive strategy. To that end, a scant number of public relations scholars have posited ways in which legitimacy can be placed as a central public relations tactic, rather than as a reactionary tactic to accommodate a crisis (Boyd, 2000; Meznar & Nigh, 1993; Yoon, 2005). Boyd argued, for example, that organizations should implement strategies that communicate for "actional" legitimacy, communication that incrementally builds, from day one, public buy-in of organizational goals and objectives. Organizations focused on incremental public buy-in have more success during times of crisis and social uncertainty in maintaining public support.

The challenges and approaches to addressing legitimacy inform gay rights organizations' communication strategies. Certainly, the gay community must adhere to existing laws and norms in the process of pursuing long-term legislative change and/or social influence. At the same time, the gay movement must continually scan its environment and make strategic judgments regarding which social norms should be challenged and which should not. In the process, gay rights organizations must seek incremental buy-in for the community's long-term objectives. The goals of this dissertation therefore are very much rooted in uncovering the communication strategies that aid public perceptions of organizational legitimacy. And as a review of agenda building and framing literature will demonstrate, often these strategies take shape in the spotlight of the media. In fact, Yoon (2005) argued that organizations must accommodate media's expectations as a means to proactively manage organizational legitimacy. Journalists provide media access for those organizations perceived as legitimate sources. Media relations practices therefore must squarely address how organizations can be seen as legitimate in the eyes of the media. Specific to gay rights organizations, public relations "sometimes may be the only realistic strategy for groups off the 'beaten' path and without institutional legitimacy" (p. 763). The next section will outline a key way in which organizations can gain a legitimate voice in the media: agenda building.

3. Agenda Building

Given the challenges highlighted by key public relations frameworks, a key question for this project asks how gay rights organizations design campaigns guided by a *lack* of publicly ascribed legitimacy and with a goal of broadening socially accepted standards rather than demonstrably adhering to them. To that end, public relations research that has addressed agenda building provides important guidance. Similar to public relations competition for media attention, multiple social movements and social movement actors compete for public and political attention. Repeated attention to an issue in a formalized setting increases the issue's legitimacy. Repeated sourcing of a certain social movement organization, in turn, influences public understanding of that issue. The challenge for the gay community, therefore, first is to design a strategic campaign that brings *positive* attention to an issue, and then to use that attention to further the broader campaign for equality.

Social movement organizations must implement their strategy for change in a contentious climate composed of an array of actors who voice different definitions, perspectives, and goals regarding the issue at hand. Each actor seeks to bring a social issue into the public consciousness in a way that influences interpretation of that problem and resolves the problem in accordance with that actor's perspective. Media reside at the heart of this battle for the public consciousness (Yoon, 2005). Cultural battles, Frow and Morris (2000) explained, are grounded largely by mediated "representation wars" in which power relationships and social conflict are on display for mass consumption (p. 323). Technology has only enhanced these mediated contests and has led to the "intensification of public debates about power, propriety, and representation; who has, and who should have, the power to represent whom, how, and under which conditions" (p. 323). In other words, key ideological battles occur in the media, and those actors who influence the media's coverage of a certain issue can influence the public agenda and therefore shape the ideological battlefield.

Issues arise in a variety of ways. Some scholars argue that politicians and opinion leaders force issues into the public consciousness. Other scholars argue that issues arise organically, through observable politically and culturally based phenomena in everyday life (Cobb & Elder, 1972; Johnson et al., 1996; Lang & Lang, 1981). Blumer (1971) suggested issues often are the product of collective definition. Agenda building focuses on the strategic ways in which a source can influence interpretation of a given issue. That said, it is important to remember that from the perspective of the media, social movements "provide drama, conflict, and action; colorful copy; and photo opportunities. But they operate in a competitive environment with many rival service providers; they are only one source of news among many" (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993, p. 116-117).

The public competition over the problem definition, the communication strategies used to relay an organization's argument, and the role of the media in transferring the salience of that argument into the public agenda, reside at the heart of public relations' agenda building function. Certainly, the process of agenda *setting*—the media process of telling the public what to think about, not what to think—has been researched extensively (e.g., Lasorsa, 1997; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Shaw & Hamm, 1997; Tedesco, 2005). Agenda *building*, however, investigates who/what influences the media's decisions regarding what to cover and how that process occurs. For public relations practitioners, agenda building results from the successful transfer of message salience from internal strategy to media content and public consumption (Curtin & Rhodenbaugh, 2001). Organizations that are able to successfully communicate their perspective and call to action to the media are able to help influence public agendas regarding an issue. The public picks up specific salience cues (Johnson et al. 1996) from the media and forms attitudes and opinions regarding an issue based on those cues. In turn, opinion leaders respond to public sentiment and act accordingly. Curtin (1999) explained that an effective communication strategy can "influence the media agenda, which in turn can influence public opinion and the public agenda, a process that has come to be known as agenda building" (p. 54).

The focus for agenda building, in other words, is on the sources of information for the media, because the sources chosen by media play an important role in shaping the public agenda regarding an issue (Weaver & Elliot, 1985). Here, Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) paint a vivid picture of the challenges facing social movement organizations. They explained, "When reporters are given continuing assignments or beats, it is rare for them to be assigned to cover a social movement, and they are less likely to develop routine relationships with movement sources. Hence movements must… start the race much further back on the track" (p. 117). Organizations that do become a reliable, permanent force for media outlets, however, have the potential to shape media coverage and, in turn, the public agenda.

At the same time—in order to meet the demand for 24-hour, real-time news—media often rely on outside sources to fill otherwise inevitable gaps in coverage. Information subsidies help fill those gaps (Gandy, 1982). These subsidies can be proactive or reactive, formal or informal, and appear in many forms including news releases, fact sheets, organizational backgrounders, news conferences, and face-to-face conversations (Turk, 1985, p. 15). And organizations with effective media relations practices that are able to provide valuable subsidies become staid media sources. As Turk explained, "Sources who quickly and inexpensively make information available to journalists through… 'Information subsidies' increase the likelihood that the information will be used in media content" (p. 12). In this sense, the importance of timely, critical news regarding important issues makes information regarding those issues a valuable commodity (Gandy, 1982), resulting in a potentially productive symbiotic relationship between media and social movements (Sweetser & Brown, 2008).[12] Ideally, media would turn to social movement organizations as sources when covering controversial events. Social movement organizations depend on the media to convey a certain perspective. The goal for the media is to identify those sources deemed most reliable, and the goal of the organizations is to be perceived by the media as a

[12] Sweetser and Brown provide an effective example of how effective media relations, during a crisis, results in positive coverage. By providing access to the media during times of crisis, an organization can provide valuable information subsidies to the media while contributing their perspective to the issue at hand. This helps organizations stay in control of the message during a crisis while providing important information for the media and the public.

permanent, expert source. Journalists rely more heavily on who they perceive as experts to subsidize their information (Andsager & Smiley, 1998).

Information subsidies are most effective when provided in response to a journalist's needs or questions rather than offered as unsolicited promotion (Turk, 1985; Turk & Franklin, 1987). Subsidies are also more effective when media perceive the sources as not acting in a self-serving manner (Curtin & Rhodenbaugh, 2001). Moreover, government, nonprofit, and event-relate subsidies are most likely to be retained and processed by the media as long as they provided locally relevant, newsworthy, and timely information (Berkowitz & Adams, 1990). That said, Zoch and Molleda (2006) emphasized that "although information subsidies may set the stage for the presentation of particular viewpoints, they must be reinforced and complemented by interpersonal interaction and a variety of communication channels" (p. 290). Organizations must heed media schedules, expectations, and needs. They must be aware of the media's news values: timeliness, impact, proximity, conflict, unusualness, and proximity. They must be aware of editorial deadlines and editorial calendars. And they must research which publications, and which reporters at those publications, are most appropriate to contact. The process of subsidizing the media is a dynamic one in which sources engage with media. In other words, to influence public opinion regarding a certain social issue, it is imperative for social movement organizations to influence the public agenda that surrounds that issue. In order to influence that agenda, these organizations must influence media coverage. They accomplish this by becoming expert sources and providing timely and important information subsidies.

The current social issue of same-sex marriage again provides a good example, and demonstrates how, in many ways, those groups opposed to same-sex marriage have become a regular source for the media. Cahill (2004) explained that the ability of these groups to effectively provide media with specific anti-gay messages has resulted in those messages becoming a standard against which counterarguments often are positioned. For example, these groups argue that same-sex relationship recognition will damage or even destroy the traditional institution of marriage. Other messages insist that because of the 1980s AIDS crisis—as well as a handful of publicized domestic violence cases over the last decade—gay relationships are both unhealthy and unsafe (p. 28-29). This argument is perpetuated even though AIDS is also a crisis in the heterosexual community and the risk of getting AIDS is now steeper between heterosexual partners than in the past. Another argument suggests that granting marriage to the gay community is a threat to religious freedom because the law would force churches to marry couples regardless of religious doctrine. Certainly, each of these arguments is extreme, but it demonstrates the ability of a well-placed subsidy to influence the parameters of the mediated debate.

Returning to the site of social change as a forum to investigate "best" public relations practices, informs how to better address the organization-public dynamic and provides new insight regarding the active role of legitimacy in communication and how communicating for legitimacy can influence a public agenda. As Kathleen German (1995) argued:

> "Public relations does not just contribute messages and products to the public dialogue, but it also creates relationships that hold consequences for the evolution of society. We can investigate those relationships by asking about the legitimation created by public relations messages, the relationship of the receivers to the organization, the power of all participants to enter equally into the dialogue, and even the relationship of the spokesperson to the organization" (p. 284)."

Ultimately, success depends on positive exposure in mainstream media. An important piece of this project therefore will examine how media cover gay rights organizations and the issues for which these organizations advocate. If the public relations process of agenda building concerns an organization's strategies to influence the public agenda, then the complementary perspective investigates the success these organizations have in actually subsidizing media coverage. To that end, the next section will examine how media have framed prior social movements and review the legitimizing role of the media in presenting a social movement organization's messages.

Framing

Public relations and media framing literature provide distinct but complementary ways to explore the communication environment that undergirds the modern American gay rights movement. Public relations provides ways to study an organization's communication strategy and framing provides ways to examine how (if at all) media convey the salience of that communication. Media are a key public for any social movement. Gay rights organizations rely on media in order to mobilize constituents, influence public sentiment, and shape policy. Ideally, an effective gay rights campaign results in media coverage that accommodates the perspective of gay rights organizations. As Gross (2005) argued, "The media have served both as carriers and reflections of transformations that the forces of cultural reaction have been powerless to reverse" (p. 520).

This dissertation is not a media framing study, but it is important to examine framing's principles because they emphasize the legitimizing force of the media. Work such as that of Walter Lipmann in the early 20th century—which argued for a hierarchical news structure through which ideas and ideology were disseminated through traditional power structures—set the stage for the development of framing in mass media. Goffman's seminal work in 1974, *Frame Analysis*, however, effectively marked the explicit beginning of the study of how individuals and organizations organize and ostensibly *frame* experience. In this section, I will walk through Goffman's premise, his assumptions, and its extension from sociology into the study of media. I then will highlight how scholars, such as Entman (1993), Iyengar (1991), and Tuchman (1978), have studied the ways in which mass media serve as a legitimizing force.

Building from his book, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1974) was concerned with how individuals organized experience and the social factors that influence how individuals interpret experience. Goffman explained that natural and social primary frameworks establish how individuals perceive to world. He argued that the process of interpretation is cumulative; experience depends on how individuals interpret the continually changing interpersonal contexts that influence the moment to moment of everyday life. In the process, the social world provides what Goffman describes as "keys" which reinforce or challenge one's primary frameworks and transform meaning for an individual. Often, these keys can produce multiple frames that compete to organize an individual's interpretation. For example, Goffman explained that the ceremonial trappings of weddings in concert with ceremonial documentation of marriage imbue weddings with significant cultural meaning. The resulting wedding frame provides distinct keys that deliberately guide personal interpretation in a specific way. Ultimately, framing exposes the vulnerability of experience. The vulnerability of interpretation resides at the core of framing research and this dissertation. Consequently, gay movement organizations must acknowledge and address the powerful social keys that often dictate challenging cultural imperatives that the organization seeks to influence.

Goffman's (1974) premise is guided by sociological inquiry and provides an understanding regarding how individuals organize experience. Iyengar (1987, 1991) and Tuchman (1978) extend this perspective to media and investigate how media influence public interpretation of issues and events. As Gamson (1992) explained, framing in sociology focuses on the interpersonal, lived influences on interpretation and framing in mass communication focuses on the structural influences media have on social understanding. For example, Tuchman argued—from a social constructionist perspective—that media construct cultural myths. What is seen on television is not necessarily reality, rather a specific social construction that influences how to interpret reality. She explained, for example, that both Jack Kennedy and Jack and the Beanstalk are cultural myths, but one lived and the other did not. What is known about Kennedy is a social construction. O'Donnell (2004) echoed this premise, and extended it to the debate regarding same-sex marriage. He explained that cultural myths "are best understood as nodes at the heart of complex networks of inter-related stories…. Myths can act as literary organizing devices, which bring different, sometimes contradictory, textual elements into dialogue with one another" (p. 13). He explained, for example, that mainstream media consistently reinforce specific cultural myths regarding the same-sex marriage debate: the evolutionary myth that society is not ready for gay marriage; the apocalyptic myth that argues God does not sanction same-sex marriage; and the gendered myth that the primary purpose of marriage is reproduction of the species. Together, the three myths represent "heuristic devices, which point to some of the specific ways in which the same sex marriage debate is being constructed but they also link the debate back to a set of larger cultural issues," (p. 25). Journalism's tradition of storytelling provides a platform onto which these myths converge. O'Donnell also argued that this "contested storytelling" is imperative in the context of marriage, because through public, mediated dialog, the public negotiates new ideas and engages in the discourse of human rights (p. 9). These ideas and how they are presented, however, depend on media choices regarding content and perspective.

Media therefore are a powerful legitimizing force (Tuchman, 1978). In the process of constructing a picture reality for the viewer, media legitimize the sources they use. This premise resides at the heart of agenda building. But the actual organization of the news process also contributes to its legitimizing function. Namely, the media's use of beats around which news is reported reflects what media deem as relevant and important. Beats construct reality and limit what is and is not news. Beats allow media to establish regular sources, which in turn reinforces the legitimacy of those sources. And news that does not conveniently fit into a beat—such as social movements—often is not reported. For example, Bradley (2003) explained that Betty Friedan, during the launch of the National Organization for Women, understood the news process and the difficulty of garnering coverage. By launching NOW in her living room she was able to fit into the lifestyle newsbeat and receive widespread coverage. That said, the setting also relegated the organization—and women's movement—as "offbeat" news, setting a derogatory tone for subsequent coverage. Ultimately, Tuchman's argument regarding the organization of news into beats and the legitimizing force of the media help explain the limited perspective ultimately provided to the public. Media limit what the possible interpretations of broader social phenomena.

Iyengar's (1987) research of television news provided additional insight regarding how media shape experience. He found that news is reported on television as episodic rather than thematic: one-time events, not part of a broader social context. Individuals and organizations often responsible for the event are not held accountable; audiences are unable to tie the importance of a single event to a broader social issue. Accordingly, Iyengar found that how people attribute responsibility for an issue is a much more significant predictor of political opinion than party affiliation. The lack of thematic news on television limits public understanding of broader issues, and how those issues are interrelated. Ultimately, his findings reinforced Tuchman's premise by arguing that what we see is limited, but has a very strong impact on how individuals interpret the world and—as Goffman (1974) suggested—how individuals organize experience. Given the limited scope of news beats and the limited insight provided by episodic reporting, but cognizant of the powerful legitimizing function of the media, it is imperative to examine how media frame gay rights issues. How the media perceive gay rights organizations has direct implications for how those organizations shape their message.

Despite framing's rich potential in investigating the critical connection between media processes of production and the individual processes of consumption and interpretation, the paradigm initially suffered from a set framework regarding exactly how to study the process. Entman (1993), for example, argued that by the early 1990s, framing research had become a "fractured paradigm" (p. 51); framing had yet to define and then defend itself as a discrete area of research. For example, agenda setting scholars argued that framing, in essence, concerned second-level agenda setting, which focuses on the attributes used to report on individuals and issues. Maher (2001) argued, however, that framing responds to a distinct set of concerns. Agenda setting focuses more on the holistic content of news coverage while framing examines how individual items within a story are written in order to make certain interpretations more or less salient. Maher also explained that framing scholars traditionally focus on explicating the meaning behind certain frames—as well as the context that influence them—while agenda setting typically studies the effect on the public. He argued, "agenda setting studies have shown that the media tell what to think about… [but] Where do frames originate and ho do they spread? Why do reporters adopt a given frame for a social problem?" (p. 92). Framing focuses on the various influences that—through the media—shape the interpretation of reality. Certainly, this points to the robust potential of framing in mass communication research. It reinforces the connection between media framing research and agenda building, but also presents a potentially unwieldy methodological challenge.

To that end, Entman (1993) proffered what has become a standard model through which to examine the process of framing in the media. He argued that frames are selections of perceived reality communicated through text in order to define a problem, provide a causal interpretation, offer a moral judgment, and/or suggest possible remedies. Journalists convey a degree of salience to certain aspects of news and suggest which aspects are and are not important for public consumption and interpretation. These frames can come from the communicator and exist in the text. In addition, they are influenced by culture, and can never guarantee how they will guide the receiver. In sum, Entman's model directs research to investigate the frames that appear in the form of a problem, cause, solution, and/or moral judgment. His guidance also emphasizes that interpretation of these frames emanate from the communicator, receiver, cultural context, or text. Simultaneously, Macro and micro processes influence how a frame is received and interpreted (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). For example, certain cultural and political forces influence how frames are activated and communicated to the media (Entman, 2004). These forces have the ability to cue the media regarding what was and was not important. Each source has its own motivations, uses its own strategy, and wields its own degree of power. Entman provided the example of the Cold War and media's dependence on the government as a critical source of news. Today, this hierarchical structure of issue activation has flattened; a plethora of influential sources activates media attention to an issue. And though the number of influences on media processes has increased, the media still provide the critical connection with society regarding what is and is not important, and in fact, news.

In all, Goffman's (1974) premise of frame analysis, Iyengar's (1987) focus on episodic versus thematic news, Tuchman's (1978) emphasis on the legitimizing power of the media and the social construction of reality, and Entman's (1993) unifying guidance regarding how to study the process itself, provide the requisite foundation for media framing research. Given this background, the next section reviews literature that addresses how media have framed past social movements. Doing so helps contextualize the possible challenges facing the modern gay rights movement.

1. Media Framing of Social Movements

The principles of framing are ideal for examining how media cover social movements, and the experience of prior social movements in the context of the media provides valuable insight for the organizations in the modern gay movement. For example, Gitlin's (1980) examination of the 1960s New Left—specifically the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)— reinforced the principles outlined by Goffman (1973), Iyengar (1991), and Tuchman (1978), and demonstrated how media can directly influence the trajectory of a social movement. He explained that media "sometimes generate, sometimes amplify a field of legitimate discourse that shapes the public's 'definitions of its situations,' and they work through selections and omissions, through emphases and tones, through all of their forms of treatment" (p. 9). Specific to social movements, Gitlin posited that media play four roles in the context of social movements: serve as ideological distribution systems; provide a direct experience and make "natural" otherwise distant events; advocate for social change while disparaging groups and individuals who are advocating *for* that change; and shape like a fun house mirror what the public "knows." To this last point, Gitlin argued that news does not exactly reflect reality, rather it widens, shortens, and shapes reality in different ways. Similarly, Tuchman (1978) described media as a window. What you see depends on the number of panes, if the glass is clear or opaque, and which direction it faces.

Given this perspective, Gitlin (1980) defined frames as "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories of what exists, what happens, and what matters" (p. 6). His findings demonstrated that the influential lens of the media framed the SDS in terms of extremism, deviance, and threat, and altered internal and external perceptions of the organization's mission. In the organization's beginning, the SDS was a campus-based organization focused on left-leaning, local, independent media and guided by the Port Huron statement – the organization's mission and call to action that was drafted in 1962. The organization grew quickly, and by 1965, the SDS realized the potential of becoming a national movement. Accordingly, in April of that year, the SDS held an anti-Vietnam march on Washington, although the Vietnam War was only one of many issues with which the SDS and New Left was concerned. The organization, however, did not distribute planned keynote speeches to the media and lacked knowledge of how to effectively engage the media. The organization failed to communicate a unified, proactive message of reform. As a result, media highlighted the more radical activists who attended the march that day, and painted the organization as extremist, a danger to civil society. And as Gitlin and others have argued, the moment media perceive an organization as radical rather than reform-minded, coverage becomes disparaging. Media tied SDS to the radical arm of the New Left, and while the SDS did not want to become a one-issue organization (as did many of its new, radical members), the media framed it as the radical leader of the anti-war movement. The organization's inability to engage the media with the sophistication needed for effective media relations made the organization even more vulnerable to the media shaping its image.

Rhodes' (2006) investigation of the Black Panthers reinforced Gitlin's premise. Despite the Black Panthers' ability to engage the media with more sophistication than the SDS, the organization's emphasis on black nationalism contributed to its image in the white press as radical. The organization's patrolling of black neighborhoods while carrying exposed weapons fostered an image of a militant group. As a result, the mediated message—as Gitlin argued—highlighted deviance, extremism, and threat rather than the organization's original mission of protecting the black community against unfair police practices. Rhodes used Entman's conception of framing (problem, responsibility, moral judgment, and solution) to explain the resulting derogatory frames. In covering the Black Panthers, the media defined the problem as young black males who used radical militant rhetoric and targeted officials. Media judged the organization as a national threat for which the government and municipal officials were responsible for handling. As a result, the frames used by the media suggested that the Black Panthers should adopt the more palatable protest model of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Ultimately, Rhodes' larger argument demonstrated that the way in which media frame a group not only defines the immediate, contemporary understanding of that group, but also the long-term collective memory ascribed to that group's identity. The frames established for the Black Panthers in the 1960s continue to shape modern perceptions of the organization as evidenced by movies such as *Forrest Gump*.

On one hand, the SDS demonstrated the negative effects of not being well versed in media processes. On the other hand, the Black Panthers demonstrated that even if a social movement organization understands how to engage the media, the tactics of engagement are just as crucial to legitmating a social movement organization's identity. The two critical lessons for the gay movement, as evidenced by Gitlin (1980) and Rhodes (2006), therefore emphasize the need to communicate with a message of reform rather than radical change and the importance of engaging the media with a needed sophistication that reflected knowledge and expectations of media standards, deadlines, and news values. Together, these lessons reinforce the principles of agenda building in public relations, which emphasize the steep but imperative challenge of becoming staid, legitimate sources for the media. Gitlin summarized, "Reformist movements… are less vulnerable to structural deformation in the publicity process than are revolutionary ones. Reformists can achieve media standing by getting their experts legitimated…. Revolutionaries, by contrast, can achieve media standing only as deviants" (p. 286). This guidance also reinforces the pervasive focus across social movement, public relations, and framing literature on managing organizational legitimacy as a core piece of an organization's communication strategy. And these examples refine Heath's (2008) earlier argument by explaining that specifically reformist—not revolutionary—social movements are the modern source of new ideas. In fact, Gitlin explained that while they do not fit neatly into news beats, many reform-minded social movement actors have become regular sources for the media. As a result, "The media spread the news that alternative opinions exist on virtually every issue. They create the impression that the society is full of political vitality, that opinions and interests contend freely—that the society, in a word, is pluralist" (p. 285).

2. Social movement organizations' framing processes

Though Gitlin (1980) and Rhodes (2006) focused squarely on the media's role in framing social movements, embedded in their arguments is the importance of a social movement organization's media strategy. How a social movement organization develops and delivers its message plays an important role in how media interpret and convey that organization to the public. It is important, therefore, not only to apply the principles of framing to examine how media cover social movements, but also to understand how social movement scholars have investigated the ways in which organizations have employed framing principles to shape their own message. As Snow and Benford (1986) argued, social movement organizations "frame the world in which they are acting…. The strategic action pursued by SMOs, their resource acquisition efforts, and their temporal viability are all strongly influenced by their interpretive work" (p. 466).

Snow and Benford's (1986, 1988, 1992) emphasis on how social movement organizations interpret the world and use that interpretation to communicate on behalf of their stakeholders, reflects Goffman's (1974) original discussion regarding the individual's interpretation of experience, and complements both Entman's (1993) conception of how media influence that interpretation and Gitlin (1980) and Rhodes' (2006) argument regarding what that means for social movement organizations. Snow and Benford (1992) argued that social movement organizations demonstrate their interpretation through collective action frames—frames that perform three key roles. First, organizations employ "accenting devices" that define and emphasize a certain social injustice or issue (p. 137). In this role, the frame punctuates an issue by bringing it into public consciousness or transforming public attention regarding that issue. This is reminiscent of Blumer's (1971) call for a focus on how social problems are collectively defined as a way to understand the trajectory of social movements themselves. Second, Snow and Benford argued that collective action frames provide diagnostic and prognostic attributions. Reflective of Entman's (1993) model, the role of these frames is to communicate the cause of a problem and to proffer a solution to that problem.

Finally, Snow and Benford (1992) explained that collective action frames "enable activists to articulate and align a vast array of events and experiences so that they hang together in a relatively unified and meaningful fashion" (p. 137-138). The purpose of this third type of frame is to link otherwise distinct issues in a way that effectively paints a picture of the holistic mission of a social movement organization. In this regard, "what gives a collective action frame its novelty is not so much its innovative ideational elements as the manner in which activists articulate or tie them together" (p. 138). The ideas build from Snow and Benford's (1988) earlier work in which they argued that social movements respond to social issues through diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. Diagnostic and prognostic frames, as explained, identify and propose solutions for a certain problem. Motivational frames, however, explain who is responsible for the solution of that problem, and why.

This perspective reinforces the potential of investigating the intersection between a social movement organization's messaging strategies and the media's reflection (or lack thereof) of those strategies. For example, Snow and Benford's (1992) third criterion regarding the articulation of a problem that connects a single hot-button issue to a broader, holistic plan reflects the importance of thematic messaging. As Iyengar (1991) emphasized, the ability to accurately ascribe causality or assess potential solutions depends on the extent of thematic rather than episodic framing. In addition, Snow and Benford's overall conception of collective action frames based in organizational processes that identify the problem definition, problem cause, and problem solution closely mirror Entman's (1993) focus on media framing of problem, responsibility, solution, and moral judgment. It supports the use of Entman's model to investigate the transfer of salience from an organization to the media. Do the problem definition, problem cause, problem solution, and moral judgment as defined by the organization resonate in media coverage of that problem or the organization's role in communicating that problem? Gamson et al. (1992) explained:

> Participants in symbolic contests read their success or failure by how well their preferred meanings and interpretation are doing in various media arenas…. Essentially, sponsors of different frames monitor media discourse to see how well it tells the story they want told, and they measure their success or failure accordingly. (p. 385)

As I mentioned in the discussion of collective behavior, scholars who study social movement organizations have provided guidance regarding how those organizations can frame messages that will mobilize constituents and resonate with the public. In the context of protest, Snow and Benford (1986) argued that collective action requires interpretive frames that inspire and justify action, and legitimate the organization and organizational tactics. Similarly, Gamson (1995) emphasized the need for frames that speak to injustice, agency, and identity. Injustice speaks to the issue or set of issues for which an organization advocates. Agency seeks to motivate the individual and instill in her/him the possibility for change. And messages of identity define the organization in terms of "We" in order to establish a sense of community. Gamson (1995) cautioned, however, that one of the key challenges facing social movement organizations is the need to develop a group consciousness. In addition, he emphasized that certain dynamics that can either help or hinder collective action such as motivating potential constituents to act while acknowledging the personal risk involved with doing so and being able to accommodate continually changing opportunities. He explained that activist organizations too often communicate with constituents as if they were marketing a product. These organizations base their strategy on fleeting hot button issues rather than on building long-term relationships with constituents. As a result, individuals deciding whether or not to join a movement do so based on a specific issue at a specific time and are not committed to the movement beyond that issue. Gamson argued that instead, movements must frame their message in a way that communicates for long-term relationships with the community and garner buy in for the holistic mission, not just the hot-button issue.

Gamson (1995) and Snow and Benford's (1988, 1992) perspectives are important, because they reinforce framing's applicability to social movements and how framing can be used to study the role of public relations in furthering social movements. It places at the intersection of public relations and framing the importance of legitimacy and reinforces agenda building's role in establishing legitimacy for an organization in the eyes of the media. Moreover, Gamson's (1995) call for long-term relationships between social movement organizations and their constituents echoes the central premise of Relationship Management Theory. The foundation of public relations scholarship therefore parallels, in many ways, the principles of framing as proffered by social movement scholars. Accordingly, the final section of literature will review the role of framing in public relations research.

3. Public Relations and Framing

At this point, I have walked through the sociological foundation of framing, the application of Goffman's premise to media, the role of media in framing social movements, and the ways in which social movement organizations employ their own frames in crafting messages of legitimacy. Public relations scholars have begun to address this intersection and acknowledge the benefits of incorporating the framing's guidance to the study of strategic communication. For example, Hallahan (1999)—one of the first researchers to extend framing to public relations—squarely placed the public relations application of framing in the tradition of social constructionism, because meaning does not reside in an object itself but in an individual's interpretation of that object. He explained the benefits of framing to the relationship management premise:

> Implicitly, framing plays an integral role in public relations. If public relations is defined as the process of establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relations

> between an organization and publics on whom it depends (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1995), the establishment of common frame of reference about topics or issues of mutual concern is a necessary condition for effective relations to be established. (p. 207)

With this premise, he proffered seven models of framing that are applicable to public relations: responsibility, actions, issues, situation, choices, attributes, and news (p. 210). Practitioners must focus on the discourse in everyday situations, the characteristics of individuals in those situations, the different choices possible in a situation, the actions and issues that influence situations, the actors perceived as responsible, and the role of the media as a legitimizing force for certain sources. Though the scope of these models proves somewhat unwieldy, it introduces important decisions regarding message development.

Additional scholars consistently leverage core media framing and social movement framing literature as the justification for the extension of framing to public relations. For example, Johannson (2007) argued that Goffman's (1974) premise regarding frame analysis directly informs the fundamentals of public relations. He concluded that Goffman's focus on social interaction is key for public relations because communication can only improve by examining the internal and external day-to-day practices at the micro-levels of communication. Reber and Berger (2005) employed Snow and Benford's (1988, 1992) focus on collective action and master frames in their study regarding how the Sierra Club framed specific issues when constructing messages for internal stakeholders and the media. They argued, "Social movement organizations… use frames to attempt to influence the perceptions, beliefs, and actions of various target groups, such as media personnel, potential allies, constituents, and the general public" (p. 186). And the repetition of certain common issue frames helps establish a productive relationship with the publics the organization is trying to influence. The authors found that the Sierra Club organized messaging around three primary issue frames, which effectively translated to the organization's Website, chapter newsletters, and the media. Reber and Kim (2006) echoed these findings, and argued that especially for local activist organizations, or local chapters of national activist organizations, success and growth depends on effective media relations, and that "activist communication provides fertile soil for public relations scholars to work" (p. 331).

Zoch and Molleda (2006) and Zoch et al. (2008) paint the most-comprehensive picture regarding how foundational framing literature informs public relations. Zoch at al. explained, that Snow and Benford's (1988, 1992) focus on diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames, provides important guidance regarding the kinds of frames that public relations practitioners should employ. They noted, however, that additional research investigating the techniques and tactics that support the process is needed. They suggested that Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) use of framing devices—metaphors, exemplars, depictions, visual images, and catchphrases—offer important techniques for effective organization-public communication.

Their perspective builds from an earlier study by Zoch and Molleda (2006), which directly informs this dissertation. The authors developed a theoretical model of media relations that incorporates the principles of framing, information subsidies, and agenda building. They explained that media relations directly benefits from framing's lens. Framing allows organizations to own a message, control the timing of the message, control the source of the message, and—to an extent—influence the effect the message has on the media agenda. They ground their argument with the framing principles outlined by Entman (1993) and Goffman (1974). Moreover, they argued that incorporating Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) framing devices with Entman's focus on how frames define problems, make moral judgments, attribute responsibility, and propose solutions, can help public relations practitioners focus their messages. In turn, the process of subsidizing the media through the function of agenda building connects those frames with the media. First, proactive information management tracks issues and reveals opportunities for the creation of an information subsidy. This realization then requires internal/external newsgathering and crafting of the subsidy, the provision of the subsidy to applicable media, and ultimately evaluation regarding the success, or lack thereof, in subsidizing the news process. More importantly, Zoch and Molleda provided a valuable synthesis regarding the theoretically based considerations that undergird the media relations process. They explained that practitioners must interpret the situation; ascribe a degree of salience to specific aspects of an issue or situation (Entman, 1993); establish common frames of reference regarding issues that reflect mutual concern (Hallahan, 1999); define the function of a frame as problem, solution, moral judgment or responsibility (Entman, 1993); and employ framing devices such as visual images and metaphors (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). In other words, public relations processes must lend salience to certain items, use visual and rhetorical devices as tools to help deliver communication, and ensure that the message itself responds to one of Entman's four frame functions: problem, solution, cause, and/or moral judgment.

The underlying question asks how these messages translate in the media. What do the media convey as the most or least salient information regarding the important issues? Organizations in the modern gay movement have a unique opportunity to employ framing in their public relations strategies and subsidize the 24-hour news cycle. As mentioned, technology that is available today allows ways to execute relatively inexpensive but professional, widespread campaigns that were inconceivable by earlier civil rights movements. Accordingly, gay rights organizations have developed more formal media relations apparatuses that seemingly have the ability to communicate for legitimacy and navigate the tenuous balance between communicating for reform and communicating for a radical change.

Research Questions

Social movement, public relations, and mass communication theory problematizes how a social movement organization representing a diverse constituency can develop an actionable collective identity, construct messages that legitimate that identity in the eyes of the media, and ultimately influence the agenda that informs the public's interpretation of that identity. Equipped with this foundation, my study seeks to fill critical gaps in the literature and demonstrate the rich potential in focusing specifically on the legitimating processes that are fundamental to social movements, public relations, and mass media. Doing so elucidates important considerations regarding the symbiotic relationship between communication, culture, and identity. The ways in which LGBT advocacy organizations develop and execute their communication strategies, and how those strategies are conveyed through the lens of the media, inform what is known about how the state perspective contributes to the overall movement, and what is communicated regarding the identity of the LGBT community. Accordingly, the three questions that guided this dissertation asked:

RQ1: What issues comprise the agendas of state-based LGBT advocacy organizations?

In order to understand the communication processes that drive state-based LGBT advocacy, it first was important to survey these organizations' operational context. Each state presents a unique social and legislative climate. Accordingly, while the needs of the LGBT community may be similar across states, what is actionable for these organizations may differ based on their operational context. It was important to determine if these contexts demanded different communication priorities and strategies.

RQ2: How are the messages that are used to advocate on behalf of the LGBT community developed by state-based advocacy organizations and reflected by state-specific print media?

The fundamental, practical question of this dissertation investigates how state-based gay rights organizations design and execute their communication strategy, including the key publics, the tactics, and the overall goals that guide of their strategy. I was particularly interested in how organizations have addressed the issue of same-sex marriage (if at all) and if the issue has influenced their advocacy. These findings provided an effective point of comparison to how the media portray state-based LGBT advocacy and the LGBT community itself. I was interested in determining how (if at all) media reflect the messaging, tactics, and goals of state-based LGBT advocacy organizations.

RQ3: How does the perspective of state-based LGBT advocacy contribute to the dynamics of the overall movement and address the dilemma of new social movements regarding the relationship between identity and action?

Social movement literature provides important guidance regarding the traditionally accepted life stages of social movements. Post 1960s *new* social movements introduce to that literature the importance of identity and a decentralized organization to movement structure. Investigating state-based LGBT advocacy responds to scholars' call for research that answers "How" questions related to new social movements. More importantly, the state perspective informs how state-based LGBT advocacy fits within the larger movement structure, specifically compared to the mission and goals of national organizations.

At the heart of the movement are the processes of legitimation of the LGBT identity. As Gamson (1995) and Epstein (1994) argued, however, the key dilemma facing the gay movement is how to wage actionable campaigns that account for the diversity of identity. Focusing on state-based advocacy therefore also informs how the gay movement accommodates questions of identity in the process of advocating on behalf of the community.

Social movement, public relations, and media framing literature reinforce this project's focus on the intersection legitimacy and identity. Social movement scholars call for movement actors to establish legitimacy for movement needs in the eyes of the public. Embedded in the core paradigms of public relations is the notion that good public relations practice focuses on attaining and managing organizational legitimacy. In the process, media provide a key, culturally legitimizing force for organizations; media lend degrees of salience to issues that either can help or hinder an organization's ability to influence the public agenda and influence public consciousness around an issue or set of issues. New social movements place at the center of this legitimizing process the importance of identity and the need to legitimize the identity(s) associated with a movement's goals. And LGBT advocacy organizations are challenged with crafting messages and waging strategic campaigns that legitimize the identity of an infinitely diverse constituency in the eyes of the general public. The research questions reflect these challenges, and the answers reinforce the potential of social movements as rich sites of investigation for public relations and media framing processes. Guided by this premise, the next chapter outlines the means to that end, the methods I employed in my investigation of LGBT state-based advocacy.

Chapter III: Research Methods

I employed two research methods to investigate the communication dynamics that influence state-based LGBT advocacy: in-depth interviews with representatives from state-based LGBT advocacy organizations, and a qualitative content analysis of media coverage specific to those organizations and the issues for which those organizations advocate. In its most-basic sense, triangulating the data—employing two or more methodologies to investigate a topic—benefits research by lending validity to a set of findings (Seale, 1999). More importantly, methodological triangulation adds confidence to the findings (Denzin, 1978) and allows for a more-robust, complete account of that which is being investigated.

I analyzed interview data and media content through a qualitative lens, characterized by questions that begin by asking "what" and "how" (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). Qualitative research seeks interpretation of a problem or phenomena and then uses that interpretation in order to issue a call to action. Qualitative analysis moves from an evaluation of the particular to an understanding of the general, incorporates the reflexive lens of the researcher, and privileges the voice of the participant. The qualitative process pulls from multiple sources of data, focuses on interpretative inquiry, and requires the research plan to emerge based on the data collected.

This last dynamic of an emergent research plan is central to my dissertation design, and reflects the principles of grounded theory, which explores and builds theory from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It provides a qualitative framework through which theory emerges from a methodical, structured analysis of the gathered data. Unlike quantitative research, which largely focuses on testing models and hypotheses, grounded theory demands that research begin without a priori assumptions or expectations; data guides the theoretical interpretation. The meaning embedded within the data reveals knowledge about the world and indicates what can be deduced from that understanding. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained, “Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of research” (p. 6).

Within this framework, the researcher is tasked with four objectives: coding of the data, constant comparison across incidents, conceptual categorization of the findings, and conceptual saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Researchers first identify the major analytical categories (open coding), readdress and redefine the categories in the context of this core phenomenon (axial coding), and ultimately compare the findings to foundational literature (selective coding). Mining the data requires the constant comparative method, which compares similarities and differences between incidents across the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The constant comparative approach helps the researcher quickly get a handle on the scope of the data, move from the descriptive to abstract level, acknowledge personal assumptions or bias, and promote links between incidents rather than focus on a single case. Corbin and Strauss explained, “It is not the specifics of an experience that are relevant but the concepts and understanding that we derive from them” (p. 76). And, the constant comparative method can help reveal these understandings in a variety of ways. As Charmaz (2000) summarized, the constant comparative approach can involve, “(a) comparing different people (such as their views, situations, actions, accounts, and experiences), (b) comparing data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time, (c) comparing incident with incident, (d) and comparing a category with other categories" (p. 515).

The goal of the grounded theory process, and of any qualitative research paradigm, is saturation. Researchers must continue to code the data until no new categories emerge, and they are able to detect consistent themes and patterns. As Corbin and Strauss (2008) cautioned, however, saturation refers not only to the raw data being analyzed, but also to the comparison of data and relationships between categories. Moreover, they explained that a researcher must, "return to old sites, documents, and persons, or go to new ones to gather the data necessary to saturate categories and complete a study" (p. 155). In returning to these data sources, the researcher must tease out, through memo writing, the significant findings and relate them back to the literature. Finally, as researchers work toward saturation, it is imperative to ensure accurate interpretations. At this step, investigators must go back to research participants in order to get their perspectives on the findings. These member checks ensure that the analysis accurately portrays the participants' interpretation and intended meaning.

The primary risk, of course, is the researcher's definition of saturation. Definitions of what constitutes saturation vary (Charmaz, 2000). Research that employs grounded theory ranges from the analysis of small, contained cases to broad, long-term field research. Regardless of the scope, however, the researcher is tasked with demonstrating an exhaustive investigation. Points of saturation will vary depending on the types of questions asked and the types of data retrieved, but it is important that the research paints a complete picture of the phenomenon being studied. As Charmaz explained, qualitative research guided by grounded theory must demonstrate "the resonance of intimate familiarity with the studied world" (p. 520).

The triangulation of my data through in-depth interviews and content analysis supports the objectives of grounded theory. My goal was to incorporate the perspectives of as many states as possible, with a minimum target of including the perspective of at least five states. In the next chapter, I present the perspectives of seven states, as well as a national perspective of LGBT advocacy. The in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis of media coverage specific to these organizations and LGBT issues reflect the communication dynamics, internal and external to movement organizations, which pervade state-based LGBT advocacy. Internally, the communication strategies as explained by participants revealed the types of messages and communication tactics that drive their agendas. Externally, the coverage of LGBT issues through the lens of the media revealed if and how the salience of these organizations' agendas is conveyed for public consumption. Each organization has faced unique operational contexts in their long-term campaigns for equality, but the findings revealed that the fundamental mission and communication philosophy driving state-based advocacy is consistent across states. In all, the experiences of these seven states and one national organization paint a picture of LGBT advocacy from New England, the South, Midwest, and West Coast. These findings also revealed consistent findings regarding how state-based organizations communicate for change, help position the state-perspective in the broader gay movement, and contribute to several fields of research including social movement, public relations, and media research.

1. Interviews

I gathered the bulk of my data through in-depth interviews. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) outlined the central benefits of in-depth interviews. Interviews provide valuable information not only in terms of participant responses, but also in terms of the reasons these participants give for providing certain responses. Given the length of the interviews—

typically more than one hour—the researcher has an opportunity to investigate both verbal and non-verbal responses, and explore in detail important perspectives and interpretations regarding the phenomena being studied. Because these interviews are concerned with depth rather than breadth, the research involves fewer participants than research conducted quantitatively.

In order to identify participants, I began by sending emails—based on the email addresses provided on organizational Websites—to the executive director, communication director, and/or public outreach coordinator at the primary LGBT advocacy organization in 13 different states: Maine, Massachusetts, California, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Ohio, Iowa, Texas, and Washington state. I chose these states because of their geographic representation as well as their diverse political contexts. In the email (Appendix A), I introduced myself, summarized the goals and rationale for my research, and self-identified as a member of the LGBT community. I will address this aspect of my identity more in the following section, but for purposes of establishing initial contact, I felt it was important to demonstrate to potential participants my close involvement with the LGBT community. Ultimately, seven of the targeted 13 organizations participated: MassEquality (Massachusetts), Equality North Carolina, Georgia Equality, Equality Ohio, One Iowa, Equality Texas, and Equal Rights Washington. I also reached out to the executive director of the Equality Federation—the national federation of state-based LGBT advocacy organizations—who also agreed to participate. In all, I interviewed participants from eight of 14 targeted organizations.

I targeted potential participants through purposive (or purposeful) sampling, which is sampling that targets specific individuals who represent a specific population and/or perform a similar role—in this case, associates charged with developing and executing the communication strategies of state-based LGBT advocacy organizations (Creswell, 2007). The organizations reflected in this study represent geographically complementary regions of the country and complementary perspectives regarding the key issues that comprise their agenda. In terms of geography, for example, it was important to understand the operational context of traditionally liberal states (Massachusetts, Washington), traditionally conservative states (Texas, Georgia), and states that reflect a mix of political sentiment (Ohio, Iowa, and North Carolina). In terms of organizational agendas, it was important that I garnered the perspective of states that had successfully won and defended marriage equality—such as Massachusetts and Iowa—as well as states such as Ohio and Texas campaigning, instead, for fundamental protections including employment and housing non-discrimination policies. Given the guidance of grounded theory and the need for saturation, I allowed the depth of interview data—and the willingness of participants—to determine the total number of interviews. Accordingly, the eight organizations that participated provided the requisite diversity of perspective and experience.

As indicated, six state-based organizations did not respond to my email. The lack of response from four of those states was understandable. Equality California, for example, was in the midst of a high-profile federal court case to overturn Proposition 8. In addition, the week before I contacted the advocacy organizations in New Jersey and New York, legislators in those states voted against marriage equality. Because those votes were decided, in part, by individuals who had campaigned on the promise of voting for marriage equality, the advocacy organizations I contacted were in the midst of publicly responding on behalf of the LGBT community to the vote. Finally, one month before I contacted Equality Maine, that organization's campaign to preserve marriage equality was unsuccessful; Maine citizens voted by a narrow margin to ban marriage equality. In all, it therefore is understandable why those organizations were unable to participate.

Of the eight organizations that did respond, I interviewed nine individuals who have a role in developing the communication goals and strategies for their organization. This included one representative from each organization except Equal Rights Washington, for which I had two participants. Three representatives from that organization agreed to participate, but one individual was unable to attend the interview. For most state-based organizations, the executive director—not a communications employee—directs the development of communication. Moreover, a variety of organizational representatives assists in the execution of these campaigns. In my findings, I outline the role and background of each participant, but my sample reflects the variety of responsibilities involved in the development and execution of state-based communication strategies. My sample included five executive directors (four at the state level, one at the national level), two communications managers/directors, one director of programs and outreach, and one project development manager.

Several participants reinforced the importance of connecting with the executive director of the Equality Federation. They offered help to reach out to the Federation as well as to additional state organizations if I did not receive requisite interest for the study, which reflects the principles of snowball sampling. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) explained that snowball sampling depends on referrals in which the investigator "randomly contacts a few qualified respondents and then asks these people for the names of friends, relatives, or acquaintances they may know who may also qualify for the research study" (p. 99-100). Because I was able to achieve through my initial outreach sufficient representation with the nine participants I did not pursue contacting additional organizations through snowball sampling. I hope to rely on these participants' support for future research, however, when I replicate this study.

I scheduled interviews based on each participant's needs in terms of time and place of the interview. Ideally, I would have conducted each interview in person, but because of time and budget constraints, I conducted most interviews via telephone and Skype – which is an online tool that provides free video calls over the Internet. I conducted the interview with the participant from Equality North Carolina in person, given the close proximity of his office to mine. Before the interviews began, I reviewed and asked participants to sign an Institutional Review Board consent form, which indicated their consent to participate in the study (see IRB approval, Appendix C). I then taped interviews on an audiocassette and Apple computer. I told participants that they could use pseudonyms if they preferred their identity to remain confidential. Here it is important to note the difference between anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity promises that there is no way to tie a respondent to the information she/he provides. This is impossible in interviews, because the researcher knows which respondent provided which information. To that end, confidentiality ensures that even though a researcher can identify the source of certain information, the respondent's name will never be associated publicly with that information (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). That said, each participant chose to use her or his real name in the final study

Each interview lasted between one, and one and a half hours. I personally transcribed each interview in order to become closer to the data. I transcribed verbal ticks, such as the use of "um," or "you know." In addition, I indicated when participants paused before responding and when they emphasized certain words or phrases. Although I do not include these notes in the quotes that I incorporated into the findings, transcribing these contextual elements provided important cues as I coded the data. I have retained the transcripts of the interviews in a locked office; the transcript files have been password protected.

I followed McCracken's (1988) guidance throughout the development and execution of the interview guide. In terms of developing the guide, McCracken emphasized that a well-executed literature review helps the researcher outline the requisite background and better-define the needed interview questions. This background is imperative for focusing the interview guide and establishes important points of reference for the researcher. McCracken also emphasized the importance of the researcher taking a reflexive look at personal biases and embedded cultural assumptions that may influence research, which I will do at the end of this chapter. The introduction of these "cultural categories" allows the researcher to add important cultural context to the phenomena to be studied, context that is not available in the literature (p. 33).

I used a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B) that included questions and probes that were asked and/or modified based on participant responses. The semi-structured approach balances the characteristics of structured interviews, in which the researcher leads participants through a definitive, unwavering set of questions, and unstructured interviews, in which participants speak generally about their experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A semi-structured guide provides the requisite interview roadmap. As McCracken (1988) argued, the presence of a questionnaire is indispensible for the long interview. It ensures, "that the investigator covers all the terrain in the same order for each respondent (preserving in a rough way the conversational context of each interview)" (p. 24).

It is important, however, to maintain distance and allow respondents to tell their own story. As McCracken (1988) argued, by asking non-leading, non-directive questions, "The investigator seeks to keep as 'low' and unobtrusive a profile as possible" (p. 34). Along the way, investigators must be prepared to employ prompts as needed. McCracken suggested that researchers place prompts at the end of each section of questions. Moreover, he explained that questionnaires are ways to test the relevant analytical and cultural categories identified during the preparation, if a participant's responses do not reflect the categories.

I scheduled based on participant availability and was able to conduct all interviews within a two and a half week period. I began the interviews by asking participants for basic biographical information such as their name and professional background. Asking respondents for relevant biographical information helps cue the investigator to the participant's perspective (McCracken, 1988). Equipped with participants' backgrounds, I then addressed the individual's specific organizational role, and asked questions that spoke directly to the dissertation's research goals. Supporting probes ensured that participants provided relevant definitions, explanations, and operational contexts as appropriate. Asking the same questions to representatives from several organizations who serve in similar capacities allowed a valuable comparison between organizations. Following McCracken's advice, I treated the interview guide as a living document. For example, following my first interview—which was with MassEquality—I modified the guide to address participant responses, and those questions that became more salient. Appendix B reflects this revised guide.

Once I transcribed the interviews, I analyzed the data following Corbin and Strauss' (2008) guidance in terms of open, axial, and selective coding. Researchers begin by coding the data in order to identify the major analytical categories—a process that Corbin and Strauss called open coding. The researcher then analyzes the initially identified categories and determines the central category that addresses the broader, core phenomenon. This step of axial coding then readdresses and redefines the categories in the context of this core phenomenon. Finally, researchers employ selective coding, at which point the findings are compared to the foundational literature. This crucial step contributes to broader understandings of the concepts and processes that guide modern social movements and social movement organizations. Moreover, new concepts may emerge that either support or refute the guiding literature; findings may point to theories that were not initially included in the theoretical framework.

There were challenges to conducting structured, in-depth interviews. As Creswell (2007) explained, "Gaining access to organizations, sites, and individuals to study has its own challenges. Convincing individuals to participate in the study, building trust and credibility at the field site, and getting people from a site to respond are all important access challenges" (p. 138-139), which reinforces my decision to self-identify as a member of the LGBT community during my initial contact. Additional challenges include unexpected participant response or reaction, how to ask participants questions on sensitive issues, and knowing the best questions to ask. There is an important relationship that requires delicate balance between interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer is in control and wields a degree of power in the administration of the questions and interpretation of the data. As McCracken (1988) warned, it is important to take caution not to lead the participants into answering items in a certain, predetermined manner. Also, Creswell (2007) noted that it is important for the researcher to conduct post-analysis member checks to ensure accurate interpretation of the data.

Interviews—as qualitative tools—also pose challenges to generalizability. Qualitative research addresses two degrees of generalizability: internal generalizability, which generalizes to the immediate communities and groups represented by interview participants; and external generalizability, which generalizes to external communities and groups (Huberman & Miles, 2002). One of the key benefits of qualitative research is its potential for *internal* generalizability to specific groups and communities. That said, researchers could be at a disadvantage because of the relatively brief contact with individuals and the inferences and interpretations that must be made based on that limited contact. Huberman and Miles explained, "An account based on interviews may be descriptively, interpretively, and theoretically valid as an account of the person's actions and perspective in that interview, but may miss other aspects of the person's perspectives that were not expressed in the interview" (p. 54). The authors' caution reinforces grounded theory's focus on member checking the interpretation of interviews, and revisiting sites of investigation to ensure saturation.

This challenge also reinforces the benefit of triangulating data. As mentioned, employing multiple data collection methods helps substantiate the claims a researcher makes (Huberman & Miles, 2002). To that end, I wanted to determine if and how the communication strategies espoused during the interviews was visible in media coverage of the organization and coverage of the issues for which the organizations advocate. In the next section, I will walk through how I used the themes identified during the interviews to direct the qualitative content analysis of media coverage in each state. A qualitative content analysis of relevant media coverage in each of the participant states provided additional insight and points of comparison to the responses provided in the interviews.

2. Media Content Analysis

To complement my interviews with representatives from the eight LGBT advocacy organizations, I performed a qualitative content analysis of the media coverage regarding those organizations and the issues for which those organizations advocate. I targeted newspapers specific to each state for the analysis to determine if, how, and to what extent media convey issues specific to the LGBT community. Participant comments during the interviews revealed the communication values and messaging tactics that guide their media and community outreach. Analyzing the news content of the local media sources with which these organizations work therefore provided an effective marker regarding how LGBT advocacy is perceived, and how the LGBT communities are portrayed.

I focused the analysis around newspaper media content published in calendar years 2008-2009. I chose newspapers rather than a different form of media because of availability and ability to make a direct comparison between participant comments regarding newspaper coverage and actual content. Two calendar years allowed enough time to investigate broad, long-term campaigns, as well as shorter, issue-based campaigns. Moreover, this approach provided a direct and consistent comparison to the findings from the in-depth interviews, during which I asked participants to discuss the major initiatives and campaigns waged during 2008 and 2009. I made one exception for the state of Iowa. In January 2010, One Iowa launched a major statewide media campaign in support of marriage equality. I therefore included January 2010 in my search for media coverage specific to that state.

Interview data confirmed the appropriate newspaper sources to explore. As the findings will demonstrate, participants emphasized the importance of reaching out both to large and small media outlets across the state. Although each participant identified the major media markets, they highlighted the value of editorial meetings with papers throughout the state, regardless of the paper's reach. I therefore was interested in conducting a general review of media coverage in each state, regardless of source. In my findings, I outline in detail the sources from which I pulled relevant examples. Ultimately, the sources I incorporated into the findings serve the larger markets in each state, but the examples reflect overall content across all sources. I also originally planned to investigate coverage in national publications such as the *New York Times, Washington Post*, and *Chicago Tribune*. Based on interview data, however, although my participants respond to media requests regardless of media type, state-based advocacy in general is not concerned with national coverage. I therefore limited my media analysis to state-specific publications.

I searched for print articles using the LexisNexis Academic database. Using the database's "news source" option, I specified the state in which to search for news coverage. The state-specific news sources included a variety of media, including small and large print outlets, niche publications, and wire services. Because participants emphasized the importance of consistent media outreach regardless of publication size, and because of the qualitative lens's focus on depth rather than breadth, I was less concerned with achieving a representative sample of media and more concerned with mining the data based on participant guidance. That said, one marked absence from the pulled sources was the *Des Moines Register,* which is the largest paper in Iowa, but unavailable on Lexis Nexis or any available, searchable database. Through a phone conversation I had with the subscriptions department at the *Register*, the full content of articles is only available for 30 days after a story has run – though archived access would be available for a full, annual subscription. Given my participants' emphasis on a pervasive focus on all media outlets throughout the state, and because findings were consistent in the balance of Iowa news sources, I determined that having access to the Register was not necessary for analysis purposes.

For each of the seven states, I performed three different searches within Lexis Nexis, which resulted in 21 sets of articles. I first performed a search for content that explicitly referred to the state-based gay rights organizations. For example, in North Carolina News Sources, I performed a search for all 2008 and 2009 coverage that specifically referred to

"Equality North Carolina." Because the names of the organizations contain general terms that apply to a variety of contexts—such as Equality, One, North Carolina, Iowa, etc.—I eliminated articles that did not refer to the organization.

I then performed a second search using search terms based on what participants indicated were the primary issues for each organization in 2008 and 2009: hate crimes, non-discrimination, safe schools, and various forms of relationship recognition. Based on participant comments I applied issue-specific searches for each state. Table 1 outlines the state, the key issues for which they advocated in 2008 and/or 2009, and the topic search used. Below, I outline the search terms used for each specific topic.

Table 1: Key issue addressed by each participant organization in 2008-2009

State	Key Issue	Search
Massachusetts	Marriage (5 year anniversary of marriage equality - 2009)	Topic 1
North Carolina	Safe Schools (anti-bullying) and Sex Education laws	Topic 2
Georgia	Non-discrimination policies (community-focused)	Topic 3
Ohio	Non-discrimination policies (statewide focus)	Topic 3
Iowa	Marriage – defending 2009 decision for marriage equality	Topic 1
Texas	Non-discrimination, Safe Schools	Topic 3a
Washington	2009 campaign defending statewide Domestic Partnership Law	Topic 1

For topic 1—Iowa, Massachusetts, and Washington—I searched news sources for content that included the terms "gay marriage," or "same-sex marriage," or "same sex marriage," or "marriage equality," or "domestic partners." For Topic 2—North Carolina—I searched news sources for content that included references to "safe schools," or "bullying," or "anti-bullying," or "anti bullying," or "sex education." For Topic 3—Georgia and Ohio—I searched news sources for content that included references to "non-discrimination," or "non discrimination," or "anti-discrimination." For Texas—Topic 3a—I searched for "safe schools," or "bullying," or "anti-bullying," or "anti bullying," or "non-discrimination," or "non discrimination," or "anti-discrimination." Because there was minimal coverage in Texas regarding safe schools and anti-bullying, however, the bulk of that analysis focused on the non-discrimination topic.

Once I searched for the organization-specific and topic-specific content, my final Lexis-Nexis search sought general, non-issue-specific coverage of the LGBT community. In each state, I searched for any article that referenced to "Gay," or "Lesbian," or "Homosexual," or "Bi-sexual," or "Bi sexual," or "sexual orientation," or "sexual preference," or "gender identity," or "gender expression," or "transgender," or "transsexual," or "LGBT," or "GLBT." The goal was to examine the differences between the topical searches and the general searches. The topical searches allowed me to compare the specific LGBT issues as discussed by participants with media coverage specific to those issues. The general search allowed me to determine which LGBT topics media feel are important for public consumption, beyond the specific issues indicated by participants. In other words, I wanted to determine which issues specific to the LGBT community the media were covering, regardless of the issues my participants emphasized. In most cases, the articles pulled in the topical searches were subsets of the general search, but it was important to establish a benchmark regarding the issues for which these organizations advocate and the issues the media privilege.

Table 2 provides the breakdown, by state, regarding the total number of articles pulled for each of the three searches. Many more articles were retrieved than were appropriate for this qualitative analysis. In many of these cases, I relied on Lexis Nexis's categorizing to help filter the content. For example, if more than 300 articles were retrieved, I used the "Gay and Lesbian" category provided by Lexis Nexis to narrow my selection. This categorization helped, not only because it specified the most-topically relevant articles, but also because it eliminated miscellaneous content such as sports articles, wedding announcements, and obituaries, which discussed someone with the first or last name of Gay. If the first search retrieved fewer than 300 articles, I narrowed my sample directly rather than relying on the Gay and Lesbian categorization. In the general searches for Massachusetts and Texas, Lexis Nexis retrieved more than 3,000 articles. I therefore eliminated the term "gay" from the search to retrieve a more-searchable sample. Doing so retained most terms used to identify the LGBT community and retrieved a searchable set of articles from which to pull my sample.

Table 2: Breakdown of articles pulled from Lexis Nexis

State	A – Org. Specific			B – Specific Topic			C – General		
	Total	In G/L[1]	Pulled	Total	In G/L	Pulled	Total[2]	In G/L	Pulled
NC	9	-	9	185	-	57	1097	165	85
MA	6	-	6	746	241	78	1445*	458	89
WA	10	-	10	179	-	54	1127	279	95
GA	22	-	22	6	-	5	2437	240	65
TX	15	-	15	264	-	13	1378*	529	123
OH	29	-	29	782	71	43	1999	301	125
IA	7	-	7	124	-	57	390	102	64
Total	98		98	2286		307	9873		**646**

[1]The total number of articles categorized by Lexis Nexis as "Gay and Lesbian."

[2] Total = total number of articles retrieved from Lexis Nexis (the * indicates the two instances in which I eliminated the search term "gay" in order to retrieve fewer than 3,000 articles).

In identifying the most-appropriate articles for analysis, I included opinion and editorials, because participant comments indicated that letters to the editor can play an important part in their advocacy as well as the opposition's strategy. I included an article only if the majority of the content focused on the LGBT issue, rather than a passing mention in the context of a larger, unrelated article. For example, many articles outlined state legislative agendas and pending legislative votes. In these cases, the reference to the LGBT community was a single line item simply stating that an LGBT-specific bill was to be addressed. Similarly, I eliminated articles that mentioned, in passing, a legislator's stance on

LGBT issues, unless a significant portion of the article was dedicated to that stance. I eliminated duplicates, and if more than one publication covered a certain issue on the same day, I pulled the one or two examples for that given day that best reflected that issue. Finally, I pulled wire stories only if a story on a certain day was not covered by a state-specific publication. My findings will demonstrate that all wire service examples were pulled from the Associated Press State and Local Wire.

As Table 2 indicates, few articles specifically referred to the respective LGBT advocacy organizations and therefore did not require I pull a smaller sample. My goal for the topical and general searches, however, was to identify between 50 and 100 articles for each state that demonstrated the key themes. The organization-specific and topic-specific searches provided subsets of the articles pulled in the general search. As Table 2 shows, in all I pulled 646 articles for analysis. I did not include the articles retrieved for the Equality Federation. Participant comments indicated that the Federation does not play a public role in LGBT advocacy beyond serving as a support network and advocate for the state-based organizations.

I began my analysis using Corbin and Strauss's (2008) guidance to code the data at the paragraph level of each news story. This approach provided a good survey of what newspapers discussed in terms of LGBT issues and how they discussed LGBT issues and community. Interview findings then directed my analysis. I compared my findings from open coding to the themes identified from my analysis of interview data. Consistent codes and consistent comparisons to participant comments had emerged by the time I had analyzed content from North Carolina, Georgia, Iowa, and Ohio, which totaled 339 articles. I then used those findings to ensure saturation in content from Washington, Massachusetts, and then Texas.

I also coded for the types of individuals sourced by the media and the ways in which comments were juxtaposed. In other words, the statements themselves were not enough. It was important to analyze for contextual elements such as the sources used, physical placement of statements, and length of article. As Tuchman (1978) argued, media are a legitimizing force. As the principles of agenda building emphasize, it is imperative that my participant organizations establish ties with the media to legitimize their voices and missions, and become perceived by the media as expert sources.

Findings from the media analysis provided insight regarding which organizations are most successful in having their message conveyed to the public via the mainstream media. The findings also indicated important trends in terms of which issues, organizations, and voices media deem important when covering the LGBT community. The content and patterns of media coverage indicate what enters the public agenda and the legitimate sources who influence that agenda. This portion of the research therefore responds to the calls of public relations scholars (e.g., Zoch & Molleda, 2006) to investigate the intersection of organizational messaging and media reflections of that messaging. Social movement organizations must understand who the media consider an expert source, what that means in terms of how media frame a gay rights issue, and how that influences the public agenda.

In summary, the findings from the in-depth interviews and media content analysis respond to the overarching questions driving this dissertation. Each participant organization operates in a unique context, but my findings demonstrate that consistent communication strategies and media dynamics pervade their advocacy. In concert, these findings provide an informative guide regarding “best practices” for other state-based gay rights organizations. Moreover, the findings reveal ways to understand the identity of *a* national gay rights movement through the lens of the state-based organizations that comprise it.

In the next section, I acknowledge on my own subjectivities and biases. As I conducted my analysis, it was important to be aware of who I am as a researcher, and how my personal experience influenced my approach and interpretations.

My lens

The research goals of this dissertation reflect my perspective as a qualitative researcher who is driven by a post-positivist worldview that refutes assumptions of objectivity. Personal experience and bias influence all phases of research. Bias and experience influence the types of research questions asked, the way they are asked, the rationale for asking them, the methods by which the answers are obtained, and the analysis of those answers.

As a gay man, I acknowledge that I have a firmly established worldview regarding the lack of protections afforded LGBT citizens, the role of LGBT advocacy in securing those protections, and the ways media influence the corresponding discourse. I have lived many of the experiences that undergird the rationale of the Equality Agenda – the agenda at the foundation of state-based LGBT advocacy that I will detail in the next chapter. My childhood classmates sometimes called me a sissy; a moniker accompanied, at times, with an effectively placed kick, push, or punch. I have worked most of my life in states where I could be fired because of my sexuality. Once, as a member of a corporate-sponsored LGBT diversity awareness committee, I was told by corporate leaders that sponsorship was contingent on the committee not using the words, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender at events, because the terms made employees feel uncomfortable. In my personal life, my partner and I continually listen to opinion-leaders debate—via mainstream media—if our love is valid, while we watch friends and family—most of whom have been together for fewer years than us—get married, divorced, and remarried. My partner and I are constantly reminded that regardless of our love and commitment, in the eyes of our government we are strangers. Something as simple as being able to check "unmarried partner" for the first time on the 2010 U.S. Census was cause for celebration and tears in our household.

I share this experience not to express anger or sadness. My struggles are nothing compared to prior generations, yet they have shaped who I am as an individual and as a scholar. To be a member of the LGBT community is one of my proudest roles. I share my experience to demonstrate that the aims of the Equality Agenda, which I will outline in the ensuing pages, are real and important. While some scholars may argue that my intimacy with the subject blurs my objectivity and limits my research, I argue that it makes my research more powerful. I know the questions to ask, and I understand that the ways in which issues have been researched in the past limits our understanding of them. As I began developing my research design, for example, I received comments from a reviewer for an article about marriage equality that I submitted for presentation at an academic conference. The reviewer advised that I cease using the term "marriage equality" and begin using the more objective terms of "gay marriage" and "same sex marriage." Otherwise, I would be perceived as an activist, not a scholar. The irony of the reviewer's comments, however, is that the terms "gay marriage" and "same-sex marriage," are—to an extent—products of conservative activism. As the literature demonstrated, individuals and groups opposed to LGBT issues have been successful in framing the conversation. In terms of marriage, they successfully have reinforced an idea that there is marriage, and there is "gay marriage" – something different, something distinct, the "Other." Each time an individual makes that distinction, she or he supports the misconception that the LGBT citizen seeks something special, something different. Had I followed the reviewer's advice, I would buy into a very specific form of activist rhetoric.

Certainly, members of the LGBT community and even LGBT advocates often use the terms "gay marriage" or "same-sex marriage" in the public debate. I admit that the fundamental issues associated with the marriage debate are perhaps more important than the nuanced language used to drive the discussion. But I present this example because I fear that research of the gay movement done from an outside, "objective" perspective can be influenced unconsciously by the rhetoric of a very specific worldview that to an extent has framed cultural discourse. As a result, what is received as objective essentially reinforces cultural stereotypes, and as Chauncey (2004) argued, perpetuates the movement as one that is advocating for special rights, not equality.

That said, I earnestly believe that social movement research requires inquiries by outside observers as well as by researchers who are intimately involved with the process of advocacy. Without the possibility of pure objectivity, it is important to consider research conducted through a variety of lenses. My hope is that my personal experience and involvement in LGBT advocacy complements existing research. As Habermas (1993) argued, the ideal speech situation requires all voices and perspectives at the table. I argue that research should be guided by the same principles.

My lens is embedded in the next chapter, which details my findings from in-depth interviews and media content analysis. Out of respect for my participants and the movement for LGBT equality, I will employ the language and terminology participants emphasized during the interviews as I examine the communication dynamics and processes that influence LGBT advocacy. Together, the findings demonstrate what my participants collectively refer to as the Equality Agenda.

Chapter IV: The Equality Agenda

In a 1998 letter to his supporters, James Dobson—founder of the conservative religious organization Focus on the Family—referred to the modern gay movement as "the homosexual agenda," "the radical social agenda advanced by gay activists," and "the radical gay and lesbian agenda" (Dobson, 1998). The phrasing is common among conservative groups. In fact, mainstream media sometimes place quotes around phrases that refer to the movement as an "agenda" to indicate the conservative perspective (Bearak, 2010). The two central questions of my interviews, however, asked participants to outline their organization's agenda: what LGBT issues does your organization actively address, and how do you design a communication strategy that effectively advocates on behalf of those issues. The issues that drive the day-to-day operation of state-based LGBT organizations determine the specifics of an organization's communication strategies; together they reflect an organization's agenda.

As I began my interviews, I hesitated to explicitly ask my participants to outline their agendas, often stumbling over different ways to introduce the question. But Equality Federation Executive Director Toni Broaddus assuaged my concerns, explaining, "Oh, no, we *have* something called the equality agenda. We don't shy away from that word; we *do* have an agenda. And we do not drive the agenda; the agenda comes from the states." In my interview with Georgia Equality's Jeff Graham, he echoed, "We *do* actually have a five-year agenda." Their clarification is important. As the contested use of "agenda" demonstrates, the thoughtful use of language is central to understanding the philosophy of a social movement.

The words chosen to communicate on behalf of certain issues and the spokespersons chosen to deliver that message reflect how movement organizations define the movement itself. For example, I began this research by using the vernacular typically associated with the gay movement. In conversations, I always have referred to the modern American gay movement in terms of "gay rights" and "fighting for rights" and the "battle for gay rights." As the names of the participant organizations suggest, however, and as participants repeatedly emphasized, their agendas are driven very explicitly by campaigns for "equality." Participants emphasized that they are "advocating for equality" on behalf of the LGBT community – a broader, more-inclusive proposition than "fighting for gay rights." They understand that language is important; language is contested. And they believe the success of a movement depends on staking a claim and conveying a certain type of language. This chapter addresses these distinctions and examines: (1) how these state-based organizations define a specifically 21st century *equality* movement that advocates on behalf of the LGBT community, (2) the internal and external dynamics that present challenges to state-based advocacy, and (3) the ways in which media reflect state-based advocacy (if at all).

Part I: Defining the Equality Agenda

In Part1 of this chapter, I first will introduce my participants, their backgrounds, and the state and national organizations for which they work. I then will examine the issues that comprise the agendas in each state and the limited resources available to advocate on behalf of those issues. This background provides important context for understanding the important types of messages and messengers who reside at the heart of the movement and the philosophy behind what they refer to as the "Equality Agenda."

Background

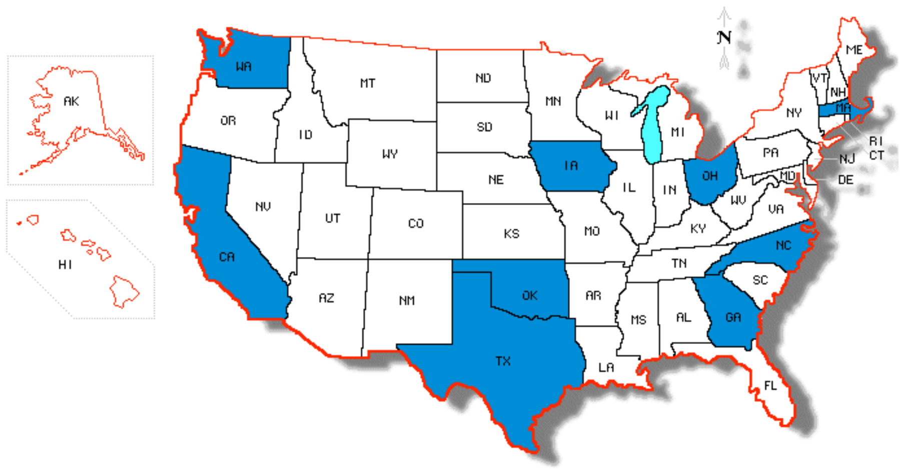
1. The Participants

I interviewed eight individuals who serve in leadership positions at the largest LGBT advocacy organizations in seven states: Equality North Carolina, Equality Ohio, MassEquality (Massachusetts), Georgia Equality, Equality Texas, One Iowa, and Equal Rights Washington (See Table 1). In addition, I interviewed Toni Broaddus, the executive director of the Equality Federation, the national federation of state-based LGBT advocacy organizations, which represents more than 50 member organizations across more than 40 states. Before her current role at the Federation, however, Broaddus established an LGBT advocacy voice in Oklahoma and was at the forefront of the campaign for marriage equality in California. I therefore consider her work in those two states as important experience that informs her perspective regarding the role of the state organization. Together, these leaders contributed the perspectives of nine states spanning each region of the country (Figure 1), from New England, to the Deep South, Midwest, and West Coast.

Table 3: Participants and Organizations Represented

Organization Name	State Represented	Participant Name	Title
Equality North Carolina	North Carolina	Ian Palmquist	Executive Director
Equality Ohio	Ohio	Kim Welter	Director of Programs and Outreach
Georgia Equality	Georgia	Jeff Graham	Executive Director
Equality Texas	Texas	Chuck Smith	Acting Executive Director
One Iowa	Iowa	Justin Uebelhor	Communication Director
MassEquality	Massachusetts	Scott Gortikov	Executive Director
Equal Rights Washington	Washington (state)	Doug Hamilton	Project Development Manager
Equal Rights Washington	Washington (state)	Kara Gallemore	Communications Manager
Equality Federation	All	Toni Broaddus	Executive Director

Figure 1: States represented



Each of these leaders agreed to use their actual names. Their professional resumes speak to the wealth of experience that drives their advocacy work. Georgia Equality Executive Director Jeff Graham, for example, began his career working on behalf of HIV awareness during the mid 1980s in grassroots and street activism roles for organizations such as Act Up and Queer Nation. He then moved into more-formal roles, first serving as the media coordinator for five years for Act Up Atlanta and then executive director of Georgia's AIDS Survival Project. Justin Uebelhor, communications director for One Iowa, began in political communication working for Senator Russ Feingold. More recently, he worked on New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson's presidential campaign as well as a U.S. congressional campaign. MassEquality's executive director Scott Gortikov most recently served for five years as MassEquality's development director, which includes 2004, the year in which marriage equality in that Massachusetts first was achieved, and the subsequent campaigns to defend that decision. Ian Palmquist joined Equality North Carolina in 1999, directly out of his undergraduate work at UNC Chapel Hill. In addition to serving as the organization's executive director, he sits on the board of the national Equality Federation, as well as the boards of the NC AIDS Action Network and NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina.[13]

Participants bring with them specific skills and insight that are instrumental to LGBT advocacy. For example, Doug Hamilton brings into his role as project development manager for Equal Rights Washington eight years of small press experience, including the foreign language press in Seattle and production manager for the Seattle-based *European Weekly*. Chuck Smith moved from investment advising to the Catholic Seminary and ultimately to his leadership position as acting Executive Director of Equality Texas. Kim Welter came to her position at Equality Ohio from Equality Toledo, a one-person LGBT advocacy organization for which she served as executive director. Before that position, she taught at the high school and university levels. Kara Gallemore came to Equal Rights Washington from restaurant management and began as an intern before becoming the organization's communication manager. Finally, Equality Federation Executive Director Toni Broaddus co-founded the Oklahoma Gay and Lesbian Caucus in 1987. Later, she majored in women's studies at the University of Massachusetts at Boston where she became interested in employment non-discrimination, which then led her to a law degree from Stanford. Upon graduation, she helped launch the campaign for marriage equality in California in 2000 and co-founded Californians for Civil Marriage in 2002 at a time when no other organization saw the issue on the radar. She was instrumental in the formation of Equality California as well as the national Equality Federation.

It is important understand the diverse experience these leaders bring to their roles. Their backgrounds include training in communication, law, media, politics, HIV advocacy, and LGBT advocacy. Collectively, their experience represents three decades of mobilization

[13] Originally, NARAL stood for National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws. This is now the name of the organization, and not used as an acronym.

and change in the LGBT community. They reflect a movement in the 1980s that was beginning to formalize, but still relied to an extent on street activism in the 1969 Stonewall sense. These participants represent the professional, organized movement of today, and their comments indicate very much a specifically state-focused 21st century perspective.

2. The Issues

Participants said that they leverage their experience to advocate on behalf of four core policy areas: non-discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition. Of these issues, participants explained that inclusive non-discrimination policies provide the key first level of protection. Equality North Carolina's Palmquist argued, for example, "It's critical. That builds momentum for the other things." Jeff Graham echoed that Georgia's Campaign for a Fair Majority prioritizes "non-discrimination ordinances that include both sexual orientation and gender identity, that covers municipal employees in ten municipalities throughout the state of Georgia." Kim Welter explained that, in terms of Equality Ohio's priorities:

> Basically it's housing and employment, so non-discrimination in housing and employment. I don't know if you're aware… It's still legal here to fire somebody or kick them out of their home or deny them public accommodations based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Our main priority is trying to establish that non-discrimination law.

The situation Welter described is the same for North Carolina, Texas, Georgia, and 26 additional states. Participants emphasized that these protections are crucial at the local and state level regardless of national regulations, such as the current version of the federal Employment Non Discrimination Act (ENDA). Important parts of the federal bill, for example, limit the extent of protections against discrimination. As North Carolina's Palmquist explained, Federal ENDA, "only covers employers over a certain size. It may or may not cover state and local government workers. We're not sure yet. And it doesn't cover public housing or credit or public accommodations." As a result, these participants are fighting for individual non-discrimination provisions at the local and state level in order to accommodate specific state contexts.

The same is true for hate crimes. These leaders explained that they continue to emphasize the importance of passing statewide hate crimes laws despite the October 2009 passage of the federal Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act. Provisions at the local and state levels provide an important, first level of protection for LGBT citizens. For example, there is no statewide hate crimes legislation protecting the LGBT communities in North Carolina, Ohio, or Georgia. Texas, Massachusetts, Washington, and Iowa do have hate crimes legislation that cover sexual orientation but not gender identity.[14] Equality Texas's Chuck Smith provided the story of that state's hate crimes legislation, the James Bird Jr. Hate Crimes Act. Smith explained:

> The history of the fact is that it took over a decade and the man being dragged to his death behind a pickup truck for us to end up with a hate crimes law at all. And it was with the help of James Bird's surviving family that the word sexual preference even remained in the bill. There were discussions that 'we can pass this bill if you take the gays out'… and Mr. Bird's family that said, 'You know, you need to include everybody in here.'

Although Smith believes the term "preference" is not ideal, it remains the only statewide protection legally afforded the LGBT community in Texas. For Smith, however, the important lesson for something as important as hate crimes protection is that the worth of a bill is in its enforcement, not just the fact that it was passed. He explained, "The larger problem or larger issue with the bill is that since it was passed in 2001, there have been over 1,800 hate crimes reported to the department of public safety in Texas and there have been

[14] "Inclusive legislation" typically refers to legislation that provides protection for both sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Sexual orientation refers to an individual's emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to another, and the personal and social identity derived from that attraction (APA.org, 2010). The gender for which an individual identifies is defined as their gender identity. Often this is in reference to transgender individuals (APA.org, 2010).

less than a dozen prosecutions." As a result, he said, one of Equality Texas' priorities regarding hate crimes is identifying ways to improve enforcement in local communities, including education efforts aimed at local officers and legislators.

The third policy priority identified by these participants seeks safe schools through anti-bullying laws. On this front, state-based organizations have experienced increasing success. Iowa, North Carolina, and Washington each have safe-schools laws that include sexual orientation and gender identity. Massachusetts has a safe schools law that extends only to sexual orientation. Although Ohio, Texas, and Georgia do not currently have inclusive safe schools protection, in 2010 Georgia Equality will be lobbying for a measure in the state legislature. Equality Texas hopes an inclusive safe schools bill will pass in the next legislative session, in 2011. Participants stressed that their organizations want to ensure that any safe schools law is effective and enforced. Ohio's Kim Welter explained:

> We do not have a safe schools bill that enumerates. We have a really weak safe schools bill, which all of the studies have shown is not horribly effective. And so we're working on trying to improve that. The organization that was really behind that didn't really care that it work, they just wanted it done…. they didn't really care a whole lot about strength or the actual how well it was actually going to work, unfortunately.

Marriage equality is just one component of the final policy priority area of relationship recognition identified by these participants. Marriage equality currently is not a possibility for Texas, Georgia, Ohio, and North Carolina. Texas, Georgia, and Ohio each have constitutional bans on marriage equality. North Carolina does not have an explicit ban, but because obtaining an inclusive marriage law is not currently a possibility in the state, Equality North Carolina's Palmquist explained that the goal for now is to keep the issue off the table. That said, all participants argued that regardless of the possibility for full marriage equality, securing various forms of relationship recognition is a key priority. Georgia

Equality, for example, is pursuing domestic partnership benefits in local communities throughout the state while identifying ways to strip references to "spouse" in state policy and law. And although Ohio's constitutional amendment is one of the country's most-strongly worded—outlawing any institution that comes close to resembling marriage—Equality Ohio sees a possibility of establishing a statewide domestic partnership registry. As Equality Ohio's Kim Welter explained, "Not the kind like you have at a lot of different states, but the kind that would at least allow people to have some documents they can give their employer to prove they're in a relationship for insurance purposes."

Iowa, Massachusetts, and Washington, though, do benefit from statewide relationship protection for same sex couples. Iowa and Massachusetts have full marriage equality, and Washington recently passed a statewide domestic partnership law, or as the nickname suggests, an "Everything but Marriage" law. Participants emphasized, however, that a key priority is to defend these protections, because—as demonstrated by California's experience—opposition forces will attempt to overturn or repeal these measures. In January 2010, for example, One Iowa launched a major campaign supporting marriage equality as a preemptive measure against legislative attempts to reverse the 2009 decision, attempts which to date have been blocked by Iowa's legislature. Fewer attempts are being made in Massachusetts to reverse that state's 2004 decision, and as marriage equality has become more secure, MassEquality has begun evaluating how to support campaigns in other New England states, including a campaign for marriage equality in Rhode Island by 2011. MassEquality's executive director Scott Gortikov explained that his organization can help provide an effective ground game for other states that otherwise would not have the capacity to be in local communities. Similarly, Equal Rights Washington wants to grow its already-established ground game in anticipation of the need, in 2012, either to protect their

Domestic Partnership Law or to move toward full marriage equality. My participants from MassEquality, Equal Rights Washington, and One Iowa emphasized that they do advocate for other important LGBT issues. Prioritizing defense of marriage and domestic partnership protection, however, requires a great deal of organizational resources. Knowing what they will face in terms of the opposition, participants argued that their organizations must commit the bulk of their already-limited resources specifically to those campaigns.

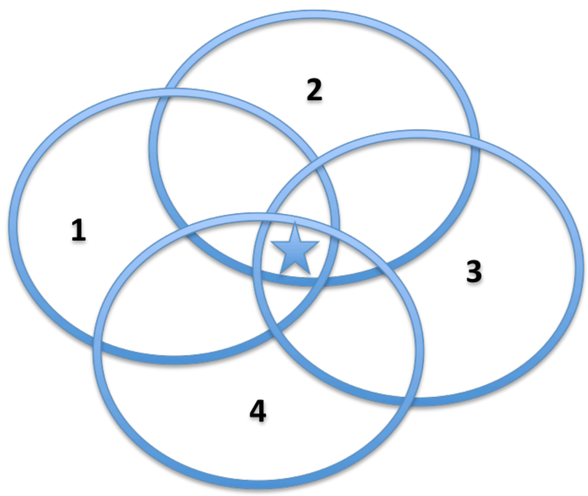
Each participant organization advocates for state-specific needs. For example, because Massachusetts has legally recognized LGBT families since 2004, MassEquality has prioritized the need for education efforts around the 2010 census, which for the first time asks the LGBT community about their families (see Figure 2). In Texas, there is a push for a centralized depository of medical directives for hospitals. Equality Texas's Chuck Smith explained that individual hospitals in local communities currently make decisions on a case-by-case basis whether or not to honor medical directives. Smith has found that in Texas, a state with large conservative pockets, these local gatekeepers often do not honor the medical directives of same-sex couples. He also highlighted the need for the state's two university systems—the University of Texas system and Texas A&M system—to challenge Texas's lack of protections for domestic partners of state employees. Smith explained that state law mandates the two systems to be nationally competitive. University administrators and faculty, however, continue to report the loss of existing faculty and a competitive disadvantage in pursuing faculty nationally, because the schools are not able to provide domestic partner benefits to employees.

Figure 2: Logo for MassEquality's campaign for the 2010 census

These state-specific contexts, in addition to the four core issue areas of non-discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition, demonstrate the breadth of policies for which my participants argued their organizations must advocate. Participants argued that often, the national public debate often centers on marriage equality, but their organizations must stay focused on pursuing fundamental protections in the form of employment and housing discrimination, hate crimes, and bullying. That said, they also believe their organizations must advocate for these issues and represent a diverse constituency with limited resources.

Model 1 depicts the balancing act my participants must perform in terms of addressing the key needs of their LGBT constituents. Arguably, given the states' unique operational contexts, each organization prioritizes different issues at different times. For example, in Iowa and Washington, advocacy around relationship recognition currently occupies a majority of organizational resources and reflects the focus of public discourse. In Ohio, the focus is on non-discrimination. And in North Carolina, recent focus has been on safe schools. Regardless, issues regarding non-discrimination, safe schools, hate crimes, and relationship recognition comprise each state organization's agenda. Model 1 therefore conceptualizes the intersection of the four issue areas. How these issues intersect reflects a nexus of change for each organization's advocacy efforts. That said, the ability to address each issue area depends on an organization's capacity, which I address in the next section.

Model 1: Balancing the issues for LGBT constituents



1 = Non-Discrimination
2 = Hate Crimes
3 = Safe Schools (anti-Bullying)
4 = Relationship Recognition
= the nexus of change

3. "Simply not enough resources" – Organizational Capacity

Although each of these organizations represents the LGBT voice for entire states it is important to remember as I walk through the findings that these organizations have been successful with small staffs and budgets. For example, participant organizations ranged in size from two staff (Georgia Equality) to eight staff (MassEquality). Accordingly, annual budgets range from approximately $400,000 (Equality North Carolina) to $1.4 million (MassEquality). Each organization is composed of two core legal components, a 501(c)(3) and a 501(c)(4). The C3 component is a foundation that performs outreach to local communities in an attempt to educate citizens regarding the issues facing the LGBT community. Contributions to the C3 foundations are tax deductible. The C4 component is the legislative advocacy organization through which lobbying efforts occur. By law, the organizations are non-partisan and the contributions are *not* tax deductible. Several organizations also have a Political Action Committee (PAC), but the important divisions are the C3 education organization and the C4 legislative advocacy organization.

To do the work, these participants argued their organizations need larger staffs. And to hire more staff, they need more money. As Broaddus explained:

> Well, the number-one challenge is having enough resources to do the work. I mean, just period. There are simply not enough resources to do the work…. We know what needs to be done. We know we have great leaders trying to get it done. But if you're an organization with two staff, how much can you actually accomplish?

For example, with six full-time staff and four interns, Texas Equality is one of the largest state organizations in the country. As Chuck Smith explained, however, in a state of 24 million residents, this staff number equates to reaching four million people per full-time staff member. Equality Ohio's Welter added, "You have to convince the regular people of Ohio that you're a viable organization, and in a state like Ohio where you have these five major media markets… to appear to be a statewide organization with three people on staff." The bottom-line, as Smith argued, is "we all need a shitload more money."

Participants acknowledged that because resources are limited, communication often is prioritized after legislative work and community organizing. Equality North Carolina's Ian Palmquist explained, "Overall I think communications is one of our weaker areas as a movement. Not that folks aren't doing well with the resources they have. But I think there could potentially be a lot more done generally to get our stories out there and also to have some more diverse viewpoints out there." He added, "Whenever we get out of this economic slump and have more money, that's the next position that we want to hire actually. I think it's a really critical need to do more in that area."

Toni Broaddus explained that of the more than 50 state-based organizations that belong to the Equality Federation, only a handful has dedicated communication staff. Most executive directors play a central role in the development and execution of their organization's communication strategy. In fact, not surprisingly, of the participant organizations represented in this study the only ones that currently have communications staff—or have spent significant resources on communications staff in the past—are those organizations that have waged major statewide campaigns for inclusive marriage or domestic partnership laws: Iowa, Massachusetts, and Washington. One Iowa and Equal Rights Washington, in the midst of defending recent victories, maintain communications staff with specific roles. MassEquality does not have an explicit communications role, but Scott Gortikov explained that in recent campaigns, the organization has contracted communication experts. Participants from the organizations involved in a push for statewide marriage or domestic partnership laws argued that the high profile and highly publicized issue of marriage raises the stakes to a degree that requires an all-in, resource intensive effort by these organizations. These efforts require a dedicated focus on communication. Following Iowa's court decision for marriage equality in 2009, for example, One Iowa invested in communication outreach in local communities throughout the state. That organization then kicked off a statewide campaign in 2010 to build public support in anticipation of legislative challenges to the decision. Along the way, as Justin Uebelhor, One Iowa's communications director, explained:

> I rarely talk to the communications directors in other states. I think it's important to have that communication structure. I know for some statewide groups it's not possible, because they do not have the resources available to them. And I know

> some executive directors who will handle communications and their duties as executive director and fundraising and the whole shebang.

Participants indicated that often, the resources available to them depend on the public profile of an issue; donations and volunteer support increase depending on the degree of visibility. In places like Ohio, North Carolina, Texas, and Georgia, campaigns for protections against employment and housing discrimination, hate crimes, and bullying do not receive the same exposure as do campaigns for marriage. As a result, their resources remain limited.

In addition, the Federation's Broaddus explained that although some progressive foundations do provide funding for LGBT initiatives, she believes many philanthropic foundations fail to understand how supporting LGBT issues can influence broader social issues. She explained:

> We only have a handful of foundations that really focus on building the infrastructure and creating the environment for success in the LGBT community and for the LGBT agenda. Progressive philanthropists and foundations are not funding LGBT work at the level they should.... Because you know, poverty, immigration, health care reform – all of these issues affect LGBT people.

Of those organizations that do prioritize LGBT issues, several participants highlighted the help of the Gill Foundation. Between 1992 and 2008, the Gill Foundation, which focuses on LGBT equality issues, provided close to $97 million in grants (GillFoundation.org). Gill provides national state-by-state overviews of LGBT protections in the four key areas outlined by my participants: relationship recognition, non-discrimination, hate-crimes, and safe schools.

Participants emphasized that it is important for constituents to understand the financial constraints facing these state-based organizations, especially given the overwhelming financial power wielded by the opposition. They indicated that the opposition's funding often comes from conservative groups with strong religious ties. Toni

Broaddus explained, “When you look at the unlimited resources of Focus on the Family or the Mormon Church or all of these religious fundamentalists that are fighting us, it is truly a David and Goliath battle, to use some religious language.” Broaddus also believes that the ability of the opposition to coordinate strategies with churches and raise money based largely on the religious argument should not indicate that the entire religious community stands against the gay movement. Many faiths, religious leaders, and communities support and advocate for LGBT equality. The issue for state LGBT groups, she believes, is being able to identify and harness those resources.

Participants repeatedly indicated that the question is not what needs to be done or even what works in terms of communication values, messages, tactics, and tools. These leaders believe they know what it takes. As Toni Broaddus summarized, however, because of strained resources these organizations often lack the ability to run a “comprehensive, communication strategy…. Car companies do it. Food companies do it. Beer companies do it for God’s sake. It’s something as important as civil rights and we don’t have the capacity to do that.”

In summary, the Equality Agenda begins by identifying the key issues affecting the LGBT community. These organizations must develop and execute their advocacy around these issues, albeit with strained funding and limited organizational resources. To that end, a common set of communication values guides the development of each organization’s communication strategy. These values very purposefully position the movement as advocating for equality on behalf of the LGBT community rather than explicitly fighting for gay rights. The next section will demonstrate how participants’ communication strategies emphasize the importance of a movement based on equality, conveyed through messages and messengers that reflect inclusiveness and diversity, rational arguments, and authentic story telling. The section also will examine how these strategies inform how participants use communication values to address the opposition's message.

Communicating Mainstream Values

The goal of the Equality Agenda is to advocate for these issues in a way that connects the LGBT experience to the mainstream and reinforces why these issues reflect mainstream concerns. Participants indicated that they accomplish this in three ways. They begin with messages of equality, they use personal storytellers from local communities to share their experiences, and they strategically leverage the opposition's often-negative message when warranted. This section explores the communication values that comprise the foundation of the Equality Agenda.

1. "We have humanity in common" – Messages of Equality

Equipped with the four key priority areas, participants argued that the first step of advocacy is to develop a message platform that connects LGBT needs to community concerns in a way that legitimizes a given issue in the eyes of the mainstream. The key is to connect LGBT citizens, or more appropriately, LGBT experiences, with their friends and neighbors' everyday lives. As Equality Texas Deputy Director, Chuck Smith explained, "If there are issues that don't exclusively affect LGBT people but that LGBT people are affected by, then that communication has to be targeted so that it reaches the largest group of people that share the same values…. That's the first step." Smith argued that inclusive messages achieve key goals specific to the LGBT community while accommodating the mainstream need for messages of social acceptability. Kim Welter outlined Equality Ohio's communication values that guide that organization's message development. They read, in part, "Rather than talking about how we're separated from society we talk about we as a community in Ohio, all over Ohio. Our rights are your rights…. We have humanity in common."[15]

Participants explained that regardless of the issue, the fundamental message remains consistent. For example, in 2009, when the North Carolina legislature debated an inclusive safe schools (bullying) bill, the arguments that ultimately convinced the bill's passage revolved around messages that emphasized the goal was to protect all students, not just students who are perceived or known to represent a certain sexual orientation or identity. In terms of marriage, participants in Iowa, Massachusetts, and Washington explained that they believe it is important to advocate for marriage equality, not fight for gay marriage or same-sex marriage. During my interviews, I sensed participants hesitating or correcting themselves on several occasions in order to avoid the terms "gay marriage" or "same-sex marriage" and ensure they used appropriate language that emphasized marriage equality. Justin Uebelhor argued that preserving support for marriage equality in Iowa will require messages focused on fairness to all Iowa families, not special rights reserved for gay families. He explained, "If you make it a gay rights issue and an LGBT issue, then it's not going to have the same power that it has as if you make it an inclusive issue. If this is about equality and fairness for all, rather than equality and fairness for the gay and lesbian community, then it's a much more powerful argument." In fact, when participants discussed the issues that drive their agendas, they emphasized that in the past, the opposition effectively has positioned the movement as a campaign for special rights, and the LGBT community as the "other." And as the marriage example demonstrates, they believe their organizations must communicate inclusive, broad-based messages of diversity that convey the importance of equality for everyone within a community, rather than the specific needs of the LGBT citizens.

[15] She read this value statement from the official values statement of the organization.

Participants provided several examples of these communication values at work. Kim Welter incorporates a final language check before releasing all Equality Ohio communication to ensure that phrases such as "to fight for" are not included. She explained that it can be natural to use aggressive language such as "battle" or "fight" when discussing LGBT issues, but doing so jeopardizes the ability to present an inclusive, non-partisan message. As Equality Ohio's values read, "We can talk about victimhood and powerlessness, retaliation and reaction. Or, we choose to speak about love, fairness, community, integrity, humanity, truth, dignity, understanding." Texas Equality's Chuck Smith summarized that campaigning for something explicitly as a "gay rights" issue can be limiting. He explained, "We don't argue that there is a 'right' to be a parent or a 'right' to be an adoptive or foster parent. What we argue is that there should not be a barrier upfront that would preclude someone who might otherwise be qualified from acting in that capacity." More telling, Smith argued, "I consider myself as working for an equal rights organization that's focused on LGBT people. But since a third of my staff is straight, I don't consider this to be an LGBT organization."

The value of inclusive messaging does not mean, however, that these groups intend to negate the importance of diversity. Rather, participants indicated that the goal is to craft messages that communicate the crucial importance of *acknowledging* diversity, the breadth of diversity within the LGBT community, and how that diversity reflects society as a whole. For example, Jeff Graham of Georgia Equality told the story of a male student in Cobb County, Georgia, whose gender expression was female. Although the school allowed this expression, the student eventually called a press conference in reaction to what the student felt was an inadequate response by school administrators to harassment by his peers. While it was determined ultimately that the school had done a relatively good job handling the issue, the public story unfortunately featured the false presumption that Cobb County schools discriminated against transgender students. An opportunity to capitalize on a broader message of diversity was lost. Graham argued, "I think we could have ended up turning this into an even stronger message that there is great diversity within the schools here in Georgia. You could have brought in issues of immigration status. You could have brought in kind of the changing demographics."

The goal for these participants is to communicate that the challenges facing LGBT citizens—such as those in Cobb County, Georgia—reflect situations that could affect all citizens. As Doug Hamilton of Equal Rights Washington explained, it is about "making people aware that gays and lesbians are not these exotic creatures that only live in big cities. We're real people and have real lives." Participants representing four of the seven state organizations–Equality North Carolina, Georgia Equality, Equality Texas, and One Iowa—emphasized that they must pay particular attention to the messages they convey as well as the policy language they support because of potential regional and national impact: Texas, because of its size and national political relevance; North Carolina as the only state in the South not to have allowed a vote on a constitutional marriage amendment; Georgia, because of Atlanta's growing national reputation and the state's position in the deep south; and Iowa because of its position in the heartland. As Jeff Graham argued, what happens in Cobb County, Georgia, influences state education policies. Georgia's education policies, in turn, may serve as an example or model for other southern states. Similarly, Justin Uebelhor explained, in terms of marriage equality in Iowa:

> I think the one thing that gets overlooked is the symbolic message that is, how powerful the symbolic message of marriage equality can be, especially in a place like the heartland. You know, I grew up in a small town in Indiana, and I can't imagine what it would be like if I was a kid growing up in that small town struggling with my sexuality and my state all of a sudden recognizes that I can marry the person I love one day.

Participants argued that their communication values, as outlined above, provide the foundation for proactive messages that promote inclusiveness and diversity, and position these campaigns as representative of mainstream values and social acceptability. Moreover, their inclusive messaging reinforces the importance of "equality" for everyone and challenges notions that what the LGBT community seeks are special rights.

2. The Value of "Authentic Personal Stories"

Participants emphasized that the ideal way to communicate these positive messages of equality is through authentic personal stories told by LGBT supporters and allies. Scott Gortikov of MassEquality explained: "The personal story has always had a greater power. Whether it's convincing the legislator or convincing the public. Authentic personal stories from the heart – there's little else that's more compelling."

Participants explained that they develop specific messages and talking points for specific communication initiatives, but those points provide a central reference around which the personal, LGBT experience is communicated. For example, during its campaign for the domestic partnership law, Equal Rights Washington consistently repeated the inclusive phrase, "Protect all Washington Families." These messages, however, provided a platform from which broader messages develop. The key content, participants said, depends on the varied experiences of individuals who are willing to come forward and have a conversation with various publics. Equal Rights Washington was one of several organizations to produce commercials that profiled same-sex couples telling their stories. As Doug Hamilton explained, "these were real people in the community and they were making the case exactly really why and how it affected their families. So pretty much it was authentic, it was truthful." Hamilton added that using couples from local communities across Washington reinforced "our own little consistent point which basically was that our families are real, we are real people, and these are the protections that we need in order to live modern life."

Similarly, Kim Welter explained that Ohio's campaigns are more effective when they communicate a wide variety of messages that reinforce a common point rather than one single sound bite used repeatedly, and the state-specific context provides important teaching moments. For example, she travels to colleges and universities across Ohio, doing educational workshops and holding forums on LGBT issues. She emphasized that one of her key challenges is that external audiences do not realize that fundamental protections still do not exist for LGBT Ohioans. In her workshops, most participants raise their hand when she asks how many people think it is illegal to fire someone because of their sexual orientation; they are surprised to discover they are wrong. To educate participants on the importance of domestic partner benefits, she then tells them the story of a local woman who was allowed by the state teacher retirement system to name her same-sex partner as a beneficiary. Because the woman checked an incorrect box on the beneficiary form, however, the system would not allow a correction unless she had a legal change in relationship status: a marriage and divorce. In Ohio, though, marriage is restricted to a man and a woman. As a result, this woman was required to marry a male friend, mark him as beneficiary, wait six weeks, divorce him, and then correctly place her partner as the beneficiary. As Welter likes to tell her participants, "you know, talk about the sanctity of marriage." Consequently, she explained, "You can win over about 50% of that class just kind of through educational efforts."

Participants believe the personal angle often is more effective than the use of statistics, facts, or figures. They emphasized that reports—such as those from UCLA's Williams Institute—provide crucial information in terms of census data, the economic impact of marriage equality, and the growing visibility of LGBT individuals and families in the most rural areas across the country.[16] State-based LGBT advocacy organizations incorporate these data into their communication, but they do so in support of the personal message and only when the information is compelling. MassEquality's Scott Gortikov explained, in the early days of the movement, the strategy was to provide, "litanies of injustices and the numbers of laws/protections that are not extended to gay people." He argued, however, "It doesn't seem to convince anybody. It's not suddenly making a lawmaker say 'Oh! Well this is unjust.'" Equality North Carolina's Ian Palmquist added:

> Our movement and the progressives generally expect people to make rational decisions based on data, and that's not really how people operate…. We assume that about the general public but we've also assumed that about legislators, that they're going to be more rational than everybody else, and it's *so* not true…. You have to have some data, but what's actually going to convince somebody to vote when they're nervous politically is going to be a personal story.

As Equality Texas's Chuck Smith argued, "If we wanted to talk wonky all the time we could talk wonky all the time. But that's not really going to move anybody to care. So from a communication standpoint, we have to lead with a value statement that's based on emotion and that's based on the most-commonly held value that we think the majority of people embrace." Consequently, Gortikov said, the messages and communication strategy driving a state-based organization's outreach should be grounded in "the authenticity of real storytelling," which requires not overproducing or over-scripting what should be unique stories. Broaddus explained, "I think over the years what we've discovered is that people move when they know gay, lesbian, and transgender people, so coming out is still a message we put out there to our community – how important that is."

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[16] The Williams Institute, http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/home.html, is affiliated with the UCLA law school, and focuses on legal implications of laws specific to the LGBT community. The Institute reports census information, changing demographics related to the LGBT community, and the corresponding economic, legal, and political impact those data have at local, state, regional, and national levels.

Participants consistently emphasized that the individuals who tell these stories become an organization's spokespersons. In order to convey a movement for equality, the messenger is as important as the message. Toni Broaddus of the national Equality Federation prefaced her discussion of communication strategies by arguing, "I mean first of all, people telling their own stories are the best spokespeople." MassEquality's Gortikov echoed, "You know the one who delivers your messages is actually half the battle." For example, in terms of the marriage debate in Massachusetts, Gortikov explained, "We know that the Catholic hierarchy couldn't be less trusted in Massachusetts. But real people with real families might be." In fact, participants emphasized that the need to train and integrate into their communication strategies credible, authentic spokespersons—such as faith leaders, politicians, couples, straight allies, etc.—often is more important than maintaining a well-stocked stable of campaign messages. Equality North Carolina's Ian Palmquist explained that the successful passage of the inclusive safe schools (bullying) bill resulted in large part because of local students who were willing to speak on behalf of Equality North Carolina. He explained, "There wasn't really a message there exactly, but it was more about the messenger."

These organizations employ authentic storytelling for three key purposes: to establish personal contact for local communities and smaller media outlets across the state; to present an expert voice for an issue; and to provide tangible, legitimate proof points for legislators and community leaders. Chuck Smith of Equality Texas relayed a story from El Paso, Texas, where strong opponents of LGBT issues decried a recent ordinance that allows access to healthcare benefits for the domestic partners of city employees—same sex or otherwise. To help protect the inclusive policy, Smith wants to contact the 19 employees who, to date, have registered for the benefits and work with them to become local spokespersons who can explain the benefits in very real, localized terms. Toni Broaddus believes the goal is to have these voices connect with localized audiences, so the reaction becomes, "you know, they could live just down the street from me, or, oh, my God, there's a police officer that's gay or teachers or whomever." In more simple terms, she explained, "If we don't put all kinds of families out there, then we can't really directly confront the 'ick-factor' – that's what we call it, this 'ick-factor' – of people going 'ooh, homosexuals, can't deal with that.'"

These organizations also use localized storytelling to establish expert credibility that executive directors otherwise would be unable to achieve. Broaddus explained, "Those of us who are 'gay for pay' so to speak are not necessarily the best spokespeople because, you know, we're paid to do this work." When advocating for social issues, an organizational representative—though well versed in the issue details and well trained as a spokesperson—may lack credibility compared to individuals who can tell a story from actual experience. Jeff Graham of Georgia Equality explained, "If we're working with other organizations or just trying to amplify an issue, then generally what we look for are people who are personally affected and/or closely involved with the situation so that they really are providing a kind of expert lens." As opposed to facts, figures, and prepared statements, he believes the face of experience and the story of hardship establish credibility and expert status to a spokesperson. Again, the participants used the issue of marriage as an example. Toni Broaddus explained, "People aren't as trusting of experts on this issue as they are on many other political issues, because everybody thinks they're an expert on marriage." The expert voice of the LGBT community becomes those couples who can tell the story of their relationship and the impact of not having marriage. In Massachusetts, for example, Gortikov argued that MassEquality was able to establish credibility for marriage equality, in part by advertising the story of a hockey player, whose parents—two women—wanted to marry.

Finally, participants argued that providing spokespeople from local communities who can speak about the importance of equality presents unavoidable proof points for community and state leaders. Each participant explained that legislators often respond to LGBT issues with, "There are no gay people in my district." Toni Broaddus explained, that first, because of census statistics from reports such as those from the Williams Institute, "You can say, 'yes, you do. In your county, 3% of the people in your county are gay or lesbian, and 50% of those are raising children. This isn't an issue you can ignore, because it affects your constituents.'" Second, to reinforce those statistics, she argued that it is important to introduce those LGBT constituents to their legislators and have them tell their story of living in that individual's district. As Chuck Smith argued, in discussing the need for an effective safe schools bill in Texas:

> I don't think that it's going to get tackled as a policy issue until angry parents go to their state representative's office in their hometown and say, 'I've done everything I'm supposed to do, and my kid's still getting the shit beat out of him.' That raises the profile of the issue to a level where it can't be ignored anymore.

In addition to the personal experience of LGBT citizens, participants emphasized the importance of having straight allies—coalition partners, faith leaders, the local PTA, a teachers' union, NAACP, or organizations working with specific populations—serve as spokespersons. Doing so, they argued, allows these organizations to pair the appropriate role with different public needs, and reinforces the broader message of equality rather than specific rights for a specific group of citizens. For example, Equality North Carolina's Palmquist discussed that organization's work with the ARC of North Carolina—which provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities—on the state's school violence prevention bill. In the case of MassEquality, local business owners have served as key allies. Scott Gortikov explained that during the campaign to preserve marriage equality, many legislators replied, "look, I'm for you, but my constituents aren't." In response, MassEquality helped mobilize local business owners to explain to legislators the profound economic benefits of extending marriage to same-sex couples. Gortikov argued, "For Christ's sake, if we could show them that the signs of industry are for us, it sort of erodes that idea of theirs. The creative economy is a good thing for a society in a healthy business environment."

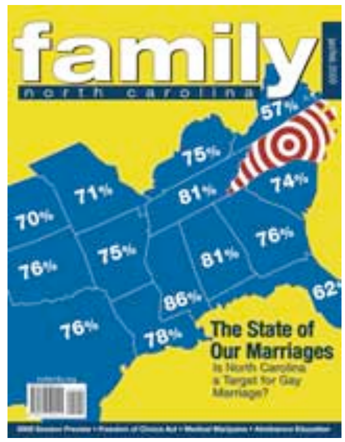
Together, the participant comments indicated that their strategy regarding legislative proof points is three fold: to provide compelling data regarding LGBT issues that are specific to local districts, introduce LGBT constituents who are affected by those issues, and introduce straight allies from the district who can speak to benefits that extend beyond the LGBT community. There are instances when an official, central organizational spokesperson is most effective. For example, media inquiries during Equal Rights Washington's campaign for the domestic partnership law were directed to that organization's political director. The organization had a structured process with a small, set stable of organizational representatives. Project development manager Hamilton and communication manager Gallemore argued that at the time, conveying specific policy points to certain audiences was crucial, but they acknowledged that ultimately what changed hearts and minds was the public outreach grounded in authentic storytelling. The sentiment among each participant was consistent. As the Ohio, Texas, North Carolina, and Massachusetts participants explained, at the end of the day legislators want to know in very specific ways, "But what about my district?" They argued that the answers demand personal connections and reinforce the need for messages that speak about the benefits to an entire district.

In addition to authentic storytelling, participants discussed how they must address the counterpoints made by their opposition. It is crucial for these participants to reinforce for their various publics the importance of an inclusive, positive agenda in the face of an often-negative opposition. The following section describes what emerged from the interviews regarding how LGBT advocates address anti-LGBT sentiment.

3. 'Reframing and deflecting' – Positioning the Opposition

Participants indicated that an agenda built around inclusive and diverse messages of equality must carefully navigate an often-negative opposition. To that end, participants consistently emphasized that they do not directly engage the opposition and only comment on oppositional, negative messaging when absolutely warranted. Even then, their goal is to redirect to a more- positive, inclusive message of equality. They emphasized that this approach is not to avoid confrontation, but rather to reinforce the inclusiveness of their own agenda. Doing so also reinforces these movement organizations' voice as that of the mainstream. For instance, as Equal Rights Washington prepares for the next round of challenges to its new domestic partnership law, Hamilton and Gallemore said their organization is strategically waiting to be able to highlight the messaging used by the opposition during the 2009 campaign to reverse the domestic partnership law. By 2012, they argued, if there is a new challenge to the law or a push for full marriage equality, the organization will be able to show voters that the warnings communicated by the opposition in 2009 never occurred – that Equal Rights Washington painted a more-realistic picture for the mainstream than did the opposition. Doug Hamilton explained that they want voters to see, "The sky did not fall. All of the lies… didn't happen. It kind of needs to sink in a little bit." Ian Palmquist related the example of a conservative group in North Carolina —the Family Policy Council—that published its February 2009 newsletter with a map of the Southeast, the percentages by which each state passed a constitutional ban on marriage equality, and a bull's eye on North Carolina as the only remaining southern state without such a ban (see Figure 3). Ian Palmquist explained, "They literally have a bull's eye on the state…. I mean we've definitely used that with our supporters. It's incredibly energizing for folks to see that we're being targeted by the right wing in that way. That's been good for fundraising and list building and engagement with the community."

Figure 3: Equality North Carolina uses Family Policy Council's negative messaging (ENC email, "Stam Challenge," February 2009)



These participants value opportunities to reposition negative, oppositional messages into positive, proactive messages. As Equality Ohio's communication values state, "instead of thinking we have to react to every tack, we respond when it is truly warranted and only when it is warranted. We absorb the opposing message by reframing and deflecting." Kim Welter shared the example of an Ohio-area congregation that advertised on its church sign, "I kissed a girl and I liked it. Then I went to hell." When the message became statewide news, Equality Ohio was approached by media for comment. Welter argued that it provided an opportunity to reposition the negative message as a teaching moment. She explained:

> What we wanted Ohioans to know is that there are over 300 welcoming and affirming churches in Ohio; this is not what you will find at every church in Ohio. We kind of went in a slightly different direction and said, 'You know, they can say what they want to say; that's their right.' But we turned it to a more proactive message.

In that same vein, she noted that one of that organization's key 2010 message platforms is the "Banniversary," which uses the fifth anniversary of Ohio's ban on marriage equality to celebrate the advancements on LGBT issues the organization has made since that time.

Positively grounded messages of equality also help provide an important point of comparison when juxtaposed in the media with opposition organizations' negative, divisive messaging. As Equality Ohio's Kim Welter argued, "I think they actually help us when they print the really whacko ones." In fact, several organizations emphasized that the comparison helps reinforce their messages of diversity and inclusivity as representative of mainstream ideals, and in turn representative of the LGBT community itself. Consequently, participants argued that this juxtaposition helps position the opposition as extreme. As Doug Hamilton of Equal Rights Washington argued, the resulting public discourse demonstrates how LGBT issues and the LGBT community "are becoming more mainstream." He explained, for example, that the broad coalition of LGBT supporters and straight allies who advocated for the domestic partnership law in Washington reinforced to the public, through events and media coverage, that supporting the LGBT community should be a mainstream concern. He argued, "It's almost like we've become mainstream and our opposition is going into the closet."

In summary, although the operational context differs between states, the communication values across each organization are consistent. Participants understand that the message communicated by their organizations and the way that message is communicated defines the movement itself. Defining a distinctly 21st century LGBT equality movement begins with a philosophy that promotes messages of inclusiveness and diversity. The crucial content conveyed by movement organizations is derived from authentic stories told from personal experience. They strategically couple facts and figures with these stories when most compelling, and their campaigns ultimately are reflected in the spokespersons drawn from their local communities. A key consideration for the participants along the way is how best to use the opposition's message to further the agenda.

"A constant and consistent drumbeat"- Delivering Messages to Stakeholders

Participants explained messages that highlight inclusiveness and diversity, and convey the importance of equality, should guide all communication outreach, regardless of the audience. Their comments indicated that in terms of developing campaign messaging, there is not an explicit distinction between the LGBT community and general public, or between allies and opponents; the importance of their message is its authenticity, and authenticity is enhanced when the same type of message is repeated in the same way to a variety of stakeholders. Toni Broaddus explained, "We have to have a constant and consistent drumbeat of messaging in multiple places." This drumbeat, she argued, must establish productive narratives in LGBT communities, town councils, state legislatures, supporter and ally communities, and media. Participants also argued that for each of these stakeholders, it is important to connect—in a very personal way—LGBT experiences with neighbors, local media, and government representatives. This section explores the dynamics of establishing a constant and consistent drumbeat of equality with key stakeholders. I will explore how the messages of equality guide organizational engagement with four key stakeholders: LGBT constituents and local communities, legislators and legislatures, straight allies and coalitions, and media.

1. LGBT Constituents and Local Communities

Although messaging remains consistent across stakeholders, participants indicated that the most-important stakeholders are their local and state LGBT constituents. They mentioned that the key goal of their outreach is to establish a productive, long-term dialogue with stakeholders in local communities to ensure that their agenda always reflects the needs of their constituents. Doing so helps garner support for policy initiatives and identifies contacts in those communities who are willing to tell their authentic, personal story to their neighbors, legislators, and local media. Accordingly, while the agenda for the Federation comes from the states, the agenda for the states comes from citizens in local communities. Equal Rights Washington's Doug Hamilton explained, "We've maintained our relationships with our community and we have basically taken their input about where they want us to go and done that." One Iowa's Justin Uebelhor echoed that regardless of a specific campaign, their goal is "to try to keep that drum beat rolling and to continue that conversation with our supporters." Given a diverse constituency, however, building consensus for the agenda can prove difficult. Uebelhor continued:

> As a statewide organization working on full equality, I think there's sometimes these tensions between the priorities we're working on… from time to time we hear from constituents who feel like they are underrepresented in some of the work that we do…. So I think it is a struggle making sure that our messages are inclusive, and we always strive to make sure that we are reaching out to everyone in our community. Sometimes I think we do a better job than others.

Participant comments indicated that the LGBT community considers itself an internal stakeholder of these organizations, not external. The LGBT community drives the conversation, and these organizations exist in order to voice LGBT concerns. Jeff Graham from Georgia explained:

> Our communication strategy focuses primarily on educating our core constituents, how they can get involved, and… giving people the tools to effectively communicate with their lawmakers on these issues. We don't really have a broader communication strategy in place where we're trying to influence public opinion in large ways, or where we're doing specific messaging to the general public in a structured way that we're controlling. We certainly do this in response to issues that come up in the public or certainly in the media.

Participants argued that community engagement serves three purposes as state-based organizations pursue their policy agendas. First, community engagement helps ensure that these organizations are responsive to their constituents. Second, it provides a ground game for state-based organizations in local communities that otherwise might not be reached. In other words, engaging LGBT individuals in their local communities helps build a stable of organizational spokespersons who can speak on behalf of the core issues in very localized ways with their neighbors, media, and government representatives. These community spokespersons understand their local contexts in ways that the state-level organization do not. Finally, a community focus helps distinguish local issues from the national conversation and build consensus for the state-specific agendas. As Equality Ohio's Welter explained regarding her organization's newsletter, "we don't put in there much in the way of national-type news partially because we don't want to confuse folks." She provided the specific example of national versus state, employment non-discrimination bills. "You have ENDA and you have our bill, which is EHEA. They look awful similar if you aren't really engaged in the work day after day, like some of us are. So we try to keep our newsletter message pretty simple and try not to confuse issues."[17]

Certainly, as Jeff Graham explained, there are occasions when these organizations must respond to and advocate for issues that develop from an external impetus. But in terms of proactive, long-term goals, participants argued that a statewide strategy cannot work unless organizations first have secured community buy-in. The LGBT experiences in these individual communities comprise the foundation of my participants' messaging strategy;

[17] ENDA stands for Employment Non-discrimination Act. EHEA stands for Ohio's Equal Housing and Employment Act.

LGBT citizens in these communities, along with their allies and supporters become the critical proof points for change.

2. Legislators and legislatures

Even if an organization has garnered buy-in from the community for its agenda, it is imperative that they maintain strategic relationships with the lawmakers who determine local and state policy. As their communication values emphasize, these advocates feel it is crucial that they connect the LGBT experience with their legislators. Moreover, each participant stressed that pursuing inclusive policies around non-discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition, requires an agenda that engages both sides of the political aisle. Participants explained that this approach includes working in communities throughout their states to help get local ordinances passed regardless of the local political context, while maintaining a pulse on any political shifts at the state legislative level.

As participants indicated in terms of their limited operational capacity, organizations must prioritize legislative work ahead of other initiatives. They emphasized that community-by-community education and outreach can successfully influence public sentiment, but these organizations ultimately rely on lawmakers to pass the actual protections. They work on legislative campaigns that connect constituents to lawmakers, engage in official lobbying efforts, and aid political campaigns to elect—as Equality Texas's Chuck Smith explained—"fair-minded lawmakers." Ian Palmquist of Equity North Carolina explained, for example, that regardless of an organization's community outreach and legislative conversations regarding the importance of certain LGBT issues, these campaigns often come down to a single vote and trusting that legislative support will hold despite immense external political pressure. The Federation's Broaddus explained that she consistently hears from state leaders, "It's not just doing the education work, it's 'Well we actually have to elect a new governor or we are never—it doesn't matter whether we get it through—we'll never get it signed.' Or, 'We have to flip states in the state legislature to get people who will vote for our bills.'" And flipping states—repositioning legislative bodies to reflect more inclusive sentiment toward the LGBT community—takes time. As one email from Equality North Carolina explained, "Over the past two years our numbers in the North Carolina House and Senate have certainly been improving. We're getting closer and closer to garnering clear and unwavering support for pro-equality legislation and it's in large part because of Equality NC PAC's financial support for pro-equality candidates." (Flaminio, 2009)

Because there is a consistent legacy of politicians supporting LGBT issues during their campaign and then abandoning that support once in office for fear of political backlash, participants explained that the issue is not only developing relationships with and supporting the candidates who campaign with an inclusive message, but also holding those candidates accountable once they are in office. Broaddus argued, in many cases, "politicians are cowards." She pointed to recent cases in Hawaii, New York, and New Jersey in which state-based LGBT organizations invested their already limited funds in certain candidates who campaigned on promises of support for LGBT equality. In early 2010, when votes for inclusive relationship provisions in each of these states occurred, however, these politicians either voted no or abstained altogether. Broaddus summarized:

> It's completely frustrating because we know that legislators do not lose their seats because of the way they vote on marriage equality. We have data to back that up. And I think we're all really frustrated with politicians who don't believe that leadership is part of their job description. We don't have that much money, but… we're going after the seats of these people... You can't take our money, promise us you're with us – except for marriage. It's like, 'I believe in equality, like almost.'"

Participant comments indicated that these legislative challenges reinforce the importance of establishing a constant and consistent drumbeat that communicates the importance of equality and connects LGBT citizens in local communities to their representative. For example, because the Texas state legislature meets only in odd-numbered years, Equality Texas spends even-number years focusing on outreach in local communities that will position issues effectively by the next legislative session. As Chuck Smith explained, during these even-number years, "We want personalized conversations happening about issues that are affecting people's lives and to have that one-to-one to ask lawmakers to do something about it. And then, gee, big surprise when they come back here we're going to have a proposed way to do that."

3. Straight Allies, Coalitions, and Opinion Leaders

Participants emphasized that the support of straight allies plays an integral part in providing support to legislators and the LGBT community during these crucial campaigns. Doug Hamilton and Kara Gallemore of Equal Rights Washington, for example, quickly pointed to the number of straight supporters who are on their organization's listserv. Hamilton explained, "Well, actually, we have a lot more straight allies than people realize. We have 23,000 people on our active email list so that at any given time if we do an email blast we're really estimating that half to two thirds of them are actually straight allies." In fact, several participants argued that having straight allies convey inclusive messages of equality is as important as telling the story of the LGBT experience. Equality Texas's Smith argued, for example, "I believe that we will be successful when the majority of people that are advocating for us are straight people. I mean… most lawmakers and policy makers are straight. I need straight people giving them coverage and saying you know it's all right supporting equal rights for gay people."

Support from straight allies also enhances opportunities for coalition building across organizations beyond the LGBT community. Participants repeatedly emphasized the role that coalitions play in passing inclusive legislation. Equality Texas's Chuck Smith explained, for example, "All of our staff is based in Austin. We can't physically be in all 254 counties in the state of Texas, and so, you know, we rely upon the relationships and the coalition building that we do with organizations at the local level across the state." Justin Uebelhor argued that advocacy by One Iowa's strong coalition of supporters has helped build support for the marriage decision in that state. He explained:

> We have a pretty good coalition going here in Iowa. We have people of faith who are on our list…. We have an allied organization called the inter-faith alliance that really helps in organizing people of faith around this issue. We have civil rights leaders and civil rights groups that have signed on to our campaign…. I think it's a pretty good non partisan group of individuals. Labor groups are also key to that coalition. We also have Republican co-chairs through our Red Blue Purple campaign as well.[18]

Doug Hamilton, in discussing the successful campaign for Washington's new domestic partnership law, touted the role of Equal Rights Washington's supporter coalition. He explained that this coalition includes, "186 different organizations – it may have been 286 – other nonprofit organizations, a lot of them *not* gay and lesbian organizations—in fact, the majority of them not gay and lesbian…. It was kind of humbling to see just how broad the base of support is across the board."[19] Hamilton added that some of these allies were on the national level, but the vast majority was on the local and state levels. Their participation in the coalition provided a form of support that helped bridge the LGBT and straight communities.

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[18] Red Blue Purple is the name of One Iowa's 2010 campaign to preserve marriage equality.

[19] In researching the coalition, the number of coalition partners indeed is 286.

In the same vein as straight allies and non-LGBT organizational partners, participants emphasized the role of cultural opinion leaders—including high-profile local citizens, individual legislative allies, faith leaders, and business leaders—in helping achieve public buy-in for legislative action. Justin Uebelhor and Kim Welter emphasized, for example, that engaging the support of the religious community is key to the movement. It is imperative to demonstrate to the public that religious groups do support these issues. Equality Ohio's Kim Welter argued that in the 1960s and 1970s, the LGBT movement "divorced itself" from the religious conversation. She explained, "Unfortunately, I think we might have paid a price for that. So basically now—especially when the major voices [that] oppose equality tend to be religiously affiliated in some form or another—I think it's important that we do engage on that playing field." As her earlier example demonstrated, it is important to connect citizens with welcoming churches in their local communities.

4. Media

Participants explained that it is important for LGBT advocates to continue a consistent drumbeat of messaging across a variety of media. Whether educating constituents, legislators, or members of the general public, participants argued that establishing a narrative in the media provides an opportunity to capitalize on the power of personal stories and convey the importance of equality. Participants consistently argued that, in terms of media relations, rather than privileging outreach to the major media outlets, it is important to connect first with local papers in small communities across the state. Justin Uebelhor explained, for instance, that following Iowa's marriage decision, his organization introduced local couples to the editors of their local papers. He argued, "Iowans have that Midwestern mentality, a sort of live-and-let-live mentality where they go about their lives but they don't make an issue of it with other people. So I think we have met that struggle with couples in smaller towns where it's really vital that they share their stories with the media." He continued:

> One of the key areas where we put most of our attention is newspapers recognizing that in a state like Iowa—which has a good mix of rural and urban populations—a lot of people in smaller towns get most of their news from their local newspapers. That was one of the strategies… going out to visit with these local editors and reporters in their areas and introducing them to people in their area who could talk about this issue from a personal angle.

Toni Broaddus echoed, "Editorial board meetings are really critical because it can be really good for a newspaper editorial board to take a position and urge people in support of LGBT equality." In Washington, for example, participants indicated that only two print outlets across the state did not endorse the organization and promote support for the domestic partnership bill. Scott Gortikov, in discussing how they were able to preserve marriage equality in Massachusetts, explained, "Sometimes our focus would be in a particular district, because we were trying to build some momentum and some messaging in a particular legislator's district. So we would concentrate on the papers out there." He added, however, "Sometimes we wanted a more-pervasive message, so we would want to concentrate on the local news companies and outlets as well as the [Boston] *Globe* and the [Boston] *Herald*."

Establishing a consistent drumbeat of messaging requires effective, consistent coverage of LGBT issues by the media. Participants argued that mainstream print media coverage of LGBT advocacy has improved in recent years, with only a couple of exceptions. For example, Chuck Smith explained that certain outlets in parts of Texas sometimes will return his news release with a request to stop receiving news from Equality Texas because they do not support LGBT issues. Smith argued, however, that reaching out to these local outlets, regardless of their initial support, is crucial. That said, the Federation's Toni Broaddus explained, "Coverage is so much better and so much fairer than it was ten years ago." Equality North Carolina's Palmquist echoed that mainstream print media have improved substantially and do a "pretty good" job. The improved coverage, in part, is a product of effective education efforts by these organizations. Toni Broaddus explained, for example, that LGBT advocacy organizations previously focused on developing relationships with reporters, educating print media on appropriate sourcing, and reinforcing the importance of fact checking before reporting a sensational claim, or false claim. She argued, "For a long time we faced, 'well we have to cover both sides of the story.' And we had to change that frame because the fact of the matter is, crazy people argue that we are just all pedophiles, there's no data to back that up. A newspaper shouldn't be giving voice to those wild accusations."

That said, participants understand that media value conflict, and they are familiar with media's tendency to frame social activists as radical. These dynamics reinforce the importance of staying on message and communicating messages of equality rather than combative messages that highlight a fight for rights. It ensures that the positive voice comes from the LGBT advocate and helps distinguish that voice from the opposition. While coverage has improved, participants indicated that mainstream print media present three key challenges to conveying messages of equality: inappropriate terminology in covering the LGBT community; the use of illogical sources and counterpoints; and a changing media landscape. First, participants argued that the wrong terminology positions the LGBT community as separate, "other." Palmquist explained, for example, "We do still bump up against some things where I mean even well-intentioned reporters are using homosexual instead of gay or lesbian, despite what the AP Style book says about that; despite what we've told them repeatedly the AP Style Book says about that." Ohio's Welter echoed, "I mean every now and then they slip up on something… for the most part we don't have difficulty.

There's still a lot of folks out there who will use phrases that probably aren't ideal: sexual *preferences*, transgendered with an 'e d' on the end as if it was something that happened to somebody." Use of such terms, participants argued, distances the LGBT community from the mainstream.

Participants argued that, in some instances, the mainstream media use inappropriate sources for counterpoints in order to produce more sensational coverage. Jeff Graham of Georgia Equality provided an example:

> What we try to work with the media around, especially mainstream media, is to discourage them from doing things such as calling someone who they know who happens to be gay or transgender to provide commentary on an important issue. It actually happens far more often than I wish it would in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. One concrete example of that is that we had a very heated mayor's race last fall where the issue of gay marriage was a very hot topic between the two candidates. And there was one reporter from the *Journal Constitution* that kept calling a gay man who writes a sex column for an alternative weekly publication called *Creative Loafing* here in Atlanta, to get his views on the mayor's race.

Graham explained that although the columnist certainly was entitled to his perspective, Graham repeatedly asked the reporter what made the columnist qualified to discuss the nuances of a political debate and the broader policy ramifications. The only criterion the reporter gave was the fact that the columnist was gay. As a result, as Graham explained, when media use sensational counterpoints, they position the story as "more of a fringe or a side issue as opposed to an issue that should be of greater concern to the whole community." Chuck Smith added:

> Some media want to see the radical gay activist with the bullhorn on the corner. And there's a role for that person. But at the same time, on some levels I would make more progress if we were talking to a straight soccer mom with two kids talking about why she doesn't have a problem with it – doesn't understand why it's an issue. But that's not necessarily attractive to the media.

Participants clarified, however, that most often, these inappropriate counterpoints occur when reporters juxtapose a policy-focused LGBT voice with an oppositional religious leader. For example, Chuck Smith in Texas argued that often media juxtapose his comments with the Catholic Church's Bishop of Austin. North Carolina's Palmquist explained that certainly there is a religious aspect to the discussion, but in that case, a reporter should seek religious voices on either side of the debate. Otherwise, he explained, "It ends up being like minister versus radical gay activist is how they frame it."

The shifting landscape of the media industry, however, is perhaps the biggest current challenge to establishing a constant and consistent drumbeat with print media; a changing media environment devoid of news beats and the capacity to conduct in-depth reporting provides a key source of frustration for these participants. As a result, these participants are unable to establish long-term relationships with media contacts, and they increasingly encounter unprepared reporters who lack background knowledge of LGBT issues and fail to do important research before interviewing a member of their organization or a member of the LGBT community. In turn, unprepared reporters may target the sensational story and risk repositioning the LGBT voice as extreme. Georgia Equality's Jeff Graham summarized:

> I've been doing this long enough, I remember the days when there actually were beat reporters assigned to cover the LGBT community. And they were reporters that got to know the organizations, got to know the personalities, really got to know and have a good understanding of what the issues were. And I felt the coverage at that time would be far more in-depth, far more accurate, less sensational. I mean it really started several years ago, but it reached a head—with specifically the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*—over the last two years. They have had so much turnover and they have done away almost completely with the beat system. That's when you end up with sometimes having to provide so much background to a reporter that the final product either is a little too sensational or sometimes gets a message that is so watered down that I don't think any sort of effective message really comes through in an article.

Equality Texas's Chuck Smith echoed, "Most of the statewide print publications have closed their capitol bureau in Austin to where it pretty much doesn't exist any more." Equality Federation's Broaddus added, "I think my disappointment with the straight media is that – but like I said the coverage is so much better and so much fairer than it was ten years ago – I think the research isn't always as in depth. I get reporters calling me all the time asking questions that I just go Google to give them the answer. They don't necessarily do their background research."

Most of the comments regarding persisting issues with print media came from participants in states where marriage is not currently a priority. Participants have found that the topic is more newsworthy than other LGBT issues because marriage allows mainstream media to incorporate aspects of religion, politics, and culture, and feature an intriguing, epic battle over mainstream values. Consequently, Equality Federation's Broaddus explained, "a different list of priorities has evolved over the last five years thanks in large part to what the media thinks [sic] is the most- important thing to cover."

With improvements are evident in print coverage, participants explained that broadcast coverage now is the biggest challenge in terms of framing the LGBT advocate as the radical gay voice. In the Georgia example regarding the Cobb County student whose gender expression was female, Jeff Graham explained that community experts who could speak in depth about the situation were available, but local television outlets were not interested in interviewing them. Equal Rights Washington's Doug Hamilton echoed, "I think television has really constrained their ability to go in depth on an issue…. So print's been a lot more balanced and in-depth." Kara Gallemore added that broadcast outlets, "show whatever's going to catch attention, and it's not always accurate or what we want to be, you know, portraying to the public about what our actual experience is as a community." The biggest issue, participants indicated, stems from the pronounced lack of a beat system in broadcast media and the corresponding challenge of establishing an ongoing narrative that conveys consistent messages. As North Carolina's Palmquist explained in comparison to his experience with print media:

> You know we try to get some TV news and that sort of thing. That's kind of tricky because TV reporters don't seem to have beats at all. It's just sort of luck of the draw who's assigned to do something that day. With TV it's sort of hard to identify who to build a relationship with. Because the same channel, even if it's the same story over a couple of weeks, may send a different reporter every time they do the story.

Equal Rights Washington's Doug Hamilton argued, "They just send whoever they have available. I wouldn't say we really develop relationships with reporters unless they're actually part of our community." He acknowledged, however, that while broadcast outlets often use archived clips if the spokesperson is unavailable, "the idea that things are going to be rational and balanced is a little idealistic when you're looking at politics and giving equal time."

For these reasons, participants repeatedly emphasized the need to develop relationships specifically with broadcast media outlets as a way to de-sensationalize coverage and more effectively convey messages of equality. Equality Texas's Smith explained, "if you have a story that you really want to get on air, that comes back to having a one-on-one relationship with the reporter – whoever the gateway is in the market. In a state as big as Texas, that's a problem." Equal Rights Washington's Doug Hamilton argued that the need to focus on broadcast is also important because of the difference between broadcast media consumers and print media consumers. He explained that during Equal Rights Washington's campaign to protect the domestic partnership law, they found that the more liberal—and often more educated—audiences are individuals who still subscribe to print media. In contrast, Hamilton added that broadcast audiences tend to look at issues on a "knee-jerk and emotional basis, and not so much in depth." As a result, during their campaign for the domestic partnership law, they viewed broadcast audiences as, "the side that we need to educate and reach them on their level. That's kind of why spending the amount of money that we did on television was effective." Similar to MassEquality's and One Iowa's experiences, Equal Rights Washington's use of authentic, personal stories broadcast as campaign commercials succeeded in changing hearts and minds among the general public.

Participants argued that independent and LGBT media also provide an opportunity for organizations to connect with individuals in very personalized ways. Participants interchanged the terms "Independent" and "Alternative" media, defining them as small, independently run outlets that typically target specific audiences in terms of specific political, advocacy, or community interests. These outlets, by nature, are smaller, localized, and target specific audiences, and participants voiced stronger opinions regarding their relationships with these media than with mainstream media. In terms of LGBT media, Georgia Equality's Jeff Graham explained, "We work extremely closely with the LGBT media here in Atlanta and throughout Georgia…. I think that certainly the LGBT media does a very good job of recognizing that there are multiple perspectives and points of view within the LGBT community." Toni Broaddus of the Equality Federation argued, however, that LGBT media too often use the multiple perspectives to paint a picture of a disjointed movement:

> I will say I think we have a problem in terms of the gay media…. There's a strong desire to find controversy and exploit it. So if groups disagree with each other about a particular approach, the gay media likes to focus on the negative internal stuff, which I think any movement has because there are multiple ways to move forward and multiple strategies…. It's not clear who they think the enemies are.

In terms of independent media, Georgia Equality's Graham argued, "You know the alternative ones frankly can be some of the worst offenders in terms of looking at just one or two people within the LGBT community without really seeing what their reputation or expertise within the community is." But most participants emphasized the benefit of working with independent media. They argued that independent outlets provide an effective opportunity to disseminate organizational messages to potential supporters outside of the LGBT community. One Iowa's Uebelhor explained that developing a strong relationship with independent media allies allows an effective forum through which to convey important campaign communication quickly to a large audience:

> One of the key outlets actually has been the *Iowa Independent* which is an online publication and they employ a couple of great journalists who we work with very closely…. They're the type of publication that can turn something around in a few hours and really get our message out there. They also do a lot of profiling on the work that our opposition is doing. So that publication really helps in terms of keeping our supporters engaged and letting them know what is going on across the state on this issue.

Equal Rights Washington's Hamilton echoed that during its campaign for the domestic partnership law, the organization's relationships with alternative weeklies were invaluable.

In all, participants indicated that while mainstream media have a responsibility to report accurate and timely information regarding their campaigns, independent and LGBT-focused media have a heightened responsibility; participants hold these media sources more accountable. In terms of establishing a constant and consistent drumbeat of messaging, close relationships with mainstream media may prove unfeasible, but relationships with independent and LGBT media are crucial because they connect to specific, local audiences.

Regardless of the media type, however, media training is important. Participants indicated that it is crucial for organizations not only to have a strong message of equality that appeals to broad audiences while engaging the most local of populations, but also to execute their communication strategy with media savvy. As Georgia Equality's Jeff Graham advised,

> The advice that I would share with other state groups is the importance of doing media training, that ongoing refresher course in how to be a spokesperson and how to deal with the media, and how to choose your words very carefully; it's just always helpful. And I think that it's something that organizations should routinely build into their board training, their staff training. The second point of advice I have for other organizations, is don't be afraid of the media. Learn how your role is different from the media's role and learn how to be effective at getting your message out through the media."

Most participants acknowledged, however, that they most need training in social media. Kim Welter explained, for example, that Equality Ohio "needs somebody to come in here and really take a look at that… social media: Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, etc., You Tube, Flickr, all of those things." Georgia Equality's Jeff Graham added, similar to participants from Texas, North Carolina, Washington, and Massachusetts, "I don't know that we use social networking to its greatest effect. We use it primarily around our educational or fundraising events. But in terms of actually responding to issues or doing messaging on some of the policy agenda items, we have not figured out how to make social media an effective tool." Kara Gallemore of Equal Rights Washington, added, "I'm trying to get that on its feet. I'm actually attending a conference next week that's going to train on new media… because that is getting to be one of the most-efficient tools for community organizing. And I think that's going to be one of the biggest ways that we communicate in the near future."

Similar to the importance of connecting with local media outlets, the viral nature of social media provides an effective way to connect with new publics, and participants emphasized that various types of social media are becoming important tools for conveying their organizations' messages. Participants specifically mentioned the importance of connecting with existing and potential supporters through their Websites, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and You Tube channels. They consistently mentioned that the viral nature of online content allow organizations to connect with the public in profound ways that helped supplement relationships lacking with traditional media outlets. Texas Equality's Smith explained, "If you used to write a press release you wrote one. Now you write one and you syndicate it to ten different places." Each participant indicated that learning how to effectively and strategically disseminate key messages via social media could prove an effective campaign advantage for their respective organization. Justin Uebelhor from One Iowa, for example, discussed how his organization has been able to harness the power of social media, specifically to build momentum following the 2009 marriage decision. He explained, "I think social media has been really great and is one of those areas where we have outworked our opposition. We really put an emphasis on it *after* the ruling, to try to put fresh content out every day… and to keep people informed." He acknowledged that one of their biggest challenges was keeping the LGBT community engaged after marriage equality had been granted and explaining that significant work remained. Social media have allowed that continued mobilization.

Participants explained that one of the biggest concerns with social media, however, is tracking the "conversion advocacy" of individuals from casual followers to active members. Chuck Smith of Texas Equality argued:

> I guess what's sort of hard is to monitor your conversion, or what level of conversion advocacy that you're getting from that; that's somewhat hard to determine. I reach different people on Facebook than I reach through our action center. There are people who will see my fan page and will see our updates and will see our events on Facebook that have not provided an email address to the organization to be on an email list. I am prepared to admit that I have to be in these places because I am reaching and touching people that I wouldn't. But it's harder to determine whether or not I've motivated them to do anything or take any action.

North Carolina's Palmquist believes that social media serve two purposes for his organization. First, because of the viral nature of the tools, his organization is able to reach new audiences in new ways, convey important messages, and educate individuals in remote communities to which they otherwise would not have access. Similar to Smith's argument, however, Palmquist argued that social media also should be used to increase active membership and mobilize the community in very tangible ways. He explained, "We actually see some conversion from seeing us on Facebook to interacting with us in other ways when we do action alerts around really timely legislation and post those on Facebook. We will see conversion from folks coming over from Facebook and taking action and getting into our database that way." That said, Palmquist made the important distinction that tools such as Facebook are best for conversion advocacy while Twitter "has been most helpful at keeping the folks who want to be super-engaged in our work feeling really connected to us."

Although most of these organizations are still determining how best to use tools such as Facebook and Twitter and how to track on those tools the conversion of individuals from followers to active members, participants consistently emphasized the importance of blogs as a key tool to establish a constant and consistent drumbeat of messaging. First, having an organizational blog is a key tool. Participants emphasized, however, the benefits of developing strong relationships with popular, topical blogs. Doing so provides an effective way—given the disappearing beat system—to convey certain campaign messages to various publics, quickly. One Iowa, for example, emphasized the benefit of connecting with blogs during and after the state's marriage decision; blogs were ideal places to reinforce key campaign messages and advertise the campaign itself. Georgia Equality's Graham, while unable to establish strong relationships with the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* and local independent print outlets, has experienced a degree of success connecting with various bloggers. Equality North Carolina's Palmquist argued, "One of the things that we see happening is that although they don't tend to hit the mainstream media, Q-notes and Pam's

House Blend and blogs *do* pick up stories just from what's intended as supporter communication – not a media release necessarily." Kara Gallemore from Equal Rights Washington explained, in discussing the campaign for the domestic partnership law, "We also have some direct relationships with a few bloggers, too. And they helped out hugely with the campaign." Co-worker Doug Hamilton expanded, "It's really interesting; the blogosphere's become a lot more important during the campaign. I'm not really sure if it's like a well-known secret internally, is that we actually had conference calls with bloggers to tell them what the campaign was and the major points that we wanted to emphasize." He added that relationships with bloggers, in concert with strategically placed comments in online articles and blog posts, create an effective opportunity to influence mainstream media coverage in major ways.

Participants indicated that the emerging role of blogs establishes important connections between organizations and their publics and provides a new and important way for these organizations to establish a community narrative. Palmquist argued that Equality North Carolina has established itself as a "go-to" resource for media when LGBT issues arise, but coverage—at least in traditional media outlets—usually depends on some external impetus and is at the mercy of a constrained traditional media apparatus that may decided not cover the issue. As the above comments demonstrate, however, social media may provide an effective avenue by which to bridge that gap.

At the center of the Equality Agenda are the needs of LGBT constituents. The state-based organizations in this study employ inclusive messages of equality based on those needs that help establish a public discourse among a variety of publics. Participants emphasized that they must communicate constantly with each of their key stakeholders, including social media, traditional media, legislators, allies, coalition partners, and local LGBT constituents.

Model 2 depicts this liaison role of state-based LGBT advocacy in connecting local LGBT communities with various stakeholders. Although this model focuses on the liaison role between my participants and the LGBT community, it should be noted that not depicted are the important networks of connections that exist directly between each stakeholder. The next section builds on this model, and addresses the most crucial characteristic of my participants' agenda: advocacy occurs from the ground up.

Model 2: The Realm of Public Discourse – Establishing a constant and consistent drumbeat of equality messaging to a variety of stakeholders

Movement from "the Ground Up"

My participants emphasized the importance of communicating a constant and consistent drumbeat of equality messaging to a variety of stakeholders around issues of non-discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition. These state-based organizations organize and execute their agendas, however, based on the core philosophy that change begins locally. What the Equality Agenda requires, participants argued, is a constant and consistent drumbeat of messaging executed from "the ground up." They emphasized that ground-up advocacy is the cornerstone to the Equality Agenda; an agenda based on messages of equality communicated through a constant and consistent drumbeat to a variety of key stakeholders is successful only if done in a way that builds incremental support for the key issues from the community level up to the state level and beyond. They explained that success at the state level begins with individual policies in individual schools and school districts, hospitals, municipalities, and town halls. I began this chapter with Toni Broaddus's clarification, "Oh, no, we *have* something called the Equality Agenda. We don't shy away from that word; we *do* have an agenda. And we do not drive the agenda; the agenda comes from the states." The second part of her statement, however, added, "That's our philosophy – things from the ground up, not from the top down." And she was quick to point out that the ground-up approach, "has never, to my knowledge, been done in the LGBT rights movement until now."

The goal as explained by participants is to establish a critical mass of community and policy support for the Equality Agenda. For those states trying to establish initial layers of protection, Broaddus explained, "Many states will look at doing education around safe schools in district by district…. In many cases now we're working on passing things at the local level so we can build enough support to then move laws at the state level." Ian Palmquist argued that the inclusive safe schools law in North Carolina passed in part because of successful safe-schools policies already used by individual school districts. He explained, for example, that a key argument for an inclusive law came from Iredell County schools, which is located in one of the state's most-conservative areas. That district's superintendent was able to explain why its policy worked and why including sexual orientation and gender identity was key to its success. Palmquist explained that if a school district based in a conservative community can demonstrate the merits of an inclusive bill, then it bolsters the argument on the state level. One Iowa's Uebelhor added that prior to Iowa's 2009 marriage decision, LGBT advocates had success passing inclusive "employment and housing non-discrimination and passing through a hate crimes bill and passing through an anti-bullying bill. Marriage was the next step." Georgia Equality's Jeff Graham argued, "Every municipality that passes an ordinance, every school that adopts better safe-schools training, every police department that actively recruits transgender police officers – those all add up to really putting our lives and our issues and our policy agenda in perspective that we're not seeking anything special and different."

Participants argued that the buy-in of local citizens and the passage of local ordinances provide a more-substantive foundation than a top-down approach on which to build permanent change. For example, the enacting of Cleveland's local domestic partner registry in April 2009 was a crucial first step toward the possibility of a statewide registry, Equality Ohio's Kim Welter said. The city's registry has no legal implications, but Welter believes it is a symbolic precedent for recognition at the state level. She added that a critical mass of policy support also builds a strong infrastructure for the movement itself, in terms of "volunteers, knowledge base, [and] experience," which eventually will allow a push for broader protections at higher levels. Participants argued that this ground-up approach is not only establishing a critical mass of support from local to state level. They added that the state level legislation, in turn, is crucial for national momentum. As Jeff Graham explained, "These local successes as small and incremental as they may seem from Washington, D.C. – they still, every single one of them, is important towards changing the overall politics of LGBT life here in the United States." Specifically in terms of inclusive marriage legislation, Toni Broaddus explained:

> It may not be clear to most folks out there, but the strategy to our movement organizations has been in order to win at the Supreme Court, we need to have a critical mass of support in the states. And that means we don't have to have marriage in every single state but we need to have marriage in as many states as possible. We need to have civil unions in as many states as possible and we need to have relationship recognition in as many places as possible…. that would sort of set up a series of legal precedence that would then help us build to that larger case. Because it's kind of like okay, we want to get a good ruling on A, and then on B, and then on C. And those things will add up to put the Court in a position to where there's no other way to rule except for marriage equality. So, so that's been the strategy.

These participants consistently discussed the messages that change hearts and minds, and which communication tactics and tools provide a crucial connection with their various publics. These participants do not have false expectations regarding media outreach. And their 21st century track record demonstrates the merit of the ground-up approach to advocacy. So what is the Equality Agenda? Participants indicated that, in all, there are four parts to the definition. It begins by understanding the everyday experiences of the LGBT community. The Federation's Broaddus explained:

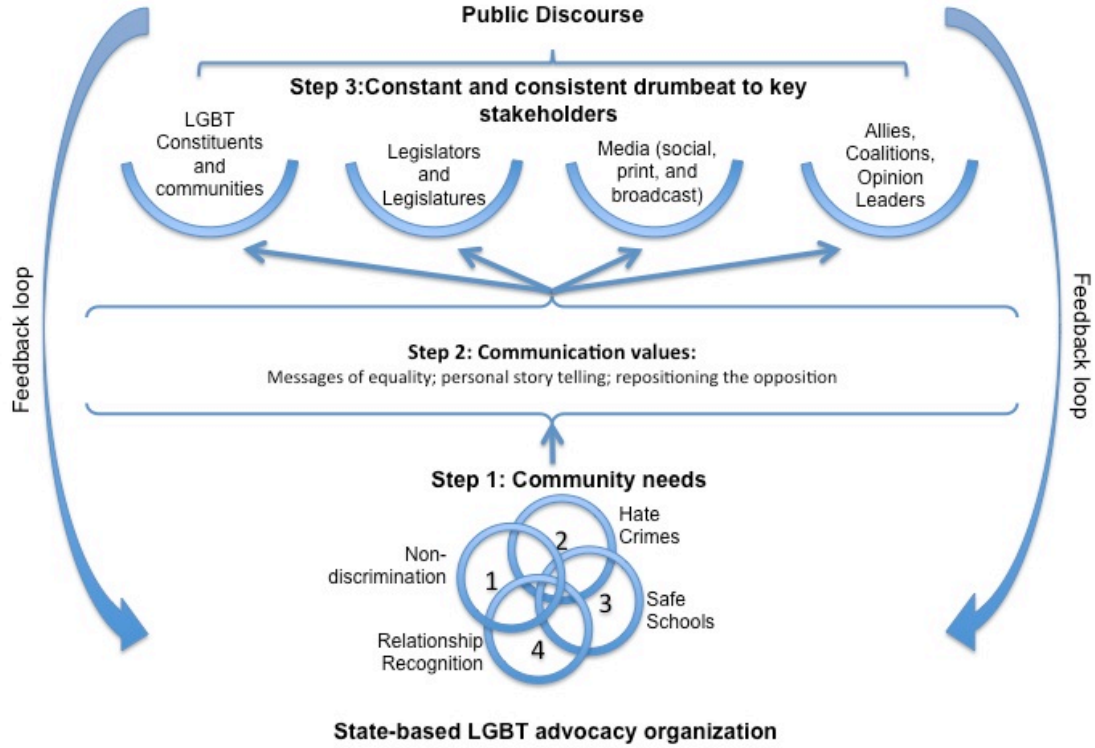
> The Equality Agenda, which is actually what we call it, is really looking at what are states prioritizing in terms of the issues that they're working on and what they think they can move forward…. All states are working on multiple issues, but for most of our states, marriage is not a primary issue, marriage is a way down the line issue. And they're still working on non-discrimination laws, and hate crimes laws, and safe schools laws... But they're also doing a lot of education around LGBT families and laying the groundwork for those relationship recognition laws as well.

Simply put, the first part of the definition emphasizes that with small staffs and limited budgets, these state-based organizations advocate for issues of non-discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition.

In the process, however, my participants emphasized that language is important. Language is contested. The second piece of the Equality Agenda demands advocacy that employs messages of equality that tie the LGBT experience to mainstream values. In the process, the use of local citizens as spokespersons and having them deliver inclusive messages broadens the appeal of these campaigns and reinforces the importance of diversity. The power of their agenda resides in the authenticity of its message, and authenticity requires a constant and consistent drumbeat of messaging to a variety of stakeholders, which is the third component of the Equality Agenda. Participants establish a constant drumbeat that reflects consistent messages of equality with LGBT constituents, community allies and coalitions, legislators, and media.

Together, the issues, communication values, and advocacy tactics discussed by participants contribute to the importance of a ground up process. Model 3 depicts these first three components build upon each other and work together in pursuit of the Equality Agenda. In step one, state-based LGBT advocacy organizations identify the core issues facing their constituents. The issues demand inclusive messaging that connects LGBT needs to the public consciousness demonstrates, as shown in Step 2. Once developed, this messaging is communicated constantly and consistently, in step 3, to the organization's key stakeholders. Finally, the feedback loop allows organizations to evaluate the success of their messaging, which stakeholders have become more or less responsive, and the degree to which the public discourse reflects—in a positive way—the needs of the LGBT community.

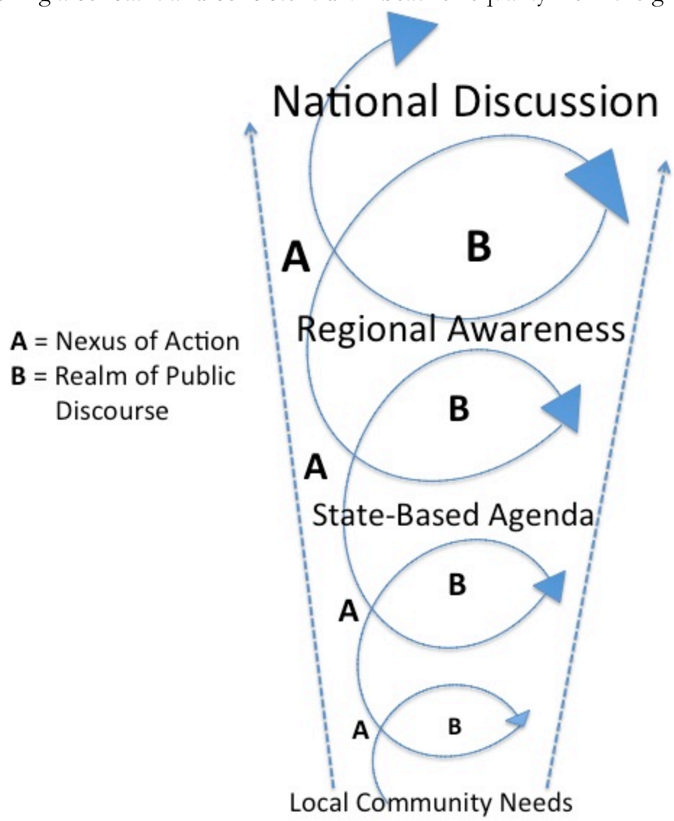
Model 3: Building state-based campaigns for equality



This outreach begins in local neighborhoods. As the final and most-important piece of Broaddus' definition stipulates, the Agenda comes from the states, and the states identify the needs in local communities. The ground-up approach to advocacy requires first establishing a critical mass of policy support from the ground up. Collaboration with national organizations is crucial, but long-term success at the national level can be guaranteed only if the conversation begins with local citizens in local communities throughout each state.

Accordingly, Model 4 builds upon Model 3 and conceptualizes the overall process, focusing on the final and most crucial characteristic of state-based LGBT advocacy, as explained by my participants: the Equality Agenda occurs from the ground up, not the top down, in the form of a Spiral of Advocacy. The Spiral of Advocacy suggested below demonstrates how the Equality Agenda advocates on behalf of the needs of LGBT citizens by incrementally building a critical mass of public and policy support for issues from the ground up. Point A represents the nexus of action, which begins and ends advocacy efforts at each level of society. The process begins at point A when state-based advocacy organizations bring a certain issue into the public consciousness by communicating inclusive messages of equality that connect LGBT needs to public concerns. This process establishes the initial drumbeat of messaging at local levels with the key stakeholders, represented—as in Model 2—by the realm of public discourse (B).

Model 4: The Spiral of Advocacy
(Establishing a constant and consistent drumbeat for equality from the ground up)



Public discourse continues until advocacy efforts reach point A the second time, at which point some form of legislative action on behalf of that issue occurs. When this first, crucial level of policy support has been established, state-based advocates are able to focus on using that foundation to pass similar protections at higher levels, as depicted in the model. Similar to the first revolution, advocates bring the issue into consciousness at a higher level, perhaps to statewide media outlets and state legislators. Accordingly, as efforts gain a critical mass of public and policy support, and move up through the spiral of advocacy, the realm of public discourse becomes more robust. At each level along the spiral, discourse continues until legislative action occurs, establishing additional levels of crucial mass support. Ultimately, as participants explained, the critical mass established at local and state levels provides a strong foundation for permanent, inclusive change at the national level. Along the way, the Spiral also demonstrates the potential for the Equality Agenda to be able to frame the conversation, the public discourse. By introducing establishing a narrative at the most-local levels, advocates are able to discuss the core issues in a controlled and strategic way. Certainly, external influences also help shape the conversation, but a controlled message from the ground up can contribute to the way in which society discusses these issues at higher levels. Participant comments indicated that a top down approach would not be as effective in establishing the same type of conversation based on messages of equality.

As a result, these state-based advocacy organizations are helping to define a modern movement as a movement for equality, not a movement that explicitly fights for gay rights. As Doug Hamilton of Equal Rights Washington concluded, "We'd rather make less of a splash to the right people and get our message across in a rational way than to just get this you know 'we're here, we're queer, we're pissed off.'" Added Kara Gallemore, "I think in the beginning of this movement, when Stonewall happened, that was completely necessary. We needed to be loud then." These shouts, as told by participants, have been replaced by the Equality Agenda, defined as a constant and consistent drumbeat of equality communicated to a variety of stakeholders from the ground-up, around the issues of non-discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition.

Equipped with participants' perspectives regarding state-based advocacy, the next section explores two specific challenges to the Equality Agenda as explained by participants. First, participants consistently discussed how society's focus on the single issue of marriage influences their advocacy and hinders their ability to garner buy-in for an agenda around more fundamental issues. Participants also discussed how certain structural dynamics within the LGBT movement also sometimes hinder their ability to execute the Equality Agenda from the ground up.

Part II: Challenging the Equality Agenda

Participants' primary frustrations reflect challenges related to internal and external dynamics influencing the broader movement that they must address as they develop and advocate on behalf of the Equality Agenda. First, participants argued that they must maintain a long-term, proactive, ground-up strategy focused on each of the four key issue areas despite society's obsession with the single issue of marriage. Participants also argued that they must execute their ground up, state-by-state strategy while trying—with varying levels of success—to collaborate with other movement organizations that emphasize mainly a top-down, national approach. Participants acknowledged that the marriage issue is important and hugely symbolic. Similarly, they acknowledged that the role of national organizations is crucial to the overall movement. The challenge, however, is how to balance structural and cultural influences with state agendas. The next section explores the external cultural pressure and the internal structural pressure to executing a ground-up, issue-by-issue, community-by-community approach to advocacy.

External Challenges: The Pressure of Marriage

Doug Hamilton of Equal Rights Washington argued, in discussing the continuing crescendo around the issue of marriage and the increasing importance it is playing in several states' political agendas, "2012 is going to be comparable to the Lord of the *Rings*." Participants indicated that this pervasive cultural focus on marriage complicates the process of establishing a ground-up agenda seeking more-fundamental protections such as non-discrimination, hate crimes, and safe schools. They believe external public discourse—shaped specifically by anti-LGBT oppositional organizations, mainstream media, and cultural opinion leaders—effectively has positioned, for different reasons, marriage as the cornerstone of the modern gay movement. Participants argued, however, that for most states, marriage is not a realistic goal. As Equality Ohio's Kim Welter explained, "You know it's hard for people to think about a major push on relationship recognition if they can't go out and join an organization, they can't go to an LGBT event because they're afraid who could see them and tell their boss and be fired."

First, participants explained that their opposition attempts to publicly reframe conversations about protections against discrimination, hate crimes, and bullying, into conversations about how those protections would be a first step toward marriage equality. As Equality North Carolina's Palmquist argued, "The other side now ties everything we do to marriage. Protecting kids from bullying is about gay marriage. And it's this huge, weird illogical leap that they're making, but you know marriage is not a winning issue for us yet. So we try to keep the other issues separate from it as much as we can." Accordingly, he added that much of Equality North Carolina's communication around their campaign for a safe schools bill focused on explaining to various stakeholders—especially legislators—how and why protecting school children and marriage equality are completely separate issues.

Second, participants explained that even allies sometimes help fuel the public focus on marriage; opinion leaders have become involved in the high-profile debate, which reinforces to the public—and the LGBT community—the perception that it is the cornerstone of today's movement. Several participants expressed strong feelings, for example, regarding a high-profile California lawsuit currently being waged in federal court regarding the legality of Proposition 8, and the legality of denying same-sex couple the protection of marriage. Equality Federation's Toni Broaddus explained:

> Many of us who are leaders in the movement had great concerns about this case being filed…. So it was completely disconnected from our strategy. It didn't have the plaintiffs we would have chosen to better reflect the diversity in our community. And it was funded essentially by Hollywood activists who had not been supporting our existing work and infrastructure to the level that they're willing to support this case.

Participants' concerns with the case were two fold. First, a loss at the federal level could hinder the movement toward full marriage equality for many years. Equality North Carolina's Palmquist argued:

> The federal marriage case I think is incredibly risky. A loss at the Supreme Court could potentially delay getting marriage equality nationwide by 15 or 20 years, easily…. I think typically on social issues the Supreme Court doesn't come out the right way until you have at least a majority of states on board with an issue, and often a super majority of states. Thinking about segregation, thinking women's rights, the sodomy laws when it came up with *Bowers* in the '80s, most states still had them. When it came up with *Lawrence* again six years ago, it was down to 13 that still had sodomy laws, including North Carolina.[20]

Second, as Broaddus indicated, the legal teams in addition to the state and national LGBT advocacy organizations that had developed long-term strategies over many years were not consulted when deciding to move forward with this case. One Iowa's Justin Uebelhor explained, "It was filed initially without some of the input from the traditional organizations

[20] Here, Palmquist is comparing the 1986 *Bowers vs. Hardwick* decision in which the Supreme Court upheld sodomy laws, and the 2003 *Lawrence vs. Texas* decision (17 years later) in which the Court struck down the laws.

that do most of the legal work around gay rights organizations, and I think that ruffled a lot of feathers." Broaddus added that one year before Proposition 8 passed in 2007, several national LGBT advocacy organizations collaborated regarding the possibility of pursuing marriage through the federal courts, ultimately deciding that it was important to wait. From the Federation's perspective, Broadus believes it was important to first pursue a critical mass of community and legislative support at the local and state levels. They issued a statement urging the LGBT community to "not rush to federal court because it's our assessment… that we currently do not have a Supreme Court that is ready to extend marriage equality to all citizens." Two years later, in 2009, these organizations reissued their statement without knowing that it was the same day that the federal case to overturn Proposition 8 was filed. Externally, Broaddus explained, it appeared that the coalition of LGBT organizations sought to undermine litigation that was filed on behalf of same-sex couples. The unfortunate timing, however, resulted from a lack of communication between the external counsel that filed the case and the traditional LGBT organizations that have been at the forefront of the movement for years.

As a result of this pervasive public discourse on marriage, participants argued that their LGBT constituents expect their organization to quickly respond to or accommodate the public conversation. Regardless of the political realities specific to marriage, several participants provided specific examples of how the marriage discussion has influenced their constituent expectations. For instance, as Equal Rights Washington geared up for its campaign for the domestic partnership law, the LGBT community began reacting to the brewing public debate. Doug Hamilton explained, "Everybody on the outside was like, 'What are you going to do? What are you going to do? We need to have this campaign. What are you going to do?' And we were like 'Look, we're doing this thing step by step according to a rule of a strategy that we're not privy to tell you.'" In short, the media frenzy and public campaigns waged by the opposition regarding the domestic partnership debate incited frenzy among Equal Rights Washington's supporters. Internally, the organization was developing a thoughtful, well-timed public communication strategy. Without public knowledge of that process, however, the LGBT community perceived that the organization did not share their same sense of urgency. Hamilton added:

> It was very frustrating that the community activists wanted to know everything and go out and do everything. And what they don't realize is that you can't tip your hand about your strategy to the other side either. You don't tell all of the inside and outside of a campaign. You just show the visible part of the campaign at the appropriate time. So we had a lot of backseat drivers.

Kara Gallemore said that in retrospect, one of the key challenges in executing their strategy was a lack of understanding by the LGBT community regarding the process. She emphasized, however, that it is important to remind constituents that, "Marriage equality is a huge issue, but it's just one issue. I think that the education of our society about our life is more strategic." As a result, participants explained that organizations must distinguish for constituents who may be caught up in the marriage debate the short-term versus long-term priorities. Although current public discourse centers on marriage, permanent success will result from a long-term, more-holistic public education campaign executed from the ground up.

Even in states where marriage currently is not a possibility—such as North Carolina, Ohio, Georgia, and Texas—participants indicated that many of their constituents still want to know how and when their state will achieve marriage equality. For example, Jeff Graham discussed the 2009 Atlanta mayoral race, in which one of the key election issues was the candidates' position regarding marriage equality. Georgia has a constitutional ban on marriage equality. The Atlanta mayor cannot alter that ban, and currently there are no plans to attempt to reverse the ban. Many citizens in Atlanta's LGBT community raised the marriage question, however, because they argued that the answer provided a marker of candidate sentiment regarding other LGBT issues. Equality North Carolina's Palmquist noted, "Marriage is the issue that is most personally important to our supporters, but politically very challenging in a southern state. So we try to focus on issues that will have a real impact on people's lives but are achievable in a shorter time frame generally."

Palmquist added that, although marriage is not currently a possibility, he views the opposition and media's unwavering focus on marriage laws at the state level as an opportunity to pass smaller, incremental forms of relationship recognition on local levels. Palmquist argued that, to an extent, it helps the ground-up strategy by creating space for Equality North Carolina to pass inclusive domestic partner benefits for municipal employees and help establish an inclusive hospital bill of rights that accounts for same-sex partners. Georgia's Jeff Graham added that for those states that currently have constitutional bans on marriage equality, constituent messaging becomes two fold. First, as explained above, they must advocate on behalf of short-term, achievable goals while convincing constituents that marriage, though still a priority, must wait. Second, Graham explained, "The advocacy community throughout the country has not come to consensus about what the roadmap is to *overturning* state constitutional amendments…. it's a situation that there's really not a lot of precedence for—on the state level—in any real social justice issue." For these states, any campaign for marriage first must garner public support for *reversing* a law before it can proactively campaign for marriage equality.

Toni Broaddus emphasized, however, that even if the pervasive national discourse ultimately results in a favorable marriage decision by the Supreme Court, it will not result necessarily in marriage equality across the country, especially in states that already have constitutional marriage bans. It is essential, therefore, for participants to reinforce for constituents the importance of the state-based approach to advocacy and the importance of establishing a critical mass of support from the ground up. Participants argued that they must present themselves as autonomous and effective leaders connected to the national movement but focused on the needs of the LGBT community in their particular state. Participants explained that balancing the state and national perspectives sometimes can prove challenging as they try to collaborate with organizations that proffer a top-down rather than ground-up approach to advocacy. Accordingly, the next section outlines the internal challenges to the Equality Agenda that result from the structure of the movement itself.

Internal Challenges: Ground Up vs. Top Down

Participants explained that within the movement, resources are concentrated at the national level, at national organizations, not—as the Equality Federation Website argues—at state organizations, which are doing the lion's share of the work. Equality North Carolina provides a good example. Between 2006 and 2010, the organization almost doubled its staff – from two full-time staff members, to three full-time, one part-time position, and several interns. Although the organization has grown and received national accolades for its work, Palmquist believes the organization must determine how to advance a statewide agenda with an annual operating budget of $400,000 and a full-time staff of three. It is important, therefore, that the organization maximizes opportunities for fundraising and connects with local LGBT communities throughout the state in substantive ways. To that end, the organization made a deliberate move several years ago to change Equality North Carolina's logo. Palmquist explained,

> We redid our logo a while ago. For a while it was in colors that were really similar to the Human Rights Campaign colors and… we changed to some different colors.

That was really important to use because we're *not* an affiliate of the human rights campaign and we were realizing that there were people in the community who thought that by giving to the HRC we were getting part of that. Plus, we haven't always taken the same policy positions on issues as the HRC. It was important to distinguish ourselves a little bit more… A minor thing changing the colors, but it definitely helped separate us a little in people's minds, which is really important to us from a fundraising perspective. We often get people who you know are like, 'Yeah, I give to you.' And you draw them out a little bit and it's like they go to the HRC dinner.

As seen below (Figure 5), the former Equality North Carolina (ENC) logo (left) closely resembled the HRC's logo (center). Today, ENC (right) has changed its colors to separate the organization from the HRC. Palmquist believes doing so reinforces its independence and aids in crucial fundraising.

Figure 4: ENC changed its logo to distinguish itself from HRC

Participants argued that state and national organizations both have important roles, but a key challenge for the overall movement in pursuing an agenda of equality is determining how state and national organizations can work together most effectively. They must do so to more effectively counter the fewer, but larger and better-funded opposition organizations. Toni Broaddus provided the example of the opposition's campaign in the lead up to the Proposition 8 vote in California. She explained that during the subsequent trials to overturn Proposition 8, it was revealed:

The Mormons and the Catholics were getting together and having these huge briefings with their preachers and priests and pastors all across California, and reaching tens of thousands of people, maybe millions of people every Sunday with

> this message of discrimination and exclusion. And you know we don't have that kind of infrastructure that has that kind of hold in people's lives to counteract that.

MassEquality's Scott Gortikov also noted the use of national power to oppose state-based campaigns. He explained, "Our opponents have figured out ways of bringing campaigns to states that are sort of pre-packaged, leverage national money, [and] bring with them either national media that you can leverage locally, or messages that you can then customize. So it's not like recreating the wheel every time." He continued that the gay movement must be careful not to follow this model exactly, because it detracts from the important, localized, authentic personal story that is at the heart of the movement. But he argued that state and national organizations must collaborate to determine how best to share resources in order to compete with the opposition.

In several cases, participants mentioned how national resources *benefit* state organizations that otherwise would not have the capacity to execute major campaigns. Kara Gallemore, for example, discussed how staff from the Human Rights Campaign and Glaad worked in Equal Rights Washington's offices during their campaign for the Domestic Partnership Law. MassEquality's Scott Gortikov discussed how the Gill Foundation, the HRC, MassEquality, and a local New Hampshire organization collaborated on marriage issues. And OneIowa's Uebelhor argued that national organizations played an important part in helping Iowa reach key milestones; the focus going forward should be on how state and national organizations can help each other locally and regionally. Equality Texas's Chuck Smith summarized that ideally:

> There's a role for national organizations. There's a role for state organizations. There's a role for local organizations. We can't be in all 254 counties in Texas, and we don't have an ear to the ground in every city the way people that are organized locally do. In the same way, national organizations that spend most of their time working with the U.S. Congress do not know the nuances of what is happening in

> each of the fifty states. I think the best way to work collaboratively is to understand that there are certainly benefits of working together because each of us can be in places that the others can't."

Most participants voiced a key frustration that often, national organizations do not do enough to acknowledge or respect the state perspective. These national organizations are willing to collaborate with states and lend resources during major campaigns, but often they do so from the top-down, national perspective, failing to acknowledge the specific state context or experience. Toni Broaddus explained:

> Every state has its own unique culture, and state organizations understand that culture…. I think sort of the hardest thing is figuring out how… national and state organizations can partner in state work. So I think a state group is responsible for figuring out how to build that basic infrastructure in their state and national groups should be responsible for figuring out how to use that infrastructure in a way that doesn't undermine state work but that helps move the agenda forward across the country.

She added that in the past, national organizations helped coordinate fundraising and outreach during major campaigns in states with few resources, but then would leave without contributing to a long-term infrastructure or helping establish consistent leadership. Scott Gortikov echoed, "I've seen it where it's collaborative. And I've seen it where it's competitive. I've certainly seen it sometimes where national organizations come in – they think they're helping but they don't wish to coordinate, or their communication with the local organization is bad."

Most participants argued that, at the root of these issues is a lack of effective communication. Georgia Equality's Jeff Graham provided an apt example. He explained that each year, the Human Rights Campaign issues a "State of State Equality Report" in which the HRC examines state-level legislation around the country. In discussing the HRC's 2009 summary of Georgia-specific LGBT legislation, Graham explained, "Well, they certainly didn't check in with me—as someone who does state-level legislation here in Georgia—to see what our legislative priorities were, to review to see if the bills that they had picked up were the important bills or not." As a result, Graham believes important pieces of the HRC summary were inaccurate, which has significant implications for Georgia Equality's 2010 legislative agenda. Graham explained, for example, that the HRC issued a call to action for a now-inactive House Bill introduced in a prior legislative session. Given HRC has a greater membership in Georgia than does Georgia Equality, "If their members read this report… that says House Bill 33 is the bill to support for safe schools, and I'm trying to push House Bill 927, there's actually a lot of people who will say, 'well HRC knows better than Georgia Equality.'" Consequently, Georgia's LGBT citizens "actually would advocate on a bill that nobody is actively working to pass." Graham explained that his issue is not that the HRC issued the report—he believes a national report on state-by-state issues has merit—but he has concerns about the lack of input HRC requests from state leaders in compiling the information. As he summarized, there is simply "a disconnect between state work and national organizations. That two-way communication I've found kind of lacking overall." Equality North Carolina's Palmquist echoed that at different times, "it didn't feel like the lessons learned were being transferred up to the national level necessarily."

That said, participants believe relationships with some national organizations are improving. The Equality Federation has played an important role in establishing that two-way connection and providing a voice for state groups in the national conversation. Toni Broaddus explained that before the Federation was formed, when national strategic conversations were held, "HRC the Task Force, ACLU, NCLR, Lambda all those groups would be at the table but the state groups weren't."[21] In terms of the Federation's role,

[21] NCLR stands for the National Center for Lesbian Rights

Broaddus added, "We do Federal stuff. When we do it, it's all to make sure that the voices of the state campaigns and state efforts and state groups are part of the national agenda." Accordingly, the Federation has, "tried to work on best practices for good partnerships between state and local groups over the past few years. So I think that's a much better situation." Moreover, Broaddus argued that state-based organizations can benefit from political and economic power of a national federation otherwise unattainable as individual organizations. Broaddus explained:

> You have more purchasing power; can purchase things more cheaply. You have more political power because you're representing larger groups of people. And we felt that we needed to leverage that power of the states and really increase the visibility of the work in the states and the resources going to the states.

In the early days of the state-based movement, she added, many of the groups worked around their kitchen table without computers. The primary need, therefore, was to equip these organizations with basic technology and connect them to their supporters and each other. Through the Federation, groups were able to purchase the needed technology at a discount. As Broaddus explained, "today we have something like 52 member organizations and 46 of them purchase their technology through the Federation."

The challenge, as Broaddus argued, is that the LGBT community does not, "Have an organization or a capacity nationally to really implement a nationwide, comprehensive, communication strategy to persuade people." As a Federation, however, these organizations can be put in touch with each other and benefit from lessons learned. Broaddus provided the example of the Federation's single subscription to Survey Monkey, a web-based survey tool, which is accessible to all Federation members. Because states are able to share question banks and survey results, they are able to learn how best to use the tool to connect with and receive important feedback from their own constituents. The network ensures that while these organizations operate independently and in unique contexts, they do not have to operate completely in silos. In fact, most participants commented on the collaborative culture that exists between state leaders and emphasized that the Federation's listserv for state leaders was one of the key tools in connecting with and learning from each other.

Participants emphasized that having a state voice that champions the ground-up approach to advocacy at the national table is important and has influenced direction in several policy areas. Several participants provided the example of the federal Employment Non Discrimination Act (ENDA) and the debate regarding whether or not to include gender identity in addition to sexual orientation. They believe that passage of ENDA stands a much better chance of passing in the short term if it is limited to sexual orientation. Participants argued, however, that state organizations have witnessed the effects of eliminating certain constituents within the LGBT community while advocating for legislation. Eliminating the transgender community, for example, may make it easier to pass legislation for gays and lesbians in the short term, but it splinters the community and makes the long-term prospects for full inclusion much more difficult. In fact, North Carolina's Ian Palmquist pointed to transgender inclusion in national legislation, such as ENDA, as one of the sticking points that caused a division between state groups and specifically the HRC. He explained, "In 2007, after publicly stating that it was their policy to insist on inclusive legislation, they backed away from that. And nearly all of the state equality groups and basically every other national organization felt like that was the wrong decision to make." Toni Broaddus added that in this case, the state voice at the national level—by way of the Equality Federation—helped keep gender identity and expression in the bill. She explained:

> When members of Congress pulled gender identity and gender expression out of ENDA we were also at the table…. So we were very instrumental in participating and helping create United ENDA which is a coalition of I think over 400 groups that really stood up to Congress and said we do not want a bill that does not include gender identity and expression. And that was based, again, on our experience in the states.

More recently, legislation was drafted to repeal the 1996 federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Broaddus explained that again, the ground-up, state perspective was crucial. "There was a difference of opinion in how/what that bill should look like. And we got pretty involved in that because we had concerns that some language that was being proposed by staffers on Capitol Hill really would undermine the work that was happening in the states."

The states provide a wealth of experience in passing legislation that has proved more difficult at the national level. Their local advocacy for inclusive non-discrimination, safe schools, and hate crimes legislation demonstrates their experience. Although marriage equality is limited to a handful of states and the District of Columbia, these organizations have experienced more success on this issue than the national agenda. As Jeff Graham argued, "It's just a local strategy that *has* been effective in the history of our movement here in the United States. It's never been a federal strategy. It's always been a local strategy. So there is a failure of very specifically HRC, but I would say a number national organizations lose sight of this." Ian Palmquist echoed, "The state work and the local work is what's actually moving public opinion. It's changing the reality on the ground. And the state legislative work is creating space for federal victories, either in the courts or in Congress." The state and national perspectives therefore do fit together, but, as Palmquist argued, "It is frustrating to me how much of our movement's resources have been poured into the national level, and I would say to limited effect."

The challenge goes beyond working with the national organizations, however. Participants argued that public figures in the LGBT community also must realize and advocate for the state perspective. For example, Palmquist explained that Cleve Jones—well known as an intern for Harvey Milk, creator of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, and founder of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation—speaks in local communities across the country, but decries state contributions. Palmquist explained, "Cleve Jones, every time he speaks anywhere he says that the state-by-state strategy has failed us… and state-by-state strategy is the only thing that has produced any results in our movement so far. It kind of makes me crazy."

Despite the challenges regarding state and national collaboration, each participant emphasized they generally have good working relationships with national organizations. Similar to Graham's earlier comment, most participants distinguished the HRC as the most-challenging organization in terms of establishing two-way communication, which is problematic given HRC's status as the nation's largest LGBT advocacy organization. In fact, the HRC is the only major national advocacy organization *not* listed as an ally on the Equality Federation's Website. Participants were quick to acknowledge, however, that other national organizations have done an exemplary job collaborating with the state organizations. Georgia's Jeff Graham repeatedly mentioned the positive work of the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) and Glaad; state groups often use materials developed by Glaad and MAP that outline specific messaging and talking points for each LGBT issue. In addition, several participants indicated the effectiveness of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, a leader of the national arm of the movement since its founding in 1973. Its mission is "to build the grassroots power of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community" (thetaskforce.org, 2010). Finally, participants highlighted the effectiveness of national organizations that advocate on behalf of specific constituent groups, including the National Center for Transgender Equality, National Center for Lesbian Rights, and the National Black Justice Coalition.

As participant sentiment toward these organizations indicates, they welcome collaboration with national organizations and they quickly acknowledge the benefit of the national perspective. North Carolina's Palmquist explained, "It's not that I don't wish we could do all this federally because, boy, that would be great. But it hasn't worked out that way. I feel like we have to do our homework state by state. So in terms of the role, federal versus state, I think it's best when we're all working together as much as we can." Their frustrations, however, result from a desire for mutually beneficial relationships, better communication, and a strengthened focus on the significant advancements being made at the state level. MassEquality's Scott Gortikov explained, "There are concerns here. There may be ways to operate organizationally as a LGBT community that's more effective, that can be more efficient. I'm not convinced that the way things are now are the way things should be." He added, "I'm wondering organizationally, are there ways of collaborating and/or doing shared services, co-locating – where we can be more powerful by combining our organizations or sharing the same services than each doing them separately."

Participants believe part of the challenge is in the actual structure of the gay movement and how it developed in the 20th century. To an extent, the movement is in the process of adapting to a new model of ground-up, state-by-state advocacy. Palmquist explained:

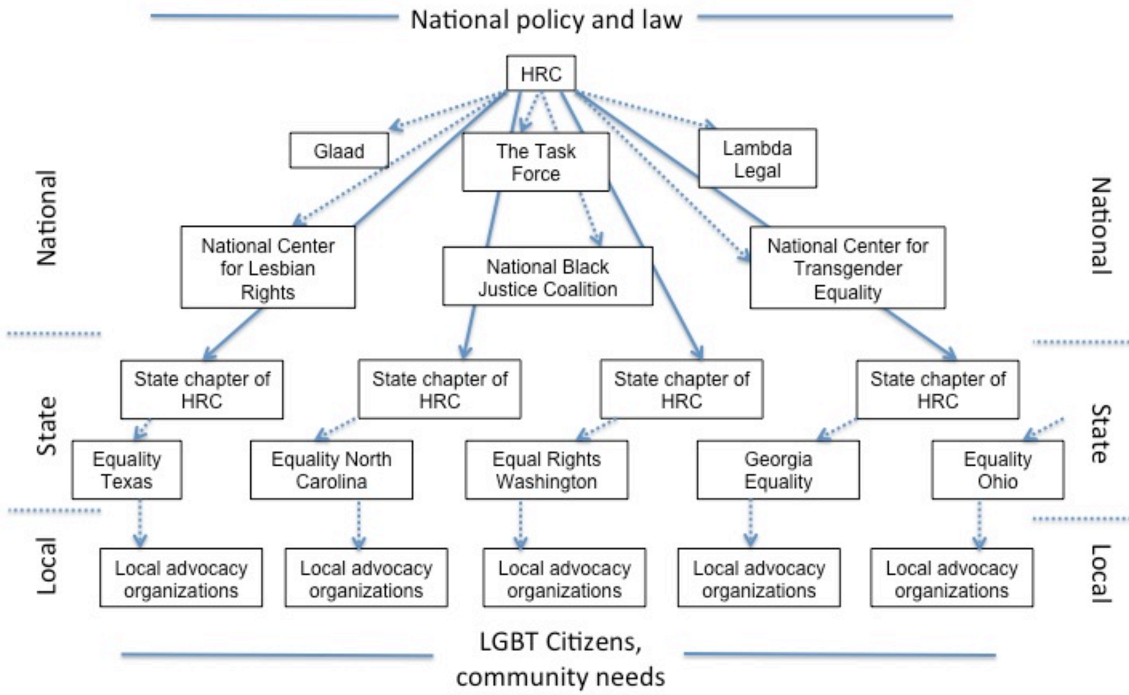
> One of the things that's different in the LGBT movement than others—like if you look at the structure planned parenthood has, NARAL, or the NAACP—you have a national advocacy group and you have state affiliates that are formally connected to the national. And our national movement did not ever decide state work was important, so the state groups all formed independently on their own from the grassroots in every state. And then they came together and formed the Equality Federation to provide networking and support for state work. I think in the last decade the national groups have definitely realized more of the importance of state level work, but the structure was already built.

That said, adapting to the organic nature of social movements is an important part of the movement itself, and the key is to remain united during the process. As Toni Broaddus argued, "You know, movement by definition is just a little messy and you have a lot of people trying to go in the same direction but thinking there might be different roads to take. So that's normal." What LGBT media, LGBT constituents, and LGBT organizations must avoid, she added, is "focusing on that as a negative instead of as a part of the process of a movement and indeed the process of a democracy." The different opinions are crucial to maintaining a movement that speaks for an immensely diverse constituency. As Broaddus summarized, "It's a movement; it's messy…. I don't think that's a bad thing. I think ultimately it's a good thing."

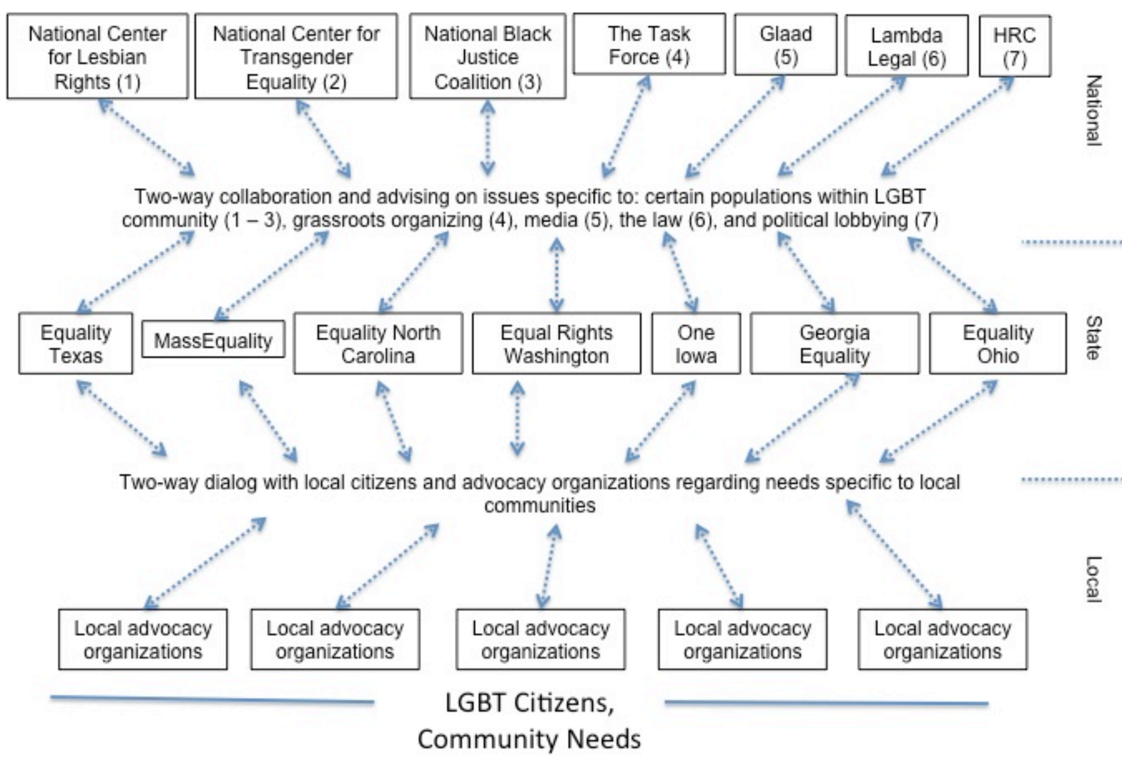
Models 5 and 6 suggest ways of conceptualizing the movement from the top down versus ground up perspectives, based on participant responses. First, participants argued that it has been challenging to establish a two-way dialog with the HRC specifically. Often the HRC publishes state-specific information, or wages state-specific campaigns, without input from state leaders. This approach may indicate HRC's preference for a nationalized, top-down, centralized structure, which is conceptualized by Model 5. My participants emphasized that national organizations do play an important role. They highlighted the work of certain organizations, including Glaad, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, National Center for Transgender Equality, National Center for Lesbian Rights, and the National Black Justice Coalition. That said, the state lens provides a different perspective regarding the optimal movement structure.

Model 6 suggests a movement based on a decentralized structure, and two-way collaboration between movement members at the local, state, and national level. From this perspective, the states become the central, collaborating force, linking the needs of the community to the movement agenda. Both models incorporate essentially the same organizations, but the comparison indicates the contrasting perspectives, and the potential benefit of shifting to the state-focused perspective.

Model 5: Centralized structure from national perspective



Model 6: Decentralized structure from states' perspective



In summary, findings from interviews provided key insight regarding the cultural and structural dynamics that influence state-based advocacy. Despite these challenges, however, my participants maintain an unwavering focus on establishing a constant and consistent drumbeat of equality messaging communicated to a variety of stakeholders from the ground up. The next section explores if and to what extent mainstream print media reflect the salience of the Equality Agenda.

Part III: Reflecting the Equality Agenda

Participant comments indicated that these state-based organizations are defining a 21st-century LGBT advocacy movement based on messages of equality that establish a constant and consistent dialogue with a variety of stakeholders from the ground up. It is important, however, to determine if and/or how the media represent these organizations' agenda, and how that agenda is juxtaposed with voices representing different perspectives. From the perspective of my participants, it is important to maintain an unwavering focus on positive, inclusive messages of equality, regardless of how the opposition's viewpoint is represented. Again, language is important. The *Spokesman Review*, for example, presented the findings from a Washington poll regarding support for marriage equality. The reporter explained, "All sides agree that a critical factor is how the question is framed…. 'Do you believe that homosexuals should have the right to be legally married?' voters were asked. Fifty percent said no, 43 percent said yes. But change the words to 'gay marriage' or 'same-sex marriage,' …and people are more supportive"(Roesler, 2009a, pg. A8).

Guided by my participants' comments, I analyzed newspapers in Massachusetts, North Carolina, Georgia, Iowa, Texas, Ohio, and Washington in order to gauge the types of messages being conveyed. I wanted to know if, and to what extent, media in these states reported LGBT messages of inclusiveness and diversity, conveyed the authentic stories of the LGBT experience, juxtaposed positive LGBT messaging with negative messaging from opposition, and reflected a ground-up, community-by-community approach advocacy. I also wanted to determine the extent to which media focus on the marriage issue in each state. Participants emphasized that they targeted local media throughout their respective states, in addition to the major outlets. Reaching the more local, rural outlets plays an important role in their overall outreach. Equipped with this guidance, I determined it was more important to analyze coverage from a variety of urban and rural sources, a broad survey of coverage in each state. As mentioned in the explanation of methodology, I performed three searches for coverage using Lexis-Nexis's grouped state sources (i.e. "Ohio News Sources"): (1) a general search of coverage regarding the LGBT community; (2) a specific, topical search based on the key issue in each state during 2008-2009, as discussed by participants; and (3) a simple search for instances when a specific organization or organizational representative was referenced. Topical searches were based on participant responses regarding which issues they prioritized between 2008 and 2009. For Equality North Carolina, these issues included campaigns for safe schools and a new sex education bill. Equality Texas highlighted its focus on safe schools and non-discrimination policies. Equality Ohio and Georgia Equality also discussed the importance of inclusive non-discrimination bills. Washington highlighted the 2009 campaign for the domestic partnership law. Iowa and Massachusetts focused on issues related to marriage equality.

The topical and organization-specific searches were subsets of the general search, but the individual searches allowed an interesting comparison regarding how much attention media give to relevant, state-specific topics—as communicated by participants—versus other issues. In all, I analyzed more than 600 articles, but pulled from within those articles 151 specific quotes and reporter statements that address the themes identified by my participants. Table 4 outlines which publications are represented for each state. In the following pages, I incorporate many of these examples to demonstrate that media do reflect many of the themes discussed by participants.

Table 4: Publications represented per state

State (No. of Sources)	**Publication(s) pulled**
Georgia (1)	*Atlanta Journal Constitution* [1]
Iowa (2)	*The Gazette, Telegraph Herald*
Massachusetts (4)	*Boston Herald, The Republican, The Lowell Sun, The Berkshire Eagle*
North Carolina (5)	*Durham Herald-Sun, Greensboro News & Record, Winston-Salem Journal, Chapel Hill Herald, Associated Press State and Local Wire*
Ohio (4)	*Columbus Dispatch, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Dayton Daily News, Associated Press State and Local Wire*
Texas (5)	*El Paso Times, Austin American-Statesman, Houston Chronicle, San Antonio Express-News, Associated Press State and Local Wire*
Washington (5)	*The Columbian, Tri-City Herald, Spokesman Review, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Associated Press State and Local Wire*

[1] In Georgia, of the 65 articles pulled for general search, 46 were from the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. Of the remaining 19 articles, 15 were from the *Augusta Chronicle* and four were from AP state and local wire reports. Of the 15 articles from the *Augusta Chronicle*, there were nine editorials and four letters to "Dear Amy," an advice column, which left only two articles.

Communicating Mainstream Values

The analysis indicated that certain messages that communicated mainstream values resonate with the media. Although the analyzed coverage certainly reflected some of the ongoing concerns of my participants in terms of media language and sourcing, the salience of their messaging strategy was evident. Media communicated messages that highlighted the importance of diversity, and coverage indicated that the personal story plays an important role. Finally, although my participants do not proactively seek to engage the opposition, the media's juxtaposition of their messages with the opposition does reflect a competition regarding mainstream values. The following sections mirror the organization of the interview findings and examine how media reflected each of these key themes.

1. "We have humanity in common"

Media regularly conveyed inclusive messages of diversity. The AP state and local wire in Georgia, for example, reported on the controversial decision by President Obama to invite a minister who campaigned in favor of Proposition 8 to offer the official inaugural prayer, and the subsequent invitation to invite openly gay Episcopal Bishop Eugene Robinson to offer a prayer at a low-profile event. When the reporter asked Robinson why he agreed given the controversy, he explained, "It's important for any minority to see themselves represented in some way…. Whether it be a racial minority, an ethnic minority, or in our case, a sexual minority. Just seeing someone like you up front matters" ("Gay NH bishop to offer prayer at inaugural event," 2009, para. 5). The *Durham Herald-Sun* ran a story about the election in Houston, Texas, of the country's first openly gay mayor in a major American city. In commenting on her win, the new mayor explained, "It's a historic election for my community, and I believe an election that will change some people's minds about the city of Houston…. It's a diverse, international city that welcomes everyone"(Rhor, 2009, pg. A5). In Massachusetts, the *Berkshire Eagle* reported the national Transgender Day of Remembrance honoring people who have been killed because of their gender identity. In explaining the importance of the day, the reporter quoted the local Massachusetts state senator, Benjamin Downing, "This is an important time to remember that while progress has been made in striving toward equality for all, it has not been realized…. There are still people in our society that are not only persecuted and harassed, but have even been killed, simply for being who they are" ("Slain transgender people remembered," 2009, News, para. 4).

Most often, these messages of inclusiveness and equality came from straight allies. *The Columbian*, in Washington state, reported that one of the strongest allies of the LGBT community, in its stand against the repeal of the domestic partnership law, was Clark County's YWCA and its director, Kathy Kniep. When the reporter asked why the organization was so vocal in support of the LGBT community, Kniep explained, "We see this as the same thing as racial discrimination…. This is no different. ... It's a minority group being oppressed and deprived of rights that are given to everyone else" (Andersen & Buxton, 2009). A different example in the *Gazette* (Iowa) reported an incident in which anti-gay graffiti directed toward a social work student at the University of Iowa led the School of Social Work to expand harassment training. The professor who reported the slur explained why increased training is important. "That's a core value in social work -- respect for all people…. I don't think you can have a student writing that kind of message in a bathroom and feel like students have gotten the message about what's appropriate" (Heldt, 2008, para. 11). Further, the *Spokesman Review* reported the perspective of Washington's governor, Chris Gregoire, regarding the domestic partnership law. Gregoire was quoted, "They will make for stronger families, and when we have stronger families, we have a stronger Washington state" (Roesler, 2009c, pg. A1).

These examples reinforce participants' arguments regarding the importance of having community and legislative allies serve as spokespersons in support of LGBT equality. If spoken by community leaders, faith leaders, legislators, and governors, these messages lend legitimacy to LGBT issues. Only a fraction of the articles (1% of all articles, 98 of 9873 articles initially retrieved) referred to one of the participating organizations. That said, when quoted, LGBT advocacy organizations reflected the communication values discussed by my participants. For example, in covering the increasing acceptance of LGBT students at

Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the *Winston-Salem* (NC) *Journal* talked to the diversity student coordinator for the Human Rights Campaign. He explained that in the process of advocating for LGBT needs at these schools, "I don't think it's our goal to challenge any long-held historical values of these schools…. Our goal is to just open up the conversation about who we are…. Maybe through that conversation, hearts and minds will change" (Hewlett, 2009, pg. A1). In a different example, during the debate regarding Ohio's pending non-discrimination bill, the *Columbus Dispatch* interviewed Equality Ohio's former Executive Director, Lynne Bowman, who explained, "A call for basic equal treatment in human kindness is not a partisan issue…. It is not a controversial issue. It should not be a difficult issue to support" (Siegel, 2009a, pg. 1B). In Texas, supporters of the new domestic partner benefits in El Paso, including Equality Texas, repeatedly emphasized that the measure was simply, "the right thing to do" (Meritz, 2009, para. 3). In another example in the Tri-Cities region of Washington, the *Tri-City Herald* reported on plans by that area's LGBT community to hold inclusive celebrations. They quoted one of the organizers, "We don't care what your sexual orientation or gender identity is…. We just want everybody to come together and be prideful of what we are. We open our arms to the entire community" (Dupler, 2008, para. 5).

2. The Value of Authentic Storytelling

Broad messages of equality and messages that connect the LGBT community with the mainstream appear to resonate with the media. For example, the *Telegraph Herald* profiled One Iowa's strategy to defend the 2009 marriage decision. The reporter explained:

> One Iowa is working on many fronts to defend the legality of same-sex marriage, focusing on broad grassroots support, said executive director Carolyn Jenison. "We're having people from each community tell their stories so people can get to know their neighbors. Peers talking to peers is the most effective way to change the hearts and minds of Iowans," Jenison said. (Nevans-Pederson, 2010, pg. A3).

The local media sources I analyzed repeatedly used the experiences and stories of LGBT citizens in the community to introduce an article, especially in the case of relationship recognition. For example, the *Greensboro* (NC) *News & Record* reported on a local billboard that advertised support for marriage equality. In profiling the couple who appeared on the billboard, the article began, "Forty-three years. That's how long it's been since Ellen Gerber fell in love with the person who would become her partner for life. Forty-three years of love - but no wedding ring" (Hardin, 2009, pg. A2). In Washington, the *Spokesman Review* juxtaposed Governor Gregoire's support for the domestic partnership law with the story of the hardships experienced by one couple resulting from the lack of partnership protections. One story explained:

> Six years ago in Oregon, the couple found out what it's like to lack such protections when they and their daughter were in a car wreck. It was the kind of thing for which they'd prepared, spending thousands of dollars on legal paperwork to ensure that they would be able to make medical decisions for each other. But 'at the hospital, they wouldn't let me in the emergency room with either one of them, because I didn't have the documentation with me,' Bates said. 'For us, it was a huge wake-up call.' (Roesler, 2009c, pg. A1)

In Massachusetts, several outlets covered the fifth anniversary of marriage equality in 2009. These articles profiled personal accounts of local couples. For example, *The Republican*, out of Springfield, Massachusetts, began, "Julie Pokela used to be cautious about how she described her relationship with her partner, Elizabeth Denny. Girlfriend? Significant other? .... That changed on May 18, 2004, when Pokela and Denny were married in Northampton. After 20 years together, they acquired the right to introduce each other as 'my wife'" (Cahill, 2009, pg. A1). Similarly, a Massachusetts AP state and local wire story began:

> Twenty years after he met the love of his life, nearly five years after their wedding helped make history, it took a nasty bout of pneumonia for Gary Chalmers to fully

> appreciate the blessings of marriage. 'I was out of work for eight weeks, spent a week in the hospital,' Chalmers said. 'That was the first time I really felt thankful for the sense of the security we had, with Rich there, talking with the physicians, helping make decisions. ... It really made a difference.' (Crary, 2009, para. 1)

Media did not rely on the personal story to the same extent in articles that addressed issues other than same-sex relationships. Even the *Greensboro* (NC) *News & Record* article described above focused on marriage, although marriage equality currently is not an issue that is in scope for the North Carolina LGBT community. Consequently, in terms of the authentic personal story, there was a noticeable difference between coverage in Iowa, Washington, and Massachusetts—states that have marriage equality and domestic partnerships—and coverage in North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, and Texas—states in which marriage equality currently is not a possibility. In states where statewide relationship recognition is not on the radar, articles that *did* incorporate personal stories often focused on individuals who have served in an official capacity for the government, or who have become official spokespersons for a certain cause. For example, the *San Antonio* (Texas) *Express-News* profiled a local military officer who has campaigned for the repeal of the Don't Ask Don't Tell law. The reporter began:

> Former Marine Staff Sgt. Eric Alva, the first casualty in the Iraq war, said Tuesday that the nation's 'don't ask, don't tell' policy on gays and lesbians serving in the military is having a detrimental impact on readiness. Alva, a San Antonio veteran, openly declared his homosexuality after he left the U.S. armed services as a hero, earning a Purple Heart after he lost a leg from a land mine in the first hours of the war. (Martin, 2009, pg. 1B)

The *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, in profiling police department's liaison to that city's LGBT community, began:

> Anger doesn't live under Darlene Harris' skin anymore. It's melting away --- the same way bad memories do --- along with the confusion she has carried from a rocky childhood in New York City's housing projects to her life as an Atlanta police

> officer. She now knows why her voice is so deep, why she's always been attracted to women, why she can grow a full beard. Harris is intersex. (Eberly, 2008, pg. 1M)

Examples from North Carolina and Ohio indicated that media also reported the personal stories of LGBT youth. For example, media in North Carolina reported the personal experiences of individuals who had been bullied in school (Jones, 2008; "Protecting Bullies," 2008). The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* featured the story of a gay teenager who had become homeless after his parents kicked him out of his home because of his sexuality (Dissell, 2008).

In summary, the media content supported participant comments in three key ways. First, media report the inclusive, diverse messages that connect the LGBT community to the mainstream. Second, media coverage demonstrates the importance of having members of the LGBT community and straight allies serve as spokespersons. Only a small portion of the articles regarding LGBT issues referred to a participant organization or organization-specific spokesperson. Finally, media respond to authentic personal stories that convey the LGBT experience. This use of the personal story is especially true with articles regarding marriage, youth, and LGBT citizens who serve in an official capacity with the government or military. Equipped with this foundation, the next section will examine how media represent the opposition.

3. Positioning the Opposition

Media reflected the different language used by the opposition to frame LGBT issues. For example, one article in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* discussed the advent of gay characters and same-sex couples on soap operas, and the networks' continuing hesitancy to show the same-sex kiss. The reporter explained, however, "'As the World Turns' is owned by Procter & Gamble, which says there's no kissing ban. But the American Family

Association has labeled P&G 'the top pro-homosexual sponsor on television'" (Kloer, 2008, pg. 3D). When the domestic partner registry was approved by Cleveland's city council, the *Plain Dealer* summarized:

> Supporters said the move would cultivate a gay-friendly image for Cleveland and perhaps help domestic partners obtain benefits, such as health care, typically reserved for married couples. Those working with Matthews said they oppose the registry on religious and legal grounds. They have cast the registry as a sneaky way for council to circumvent the 2004 constitutional amendment that bans gay marriage and civil unions in Ohio. (Gomez, 2009, pg. B1)

Similarly, when El Paso passed domestic partner benefits for city employees, the *El Paso Times*—in an article titled, "El Paso trails other cities in extending insurance to domestic partners"—reported the opposition's perspective:

> "We don't want the government passing laws that are directly contrary to the word of God," said Barney Field, founder and executive director of El Paso for Jesus. Field calls homosexuality an abomination and counter to traditional values. To him, domestic partnerships are a government endorsement of gay lifestyles. (Meritz, 2009, para. 26)

The discourse regarding LGBT issues, as reported by media, often reflected a debate regarding what constitutes mainstream, or traditional, values. For example, the *Gazette* interviewed One Iowa's Executive Director Carolyn Jenison regarding anti-LGBT plans to campaign for a repeal of the new inclusive marriage law. She commented, "At a time when Iowans are losing their homes and rebuilding after last year's devastating floods, we should focus on issues of common concern to all Iowa families such as the economy, health care and education, rather than focusing on divisive issues and amending the constitution to hurt a number of Iowans" (Lynch, 2009, para. 5). Similarly, in a special commentary for the *Telegraph Herald*, a former Iowa state legislator explained his confusion regarding the planned campaign. "How can they be so out of touch with mainstream Iowans? Iowans are struggling just to make ends meet amidst rising unemployment and a tightening job market. Some families are still recovering from flood damage and many lack basic health care" (Jochum, 2009, pg. A4). The AP state and local wire in North Carolina quoted Ferrel Guillory, director of the Program on Public Life at UNC Chapel Hill, regarding the introduction in 2009 of a bill for a constitutional ban on marriage equality. Guillory argued, "Why put up a ballot on the measure that would stir up the culture wars and divert from addressing the budget issues and the economic issues?" (Robertson, 2009a, para. 7)

Another way in which media demonstrate this campaign for the mainstream is by juxtaposing the typically positive message from LGBT advocates and supporters, with the often-negative message from the opposition. For example, when the Ohio House tentatively approved an inclusive non-discrimination law, the *Columbus Dispatch* quoted Rep. Dan Stewart, D-Columbus, a joint-sponsor of the bill, who argued, "This is not special rights [sic]. These are rights all Ohioans are afforded." The reporter quoted one opposing representative who argued, "The bill is not about protections, but rather 'is about forcing acceptance of a lifestyle that many people disagree with.'" The reporter then added the perspective of a second opposing representative, who argued "Keep your immoral beliefs, in my view, to yourselves" (Siegel, 2009b, 3b). In a different example, the *Boston Herald* reported on ice cream manufacturer Ben and Jerry's decision to produce a special "Hubby Hubby" ice cream in honor of Vermont's decision in favor of marriage equality. The *Herald* first quoted MassEquality Director Scott Gortikov, who argued, "As we continue to fight for equality, it's heartening to see businesses like Ben & Jerry's demonstrate their support…. I look forward to the day when 'Hubby Hubby' is available in supermarkets in all 50 states." The reporter continued, with the opposing view, "But the name change is giving gay-marriage opponents an ice cream headache. 'It's a bad idea, especially because I think they're just doing it to rub it in that Vermont has legalized gay marriage,' said Brian Camenker of MassResistance.org" (Kronenberg, 2009, pg. 25). Not only does the juxtaposition present the positive versus negative comment, the reporter uses the joke of an ice cream headache to report the opposition's perspective.

Perhaps the most-powerful examples of negative oppositional messaging occur when media report the opposition's more-extreme examples. For example, as pro- and anti-LGBT forces in Washington began their respective campaigns over an inclusive non-discrimination law, the *Spokesman Review* provided historic context, explaining that in 2006 groups opposed to the law failed to get enough signatures on a ballot. The article reported that during the campaign, a tactic used by one of the anti-LGBT advocates fell short. The reporter explained, "Eyman's showman tactics also rankled. He dressed as Darth Vader for one event, referred to himself as 'the Dark Lord' in front of TV cameras and scheduled the final press conference on June 6, 2006." (Roesler, 2009b, pg. A1). The *Seattle Post Intelligencer* reported on one local religious leader's response to the region's growing support for marriage equality:

> A conservative Christian pastor plans to launch a high-profile campaign Tuesday urging religious followers to load up on Microsoft Corp. stock, in an attempt to force the company to 'stop financing ungodly ventures.' The Rev. Ken Hutcherson, who leads Antioch Bible Church in Microsoft's hometown of Redmond, says that he will create a global and powerful group to promote traditional family values, including marriage exclusively between a man and a woman. (James, 2008)

In Texas, when the Fort Worth city council voted to expand its non-discrimination ordinance—already inclusive of sexual orientation—to cover transgender residents, the *Houston Chronicle* reported the competing reactions. On one hand, they quoted a representative of the local LGBT advocacy organization, Fairness Fort Worth, who argued, "We believe, as you do, that we should respect each other…. The foundation of these recommendations isn't preferential treatment, it's equal treatment." To present the counterargument, the reporter then profiled a protestor, explaining, "Ron Armstrong stood on top of his Bible in front of City Hall to symbolize that he was 'standing on the word of God. The law says clearly no man is supposed to lie with a man the way he lies with a woman'" (Lee, 2009, pg. 2). Ron Armstrong's actions may seem extreme, but what is also telling is the opposition's focus on religion and same-sex relationships, not the article's topic regarding protections for the transgender community.

What these examples also reflect is the opposition's focus on religion. In addition to the examples above, an article in the *Spokesman Review* reported an anti-LGBT response to Washington's same-sex domestic partnership bill:

> "I say this respectfully, but there's going to come a time when we're all going to have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account for things done in the flesh," said Roy Hartwell, pastor of a church near Olympia. He cited Sodom and Gomorrah, saying that God saw no hope for a society whose leaders embraced homosexuality. (Roesler, 2009a, A8)

In the lead-up to the 2008 presidential election, a journalist for the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* outlined on his AJC.com blog the perspective of conservative religious organization Focus on the Family, which included several references to homosexuals and "homosexual behavior." The author concluded, "This is what millions of our fellow Americans are being told to believe by leaders in whom they place great faith and confidence…. And it is difficult to imagine how that world view can ever be reconciled with that of the mainstream." (Bookman, 2008, para. 16).

My analysis determined that the media reported more extreme actions by the LGBT opposition than by LGBT advocates and supporters. That said, the most radical example of the LGBT voice in the media came in the days following the passage of Proposition 8 in California. Media in each state reported on the protests that were held across the country in response to the marriage ban. In this situation, the LGBT voice became that of protests and protesters rather than community allies and political leaders. For example, the AP state and local wire reported on protests in Ohio, explaining:

> The protests were widely reported to be peaceful, and the mood in Boston was generally upbeat, with attendees dancing to the song "Respect." Signs cast the fight for gay marriage as the new civil rights movement, including one that read "Gay is the new black." But anger over the ban and its backers was evident at the protests. One sign in Chicago read: "Catholic Fascists Stay Out of Politics." (Lindsay, 2008, para. 13).

Similarly, the *Winston-Salem Journal* reported on a local protest, explaining, "Drums shook the air as a group of 30 people waved signs and shouted from the sidewalk to protest what they see as an unjust court ruling in California. 'Gay, straight, black, white, marriage is a civil right!' they yelled" (Kloc, 2009, Pg. 1). In Washington, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported the array of signs displayed during that city's protest.

> Dozens of demonstrators bore signs to the rally: 'Fight the hate/Repeal Prop. 8;' 'You can't stop love;' 'No more Mrs. Nice Dyke;' 'I love him/He loves me/Let us be/A family;' 'Jesus had two dads;' 'Can I vote on your marriage now?' Riona MacNamara's sign spelled out a quotation from Thomas Jefferson: 'The best principles of our republic secure to all its citizens a perfect equality of rights.' (Roberts, 2008, pg. W)

In all, there were few examples in this sample of articles of the radical, protest-focused voice that is synonymous with prior eras of LGBT advocacy. The examples seen in the media in the days following Proposition 8, however, demonstrate that media do report those instances. The balance of examples from 2008-2009 demonstrates that the LGBT community voice represents an inclusive, non-combative voice in the broader debate over mainstream values.

In summary, I used participant comments regarding the importance of inclusive and diverse message, the use of authentic stories, and their perspective regarding the opposition, to guide my analysis of media content in each state. I found that, indeed, media coverage of LGBT issues between 2008-2009 reflected a movement based on messages of equality. I found media employed the personal story regularly to convey the LGBT experience. The sources also reinforced participant comments that spokespersons should be in the form of community allies, including community leaders, LGBT citizens, and politicians. Finally, media demonstrated the potential in juxtaposing a positive, inclusive message of equality with the often-negative message of the opposition. In all, the coverage was consistent and supported participant perspectives.

The coverage also demonstrates that mainstream media, as Equality North Carolina's Ian Palmquist explained, do a "pretty good job" conveying LGBT messages of equality. That said, the media content I analyzed did provide some examples of participant concerns regarding the continued need for media education. There are still issues with reporters using terms such as "homosexual," "sexual preferences," and not understanding the appropriate language that should be used for transgender individuals. For example, the *Durham Herald-Sun* asked, in an article about teaching families acceptance for the LGBT community, "What do people of faith do when faced with the news that their child is homosexual?" ("Film aims to teach families acceptance," 2009, Pg. C6). In Ohio, a *Columbus Dispatch* reporter explained, "With defenders of church policy and dissenters divided, Mennonite Church USA will continue to study whether to welcome homosexuals into its pews.... One group of delegates wanted the church's 21 area conferences to not censure churches that welcome homosexuals" (Ludlow, 2009, pg. 3A). The *Columbus Dispatch*, in a different article, explained, "A state lawmaker from New Albany backed a bill this year that would give employment and housing protection to Ohio's gays and transsexuals" (Fisher, 2008, pg. 1B), which was a missed opportunity given the pro-LGBT equality article title: "Gay-rights foes will be minority before long." In the *Dayton Daily News*, the reporter explained, "More than 13,000 homosexuals have been discharged from the military because of their sexual preferences" (Wehrman, 2009, pg. A5). Further, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*—in profiling the police department's liaison to the LGBT community—reported, "Atlanta police Sgt. Lisa Keyes described Harris as an officer who is passionate about her job and tries to make sure everyone in the city's alternative community is treated fairly by the Police Department" (Eberly, 2008, pg. 1M).

It is also evident that, per participant comments, media do often juxtapose the voice of LGBT advocates with religious leaders rather than more appropriate counterpoints, such as anti-LGBT advocates or politicians. For example, an AP state and local article in North Carolina juxtaposed Ian Palmquist's comment supporting the safe schools bill with the response of the two North Carolina Catholic Bishops (Robertson, 2009b). Similarly, the *Greensboro News & Record* juxtaposed state representative Julia Boseman's reaction to the safe school's bill with the reaction by the Reverend Mark Creech of the Christian Action League (Binker, 2009). When a new sex- education bill passed in North Carolina, the AP again juxtaposed a policy perspective with a religious perspective. The reported explained, "State health director Jeff Engle said most people have sex before marriage and need information to protect themselves. Christian Action League director Mark Creech said the Bible forbade sex outside marriage, and that eliminates the risks" ("NC House to vote on expanding teens sex ed option," staff, 2009, para. 5). This media content reinforces my participants focus on ensuring the best types of spokespersons, consistently directing reporters to those sources and reminding reporters who privilege more sensational counterpoints of the importance of targeting appropriate spokespersons on both sides of the issues.

Movement from the Ground Up

Embedded in the assessed media coverage of the LGBT community is the media's interest in the local angle, which supports my participants' strategic focus on ground-up, community-by-community advocacy. These media sources contextualized LGBT issues either by providing local context within the state or providing state-by-state context. For example, the AP state and local wire in North Carolina reported on the decision in Mecklenburg County, NC, to extend domestic partner benefits to government employees. The reporter began, "Mecklenburg County last week became the seventh local government in North Carolina to extend the benefits of married, heterosexual couples to same-sex couples. The state's most populous county follows Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Durham, Greensboro and Durham and Orange counties in approving the benefits" ("NC city to consider" 2009, para. 4). When Cleveland, Ohio, opened its domestic partner registry, the AP reported the story of one couple who chose to register, quoting one of the partners, "We're here, we want to get married and love each other…. First steps are always the beginning of movements" (Kropko, 2009, para. 3). The reporter then contextualized the registry in the broader political landscape:

> Two other Ohio cities, Toledo and Cleveland Heights, have domestic partner registries, which can provide employers, insurers, hospitals and other establishments official record of the relationship. In December, the Cleveland council voted to make a registry available for unmarried couples of whatever sexual orientation. Same-sex marriage is not allowed in Ohio. (para. 5)

The *Durham* (NC) *Herald-Sun*, in discussing the opposition to LGBT issues by certain religious groups, explained, "Twelve states now offer some form of same-sex marriage or same-sex partner recognition. Twenty states and more than 180 cities and counties, ban discrimination against gays" (Salmon, 2009, pg. C7). Interestingly, the reporter pulled this local- and state-specific context from information provided by the Human Rights Campaign, not the local resource of Equality North Carolina.

Specifically regarding marriage, as the *Herald-Sun* example demonstrates, context is important and begins at the local level. Several newspapers analyzed provided the state-by-state breakdown of states with inclusive marriage and domestic partnership or civil union laws. Very rarely did media present national campaigns for marriage. The Iowa *Telegraph Herald*, for example, provided a detailed breakdown of how many same-sex couples applied for marriage licenses in each major region of Iowa, and how many couples applied from other states (Blanchard, 2009). Several articles reported on local town councils passing non-binding resolutions either in favor of, or against, marriage equality. For example, when Davie County, North Carolina's governing board passed a non-binding resolution supporting a ban on marriage equality, the *Winston-Salem Journal* explained:

> Thirty states have passed constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage, according to the resolution. The Iowa Supreme Court ruled last week that not allowing same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, and the state legislature in Vermont today overrode Gov. Jim Douglas's veto of a bill allowing gay couples to marry. (Davie board backs ban on gay marriage, 2009, pg. 2).

As Chapel Hill Mayor Mark Kleinschmidt argued in the *Chapel Hill Herald*, however, it is important to debate resolutions at local levels, regardless of legislation at higher levels. From his perspective, support for LGBT issues must be expressed from the ground up. The article quoted:

> “I think people of good conscience need to take every threat to equality seriously,” said Kleinschmidt, who is one of eight openly gay elected officials in the state, according to Equality North Carolina. “I don't think we can sit back and just rely on [Democrats in the Legislature]. Politics at the state level is a difficult game and the rules are constantly changing.” (Goldberg, 2009, pg. CH3)

What the media demonstrate is not profound necessarily, but it important in determining how LGBT advocates structure their outreach: context begins locally. The newspapers explored in this study connect for readers how specific, local contexts compare across the state and how they relate to similar issues in other states. That said, media also reflected participant concerns regarding the cultural focus on marriage. The next section examines the pervasive focus on marriage regardless of the state, and explores the voices that are heard in that debate.

1. The Pressure of Marriage

One of the primary reasons I performed three individual searches for media coverage was to evaluate if coverage focused on LGBT issues specific to each state, or if—regardless of state context—media profiled the issue of marriage. As the above examples demonstrate, although media did report on the relevant state-specific issues voiced by my participants, media coverage supported participants' claims that media privilege the marriage debate. As would be expected, media sources in Washington, Iowa, and Massachusetts focused on domestic partnerships and marriage. But even in Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas—where formal forms of statewide relationship recognition are not a possibility—media still reported on the topic. Moreover, media in Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas relied more heavily on reader comment, opinion pieces, editorials, and op-eds to report perspectives regarding marriage equality. As the Federation's Toni Broaddus argued, everyone is an expert on marriage.

Media coverage reflected specific points made by participants regarding marriage. First, marriage equality was a central issue in the Atlanta mayoral campaign, despite the fact that this issue is not on the state organization's radar in terms of achievable issues. For example, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* ran an article discussing the influence of the LGBT community in Atlanta politics, in which they quoted my participant from Georgia, Jeff Graham, discussing why the marriage issue was so important. He explained,

> It's important to realize that no [gays and lesbians] had marriage equality in the country five years ago. Now we have six states with solid marriage equality. This is a dialogue and conversation that is moving very quickly throughout the country. It's important to understand where these candidates stand on this issue today so that we know who will be our strongest champions when those conversations come back to Georgia in the future. (Bentley, 2009, pg. 4B)

Media coverage repeatedly demonstrated how one of the key strategies by LGBT opposition is to tie every LGBT issue to marriage. For example, when the North Carolina legislature passed an inclusive bullying bill, the AP state and local wire reported the competing reactions.

> "We're pleased that the House today (voted) to make all kids safer," said Ian Palmquist with the gay rights group Equality North Carolina. The state's two Roman Catholic bishops have opposed the bill because they said identifying sexual orientation could possibly encourage the courts or lawmakers to approve same-sex marriage. (Robertson, 2009b, para. 16)

Similarly, the *Winston-Salem Journal* explained,

> Christian conservatives have fought hard against the bill. Over the weekend, the Rev. Mark Creech, the executive director of the Christian Action League of North Carolina, sent an e-mail to his members urging them to work for the bill's defeat. Creech called the bill the result of "pro-homosexual influence and power" that could potentially lead to the legalization of same-sex marriage. (Romoser, 2009, pg. A7)

In Ohio, in reporting on the initial passage of that state's non-discrimination bill, the AP quoted state representative Dan Stewart, who explained, "It's taken that long to make people understand it doesn't have anything to do with gay marriage or anything like that…. We always have a few fringe folks who don't get it and think we're condoning something bad" (Majors, 2009, para. 5). In Georgia, when the town of Chamblee passed non-discrimination protection for gay employees, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* quoted town councilman Mark Wedge, who explained, "The bulk of the debate came from a skeptical council, where the majority of members had to be convinced that adopting the resolution would not pave the way for approval of gay marriage or benefits for same-sex partners" (Hunt, 2009, pg. 2B). Participants consistently acknowledged the media's pervasive focus in reporting on marriage. Embedded in that debate, however, is the religion angle. As participants indicated, media do not hesitate to incorporate that perspective. The next section explores media's focus on religion, and how that focus goes beyond the single issue of marriage.

2. Religion's Role

While all participants discussed the importance of having faith leaders as allies, only Equality Ohio's Kim Welter and One Iowa's Justin Uebelhor outlined in detail how faith-based support is a cornerstone of their advocacy efforts. Coincidentally, two key media sources in Ohio and Iowa indicated that some publications might still maintain their Religion beats. For example, the *Columbus* (Ohio) *Dispatch's* Meredith Heagney wrote articles regarding various churches' decisions regarding the LGBT community. Molly Rossiter of *The Gazette* wrote several similar religious-focused articles for that Iowa publication. These journalists' consistent topic area may indicate an opportunity for LGBT advocates to effectively communicate positive messages regarding the importance of religion in the LGBT community. Moreover, it demonstrates that despite the lack of beats, there still are opportunities to develop relationships with reporters.

As the above examples demonstrate, media are quick to juxtapose policy-focused voices with the religious perspective. Given the cultural focus of the equality issue on marriage—as well as the opposition's strategy of tying everything to marriage—the religious perspective becomes even more visible. For example, in Iowa, *The Gazette* explained, "Religion has played a big role in the same-sex marriage debate, with some saying homosexuality is condemned in the Bible. But Rabbi Susan Talve, who came from St. Louis to perform some of the weddings, said her congregation takes a different view" (Hennigan, 2009, para. 10). The *Telegraph Herald* echoed, "Iowans aren't the only ones struggling with the gay marriage issue. So are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" (Jerde, 2009, pg. D1).

In a break from the trends seen with other issues, media in each state reported on the *national* debate occurring in several denominations regarding the LGBT community and how different policies toward the community could split these churches. In terms of religion, these national stories provide context for local stories. For example, the *Durham* (NC) *Herald-Sun* explained, "The nation's mainline Protestant denominations have quarreled for years over the role of gays and lesbians in church life, but those debates promise to grow even more intense and acrimonious this summer" (Helfand, 2009, pg. D3) In a different article, the paper added:

> By voting Friday to allow gays and lesbians in committed relationships to serve as clergy, the 4.7-million member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will either show how a church can stand together amid differences, or become another casualty of division over sexual morality and the Bible, observers say. ("Lutheran gay clergy vote tests mainline churches Gay clergy," 2009, pg. A10)

In Ohio, an article from the *Columbus Dispatch* explained, "Local churches might be among those that leave the country's largest Lutheran denomination in disagreement over issues involving homosexuality" (Heagney, 2009, pg. 4B). The *Houston Chronicle* outlined where each major religious group in the United States stands regarding the LGBT community. In a little more then one page, the reporter summarized the perspectives of Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism, Orthodox Judaism, Islam, Episcopal Church of the USA, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, Roman Catholic Church, Southern Baptist Convention, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Mormon church. The summary focused on these faiths' stances regarding the ordination of LGBT clergy and the blessing of same-sex unions. In terms of the Presbyterian Church, for example, the reporter explained:

> This year the General Assembly approved a request to remove from its Book of Order the policy that prohibits ordination of gay and lesbian clergy. If approved by all 173 presbyterys in the country, that policy would take effect in 2010. The assembly also voted to let local governing bodies decide whether to ordain gays and lesbians who are in committed partnerships. The Presbytery of New Covenant, which represents all of southeast Texas, will vote on the partnered gay-clergy issue in February. (Karkabi, 2008, pg. 4)

The discourse demonstrates that regardless of the specific stance, media often seize the opportunity to report the religious perspective when covering LGBT issues. For LGBT advocates, it is important to connect media with religious allies who can serve as spokespersons. In the process, it is also important to reinforce to the media that the LGBT community is not divorced from religion. Kim Welter, from Equality Ohio explained that the LGBT community has had a tenuous past with the religious in the past; many LGBT individuals left their faith houses and many more were forced out. This dynamic has been captured in media coverage. For example, one article in the *Gazette* profiled the personal story of an Iowa mother of two who came out late in life. In the article the woman explained, "I felt a lot of sadness and a lot of conflict around church, and yet I kept going back because it's a big part of my life, of who I am" (Rossiter, 2009, para. 3). The article continued, and provided additional context:

> According to a study by the Barna Research Group, more gay and lesbian adults are turning away from church and faith, and Eastern Iowans say the church bears some responsibility. Researchers found that gay and lesbian adults are 50 percent more likely than heterosexual adults to belong to no church and are far less likely to describe their faith as "very important" to them, with 60 percent of gay and lesbian adults using that definition compared with 72 percent of heterosexuals. (para. 3)

In summary, the media analysis supported participant comments regarding an improved mainstream print media climate. Reporters do not always use the most-appropriate language to report on LGBT issues, and they often juxtapose inappropriate counterpoints in a way that makes the issues seem more sensational. The sources that media rely on to comment on the LGBT perspective in each state effectively conveyed inclusive, positive messages focused on equality, and they reflected the variety of community supporters and allies who are willing to serve as spokespersons. These sources told the personal, authentic stories of the LGBT experience at the most local levels. These examples also indicated that the more extreme, perhaps even radical perspective often comes from *anti*-LGBT voices.

These anti-LGBT voices often come from conservative religious leaders, and the reporters who wrote the news articles that I analyzed incorporated those perspectives whenever possible. Media privilege the marriage issue, but they did a reasonable job reporting on state-specific LGBT issues. Reflective of the state-specific ground-up approach to advocacy, media reinforce in their coverage the local and state context, except when covering issues specific to different faith communities. In all, coverage reflects a 21st century movement that has become media savvy. LGBT advocates understand the types of messages that resonate with media, the types of messages and tactics that could risk portraying a radical agenda, and the types of spokespersons who lend the most (or least) credibility to their argument. An AP state and local wire story out of Massachusetts best explains this shift. The article reported the reaction of U.S. Congressman Barney Frank to the October 2009 LGBT march on Washington, D.C., in support of marriage equality:

> Rep. Barney Frank, the first openly gay member of Congress, says he'd rather see gay rights supporters lobbying their elected officials than marching in Washington this weekend, calling the demonstration 'a waste of time at best.' Frank, in an interview with The Associated Press, said he considers such demonstrations to be 'an emotional release' that does little to pressure Congress. 'The only thing they're going to be putting pressure on is the grass,' the Massachusetts Democrat said Friday. (Miga, 2009, para. 1)

His perspective helps paint a different picture of the LGBT community than the image conveyed through the loud protests of the 1960s and 1970s. As Equal Rights Washington's Kara Gallemore argued, there was a need to be loud then. But today's coverage indicates the important tactical shift that helps establish a new identity for the movement. The state-based LGBT advocacy movement is focused on a thoughtful, proactive agenda based on a constant and consistent drumbeat of equality communicated from the ground up.

The findings from the interviews and content analysis reflect how the Equality Agenda occurs and reinforce the merit of the long term, inclusive strategy employed by state-based LGBT advocacy organizations. The spiral of advocacy, from the ground up, has important implications for public relations scholarship. Moreover, the findings regarding how state-based advocacy perceives the structure of the movement has implications for new social movement scholarship and the discursive process of identity formation. The next chapter analyzes these findings, answers the research questions, and returns to the literature at the foundation of this dissertation.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusion

I began my dissertation with a core premise: social movements provide rich sites of investigation. They are ideal forums through which to examine the various communicative practices that influence the quest for social change. Social movements exist at the crossroads of several bodies of literature, including organizational communication, public relations, and media framing. *New* social movements, such as the movement for LGBT equality, introduce to that intersection the importance of identity, and integrate sociological perspectives regarding the formation and practice of identity. As such, the movement for LGBT equality provides the ideal site to investigate the symbiotic relationships between identity, communication, and culture. The perspective of specifically state-based LGBT advocacy organizations further provides a unique lens through which to investigate the process of social change.

I organized my research around three central questions. The first question explored the issues that comprise state-based agendas. The issues that are most relevant to today's movement organizations provide the context for organizational communication priorities. The second research question addressed the content of organizational messages used to advocate on behalf of the core issues, the communication practices that guide the public face of that agenda, and mainstream media's reflection of the organizational agenda. I examined how these organizations craft certain types of messages to communicate on behalf of their core issues and what those messages indicate about an organization's approach to advocacy. I also was interested in learning how the issue of marriage influences the process. There are issues other than marriage that are more fundamental to achieving LGBT equality, but I wanted to determine if the cultural obsession with marriage has affected movement organizations' strategies. Accordingly, I wanted to know if and how media portrayed the LGBT community in their coverage of the key issues, especially marriage. My last research question returned to social movement literature in order to understand what the state-based perspective indicates regarding the structure and trajectory of overall LGBT movement, how the perspective contributes to the new social movement paradigm, and what this means regarding the relationship between action and identity in the context of a new social movement. The answers to each of these questions provide important insight regarding several areas of literature: public relations, media framing, social movement theory, and queer theory. In the following sections, I first will summarize my core findings and then explore how the answers to each research question contributes to specific bodies of literature.

Defining the Equality Agenda – answering RQ 1 and summary of findings

I began my research by identifying the core issues that comprise the state-based movement for LGBT equality (RQ1). Although each state presents unique operational contexts and challenges, I found that state-based LGBT advocacy among those organizations that are part of this study is organized around four common policy areas: non-discrimination, hate-crimes, safe-schools, and relationship recognition. These findings support the priorities identified by the national philanthropic organization dedicated to LGBT issues, the Gill Foundation. The primary goal for these advocates is to establish inclusive non-discrimination policies. Making it illegal to discriminate—especially in terms of employment, housing, and public accommodation—provides a foundation for incremental protections such as statewide hate crimes protections, as well as school policies that protect children from bullying and promote sex education. Participant organizations are beginning to experience success around non-discrimination, hate crimes, and safe schools, but among those states in this study, the most-challenging policy area is relationship recognition. The opposition is quick to frame each LGBT policy initiative as an endorsement of same-sex marriage. As Palmquist explained, even a safe- schools bill becomes a debate regarding same-sex marriage. In Texas, Georgia, Ohio, and North Carolina—states in which statewide relationship provisions are not a possibility—organizations are concerned with incremental forms of relationship protection such as centralized databases of medical directives, domestic partner registries, and domestic partner benefits for government employees. Washington, Iowa, and Massachusetts are concerned with preserving statewide domestic partnership and marriage protections for same-sex couples.

Participants agreed that each issue requires state-level protections regardless of federal protections. The federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), for example, is limited in scope. Similarly, the federal hate crimes law is only enforceable once state laws have proven inadequate. State protections provide an important, first level of protection. Moreover, in the process of establishing these initial protections, participants said they have learned that it is important to insist on legislation that includes provisions for sexual orientation as well as gender identity. To pursue only sexual orientation splinters the community and creates steeper hurdles to revise or enact future legislation.

The answer to this first research question provides crucial context through which to explore the communicative dynamics that influence state-based advocacy. My findings demonstrate that the Equality Agenda is defined as establishing a constant and consistent drumbeat of equality messaging—around the issues of non-discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition—communicated to a variety of stakeholders from the ground up. My participants' goal is to promote inclusive messages of diversity that connect the issues facing the LGBT community with mainstream concerns. The language through which these values are conveyed therefore is important. Participants consistently discussed the importance of not addressing these issues explicitly as gay rights or LGBT rights issues; the agenda behind LGBT advocacy is very much about the pursuit of equality, not a set of special rights. Together, these messages emphasize that living without fear of discrimination, hate crimes, and bullying, and knowing that your relationship will be protected and respected, are universal human values. To advocate specifically for gay rights is to use the activist rhetoric of the opposition who argue, for example, that there is marriage and then there is gay marriage – something distinct, something different.

Often, the messages are in the form the authentic stories as told by LGBT citizens; everyday citizens become the organizational spokespersons and the proof points for change. The story of a person who has faced discrimination or who has been physically or verbally assaulted because of her or his sexuality or gender identity places a personal face on the issue and communicates the very real implications of not having these protections. Hearing the personal story of a woman who was unable to see her partner or child in an emergency room simply because she was not considered family helps explain why relationship recognition for all couples is important. The tactic reinforces the contact hypothesis, which argues that exposure to an individual—either in person or via media—who represents a certain minority reduces potential for prejudicial attitudes toward that minority group (Allport, 1958; Schiappa et al., 2005).

State-based LGBT advocacy uses these messages of equality to establish a constant and consistent drumbeat with a variety of stakeholders, including the LGBT community, straight allies and coalitions, legislators, and media. Participant comments reinforced the premise of relationship management theory, which focuses on establishing long-term relationships with all stakeholders, and to evaluate communication through the strength of the relationship (Ledingham, 1998). In terms of media, however, certain dynamics may prove challenging in terms of establishing a *consistent* drumbeat of messaging with mainstream media. The lack of a beat system, reporter use of inappropriate terminology, juxtaposition of incongruous counterpoints, lack of journalist research, and the pervasive focus on the single issue of marriage each can hinder advocacy organizations' media outreach efforts. Despite these challenges, media effectively convey these personal stories and messages of equality. Rather than quoting official organizational spokespersons media quote LGBT citizens who are willing to share their story. Media also leverage straight allies in the form of legislators, faith leaders, and opinion leaders. In fact, journalist use of non-organization-specific sources establishes credibility for an organization's agenda and demonstrates that advocacy organizations have been able to establish a constant and consistent drumbeat of messaging with their supporters and allies.

In all, my findings emphasize the interplay between two key dynamics that undergird the Equality Agenda. First, state-based movement organizations are successfully defining 21st century LGBT advocacy as driven by a movement for equality, not explicitly gay rights. Second, these organizations are defining the movement as one that happens from the ground up, not the top down. The first dynamic, in isolation, is not necessarily a new finding. Scholars have found that new social movements use broad messages of inclusiveness and diversity at strategic moments throughout a movement's lifetime in order to tie movement identity and experience with mainstream values. As Bernstein (1997) explained:

> Over time, 'identity' movements shift their emphasis between celebrating and suppressing differences from the majority. For example, the Civil Rights movement underscored similarities to the majority in order to achieve concrete policy reforms. At other times, movements that assert radical racial identities to build communities and challenge hegemonic American culture take center stage. (p. 532).

Gamson (1995) added that often a movement must navigate the balance "between a politics of identity-building and identity-blurring" (p. 401). What makes the state-based advocates' perspective unique and potentially powerful is their unwavering commitment to creating change from the ground up, not the top down. Participants argued that they have been successful in large part because they begin this narrative in local communities, hearing the stories of LGBT citizens, talking with community supporters and allies, and communicating the everyday needs of the LGBT community with local legislators and town councils. As participant Chuck Smith and U.S. Congressman Barney Frank both argued, it usually is more productive to have a one-on-one conversation with a soccer mom or a legislator from a specific district rather than holding an angry protest at the capitol. The strategy seems to be working. These organizations have experienced success executing a ground-up agenda around their four core issue areas, despite the cultural obsession with "gay marriage." Despite limited capacity, multiple state-based organizations have successfully advocated for state laws that now grant protections for millions of LGBT constituents in terms of hate crimes, bullying, discrimination, and relationship recognition (including marriage). They have been successful despite the challenge of collaborating with other movement organizations that not only have more capacity, but also want to use that capacity to forward a specifically top-down approach to advocacy.

This integration of equality messaging with a uniquely ground-up strategy also presents intriguing implications for communication-based research and demonstrates how the state-based perspective informs specific dynamics regarding the process of advocacy and social change. Equipped with the issues identified through RQ1 and the advocacy process summarized above, the following sections walk through RQ 2 and RQ 3, and examine how these findings inform public relations, media framing, social movement, and queer theory literature.

Public Relations and Media Coverage: RQ2

The movement is known by the way in which movement members communicate and the way that communication is reflected by the media (Gitlin, 1980; Rhodes, 2006). To that end, my second research question explored the communication processes that influence the process of social change. I first will walk through the contributions these findings provide to public relations scholarship as they relate to the role of legitimacy, the organization-to-public relationship, and agenda building. I then will explore what the findings from my content analysis indicate regarding how media report LGBT advocacy and anti-LGBT advocacy.

Public Relations

The findings support three aspects of public relations research. First, participant comments and the media sources reinforced how the processes that guide good public relations practice should be grounded in the process of managing organizational legitimacy. Second, the findings provided insight regarding the needed organization-to-public relationship that must be forged when communicating for social change. Finally, state-based LGBT advocacy demonstrates the process of agenda building through traditional media sources and indicates ways agenda building can be extended to social media.

1. Legitimacy

State-based LGBT advocacy offers new insight regarding how the principles of public relations can contribute to the process of social change, manage organizational legitimacy, and help define a social movement in the eyes of the public. State-based advocacy organizations very much establish crucial legitimacy for the equality agenda by demonstrating to their key stakeholders how issues regarding discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition represent universal values. These campaigns emphasize that these issues are about equality and fairness, not special rights. These issues reflect legitimate, mainstream concerns. Moreover, connecting the LGBT experience with the mainstream through personal stories establishes authentic spokespersons who effectively reinforce the agenda's legitimacy. The key for my participants, however, is establishing legitimacy from the ground up, first at the local level. Participants argued that hearing a personal story from a neighbor—someone who shops, works, and worships in the same local spaces—resonates more than providing a litany of statistics or showing examples of the LGBT experience beyond a local community. The impetus for communication is to ascribe a personal perspective, a localized mainstream identity to the needs and experiences of the LGBT community.

Embedded in the process of managing legitimacy—in the definition of legitimacy itself—is the importance of social norms. I began this project with the concern that broad assumptions of legitimacy bound by universal social acceptability—and public relations paradigms that place those assumptions at the center of communication processes—are shortsighted ideals in the context of social movements, especially social movements that represent such a diverse constituency. My findings demonstrate, however, that diversity is a universal value. Diversity is the legitimizing dynamic. Difference is important, and strategic communication that guides campaigns should connect the experiences of one group to the experiences of another. The clarification that these organizations provide for current public relations theory emphasizes that demonstrable adherence to socially acceptable standards requires a focus on diversity and the value of individual experience. For example, many corporate websites address diversity not by explicitly talking about any individual group, but rather by essentially communicating the message that everyone is diverse, and respecting individual difference is important for success (Mundy, 2009). To view socially accepted standards as objective, "mainstream" realities reinforces a problematic dichotomy of "us versus them" and the need to be more like "them." In the case of social movement organizations, the only universal standard is that of diversity. It shifts the understanding of socially accepted standards from an objective reality to a discursive process that occurs as experiences are connected, and ultimately as needs of one group are legitimized in the eyes of another group.

My findings reinforce public relations scholarship that calls for a renewed focus on legitimacy in public relations research. Public relations is rooted in the process of managing organizational legitimacy (Heath, 2008). Several public relations paradigms, including the two-way symmetrical communication model, theory of communicative action, and relationship management acknowledge legitimacy as an important part of the communication process. Yet, few public relations scholars have placed achieving organizational legitimacy as an *active* part of the public relations process (Patel, Xavier, & Broom, 2001). This literature raises two specific challenges. There is a continued need in public relations to examine how the process of establishing and managing legitimacy occurs. Moreover, scholars have emphasized the need to examine how social movement organizations can build agendas that legitimate social issues in the eyes of the mainstream

(Reber & Berger, 2005; Snow & Benford, 1992). My findings specifically support Boyd's (2005) call for public relations practices based in actional legitimacy, which are actions that seek incremental buy-in at the micro-levels of society for organizational goals. Boyd argued that the micro-level approach of actional legitimacy establishes stronger relationships and more-substantive buy-in between organizations and their publics than the macro-level approach of institutional legitimacy. Participants believe that the goal of state-based LGBT advocacy is to garner public buy-in for social change from the ground up, by establishing and maintaining legitimacy for LGBT issues.

2. Organization-to-Public Relationships

As participants explained, a constant and consistent drumbeat of communication must be forged between movement organizations and the LGBT community, community allies, legislators, and media, which supports the literature that argues for establishing important relationships as a central goal of public relations (Ledingham, 1998). Social movement organizations also must establish relationships between LGBT citizens and those citizens' local communities, their respective legislators, and local media outlets. Social movement organizations also must successfully navigate the sometimes delicate, but crucial, relationships with national LGBT advocacy organizations. They must establish a firm voice for state organizations while collaborating with other movement organizations to determine the best way forward. In all, state-based LGBT advocacy organizations must (1) lead and motivate local and state supporters; (2) partner with other local, state, and national LGBT advocacy organizations and initiatives; (3) educate the general public regarding the important LGBT issues; (4) advocate on behalf of those issues with legislators; and (5) communicate with savvy to a variety of media outlets.

Each relationship requires important decisions regarding the optimal organization-to-public balance. Accordingly, the core tenets of the two-way symmetrical communication model, theory of communicative action, and relationship management premise reinforce, in different ways, best practices as communicated by participants. For example, Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical model of communication emphasizes that organizations must account for and sometimes accommodate the public perspective when executing and evaluating its public relations strategy. As I argued, this model does not effectively address the needs of a social movement organization in terms of establishing cultural legitimacy and influencing public sentiment. I found, however, that this model does reinforce important lessons related specifically to the *internal* relationships that exist between state and national advocacy organizations. Participants consistently indicated that establishing two-way communication is an important step toward maximizing and sharing resources between movement organizations. That said, participants are concerned that the lessons learned in the states have not always been heard by the national organizations, and national organizations are not recognizing to the extent they should the contributions of these state organizations. The liaison role of the Equality Federation has assuaged this frustration to a degree, but state organizations want to establish two-way dialogue in order to reinforce with national groups the important success achieved through the state-based agenda.

The internal dynamic between state and national groups also supports Habermas's (1987) public-focused theory of communicative action. Habermas cautioned that legitimate dialog results from the pursuit of an ideal speech situation in which multiple perspectives are given equal voice. My participants argued that good decisions can be made only if every voice is at the national table. Legitimate decisions regarding the best way forward for the movement results from equal access and robust discourse. To that end, in order to facilitate effective two-way communication, and to ensure the place of the state voice at the national table, state organizations formed the Equality Federation. This proposition is different from the call for public relations to have a place at management's table (Dozier et al., 1995). State organizations have a role as equally important as national organizations. There is no management hierarchy. In fact, the unique structure of the movement—without an overarching, unified hierarchy with a single leader or lead organization—provides a unique forum to investigate Habermas's principles of communicative action.

I do not wish to oversimplify the theory of communicative action or two-way symmetrical communication model, but I would argue that when focused specifically on the internal state-to-national dynamics of the movement, and the state-based organization's role in that movement, Grunig (1984) and Habermas (1987) offer complementary ways to establish constructive relationships and productive dialogue specifically between internal stakeholders. Although the state and national organizations are independent entities, they are part of an integrated, interdependent system. These unique relationships, in turn, reposition Grunig's organization-focused perspective and Habermas's public-focused perspective as complementary dynamics of a social movement's *internal* communication processes that occur between movement organizations.

In terms of external communication, however, participant comments supported my argument that state-based LGBT advocacy supports the principles of relationship management. Participants indicated that establishing long-term, productive relationships drives the outreach to each of the three key external stakeholders: legislators, media, and the general public. State-based advocates meet with editors, town councils, and local citizens throughout their states. As Kara Gallemore of Equal Rights Washington argued, members of the general public who know LGBT neighbors, vote for LGBT issues. LGBT constituents who meet with their legislators can discuss the real experiences of living in that person's district, and provide tangible, but personal, proof points that may convince a legislator to promote inclusive LGBT policies. Media who disseminate these stories to the local communities establish connections with neighbors and grow public support.

Participants acknowledged that forging productive relationships takes time. Substantive change requires a focus on long-term outcomes rather than short-term outputs, which reinforces the premise of relationship management theory (Ledingham, 2006). Their discussion of the federal Employment and Non Discrimination Act (ENDA) provides a good example. While the HRC proffered a short-term approach that would eliminate protection for transgender community members, state-based and other national organizations insisted on including the entire community. They understood that the decision could delay passage of the bill, but the focus was on long-term, substantive change, not short-term fixes that could splinter the community while compromising the benefit of the bill itself. Establishing productive relationships with a variety of local stakeholders reinforces the legitimacy of the equality agenda, the legitimacy of the needs facing the LGBT community.

3. Agenda Building

Media provide important connections between the Equality Agenda and the general public; repeated attention in the media influences an issue's legitimacy. A key component of the Equality Agenda, therefore, is effectively working with the media to disseminate organizational messages. To that end, participants reinforced the importance of public relations in agenda building. They discussed the importance of becoming expert sources for journalists and leveraging those relationships to frame the core issues around messages of equality. Becoming a regular source for the media may positively influence media coverage and, in turn, influence the public agenda regarding what issues are important (Curtin, 1999; Curtin & Rhodenbaugh, 2001; Johnson et al., 1996). Perhaps because of the shifting media climate and disappearing beat system, journalists often must rely on these organizations and LGBT spokespersons to subsidize important community viewpoints and information. Of course, providing background information for unprepared reporters can be frustrating, but it also provides an opportunity to educate the public and shape the conversation. Participants therefore reinforced the importance of understanding the broader media climate, media routines, and media expectations.

The importance of the long-term, ground-up, relationship-focused strategy emphasizes that the first step toward influencing the public agenda requires connecting LGBT individuals who are willing to tell their stories to the media, who—in turn—may tell that story to a variety of audiences across local, state, and national communities. My participants emphasized that often it is more about connecting the messenger with the media, not just communicating a certain message. My content analysis demonstrated that the personal story of LGBT experience often resonates with media. These authentic stories of the LGBT experience subsidize important, intimate information to which media respond and convey to the general public. These stories establish for the public the notion that these are very real needs faced by neighbors who shop, worship, and work in the same spaces. It helps place into the public consciousness the reality of those needs and how they reflect mainstream concerns. This connection is enhanced by the Equality Agenda's commitment to a ground-up approach to advocacy. Participants indicated that the personal story is most effective when communicated locally. It is one thing to see in your Georgia living room a story about a same-sex couple in California. It is quite another thing to see a story about a couple down the street, who is speaking about the real-world implications in local terms; a local issue, a common legislator, a neighborhood church, provides a more-intimate connection.

Embedded within this strategy is the premise of the contact hypothesis, which often is employed in studies of media and not examined as part of the public relations process. As these organizations demonstrated, however, there is rich potential in terms of examining how the contact hypothesis can contribute to the agenda-building role of public relations. Allport (1958) posited the contact hypothesis, which argues that personal contact between individuals from different cultural groups reduces prejudicial tendencies between those individuals. In other words, personal contact with someone who represents "the other" diffuses preconceived, negative stereotypes associated with "the other." Schiappa et al. (2005, 2006) extended this premise to broadcast media, and argued that if media are able to connect minority populations with the general public, there is the possible reduction of prejudice toward that minority population regardless of physical contact. In future research, I hope to explore the relationship between the contact hypothesis and agenda building.

Relationships with mainstream media are important, but it is becoming increasingly imperative to understand the social media climate and identify online outlets that influence the public agenda. Social media expand the possibility for contact, and participants provided important insight regarding how the use of social media can contribute to the agenda-building process. For example, my participants emphasized that an emerging component of their organizations' outreach focuses on relationships with influential blogs. In a sense, bloggers serve as new opinion leaders. These organizations must become expert sources for these social media outlets. Their message can reach more audiences, faster. Moreover, the viral nature of social media maximizes the ability of an expert source to influence public sentiment. A respected blogger, for example, may be linked to a broad network of blogs, social media sites, and online news outlets. In the past an organization would write a single press release and submit to print media across the state. Today, organizations must rework that single release into multiple forms for multiple types of media.

Social media provide opportunities to subsidize concrete organizational messages and increase the reach of these authentic stories. Social media allow for quick dissemination of specific organizational messages to a variety of targeted audiences, including remote audiences that traditional media are unable to reach. As Amichai-Hamburger and McKenna (2006) argued in the context of Allport's (1958) original contact hypothesis, the Internet provides a unique and potentially powerful tool to produce positive contact and reduce prejudice. Agenda building therefore not only requires practitioners to have a handle on the pulse of social media processes, but it also calls for practitioners to identify ways to communicate authentic personal stories across a broad array of social media outlets. The first challenge is to establish positive contact between the LGBT experience in different communities with uninvolved publics in order to communicate how the needs of the LGBT community reflect mainstream values. The second challenge, then, is to effectively subsidize the online social discourse—observed via Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, etc.—by communicating the legitimate needs of the LGBT community.

In sum, the goal is to connect with new audiences, communicate the LGBT experience, convey how the needs of the LGBT community reflect mainstream values, and transition stakeholder status from latent to aware to active—or in social media terms—from followers to members. To that end, future research should update agenda building to incorporate routines of social media. In addition, research should explore the process, as explained by my participants, of conversion advocacy. It is important to determine best practices in terms of leveraging social media to first attract followers and then convert followers to active organizational members.

Defining the New Radicals

Media are important. Executing a group-up approach to advocacy through local media helps share the Equality Agenda with local constituents in their communities. Moreover, exposure through mainstream and social media has helped these organizations establish legitimacy for the Agenda itself. It therefore is important to understand the ways in which mainstream media report on LGBT advocacy in each state, which addresses the second part of RQ2. Accordingly, this section analyzes the findings from my media content analysis, and what they indicate regarding how the movement for LGBT equality is being conveyed. The findings specifically support arguments made by Iyengar (1987), Tuchman (1978), and Entman (1993). In short, the content analysis revealed that media do legitimize certain voices by using them as sources in covering an issue. Moreover, my participants acknowledge the legitimizing power that media wield. They discussed their work with mainstream print and mainstream broadcast, independent and LGBT, and the emerging role of social media.

Participants indicated that print media coverage has improved over the last decade. Certain challenges remain, but the education efforts and media outreach in prior decades helped establish a positive voice for the LGBT community. My participants argued that it is important to maintain these efforts and outreach, particularly with broadcast outlets. That said, reflective of Tuchman's (1978) and Iyengar's (1987) arguments, my participants focused many of their frustrations with media on the actual structure of the news process. In the past, news beats formed around those issues media deemed most legitimate. My participants indicated, however, that not only do beats no longer exist, but also that they *miss* the days when the media process was organized around a beat system. They argued that the beat system allowed them to establish key relationships with reporters assigned to LGBT topics. This finding is surprising given the literature has emphasized how a beat system limits coverage of social movements and delegitimizes social issues for which these organizations advocate. My participants from these state-based organizations, however, felt a beat system could benefit their advocacy. By establishing relationships with beat reporters, these organizations were able to educate the reporters on key issues and influence coverage. It allowed organizations to establish a consistent drumbeat with media. Participants clarified that often, these frustrations are pronounced in broadcast media. As Iyengar (1987) argued, my participants argued that broadcast continues to limit itself to episodic and sensational coverage.

It is important to remember, however, several industry dynamics have affected the ability of media sources to report effectively on the movement. First, the movement's core issues are applicable to a number of beats, including politics, health, marriage, family, religion, etc. As Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) argued, for example, social movements often fall between traditional news beats, which makes it difficult for movement organizations to receive crucial coverage. Accordingly, although a newspaper may not have a specific social movement or LGBT beat, it could report on LGBT issues in a variety of forums. Consequently, more than one reporter may be sent to investigate the issue, depending on her or his specific area. Second, as a growing number of scholars have addressed (e.g. Farhi, 2009; Smith, 2009; Cho et al., 2006), the shifting economics of the media system itself may influence how issues are covered. Economies of scale in both broadcast and print media may result in fewer reporters assigned to multiple beats. As a result, the media outlet may not be able to report on any single issue with the desired depth.

Given the limitations presented by a changing news structure, however, my participants may have opportunities to wield a stronger influence in the news process and how media frame stories for public consumption. And though this is not a media framing study, participant comments and the content analysis of media coverage provided important insight regarding how media may be shifting the way they frame LGBT advocacy. Gitlin (1980) and Rhodes (2006) argued that media often denigrate those sources perceived to represent a radical voice. In the past, those sources often were social movement organizations. For example, media isolated the radical aspects of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Black Panthers, and framed the New Left and Black Power movements in terms of extremism, deviance, and threat. My participants argued, however, that although media still capitalize on opportunities to portray the LGBT advocate as the radical street protestor—as seen in the aftermath of Proposition 8—coverage in the studied states is largely supportive and indicates that their movement representatives have become more media savvy. These advocates focus on connecting the LGBT experience with mainstream values through non-combative, positive messages of equality. In contrast to the street protests of the 1960s and 1970s, today's LGBT voice at the state level of these organizations is communicated through personal stories of real experiences. My participants do not directly engage in the media's attempt to craft a more-sensational angle, and they direct journalists when possible to appropriate sources and counterpoints. They want to ensure, for example, that it media do not juxtapose the comments of a state legislator with the local Catholic bishop. If the media seek a political angle, they should juxtapose political perspectives. If media seek a religious angle, they should juxtapose the comments of religious leaders.

At the same time, the findings demonstrated that organizations and individuals opposed to LGBT equality are establishing a record of negative messaging and sometimes-extreme tactics. And reflective of the SDS and Black Panther examples from the 1960s, media are capitalizing on these opportunities. Participants argued that the juxtaposition in the media of the LGBT advocates' positive, inclusive message with the oppositions' negative, divisive message helps portray the LGBT voice as that of the mainstream.

Accordingly, media may be in the process of defining a new radical. My findings indicate several potential implications for media framing. Media coverage reflects the contest over language between LGBT advocates and the anti-LGBT opposition, which indicates three potential sets of frames and counterframes specific to identity-based social movements. The media are defining what is mainstream versus radical, who is a victim versus victimizer, and if the movement is advocating for equal protections or fighting for special rights. Ideally, LGBT advocacy organizations seek a story that portrays the movement as representative of mainstream ideals, a movement that advocates for equal protection on behalf of a group of citizens who have long been the victims of widespread discrimination. The opposition seeks media coverage that portrays homosexual activists as the 1960s radical street protesters who victimize traditional social values in the name of a special set of rights. As the analysis implies, my proposed frames and counterframes complement Entman's (1993) framing model, which calls for the identification of the problem, causal interpretation, moral judgment, and/or possible remedies. I argue, however, that the gay movement, as an identity-based social movement, requires a framing analysis that focuses on the distinctions between a frame and its corresponding counterframe. It is not enough to examine who media portray as the victim, because in framing the victim media suggest who or what may be the victimizer. Similarly, by identifying the radical voice, they are framing what constitutes mainstream values. For identity-based social movements, these juxtaposed frames and counterframes are key to understanding the overall media climate. In my next study, I will use these findings to conduct a media framing study. It is important, in the spirit of Gitlin (1980) and Rhodes (2006), to test the hypothesis that media indeed are framing a new radical.

This possible shift in media framing, taken with the shifting news structure itself, therefore provide opportunities for LBGT advocacy organizations to influence how their story is portrayed for public consumption. Specifically, LGBT advocates should have an opportunity to focus on frame sponsorship. They should take advantage, as Carragee and Roefs (2004) argued, of available "economic and cultural resources… to promote frames" and influence the news discourse (p. 219). The findings suggest that successful sponsorship should focus on crafting authentic messages that convey the crucial personal stories and maximizing the use of community spokespersons to deliver that message. Frame sponsorship goes beyond redirecting reporters to appropriate spokespersons and providing a strong counterpoint to anti-LGBT sentiment. As many of my participants demonstrated, it requires an unwavering focus on the personal, authentic message, and it benefits from establishing a well-stocked stable of community spokespersons who are able to develop relationships with local media outlets, including print and broadcast sources, freelance journalists, and blogs. Successful sponsorship also requires, however, an awareness when certain frames are not salient with certain audiences. For example, Equality California recently emailed its constituents explaining that despite messaging campaigns, media outreach, door-to-door advocacy in local communities, and public forums, a slight majority remained supportive of the Proposition 8 marriage ban (Kors, 2010). Accordingly, the organization asked its constituents to reply with their own perspective and offer suggestions regarding what could be done in terms of messaging and campaigning that might shift public opinion. Future research should address how advocacy organizations can test and evaluate the salience of certain frames with targeted publics.

This process begins, however, by studying the organizational messages and communication strategies developed by LGBT advocacy organizations. This foundation provides a benchmark by which to evaluate the degree of success these organizations achieve in media outreach. My findings demonstrate that state-based LGBT advocates have successfully achieved message pull-through. Although a full media framing study would lend clarity to these findings, there are important lessons in terms of shaping media frames through the use of local, personal stories and non-LGBT spokespersons, as well as the strategic use of oppositional messaging. In turn, this supports Zoch and Molleda's (2006) call for research that investigates the intersection of public relations and media framing. As my participants and media coverage demonstrated, understanding the intersection of internal message development and external reflection of those messages through mainstream media provide important lessons for social advocacy.

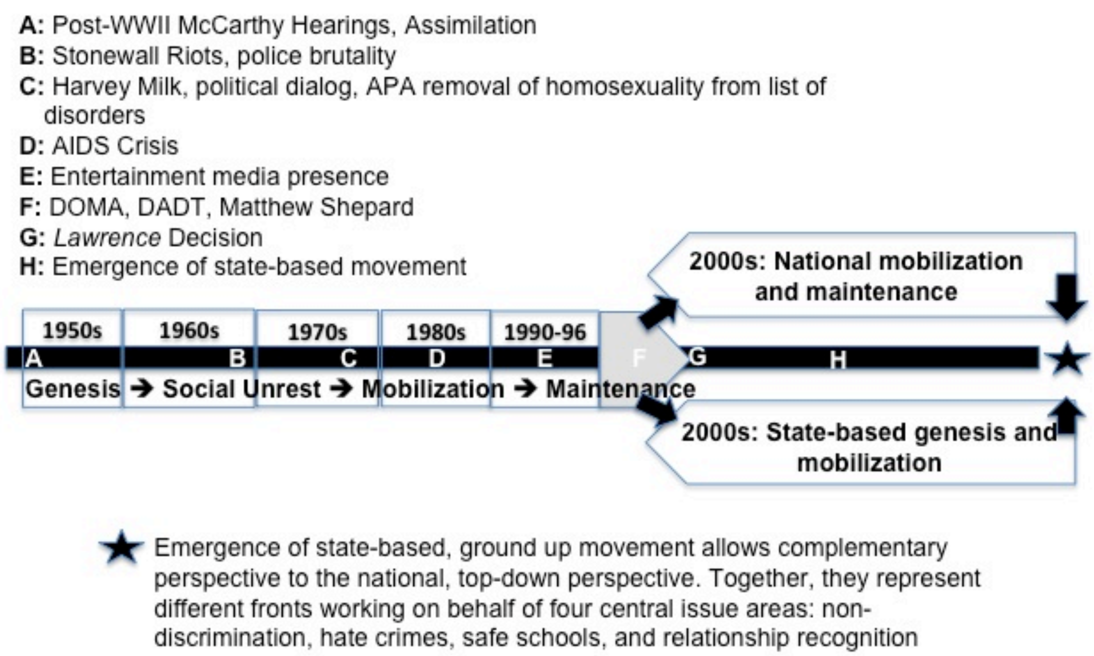
These findings also provide important lessons for social movement literature and cues regarding the identity of the overall movement. The next two sections address the final two research questions driving this research. The first section explores how my findings contribute to social movement literature. The following section then examines what these findings indicate regarding the overall movement identity.

Contributions to Social Movement Literature: RQ3

The state-based approach to LGBT advocacy responds to the first part of RQ3: How does the state perspective contribute to the dynamics of the overall movement? First, my findings provide important insight regarding how the state-based LGBT advocacy movement fits within the context of the traditionally accepted life stages of social movements. As I argued in the literature review, four events in a span of seven years shifted the trajectory of the movement: the passage of the Defense of Marriage Act and Don't Ask Don't Tell; Matthew Shepard's murder; and the impetus of the *Lawrence v. Texas* Supreme Court decision that prompted a 21st century movement for marriage equality. As a result, dozens of new state-focused LGBT advocacy organizations, including many of my participant organizations, emerged at the outset of the 21st century. Participant comments reinforced the argument that while national advocacy organizations and centralized national advocacy strategies have merit, they are not enough. The movement must occur simultaneously on several fronts: local, state, and national. Moreover, the work that state-based advocacy has done in the first decade of the 21st century is providing the critical mass needed for national campaigns, including the repeals of Don't Ask Don't Tell and Defense of Marriage Act. Participants also emphasized that state work helped ensure a push for a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). In the context of social movement theory, therefore, these findings reinforce a revised, more robust movement model that allows for simultaneous community mobilization and movement maintenance from complementary national and state perspectives.

Blumer (1939) suggested that social movements transition through four specific stages: social unrest, popular excitement, formalization, and institutionalization. At the beginning, they are unorganized, slow moving, and lack control. Eventually they crystallize around a specific issue or set of issues, and develop an organized plan of action. Organized movements also benefit from clear leadership and a defined membership. Stewart et al. (2001) amended Blumer's premise with a slightly more-robust life cycle that moves from genesis, to social unrest, enthusiastic mobilization, maintenance, and ultimately termination. Using Stewart et al.'s life stages, Model 7 suggests—given my participant's guidance—how the develop of the modern gay movement has occurred, and how the emergence of the state-based movement in the early 2000s contributes to a more-robust 21st century movement by establishing a crucial ground game.

Model 7: Modern American Gay Movement, Timeline



I do not intend for the movement model to reflect a split movement for LGBT advocacy. Rather, the model reflects a specifically 21st century perspective that demonstrates a strategic move by movement members to collaborate in new ways at different levels.

The move toward a decentralized movement structure reinforces the gay movement's label of a new social movement. New social movement scholars distinguish post-1960s social movements from earlier social movements by emphasizing the importance of a decentralized organization, focus on member participation, and emphasis on identity as the impetus for movement action (Huesca, 2001). Scholars have debated, however, the tangible distinctions between traditional social movements and new social movements and the merit in having separate classifications (Pichardo, 1997). In addition to exploring why the distinction is important, some scholars hold that new social movement theory has effectively explained why there is a need for a nuanced perspective to traditional social movement theory, but questions remain regarding the procedural distinctions (Buechler, 1995). To an extent, I agree with some of these concerns. It is problematic to dissociate questions of culture from pre-1960, traditional social movements. In one form or fashion, questions of identity, politics, and culture are embedded in all social movements. Is it possible to examine a social movement through explicitly a political lens *or* cultural lens, or to address a movement as only identity based *or* issues based? Politics are part of a society's culture. As my participants explained, notions of identity are very much tied to the issues. They are linked.

Despite these tensions, my findings reinforce the movement's status as a new social movement. I would argue that, while identity as the impetus for action is a key question for this dissertation, the decentralized nature of the movement revealed through these findings and the length of the movement help distinguish the gay movement as a new social movement. A decentralized movement allows organizations to approach issues simultaneously on different fronts: from the ground up and the top down. Moreover, the decentralization itself allows for a renewed focus on identity as the source of action. The ground-up approach places at the center of the movement the identity and experience of individuals in local communities. The emerging state-based movement in the 21st century as discussed by my participants demonstrates the strategic opportunities made possible by this new social movement model. The decentralized, grassroots nature of post-1960s movements allows for an explicit focus on identity at the most-fundamental levels of society that was not possible with traditional social movement that focused on systemic economic transformations at higher levels.

Participants also discussed the importance in a decentralized movement of navigating the context at both the state and national level. Not only are there unique legislative challenges facing each state, but there are also structural challenges in terms of reconciling those unique contexts with the national climate and connecting state work with a national movement. Specific dynamics, both internal and external to the movement, influence the ability to effectively begin at the micro levels of society and craft an agenda that influences the broader ideological tapestry of society. Certainly, there are issues with collaboration between movement members, given my participants' comments regarding certain national LGBT advocacy organizations and the pervasive cultural influence of marriage. I would argue, however, that the decentralized structure of the movement helps resolve the challenges of understanding issues of identity and difference that would be difficult in traditional social movements. The national organizations have a very different perspective regarding how identity and grievances should be reconciled in various parts of the community. The state-based argument is that a new social movement must start at the micro level that addresses specific grievances in local communities. The challenge is connecting this micro level with the macro level challenges produced by cultural context and movement structure.

Despite the different state and national perspectives, all movement organizations advocate for collective action around the same four issues areas. Organizations must mobilize LGBT constituents, straight allies, organizational coalitions, and community leaders around policy initiatives. As Snow and Benford (1992) argued, for example, these organizations must 1) inspire action, 2) attract members and resources, and 3) legitimate the group's claims and work. Ganesh (2003) explained that it is crucial for social movement organizations to communicate in a way that balances organizational legitimacy with organizational accountability. At the heart of social movements, therefore, is the need for state and national organizations to legitimize certain needs in the eyes of the public. And at the heart of new social movements is the need to legitimize the identities associated with those needs. As the findings specific to RQ2 demonstrated, these processes of legitimation require connecting the real experience of LGBT citizens with those citizens' neighbors. And, in order to legitimize the Equality Agenda, these connections must be made first at the most local levels, in local communities.

My participants emphasized that this process of legitimization takes time. A successful movement executed from the ground up, my participants argued, depends on an agenda focused on the long term and convincing stakeholders that substantive change takes time. Equality will not occur through a single sea change, but rather through incremental change that thus far has crossed two centuries. Therefore, LGBT advocates not only must address how to reconcile aspects of identity and issue advocacy with a strategy that connects the state-based movement to the national table, it must do so in the context of an agenda with no clear end date.

The duration of the formal movement adds an important dimension that distinguishes new social movements from traditional social movements. If it can be agreed that the modern LGBT movement began post-WWII, then the active movement has been sustained for more than 60 years; the movement is just beginning to realize some of the major achievements. The absence of a definitive termination stage is a key distinction for a new social movement. Certainly, there are an infinite number of ways to conceptualize the life stages of any movement. As Chauncey (2004) argued, however, it is problematic to point to a single issue—such as interracial marriage in *Loving v. Virginia*, or Equal Employment Opportunity for women—and then claim that the resolution of the issue terminates the movement itself. I do not want to argue that traditional social movements were accomplished in short timeframes. The definitive end to each traditional social movement prior to the 1960s could be debated. My argument, however, is that it is important to consider the length of the movement itself and acknowledge that new social movement questions of identity and culture require long term strategies that span generations.

This perspective reflects Blumer's (1971) important distinction that it may be more fruitful to examine social movements based on the emergence of certain social problems rather than a social movement's *response* to a social problem (as noted through stages of social unrest, mobilization, and maintenance). In fact, my participants consistently emphasized that the agenda comes from the states and is determined by identifying the problems facing LGBT individuals in local communities. As Blumer explained, the trajectory of social movements can be understood in terms of the 1) emergence of a social problem, 2) legitimation of that problem, 3) mobilization of action on behalf of that problem, 4) development of a specific plan to address that problem, and 5) implementation of that plan. This model provides a more-fluid and practical perspective to the process of social change. For example, one of the key challenges participants face is in the cultural dynamics that shape the problem definition itself. My participants argued that an LGBT advocacy organization's first priority is to legitimize the fundamental issues of non-discrimination, hate crimes, and safe schools. Yet, the pervasive cultural focus on marriage both inside and outside of the LGBT community sometimes makes it difficult to achieve public support for an agenda built around these lower-profile issues. Blumer's model, however, allows movements to adapt to emerging issues, and it accounts for the challenges of pursuing legitimacy in the face of cultural dynamics that seek to redirect the conversation.

I would add to this model two clarifications. First, rather than beginning with the "emergence" of a social problem, I argue that it begins with the "identification" of a social problem. In many cases, the needs of LGBT individuals in local communities—in terms of protections against discrimination, hate crimes, and bullying, and for relationship recognition—are not emerging problems. They existed during the 1960s and 1970s, but because of the inroads made during the last forty years, movement organizations have been able to identify them as priorities for today's movement. Second, a ground-up movement focused on establishing a critical mass of policy support as is moves from local communities to the national stage requires that this become a cyclical process. As the Spiral of Advocacy demonstrated (see Model 4), once a problem has been identified, legitimized, and acted upon in the local community, movement organizations must then use that success as a proof point as it brings the problem into public consciousness and legitimizes that problem at a higher level.

Ultimately, the question of whether issues emerge or are identified—in the context of the spiral of advocacy—depends on perspective. For example, from the LGBT advocate's perspective, legitimizing an issue requires identifying the importance of the issue for the community. From the community's perspective, the issue emerging as part of the public discourse reflects legitimacy of the issue itself. For the LGBT community, these issues have long been identified, but for the mainstream these issues are just emerging. The role of perspective is explained best by premise of standpoint theory, which argues, "all knowledge claims are socially located" (Oleson, 2000, p. 222). Accordingly, establishing legitimacy in the context of social movement advocacy is a discursive process that helps position or reposition knowledge to better reflect the importance of a given issue. In a future study, I will explore this process, and specifically investigate how—depending on perspective—movement constituents and publics can misuse or incorrectly remember the movement's history. Embedded within this investigation is a further application of new social movement theory to LGBT advocacy.

Queer Theory, Identity, and the Equality Agenda: RQ3

The dynamics of new social movements, and the importance of universal values based on diverse identities, helps answer the second part of RQ3: How do state-based LGBT advocacy organizations address the dilemma of new social movements regarding the relationship between identity and action? The findings demonstrate that advocates for LGBT equality must harness the value and emotional significance of the LGBT experience in order to convey the important, unique identity of the LGBT community in a way that explains how the issues facing the community reflect fundamental human needs. The balancing act requires communication strategies that connect the LGBT identity with the mainstream while not negating the importance of that unique experience. The process begins at in local communities. For state-based movement organizations, public relations processes focus on legitimizing LGBT identity and connecting that identity with mainstream concerns. Along the way, media representation influences what the mainstream knows about the LGBT community and helps determine the social identity of the LGBT movement. In all, how the LGBT identity is presented, discussed, and conveyed undergirds the Equality Agenda and reinforces why identity-based social advocacy provides an ideal site of inquiry for public relations, media framing, and social movement scholars.

This question of identity is complicated. Tajfel (1978) defined social identity as, "that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 63). Yet, reconciling the identity of a uniquely diverse community presents steep challenges in terms of mobilization, collective action, and social change. As Joshua Gamson (1995) asked, "If identities are indeed much more unstable, fluid, and constructed than movements have tended to assume—if one takes the queer challenge seriously, that is—what happens to identity-based social movements such as gay and lesbian rights?" (p. 391). Epstein (1994) noted, "Recent studies of social movements… have emphasized the critical importance of collective identity as something whose existence cannot simply be assumed by the analyst of the social movement. Yet queer politics raises perplexing questions about the relations between identity and action" (p. 198-199).

These critiques reflect a central inquiry for this dissertation and a central issue for the modern movement for LGBT equality. Each tactical component of the Equality Agenda—establishing a constant and consistent drumbeat of equality messaging from the ground up—contributes to the relationship between identity and action. My participants emphasized that the process begins with inclusive messages that promote the importance of equality, the value of diversity, and how both should be mainstream concerns. The issues facing the diverse LGBT community reflect real challenges facing every individual, regardless of affiliation with or support of the LGBT community. These participants very explicitly represent the LGBT community, but their objective is to communicate real needs while reinforcing the breadth of diverse identities in a social landscape. For example, One Iowa's goal is to explain why marriage equality is important for all Iowa families, not only families headed by same-sex couples. It not only ascribes to queer theory's claim that it is problematic to understand identity through socially constructed silos of meaning (Gamson, 2000), it also makes a claim that change can happen *only* if you acknowledge the infinite and ongoing discursive nature of identity.

The challenge of queer theory, therefore, actually is the solution. How can you form an effective identity-based social movement that represents an infinitely diverse constituency, a movement grounded by the notion that all identity is fluid? By using the diversity and instability of identity as the basis for communication itself, by demonstrating to targeted publics that diversity is important, and by explaining that because we are all diverse—yet live our lives in the same spaces, with the same rituals, aspiring to the same dreams—then our concerns are your concerns. Similar to my public relations argument regarding broad statements of adherence to social acceptability, what queer theory does for LGBT advocacy, then, is to remove the "us versus them" critique of social constructionism (Gamson, 2000). In a sense, the fact that queer theory emerged from social constructionism has limited its application to actionable social movements, because the characteristics of queer theory are compared to social construction premises. If the comparison, instead, is to no basis of action, then queer theory shows promise for social movements. In the context of William Gamson's (1995) collective action paradigm that calls for messages of injustice, agency, and identity, where "injustice" highlights a social wrong, "agency" encourages action on behalf of that injustice, and "identity" communicates a movement's unified "we," the definition of "we" unifies the social movement community and connects it with a broader ideological fabric. The broader definition of "we" that connects rather than distinguishes provides a strategic opportunity for advocates to broaden the message and reach more publics. As the premise of queer theory demands, state-based LGBT advocacy is grounded by *not* defining silos of identity. The moment a movement ascribes to social categories, or suggests that a certain identity within that movement does not fit a certain category—such as not including the transgender community in Employment Non-Discrimination Act—the movement limits its ability to effectively wage a ground up strategy that represents the entire community.

In moving toward advocacy based on "we" rather than "us versus them," the second piece of Gamson's (1995) challenge asks how a movement guided by the principles of queer theory can be actionable. Once again, the key resides in the state-based focus on a ground-up strategy that begins in local communities. As I began analyzing my findings, I did not think much about the participants who mentioned, in passing, the importance of establishing a drumbeat of messaging across a variety of stakeholders in local communities. As the main themes were revealed, however, the metaphor of a drumbeat became increasingly resonant. The drumbeat, especially when used to connect this infinitely diverse constituency to other publics, from the ground up, is quite powerful. Much like state-based LGBT advocacy, a drumbeat is distinct. It makes a single point, consistently, and with purpose. When struck loudly, a drumbeat can startle or disrupt, much like the protests of the 1960s. Certainly, during this early stage of social unrest, the movement needed to be loud. In the days immediately following the passage of Proposition 8, the community also needed to mobilize and express discontent through the drumbeat of protest. But my participants argued that a long-term movement strategy requires LGBT advocacy to sound an incrementally louder drumbeat of messaging as it moves from the local to national conversation.

The Equality Agenda begins by sounding a drumbeat of change that is able to reach local communities and establish crucial discourse among neighbors. The drumbeat and corresponding public discourse grow as inclusive policies establish a critical mass first at local, then at state levels. By the time a requisite critical mass of public and policy support allows pursuit of a national agenda, that drumbeat is loud and sustained. Participants acknowledge that they sometimes must accommodate shifting external factors along the way, but advocacy for LGBT equality is not apologetic, nor does it relent.

The relationship between identity and action, at least in terms of the movement for LGBT equality, reinforces the importance of a decentralized structure as the one, fundamental criteria for a new social movement. Without the decentralized structure that allows for a grassroots, or in this case state-focused, structure, the effective accommodation of diverse and fluid identities would be impossible. This approach is not to negate the top-down, national structure. As my participants emphasized, both perspectives are needed. The state perspective, however, connects with constituents in real ways in local communities. My participants are on the ground meeting these individuals and connecting their experiences with their neighbors, legislators, pastors, and media. Diverse, fluid identity is manageable at this local level. If a movement starts from the ground up, then it can help ensure that many different voices are represented. As Justin Uebelhor argued, sometimes organizations do a better job than others, but having that conversation in local communities helps ensure an inclusive movement.

Conclusion

The ground-up approach to the Equality Agenda is the central finding of this dissertation. As I have discussed, it perhaps is the most-significant dynamic of state-based advocacy and offers an intriguing counterpoint to academic research that privileges a top-down national perspective. As my participants emphasized, both perspectives are crucial to the gay movement. There needs to be better acknowledgement, however, of the power and benefit of the state lens. State-based LGBT advocacy organizations must distinguish for constituents the state and national agendas, and the long-term importance of the state agenda. To that end, in April 2010 Equality North Carolina Executive Director Ian Palmquist sent an email regarding a federal mandate by President Barack Obama that requested national hospital visitation rights for same-sex partners. In the spirit of the Equality Agenda, however, Palmquist explained:

> Late yesterday afternoon, President Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum extending hospital visitation rights to same-sex couples and others across the country. That's reason to celebrate! But what makes it even more exciting for us is that our work—the work you help us do every day—provided the model the President cited in his memo. In fact, he directly quoted the policy Equality NC proposed and got adopted right here in North Carolina two years ago! This demonstrates once again that work we're doing on the ground at the state and local level is having an impact beyond our borders. Change flows up from the states, not down from Washington, DC, and you're a critical part of making that change happen. (Palmquist, 2010).

This email provides an example of the Equality Agenda at work. It demonstrates that various forms of relationship recognition, not only marriage, are important goals for LGBT advocacy. It demonstrates how the Equality Agenda begins with individual experience in local communities. It demonstrates the interplay of both state and national perspectives, and the importance of having state protections in place before national progress can occur. It also demonstrates my participants' unwavering focus on creating change from the ground up. The experience of LGBT citizens in local communities provides the foundation for advocacy and helps establish an agenda for social change reflected by a constant and consistent drumbeat of equality messaging communicated from the ground up around issues of non-discrimination, hate crimes, safe schools, and relationship recognition.

My hope is that this dissertation reflects more strengths than limitations. First, as I mentioned, some scholars may consider my identity as a gay man to be a limitation, although I think my experience provides crucial insight. Given the nature of interview-based research and qualitative content analyses, my findings are not generalizable, but the findings do provide important cues regarding broader trends in LGBT advocacy. In addition, given the qualitative focus on depth rather than breadth, I only addressed eight of the more than 50 state-based advocacy organizations. I therefore plan to replicate this study. In doing so, I will focus more on the nuances, the differences between participants and organizations. My findings from these organizations reflected an extremely consistent message. Consistency could result from the fact that my participants are media savvy professionals who are well versed in staying on message. This dynamic does not detract from the importance of their comments and the power of the Equality Agenda. Equipped with this foundation, however, it is important now to seek more nuanced perspectives that broaden, and perhaps problematize, the communicative practices that influence LGBT advocacy.

My biggest regret is also my biggest source of encouragement. This dissertation only begins to address the potential in examining the various communicative practices that influence the quest for social change. I want to know more about how public relations research can benefit from examining the communication practices of social movement organizations, and how research regarding social movements can respond to Heath's (2008) call for public relations scholarship that returns the field to its roots of social change. I want to know more about how media frame state-based social movement advocacy. And I want to continue the conversation regarding the distinct role of the 21^{st} century new social movement.

What this dissertation does, beyond defining the Equality Agenda, is shift the study of LGBT advocacy to the state level, to organizations doing the lion's share of the work. With staffs ranging from three to seven employees, my participant organizations collectively represent more than two million LGBT citizens.[22] Without much funding or notoriety, and despite large, powerful influences that challenge their work, these organizations help provide fundamental protections to millions of Americans in the form of non-discrimination bills, hate crimes legislation, safe schools, and various forms of relationship recognition. My participants focus on the long-term strategy, knowing that their work will create substantive change, but without the promise that change will happen in their lifetime. Most importantly, while my participants are continuing the work that began more than half a century ago, they are defining a specifically 21st century movement from the ground up. The good news is that public sentiment is shifting. Many more straight allies are becoming willing spokespersons for the community, and legislators at the highest levels of government are beginning to advocate for inclusive legislation. Certainly there are challenges regarding the best ways to collaborate along the way. But that tricky process is an important part of defining the movement itself. As Toni Broaddus so aptly explained, "It's a movement; it's messy…. I don't think that's a bad thing. I think ultimately it's a good thing."

[22] 579,968 (Texas); 278,943 (Georgia); 212,104 (North Carolina); 335,110 (Ohio); 62,000 (Iowa); 269,074 (Massachusetts); 266,983 (Washington) – Source, Williams Institute (2008) as determined from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Appendix A: Sample interview-participant recruitment email (email sent to communication director at Equality Rights Washington)

Dear Kara,

I hope this email finds you well. I am a Ph.D. candidate at UNC Chapel Hill in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication writing to see if you - or if someone at Equal Rights Washington - would be willing to take a few minutes to speak with me as part of my dissertation research. I know you probably receive constant requests from students for participation in different studies, surveys, etc, especially given the recent "everything but marriage" bill. But I hope that my research will be of particular interest to you given your role as communications manager.

In short, I am investigating the "best" communication practices used by state-based gay rights organizations. As part of this, I am interviewing employees from several state-based organizations around the country regarding the communication / media strategies they employ in their respective campaigns for equality. My goal is to assemble a kind of "lessons-learned" guide for state organizations based on what has and has not worked in the past. As an active member of the gay community and from what I have seen in terms of existing resources, I think this type of state-based research is important and could potentially help in our fight for equality. If nothing else, I hope it could help update what is already out there - especially for organizations that do not have extensive resources of their own.

That said, I was wondering if you would be willing to sit down with me for an interview that would last no more than an hour and a half. Of course, participation is voluntary and you would be able to skip any questions or discontinue the interview at any time. And if you prefer, you certainly would not be required to use your name. In all, I hope to interview between 10 and 15 individuals who serve in a communication capacity at different sate-based organizations. Once I transcribe and analyze the interviews, I might have additional follow up questions, but I wouldn't anticipate these would to take much more than an hour more of your time.

As part of my thanks, I will make a $25 donation to Equal Rights Washington. I also would make available my analysis. If you have any questions, and/or if you or someone else on your staff would be willing to interview, please let me know.

Thanks so much for your time. Happy New Year!
Best,
Dean

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Starting Script:
(INTERVIEWER TO READ) Thanks again for being willing to speak with me. As a reminder, I am investigating the strategic communication practices of state-based gay rights organizations. I'm going to ask you a few basic questions about yourself, then about the organization you work for, your organization's communication needs/strategies, and your role in the process. Feel free to stop the interview at any time. If you would rather not answer a question, just tell me so. You are not obligated to answer. That said, if there is anything that you want to discuss that I have not asked, let me know that as well and we can redirect the interview. The donation to your organization is not contingent on completing the interview.

(INTERVIEWER: Ask to sign consent form)
(INTERVIEWER: Everything noted with an arrow is a prompt. Use only as needed.)

Section 1: Personal information:
1. What is your Name (or do you wish to use a pseudonym)?
2. What is your current position with [insert organization name]?
    a. Is this your only job? Your primary job?
3. Quick professional background?

Section 2: Organization Background:
1. Please tell me about your organization's background – General, mission, vision, etc.
   Probes:
    a. What is your organization's name?
    b. What is your organization's mission?
        - ➔ What are the primary responsibilities of your organization?
    c. How old is the organization? Can you tell me a little about its history?
    d. How is your organization organized?
        - ➔ What are the different functions within the organization?
        - ➔ What are the core positions (employment)?
    e. How large is the staff?
    f. When does your fiscal year end?
    g. Who are your constituents? (If they mention only the LGBT community, ask about *external* constituents.)

2. So can you speak a bit about the issues comprise your organization's agenda, that you feel are key to achieving your mission.
    - ➔ KEY: Can you list or prioritize the issues, do they change per quarter, per year - ***what are the factors that determine the issues*** for which you advocate at a given time.
    - ➔ Are the issues a proactive strategy or reactive? Or does it depend on the issue?

Section 3: The Role of Communication in the Organization

1. Is there a specific communication department/function within the structure of the organization? If so, how is it (are they) organized?
   Probes:
   - ➔ If yes: How large is the communications staff? How is the communication staff organized?
   - ➔ If no: How is the communication function handled? As part of another area? As part of everyone's job?
   - ➔ Have you worked (or do you work) with agencies for communication campaigns?

2. Is the development and execution of public communication strategies/campaigns important to your organization's day-to-day activities? Or are resources focused in other areas?

3. Who do you target with your campaigns? (Internal, external, political, media, community organizers, opposition) If you could rank them in order of importance, how would they rank?

Section 4: Issues and Strategies – <u>Let's focus on the past two years</u>

1. So returning to the core issues that comprise your overall agenda, talk a bit about how you develop campaigns around these issues. Specifically, how do develop and communicate your message to the various targets discussed earlier (politicians, media, internal/external stakeholders, opposition, etc?)

   - ➔ ***What types of communication campaigns do you execute? Media / LGBT community focused, etc. etc.
   - ➔ **Some examples? From the last two years?**
     i. Can you talk about the messages used in these campaigns? What were they?
   - ➔ If willing – what are the budgets for these campaigns?

   Probe as needed:
   - ➔ How does it begin?
   - ➔ From whom do you seek input?
   - ➔ What types of individuals do you use as spokespersons? *********
   - ➔ **Is the source of the message as important as the content? More? Less?**
   - ➔ **What's the role of personalized messages vs. facts and figures?**
   - ➔ How long does the development of a communication plan take?
   - ➔ Are the messages the same for all stakeholders?
   - ➔ How do you deliver the organization's communication? *****List the tools you use!***** (press releases, email, fliers, official letters, commercials, social media, YouTube, etc.?)

- ➔ Does your organization have a Website? How important is that to delivering your message?

2. Could you compare your most and least successful campaigns? Why do you think they failed / succeeded? **How do you evaluate success?**

3. Have you been faced with having to develop reactive messages? Explain…

News Media and Social Media

1. Let's talk more about the news media? Does your organization actively seek media coverage? What is your relationship with media?
   a. Do the media influence how you develop campaign messages? If so, how?
   b. Do you proactively communicate to specific news media?
      - ➔ If no: why not?
      - ➔ **If yes: who? Which sources?**
      - ➔ If yes: is it more important to convey your perceptions regarding an issue or to report your organization's name? How important is name recognition versus issue recognition?
      - ➔ **KEY:** Which campaigns have been more or less successful in getting the core message carried by the media? Why do you think?

2. In terms of the campaigns we were discussing, do media do a good job reflecting your intended message?
   c. What are the gay rights issues and who are the sources being reported in the media?

3. How important are social media tools to the strategy you outlined earlier?
   Probes:
      - ➔ Are tools like Facebook, emails, blogs, and Twitter used to communicate your organization's message? If so, how?
      - ➔ What is the ideal role of social media in the gay rights movement? Can it hinder? Help?

Wrap up questions re: specific strategy

4. KEY: We've talked about issue-based campaigns. Do you ever do **an organizational campaign** – something more holistic that communicates the organizational mission?

5. KEY: What are the biggest lessons learned over the years regarding the developing and executing of campaigns? Specific strategies that seem to work/fail? Top lessons?

Section 5: Marriage (IF NOT ADDRESSED in earlier responses, start with question #1. IF ADDRESSED, fill in the details as necessary)

1. Is the marriage/civil union a key issue for your organization?
2. How does your organization define marriage?
   Probes:
      - ➔ Does your organization distinguish between marriage and civil union? Why/Why not?

(IF marriage is on the org's radar) What are the key messages your organization has communicated regarding marriage/civil union?

- ➔ Do you engage the opposition in the marriage debate (ie. Do you respond to the oppositions' arguments via official communication channels)? Why/why not?
- ➔ What are your future plans in terms of communication strategy regarding marriage?

Section 6: General / Concluding:

1. How well do you think gay rights organizations listen to constituents in the LGBT community?
   Probe: Does one organization do a better job than others?

2. How effectively do you think gay rights organizations communicate on behalf of the LGBT community?
   Probe: What would you like to see done differently (if anything)?

3. What other issues do you see on the horizon?

4. **KEY:** What are the roles of a national organization vs. state organization? Do national organizations such as the HRC help your organization's goals?

5. **KEY:** What advice, in terms of communication strategy, considerations, concerns, would you have for other state-based gay rights organizations.

6. **KEY:** What kind of help, support, advice, lessons learned, etc. would you like to receive from other state-based gay rights organizations?

7. What have I not asked that you would like to discuss?

Appendix C: IRB Approval

To: Dean Mundy, Journalism/Mass Communication, CB: 3365

From: Behavioral IRB
Approval Date: 12/17/2009
Expiration Date of Approval: 12/16/2010

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)
Submission Type: Initial
Expedited Category: 7.Surveys/interviews/focus groups,6.Voice/image research recordings
Study #: 09-2324

Study Title: Visibility Matters: Communicating for Equality, State, By State, By State

This submission has been approved by the above IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

Study Description:
Purpose: To examine how state-based gay rights organizations organize and execute their communication strategies.

Participants: 10-15 communications employees from 5 state-based gay rights organizations.

Procedures: Conduct interviews.

Investigator's Responsibilities:
Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

When applicable, enclosed are stamped copies of approved consent documents and other recruitment materials. You must copy the stamped consent forms for use with subjects unless you have approval to do otherwise.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented (use the modification form at ohre.unc.edu/forms). Any unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others (including adverse events reportable under UNC-Chapel Hill policy) should be reported to the IRB using the web portal at https://irbis.unc.edu/irb.

Researchers are reminded that additional approvals may be needed from relevant "gatekeepers" to access subjects (e.g., principals, facility directors, healthcare system).

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

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