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Bloggers and Their Impact on Contemporary Social Movements: A Phenomenological Examination of the Role of Blogs and Their Creators in the LGBT Social Movements in Modern United States

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Bloggers and Their Impact on Contemporary Social Movements:
A Phenomenological Examination of the Role of Blogs and Their Creators in the LGBT
Social Movements in Modern United States

by

Bobby K. Huen

A Dissertation Presented to the
College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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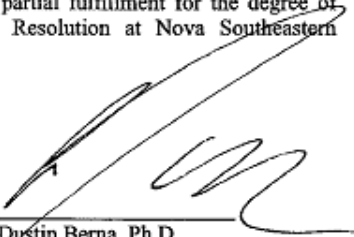
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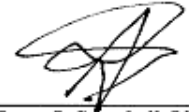
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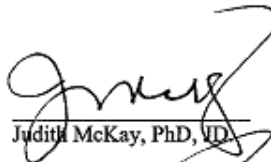
This dissertation was submitted by Bobby K. Huen under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the Graduate School of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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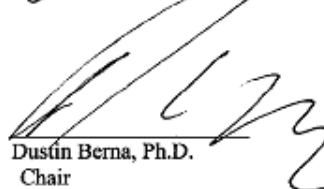
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Date of Final Approval


Dustin Berna, Ph.D.
Chair

Dedication

I am dedicating this dissertation to my mother Louisa, who showed me the joy of learning; to my late partner Gary, who showed me the meaning of love; And to the thousands of LGBT activists, who showed me through their immense courage and strength that there is hope in the face of oppression and violence.

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Abstract

The Internet is a ubiquitous feature in everyday life, but its application to social movements has yet to be completely understood. This phenomenological study examines the lived experiences of bloggers who focused on the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) movement in the United States to understand the impact bloggers and their work as online activists have on existing LGBT social movement organization and operation. Data collection is gathered from semi-structured and open-ended interviews with four social movement bloggers using web-conference software over the course of three months. The results of this study indicated that internet has empowered individual activists, allowing them to gather a following and share their views to a large audience over the web, independent from existing social movement organizations. Consequently, bloggers and online activists maintain a relationship with existing social movement structure that is both collaborative and antagonistic. The results of this study contribute to the current understanding of social movement organizations as well as the impact of technological innovations on social movement advocacy.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Internet and the Power of the Collective

Prior to the emergence of the Internet, the consumption of news was confined to newspapers, magazines, and television. Commerce relied on storefronts and mail catalogues in order to sell goods, and people depended primarily on telephones and mail services in order to connect. As a result, people knew little outside their immediate community since news from other parts of the world traveled slowly.

However, as technology advanced, people became more exposed to the world around them. In the 1980s, the availability of cable television and the advent of 24-hour news stations allowed people to witness news as it happened while fax machines provided a cheaper and quicker alternative to traditional mail. The emergence of cell phones enabled people to connect instantly regardless of the distance, rendering phone booths obsolete. The proliferation of cell phones also spawned a new generation of citizens who could not imagine themselves without a communication device in their pockets. As technology advanced, the world became smaller and more accessible, enabling people to communicate on a global scale.

Today, the World Wide Web has surpassed the fax machine and the mobile phone as the most radical innovation in global interaction, and, in the process, it has enlarged the individual's reach in political, social, and economic milieus. Electronic mail (email) allows people to communicate without the benefit of the post office or the fax machine, and, with web-enabled cell phones, information can be retrieved from anywhere at any time. Personal finances can now be managed via banking web sites, and web-based storefronts rendered the main street obsolete by allowing people to shop for everything

with a click of the mouse. Meanwhile, Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms have become a daily fixture in everyday life, further eroding the personal and public domains. On the international stage, governments can now communicate with their staffs across the world instantaneously, increasing the speed of statecraft and diplomacy.

Through its user-driven content creation, the Internet has further integrated itself into the lives of many people across the globe. Even in its infancy, the World Wide Web served as a tool for self-expression as users created new information and contributed to the virtual discourse via features such as newsgroups and listserv platforms. Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and other chat rooms allowed people with shared interests to meet and chat in real time across the globe. As technology improved, user-created content became more and more commonplace on the virtual landscape. For example, YouTube allowed users to upload self-created or curated videos, creating the cultural phenomena of "viral videos" and led to the rise of "Internet celebrities." (Lang, 2015) User-generated content created a culture of fads and "memes," such as the "ALS Ice Bucket Challenge," designed to garner a large online audience in order to raise awareness. (Steel, 2014) Meanwhile, the rise of social networking sites such as Facebook, Google+, Twitter and the late Myspace enabled individuals to impart their beliefs, document their lives, and share their story with the global community. Furthermore, the trend of "crowd-sourcing," whereby the general public is invited to contribute to contents of web sites, has led to massive online collaborative projects such as Wikipedia, TVTropes and many other popular web sites.

The web's ability to empower the public, combined with its capacity for instantaneous communication, has led to revolutionary changes in the global discourse.

For example, the "Arab Spring" revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East came about as a result of Facebook and Twitter users publically venting their frustration and resentment towards political oppression and censorship, which ultimately led to the collapse of dictatorial regimes. (Eaton, 2013; Alhindi et al., 2012) Even in Iran, where the protests were ultimately unsuccessful, the speed and effectiveness of the dissents unnerved the oppressive and theocratic government. While the political outcomes of these revolutions continue to be in flux, history would undoubtedly record the Internet's central role as a chief organizer of these events. The power of the web to generate collective action is so great that governments in Turkey and China have resorted to imposing censorship and arresting web activists to prevent the spread of popular dissent. (Letsch, 2014; Long et al., 2015)

Technological Changes and Social Movements

Whether it was combatting anti-gay bullying or advocating for the rights of LGBT individuals overseas, LGBT bloggers played a pivotal role in calling into attention the necessity of fairness and equality for all members of the global community. Their efforts were a continuation of the tradition of collective action and social movements. In fact, collective action itself has long been part of the history of social and national development. From popular rebellion against economic hardships to revolution against corrupt regimes, social upheavals have driven the development of politics, philosophy and society throughout history. Due to the industrial revolution, population increase, improvement of mass communication, and the emergence of the urbanization landscape, the sharp divide between social and political classes became more apparent, leading to

class conflicts. In reaction, social movements were formed to oppose social inequalities and advocate for the rights of the disadvantaged.

Parallel to the rise of social movements as part of the sociological fabric was the academic analysis of social movements and collective behavior. On that front, the scholarship of social movements has matured into a sophisticated academic field since its foundation in the late 19th century. Originally regarded as part of irrational collective behavior like riots and crazes, social scientists began to study social movements as a separate discipline from collective behavior. As a result, many theories and models have been developed to explain the origins, methods, and organization of social movements and collective action generated by social conflicts. From the seminal and influential Marxist theory of social reproduction, which saw social conflicts as the result of structural imbalance between the social classes, to Zald and McCarthy's theory of resource mobilization, which sought to explain the organization and mechanisms behind successful social movement organizations, theories allowed scholars to explain the reason and mechanism social movements.

The widespread use of the Internet as a medium for information, expression, and communication has changed the way in which people participate in social movements, and social scientists need to develop new theories and models to account for and expand upon existing models. Information from far away can now be instantaneously reached by millions of people, and online mediums such as blogs and news sites has made social groups cognizant of new issues at an unprecedented speed. As the cost of technological services decrease and content generation becoming easier, how would modern social

movements—which were centralized and professionalized—react and adapt to the emergence of the Internet?

Meanwhile, as the study of social groups become more and more sophisticated, new social groups are recognized based on social identity rather than on the traditional classification of socio-economic status. One of the major identity-based social minority groups that are extremely active in the United States is the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Originally oppressed and forced into hiding by overwhelming political and religious persecution, the LGBT community emerged from the shadow of exclusion and has become a highly politically and socially engaged minority groups. In the past four decades, the community has formed a social movement to cast off social stigma and gain acceptance in multiple fields including medical, political, economic and cultural. In the process they have formed social movement organizations that enjoyed great successes in removing the link between homosexuality and criminality, increasing protection of LGBT civil rights, and continue to fight for true social and political equality for all LGBT Americans. In addition to being one of the major social movements in the United States, LGBT Americans are also early adopters and users of the Internet for communication and information. As a result, American LGBT social movement is one of the more Internet-savvy groups among many social movements, making it an attractive subject to study the link between the Internet and social movement operation.

Justification of Research

There are several factors that contribute to the suitability of the LGBT online community as subjects for this research. First and foremost is its vibrancy and visibility.

Through discriminatory laws, regulations and nefarious political motivations, the gay community was marginalized, ignored and victimized throughout much of the 20th century. However, by the 1950s, the community began to fight back at what they perceived to be prejudicial policies, scoring a string of minor victories in the courts against active censorship and repression of gay rhetoric.

In 1969 the watershed moment for gay and lesbian rights in the United States took place in New York City, where the famous Stonewall Riots became an expression of collective outrage against rampant victimization of gay and lesbian persons. For the next three decades and beyond, gay communities around the country emerged and became visible minority in social discourse.

The gay community's ascending prominence led to the development of a national social movement that demanded recognition as full citizens under the law such as equal rights in employment, housing, and other facets of society. Through tireless advocacy and education, the movement battled numerous obstacles, including the social stigma of homosexuality and the Reagan administration's indifference over important LGBT-related issues such as the AIDS crisis. Although significant civil rights improvements have been achieved through both judicial and legislative efforts, the gay and lesbian community continues to be one of the most disenfranchised communities in the United States. As a result, the struggle for gay rights has become a prominent national topic in the 21st century, forcing politicians to confront LGBT-related civil rights issues regardless of their political spectrum.

At the same time, improvements of communication in technology and the emergence of the Internet as an important fixture of American industry and culture have

changed the landscape of civil discourse. From email lists at the net's infancy to the sophisticated social networks of today, the Internet has brought geographically diverse people together for communication, production, and entertainment. The Internet has also become an important tool for social advocacy, allowing participants to generate collective action quickly and at a low cost.

The LGBT community was among the first to harness the power of technology. Due to a variety of reasons, the gay community quickly established its presence on the web for communication, community organization, and civil rights advocacy. While some of these sites originated from established organizations and long-standing advocacy groups, enterprising grassroots activists had also created independent web site and blogs that reports on LGBT-oriented issues of the day. Due to the opportunities provided by the web, bloggers can quickly disseminate information and organize, dramatically altering the way social movements responds to issues and crises. As their readership increase, so did their influence and their power to generate agency for collective action.

Consequently, the advancement in large-scale data collection and analysis has made the Internet an ideal source for social researchers to analyze the everyday life. In so far, there have been countless volumes on the origins, organization, and structure of social movements. Yet, despite the Internet's ubiquitous presence in the realm of social movements, little scholastic material has been written about its impact. The lack of adequate analysis and research of the Internet's role in social movements would significantly and negatively impact the landscape of social movement research and the study of sociology in general (DiMaggio et al., 2001).

Finally, the field of conflict resolution plays a pivotal role in examining the impact of new technologies on social movements. The web's ability to create, manage, and confront social issues contain an infinite potential of social exploration, and the duty of scholars is to explore the emerging relationship between the Internet and social movements, to develop new understanding of the social phenomena, and to build upon past models and theories.

From a reflexive perspective, the subject of LGBT movements has great personal significance. As part of the gay community, I am personally interested in the way the LGBT activists leverage the Internet to push forth changes in the national and global discourse. By studying these bloggers, I hope to gain insight in the Internet's role in shaping and defining the American LGBT movement and to determine how bloggers

Goals of Research

There are many goals for this research. By conducting a phenomenological study of bloggers whose works primarily focus on LGBT civil rights movement, this dissertation hopes to examine and to analyze the personal and professional experiences related to gay activism during the age of mass communication where information, goods, and services can be readily accessible with a simple click of a mouse.

Second, this study attempts to ascertain the common factors that drove LGBT activists to engage in social blogging. Specifically, the goal is to examine LGBT bloggers' personal experiences just at the start of their blogging career as well as their fundamental motivations to continue and to share their interest over the public domain. In addition, this study attempts to seek any common goals and aspirations that lead LGBT bloggers to start a career in blogging.

Furthermore, this study attempts to understand the relationship between bloggers and the established social movements, and this is accomplished by examining social activism from the bloggers' perspectives. This is important because, as independent writers and opinion makers, bloggers often work outside the established social movement organizational structure. Therefore, by examining their perceived relationship with major LGBT civil rights organizations in the United States, this study hopes to shine a light on the role of blogs in the operation and the organization of larger social movements.

The third question concerns the bloggers' experience with their readers. Blogs are an interactive medium, and advances in communication technologies mean that the content provider and consumer are interacting more than ever before. This study would try to find any common themes that demonstrate bloggers' experience with their readership, as well as their goals and aspirations for their readers. Combined as a whole, this study would hope to represent the overall lived experience of LGBT bloggers and their impact on the LGBT social movement in the United States.

Outline of Study

In order to understand the role of bloggers and online activists in the formation, organization and operation of the LGBT social movement in the United States, this study would undertake a phenomenological research that examine common factors among the lived experiences of bloggers who are engaged in LGBT rights related activism. The results of this study would help to ascertain the role of the internet in social movements in the 21st century.

Therefore, in the next five chapters, this dissertation would present the background, methodology, results and discussion of the study. In the second chapter, I

would present a brief history of the LGBT social movement in the United States, and several examples of online activism from recent years that demonstrated how the LGBT movement utilized the internet as a tool of collective action and advocacy in the 21st century. Chapter Three would be devoted to a literature review that would examine social movement and collective behavior theories both classic and modern, as well as research on internet activism and the LGBT social movement in the United States and beyond. In the next chapter, this dissertation would detail the methodology and process of this study, including sampling, research methods and procedures. In the fifth chapter, I shall present the results of the study, and provide detailed of the analysis process. The dissertation would be concluded in the final chapter, where I shall discuss the findings of the study, its significance to the field of conflict resolution studies, and further research opportunities.

Outline of Methodology

To facilitate this study, I conducted a search to find relevant blogs that focused on the subject. After contacting these bloggers by email, I found several bloggers who consented to be interviewed. The semi-structured interviews were undertaken via online conferencing software (Skype), which were recorded and transcribed. Using the methods of transcendental phenomenology prescribed by Moustakas (1998), I analyzed the transcripts to seek common factors that represented the lived experiences of the interview subjects.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, while the LGBT social movement in the United States is one of the more active movements online, it is by no means

representative of all social movements and their online activism. Therefore, while I hope that this research can open the door to further studies about the impact of the internet on social movements, the conclusions of this study cannot be directly applied to other social movements in the United States and beyond. Furthermore, due to limitations of sampling, this research did not cover some corners of the LGBT social movement as thoroughly as others, such as voices from the transgendered community. Further research would be helpful to uncover any unique perspectives that could expand on the findings covered by this study.

Chapter 2: LGBT Social Movement and the Internet

While the Arab Spring uprisings are prominent examples of the power of online dissent, other social movements, big and small, local and global, also testify to the impact of the Internet on social discourse. In the United States, one of the active social groups that maintain a prominent presence online is the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. With its vibrancy and visibility in American social and political life, the LGBT community's online activism serves as a prime example of how social movements utilize the web as means of collective action to transform itself for the 21st century. This chapter of the dissertation would provide context for the study by presenting a brief history of the history of the LGBT community in the United States, along with several examples of online activism that demonstrated the power of bloggers and other online activists in their push for equality and justice for sexual minorities.

LGBT Social Movement: A Brief History

Like other social movements, the LGBT community's campaign for equality and human rights occurred decades before the emergence of the Internet. Long perceived as deviant and immoral by religious and conservative forces of society, LGBT members were marginalized, ignored, victimized, and even subjected to discriminatory laws throughout much of the 20th century (Adam, 1995). However, by the 1950s, the gay community fought back and won a significant victory in *One Inc. v. Olesen* (1969) in which the Supreme Court ruled that gay censorship and the repression of gay rhetoric were unconstitutional.

The watershed moment for LGBT movement occurred in New York City in the summer of 1969, where the famous Stonewall Riots became an expression of collective

outrage at society's rampant victimization against the LGBT community. This eventually led to the formation of a nationwide social movement, led by organizations such as Human Rights Campaign, which demanded recognition as full citizens under the law regarding employment, housing, and other human rights. Through tireless advocacy and education, the movement battled numerous obstacles, including the social stigma of homosexuality, religious-based persecution, and the Reagan government's indifference on important gay-related issues such as the AIDS crisis (Adam, 1995)

In the subsequent decades, significant civil rights improvements were achieved through both judicial and legislative methods. In 1996, the Supreme Court ruled in *Romer v. Evans* that the voting public cannot establish laws by referenda to restrict the rights of the LGBT community, and in 2003, the same court ruled in *Lawrence v. Texas* that sodomy laws, which were used to persecute LGBT citizens, were unconstitutional. In the legislation arena, the ban on openly gay military service members (also known as "Don't Ask Don't Tell") was repealed in 2010, while sexual orientation was added to hate crimes legislation with the Matthew Shepard Act in 2009 (Branigin et al., 2010; Zeleny, 2009). However, despite these judicial and legislative advancements, the LGBT community continued to be one of the most disenfranchised and persecuted communities in the United States, open to discrimination in terms of housing, employment and public accommodation (Brown, 2015).

Internet and Social Movement: The Gay Community's Story

At the same time, improvements of communication technology and the emergence of the Internet as an important fixture of American industry and culture has changed the landscape of civil discourse. From email lists at the net's infancy to the

sophisticated social networks of today, the web has brought geographically diverse people together for communication, production and entertainment. It has also become an important tool for social advocacy, allowing participants to generate collective action quickly and at low cost.

The Internet's role as a platform for civil rights advocacy did not escape the notice of social movement organizations and activists, and a casual search online would find web sites that cater to all manners of social advocacy—everything from women's rights to highly controversial racist movements. Consequently, the LGBT community was among the first to harness the power of technology by establishing its presence on the web for communication, commerce, and advocacy during the web's early infancy (Weinrich, 1997). While some of these sites come from established pre-Internet organizations and publications such as *The Advocate* and the Human Rights Campaign, enterprising activists have also created independent web sites and blogs that reports on LGBT-oriented issues of the day. Due to improvements in online publication platforms, bloggers have also been able to publish at lightning speed and send up-to-date information (Kang & Yang, 2009). This has dramatically altered the way social movements respond to issues and crises. As their readership increase, LGBT bloggers have taken a pivotal role in generating collective action on the community's behalf.

How LGBT Activists Leveraged the Internet for Change

The struggle for marriage equality has been a prominent issue for LGBT activists, which began with the 2004 court ruling in Massachusetts that granted gay couples the right to marry. In California, same sex marriage became a controversial and political issue when the California Supreme Court ruled in 2008 that gay couples were entitled to

the same marriage rights and protection that were currently enjoyed by heterosexual couples. As soon as the ruling became law, conservative organizations gathered signatures to put the issue on the ballot and despite efforts of the gay community and their supporters, opponents of same sex marriage prevailed as Californians narrowly approved Proposition 8. The amendment banned the practice of same sex marriage, which nullified California Supreme Court's decision. The campaign was one of the most expensive ballot initiatives in American history as both supporters and opponents of Proposition 8 poured millions of dollars into the ballot initiative (Youn, 2013).

The fallout from Proposition 8 was as swift as it was massive. Due to the efforts of LGBT online bloggers and activists, protests against the passage of Prop-8 spread like wildfire, which were mainly organized through social media. As a result, thousands turned up to protest against the passage across the country, especially against the Mormon Church and its affiliated individuals who donated the bulk of Prop-8 campaign funds (Ostrom, 2008; Jones, 2008). LGBT activists posted the donors who supported Proposition 8 within hours of the information becoming public, and the unmasking of the donors triggered calls for national boycotts (Carlton, 2008; Bates, 2009; Youn, 2013). As pressure mounted, some businesses that had its roots within Utah or the Mormon Church started to distance themselves from the ballot measure while others scrambled to justify their stance in the face of public scrutiny (Derrick, 2008). In at least two cases, entertainment professionals who donated to the initiative were compelled to resign after fellow entertainers and writers declared their intention to boycott or otherwise punish the companies they worked for (Abramowitz, 2008; McKinley, 2008). The wave of collective action against Proposition 8 supporters was so pervasive that supporters of

Prop-8 sued but failed to prevent the disclosure of their donor information (Egelko, 2011).

Although Proposition 8 has since been invalidated by the federal court system, donors who supported the measure still faced considerable public scrutiny, exemplified by the public relations crisis that surrounded Branden Eich. The newly-appointed CEO of Mozilla was heavily criticized by LGBT activists and members within his own industry after his pro-Prop 8 donations became public, eventually leading to his resignation after less than 2 weeks as chief executive. (Hamilton 2014; Zara, 2014). More recently, a gay hotel magnate faced the call of boycott from online activists who protested his decision to host fundraisers for Senators Ted Cruz and Ron Johnson, both the staunch opponents of gay marriage. Although the hotel magnate subsequently posted an apology on social media, the call for boycott continued (Haberman, 2015).

LGBT members have been active in protesting against other social maltreatment of the LGBT community. Ever mindful of discrimination and bullying in public schools and long aware of the heightened risks of self-harm among LGBT youths, gay rights activists have been vigilant in spotting instances of anti-LGBT school policies. An infamous example of such discrimination occurred in 2010, when a lesbian high school student wished to bring her girlfriend to the prom in a small Mississippi town. The school refused her request, despite legal precedence that ensured the right for students to bring same sex dates to school dances. The young woman, Constance McMillen, then sought legal help from the ACLU, and, when the ACLU informed the school of the legal precedence to allowed McMillen to bring her girlfriend to the prom, the school cancelled the prom altogether, placing blame on young Constance for creating a hostile school

environment (Associated Press, 2010). McMillen's case caught the attention of a regional blogger. The post was later picked up by a national gay and lesbian news blogs that brought the issue into the national forefront.

The parents who supported the school's decision to prevent Constance from attending prom proceeded to create a "fake prom" with the expressed purpose of shunning Constance and other undesirable students from attending (Kieffer, 2010; Terkel, 2010; Simpson, 2010; Winter, 2010). In turn, LGBT activists took to the virtual space to voice their discontent, and the case became a national headline. Constance became an accidental icon and represented victims of gay bullying as anti-bullying advocacy groups fretted her across the country. Ellen DeGeneres even interviewed Constance and gave her a hefty scholarship while the national media condemned her classmates as bigots (Derrick, 2010; Bernard, 2010; Amato, 2010; Lamar, 2010). The story reached a happy conclusion when the New York Gay Pride Parade selected Constance as the grand marshal to, march with thousands of LGBT participants in celebration of LGBT rights (Newman, 2010). While unique in its extraordinary degree of visibility, Constance's story provided the pathway for mainstream media to condemn the school's action as harassment and to engage in a frank debate about the ill effects of anti-gay bullying in schools.

LGBT bloggers also looked abroad to highlight other social injustices that impacted the LGBT global community. Their efforts exposed the American Evangelical churches' new approach to spread radical anti-LGBT ideology throughout churches in Africa. The evangelical leaders would deliberately spread falsehoods that equated gay individuals to child molesters and perpetuated the belief that homosexuality was a curable

mental disorder (Gettleman, 2010). Allied with local politicians, these efforts resulted in local newspapers to call for the lynching of gay people, which resulted in the murder of a prominent gay activist in Uganda. The church's effort to spread radical anti-gay ideology resulted in the Ugandan government to authorize the death penalty of anyone convicted of being a homosexual. Through their research, LGBT bloggers were able to expose the foul legislation as well as identifying the Republican congressmen who supported the gay death penalty legislation (Kohn, 2014).

The exposé casted a harsh spotlight on the American Evangelical movement and the Republican politicians who supported the Ugandan law, and the aftermath forced many to distance themselves from the issue (Nzwili, 2014; Bailey, 2014). The United States, along with other western nations, declared LGBT rights as part of their foreign policy and aid platform. The United States government also threatened to withdraw aid from governments that supported the persecution of the gay community. In Uganda, threats of foreign aid withdrawal kept the "kill the gays" bill in legislative limbo until 2013 when the law was passed without the death penalty provisions despite pressure from the international community and gay rights activists (Ohlheiser, 2013). The international community reacted to the news by withdrawing its aid and publicly shaming the Ugandan government.

Summary

The LGBT community in the United States is one of the more visible minorities in the United States in recent decades. It has long suffered discrimination and persecution, but since the seminal Stonewall Riots in 1969, the community has made a strong effort to push back against violations of its civil rights by forming a nationwide

social movement. While it has made significant advances towards equal rights, from judicial victories to legislation that protect the community from discrimination, the LGBT community in the United States continue to suffer unequal treatment under the law in most parts of the country.

As one of the communities that embraced the Internet from its infancy, LGBT bloggers and online activists have successfully utilized various technological platforms to advance its cause. From protesting unjust laws to exposing local bully and global persecution, bloggers have played an invaluable role by bring these stories to the attention of the public and advocate for change.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The goal of this dissertation is to explore the relationship between the Internet and social movements by leveraging interviews from LGBT bloggers to understand the relationship between the Internet and the role of LGBT bloggers on the larger social movement. Therefore, it is important to understand the theoretical basis for the study of social movements, and establish what challenges can be brought towards some of the assumptions of social movements and the models that contribute to their academic understanding. From Marx's theory of social reproduction to Zald and McCarthy's arguments about resource mobilization and political participation, the existing theoretical basis for the study of social movements must be understood.

To reflect the intended purpose of this dissertation, the literature review would report on existing literature about social movements and the Internet in four parts. The first section would provide a review of social movement theories of both past and present. These include classic theories that explain collective action, such as Gurr's relative deprivation and classic Marxist theories to modern social movement theories such as New Social Movement theory and Resource Mobilization models. The next section would discuss other sociological theories and observations that are relevant to the LGBT-rights movement, including the formation of the LGBT social movement and the relevant social theories that apply to this particular social group. The third section would cover extant research that either uses the Internet as an instrument of research, a medium, or subject of study. The section following the literature review would provide critique and uncover potential gaps in existing literature that examines the relationship between the Internet and current social movement theories.

Social Movement Theories

Collective behavior and social movements

The study of social movements, defined by Diani (1992) as networks of interaction between groups of individuals based on shared identity, that are engaged in political and cultural conflicts had its roots in the more generalized study of collective behavior, itself a branch of sociology. As the world was being transformed by the Industrial Revolution during the 18th and 19th centuries, social order went through a series of unprecedented changes that impacted how society functions and how people relate to each other. In terms of technology, the rise of complex industrial machines as a means of production replaced older methods and rendered traditional craftsmanship obsolete. In addition, technological advancement in farming displaced small farms as a means of food production. The mechanization of agriculture and the mass migration from rural to urban communities had over taxed the system, which caused a major strain in the infrastructure. The resulting discontent united individuals and encouraged them to bend together to advocate for their socio-economic rights, leading to the creation of early social movements.

Industrialization also changed the face of U.S. economy. As farming became more industrialized, those who had resources to own machines dominated the agricultural field, as the higher efficiency of mechanized farming lowered production costs. Smaller farmers found themselves without a sustainable source of income, and, as a result, the displaced farmers migrated to urban communities and in the process formed the early modern working class. The use of machines as a means of good production gave rise to

modern capitalism, where business owners rely on low material and labor costs in order to maintain their competitive edge.

Within the academic arena, the changes brought about by the industrialized revolution also transformed the way in which scholars analyze social phenomena. As capitalism became the dominant system governing economic and social production, scholars studied the popular reactions to the new socioeconomic paradigm. Through the use of scientific reasoning that was the legacy of Enlightenment, scholars observed and analyzed social development in a scientific manner, giving birth to the study of sociology. These observations and analyses led sociologists to propose new ideologies to explain the larger picture caused by socio-economic changes.

One of these phenomena that sociologists studied was what would eventually come to be known as social movements, which at that time was classified as a type of collective behavior, a term that encompassed a wide variety of action such as crazes, mobs, riots and other unregulated and out-of-mainstream social behavior. For early sociologists, the theory of collective behavior rested on several core assumptions. First, collective behavior could be explained by a single overarching logic, without need to distinguish one type of behavior from another. Second, all collective behaviors were considered non-institutional in nature, and therefore not a natural part of society and therefore unpredictable. Third, collective behaviors occurred as a reaction of societal stress and breakdowns, causing what Durkheim called *anomie* among the population. Fourth, individual dissatisfaction of society was the main cause of collective behavior; sociologists studied the connection between individual discontent and the impact of collective behavior. Fifth, collective behavior was a manifestation of psychological

factors rather than political since it is rooted in individual discontent. And finally, it was assumed that since collective behaviors were unpredictable and irrational, the participants were extreme, irrational and dangerous (Buechler, 2000).

Several classical behavioral theories were developed based on the aforementioned collective behavior assumptions. The first was the idea of symbolic interaction, pioneered by Mead and Weber and further elaborated by Blumer (1969). The theory considers social interaction a fluid and dynamic process where people act in reaction to what things that means to them. Individuals created meanings as he or she interacted with his or her environment. Therefore, the theory argued that actions were not the direct result of interaction, but rather the product of the interpretation of meanings caused by these interactions. Since these interactions were not governed by rules and solely based on the interpretation of the individual, actions were considered spontaneous and unregulated. As a result, for practitioners of this theory, collective behavior was the result of negative personal reaction against what the actors consider to be the meaning of their environment. Their negative action triggers others to join in their circular reaction and cause unrest in large numbers (Buechler, 2000).

Blumer applied the basic tenets of his symbolic interaction theory to explain the formation of social movements. In his model, social movements began as disruption to existing social order, which led people to create new and negative meanings in their environment. In turn, the crowd sustained this negative reaction of the disruption through circular reaction. Eventually, rudimentary social movements would form with the purpose to either propose or resist change, and those with specific goals would become more organized and better prepared to present their demands.

In building upon Blumer's (1969) work, Turner and Killan (1987) focused on the communication and rationalization of meaning within the lifecycle of social movements, and they developed several conclusions regarding social movements. First, social movements could not be sustained without a common goal and a sense of camaraderie within the group. Second, social movements formed to either preserve or to disrupt the existing social order, and it was the work of organizations to interpret and translate the perceptions and meanings of the collective's feelings into action. Third, the collective institution would continue to exist as long as it provided benefits to the members of the collective. Finally, collective behavior and social movements were created to bypass normal and established structures in order to achieve their goals through an alternative route (Buechler 2000; Turner & Killan, 1987).

The second major school of thought regarding collective behavior was the study of structural-functionalism, which was developed by Emile Durkheim and was later promoted by Parsons and Smelser. Durkheim argued that modern society functioned best when members worked toward the good of the collective rather than the individual. Since people in modern society perform specific and specialized tasks, he reasoned that members of society depended on each other to properly function. However, since features of modern society (e.g. cities) did not involve small collective behaviors like a village, the modern society removed an intermediary layer of social structure where most individuals had anchored to and identified with the collective group. As a result, members of modern society suffered from anomie and the feeling of alienation. Adding to the fact that some individuals did not integrate within the overall structure of the

collective society, these individuals would become dissatisfied with their environment and seek change (Buechler, 2000).

Much like Durkheim's view, Smelser and other structural functionalists saw society as a series of interconnected systems—not necessarily dissimilar to the living organism—with each system providing value for the society to expand in order to thrive under ideal conditions. And like adherents of symbolic interactionism, those who studied collective behavior such as Smelser classify social movements as a deviant behavior alongside fads, crazes, and panics. As such, the social movements were considered short-lived, disorganized and abnormal, and those who participate in these movements do so based on irrational motivation (Buechler, 2000; Kendall 2005).

Smelser distinguished collective behavior into two separate categories: norm-oriented movements and value-oriented movements. In this case "values" are defined as normalized belief within the community, such as justice, freedom, and democracy while "norms" are commonly recognized ways to reach those values, such as decency, and learning. Norm oriented movements were collective actions that encouraged society to restore, expand, or protect existing norms to conform to a generalized belief of the collective. Value-oriented movements formed when the collective saw no other way to reform the system from within, especially when existing norms refused to expand to bring about the espoused value (Sztompka, 1994).

Davis and Gurr developed relative deprivation theory as an alternative model to explain social movements. They argued that people and groups examined their surroundings in order to judge the situation, and resentment would form if these actors determined that their situations were worse off than others in comparison. Although it

was not explicitly stated, the theory assumed that people employed subjective judgment as the basis of their reference. The theory also proposed that those who participated in collective behavior did not operate from an objective, rational basis. In continuing the trend of past theories on collective behavior, relative deprivation theory assumed that social upheaval was irrational based and a deviant of social norm (Buechler, 2000).

One of the distinguishing features of relative deprivation theory was Davis' proposal of the "J-curve", which stated that the middle class were more likely to rebel as opposed to members of both the lower and higher class. Members of the lower class, Davis argued, cannot afford to participate in collective action because they were less educated and had less time outside of their daily task to consider their place in society. Meanwhile, members of the upper class in society would also be reluctant to participate because they would jeopardize their position within the socio-economic strata. As a result, the middle class was more likely to participate in collective action since members from the middle class were more educated and more likely to reflect upon their place within society. If they consider their situation to be worse off than that of other social classes, then they would utilize their resources to form collective behaviors in order to reform social institutions to their benefit (Buechler, 2000).

As sociology advanced, scholars challenged the validity of social deprivation theory, anomie theory, and symbolic interaction theory in explaining the collective action of social movements. First, collective behaviors cannot be explained under an overgeneralized logic. By grouping social movements together with crazes and fads, past theorists had disregarded the context and basic reasons for the formation of various social movements. Second, while some social movements can be non-institutional in nature,

many others had formed their own institutions or work within existing institutions to advocate for change. In fact many social movements, including those working on behalf of the gay and lesbian community, had established political and social institutions of their own. Third, blaming the creation of social movements on factors such as social stress would discount other factors such as the political context that drove movement formation. Fourth, by blaming collective behavior on participants' abnormal psychology, one may ignore other contributing factors that may have contributed to the mass dissatisfaction. These factors would make it too easy for analysts to blame social movement participants for communal disruption by labeling the entire phenomenon as irrational and deviant (Buechler, 2000).

Finally, collective behavior theories had erroneously assumed that people belong to a pluralistic and egalitarian society. When these theories were first developed in the 1940s, American scholars made the assumption that a perfect society such as theirs was purely pluralistic and democratic. Therefore, it was assumed that no groups were disenfranchised and any problems in society could be resolved through existing social institutions. Consequently, any collective behaviors that worked outside the existing system were assumed to be aberrant and driven by deviant factors that were harmful to the social fabric. Unfortunately, such assumptions meant that there was no attention paid to the many varied social groups that the system neglected or actively oppressed, and collective behavior was the only action available to demonstrate their grievances for those groups. It was not until the turbulent 1960s when sociologists began to include models that would challenge existing social structures and institutions and separate social movements from the larger field of collective behavior (Buechler, 2000).

Marxist roots of social movements

Other sociologists were proposing new models to explain the rapid social changes that took place in the wake of the industrial revolution. Drawing on the lessons from enlightenment and the French revolution, philosophers and sociologists proposed new theories to explain how the emerging capitalist societies would change the existing political and social structure.

Arguably the most famous and the most influential social theory that emerged in response to the newly minted capitalist society was a suite of models collectively known as Marxism. Marx and his theories of modern social structures continued to have great resonance in the field of political science and sociology. Although not widely used in the beginning of American sociological research, Marxism re-emerged in the 1960s as a way to understand structural struggles of entire groups, even entire blocs of nations (Young, 1999). Initially proposed during the time of the industrial revolution, Karl Marx's theories fundamentally changed how scholars look at conflicts and social issues, and Marxism's basic tenants continue to be relevant in the analysis of contemporary societies due to the generations of scholarly work that have analyzed and added to its foundations.

At its germination, "Marxism" began with the theory of production, economics, and social structure. Marx's theoretical orientation was materialistic and structure-driven with emphasis on how social and economic institutions impacted individuals in society. First, he argued that the capitalist system of production amounts to a gross exploitation of the working class. The industrial revolution had made workers part of the process, their products adding value to the capital owners but not to workers. Therefore, workers could not derive meaning from their work (Joseph, 2006).

Drawing from the idea of work alienation, Marx proposed that the modern industrialized world was dominated by the idea of commodity fetishism, which placed meaning and value on goods independent of the maker. As the production of goods became highly efficient, society converted into one that associated value and meaning with the goods produced and, in the process, transitioned into the modern consumer society (Joseph, 2006).

Concurrent to the development of the capitalist society and commodity fetishism, Marx also wrote on the development of ideology. According to Marx, ideology was an instrument of the ruling class to subjugate the working class, and it was through ideology (which included religion) that the ruling class was able to instill a moral and religious outlook. When combined, the dominance of economic and ideological elements created the capitalist system of social reproduction and, in the process, allowed the elite class to reproduce the social conditions necessary to prolong a social structure that favored them (Joseph, 2006).

Taking all three factors into consideration, Marx concluded that the capitalist system of political and economic production would eventually fall. In his view, the economic and political system could not be sustained in the long run, since the survivability of the system depended upon the continuous suppression and exploitation of the working class. As capital became more and more concentrated due to the inevitable result of competition, more and more would join the working class and become part of the exploited group. Eventually, the exploited class would become sufficiently powerful to challenge the economic and political ruling class, and through the means of a violent revolution, society would transition into socialism, a system in which capitalists ceased to

occupy the most important role in economic production and replaced by the people's ownership of economic institutions (Joseph, 2006; Turner, 2001).

Since its original publication, Marxist theories had been hugely controversial. His prediction of a proletariat-driven revolution came true in some parts of the world, leading to the establishment of communist states that sought to govern under Marxist principles. However, his theories also came under heavy critique on several points. First, the unsustainability of the capitalist model did not come true; Marx underestimated the ability of the state to absorb excess economic production and therefore halted further exploitation of the working class. Second, the class-driven idea of the proletariat as a collective had not been proven. Although some parts of the labor force did come together—in the form of unions to cite one example—Marx ignored that many members of the working class have divergent goals and materialistic differences, which led to further fragmentation of what Marx envisioned as a united bloc of revolutionaries. Under these conditions, there was simply no guarantee that all capitalist societies would be driven to socialism (Turner 2001).

Despite the critics, Marxism continued to be a hugely influential model, partly due to its analysis of class and exploitation. Although Marx failed to predict the future of the capitalist system, his theories on exploitation and class remained the subject of further analysis and expansion. For example, Marxist models of production and class relations could be used to understand the obstacles for emancipatory social change through sociological Marxism, which focused on several assumptions based on the concept of contradictory reproduction of capitalist class relations (Turner, 2001).

Proposed by Buroway and Wright, their model assumed that, like the original Marxist model, the modern state of class relations was inherently unstable. In order to successfully reproduce existing class relations, the state needed to establish institutions that would protect the existing class system. The assumption proposed that these institutions were design to protect the existing system, but, over time, had eroded and lost its effectiveness to successfully perform social reproduction. Changes in technology, class structure and adaptation of circumventing methods around these institutions would lead to crises in society when class conflict had reached beyond the system's tolerance. In order to survive, social institutions would have to undergo periodic renewal to accommodate the new status quo and develop new tools to sustain social reproduction (Turner, 2001).

Critical theory and other Marxist derivatives

While sociological Marxism emphasized the foundations of Marxist paradigm as the basis for social change, critics of Marxism rejected some of its core assumptions and instead focused other aspects of the Marxist models.

There were several factors that contributed to the development of social theories. The first factor was the collapse of traditional labor movement who agitated for change by creating labor-oriented political parties. In addition, Marxist elements were coopted into existing political and economic systems. Rather than being the agent of social change, the working class became another cog in the wheel of the capitalistic machination (Levin, 2003). In the United States, the labor movement did not even merit its own political party and instead relied on the existing two-party system to advocate for their economic and political rights.

Changes in perception within the capitalist societies had also contributed to the fall of classic Marxism. As a result of consumerism, the ownership of property began to be associated with the ideal values of modern democracy and politics. As more and more citizens (including the working class) became property owners, they were less willing to adopt the revolutionary ideologies espoused by Marxism. Meanwhile, the rise of liberalism, a philosophy that required the state to act as the protector of all people from a reformist instead of revolutionary standpoint, created certain protections that prevented abuses from both the public and private sectors. Although constantly torn between the need for democracy and the need to protect the minority from abuse, liberal democracies thrived as a viable political system, standing in stark contrast to the oppressive system developed from Marxist-socialist philosophies (Levin, 2003).

The emergence of the Soviet system in Europe and Asia, ostensibly founded on Marxist principles, failed to bring about the utopian society as promised. Instead, the brutality of these authoritarian Marxist-Leninist regimes disappointed many who wished for the success of Marxism. And the Prague uprising in 1968, in which participants from all classes united in vain in an effort to eject its Soviet masters, demonstrated that rejection of Marxist-Leninism could cross class boundaries. Finally, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Marxist experiment appeared to be a complete failure. Although interest in left leaning politics did not disappear, the Marxist goal of violent revolution had been replaced by internal reforms, and the capitalist system continued unabated with limited disruptions (Levin, 2003).

However, although it took almost a century to witness the final collapse of the birthplace of the Marxist government, criticism of Marxism began to take shape before

the Second World War. Critical theory was developed in response to the Marxist model. Championed by Adorno and Horkheimer among others, critical theory was first proposed by the "Frankfurt School" of sociologists as an evolution of traditional Marxism, and toward the development of what would be known as western Marxism. After witnessing the collapse of traditional labor movements and the authoritarian regimes of Soviet communism, critical theorists rejected the pure rationality and science that had been incorporated into modern fascism and capitalism (Kellner, 1989).

In its analysis of society, critical theory rejected both the Weberian model of rationalization and the Marxian model of constant revolution as authoritarian and positivist. Indeed, critical theorists saw faults in the way Marxist theories blamed the entire failure of society on the economic model of capitalism. Rather than developing an overarching explanation of social structure and formulating a model based upon a specific structure within society, critical theorists took a more holistic view, especially in the face of changes that took place in capitalism. As an active participant in the economic process, many capitalist societies enacted regulations that protected the working class from the type of gross exploitation assumed by early Marxists. Instead, consumerism became a given fact across all social classes, and people were effectively "bought off" by the state as a way to stave off revolution and mass action against the capitalist system (Joseph 2006; Kellner, 1989).

Therefore, instead of focusing on economy, critical theorists turned their attention towards the idea of cultural reproduction. To them, the production of culture became a commodity, and it was commercialized to the point that culture became a product of a hegemonic industrial system. As Marcuse (1964) pointed out, the capitalist domination of

cultural production created a social landscape where commercialism and capitalism dominated all facets of life, and conformity became the norm. As mass media promoted pre-determined political rules and personalities, providing resources and exposure to the public, public opinion became homogenized. Instead of the family, the mass media provided the socialization of the modern individual (Kellner, 1989). Meanwhile, Habermas (1981) saw the emergence of mass media as a new method of public discourse, and recognized the power of media in consensus formation. However, since the market drove mass media production through ratings, the middle class who consumed media now saw themselves as the arbiter of public interest and defender against tyranny. Therefore, the market became the arbiter of institutional and social legitimacy, and the boundary separating public discourse and government action blurred (Joseph, 2006).

Meanwhile, other Marxist scholars debated the way forward in a post-Marxist world. One notable approach towards the issue was the idea of post-structuralist Marxism, a relatively modern concept that sought to acknowledge the impact of Marxism in social theories with a new reinterpreting. Instead of reading Marx as a positivist theory that predicted the trajectory of the capitalist social system, post-structuralists such as Carver believed that Marx should be re-interpreted as a pioneering theorist of commercial society (Peters, 2001). Deleuze also sought to create new meanings for Marxism, and he argued that capitalism had the ability to change and adapt itself to continue its function in society. Through his writing, Deleuze discussed the modern transformation of the capitalist society from a "disciplinary society" to a "society of control" (Peters, 2001). Instead of moving from one closed system to another in sequence, such as from school to factory, Deleuze proposed that modern societies allow individuals to move fluidly

between multiple realms, through modern artifacts such as corporations and continuing education. At the same time, as western societies transferred the responsibility of industry and manufacturing to less developed countries, capitalism transformed from one that produces products to one that provides services, a product that was inherently fluid, unlimited and continuous. In return, capitalist societies evolved its ability to continuously control workers through constant monitoring and better training methods. According to Alliez, as economies shift from production-based models to knowledge-based models, a person's ability to learn and to utilize knowledge throughout his life becomes the primary factor for success. Instead of the zero-sum economic outlook of traditional Marxism, the boundless nature of knowledge created an economy in which those who failed to learn and adopt new skills became the new disadvantaged social class. In response, neoliberal states began to withdraw from the idea of a welfare state to one that provided basic support in order to facilitate a citizen's acquisition of knowledge. Therefore oppression did not come from the state, but from the economic system in which a person's worth was judged by the knowledge he or she could exercise and how much the market was willing to pay for the acquired knowledge (Peters, 2001).

New social movements: From economics to identity

The rise of the Marxism school of social theories, with its focus on socio-economic inequality and class-based conflicts, was developed as a response to the industrial age and the emergence of the modern consumerist, capitalistic social fabric. However, by the 1960s, some social theorists began to search for alternative means to understand social movements that had less to do with socio-economic boundaries and

more to do with other types of social divisions. It was under such circumstances that a theory known as new social movement was born.

Several factors contributed to the rise of identity as a predominant dividing factor in societies that gave rise to New Social Movements (Kelly, 2001). Although hugely influential, Marxism began to fade in predominance by the late 20th century, as class-based conflicts that were central to Marxism failed to bring about the revolutionary social changes it promised. Not only did violent revolution failed to bring forth the workers' utopia as promised by Marxist theories, but industrialized societies had also evolved to include measures that protected social underclasses to maintain political and economic stability. In the United States, the development of New Social Movements was a consequence of the leftist disillusionment of Marxist ideals, which was crushed by the 1968 revolutions behind the Iron Curtain. Startled by the broad social spectrum of participants in the revolution and disappointed by the Soviet Union's violent response to the popular uprising against communist authoritarianism, social movement organizers and activists began to drift away from Marxism in search of an alternative theory to explain social conflicts. As a result, the economic and "class" factors became less of a concern as compared to the previous decades.

While some post-Marxist scholars embraced critical theory and other neo-Marxist models, others were concerned with the lack of attention paid to non-material classes particularly in the analysis of social movements. Therefore, the focus on New Social Movement (NSM) theories was the symbolic interaction between different non-material social classes in order to problematize identity-class construction and understand non-economic social grievances (Buechler, 1995). Some of the issues explored by NSM

theorists included the urge to conform and to jettison one's individualism in favor of a harmonized urban identity, the role of society in cultural integration, the role of colonialism in the suppression of indigenous cultural identity and social function, and the construction of collection action movements that exists structurally between private identities and public social structure (Buechler, 1995). As people sought out new collectives to create social spaces where their identities could be defined and magnified, New Social Movements were created to tackle problems in existing social structures and to advocate for change.

The development of New Social Movements was centered on the concept of individual and group identities and their roles in the overall social structure. Simply put, identity was defined as an individual's understanding of himself, and consisted of multiple dimensions including individual, collective and public identities. By its nature, identities were built subjectively and derived from sociological and psychological factors. Sociologically, individual identities began to form during a person's youth as a reflection of social interaction. The person constructed an identity that would be linked to the individualized ideology in order to give it meaning and cohesiveness, and this construction was based upon how others relate to the person (Buechler, 2000; Johnston et al., 1994).

In time, members with similar self-image would begin to create a collective identity, which was an agreed upon definition of membership among people with similar individual identity. Through the process of negotiation and sharing common experiences, groups would create their collective identities to represent the group towards the public, a valued commodity among group members and worthy to commit time and effort towards

its creation and maintenance. In return for their commitment, the collective identity could yield dividends for group members by addressing issues that plagued the group, such as discrimination or violence. In some cases, a social movement organization might attempt to strategically construct a collective identity for consumption by sympathetic members and to attract supporters to the cause (Johnston et al., 1994).

The third dimension of identity that shaped New Social Movements was the idea of a public identity, which was the group's identity as perceived by the public. Its creation was heavily impacted by external factors on how members think of themselves, and official repression or structural inequalities could contribute to form an antagonistic identity and fortify intra-group identification. Aside from governmental influences, the media could play a part of shaping a group's public identity by giving the group a public "face." Frequently, news media focused on the professional movement representative to construct the movement's public identity. As a result, many New Social Movements built institutions and affiliates to affirm collective identity (Johnston et al., 1994).

Given its use of symbolic interaction and focus on non-material issues to problematize the process of identity construction, it would come as no surprise that New Social Movement theory used the same lens to understand socially constructed grievances. For New Social Movement organizations, grievances could come from structural injustices within society that were associated with memberships to a particular identity-based social group. In return these injustices would become a part of the identity formation process: New Social Movements would provide the space for common grievance sufferers to forge and reinforce their feelings of belonging within the social minority group (Johnston et al., 1994).

Although novel for its utilization of the concept of identity, New Social Movement shared some characteristics that would connect with the dictums of other social movement theories. Similar to collective behavior theories, New Social Movement memberships were diverse and their structure could be informal, egalitarian, or ad hoc in nature (Kelly, 2001). At the same time, similar to Marxist theories, New Social Movements aimed at highlighting issues and grievances caused by structural deficiencies in society. Through advocating for structural changes to correct discrimination and injustices, the progressive or reformist bent of New Social Movements dovetailed with the sociological Marxist goal of social renovation and institutional adjustment. On the other hand, unlike Marxist or collective behavior theories, the use of identity as an organizational criterion made NSM sensitive to context, making NSM groups non-hegemonic. New groups with similar goals were often created to accommodate members due to small but distinct differences in goals and ideologies, or to deal with localized issues that would otherwise be submerged by a larger, national movement (Johnston et al., 1994). Since the membership criterion was not based on Marxist socio-economic classes, NSM organizations maintained open membership structures that included anyone who were affiliated with the group's identity and goals.

Numerous theorists have been linked to the underlying framework that ultimately led to the development of New Social Movements. Habermas proposed that social logic (money and power resources) overwhelm non-material aspects of the society through the mechanics of colonialism, where countries impose their economic and political values on an unsuspecting third culture (Buechler, 1995). Money, therefore, became a factor in identity formation and regulation, a social aspect that should not have been based on

materialistic criteria. Consequently, Habermas contended that the money culture has "colonized" society and prohibits individual growth by imposing the capitalistic system on top of personal values and development (Kelly, 2001). In his view, New Social Movement was a defensive movement that led agents of change to defend against the system's invasion of people's identities, demanding such goals as quality of life, cultural integration and participation of society, and self-identification. In other words, Habermas' vision of new Social Movements dealt primarily with issues that were intrinsically related to the overall concept of human rights (Buechler, 1995).

Building upon Habermas' concern for the decline of reflexivity (consideration of self-growth) in modern societies, Beck and Offe offered their own theories on the reasons for the emergence of New Social Movements. Claus Offe argued that New Social Movement emerged as a response to the western bureaucratic welfare state, while Beck believed that NSM was a response to the hazards and risks that was placed outside public control. Both theorists believed that New Social Movements was the result of the collapse of Marxism as the prevailing social movement, as the western capitalist state has adapted and absorbed worker's rights movements as part of its structure. Furthermore, new technologies have rendered Marxist classes obsolete. As labor movements decline, new classes emerged from the middle class that are based on non-economic issues, such as personal identity and autonomy. Therefore, New Social Movement moved society away from the hegemony of state power and technology and provided alternative social arguments, giving old values a renewed perspective. By creating an ideological opposition that was not comparable to existing movements, NSM could be seen as a new, standalone theory (Kelly, 2001).

From a more post-modern perspective, Laclau and Mouffe believed that the origin of New Social Movements stemmed from the fact that traditional Marxist classes were no longer in the position to advocate for social change. Instead, they believed in the rejection of all generalized grouping in society, preferring the NSM-based approach of fluid groups based on situational demands. However, by making the choice between Marxism and fluid social classification an “all-or-nothing” scenario, Laclau and Mouffe failed to provide any practical or theoretical options that could exist in between (Kelly, 2001).

Meanwhile, from a different post-modern perspective, Tourane and Melucci attributed to the emergence of the postmodern information industries as the cause for the rise of New Social Movements. In their view, power came from the basis of information and knowledge instead of traditional wealth. For example, Tourane described social movements as a struggle over knowledge tools that allowed for the intervention of social function (e.g. political skills, organizing skills) – tools to interrupt cultural development. An example of such laws included those who limited or expanded the cultural integration and adoption. Tourane’s central conflict revolved around the question of who controlled the means to develop and interfere with culture and groups (Buechler, 1995). Meanwhile, Spain’s Castell studied urban issues and the production of public goods in cities. He believed that urban environments have caused the conflict between social harmony, independence, and preservation of individual culture. Therefore, Castell envisioned social movements with non-class-based constituencies that included non-material criteria as vital data (Buechler, 1995).

Melucci regarded social movements as a reaction to society’s creation of a collective identity that is separate from the individual’s cultural and identity references,

effectively creating a homeless identity. Collective action represented the opposition to the enforced bureaucratic and regulatory social norms that modern society entailed, and Melucci did not see New Social Movements as protest or revolutionary movements. Rather, he saw NSM as collective action that sought to fill in the space between the public collective identities and the private identities. Like others theorists, Melucci considered NSM an ongoing construction and ad hoc groups arose from various submerged groups that would work together for collective goal (Buechler, 1995).

With its emphasis on non-material class as a basis of social division, New Social Movement brought a new dimension that was previously ignored in classic scholarship of social movements. Yet, it was not without its share of criticism, which attacked the theory on the basis that none of its elements are particularly new. For example, despite its name, New Social Movement shared parts of its theoretical grounding on a variety of previous theories from Marxism in its analysis of class struggles to critical theory's emphasis on the cultural factor in social movement formation. Secondly, while it could be argued that all social movement theories borrowed elements from other theories; there was also debate on whether the phenomenon described by New Social Movement would simply be a phase within the development cycle of social development and renovation of social institutions.

Seeking to bridge the gap between NSM and traditional Marxist theories, Steinmetz (1994) proposed using regulation theory to explain the formation of social movements. Noting that many modern social movements transcended traditional Marxist classes that were based on economy and education—and the fact that many new social movements continued to rely on Marxist models to form the bases of NSM theories—

Steinmetz offered a solution based on political economy and the mechanics of regulation within society. According to regulation theory, social movements were defined by people's reaction to social regulations that were imposed on them by the industrialized society. Since the advent of mass production methods commonly attributed to Henry Ford, the accumulation of wealth was not as important as the accumulation of relative wealth (the means to generate wealth). Mass production methods required uniform and regulated workers, and therefore capital owners intruded into the workers' lives in order to introduce a myriad of regulations that would enforce conformity and increase efficiency at the expense of identity and culture. Meanwhile, on the governmental level, social safety nets were provided so that those who worked for the factories could also afford their products, perpetuating the cycle of production and consumption (Steinmetz, 1994). Under these conditions, social movements were formed when a stable middle class, now able to afford education and allowed time to think about non material issues, realized that they have given away too much of their own culture and identity via regulations set by industry, and pushed back against regulations aimed at creating a conforming, uniform work force (Steinmetz, 1994).

Resource mobilization and political process: Organizational and operational theories on social movements

The development of New Social Movement as an alternative to traditional Marxist theories represented an evolutionary step in the development of social movement theory. By establishing non-material criteria for social class division, New Social Movement theories adapted social movement theories to a post-industrial and post-modern society, where personal identity became an increasingly important factor in-

group identification and grievance formation (Kelly, 2001). However, although structural issues and inequality in society allowed for the formation of social classes and grievances, the existence of an underclass would not automatically translate into an organized social movement; and like Marxism before it, NSM has placed its focus on the reason and origins of social movement formation, paying little attention to the operational aspects of social movements. Therefore, in order to understand how social movement works after it was formed, theories were developed to illustrate how social movements organize and sustain themselves.

One of the more popular theories regarding social movement organization formation was Zald and McCarthy's (1977) resource mobilization theory (RMT), an approach that has been used to explain how disadvantaged groups in society form movements that advocated for their interests. According to resource mobilization theory, social movements were formed when a group of people demand change in their circumstances in society. They were often disadvantaged due to cultural and structural issues within society that led them to less desirable situations in society. Therefore, frustration and grievances created the desire to form social movement organizations, and participation in social movements was proportional to the feelings of relative deprivation within the affected group (Turner, 2001).

However, the presence of grievances and structural inequalities alone would not automatically lead to the creation of collective behavior. Rational individuals, even in the face of common interests and grievances, would not create social movements automatically. Instead, the emergence of organized collective behavior depended on several factors, and these factors included the organizers' ability to recruit members and

raise awareness of the issues to which the movement would address (Klandermans, 1984). In order for a social movement to gather resources and recruit participants, recruiters for the social movement must apply traditional principles of economics to social movement creation. In other words, the organization must prove that the benefits of joining outweigh the social and economic cost. In some cases, union memberships, incentives, and benefits would have to be created for the exclusive benefit of the participants, thus providing tangible material that would entice admission and membership (Klandermans, 1984). Recruiters would also have to overcome what Olson (1965) labeled as "the free-rider problem" whereby the targeted members may opt from joining the social movement but would still benefit from the structural and social reforms. To address the free-rider issue, recruiters could rely on several alternative motivators, such as personal relationships in order to invoke a feeling of solidarity with fellow members of the social group. Recruitment could be improved by creating a sense of urgency—such as highlighting an incoming threat—that, if actions were not taken to combat that threat, would harm the entire group. If individuals realized the only way to preserve their rights was to act quickly and participate in collective action, a recruiter could convince those who would normally be "free-riders" to participate. A recruiter might also highlight points of grievances and tout potential improvement on the quality of life to create personal outrage as a motivator for participation (Zald and McCarthy, 1979).

The success of the initial recruitment allowed the social movement to gather followers and resources necessary to create a social movement organization. Zald and McCarthy (1997) believed that social movement organizations could seek recourse from

inside and outside the organization. The group might need to find money, time, and labor in order to work for the group's interest. In addition to internal support, groups might also seek resources from non-constituency institutions and conscience constituencies such as other nonprofit organizations that possessed overlapping or similar objectives, private individuals and corporations that were sympathetic to the goals of the movement, and supportive religious congregations (Jenkins, 1983). Although conscience constituents would not be direct beneficiaries of the social movement, they could provide material, political, and moral support to the movement and, in the process, expand its voice and reach.

Once enough resources have been allocated, the group would be able to pursue its goals (Jenkins, 1983). For example, a movement that wished to affect structural reforms could accomplish their goals via creation of new avenues of social action such as peaceful protests. Alternatively, the social movement could create change by building coalitions and spending resources on allies to ensure electoral success, and this could be accomplished through monetary means or through resource substitution such as providing campaign volunteers. In addition, social movements could harness the power of the mass media to publicize its mission, recruit sympathetic audience and neutralize opponents. By feeding prepackaged information to media and building a compelling narrative, social movements could generate higher recognition and publicity. On the other hand, some social movements might expect negative media portrayal and engage in deliberately counter-cultural behavior in order to appeal to the media's appetite for unusual stories. Regardless of strategy, however, the goal of social movements' desire for media coverage remained the same: to provoke interest from the public and generate public empathy.

Over time, effective message delivery allowed for recruitment of more moderate members of society to support the cause. Moreover, it would produce significant leverage and clout within existing political structure, increase gatherable resources and transform an untried social movement from a disorganized group to a full-fledged organization. Operations of the group would become bureaucratized and professionalized, eventually leading to the development of what Zald and McCarthy (1977) called the "Social Movement Industry."

While Zald and McCarthy focused on resource mobilization, Eisinger emphasized the context-based sensibility of social movements in his political process theory. Similar to the resource mobilization model, the political process model sought to explain the process, strategies, and tactics that social movements use to mobilize collective actions in order to sustain the movement and affect change. Although widely adopted today, sociologist during the post WWII period considered collective action as an irrational, chaotic, and dysfunctional force within the social structure. The perception was largely due to the rise of populist movements such as fascism and the development of widespread radicalism. It was not until the 1960s that scholars considered collective action and social movements a legitimate part of the political discourse (Meyer, 2004).

According to the proponents of the political process model, social movements were formed by groups of individuals who harbored common grievances and felt deprived of their rights in society. Similar to resource mobilization theory, the political process model focused on how social movements develop and create societal change. However, the political process model explored the reasons why participants joined the social movement and the timing of the movement's action. Understanding that social

movements did not choose their goals and actions in vacuum, analysts used the political process model to understand how variations in external factors, including periodicity, political and social structure, and other factors in predicting social movement stratagem and outcomes. In doing so, political process models demonstrated how movements took advantage of the social context as a political opportunity for action (Meyer, 2004).

Like other sociological and political theories, the political process model relied on several assumptions. First, political process theory could be used to address questions concerning the relationship between power, policy-making, and interest groups. Second, in order for political process to work as a valid model for social movements, one should assume that possession of political power was sufficient to compel a change in policy. Third, political power and policy-making must be studied in specific issue domains due to the fact that the relationship between political power and policy-making relied upon the situational factor. The fourth assumption articulated the researchers' reliance of subjective definition of interest in the study of political process. By accepting the definition of interest as given by the subject themselves, or derived from observation of behavioral patterns, researchers would be prevented from studying the interests of the silent party, even when they had obvious interest in the policy subject. This assumption proved to be controversial as later researchers objected to the restrictions imposed, especially when dealing with subjects that were powerless to express their interest overtly. As a result, some researchers would include the interest of those silenced as part of their work (McFarland 2004).

Since its inception, numerous political scientists have used the political process model to understand the different underlying factors that contributed to the development

of social movements or collective action. Notable examples included Eisinger's study on the relationship between structural factors of in cities and riots, which compared city political and social structures to draw out different structural factors that contributed to the occurrence of riots. Using Eisinger's model, Tilly used the political process model to understand collective actions on a national scale. Meanwhile, McAdams applied the principles of political process theories to understand the milestones of the American civil rights movements in the 1950s and 1960s, identifying various points that provided the African American community and its allies opportunities to engage in collective action (Meyer, 2004). These early examples demonstrated the vast potential of the political process model to predict collective action and social movement behavior. It also provided subsequent social movements a way to understand and to take advantage of political and structural opportunities.

A more recent example of political process analysis came from Engel's (2010) study on the gay and lesbian rights movement, which further divided the model into two branches: movement formation and movement maintenance. The formation question focused on opportunity, and Engel believed that an organization should seize on favorable opportunities and psychological alteration to transform a community's identity from one of victimhood to one of a cohesive minority group. The movement maintenance question focused on the formation of pressure groups and the logistics of the social movement organizations: staff, memberships, and other aspects. Organizations would need to navigate within instead of from outside of the existing political system and seize political opportunity to further its cause as it saw fit.

According to Engel (2001), social movement political process consisted of 3 different stages. First stage was one of collective outrage. The disadvantaged classes gathered to express their collective dissatisfaction and outrage, in the form of disorganized protest and even riots. These raw movements would subsequently be arranged into spontaneous ad hoc activist groups. As these organizations took shape, alliances and agendas would form, resulting in the eventual creation of the formal social movement organization. While the unaffiliated stakeholders could provide support for the core social movements groups in the form of resources, protests on their own would not create an organized movement. Therefore it would be up to the formal organizations to assert limited control over the constituent groups to prevent the formation of riots and other spontaneous protests that can potentially harm the movement. Finally, the organization would act on the will of the collective by taking advantage of opportunities within the political landscape, such as the formation of a friendly government or a politically advantageous incident that would allow the group to appear sympathetic. By taking advantage of the correct timing, organizations would be able to make further strides towards the group's ultimate goal.

Although political process model has been a widely used to analyze social movements, some scholars questioned its validity and effectiveness. For example, Goodwin's research demonstrated that the various political and structural variables were not always correlated to the occurrence of collective action. (Goodwin et al., 1999) As a result, the current model for political process was not particularly valuable as a predictive device. Furthermore, the definition of "political opportunities" had yet to be fully developed. The notions of ideological variances, openness to reform, alliance formation,

and activities of opposition were all considered variations within the model, leaving the idea of "opportunities" ill defined. As a result, analyses often varied as what qualifies as a political opportunity variable, causing scholars to qualify all sorts of sociological factor as a variable. Likewise, scholarship of political opportunities failed to define the types of tactics that take advantage of these political opportunities. Since mobilization and collective action did not necessarily lead to policy change, critics of the model had pointed out that the political process model failed to provide parameters by which researchers can judge whether a particular strategy is a success (Meyer, 2004).

Aside from the political process and resource mobilization models, scholars had proposed new ways to understand or add to the existing models of social movements. For example, Morris (2001) attributed to agency laden satellite organizations as the key factor in determining the success of social movement campaigns. Citing the civil rights movements in the 1960s, Morris attributed to the African American churches' ability to effectively galvanize its followers into collective action and donating their resources as the leading cause for the organization's success. In addition, both Morris (2001) and Engel (2001) addressed the idea of reframing a social issue by changing its perception. By correctly framing their issues, social movements could shape collective agency to suit the overarching agenda and strategy of the social movement. For example, framing civil rights as a religious value during the civil rights struggle allowed social movement organizations to recruit participation from agency-rich institutions like churches. By engaging in effective but non-violent protests, the civil rights movement also prevented the opposition from framing it in a nefarious manner.

Aside from process-based models, other researchers looked at specific elements of social movement strategies. For example, Haider-Markel et al. (2003) found that gay friendly legislations were more likely to pass the legislative process than from public referendum. The findings suggested that the gay and lesbian rights movement would more likely to be rewarded by devoting resources to lobbying support from legislative members of local and state governments. On the other hand, opponents of gay rights have long relied on referendums in order to defeat pro-LGBT measures by framing LGBT issues as one of public morality. In another historical survey, Meyer and Boutcher (2007) argued that the judiciary approach had become the most popular avenue for social minority groups to seek remedy for any civil rights shortcomings. Due to the success of civil rights cases before the Supreme Court, most notably the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling, civil rights organizations saw litigation as a more effective and permanent way to push for civil rights solutions, especially for issues that would seem unlikely to generate popular support such as LGBT rights .

Finally, an interesting concept that could be relevant to the development of social movements was "social capital," an intangible resource roughly classified as goodwill. Adler and Kwon (2002), who constructed the concept of social capital by synthesizing several existing multidisciplinary research, believed it would be a measurable resource that could help understand why and how people act. To conceptualize the term "social capital", the authors laid down a set of assumptions and characteristics associated with the concept. These included how social capital could be generated (by building connections and accumulating favors), how individuals would use social capital to generate tangible benefits (such as donations or volunteer labor), and reasons to build

social capital (perception of shared destiny, enforced trust). While the stability and utility of social capital could vary, its intangibility and its operational conditions made it a risky asset (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

Existing Research on LGBT-Community Related Topics

Social movements have been a part of the political and social discourse throughout the history of the United States, from the women's suffrage movement to African Americans' struggle for civil rights, minority and disadvantaged groups have harnessed the power of the collective to agitate political reform and inspire social changes. While the process of these changes was rarely smooth, social movements have transformed the American social fabric.

Currently, one of the most prominent social movements in the United States is the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) movement. Long marginalized and ostracized, the gay community began to organize itself close to half century ago to combat discrimination and persecution. As a consequence, the gay rights movement became one of the most prominent social movements in American society, working to ensure equal civil rights and overcoming long-standing prejudices.

Given their prominence in the American social and political landscape in the past several decades, the LGBT social movement has been the subject of numerous historical and sociological analyses. Adam's book is a notable example on the history of the gay rights advocacy from the emergence of an organized LGBT movement in Germany in the 1890s to the crest of the AIDS crisis in 1980s (Adam, 1995).

Adam (1995) provided a road map to LGBT history, where the relative liberalism in central Europe in the late 19th century was morphed into oppression and outright

persecution with the rise of right wing ideologies such as fascism. Meanwhile, in English-speaking countries, the oppression of gays and lesbians flourished due to Victorian laws and morals, which condemned homosexuality. In both the UK and the US, sodomy law persecution remained a problem with LGBT communities, and only through lawsuits and other civil rights action could LGBT people be allowed to associate freely in public or to even receive mail that postmasters deemed obscene. Politically, the rising influence of the religious right led to political strife for LGBT Americans, with Republican Party pushing forth anti-gay platforms to generate donations and corral votes. Overall, Adam's book provided an excellent overview of the LGBT social movement as a historical narrative.

Meanwhile, Mary Bernstein (2002) looked at the transformation of the LGBT social movement from collective action in the 1960s and 1970s to the creation of a professionalized social movement network. Bernstein also provided a detailed historical perspective of LGBT rights movement and the construction of identity politics. She related the concept of identity politics to the gay community, which established sexual orientation as an unchanging factor of their lives and therefore an identity that could not be altered. She defended the use of identity politics from critics, who charged that identity politics needed a common enemy to survive and could not create meaningful social changes.

By presenting an historical examination of the American gay and lesbian movement, Bernstein offered several insights about LGBT rights. First, she argued that identity politics was not the principal factor that fractured the leftist political movement, but rather the lack of a shared, broad-based agenda that would cover everyone. Shunned

by other movements, gay and lesbians banded together to form their own civil rights movement. That movement grew during the 1960s and 1970s and eventually formed political organizations that would challenge the continuing discrimination and criminalization of homosexuality, the latter until *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003). In the 1980s, the AIDS epidemic and Reagan's slow response to the AIDS crisis created a new sense of urgency, which led to a renewed grassroots effort to better advance LGBT rights. In the 1990s, the emergence of the Christian right and its homophobia agenda lead to the professionalization of the LGBT movement, hiring consultants and banding together with other minority movements to gain clout, such as the case of hate crime legislation.

In conclusion, Bernstein's study of the history of the American LGBT rights movement described the use of a fixed identity to consolidate parties in order to create a cohesive social movement. She also argued that "political" and "cultural" aspects of identity could be comingled. In fact, the LGBT movement demonstrated that politics and culture would indeed mix depending on external and internal factors. The author also argued that although LGBT movement was fixed in its identity, it did not prevent LGBT organizers from forming coalitions with other social minority groups to advocate for shared issues.

While Adam and Bernstein focused on the LGBT social movement from an historical angle, others have written about the community's progress from a different perspective. In *Courts, Liberalism, and Rights*, Pierceson's (2005) analyzed the LGBT social movement from the legal standpoint, outlining different political and judicial philosophies that had driven court rulings related to the civil rights for LGBT Americans. From using the rights of free speech to dismantling antigay censorship and to the

application of the rational basis test towards discriminatory legislation, the author presented a historical narrative on how court rulings have expanded the civil rights of LGBT Americans. Delving deeper, Pierceson proposed the idea of liberalism as a political philosophy and concluded that while some activists decry the lack of ideological diversity among the political leadership within the LGBT social movement, liberalism became the dominating principle because the community believed in the role of the government as a protector from the opposition party who embraced majority rule.

Like Pierceson, other scholars had also written about the progress of the LGBT social movement from the legal and political points of view. Haider-Markel and associates (2003) compared the outcomes of legislative versus electoral processes for the LGBT civil rights. Specifically, the study examined the outcomes of anti-discrimination legislation in Wisconsin and several statewide LGBT-rights related referenda. The results illustrated some major differences between approaches and outcome. They found that LGBT issues were more likely to pass when the issues were pushed through the legislative process, and this was the case because LGBT issues were framed as a civil rights issue. Legislators could be pushed to champion for these causes when they came from liberal constituencies. Interest groups like National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) could be called upon to pressure legislators and mobilize the community, and passing legislation quickly can prevent opposition parties from organizing.

However, electoral processes often resulted in negative outcomes for LGBT rights. The reason was attributed to several factors. First, the population at large was less likely to support LGBT rights, especially among social and religious conservatives. Second, the use of referendum on gay rights allowed opposing factions to frame it as a

morality issue, making pro-gay policies difficult to pass. In conclusion, the authors argued that it would be more prudent for LGBT social movement to place emphasis on the legislative process in order to achieve its goals (Haider-Markel et al., 2003).

Meyer and Boutcher's (2007) article on the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the struggle for LGBT rights came to a similar conclusion, albeit using different means of analysis. Using historical data, the authors argued that the lasting legacy of the landmark civil rights case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was the use of litigation as means to achieve civil rights ends. Opening with Massachusetts Supreme Court's *Goodwin* decision to legalize gay marriage, the authors argued that since *Brown*, the US judiciary remained an avenue of social minority groups to seek equality and right the wrongs of discrimination, which the authors consider a "spillover" effect.

Employing the precedence of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), activists sought to redress their issues through the use of lawsuits as a tactic to push for LGBT rights. Instead of focusing on grassroots efforts or building legislative support, activists started to push for lawsuits as a more attractive option since the judicial system could overturn anti-gay legislations. The authors argued that this strategic realignment led to the proliferation of litigation as a means to enforce civil rights, one that has been adopted by nonprofit organizations such as LGBT organizations. While not all judicial efforts proved to be successful, the authors concluded that the legacy of *Brown* emboldened minority groups to form political bodies and fight for their rights (Meyer and Boutcher, 2007).

The traditionally negative attitude towards homosexuality could be a detrimental factor in LGBT's quest for equal rights. Therefore, research had been conducted to

ascertain the possible strategic direction for the gay rights movement. For example, Avery and colleagues (2007) tracked public attitudes towards homosexuality and how these changes impacted the work of advocacy groups. Working from polling data from 1977-2004, the researchers tracked the public's attitude towards homosexuality, same sex marriage, and civil unions. In addition, Avery et al. examined studies that dealt with a wide variety of LGBT-rights related issues, including workspace discrimination, benefits for domestic partners, political attitudes towards LGBT people, education of LGBT issues, LGBT parenthood, causes of homosexuality, and the acceptance of gays and lesbians in the military.

The results showed that although much of the population were against same sex marriage, more were accepting of the idea of civil unions and a vast majority have since accepted equal rights for LGBT citizens in a variety of applications such as employment, and housing. In addition, an increasing amount of respondents believed in a biological cause of homosexuality as opposed to environmental causes, which led the authors to conclude that the public was slowly evolving towards the overall acceptance of LGBT equality.

While Avery and his colleagues used polling data to ascertain the public's attitude towards homosexuality, others had searched for fresh techniques that would accurately measure individual negative attitudes towards homosexuals. For example, Morrison (2008) noticed wide spread discrepancies between different studies that sought to measure homonegative (homophobic) attitudes, so he developed a more reliable methodology with a series of 4 studies designed to measure the consistency and reliability of a measuring system known as Modern Homonegativity Scale (MHS), which

is a psychology-based methodology that measures negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians.

The results showed that the new scale could accurately measure negative attitude towards LGBT persons, which could often be masked by the respondents' fear of being labeled as homophobic. Although there were some caveats to the results due to sampling limitations, the overall results showed that MHS could be a valid alternative to documenting homophobic attitudes among young adults.

In the realm of culture and economics, Chasin (2000) examined the relationship between the marketplace and political movements by exploring the development and impact of the LGBT-targeted marketing. She found that the LGBT political movement was partly the result of the modern capitalist society, as gay individuals were no longer bound by traditional community ties and were able to form their own communities away from hostile familial and social environments. At the same time, marketing professionals began to target specific segments of the population in the quest to find untapped consumer markets, promoting goods to specifically population segments such as teenagers, women, and African Americans. As LGBT individuals began to assert their identity and create communities of their own, and spurred by flawed research that created the illusion of a rich but underserved consumer base, companies began to target the community with specific marketing strategies, creating the LGBT-focused niche market.

The rise of LGBT-specific niche marketing impacted the community in several ways. First, it led to the creation of a community-wide consumer identity that combined commercial with political goals, making the term “pride” as much as a marketing slogan as it was a political expression. Furthermore, to attract patronage of LGBT consumers

and their supporters, companies adopted political agendas and lend corporate support of certain LGBT specific policy goals, such as the repeal of the military's "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy, leading to conflict with other consumers who oppose LGBT civil rights. Finally, while the LGBT community benefited from corporate support for its agenda, the illusion of a "rich white gay" market created a LGBT cultural landscape that sacrificed non-stereotypical community members, such as women and racial minorities, who were either ignored or forced to take on an exploitative roles (Chasin, 2000).

As the body of literature on LGBT-related topics continued to grow in the United States, some researchers sought to approach the subject from an international perspective. For example, Laurent's (2005) study of LGBT rights in Asia was a representative example of such research, which explored the modern condition of LGBT rights, as well as the root causes of oppression towards gay and lesbian populations. Despite having severely limited resources due to the relatively secretive nature of these communities, the author tried to paint a picture of LGBT rights in most Asian countries in a nation-by-nation approach.

Laurent found that despite the overall lack of outright homophobia and western-style antigay violence—and in some cases even historical acceptance of homosexuality and third gender expressions—Asian LGBT communities continued to exist in silence due to several factors. In places such as India, where Victorian values still persisted in post-colonialism, homosexuals became an outcast community. Laws were introduced to punish homosexuality, and despite many ex-colonies having achieved independence, the laws remained intact and widespread discrimination and criminalization of homosexuals were condoned. In some states, such as Sri Lanka, the law stayed on the books despite

not being enforced, allowing unscrupulous officials to blackmail or extort suspected LGBT citizens. Aside from colonialism, religious prohibition was often cited as a reason for LGBT communities to remain underground. In traditionally Muslim countries such as Bangladesh and Malaysia, religious prohibition against homosexuality led authorities to actively persecute the LGBT community, while countries with a Judeo-Christian influence also pursued similar persecutions in varying degrees. For example, LGBT rights organizations in Taiwan have encountered legislative and popular opposition due to the influence of Christian organizations (Ho, 2010).

Cultural factors also played a role in shaping the rights of LGBT communities in Asia. For example, in some countries such as China, the pressure on men and women to form families and produce children had been the most important driving factors for LGBT discrimination. Chinese culture considered marriage and procreation as the hallmark of successful adulthood; the lack of either as a result of homosexuality was seen as a shame factor for the person and his or her family, especially in high-context cultures where a person's behavior could be seen as reflection of the entire clan. On the other hand, homosexuality was not considered a taboo in and of itself, provided that the person fulfilled his or her obligations by marrying and producing children. Some cultures did not stigmatize homosexual relations outside of marriage (Laurent, 2005).

Other countries had been more sympathetic of LGBT rights than others despite the lack of support from legal and governmental quarters. Thailand, for example, stood out as an example of tolerance, which is largely due to the non-existent structural violence against LGBT individuals and the lack of a negative view of homosexuality by the native culture. Others, such as Japan, also did not have a historical or cultural bias

against LGBTs, but they had strong preference for family creation and maintaining family honor (Laurent, 2005).

Research on Cyber Activism and Social Minority Groups Online

In the past two decades, during which LGBT social movement in the United States became part of the mainstream political and social discourse, the World Wide Web became the predominant mode of communication. With its global reach, as well as its ability to deliver information instantaneously, the Internet has had an immeasurable impact on society.

Consequently, little scholarship has been devoted to measure the impact of the Internet on social movements despite its ubiquity and its enormous importance in sociological terms. Therefore, this section of literature review would cover a wider variety of research about Internet content and usage, including those using the Internet as part of their research methodology. In addition, this section would also describe research done on the gay and lesbian community, with a particular emphasis on LGBT-focused research that is conducted via Internet-based methods and analysis of web-site contents.

Since its early development, the Internet has been an attractive home for counterhegemonic discourse. It allowed for marginalized groups to speak to their needs and identities and also to avoid censorship that would hinder the development of the alternative discourse. Warf and Grimes (1997) found that the numbers of sites that catered to marginalized discourse rose exponentially, resulting in a diverse array of causes from animal rights to LGBT equality. Activists were able to harness the power of the Internet in order to support or denounce real-world events and to advocate for specific issues that catered to their target audience. While some sites provided information about

issues, others assisted users to find online destinations that would speak to their specific interests. Finally, Warf and Grimes noted that although the political left dominated the cyberspace, racist groups such as white supremacists were able to set up a presence on the Internet as well.

More than two decades later, Jessie Daniel (2009) documented how white supremacist groups utilized the Internet as a global social movement. Daniels explored the variety of racist organizations online, which organized themselves around divergent goals and ideologies. Some sites adhered to the so-called “patriot movement,” which concentrated on a nationalistic ideology while others sought to consolidate a “global white” movement, which wanted to unite white citizens from across the globe to establish a “trans local” white-racist movement. The members of these movements—who were mostly whites and heterosexuals—used the Internet as a platform to express their anger and perceived disadvantaged status in the world.

Consequently, many of the traditional white supremacist groups in the United States were unable to build a significant online presence. Infamous organizations (such as the National Alliance/National State's Rights party and Christian Identity) maintained rudimentary, if not static, websites that did nothing more than provided a printable copy of their newsletter or old recruitment documentation, even notorious organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan and the National Association for the Advancement of White People (a mockery of NAACP) were unable to establish a web presence.

The absence of traditionally racist organizations did not mean that there was a lack of online resources for those who seek to share racist ideas. In place of the older groups, newer organizations, such as Stormfront and White Aryan Resistance, carried the

torch for white supremacist ideologies by adapting to the digital age. Harnessing the open nature of the Internet, the newer and technologically savvy white supremacist groups created media outlets that would be otherwise impossible, such as online radio feeds and podcasts. In addition to building a broadcast channel for their own ideology, online white supremacist groups have also used the interactive nature of the web to encourage interaction, creating chat rooms and forums where members could communicate. Due to the ease of creating anonymous identities online, people who might otherwise be concerned about potential social stigma could join these sites to lurk or participate.

While the white supremacist groups were largely unsuccessful, the Internet did provide a globalized atmosphere and lessened the isolation of regional white supremacist networks, which contributed to the unification and expansion of the movement. It also provided a place to amplify their message, values, and ideas to a receptive and geographically diverse audience, much like the Internet's impact to unite other obscure and less popular sub-cultures. Furthermore, by utilizing distorted historical narratives and cleverly masked web sites, white supremacist groups could deploy stealth propaganda disguised as genuine academic arguments on an impressionable audience.

In another study, Adams and Roscigno (2005) applied text analysis to compare the rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan and the Neo-Nazi movements. The results showed that while both movements share the same goal, each constructed their own identity. For the KKK groups, the color of the skin was the identity trait for members and the movement called for greater participation in political process in order to impose their ideology. Meanwhile, Neo-Nazi groups prefer to identify with separatist movements and used the term "Aryan" instead of skin color as the primary identifier. To Neo-Nazi groups, social

degradation (caused by multi-racial coexistence) was the source of the decline of a nation, and therefore the narrative constructed was biologically deterministic rather than political. This study demonstrated the power of symbols and framing in the determination of ideology in social movement in addition to the power of the Internet to disseminate these symbols to an international audience of potential recruits and followers.

McCaughey and Ayers (2003) also examined how cyber activists utilized the power of the Internet to promote and produce an alternative discourse. While their goals were extremely diverse as are their tactics, cyber activists used the Internet as a medium to promote their message, rejecting the mass media as an anti-democratic device designed to quell dissent and promote views that mainstream media endorsed. For example, one of the earliest acts of cyber activism was formed when a software company announced its intention to sell user information to third party marketers, and privacy activists were able to sound the alarm and eventually consumer feedback has led to the plan's cancellation. McCaughey and Ayers also examined the rise of independent web-based media organizations such as indymedia as an alternative outlet to circumvent conventional media and provide an independent noncommercial point of view, as well as efforts by local activists to highlight local issues on the national stage using the Internet for communication.

Pickerill (2006) focused on the rise of online radical politics in the UK, which has been in place since 1980s to coordinate nonviolent political actions and “hacktivism.” The Internet provided another venue for democratic debates, a forum for direct democracy and mobilization. In addition, the Internet created “transnational” communities that provide solidarity to members of the population who could not

otherwise receive support for their work. She listed examples that included the “McLibel” case, in which McDonalds sued activists for distributing libelous material, WTO/IMF protests, political parodies, as well as grassroots level motivation of protests. The researcher also considered the emerging importance of blogs, the widespread popularity of cell phone technology and other communication modes which could be used to spread political messages quickly and coordinate direct radical political actions.

Following the same theme as Pickerill is Yang's paper on online activism in the People's Republic of China (PRC), which first appeared in China in the late 1990s. While there have been 4 types of activism: cultural, social, political and nationalistic, Yang's study concentrated on online political and nationalist activism. Political activism online in china focused on political reforms, human rights and governance. Nationalist activism created large scale mobilization which leads to on-street protests perceived threats from abroad (Yang, 2009).

While the Chinese government allowed NGOs and civic groups to maintain an online presence, the government restricted control over the contents to a point where it became impossible for much of the population to practice their freedom of expression. Nevertheless, Chinese users were able to use the Internet to debate on a wide range of issues as long as they refrain from challenging state power. Those who desired to discuss topics verboten to the omnipresent government censors could get around state-mandated filtering and restrictions by using technology to avoid censors, facilitating secret online meetings, and creating Chinese characters that would avoid filtering. Like their counterparts in the United States, Chinese users created specific communities that catered to their interest, including the LGBT community.

While Yang's paper acknowledged the existence of LGBT community's presence on the Internet, his research focused on the overall process of overcoming government intervention. Other researchers have delved deeper to and explored the relationship between the gay and lesbian community and the Internet. Written during the late 1990s, when the web has yet to become the omnipresent technology it is today, Weinrich tried to articulate why the gay community was drawn to the Internet as both a career choice and as a communication tool. As one of the earliest examples on the subject, the author conducted interviews with pioneers of gay computing and LGBT web resources, asked why the gay community took to the Internet, and whether there were intellectual, economical, geographic and other factors that drive gay liberation movement online (Weinrich, 1997).

There were many factors that made the Internet an attractive platform for the LGBT community. First, Silicon Valley was close to San Francisco, which was home to one of the largest LGBT communities in America. In addition, the Internet industry's roots in academia created a more socially liberal environment for the field, which has been more welcoming to the gay community. The lack of talent meant that companies could not afford to turn gay applicants away, and the younger demographic of tech executives meant they were less likely to discriminate against gay employees. While Wienrich (1997) found that gay employees were not especially more adept in computer programming, the community embraced the Internet in order to share political information and seek romantic relationships, both of which could be done across great distances through the Web.

Whereas much of the aforementioned research sought to explain how the Internet has impacted the reach and operation of specific communities and sub cultures, other researchers tried to understand the how these communities utilize certain tools to communicate online. As one of the most common communication tools on the web, discussion forums had been the subject of research on social interaction online. In most papers, the focus was paid to how the public used the Internet to discuss matters of interest. In Daniel's volume on white supremacist online culture, she studied members' interaction on white supremacist forums to gain insight in their identity construction (Daniels, 2009). Yang, who wrote about the state of Chinese online activism, has also conducted research to determine the impact of the Internet had on civil society by studying discussion forums. He analyzed the discourse of an online forum controlled by one of the official Chinese newspapers, and although administrators heavily censored the content, Internet users still considered it a free space for expression on a variety of topics, both personal and political. For a different perspective, Yang also conducted an ethnographic study of a website for Chinese Educated Youths (persecuted intellectuals and volunteer students who were sent to rural sites to develop China during the Cultural Revolution). There, the researcher found that the site acted as a meeting point for those from the same generation, who wished to reassert their identity and have their history recognized by the new generation of Chinese people. During his time of participation, the researcher watched the administrators of the site navigate treacherous waters of politics and censorship, as the discussion forum was closed down at least once for mysterious reasons. The researcher concluded that the Internet has impacted Chinese civil society in

important ways and in effect relied on each other for development and evolution (Yang, 2003).

Researchers have also analyzed LGBT blogs as a tool for identity building. Rak (2005) studied blogs as the digital manifestation of the personal diary and concluded that blogs could not be regarded as the direct equivalent of diaries due to several reasons. First, the nature of the Internet would allow identities to be hidden, making it difficult to decipher if the blog writer was writing from an autobiographical perspective and whether the writer was telling the truth at all. In addition, while diaries were meant to be private, blogs were written with the expressed purpose of outsider consumption and interaction. Rather than being a diary, Rak argued that blogs should be seen as an example of direct democracy, because it allowed the writers to express their views and invite the public to debate him directly. Due to its heavily American demographic, the spirit of self-expression and free speech were important values to bloggers. Finally, the article discussed the relationship between queer theory and blogging. After performing content analysis, Rak found that in the case of gay and lesbian bloggers, blogs allowed for the open declaration of their LGBT identity and to find people who share their identity and left-leaning political outlook.

Kang and Yang (2009) examined the role of LGBT-identified blogs in China and found that blogs served as a safe space for LGBT members to discuss an otherwise taboo topic. In other words, blogs created a new territory where new discourses emerged, allowing the LGBT communities in China to speak to one another without physically congregating. It also provided the means for LGBT members to anonymously share and receive feedback. In conclusion, Kang and Yang attributed the advancement in blogging

technologies as the principle agent that made it possible for the creation of an online LGBT community in China. .

While LGBTs in China utilized the Internet as a place for group identity and connection, other social groups differed in their utilization of the Internet. For example, Friedman (2005) analyzed the cyber activism of Latin American gender equality groups. Having interviewed members of these organizations, Friedman concluded that while the Internet provided a useful tool, the effectiveness of cyber activism was dependent on the degree of skill and the availability of Internet access. More importantly, the availability of the Internet enhanced efforts to build coalitions and allowed marginalized communities to unite and empower themselves.

In another study, Mehra and associates (2004) compared African American women, the impoverished community, and the LGBT community and their utilization of the Internet. Results found that each group utilized the Internet in vastly different ways. For instance, the impoverished community viewed the Internet as a tool for entertainment and shopping. LGBT groups regarded the Internet as a conduit to exchange information for community support and political empowerment. LGBT members used the Internet to discuss a variety of topics relevant to their community, to organize offline action, to promote political participation, and to socialize with other LGBT members. Conversely, African American women used the Internet for health information and mutual technological support. The researchers noted that despite their divergent goals, marginalization seemed to be the common thread that connected the online communities to pursue similar agendas.

Outside of its impact on marginalized groups, the growing popularity of the Internet as a source of information and communication has also been attributed to changes across social strata. For example, Tolbert and McNeal (2003) used National Election Studies (NES) data from 3 separate surveys that took place in 1996, 1998, and 2000 to determine the correlation between Internet use and political participation. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between a person's Internet use and likely political participation. Furthermore, after weighing demographic factors such as age, race and political affiliation, people who viewed political information online were more likely to vote. Meanwhile, concurrent analysis revealed that consumption of traditional media such as television and newspapers had little correlation with the likelihood of voting. Therefore, the findings provided strong and consistent evidence that Internet usage had been affecting the political landscape in elections.

Tolbert and McNeal also found a positive correlation between Internet access and other political activities, such as public display of candidate preferences and having political conversations with others. Furthermore, the correlation between Internet access and political participation also strengthened over time. The Internet provided an inexpensive and convenient form of information and offered an alternative source of information that traditional news media may have overlooked. However, political consumption via Internet limited the exposure to conflicting viewpoints and thereby reducing the political tolerance of those who held different perspectives.

Meanwhile, researchers on both sides of the Atlantic have conducted studies to determine correlation between web access and civic engagement. In the US, Jennings and Zeitner (2003) compared Internet access by civic engagement. They concluded that while

Internet access itself did not lead to increase in political activity, it did not decrease the amount of existing political engagement among respondents. In other words, Internet users simply incorporated the web as another conduit to consume political information. Moreover, Jennings and Zeitner found that Internet access did not increase political mistrust.

In the UK, Livingstone et al. (2005) examined the relationship between web access and participation in civic discourse among British youths. By employing a national survey and conducting focus groups between 9 and 19 years old, the researchers analyzed online activities and civic engagement. The results showed that British teenagers used the Internet for communication, entertainment, and information seeking purposes. Among them, just over half of respondents visited political and civic-focused web sites regularly. They found that the more teenagers used one genre of web sites, such as educational or entertainment, the more likely they were to use others websites, but few took up long-term participation. In addition, Livingstone and associates found that middle-class boys were more likely to use online for communication while girls were more likely to visit political and civic websites. Finally, demographic variables were mitigated by increased Internet proficiency and experiences of online usage, leading to an increase of access to civic websites and participation.

So far, the literature reviewed in this section dealt with the Internet as a medium or a subject of study, but perhaps the most important aspect of the Internet in the academic setting would be its role as a data collection tool. In addition to low implementation cost and large available sample size, Internet-based research enabled easy data compilation, making it an attractive option for researchers particularly in LGBT

research (Mustanski, 2001). For example, Halkitis and Parsons (2003) studied the behavior of HIV-positive gay men seeking sex. Using an online survey, the researchers gained insight into the practice of unsafe sex within a sub-set of the LGBT community, hoping the information can be used to create a more targeted sex education. In a similar study, Rhodes and associates (2009) examined the health-risk behavior of both gay and non-gay students. The results showed that increased health risks suffered by LGBT students were related to social stigma and discrimination against same sex relationships. Outside of health-related studies, researchers have also used an online questionnaire to examine how LGBT students define "having sex" in order to accurately determine LGBT sexual behavior (Mustanski, 2001).

Despite its enormous capability as a data collection tool, research designers would do well to consider both external and internal validity of survey respondents. External validity measures how much the survey sample fits with the typical cross section of the population. That factor depends on the subject and the population involved, but since the Internet has gained popularity with the general population, concerns that Internet survey takers would distort the sampling picture is increasingly irrelevant. On the other hand, internal validity refers to respondent's honesty and accuracy. Due to the use of anonymity of online surveys, online research methods reduce discomfort of the respondents, which leads to increased willingness to reveal true information about them. However, online survey responders could simply answer questions without reading them or insert random responses. To prevent potentially skewed results, survey creators could introduce control questions that would identify and weed out dubious responses. In addition, proper

netiquette could help prevent “trolling” and other malevolent actors that would work against the research process (Mustanski, 2001).

Summary

This chapter covered a numerous topics relating to theories of social movements, LGBT social movements, and the impact of the Internet on social movements. First, it summarized the various models and theories of social movement including the forms and function. From the study of collective action at the dawn of sociological research, when they were merely considered crazes and irrational behavior, to the theory of new social movements, where social movements has transformed from one that is based on socio-economic factors to one based on group identity, the first section examined the various models of analysis that social researchers employed to explain factors that were relevant to the creation of social movements. Moreover, due to process models such as resource mobilization theory and political process models, researchers were able to nature of social movements.

Secondly, this review touched on the extant scholarship on the LGBT social movement. As one of the more visible social minority group in the United States, it was not surprising to find extensive volumes of research on the LGBT community, from historical analysis to research papers that specifically dealt with LGBT political and civil rights. Last but not least, this review reviewed the Internet’s impact on social cyber activism. Since its emergence twenty years ago, the Internet has quickly become the most important technological innovation of the late 20th century, and given its origin within academia, it is no surprise that the web has become an important tool for researchers to

conduct studies and gather data. In addition, the Internet had also been the subject of research.

Discussion

The concept of people exchanging information through computers has long existed in the imagination of science fiction writers. From Gibson's *Neuromancer* to Card's *Ender's Game*, writers had long dreamt of a society where individuals can store data, exchange information, and share their opinions virtually. Today, just as the astronauts from the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, people consume their news on portable devices and computers and stream web content through wireless technology. Throughout the world, people have rely on the Internet to learn and to communicate, whether it involves surfing the web, sharing snippets of their lives through Twitter, or befriending people whom they have never met in person.

More importantly, the widespread use of the Internet has led to groundbreaking changes in civic discourse and personal expression. Through the magic of the web, individuals now have the power to broadcast themselves from everything involving sharing stories of their personal experiences, to posting pictures of cats and food, and to broadcasting their beliefs. Without the requirement or the expense of a middleman, citizens are free to share as much or as little of their lives for anyone who cares to witness.

The web has also changed the face of civil discourse. Politics, once confined to debates on cable news channels and to pages of a newspaper, has now been a frequent subject of fierce debates online. Politicians have also embraced the web as a source to disseminate their message, communicate with supporters, and raise money for

campaigns. In turn, the public has returned the favor, bombarding their elected officials with opinions of their own on every issue through social media. Traditional media, having embraced the web with their own online portals, tracks the online activities of political campaigns, and uses the web to poll the audience. As a result, politicians are under the microscope more now than ever with each gaffe being captured and endlessly repeated, creating a self-feeding cycle of media coverage that the public devours with glee.

Therefore, as an integral part of civic discourse, social movements did not escape the effect of the Internet. In fact, one could argue that the web has a significant impact of much of the existing sociological paradigm that has dominated the study of social movements in numerous ways. Yet, despite its enormous influence on society as a whole, extant literature has done little to address the role of the Internet in social movements. In particular, current literature on social movements failed to address the changing role of the individual from both the organizational and participatory level in the information age.

The Role of the Individual Agency within Social Movements in the Age of the Internet

One of the most important influences of the Internet on social movements is its impact on the role of individuals. Since its derivation from the study of collective behavior, social movement scholarship has placed its primary focus on the societal status quo. From Smelser's idea of collective behavior to the Gurr's model of relative deprivation, the study of protest and rebellion has largely relied on group mechanics. Later on, the emergence of Marxist theories places the cause of collective behavior and revolution squarely on class-based exploitation. In the post-Marxist era, identity replaced

class and economic status as the primary factor in social movement formation.

Meanwhile, in terms of operational models, resource mobilization theory and political process theory emphasize the establishment of strong social organizations as agents for change.

The widespread use of the Internet has challenged these established theories by changing the established relationship between the individual and the social movement. Specifically, it elevates the role of the individual in social movements by making individual agency more powerful than ever. Due to a wide variety of online tools, such as blogging platforms that are publication-ready and mostly free to use, individuals can now take a larger role in the advocacy of social movements by directly harnessing a worldwide audience that no previous communication medium can provide. With time and effort, a single person can capture the attention of a large audience who would consumer his reportage, his opinions, and other items he care to share, building influence that would previously require the resource of a large social movement organization. As a consequence, the Internet has elevated a new class of social activists that previously would have had trouble achieving movement-wide significance.

Furthermore, web-based activists such as bloggers can monetize their advocacy due to third-party advertising and other sources of revenue, unshackling individual activists from the bounds of formal social movement organizations and its constant need for donations and institutional financing. By using the web as their medium, these advocates can bypass the usual organizational hierarchy and broadcast their views directly to the audience.

Therefore, considering these factors, I believe it is important to understand how these individuals utilize the Internet to engage in social movement activism, and how the Internet's influence on existing social movement models.

Potential Impact of the Internet on Social Movements and Its Impact of Conflict Resolution

The Internet is now a permanent fixture in everyday life. People are connected to the web from their computers, smartphones, and even eyewear. Therefore, in order for sociological scholarship to move forward in the twenty first century, scholastic effort must be paid to understand the changes that the web has brought on social movements.

Understanding the web's role in social movements would have important impact not only on the future of the study of social movements, but also on the specific study of conflict analysis and resolution. In a larger scale, social scientists would be able to further understand how changes in communication and information technology have on social movements. For established social movement organizations, they would have a better understanding on how the power of the web can be used to expand its constituency and reach, creating new strategies and tactics that would be used to further their cause and improve resource efficiency. For conflict researchers, a better understanding of the Internet's influence on individual and group behavior would provide useful material for the development of interpersonal, inter-group and even international conflict management and resolution.

As online connections are increasingly becoming a large part of our life, more real-world issues will be reflected on the web. From identity-driven issues such as racism and homophobia, to economic challenges such as poverty and structural inequality, the

Internet provide an unlimited forum for debate and conflict that would create real-world consequences. Therefore, it is my conviction that better understanding of the Internet's influence on social movements, both from the point of content-creator and the content-consumer, is an important step towards the scholarship of conflict resolution and the understanding of wider realm of sociological research.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The impact of the Internet on social movements has yet to be fully understood. In order to further research and provide potentially new sociological models, the goal of this dissertation is to understand the impact of the Internet on social movements. To reach that goal, this dissertation presents a phenomenological study of LGBT-issue related bloggers, conducted in the model of phenomenological research laid out by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (1998) among others. Utilizing in-depth interviews with several bloggers that specialize in LGBT civil rights advocacy, this study examines the overarching themes and meanings that represent experience of bloggers whose work focused on LGBT-issues.

This section would address the methodology of this study in several parts, including the reasoning behind choosing transcendental phenomenology as the best approach to this subject, the formulation of a comprehensive research question, bracketing, sampling, data collection, and analysis. In addition, this section addresses the validity and credibility verification as well as the ethical concerns.

Choosing a Research Method

This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of bloggers in order to determine their impact on the LGBT social movement in the United States. In order to gather data for this study, these bloggers would be invited to provide their stories through the use of interviews. Since their experiences would be delivered in a narrative format, a quantitative approach would not constitute an appropriate research methodology.

Therefore, for this particular study, a qualitative methodology is a more suitable option. John Creswell (1988) describes five distinct forms of qualitative inquiries:

ethnography, phenomenology, narrative biography, grounded theory, and case studies. Since the goal of this study is to understand the lived experiences of the subjects and discover the overarching themes that would appropriately describe the essence of their shared experience, the most appropriate approach towards the subject matter is the method of phenomenology.

Phenomenology is the study of the participant's lived experience of a particular event or process (a phenomenon). For a researcher, the goal of a phenomenological study is to gather the lived experience of multiple individuals and distill these experiences into a universal essence that can be used to describe the general phenomenon. Furthermore, according to Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994), the goal of a phenomenological research is not to explain the subject's experience objectively, but to understand the experience's subjective meaning within the larger, overarching context.

Within the discipline of phenomenological studies, there are several approaches towards its practice. They include empirical phenomenology, existential phenomenology, hermeneutical phenomenology, and transcendental phenomenology (van Manen, 2011). Hermeneutical phenomenology focuses on symbolic interpretation and how subjects understand the world around them. Therefore, in order to understand the entirety of the subject's experience, the researcher must examine all symbolic aspects of the experience before the researcher can come to a complete interpretation. On the other hand, empirical phenomenology considers the researcher's presumptions as part of the experience, and therefore bracketing and exclusion of personal assumptions are not necessary. With existential phenomenology, the goal of research is not to distill the lived experiences into essences, but rather the subject's relationship with the experience. Researchers adherent

to existential phenomenology believe that it is impossible to reduce experiences into essences, and the method "resembles more closely an attitude than a psychological research method." (van Manen, 2011)

Finally, there is transcendental phenomenology, which is a method that creates a comprehensive description of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology is marked by the rigorous separation of the experience itself (the *noemata*) and the how the phenomenon is experienced (the *noesis*). In order to ensure that the researcher's assumptions and presuppositions do not contaminate the study, he must transcend his own consciousness and separate their own experience of the phenomenon from the subjects' experiences. Moustakas contends that "each experience is considered in its singularity, in and for itself. The phenomenon is perceived and described in its totality in a fresh and open way."

After careful consideration during the research design process, it was determined that transcendental phenomenology would be the best approach towards the subject matter. According to Moustakas, transcendental phenomenology is created through a series of rigorous processes so that the researcher can set aside his or her own experiences from the experience of the subject, allowing the true and accurate experience of the subjects to emerge. First, through the process of *epoche*, the researcher must bracket his or her experience with the phenomenon that might influence the outcome of the study. This process is constant throughout the research process, in order to maintain a sustained attitude of open-mindedness.

After data is collected through the use of in-depth interviews and properly transcribed, the researcher will apply phenomenological reduction towards the raw data,

must highlight and isolate statements that describe the experience, rejecting overlapping and repetitive statements, creating “invariant constituents of the phenomenon” that serves as discreet “horizons” of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). These meanings are grouped into clusters of statements that would illustrate a particular aspect or theme of the experience (Creswell, 1998). Next, utilizing the themes derived from phenomenological reduction, the researcher will use the process of imaginative variation to create a structural description, illustrating the context and environment that may contribute to how subjects experienced this phenomenon.

Eventually, the textual and structural descriptions would be combined to develop the overarching essence of the phenomenon, creating a composite description that would accurately illustrate the phenomenon as the research subjects experienced it at that particular space and time (Moustakas, 1994).

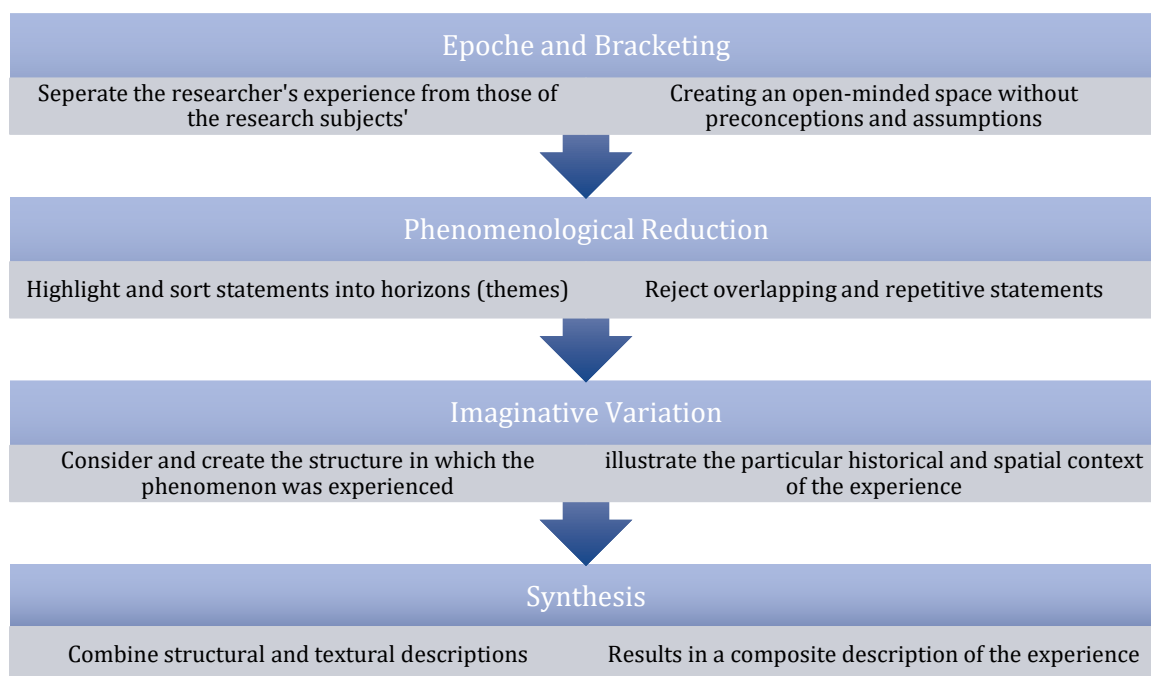


Figure 1. The Transcendental Phenomenology Process

Creating a Research Question

To begin the research process, the core research question must be identified. Since this research concerns the lived experiences of bloggers who focused their work on LGBT issues in the United States, the resultant research question, as well as the sub-questions listed below is developed and designed to maximize information that can be gathered to facilitate a thorough phenomenological study:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Central Question: | From the perspective of content creators for blogs with a primary focus on LGBT rights related issues, what are the essential meanings bloggers derive from their own experiences? |
| | <i>Why do these individuals choose LGBT-rights related issues as one of their primary subjects?</i> |
| | <i>What are the bloggers' goals and aspirations for their work?</i> |
| | <i>What is the process through which bloggers go to create content?</i> |
| | <i>What role do bloggers perceive themselves within the LGBT social movement?</i> |
| | <i>What unifying central themes can be derived by examining the lived experiences of these bloggers?</i> |

Figure 2. Central research question and sub-questions

Epoche and Bracketing

According to the precepts set forth by Moustakas, in order to conduct a successful transcendental phenomenological study, I must first acknowledge my own experience and “bracket these concerns, shutting out our preconceived biases and judgments, setting aside voices, sounds and silences that so readily tell us what something is.” (Moustakas 1994, pp.60).

With that in mind, I have maintained an outline of my own experience as part of the bracketing practice during the study. As part of the LGBT community and an avid follower of LGBT related political issues both domestically and internationally, I am

fully aware of the struggles that the subject participants have spent their work blogging about. While I do not practice the art of blogging, I am a devoted consumer of LGBT issues related blogs and I consider some of them to be better news sources than mainstream outlets, especially LGBT issues. As a person who treasures his privacy, I have not participated as a commenter in any blogs, although I have spent considerable time consuming public comments about the bloggers' work. Finally, as someone who has read volumes about religion-driven hostility towards the LGBT community, I am fully cognizant about my personal opinions about religion and its relationship to LGBT rights.

Field Selection and Sampling

After the Institutional Review Board of Nova Southeastern University approved the study protocol, I set about the process of finding a suitable sample among the many LGBT blog writers who are suitable for the study by establishing the following inclusion criteria:

- "LGBT-social movement related blogs" are blogs (online journals) that cover LGBT-related issues
- The blogs' ideological direction is consistent, but not necessarily identical, to the ideological objectives of the LGBT-social movement in the United States
- "LGBT-blog writers" or "LGBT bloggers" for short are persons who contribute content on these LGBT-social movement related blogs

In addition, I have also created several exclusion criteria to maintain the primary focus of this study. As a result, any bloggers who fit in these criteria are eliminated from the potential field of research subjects:

- Blog writers and contributors whose work is devoted to opposing LGBT-rights movement, such as those from organizations and individuals who opposed same sex marriage, anti-bias crime laws, and equal employment opportunity.
- LGBT-oriented entertainment and gossip blogs that are not devoted to LGBT social movement related issues.

After establishing the suitable criteria for subject selection, I embarked on the initial search process. Done primarily through web searches through tools including Google and Alexa, I produced a list of over two dozen relevant blogs, encompassing regional, personal and national blogs that covers LGBT civil rights issues as part of their content.

Next, I gathered their contact information online and sent out three rounds of invitation emails that have been approved by the Institutional Review Board of NSU. Five bloggers expressed interest in participating in the study, to whom I sent consent documentation and facilitate the documents' return by secure express mail. Upon receipt of the signed consent, further communications by email were made to schedule the interviews at the subjects' convenience.

In the end, four subjects were interviewed. The fifth subject unfortunately dropped out of the study after returning his consent documentation, citing technical problems with online conferencing software and time constraints. Subsequent attempts to reach him were unsuccessful.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is narrowly focused on the impact of blogs and bloggers on the LGBT social movement in the United States. These bloggers used their online

writing to report on and advocate for LGBT civil rights, and it would be essential to understand how the Internet has impacted the organization and operation of social movements. However, while the American LGBT community faces many civil rights challenges comparable to those faced by other minority groups in the United States, their struggles are not always analogous. Indeed some minority communities, such as the African American community, has long held a more hostile view against LGBT civil rights than the American population overall.

While it is my hope that this study can shine a light on the role of bloggers and the web on social movements, it is likely the outcome of this study would require further research to establish a more comprehensive breakthrough on existing generalized theory regarding social movements.

Instrument Design, Data Collection and Analysis

To facilitate data collection, I designed a research instrument that closely hewn to the objectives set out by the research question. The interview script consisted of seventeen main questions and several sub-questions. They were divided into four distinct segments that specifically address each secondary research question as outlined in the previous section. The interview script was designed as a semi-structured interview, whereas participants are invited to narrate their experiences as freely and openly as possible. Subsidiary questions are used only to steer the participant towards the intended subject matter should the conversation stray off topic or failed to arrive at the relevant information.

Due to the geographically diverse location of the participants, the interviews were undertaken through the use of the Internet. Each subject was interviewed separately at his

convenience. The average time for each interview was 60 minutes, although some participants were interviewed over the course of several days due to logistics and time constraints. Skype was chosen as the default software due to its ubiquity and ease of use, and additional software was used to record the interviews. The subsequent recordings were stored in an encrypted thumb drive, and were taken for transcription, analysis and verification purposes.

After the transcription process, I applied procedures according to the principles of phenomenology as described by Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994). First, the transcription was repeatedly read and summaries of the interviews were developed, the results of which were presented below. Next, I returned to the transcripts to highlight statements, which were horizontalized according to discrete and separate themes. From there, I interpreted the results through the creation of a textual and structural description, which were ultimately combined to create an overall description of the experience.

Ethical Considerations

As with all research involving living participants, ethical consideration is a top priority to ensure that no harm would come to them. Subjects are welcome to withdraw from the study at any time, and I exerted no pressure during the recruitment and consent-obtaining process. While bloggers are public figures and LGBT issues are part of the modern American political landscape, steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all participants. All interviewees were given a pseudonym, and all distinguishing characteristics, such as the title and content of blogs, were omitted from interview transcripts. All collected data were stored in a secure, off-line storage device,

and any notes generated during the research process would be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Verification

Before the study is concluded, the conclusions have to be verified in order to ensure that the researcher did not misinterpret any substance of the research. To verify the results of the research, I took some steps that were outlined by Creswell (1998) to double-check my conclusions. First, I examined the interviews to confirm that I did not apply undue influence on the participants and I did not steer them into any statements that might have skewed the results of the study. Next, I compared my transcripts against the original audiovisual recordings of the interviews to ensure that I obtained accurate information. Finally, using a random sample, I compared my composite description of my study against two original transcripts of the interview to ensure I have captured their meanings accurately.

Chapter 5: Results and Analysis

Since its invention in the 1990s, blogs have become an extremely popular medium for individuals to express their thoughts and opinions. Due to its low operation cost and ready-made publication platform, blogs proliferated throughout cyberspace, leading to the rise of popular blogging collectives such as WordPress, LiveJournal, and Google Blogger.

Social activists have taken to blogging as a platform to disseminate and to advocate for social justice, and they utilize blogging as a way to advocate their point of view and to report on issues that are seldom noticed by the mainstream press. Among them are those belonging to the LGBT community in the United States. I have conducted in depth interviews with several individuals who have used blogging as their initial and primary platform so that I may understand how LGBT bloggers derive meaning as cyber activists.

This chapter consists of two sections. First, I will present individual summaries of the blogging experience for each participant. In a subsequent section, I will further apply the methods of phenomenology and group LGBT bloggers' responses into common themes in order to provide a comprehensive picture on what it means to be a LGBT issues blogger in the United States. In order to protect the subjects' privacy and confidentiality, I have applied pseudonyms to each respondent.

Summaries of Participant Interviews

Subject A: Bruce

Bruce is a middle-aged White gay male who resides in the United States. He has an advanced degree in the communication field. Prior to his work as a blogger, he has worked for LGBT social movement organizations. In addition to his blog, Bruce is also a published writer, the founder of a nonprofit organization, and a podcast creator.

Bruce started blogging as a way to keep in touch with current events, and he was inspired by other LGBT bloggers who were already publishing at the time. Citing the dearth of public spaces in modern United States, Bruce describes the world of blogging as “the new [digital] town square,” where people could “have a human connection to celebrate and commiserate major events.”

In order to choose which item to blog about, Bruce would examine a news item and decide on the news worthiness of the story. He would also decide whether to repeat the story as it is, or whether there is space for additional perspectives or commentary. In addition, he would also examine whether there is any purpose for advancing a story. While he is keen to take on a story if he is able to provide additional information that is otherwise absent, he is reluctant to “push” a story onto his readers—if all he can do is to repeat the headlines—because he does not want to bore his readers. Bruce uses newspapers and other news sources as materials for his blogs. Although some bloggers would write about their personal lives, Bruce prefers not to share his personal life to the public, desiring instead to blog about political news and other items relevant to LGBT civil rights issues.

In describing the theme of his blog, Bruce notes that it is meant to encourage people to “fight back [and] not take it” from religious and political conservatives. His works expose lies and untruths told by those who wish to inflict political harm on the LGBT community. For example, Bruce would contact academics whose work has been cited by conservative activists as evidence of LGBT community’s inferiority, and he would ask the academic scholars to denounce the use of their work. Rejecting politeness, Bruce uses his blog as a loudspeaker to broadcast tactics of anti-gay organizations, and he emphasizes that it is necessary to not be afraid to display contempt and call bigotry as bigotry. Through his work, he encourages people to protest and to take action for their own civil rights, and he is central in the efforts to discredit the work of the so called ex-gay ministries, which uses distorted science to promote the idea that homosexuality is an illness that can be cured. By disseminating information that disproves pseudoscience, Bruce has been able to discredit those who advocate to “pray away the gay” therapies. Employing a tone that is “snarky with facts”, he wishes to “make [antigay activists] into buffoons” and “use their own deeds and words against them.” To fund his activism, Bruce founded a small nonprofit organization whose mission is dedicated to expose religious-driven anti-gay bigotry and its use of pseudoscience to promote ex-gay therapy.

In his role as a blogger, Bruce views his relationship with major LGBT rights organizations such as Human Rights Campaign and GLAAD as a complimentary one. As someone who used to work for one of these organizations, he recognizes that these organizations have powers in terms of lobbying and fundraising that are hard to match as a single activist. On the other hand, their size and political power make them unsuitable as an effective communicator. As Bruce describes it, a good writer, even someone as

well-known as another nationally syndicated LGBT columnist, would have been muted and hamstrung by the various board members and the potential conflicts of interest of a major social movement organization. As such, Bruce perceives his work as telling the truth without structural interference, “cutting through the bullshit” and tap into the audience’s emotion. When asked about the impact of bloggers on these large social movement organizations, Bruce thinks that one of the major consequences is that these organizations are now trying to incorporate blogs into their operational model. However, Bruce thinks that while many major organizations have taken to blogging, structural complexities have precluded them from communicating effectively, since they are unable to bypass levels of vested interest and speak honestly and emotionally.

Bruce is very proud of his accomplishments through his blogging career. He believes that by blogging and debunking ex-gay quackery, he has “saved a lot of lives.” Moreover, Bruce feels that his blog has increased public discussion of LGBT rights and has spurred his readers into engaging in political action that is leading to a “chain reaction” of inspiration, empowerment, and activism. Blogging has also brought about changes in his life. Due to his experience in blogging, Bruce sees “everything through a different lens,” always vigilant for breaking news and new ideas. While Bruce finds his work exciting, the sheer volume of information that is available can lead to occasional fatigue and exhaustion.

When asked about his blogging career and what he has accomplished today, Bruce notes that he did not set out with specific goals, but he is happy that his work has made a difference and that his words can encourage his audience to think about how they can change the world. Due to his work, blog readers have participated in campaigns to

further the LGBT social movement, including lobbying days, online campaigns, and protest rallies. Bruce believes that by disseminating accurate information about LGBT issues, his readers can see through the deception by opponents of LGBT equality and take on the fight for civil rights.

At the conclusion of the interview, Bruce was asked to opine on how blogging and the Internet has affected the LGBT social movement. Bruce points to the protest against Proposition 8 as an example of how bloggers and online activists can leverage their connection to organize real-life protests and to fight against injustice, a point that large social movements have adopted in their repertoire. Calling it “the Paul Revere movement,” Bruce describes bloggers as “the first ones to ride into town” to call injustice and to motivate readers to act. Furthermore, the Internet itself has made social movement work much more widespread and important. From being a virtually invisible minority in the 1980s, the Internet has transformed the LGBT social movement by connecting LGBT communities across the country, giving comfort and a sense of community to those located in isolated and conservative areas of the United States. While the Internet has empowered the LGBT social movement in the United States, Bruce believes that the community has “a lot more fighting to do.”

Subject B: Tony

Tony is a White gay male in his late 20s. He has higher education degrees in both the arts and the academic administration fields. At the time of this interview, he is a contributing blogger and editor for the LGBT focused section of a large liberal-leaning blog. In addition to his work for the larger blog, he also maintains a personal blog that is focused on both LGBT issues and atheist matters.

Tony has been an avid consumer of blogs before becoming a blogger himself. He started consuming blogs as a way to understand the state of LGBT rights after he came out of the closet. He credits the thriving blogosphere for allowing him to “see past his own identity” and understand what the community is going through under the persecution of the religious right.

Tony started blogging during graduate school, partly as a “coming out” declaration of his atheism. After exploring other methods of self-expression, he decided that the longer format of blogging was better for him to communicate his thoughts and experiences to a wider audience. After finishing his degree, Tony lived with his parents, and their support allowed him to further develop his blog while seeking employment in LGBT affairs and social justice related fields. Meanwhile, the passage of Prop 8 in California in 2008 left Tony angry and frustrated over the political oppression of the LGBT community by religious forces. The continuing unemployment allowed Tony to further expand his blog to cover LGBT issues, specifically issues that intersect with religion and higher education. Eventually his work caught the notice of a nonprofit organization, which awarded him with a scholarship to attend a conference for online activists, where he met other bloggers and online activists who worked in the same field. Connections made during the conference led to a wider readership of the blog, and Tony was subsequently hired to blog for the site he works for today.

Although Tony originally set out to blog about the atheist community, his blogging goals have changed since his blogging career began. While atheism and religion is still one of the many issues he covers, he has devoted much of his time and effort towards LGBT political issues. His academic background has led him to take on the role

of the educator, and Tony's goal, as a blogger, is to help readers understand the events beyond the headlines. He is convinced that "better understanding what's happening in the world is the best way to learn how to support it."

Tony employs different methods for keeping up with current events. He uses Google Alerts that are linked to certain key words, some of which are geographically specific in order to discover LGBT related regional news. In addition, Tony scours a curated list of blogs in order to discover any potentially untouched subject, which he can develop into a more in depth story. Given the nature of the Internet, it is almost impossible to be completely caught up. In more than one occasion, Tony has described his effort to be current as "Sisyphean" – a never ending task.

Gathering materials for blogging is a never-ending task, but so is Tony's work to determine what to write. With so much information coming in every direction, Tony chooses his subjects carefully and pragmatically, without setting any particular criteria. Quoting the Supreme Court stance on pornography, Tony says, "You know [the item is blog-worthy] when you see it." In addition to news items, Tony sometimes assists local LGBT organizations to bring national awareness to a regional or local issue, elevating its visibility. Tony would also write about a particular item, provided that there is room for deeper analysis and commentary.

The theme and tone of his blogging work are dependent on which blog Tony is writing for. For his personal blog, which exists alongside his better-known blogging work, his work hews closer to his original goal of writing about the intersection between higher education, LGBT rights and religion. For his work with the larger blog, Tony concentrates on writing items that concern LGBT issues in the United States and their

political context. Regarding the latter, the tone of his articles has evolved as the site expanded, moving from snarky to analytical with the aim to achieve a more journalistic voice. In terms of resources, Tony receives a salary from the nonprofit organization that funds the larger blog. While he has tried once to monetize his personal blog by using ads to generate income, he does not rely on money from such endeavor. Thanks to the help of some friends who own Internet servers, the cost of maintaining his personal blog is low. In fact, Tony considers time to be the most important and scarce resource for bloggers such as himself.

When asked about his relationship with major social movement organizations, Tony said bloggers and social movement organizations are catered towards different audiences. Whereas different organizations focus on different aspects of the movement (Human Rights Campaign for lobbying, GLAAD for Media accountability, Task Force for coalition building), their voices are often inward, towards tailor made audiences that they specialize in. On the other hand, bloggers have a natural way to specialize in different aspects of the LGBT social movement. The differentiation of coverage can sometimes lead to collaboration between bloggers to provide a diverse array of voices and opinions, in addition to providing groundwork and outreach for larger organizations. Furthermore, as part of a larger political news and blog site, Tony's audience is not limited to those who are within the LGBT community, and he is mindful that many of his readers are cisgender heterosexuals who are not as knowledgeable about the LGBT community. Therefore, Tony would take a different approach and assume the role of an educator to help non-LGBT readers understand the issues that affect the community.

Regarding the difference between the activism advanced by bloggers and those from social movement organizations, Tony thinks that while the goals are the same, bloggers and organizations take on different roles. For example, Tony's work focuses on educating the audience about LGBT issues, which allows organizations to convince the audience to advance their goals in the public sphere. In some cases, major organizations would send information and intelligence to bloggers to write about, especially if such information can compromise vested interests of the organization. Therefore, despite different tactics, there are a lot of collaboration between these organizations and bloggers. What's more, when asked about the impact of bloggers on social movement organizations, Tony thinks that bloggers like him have helped organizations spread awareness and education, and he also argues that blogging has provided support for the organizations by highlighting information that both the LGBT community and their allies can use to combat oppression and prejudice.

Tony listed several accomplishments during his time as a blogger. He is pleased that his work has expanded awareness of the plight LGBT Americans face in society. He is also very proud of the fact that he has become an ally for the transgendered community, something that he has experienced compliments in person. By highlighting issues often faced by an ostracized community, Tony is able to be proactive about advancing their struggle for civil rights and make a difference. In addition, Tony has developed several narrative arcs that help to tell the story of LGBT issues, allowing the audience to learn about the issues in a continuous context, which hopefully lead to better understanding.

Blogging has also changed Tony's daily life. Time requirement is a constant struggle since he tries to cover what is happening as quickly as possible. As a result, he is constantly on alert for any developments, and his life is very much connected to the computer and Internet feeds. Outside of his work, Tony occasionally runs into his readers, but to him the interaction is strange because there is a sort of social imbalance both online and in the real world, whereas the readers would know about his work but Tony would know nothing about them. He likens it to a minor degree of celebrity. In terms of negative feedback, Tony has never experienced a direct negative confrontation based on his work, even though he has attended a religious conference where most participants are antagonistic to his advocacy. And while he has received hate mail, he considers them non-threatening and even "comical" in their disagreement.

Tony reflects on his shift from being a hobbyist-blogger to a professional blogger for a nonprofit organization. He said that he is still rather dumbfounded that his life has taken such a turn, but his goal of educating people about LGBT issues remains the same throughout his time as a blogger. When asked about the kind of influence he wants to have on his audience, Tony wants them to be challenged by his work and achieve a better understanding of what it means to be a part of the LGBT community. He hopes that his audience would spread his message with others, contemplate on what they have read, and gain a better understanding of LGBT issues. He cited the Chik-Fil-A boycott by the LGBT community, and his efforts to explain why the boycott is a worthy cause to support, as an example of how his work can educate the non-LGBT public about issues of importance to the community.

Finally, Tony expounded on the impact of bloggers and the Internet on social movements. Due to the ubiquitous nature of social media and the Internet in everyday life, bloggers are able to harness its power to spread their word faster than ever before. It hastens the audience's understanding of the issues in a speed that is unknown prior the Internet, and as a result can provide support on the state and local level, where change is much more tangible and immediate. Overall, the Internet has given both atheist and LGBT identities an extraordinary level of visibility, and it has allowed people living in remote communities a chance to connect, to communicate, and to share their worldviews.

Subject C: Richard

Richard is a White gay male in his late 20s. He has obtained multiple degrees in the arts in a field unrelated to LGBT activism. At the time of the interview, he is the editor in chief for one of the larger LGBT focused blogs in the United States. He is also a regular contributor to the blog. Prior to his current position, he has worked for other bloggers, including one of the interview subjects in this study.

Richard stated that his blogging career started “organically,” first as a contributor to several different blogs in the LGBT blogosphere, which eventually led to his current position. He has previously worked in other LGBT organizations, and his desire to blog stems from the fact that he wishes to express himself outside of the organizational context. When he started blogging, his goal was to share his views with his readers. Richard is passionate about the rights of LGBT community, being a member himself. As he put it, “It’s my community, it’s my marriage, it’s my people, it’s my own life.” Richard utilizes blogging as a way to increase the visibility of his community.

Over time, as Richard took on the role of editor in addition to being a contributor, he found that his goals had evolved. As an editor, he actively encouraged a diversification of voices on the blog, paying special attention to the underrepresented voices within the community such as the viewpoints of bisexuals, transgendered members, and religious LGBT members. Richard also included a wider range of audiences, such as those from the straight community in order to communicate and share more effectively.

Richard faces a constant struggle on selecting an issue to blog. As LGBT news has entered the mainstream discourse and more and more news outlets are devoting time on LGBT issues, Richard finds himself a bit overwhelmed with information. He likens his process to a money cage attraction in fairs and carnivals: available items are swirling around you at great speeds and it is impossible to grasp them all. In addition to traditional LGBT issues, Richard seeks topics that are of interest for other LGBT members as well, including transgendered issues and the persecution of LGBT members in Uganda. By exposing his readers to issues other than the de rigueur subjects such as marriage equality in the United States, Richard hopes to stave off complacency by preventing what he labels as the “marriage trap,” which is the idea that marriage equality is the last barrier to true LGBT equality. In terms of sources, Richard relies on a mix of tips from readers, RSS feeds, Google Alerts, and Twitter.

According to Richard, the major theme of his blogging work is the exchange of ideas. As both editor and contributor, he aims to create and maintain various viewpoints from different LGBT constituents. By trying to be open to other ideas, he wishes to create rhetorical space for those who are traditionally underrepresented within the LGBT social movement. His preference to openness and inclusion also extends to his editorial tone,

which he described as “optimism tempered with realism.” While he tries to keep an open mind and refrain from the over use of snarky comments, Richard is not afraid to call out oppression, call those who perpetuate injustice to account, and call bigotry for what it is. In terms of resources, Richard receives a salary from the owners of the blog, which derives its income to pay for writers by advertising.

Richard sees the relationship between bloggers and social movement organizations as one that is at times antagonistic and occasionally collaborative. The LGBT activist community is small enough that Richard has been acquainted with most of the people on both sides of the divide. According to Richard, bloggers and social movement organizations generally work towards the same goal, but collaborative relationships between the two are not always harmonious, and there are some marked differences in their approach and outlook. In his opinion, while major LGBT social movement organizations dwarfs the blogging community in terms of financial resources and reach inside the corporate boardrooms and corridors of power, blogs are more grassroots oriented and geared more towards empowering readers. More importantly, bloggers often approach subjects that are sometimes overlooked by national organizations such as the recent referendum to repeal LGBT anti-discrimination laws in Arkansas. Under these circumstances, bloggers play a large part in bringing awareness of the issue. Richard thinks that bloggers shape the conversation on the ground and mobilize grassroots response. He also credits the blogosphere for pushing President Obama towards his announcement in favor of marriage equality.

Richard is proud of some of the things he has accomplished through his efforts as a blogger. As a “thought leader,” he has brought a different perspective to the

conversation over LGBT rights. For example, Richard leveraged his blogging skills to call attention to the corporate sponsorship during the 2014 Winter Olympics, which took place in the extremely antigay environment of Russia. He also takes pride in bringing under-represented perspectives and voices to the table.

Outside of the confines of the office, Richard has participated in conferences devoted to bloggers and other social activists. He sees these events as chances to receive feedback from fellow bloggers and activists, and on the occasions that he speaks with his readers, he finds that his work has taught people how to deal with anti-gay rhetoric at home. On the other hand, Richard has experienced criticism of his work both in the form of online comments and hate mails. For him, it is important to have a thick skin.

Comparing his work at the start of his career and now, Richard feels that his current work is wider in perspective. Initially, Richard focused his efforts on the issue of marriage equality, and he has since expanded outward to include a “wide spectrum of perspectives and issues and concerns” with the goal of connecting the LGBT community into a unified political force. Richard hopes that by reaching out and highlighting issues in other areas in the United States and abroad, he may raise awareness and spur his readers to take action, either by spreading the news event of the injustice or engaging in collective action to stop it from occurring. By pushing back against right-wing organizations, Richard hopes to show that the bloggers, and activists “have (the LGBT community’s) back” in the face of oppression. Richard feels a sense of gratification when his readers become more proactive in their activism and reclaim power from those who oppress them.

Richard lists several points when he was asked to consider the impact of bloggers and the Internet on the LGBT social movement. Bloggers give voices to those who are underrepresented in the community, and their work help organize people and spread information that is beneficial to the movement. As an example, he notes the case of Arkansas when bloggers called to attention the anti-gay activism in the state. The coverage of that story resulted in more awareness of the problem, resulting in many activists to protest the situation. Meanwhile, the Internet's reach has brought people together and provided comfort to LGBT people in geographically diverse areas who were struggling for their civil rights. It also empowered both the readers and the bystanders and has encouraged them to stand up for themselves. The Internet's speed also has greatly increased communication and made the LGBT social movement visible.

Subject D: Steve

Steve is a middle-aged White gay male who resides in the United States. He has an undergraduate degree in a liberal arts related field. Steve's blog was inactive at the time of the interview, although it is still available online. He has participated in a major documentary related to LGBT rights. Currently, he is the co-owner of a liberal leaning news website.

Steve started blogging in 2004 and was a pioneer in the field of LGBT issues related blogs in the United States. In addition to being an established fundraiser and a political activist for various LGBT nonprofit organizations, Steve worked as a consultant. After being introduced to the world of blogging by a friend, Steve started writing stories based on tips provided by his friends.

Steve wanted to expose the political hypocrisy of the Republican Party, and it remained a central theme throughout its blogging history. During that period, the 2004 campaign for presidency was in full swing, and Steve was “fed-up” by George W. Bush’s tactic of using antigay marriage amendments across multiple states to ensure political victory. Being well-connected and knowledgeable with the DC political scene, Steve launched his blog to expose gay political operatives who worked for the Republican Party, particularly high level staffers and advisors who helped their bosses advance discriminatory measures. While it was not Steve’s intention to swing the election, he wanted to punish and “humiliate these men in their own community” for “leading these double lives they wouldn’t talk about.” Often described as “outing” by other commentators and activists, Steve insisted that his reporting was more than just exposing someone’s sexual orientation as a punishment. Instead, he exposed sexual orientation of his targets as merely part of the process to report hypocrisy. Furthermore, during his previous work for nonprofit organizations, he witnessed the abuse of LGBT youth first handedly; many were driven out of their homes due to the political and religious messages that casted the LGBT community as deviants. Therefore, when Steve took up residence in Washington DC and witness conservatives using bigotry to generate political support, he decided that he was “not gonna take it anymore” and was determined to punish those who attack LGBT civil rights.

To gather information for his work, Steve relied on tips from friends and his readers. Weary of losing credibility and the harm that came with false identification, he performed thorough research to authenticate the information sent to him before posting. Steve was also mindful to only expose those who were in high-level positions, and only

those who work towards anti-gay messages and policies because he believed that it was not useful or proper to criticize those who worked for conservative politicians but had nothing to do with politics. In addition, Steve excluded closeted religious figures from his blog unless the subject was also a political operative, because religion “wasn’t [his] thing.” In addition to blog posts about hypocritical political operatives and congresspersons, Steve also used his blog to opine on subjects related to LGBT civil rights, such as holding the mainstream media accountable for its refusal to expose hypocrisy while reporting on conservative politics and organizations. When presenting his findings, Steve took on the tone of a reporter by concentrating on the facts.

Steve regarded running the blog as a hobby, and he never relied on the blog as the sole source for income. During his time as a blogger, he continued to make a living as a consultant and fundraiser for other nonprofit and political organizations. In addition to bandwidth and web hosting costs, Steve’s biggest expense during his time as a blogger was spent travelling and verifying the tips he received in order to legitimize the story.

When asked about the relationship between bloggers and social movement organizations, Steve notes that many grassroots activists are skeptical and biased against established social movement organizations, and he names some of his blogging colleagues who have gone head to head with some of the largest organizations in the field. However, he is not among those who wish to dismantle these larger bodies. Although major LGBT groups criticized his “outing” of closeted congressperson, Steve understood their positions at the time and their reluctance in pursuing outing as a political tactic. He also is cognizant of the fact that in areas such as lobbying and fundraising, the national organizations have institutional powers that grassroots activism simply cannot

replace. Today, Steve is the founder of an organization that connects online grassroots activists with national LGBT organizations, one that is sponsored by the very same organizations that had once criticized him in the past. By staging major conferences that connect grassroots online activists and national organizations, Steve facilitates collaboration and cooperation between the two parties in order to push for greater advances in LGBT civil rights.

Steve thinks highly of the impact of bloggers on LGBT social movement in the United States. He believes that online activists and independent bloggers play a big role in helping elect the then-relatively unknown Barack Obama into office. Moreover, bloggers provide education, support, facilitate information and document exchange to further the goals of the social movement. Bloggers also create centers of dialogues that manage to reach more people than traditional outreach.

Considering his accomplishments during his blogging career, Steve is proud of his contribution to the media landscape. While exposing someone's hypocrisy through "outing" was novel and controversial over a decade ago, his meticulous work has led to mainstream media outlets to accept and to emulate his style of reporting. His work also impacted his life in several tremendous ways. His work has been featured in a documentary that focused on the practice of outing, which brought him a new audience for his work. Steve's work also allowed him to connect new bloggers with major LGBT organizations so that both can collaborate on projects aimed at expanding LGBT civil rights. And while he has his share of adversaries, Steve said he has never received any threats, and the negative reaction he has experienced about his work mostly stemmed from discussions with fellow activists and bloggers.

Steve describes the differences between his goals and aspirations for when he had started blogging to what he has achieved today. While Steve started blogging as an effort to report on anti-gay hypocrisy, Steve ended up “more of an organizational kinda person” through his work that connected grassroots activists and bloggers to more established LGBT organizations. He also explains that blogging is “dying out” as mainstream media outlets are no longer afraid to cover LGBT issues, and the world of independent blogging is being swallowed by revenue-driven media conglomerates. While some independent blogs will remain, Steve believes that the era of activism dominated by independent bloggers is coming to an end.

Steve wishes to spur his readers into taking action. As part of his activism effort, he would publish contact lists for congressional offices and their staffers, and he would encourage his readers to call these people to express their opinions. By engaging his readers to participate, he proves that activism is possible anywhere from behind the keyboard. By successfully encouraging his readers to be more proactive in fighting for their rights, Steve hopes that his readers know that they can change the world.

Finally, Steve talks about the impact of bloggers and the Internet as a whole on LGBT social movements. He believes that bloggers have guided the development of modern activism; they are responsible for widening the movement’s reach to the public and increase awareness for its issues and goals. Bloggers are also responsible for spurring wider discussion about LGBT rights from different perspectives, and, as an example, Steve described an encounter with a reader who disagreed with him, who at Steve’s encouragement would later start blogging to express his views. In terms of the Internet as a whole, Steve thinks that the web has helped unite the LGBT community by reassuring

young LGBT people trapped in conservative communities that things will get better. Its ability to communicate instantaneously has brought geographically disparate communities closer together to work towards the same goals with collective action that has made real impact across the country. From calls to senators to national boycotts against corporations, the Internet has generated political actions at a speed and intensity that is simply unimaginable without it.

Analysis of Results

In the previous section, I have described and summarized the data acquired from interviewing four bloggers whose works concern the LGBT social movement in the United States. In this section, I used phenomenological analysis methods of horizontalization and thematic sorting to present some of the common themes garnered from the respondent's answers, themes that represented the meaning of being a LGBT-issues related blogger in the United States.

Diverse origins, Common background

The respondent of this study have some common demographic factors. For example, they are all male gay Caucasians of varying ages who are socioeconomically comfortable enough to embark on a time consuming activity such as blogging. They are also highly educated, and have obtained degrees from tertiary educational institutions. However, their subjects of study vary widely from degrees in fields that one might expect a politically oriented blogger would have—such as communication and political science, to others that are less expected—such as musical performance.

They were also introduced into the world of blogging at different points of life. For example, one respondent started blogging while searching for a job after graduating with a master's:

I started a blog just to kinda process all that and you know I wrote on it off and on a little bit during my last semester of grad school, so I was pretty busy and then I was unemployed and job hunting for a long time so the reason that I was able to be such a, a dedicated blogger because I was fortunate enough to move holding to my parents' house and be supported to do.

While another started after he finished writing a novel, as he described his life at the time he started blogging:

I has just finished my book tour, my first book tour, for [redacted], and I was living in a cool apartment in Park Slope, Brooklyn, and uh, you know, a lot was going on, and uh, I was writing my first fiction book, and only fiction book, and um, it was sort of a good challenge for me, and life was cool, it was great. You know, I was 30-mid 30's-, living in Brooklyn, cool neighborhood, and it was exciting. You know, a lot going on and a lot to write about, the experiences that I went through personally and living in such a cool area in the biggest city in the country. I loved it. It was very exciting, you know? Good part of life.

The results indicate that the interviewees came from a diverse array of educational backgrounds, and they have taken up blogging at different points of their professional life. Therefore, the results led me to believe that blogging is a medium that is open to all, an activity that requires no prior expertise to begin.

Motivation: Anger and a Desire to help

When asked about their motivation to start blogging about LGBT issues, the respondents pointed to several major themes. One of the most obvious reasons was their intense desire to help the LGBT community. As gay Americans, they were stakeholders in the movement, and they were concerned about the state of LGBT rights, and they respondents expressed a desire to express their thoughts and opinions. One respondent described his discovery of blogs and why he started journaling:

I came out and started wanting to learn more about what was happening for gay rights, really LGBT rights, you know, learn to see past just my own identity and there was this thriving a gay blogosphere all these sorta independent people who were doing all this work on their own... It was something that kept me busy and connected to the issues that are cared about.

Another blogger expressed similar sentiment when asked about his start as a blogger:

I've always been a writer and I have always been good at you know writing persuasively on I but I have also had a longtime passion for, for news and for you know helping people stay informed so I guess I just kinda came to it organically, and when I started in LGBT advocacy, I thought, you know, hey have I have these insights you know I think I can I can present and I think a present them well I'd like to share that with people.

Another major theme was anger, frustration, and fear. Specifically, the bloggers were angry and frustrated by conservative politicians and their attempts to stifle their civil rights. They feared that their rights would be trampled if they did not act. These emotions were reflected in their answers at various points of the interview. For instance, one respondent described his state of mind in the beginning of his blogging career, which coincided with the passage of Proposition 8 in California:

I had like a lot of anger because here was a, a law that infringed on my rights as a gay person but that was mostly motivated by religious forces and so I really wanted to just get my ideas out there and really challenge a lot of the

paradigms and privileges that I saw negatively affecting me and the communities that I belong to.

An even more direct response came from another blogger, who forcefully expressed his anger and frustration when asked about the theme of his blog:

I think that's what we try to bring too, a fight, stand up and fight, don't sit there and take it, you don't have to be nice to Pat Robertson, Rick Warren, and it's okay to say "fuck you" to these people, what they're doing is destructive, it's okay to call them "bigoted" and "backward" and "medieval" and bad for America.

One respondent professed his fear that his civil rights were being trampled, and his experience as a scared young gay man reinforced his desire to participate in the social movement.

I got into this in the first place is because I'm extremely passionate about LGBT civil and human rights I'm you know I mean it's my community it's my, yeah it's my marriage it's my it's my people it's my own life and you know I was that I was that scared kid you know who could have used a "it gets better" video when I was growing up.

The overarching motivation for blogging stemmed from anger and frustration. Having witnessed their community slandered and humiliated, LGBT activists took to blogging to express their exasperation and to provide the community with ammunition to fight back.

Goal: To Inform and Enlighten, and to take Action

Driven by anger and motivated by a desire to help, LGBT bloggers took to the web to advocate for their community. While the tone and editorial direction varied, the bloggers sought to enlighten and to educate their readers about the issues impacting the LGBT community. As highly educated individuals, they saw truthful reporting as the best way for readers to understand and to embrace their cause, and each blogger specialized in different area of focus. As one blogger noted:

There's a natural sorting where each person who's writing kinda finds with their own style and there's a lot of respect, there's a lot you know we're all successful partly because we work together a.m. we link to each other and you know pick up each other's content and things like that and so there was never really a challenge in terms of a competition because everybody sort of naturally found their own voice and each voice was bring something different to the table.

The variation of style and focus could be seen from the variety of responses about the respondent's work. For example, one blogger devoted his blog to expose the pseudoscience advanced by conservative activists, and notified scientists whose research was being misused to advance a bigoted agenda:

[Leader of anti-gay group] cited some studies, and what did we do? We got in touch with the people whose studies he cited and got them to say, you know, "stop lying about our research.

While another aimed to expand the readers' perspectives on LGBT rights by including other LGBT demographics in the movement, such as transgendered persons, bisexuals, and LGBT persons of color:

It's very important to me to amplify to seek out perspectives that maybe aren't best represented currently in you know in the LGBT dialogue on you know especially bisexual voices, transgender voices and perspectives and you know, people of color you know those views and perspectives and experiences it really do need to be amplified and uplifted.

One respondent's academic training as an educator led him to devote his blog to help his readers better understand issues facing the LGBT community, even when his audience was not necessarily part of it:

I've always had a passion for helping people better understand issues better how to understand how to interact with um people who are different from them and so I still sort of have that focus.

Finally, there was one respondent whose goal was not only to enlighten but also to use information as a form of weaponry to punish gay men who are instrumental in pushing forth anti-LGBT policies:

[I] so want to humiliate these men in their own community like they would lead these double lives they wouldn't talk about what they did during the day... I didn't out people, I just reported on hypocrisy, huge difference.

In addition to educating and informing their readers about LGBT issues, these bloggers also employed their digital soapboxes to call for action. These actions can include spreading their articles and news throughout social media, signing petitions,

joining protests in person, or contacting organizations by email and telephone. For example, one blogger described how he used his power as a blogger to change corporate policy after Proposition 8:

I found out that a Subway franchise in California gave a gift to the pro Prop 8 people, the other side you and um, I threatened a worldwide boycott and I said and let me tell you something I own a website that has a lot of visitors and I have a big command of social media and I have millions of angry gay people right now. I will have a protest in front of a Subway in every major city in this country the day after tomorrow if you don't do the following. And you can read the article I just sent you, I have the pants and they did it, unbelievable, they add sexual orientation and gender identity to one of the largest food companies on the planet within a week so.

Another blogger described how he encouraged his readers to take action through boycotts and protests:

People have gone to lobby days, they've gone to, they've come out and I've had protests around the country, all over the country-Houston, Sacramento, Chicago-I mean everywhere, and people get dressed and leave their houses, and paint the sign and protest Focus on the Family, write letters to the editor, we got Apple to drop an ex-gay app, we got a resolution, we were the first big campaign for change.org, and we succeeded with that.

By encouraging their readers to do more than just consume information, these bloggers are emboldening their readers to engage in real collective action, widen the

support base of LGBT rights, and educate their friends and neighbors to increase understanding.

Working as a Blogger: Process

Another part of the interview concerned the practical aspect of running a blog. Questions were asked about where bloggers source their materials, how they decide which item to write about, and recourses to sustain their blog. Their answers created a structural description on how bloggers generate content, oversee the editorial content of the blog, and how these bloggers gather resources to live and work.

The bloggers drew on a wide array of sources for items of interest, and one of the most important resources for news was the Internet. One blogger described how he set up an untold amount of Google Alerts to scour the web for any news items that was relevant to his blog while another browse through RSS feeds to accomplish the same goal. Traditional news outlets, including newspapers and web sites, were also utilized to discover any articles of interest. Another valuable source for information was their readership, which sends in tips and items of interest by email, phone, or social media.

Naturally, the wide dragnet of information, while useful, can lead to information overload, something that some bloggers in this study faced. For example, one blogger described his futile attempt to catch up with every piece of news available:

It's sort of a Sisyphean task because you know I go to the bathroom and I went back to a computer I've got four more Google Alerts and I've got you know four more unread blogs on Feedly, but it's sort of cathartic also every day it's a kinda scour through and feel like I'm not missing much there's

always stories that fall through the cracks but I like to think I cast a pretty broad net to find that content.

Another blogger's described the abundance of sources as almost overwhelming: I find the best place is often Twitter, I mean it's often on Twitter before it before it's on the AP, you know um, so yeah RSS, Twitter, um, I'm on several listservs, ... I get probably get hundreds of emails every day with press releases and pitches and things like that ... so that's another source it's really, I mean, like I said there there's so much, there's so much coming all the time that it really is it's never it's never a problem finding, figuring out what to write about, the problem is always winnowing down what to write about and yeah and making that selection that's always the problem there's just so much there's so much going on.

To deal with such information overload and the sheer impossibility of addressing every piece of breaking news, the respondents had to decide whether a piece of information was "blog worthy", a nebulous and personal process during which each respondent would decide whether to publish an item on his blog.

For example, one blogger explained that he would further a story that was already in the news if he can provide additional perspective that would otherwise not be heard:

You want to further a story that's already out there, if you just wanna sort of get the message out or if you want to add your own perspective that nobody has, which is important, that's more important, although that takes more effort, more work.

Meanwhile, another blogger would use his blog to elevate state and local level issues to the national stage and increase its awareness and visibility in the process:

This something that people need to hear about but it's not appearing in many places so this is particularly true for news that might play out at the state level or even the local level where its it should be a big story but it's not getting covered, so I look for the opportunity to just sorta uh, I always use the word aggregate that content is just kinda picking it up and elevated it without necessarily adding too much to it but just to say, look you know this is happening in this city in Arkansas or this is played out in Missouri and you know it's a big deal.

Sometimes, bloggers might write in a series of narratives, designed to educate and update their audience about a particular issue. They did so hoping that their work would lead to better understanding of the issues at hand:

I'll think about posts that I write on a similar topic as sort of an arc, a longer narrative where I say it alright I gave you this little piece we wrote about it last month and remember this story, let me catch you up, let me give you like the next little piece to help you move your understanding and I'm still getting a lot of you know readership or shares on that content, then that means that at they feel they have been successful and helping people understand more about that issue.

One respondent, whose work focused on exposing hypocrisy, would choose only to write about those who had significantly violated the community by championing antigay policies:

In terms of which story to report on, I had no interest if somebody was in the closet, none. What my interest was, are they in the closet and significantly anti-gay, in other words I don't care someone's a scheduler for a congressman you know making 18 grand a year but if you're a guy who's you know the chief of staff, or you're the communications director fashioning all these messages against gay people, you deserve to be reported on.

The other practical aspect of a blogger's life was the gathering and management of monetary resources. Unlike writers who dealt with magazines and newspapers, bloggers who run their blogs have to allocate resources to pay for research costs such as travel and website-related costs such as bandwidth and web hosting in order to keep their work accessible from the web. Although some bloggers have taken advantage of free platforms provided by Google or other online companies, a full-time blogger must also seek ways to generate resources to address other monetary needs.

Addressing the question of resource gathering and allocation, the bloggers responded with two different types of answers, depending on the age of the respondent. Older respondents, who started during the early development of blogging platforms, had used their blogs as launching points of other ventures. For example, one blogger, who was one of the pioneers of LGBT related blogging, used his income as a professional fundraiser and consultant to pay for the costs of research and web hosting. Later, he created a non-profit organization that connects online grassroots activists. Another started a blog after he finished writing a book, and his previous experiences as a blogger and activist allowed him to establish a nonprofit organization that addresses issues that were important to him. Meanwhile, younger bloggers—who entered the field after blogs were

well established—turned their writing and advocacy work into professional careers. One blogger started his personal blog during graduate school as a place to express his opinions, and while he continued to maintain his personal blog, he was later hired by a non-profit organization to write for the LGBT issues portion of its blog site. Another began as a paid contributor to a large LGBT blog site and eventually became editor in chief of the blog. The latter group, like any writers in traditional media, was paid with salaries and relies on other parts of their organizations to manage resources and pay for the necessary costs for blog maintenance.

The overall results showed that bloggers scour the web and other traditional media to find items of interest. Confronted with an overwhelming amount of information available, bloggers often had to make quick decisions about which information would best serve their advocacy and inform their readers. Careful curating and sorting were central to building a successful and informative blog. While they were united in their desire to further the causes within the LGBT social movement, bloggers were able to turn their passion for writing and advocacy into a diverse array of sustainable career paths.

With them or Against them: Bloggers and Social Movement Organizations

As one of the most visible social minority groups in the United States, there are many large social movement organizations that advocate for the civil rights of LGBT Americans. Some examples include the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Discrimination (GLAAD), and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). As engines for grassroots advocacy, bloggers occupy a space that is outside this established social movement structure. This section examines the blogger's perception of and their relationship to social movement organizations. .

When asked about the differences between bloggers and large LGBT organizations, the respondents pointed to the institutional power the organization possesses, especially in terms of lobbying. As a result, major LGBT organizations can reach places in the political spectrum that a blogger would never be able to. For example, one respondent described HRC's power to reach out to powerful individuals:

They have the staff and they have the contacts in the industry to have their calls returned, that's their strength. HRC, you know, if I call Senator X, I'm gonna be sent to some low-level staffer; they get their call returned by the Chief of Staff.

Another blogger described these organizations' power to reach out and organize events:

Sure, well there's certain things that only institutions can do and activist can't wake up in the morning and say I'm gonna have four thousand people attended a creating change meeting um so you need these organizations to pull things like that together.

In addition, these organizations were specialized in dealing with different aspects of LGBT civil rights. For example, one respondent described the different roles these large organizations occupy:

HRC obviously as the biggest one has the most lobbying influence and so you know their raising money on a different scale there interacting with people on a different scale ... and other organizations like GLAAD or the task force have very specific sort in movement goals; GLAAD is very dedicated to how is the LGBT community being portrayed in media what is that visibility look

like and ... they're working with Hollywood execs in TV show producers and ... or you know the task force is sort of be the coalition builder and they bring in lots of folks from other movements to be allies to us and works with the LGBT movement to be allies to them so we work on immigration and reproductive justice and labor issues and things like that because it's another for a facet of the movement that we need.

On the other hand, despite an inherent disadvantage in institutional power, bloggers believed their type of activism serves a space where these larger organizations cannot fill. For example, one blogger argued that they were better communicators because the same intuitional power that enables them to reach for senators was also hampering their efforts to communicate effectively to the audience:

I think they're weak in is writing, telling the truth, getting to the heart of the fact. They have to, what we can bring as bloggers is getting to the heart of the truth, we don't have 50 board members, when the writing comes out, sometimes some of these bigger organizations ... there's just too many conflicts of interest and people to fight.

Elaborating further, the same respondent believed that larger organizations cannot speak from an emotional voice that can fire up the reader and encourage action:

They could turn it into quick news items, but blogging's an attitude, it's about freeing the mind, it's about going on a journey of the heart that you go on with a particular writer and a particular voice, and a big organization has a corporate voice and cannot ever, under any circumstances, put lightning in a bottle for us, and for them to try to do it is absurd.

Similarly, one respondent believed that bloggers speak to the grassroots activists better than established social movement organizations:

That's not any kind of value judgement, you know, we need the HRC's we need the GLAAD's, we s really need all these organizations um, but blogging is a little bit closer to the grassroots and a lot of times you know and blogging is one of the ways of empowering grassroots activists.

Another blogger argued that major organizations tend to be more internally focused speaking to members of their own community whereas bloggers attract a wider audience including those who are not within the LGBT community:

I'm trying to take the wonky content that's happening in the political space and make it digestible or for those mainstream audiences and I don't know if the orgs necessarily have the same goal, they're working much more internally within the community.

These differences in audience, scope and resources had led to a very interesting relationship between bloggers and social movement organizations, one that is both collaborative and combative. On one hand, bloggers and LGBT organizations worked towards the same goal. Bloggers who participated in this study had all commented on working with national organizations on different levels and playing various roles, from raising awareness and educating readers about a particular issue, to reporting on news that national organizations have pointed them to. For example, one blogger described how national organizations could point bloggers to report on stories that larger organizations cannot report on:

My favorite opportunities have been when we use the system to its maximum potential which is an organization who has some sort of connection and they get some sort of inside scoop on something but they can't have their fingerprints on it they reach over to the blogosphere and say hey if we like you know checked the right dots for you or at tell you the right people to ask the right questions you know, can you report on this together out there and then embarrasses somebody or it raises some a stink about something and it allows them to do their work better.

While bloggers and national LGBT organizations have cooperated in pushing for gay rights, the relationships were contentious at times. In some cases, bloggers challenged the national LGBT organizations for overlooking issues that had negative impact on the LGBT community. For instance, when Arkansas passed a regressive anti-LGBT law that precluded them from anti-discrimination regulations, bloggers were the first who called national organizations to account over what they saw as an outrageous oversight. As one blogger commented:

This time in Arkansas people weren't really doing anything so you know the blogging community really has rallied behind this to try to jolt the organizations to say, what the hell are you doing, why aren't what you talking about this so that's another big important role out that the blogs play.

Another blogger also spoke about confronting national organizations about missed opportunities and potential conflicts with grassroots activists:

Bloggers are kinda just talking to people every day, they're not always focused on the big picture, ... they're also holding those groups accountable, they're

also saying you know HRC is investing this money somewhere but it's not being used productively, or they're you know stomping on the feet of local activists who were actually doing an okay job before they came along.

In sum, from the perspective of the interviewees, the appearance of blogs over the last decade had a tremendous impact on the LGBT social movement. As 21st century version of town criers, bloggers brought attention to the persecution of the LGBT community by exposing lies perpetuated by “family values” groups, pointing to the hypocrisy of LGBT people pushing for antigay laws, and calling out conservative legislations that relegated LGBT Americans into the status of secondary citizens. Bloggers were not only able to inform and enlighten readers, but their blogs encouraged their readers to participate in the political discourse as well.

In addition to shaping the online conversation about LGBT rights, bloggers believed that they furthered the cause of LGBT activism by raising awareness and by reaching a wider range of audiences on a more emotional level. While they admired the institutional power of established social movement organizations, they did not wish to emulate them. Instead, bloggers saw their relationship with these organizations as both complementary and contentious, and the result was the elevation of LGBT issues in mainstream political discourse.

Accomplishments and Aspirations: What it means to be a blogger

Bloggers occupied a unique space within the LGBT social movement, Separated from major social movement organizations and operating in cyberspace, they were committed to advocating for social justice. They also wished to reach a wide audience

with the goal of educating and enlightening the general public about issues facing the LGBT community.

According to the results, bloggers are very proud of what they have accomplished, and many mentioned the feeling of empowerment due to their ability to spread knowledge. For example, one blogger believed that he saved lives by encouraging readers to confront bigotry and by inspiring them to participate in real collective action:

I know I've saved a lot of lives, people tell me that, through my [redacted] blog, that is important, I'm always surprised when I run into people from all over who say they were inspired to do their own activism, and I think I've accomplished all that, letting people empower themselves; they don't wait around to be empowered, they themselves are the answer, they can be part of the solution, that's the greatest gift that I've given to blogging, that particular voice.

Another blogger credits his blogging for bringing awareness about LGBT issues in venues large and small, and acting as a leader of the community:

I've been able to help shape the conversation in a lot of ways, and a lot of the issues that I'm particularly passionate about, I've been able to be a part of it... many important actions ... big and small from holding corporations to account for supporting the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, Russia, to teaming up with Dan Savage to help sell out a drag show in my home state of Wisconsin that was under attack from fundamentalists... Bloggers can impact all sorts of things large and small in ways that move our community forward. I certainly feel like I've been a part of that and I'm proud of the way that people seek out my

perspective on current events and look to me as something of a thought leader and to help that help better form and formulate their own opinions.

One respondent was proud of the fact that his work had been sought out to provide perspective on different aspects of LGBT activism and his ability to elevated seldom-heard voices to a wider audience:

All I can look at each day is how many people shared it how many people read it, but the same time that alone feel like it's a big success you know if [over 15,000] people shared something that I wrote, well that's [over 15,000] other people who thought about it considered all the points that I brought up in it and that might move them up.... Personally I've also taken a lot of pride in specifically what I've done as a trans ally and working a lot with transgender people to appreciate how best to support them how best to write about their issues.

One respondent believed that his blogging had exposed hypocrisy, enlightened the readers of political malfeasance, and paved the way for mainstream journalism:

I think that I have contributed to the information in the media that has really made the stories that I talked about much more commonplace ... for example, here is the perfect example that we just said: in 2010, I wrote a story that said uh you know [blogger] wrote this, he was gay blah blah blah. In 2004, if I had written that without any proof, just that my research, the Huffington Post would never in a million years have published it so what I did, well what I was part of, you know there's always a massive effort, the issue and made it

acceptable to be an issue. It's okay to report if this guy is in the closet and is doing anti-gay things.

Blogging had also transformed their lives in a variety of different ways, chief among which was a new perspective of the world. Thanks to a newfound sense of acute awareness of their community, bloggers were always on alert for news and issues that impact their community. As one respondent stated:

I think that when you're your own reporter and gatherer and message machine, your minds always moving and the wheels are always going, and I think it's hard to shut that off sometimes, for better or worse, and sometimes you wanna run to your computer... you're always working in a way, you're always on.

Another blogger also echoed his sentiments:

I tried to turn it off nightly when I leave the office at five but it's hard and certainly the news breaks that needs to be covered immediately like doesn't matter that after five like uh, you know I don't write it for [the blog], nobody will write it for [the blog], so sometimes there's sort of an always-on kind of thing.

The respondents experienced tremendous changes to their lives as a result of their journey into the blogosphere. For some bloggers, what started as a hobby later became a career. One blogger was inspired to create non-profit organizations geared towards their advocacy, and another one founded a conference that connects fellow bloggers and grassroots activists with national nonprofits to collaborate and work on new ways to spread their advocacy. Moreover, some received compliments and recognitions for their

work, and although there were few hate mails, none received overtly hostile reaction of their work in the offline environment.

When discussing the influence they wish to have on their readers, the respondents hoped that their work would leave their readers with a better understanding of LGBT civil rights in the United States. Furthermore, they hoped that readers would be inspired to become more active within the social movement. From sharing what they had learned on social media, to participating in protests in person or online, bloggers hoped that their readers can become evangelists for their message and advocacy, spreading knowledge and gaining support for the cause. As one blogger noted:

I want to change them, I want them to feel goosebumps, I want them to say I never thought about that before, and it's changed my perspective and that is gonna adjust the way I live my life, and create opportunities, and you know, and I just want to move people, and if you can get that, if you can get people thinking, they'll come up with their own ideas and their own activism, but first we have to inspire people, and that's what my goal is.

Another respondent hoped that his readers would aggressively engage in social movement actions:

One of the things, one of the reasons it was called [blog name redacted] because instead of people coming there and reading and grumbling, I would give them an action to take and you know [researcher's name] I wasn't one of those people like go sign this petition. No, here's the guy cellphone start ringing it off the wall, okay, like that kinda stuff.

Looking beyond their own work as bloggers, the respondents considered the influence of the community of blogger-activists and the Internet on the LGBT social movement. Their answers reflected a global connectivity of the Internet and its subsequent ability to unite minority communities and gave hope to those who were isolated from larger LGBT communities. As one of the respondents said:

You know what you have any group that's isolated and you provide the through technology the ability to bring them together to bridge those gaps you changing lives. ... So anytime there's despair and hate, love can connect it's going to uplift people with no question.

Another respondent expressed the belief that LGBT social movement had been able to use the Internet to bring awareness of anti-gay persecution to audiences in remote corners of the country:

The Internet is such, I mean this sounds so elemental and basic but it really is it's such a revolutionary way of organizing people and dispersing information you know just dispersing information widely in a way that we never you know pre-Internet never had the capacity to do so you know people across the country can be aware of it, can be clued into um, you know things that are happening in one corner of it.

One blogger believed that the Internet had made the gay community and its social movement visible, and credited the Internet for the success of the marriage equality movement:

Today, if you open up the newspaper, there's gay marriages in Alabama. Without the Internet, that wouldn't have happened for another 50 years.

We've been able to provide so much so fast, you look at the younger generation, close to 80% support marriage equality now, which is a proxy for gay rights in general. And that's due to the Internet. The ability to-remember, we were invisible, visibility as we know it now didn't start till ... Don't Ask, Don't Tell battle started in '92 or '93, and then suddenly you could talk about homosexuality... I think it spread the dawn of the Internet, and that created spaces where people deep in the closet could talk and become comfortable with themselves before they came out. And the LGBT is a mass movement coming out, but it's both a mass movement and one at a time, and without the Internet, this movement would have taken another 50 years or more.

Overall, the study participants credited the Internet and the community of blogger-activists like themselves for expanding the role of grassroots activists in social movements. They were responsible for shifting the conversation and changing the way activism was performed. It turned people who would otherwise be unable to participate in social movements into prominent activists in the struggle for LGBT rights. Due to their ability to attract a national audience, online activists can now organize people over great distances and at great speed, allowing for collective actions on a much larger scale. But perhaps most importantly, the Internet brought LGBT social movement to corners of the United States that would otherwise be ignorant of it. In an age when antigay animus continues to be an electoral advantage in the most politically conservative parts of the country, the Internet enabled LGBT personas from all parts of the country to unite and advocate for their rights. As one blogger said:

Queer people are always going to be everywhere we might migrate to cities to build denser cultural communities but more of us are still gonna be born everywhere and so we have to sort of likewise have that ubiquity in the Internet is that ubiquity, queer people are everywhere, the Internet's everywhere and, and the two connect very nicely.

Conclusions: A Composite Description of being a LGBT issues blogger in the United States

In the previous chapter, I applied the methods of phenomenology to analyze the lived experiences of LGBT bloggers. I sought to draw out themes that are common across all responses and arranged them into several different categories that deal with different aspects of the blogging experience. Drawing on the final step in the phenomenological research process, this chapter of the dissertation would provide a composite textual-structural description of being a LGBT issue related blogger in the United States in order to answer the research question:

- From the perspective of content creators for blogs with a primary focus on LGBT rights related issues?
- What are the essential meanings bloggers derive from their own experiences?

The experience of being a blogger in the context of LGBT social movements was transformative. The individuals who participated in this study were highly educated and highly knowledgeable about the ideologies of the LGBT social movement. They were members of the LGBT community and were therefore stakeholders of the movement themselves. They came from diverse biographical and educational backgrounds and started their blogging experience in various stages of their lives.

The bloggers were also primarily driven by a sense of anger, frustration, and fear, which were derived from national political events that they perceive as persecution by a political, religious, and social structure that aimed to curtail the freedom and civil rights of the LGBT community. And as part of the community, they were well aware of the

LGBT civil rights movement and considered themselves victims of antigay politics. Therefore, armed with a sense of personal urgency and animus against those who had oppressed them based on their sexual orientation, these individuals decided to use blogging as a platform to combat bigotry against their community.

The primary goals for these bloggers were to enlighten and to educate their audience in order to generate collective actions that would advocate for LGBT rights in the United States. They wanted to elevate issues that were seldom noticed and expose them to a larger audience over the Internet. They also wanted to spread the message of LGBT civil rights beyond the traditional LGBT community. Blogging was an ideal format because the bloggers wished to connect directly with their audience and were weary of the institutional control of the larger national LGBT organizations. Although they specialized in different aspects of LGBT issues, the bloggers were united in the belief that knowledge was powerful and their cause was best served by disseminating information as widely as possible. As bloggers, they served as news criers in the middle of the digital town square, and they hoped that by spreading information their audience would be armed with tools to combat those who opposed their point of view.

In order to create their work, bloggers spent a lot of time and effort gathering information. Although each blogger had a different approach for scouring materials, all reported a sense of information overload. Facing a deluge of knowledge, each blogger had his own method of confronting the overwhelming amount of data. Additionally, while each blogger aimed to inform and to inspire his readership, each employed his own kind of editorial tone that varied between informative to confrontational.

Although most of the participants in this study started blogging as a hobby, they still required resources to maintain their presence on the web. Such costs include travel, web hosting, and bandwidth. In order to create financial resources to sustain their work, these bloggers have turned their work as online advocates into a career path. From creating nonprofit organizations that further their objectives, to full time employment as a blogger for third party LGBT-oriented web sites, their chosen way of monetary enrichment has enabled them to turn advocating on behalf of their community into a living.

Bloggers have a complicated relationship with established LGBT social movement organizations. On one hand, bloggers admire and respect these organizations in terms of their seemingly endless resources and incredible reach in the halls of power and wealth. On the other hand, they regard these organizations as behemoth institutions hampered by their own institutional weight and structure, burdened by vested interest, and hobbled by their need to avoid offending their board of directors and powerful patrons. Therefore, while the larger organizations were better able to connect with an audience of power, bloggers were more effective at communicating on the grassroots level. With little risk of offending important supporters, bloggers were able to be blunt and abrasive in confronting bigotry without mincing words.

The difference of audience and power between bloggers and larger LGBT movement organizations led to a relationship that was simultaneously collaborative and combative. Bloggers have criticized larger organizations for overlooking important local and regional issues, and decried their ineffective attempts at grassroots organizing and communication. At the same time, bloggers had also collaborated with larger

organizations to raise awareness on certain critical issues facing the LGBT community, and with the resources and access that these organizations had provided; bloggers can dive deeper into some stories that would not be otherwise possible. Therefore, while bloggers and established LGBT organizations disagreed on certain issues, their relationship remains cordial as both worked towards the common goal of LGBT equality.

Bloggers are proud of what they have accomplished through their work: they are proud of being able to bring their message and insight about LGBT civil rights issues to a broad range of audience; they are gratified to find their work has amplified the community's struggle to the public; they are pleased that their work has elevated seldom-heard voices within their community; and they are honored that their work has helped others to combat prejudice and homophobia. In addition to personal satisfaction, bloggers are also proud of the fact that their online work has pushed LGBT issues on a broader plane of public consciousness.

Due to their work, bloggers have seen profound changes in their lives, both for good and for ill. They have acquired a keener sense of the news, and they are more alert about what is happening to their community. On the other hand, the unpredictable nature of the news means they have sacrificed a predictable schedule and an orderly lifestyle as their blog requires constant updating as issues spring up around them. The constant demand for attention and time for work can be exhausting for bloggers, but their dedication to their goals has kept them involved in the social movement.

Bloggers have deep hopes and aspirations for the audience they serve. They hope that their readers are more cognizant of the threats against their freedom and civil rights, and like street preachers, they hope that their readers would evangelize their message of

LGBT equality to others in the community. Moreover, bloggers hope their audience would respond to their calls to action, participate in protests and other real-world collective actions.

Bloggers and the Internet have a profound and game-changing influence on the LGBT social movement in the United States. The widespread adoption of the Internet as a communication tool has led to a democratization of opinion. Despite being on the periphery of the established LGBT social movement structure, bloggers have been able to elevate the role of the grassroots activists, and they can better organize people than ever before by leveraging the Internet. Through their work, bloggers have been able to enlighten a diverse audience to join the fight for equality, inspire those who are oppressed, and expose those who preach hate and intolerance. By harnessing the global reach, bloggers are able to united LGBT persons from across the country to work for a common cause.

Chapter 6: Summary and Discussion of Results

June 26th 2015 will be remembered as a historic day for the LGBT community in the United States. At the height of gay pride celebrations across the country—exactly two years after the landmark *Windsor* ruling that abolished parts of the Defense of Marriage Act—the Supreme Court ruled that marriage is a right granted by the constitution regardless of sexual orientation (Liptak, 2015). The news was greeted with universal acclaim among the LGBT communities and their allies across the world despite continued resistance against the ruling from conservative politicians in more than 20 counties across the country. *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) would now be considered a crucial milestone in the community's quest for equality.

During the jubilant celebrations that followed the historic ruling, individual activists and LGBT organizations are credited for bringing the community to this point over the course of several decades. From the first protesters at Stonewall Inn in 1969, to the attorneys who argue before the justices on the plaintiff's behalf, they deserve every single honor and plaudit for their courageous and ceaseless work bringing justice and freedom to a long-maligned community. However, there is still much to be done for the LGBT community to achieve full equality under the law. In more than 20 states, LGBT workers can be fired from their job, denied housing, and be victims of blatant discrimination without any protection. Leaning on so-called "religious liberty" laws, conservative activists are seeking to protect their right to engage in bigotry under the veil of religious freedom. Until the community is protected by strengthened anti-discrimination legislation, LGBT civil rights in large parts of the United States will continue to be at risk, and the LGBT social movement will continue to fight for equality.

Among those who would continue the fight are a group of individuals who for the past decade and a half have worked hard to help spread the gospel of equality and elevate the cause for LGBT Americans all over the country. Working behind a computer and harnessing the power of the Internet, LGBT bloggers advocate for equality and civil rights to anyone who would read their work. By utilizing the Internet as a digital soap box, bloggers transformed the landscape of the LGBT social movement in the United States.

In an effort to understand the impact of bloggers and the Internet on social movements, I have conducted a study in order to discover what it means to be a blogger of LGBT issues in the United States. This chapter will summarize each step of the research process from the setting the goals of research to analyzing the results, and I discuss the implications of this study on the scholarship of conflict research.

Goals of Research

The goal of the dissertation is to discover how the Internet has shaped the way social movements operates in the United States. Specifically, I wish to uncover how bloggers and their work have impacted the LGBT social movement in the United States. As one of the most visible social movement in the country, the LGBT social movement is an attractive subject for research, and thanks to its early adoption of the Internet as a means of organizing collective action and social movement advocacy, it has maintained a large presence on the web. As a result, online advocates of the LGBT social movement are a prime field of subject that would allow me to explore the intersection of the Internet and social movements.

To reach my overall research goal, I decided to create a study that answers several question based on the experiences of LGBT social movement bloggers. First, this study would try to discover common factors that drive these individuals to take up blogging as a method of advocacy. By exploring their reasoning, I hope to understand the fundamental motivations that drove these bloggers to engage in an otherwise contentious issue.

Second, this study would explore the relationship between online activists and the more established LGBT organizations. By dissecting the relationship between bloggers and existing LGBT organizations, I would be able to demonstrate the role of bloggers within the overall LGBT social movement.

Third, this study would investigate the relationship between the bloggers and their readership. It would describe the goals, aspirations, as well as what these bloggers want to accomplish with their work. Combined with the answers to the previous questions, the research would seek to discover any common themes that would adequately represent the experience of LGBT bloggers in the United States.

Existing Literature

In the second chapter, I provide a literature review of social movement theories along with relevant research concerning the Internet and the LGBT community. In the first section, I cover a myriad of theories concerning social movements: from early theories of collective action, to Marxist theories of social strife, and finally to modern theories that emphasized the germination and operation of social movements.

Next, the literature review also covered existing research concerning the LGBT community, from historical analysis of its struggle for equal rights, discussions about

political and legislative strategies that would further the objectives of the LGBT social movement, and to the community's role in the early development of the information technology industry. Finally, the review provides a digest of current research regarding the Internet, from its use by other social minority groups to further their goals and to research projects that have used the Internet as a tool of exploration.

The review raised some interesting questions that open doors for further research on the role of the Internet on in social movement organization and operation. Due for its global coverage and ease of use, the Internet has enlarged the role of individual agency and allow for one person to garner a much wider audience, allowing for a level of organization that cannot be matched by activists in the past. As the Internet has become an integral part of everyday life, it is important to understand how online activists change the organization and operation of social movements.

Methodology

I employed a phenomenological study to examine the lived experiences of LGBT bloggers in the United States. Specifically, I employed Moustakas' (1994) method of transcendental phenomenology, which was due to its rigorous process and the way it considered both textual and structural dimensions of the experience.

First, I constructed a set of research questions that best reflect the purpose and goals of the study. Next, utilizing the philosophy of epoching, I created a set of notes to bracket my own experience with LGBT social movements and blogging to allow for the data to be analyzed in an open and neutral manner.

After recruiting four LGBT bloggers, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each of them to gather relevant data. The interviews were conducted online through

conferencing software, and each were recorded and transcribed. Utilizing methods described by Moustakas (1994). I highlighted each relevant statement, eliminated those that are repetitive and overlapping into discreet horizons of experience. These experiences were clustered into themes in order to construct the textural description of the participants' experiences. Together with a structural description generated through the use of imaginative variation, I put together a composite description that best represent the experience of a LGBT bloggers.

Results

By studying their lived experiences as bloggers who specialized in LGBT civil rights issues, I have discovered some common factors that lead to these individual to act as online advocates for LGBT rights.

First, the bloggers interviewed are highly educated. And despite their diverse subjects of study, these bloggers are well versed in the issues of LGBT rights, derived from their personal and professional experiences.

Secondly, the participants started blogging because they were frustrated by the state of LGBT civil rights and wanted to advocate for change. Armed with their extensive knowledge, the interviewees were eager to share their insights on news regarding LGBT civil rights so that they could spread knowledge about the community's plight and encourage their readers to take action on the community's behalf.

To accomplish their goals, the subjects of this study spent a considerable amount of non-monetary resources. From the long hours spent on research to the vast amount of information they had to sift through, these bloggers devoted considerable labor to their work in order to tell their story and share their views with the readers.

Finally, these bloggers were very proud of what they had accomplished with their work. They believed they had made substantive contributions to the LGBT social movement, and their work has educated and inspired their readers to become more informed about the community's struggles. Their actions also led to higher participation in LGBT activism and associated collective actions. By harnessing the power of the Internet, they have transformed the landscape of their social movement, and become activists for their community.

Based on the composite description generated by the study, the chart below depicts the essential textural and structural themes:

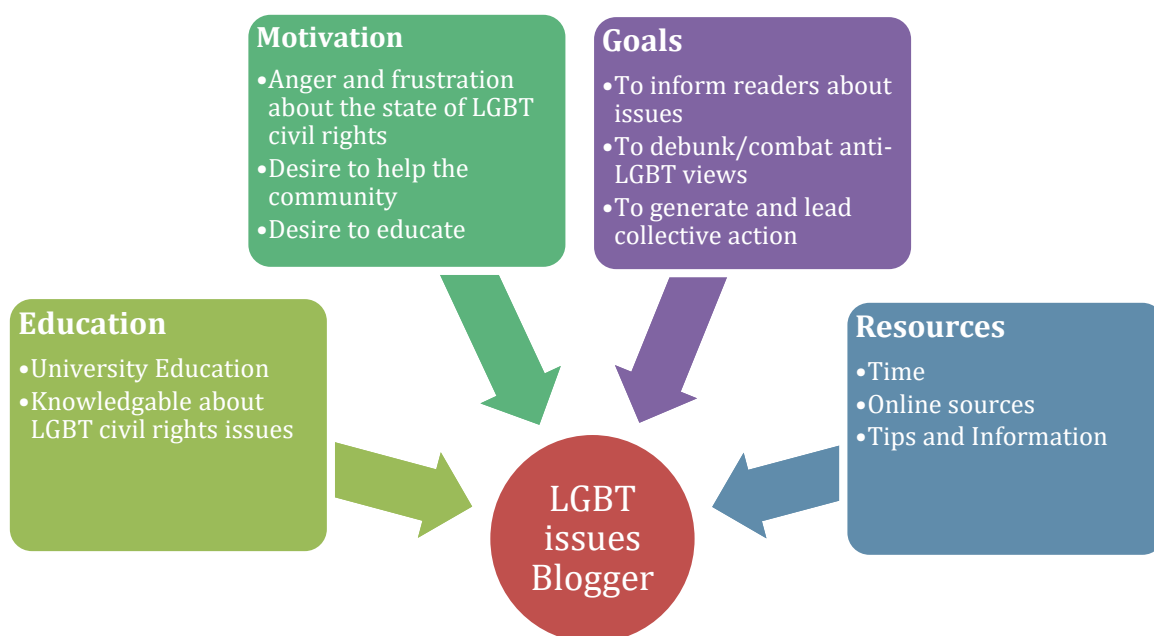


Figure 3. Common factors among bloggers for LGBT Issues

Discussion: Bloggers and their place within Social Movements

The bloggers who participated in this study occupy a new and unique place in the hierarchy of social movements. In classic social movement theories, stakeholders organize themselves into groups, which eventually coagulate into organizations that advocate for the group's interest. Individual stakeholders would contribute to the movement by donating resources such as money, time, and labor to the organization.

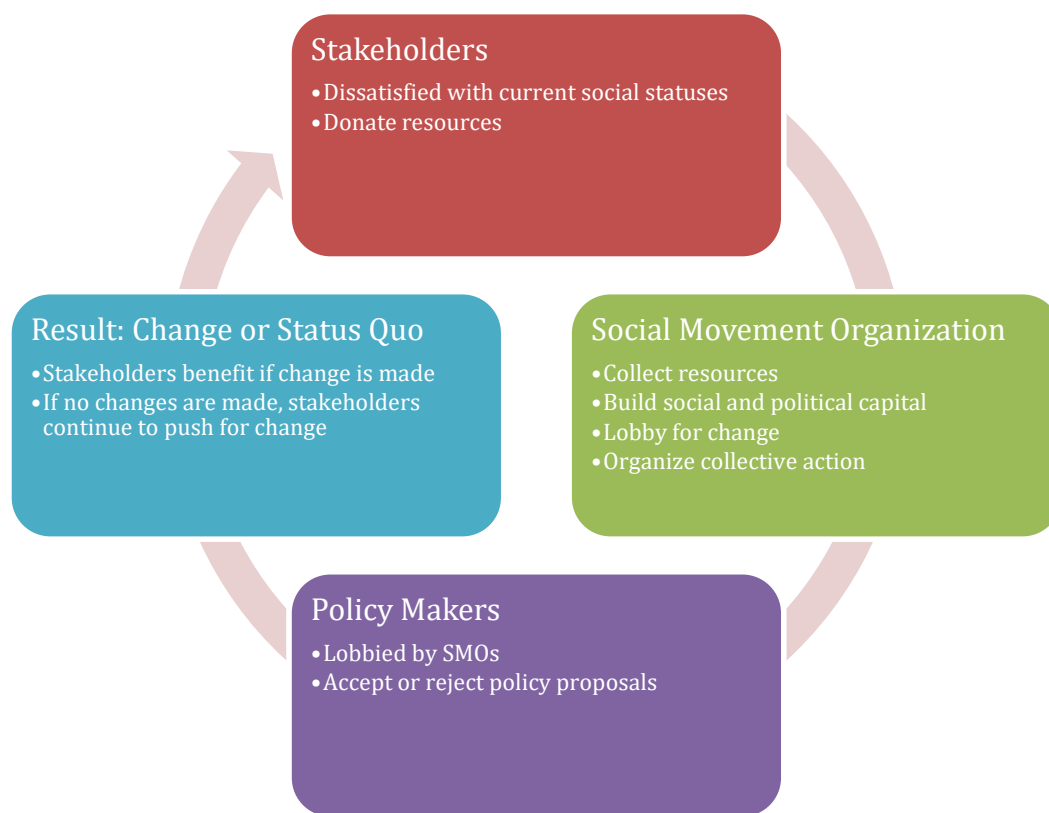


Figure 4. The Cyclical process of Social Movements

However, the bloggers in this study have created a new space outside of this existing structure. Due to the Internet, activists, driven by the feeling of deprivation and anger, have become potent voices in a social movement despite resources. Equipped with no more than a computer and a blogging platform, anyone can express their advocacy to a national or regional audience, grow readership, and organize collective action.

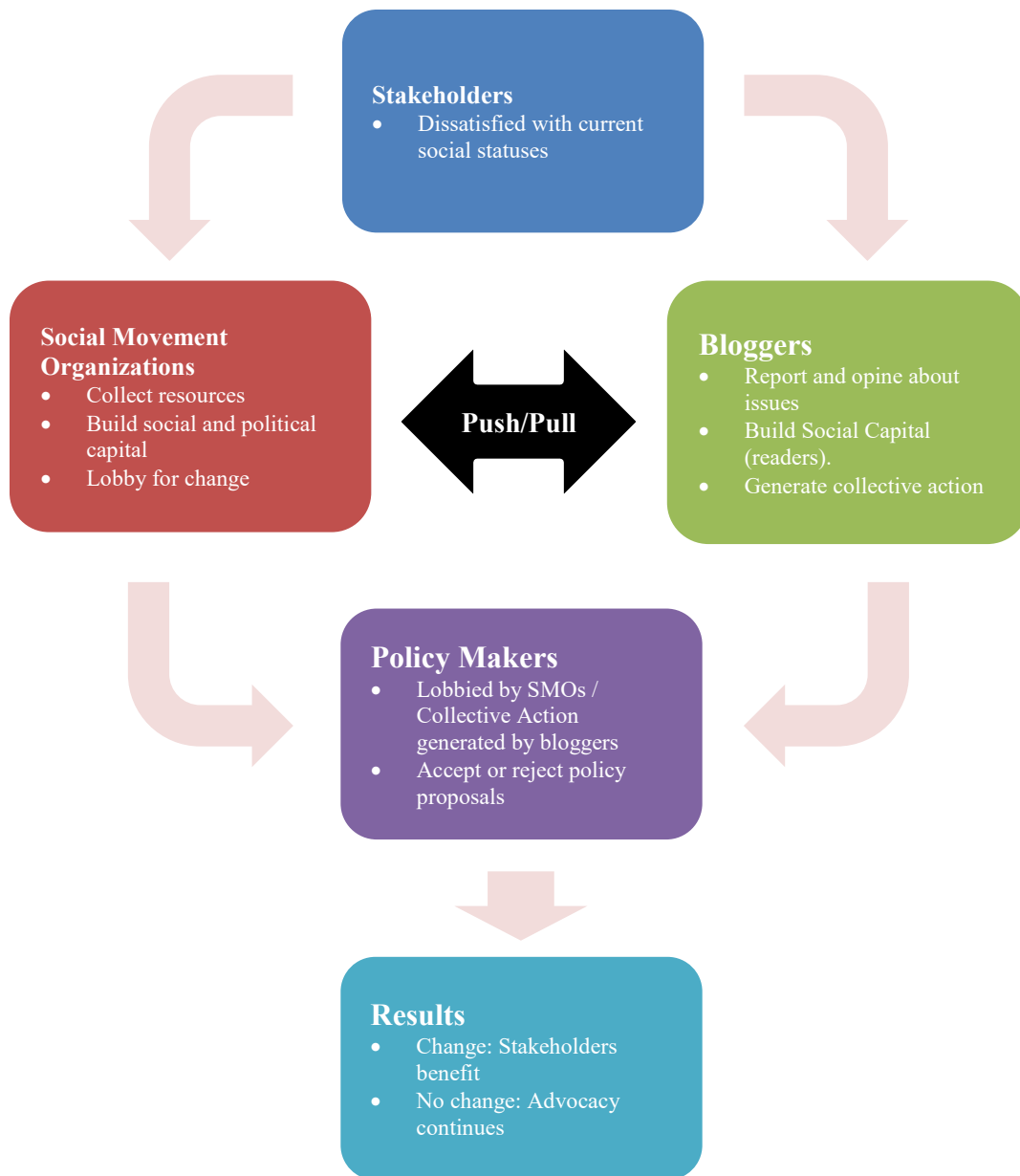


Figure 5. Blogger's Place in Social Movements

The diagram above illustrates the position I believe my study participants occupy within the LGBT social movement. Operating in tandem with traditional social movement organizations, the subjects of this study have a push-pull relationship with their more established and resourceful counterparts. Whereas traditional social movement organizations have become highly professionalized and organized (as described by Zald

and McCarthy's Resource Mobilization Theory (1979), bloggers of today are the grassroots representatives that provide a voice to the stakeholders of the movement. At times they collaborated with established organizations to reach a common objective, but on occasion, these bloggers would criticize them for neglecting issues that are important to local communities. Bloggers are also more adept at connecting with the stakeholders in the community, which has enabled them to recruit allies to support their cause. Without boards of directors to please and without sponsors to offend, bloggers can use emotion and blunt language to appeal to readers and supporters, and with social media a part of our everyday life, it is not impossible to imagine a dedicated blogger can generate the same type of collective action that would require the resources of a large establishment organization just a decade ago. By gathering readers, sharing breaking stories concerning the community, broadcasting their opinions and organizing collective action, LGBT bloggers can engineer an alternative way to lobby for change by bringing their issues directly to policy makers and other targets of protest.

Significance and Implications

In most parts of the world, the Internet is an integral part of everyday life. The explosion of social media portals and news sites has transformed the way we interact with each other and consume information. Due to its global reach, social movement bloggers have used the web to their advantage by spreading the message of social justice and equality to the most remote, hostile territories, and, in the process, they empower those who are removed from LGBT community and brings into attention LGBT issues. Their experience, as described in this study, points to the power of the web as a major contributing factor in advancing social movements and tackling social justice issues.

I believe this study is significant in several other ways beyond understanding the impact of bloggers and their work on social movements. First, although I believe that while this study has demonstrated the power of online activists within the context of one social movement in the United States, it is but a small contribution to the scholarship of social movements. Future studies should be undertaken to quantify the influence bloggers have on their readers, by surveying blog readers to gauge the effectiveness and influence of their message. In addition, the scope of the study can be expanded to include bloggers from various social movements in comparative studies. The results generated by these research opportunities can transform the way social movements organizations interact with their stakeholders, and develop new operation models to resolve social and political conflicts.

Furthermore, this study demonstrated that the Internet has a significant impact in society, and research should be undertaken to expand current knowledge regarding the sociological impact of the Internet. Therefore, beyond using it as a tool for data collection, it is my hope that this study will lead to further research on how modern technologies can change social movement paradigms, supplementing or changing current theories that explains how social movements form and operate.

Finally, this study demonstrated the increased power of individual thought leaders in the information age, which can lead to potential innovation in the practice of conflict resolution beyond social discord. Companies have already demonstrated their willingness to utilize influential online personalities to promote their goods and services, but many others have struggled to resolve conflicts with their customers and members of the general public (Wortham, 2014). From inconsiderate and offensive posts on Twitter to

their leaders expressing unpopular political views, companies and individuals that practice incompetent online communication can lead to public relation crises, loss of reputation, and face calls for boycott. Understanding the influence of bloggers can lead to effective conflict resolution and management strategies that resolve conflicts effectively and reduce antagonism between creators and consumers.

Final thoughts

This study represents the end of my academic journey. I am proud of what I have accomplished. I believe I have demonstrated a need to take the Internet and future technological innovations into account when studying sociological conflicts and that I have opened doors for future scholarship that would add to the knowledge of conflict resolution and social movements. I am also grateful to the participants of this study, and their input has helped enshrine the life experiences of social movement bloggers into the overall scholarship of social movements.

On the other hand, I must confess that I believe this study is limited and it can be further improved by expanding its coverage and scope. As it currently stands, this study is limited by sampling: the respondents are uniformly gay male who are highly educated, and it lacks representation from other segments of the LGBT community. Addition of LGBT bloggers who represent other segments of our community, such as queer women and transgendered persons, would allow for a more thorough study. Furthermore, the constant evolution of the online landscape, together with the rapid changes in LGBT civil rights in the United States, has led to an unfortunate side effect: the LGBT civil rights oriented blogosphere is shrinking, with many prominent bloggers ending their blogging careers for a variety of personal and professional reasons. Therefore, while the struggle of

LGBT rights is far from finished in the United States and beyond, in some ways this study represents a snapshot of a particular period of American LGBT history, a retrospective look at the work of a dedicated group of individuals who have finally reached their political goals.

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Appendix A: Instrument

Basic Information:

Time of Interview:

Method of Interview:

Interviewer:

Subject of Interview:

Age:

Sex/Sexual Orientation:

Blog:

Education:

Biographical Information

1. Please tell me how you discovered blogs and how you started blogging?
 - a. What is your life like when you took up blogging?
2. Why did you decide to start the blogs you are now (most) known for?
3. What is your blogging process?
 - a. How do you decide to pick what items to blog about?
 - b. Is there a criterion for "blog-worthiness"? If so, what is it?
4. What is the overall theme of your blog?
 - a. What is your overall editorial tone and direction?
 - i. Why do you choose that tone and direction for your blog?
 - b. Why do you choose these themes within the larger topic of LGBT related news?
5. What are your goals when you started the blog?
 - a. Has it changed since you started blogging?
6. What kind of influence do you want your blog to have on your readers?
 - a. What kind of action do you expect your readers to take?
7. If possible, please tell me about how you gather your resource to pay for bandwidths and other things for your blog.

- a. Is blogging your primary profession?
 - b. If not how do you gather resource to pay for the cost of hosting/maintaining your blog?
8. What is your relationship as a blogger with these mainstream/brick and mortar LGBT organizations?
9. Your blog, along with many from other bloggers, engage in and/or report on LGBT rights related activism. What do you think is the difference between you and major LGBT organizations such as HRC and GLAAD?
 - a.
10. What kind of influence do you think online activists like you have on LGBT activism overall?
 - a. How does your influence compare to that of LGBT organizations?
 - b. In turn, how do those organizations
11. What are your goals and aspirations for your readership?
 - a. In other words, what do you want your readers to do after they read your blog?
 - b. What do you think is the difference between your activism and the ones that are advocated by mainstream LGBT organizations?

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

To:
 From:
 Subject: Invitation to participate in Doctoral Study about LGBT-issues bloggers

Dear (Insert subject name here),

My name is Bobby and I am a doctoral candidate for the Conflict Analysis and Resolution department at Nova Southeastern University's Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences. The reason I am writing you today is to invite you to take part in a study on the impact of bloggers and their work on social movements.

The internet has a tremendous influence on the American society in the 21st century, and blogs is one of the most popular forms of expression online. As a prominent member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) blogging community, your work has become a vital source for information and commentary that are relevant to the LGBT social movement in the United States. Therefore, as a member of the LGBT community, I have decided to write my dissertation on the impact of bloggers and their work on social movements. Specifically, I will be gathering information from bloggers whose work focuses on LGBT rights and how their work have impacted the formation and organization of the LGBT social movement in the United States from the bloggers' perspective. It is my hope that the results of this study would add to the existing academic knowledge of social movements, and elaborate on how the internet has changed the way social movements work in the 21st century.

To gather information and data for my study, I would like to invite you to sit for an online interview via Skype or another channel of secure video conference. Your response would be recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The utmost care would be taken to protect your privacy and confidentiality.


If you are interested in taking part of this study, or if you have any questions related to this study, please email me at bhuen@nova.edu or reach me by phone at (305) 761-6854. If you wish to speak to my dissertation advisor, please contact Dr. Berna at Dustin.berna@nova.edu or (954) 262-3024.

Thank you very much for your time and I hope to hear from you soon,

Bobby Huen
 Doctoral Candidate
 Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution
 Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences
 Nova Southeastern University

Email: bhuen@nova.edu
 Phone: (305) 761-6854

*For questions/concerns about your research rights, contact: Human Research Oversight Board (Institutional Review Board or IRB)
 Nova Southeastern University
 (954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790
IRB@nsu.nova.edu*


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Appendix C: Consent Form for Participation


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Continuing Review Date: OCT 29 2015



Consent Form for Participation in the Research Study Entitled "Bloggers and Social Movements: A Phenomenological Study"

Funding Source: None.

IRB protocol #:

Principal investigator
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Nova Southeastern University
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IRB@nsu.nova.edu

What is the study about?

This study is designed to understand blogger's fundamental reasons and motivations to participate in social movements, specifically the LGBT-civil rights movement in the United States, in order to discover the fundamental meanings bloggers derive from their work.

Why are you asking me?

I am asking you to participate in this study because you are a blog owner/major contributor who blogs about LGBT civil rights related issues.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, I would arrange to meet with you via online conferencing (such as Skype or other peer-to-peer video conferencing services) in order to conduct an in-depth, semi-structured interview about you, your work as a blogger,

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and your LGBT-rights activism. The interviews would be recorded and transcribed for study.

Is there any audio or video recording?

This research project will include audio and video recording of the interview. This video recording will be available to be heard by the researcher, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the chairman of my dissertation committee. The recording will be transcribed by me. The recording will be kept securely in a separate, secure hard drive. The recording will be kept for approximately 48 months (12 months to finish the study, and 36 months after the conclusion of the study) and destroyed after that time by erasing all video and audio files. Because your image and your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears and sees the recording, your confidentiality for things you say or do on the recording cannot be guaranteed although I will try to limit access to the tape as described in this paragraph.

What are the dangers to me?

Your risk as a result of this study is minimal. Loss of confidentiality is the sole concern for this particular study. To minimize these risks, I will be recording the interviews on a separate hard drive that is disconnected from the internet between interviews. A pseudonym would also be assigned to you during the transcription process so that your identity is not compromised should any printed or written data be lost or stolen during the study.

If you have any questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact me or Dr. Berna. You may also contact the IRB at the numbers indicated above with questions as to your research rights.

Are there any benefits for taking part in this research study?

Outside of academic knowledge and understanding, there are no direct benefits.


Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information private?

Like any responsible researchers, your confidentiality is one of my top concerns. To ensure your privacy and confidentiality, I will take several steps to ensure your identity is protected during the research process. As outlined in the risk section above, I will be using a discrete, detachable device to record the interviews. During the transcription process, a random name would be assigned to you so that any loss of written or printed

Initials: _____ Date: _____


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data would not be able to be traced back to you. All video recordings and all transcriptions of the interviews would be kept for the duration of the study. All information would be archived after the end of the study for 36 months. During this period, the IRB and my dissertation committee chairperson would be able to access and review my research records, including video recordings and transcriptions.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

What if I do not want to participate or I want to leave the study?

You have the right to leave this study at any time or refuse to participate. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to participate, you will not experience any penalty or loss of services you have a right to receive. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you before the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

Other Considerations:

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, I will provide you with this information.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing below, you indicate that

- this study has been explained to you
- you have read this document or it has been read to you
- your questions about this research study have been answered
- you have been told that you may ask the researchers any study related questions in the future or contact them in the event of a research-related injury
- you have been told that you may ask Institutional Review Board (IRB) personnel questions about your study rights
- you are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read and signed it
- you voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled "Bloggers and Social Movements: A Phenomenological Study"


Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Initials: _____ Date: _____


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