

Activists' Use of Media and Messaging

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INTRODUCTION

On March 26, 2015, Gov. Mike Pence of Indiana signed into law the Religious Freedom and Reformation Act, hailed by supporters as a law ensuring religious freedom and chastised by critics as a possible gateway for religious conservatives to deny service to gay couples. A statewide and national backlash exploded.

Gov. Pence's hometown newspaper, once offering an endorsement of his candidacy for governor, ran a front page editorial with the blaring headline, "FIX THIS NOW." Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton, a likely candidate for president in 2016, took to Twitter to express her dismay: "Sad this new Indiana law can happen in America today," she wrote. "We shouldn't discriminate against [people because] of who they love," adding a #LGBT hashtag.

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest used his daily briefing with reporters as an opportunity to comment on the bill: "This piece of legislation flies in the face of the kinds of values people all across the country support," he said.

Objectors gathered in Indianapolis, the state capitol, to vocalize their dismay through collective action, hoisting signs emblazoned with the text, "Freedom of religion does not mean freedom to discriminate. Reject RFRA." Other protestors joined the cycle of contention, rallying elsewhere across the nation.

The Human Rights Campaign, self-described as the largest civil rights organization fighting for LGBT equality, updated the homepage on its website with links to a call to action, "Four Ways to Take a Stand Against the Anti-LGBT Bills Sweeping the Country," and to an infographic documenting the "wave of anti-LGBT bills in 2015 legislative sessions."

Meanwhile, supporters of the bill lauded the governor's character.

Franklin Graham, a nationally prominent Christian evangelist and North Carolina resident, tweeted, "Thank God for politicians like [Gov. Pence] who are not afraid to take a stand regardless of political consequences."

The president of the Family Research Council, which describes itself as a Christian public policy ministry, chimed in, too: "The government shouldn't force religious businesses and churches to participate in wedding ceremonies contrary to their owners' beliefs," he said.

Within days, the public pressure faced by Gov. Pence on every side led him to promise change. "We will fix this and move forward," he said of the law, though unable to elaborate on the nature of this change when questioned.

Five days later, controversy surrounding the Indiana bill still roiling, the Arkansas legislature passed legislation similar to that which continued to mire the Indiana governor's political career. At time of submission, Gov. Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas has not yet signed the bill.

Progressives and conservatives alike are known to say that the battle over gay marriage, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality more generally, is the defining cultural issue of the decade. As one leader at a North Carolina-based LGBT rights organizations quipped, "Social conservatives will soon recognize they're on the wrong side of history."

Some progressive activists may argue the battle over gay marriage, and tangentially LGBT rights, is won and done. But if recent events are any indication, that's far from reality.

Research Questions

In this paper, I explore three interrelated questions about media, messaging and the movements for and against marriage equality and LGBT rights:

1. How has the relationship between activists and mass media changed since the rise of new media?
2. If activists interact with new media in addition to mass media, how do they differentiate tactics?
3. How do activists develop strategies for new and mass media?

I operationalized new media as interactive Web, including social media, websites and blogs. In response to each question, I had clear expectations about what I'd find. First, I expected activists to be less dependent on traditional mass media, operationalized as mainstream broadcast and print, as tools to shape and engage in the public discourse. Instead, I expected that activists recognize the message-making autonomy available to them through new media and that they enjoy freedoms from traditionally stifling journalistic norms.

In interaction with mass media, I expected that activists continue their efforts to appeal to the wider audience presented by this platform; they continue to be constrained by journalistic norms, and their associations' messages are also constrained accordingly. I predicted that messages for mass media are conceivably less radical than on other platforms, and activists are dependent on drawing connections to broad social representations to communicate their claims. In contrast, I expected that activists use new media to interact with audiences already sympathetic to the organizations' claims; activists therefore do not face the same constraints imposed by mass media journalists or the

challenge of appealing to a wide, diverse audience. Instead, the messages communicated via new media are more authentic and can be micro-targeted to appeal to specialized audiences.

Lastly, I anticipated there is a difference even among likeminded organizations in their approaches to media, largely a function of their perceptions of the opportunities and constraints presented by these media. The existence of strategy for such activity corresponds to the resources available to the association. Organizations with more resources, I predicted, invest more in developing thoughtful, evidence-based message and media strategies. In contrast, younger or smaller organizations do not expend comparable amounts of resources and therefore look to new media as an economical supplement to mass media outreach.

Theory

My study is first and foremost grounded in gatekeeping theory, which describes the role of news media as a gatekeeper to the public discourse. My research questions and methods are also informed and organized by literature that explores and describes the historical relationship between social movements and mass media, in addition to message framing theory. Gatekeeping theory forms the basis of my research because it explains the fundamental importance of traditional mass media to social movements. Scholars have illustrated the manner in which news media control access to the public discourse. In doing so, traditional mass media also shape public opinion and filter the public's perceived realities. This fueled my curiosity about how the evolution of new media had affected the role of traditional mass media, and whether new media served as a route through which

social movements could circumvent the antiquated news media gatekeepers. The figures below illustrate this construct.

Figure 1. Traditional Relationship Between Movements and Media Gatekeepers

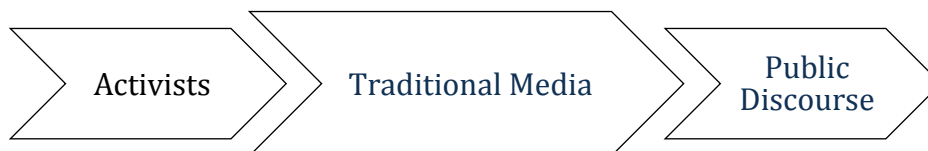
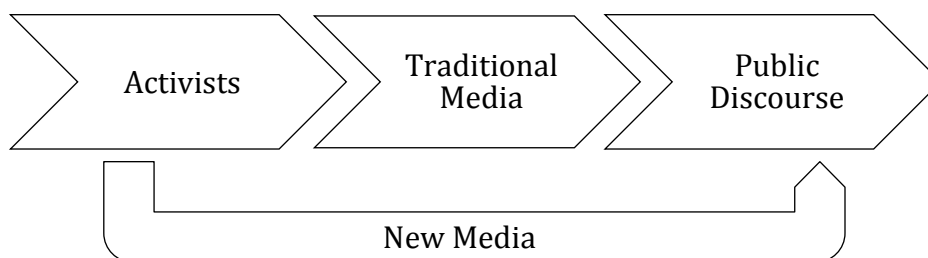


Figure 2. Alternative Relationship Between Movements and Media



Literature describing the historical relationship between traditional mass media and social movements further elaborated social movements' dependence on mass media to achieve movement goals, largely contingent upon the power the platforms wield over the public discourse. In response to this monopoly, activists must conform to journalistic norms and expectations of social movements. These direct everything from the media tactics employed by social movements to the message frames they use to communicate their claims, ultimately becoming constitutive of the collective identity of the movement itself. Recognition of the tremendous influence of mass media over social movements' activities, goals and messages drove my investigation of how the evolution of new media had changed the nature of social movements.

My methods and framework for examining the role of media platforms were informed by scholarship critical of current research in the field. Though the field of media

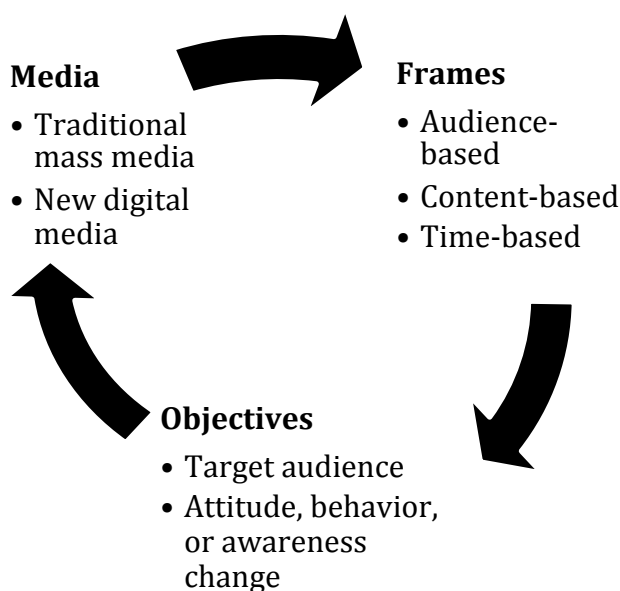
opportunities is now rich with diversity, from social media to alternative print to traditional broadcast, literature continues to examine movement's selection of media as though made in a vacuum. A blind focus on the strategies employed through one platform ignores the realities of the field today and undermines studies' validity. Additional studies asserted a clarion call emphasizing the value and importance of not only the executed media and messaging strategies but also the process begetting these decisions. I sought to answer the calls for an examination of media platforms as a multifaceted field of opportunities through an investigation of social movements' use of many platforms, not just one medium. To do so, I adopted Mattoni's comprehensive framework for studying social movements and media –one that acknowledges the dynamic interaction of multiple media opportunities for movements today, rather than vacuously focusing on one platform alone.

Lastly, I engaged literature on message framing. Scholarship on framing has identified multiple frame types and their applications. Frames are important to the study of the relationship between movements and media because they are constructs negotiated by both parties, and they are strategically developed in order to achieve specific outcomes. Scholars also criticized a lack of research contrasting the framing strategies of the ideological right and left. To better organize framing research, Scheufele proposed a process model of framing that structures and provides direction to research on frames as a variable dependent on media platforms. This model oriented my operationalization and study of the relationship between message frame and media platform, which was important because I anticipated variation in messaging dependent upon media platform.

Framing theory provided tools for evaluating frames used by movements and a foundation upon which I could build my analysis.

I have conceptualized the interaction each body of literature in context of my research questions and expected findings in the figure below. Each aspect of this cyclical relationship will be further delineated in my literature review.

Figure 3. Literature Synthesis



Methods and Key Findings

The arguments of these scholars guided the development of my research methods and further supported my preexisting interest in investigating this intersection. In an answer to the dearth of studies contrasting the messaging of the ideological right and left, I identified an issue – LGBT rights – around which there were two camps of debate rather than focusing on the language used exclusively by one side of an issue. In doing so, I intended to cultivate a complex and organizationally diverse sample that I hoped would

provide opportunities for fruitful comparison of the frames and media tactics used by both camps. Pro- and anti-LGBT rights activists are also highly active.

In response to the demand for research on the process begetting framing and media tactics of social movements, I used semi-structured interviews to illuminate these nuanced processes. I built a stratified sample of 16 organizations active in the movements for and against LGBT rights based on each social movement organization stance on the issue, scope of action (city-county, state, regional and national), and perceived access to resources. To do so, I used online databases of North Carolina activist organizations to identify organizations that actively advocated a position for or against LGBT rights. I also looked to news coverage of activism surrounding North Carolina's Amendment One, legislation that stipulates marriage as between a man and a woman, to supplement the organizations identified by the informal online databases. Ultimately, I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with executive directors, communications directors and communications staff at organizations actively engaged in the fight for and against LGBT rights in North Carolina and nationally. These organizations varied in age, resources and scopes of action. I then used textual analysis and latent coding to identify and interpret manifested themes relevant to my research questions.

My research produced three key findings:

1. Availability of human and financial resources influences movements' use of messaging and media.
2. Though somewhat democratizing, the nature of new media platforms also poses restrictions on message frames.

3. Despite the emergence of new media, activists continue to conceive of traditional mass media as the primary gate to the public discourse.

Overview

In this paper, I first provide a more detailed exploration of literature on gatekeeping theory, the relationship between social movements and media, and message framing. I justify the relevance and influence of these bodies of literature to my research and explain how scholarship on the relationship social movements and media and message frames provided organizing frameworks that directed my research questions, methods and analysis. I next describe how I developed my sample and gathered and treated my data, leading into a discussion of my methods of analysis and preliminary findings. Following a presentation of the data, I use exemplary cases to better illustrate my results regarding the role of resources in message frames and media tactics, the constitutively imbalanced nature of new media, and the continued priority of traditional mass media to social movements. Lastly, I address the limitations of my research, expand on the broader implications of these results for scholarship on social movements, media and message framing, and suggest directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Surrounding the questions I seek to explore are bodies of literature on three interrelated topics: gate keeping theory, social movements and media, and message framing. I study these bodies of literature in context of gay rights activism. In examining the intersection between these bodies of literature, I explain their connections as ultimately illustrative of the strategic decisions made by activist leaders. Gate keeping theory explains why activists value media as an access point to public discourse. Literature on social

movements and media further illuminates the complex and imbalanced relationship between movements and media. Lastly, message framing offers organizing structures and analyses of the value of message framing to movements. These three bodies of literature do not operate in isolation, but are confluent in this strategic process.

Gate Keeping Theory

Making news is a process of constructing reality (Tuchman 12), and activists accordingly want a role in this process. News media seek to disseminate information and, in doing so, create and shape public knowledge and public opinion (Tuchman 2). Moreover, news media have been shown to be powerful setters of the political agenda (McCombs and Shaw). Intrinsic in the process of making news is gatekeeping, in which a few news items are selected for transmittance from a "vast array of potential news messages."

Information passes through several checkpoints on its way from discovery to dissemination. To reach dissemination, the information first passes through metaphorical gates before entering the arena of public knowledge and discourse. "The term public sphere refers simultaneously to the practice of open discussion about matters of common concern and the places that serve as settings for such dialogue," (Habermas, Soberiaj). "Gatekeepers are the individuals...who determine whether items pass through the gates." In this process, news media shape the messages they select to communicate (Shoemaker). A generation of research has documented compelling evidence of the ability of the news media to influence public opinion through its gatekeeping power (Williams). Gitlin credited mass media with the ability to form public assumptions, attitudes and moods, and shape the way the public defines the situations it experiences. Standing in the media translates into broader political standing (Gamson).

Other scholars have argued that with the development of new media as a virtually unlimited source of information, these gates have eroded and with them so have gatekeepers (Williams). Williams also suggests that the new media environment that has evolved can be conceptualized as multi-axial, with each axis represented a point of power to influence public opinion. He hypothesizes that the changes in media function as "alterations in the rules of the game, creating new avenues through which traditional political elites attempt to shape the political agenda in new ways." Williams implicitly raises the possibility that despite the evolution of new media and proliferation of easily accessible information, traditional media elites are simply challenged to adapt to this new environment, finding new ways to continue serving as gatekeepers of the public discourse.

However, Williams concludes that as a result of the digital revolution and multi axial media, traditional media have lost and will never have again their preeminent status as agenda-setters and issue-framers. Ultimately, he says, "the new media environment with its multiple points of access and more continues news cycle has increased the opportunities for less mainstream individuals and groups to influence public discourse." Such a suggestion prompts my optimistic hypothesis that activists are able to benefit from this democratization of media access and power: they perceive and capitalize upon these new media opportunities. Williams described in 2004 his skepticism that ordinary citizens would be able to make advantage of the opportunities presented by this change, but since this time, the Web has undergone another revolution. It has transformed into an interactive space exploding with user-generated content and social media platforms.

Fraser pointed to the "value and existence of multiple public spheres, suggesting that they provide spaces for articulating marginalized interests and viewpoints, building

group solidarity, and establishing alternative interpretations of existing arrangements, and act as staging ground for the development of strategies to inject these interests and views into mainstream public discourse,” (Sobeiraj). Although not grounded in a physical sense the development of interactive Web certainly simulates the experience of smaller publics emphasized by Fraser. Applying Williams' 2004 claims about the democratization of media, it is logically consistent to infer that in the 11 years since democratization has only grown. In this increasingly multi axial media landscape, it would seem that any individual with Internet access – activists included – has the opportunity to influence the public discourse.

Social Movements and Media

Social movements need mass media in order to matter. The dependence of social movements on mass media has been documented in detail, most importantly in Todd Gitlin's eminent exploration of rise and fall of the New Left in “The Whole World Is Watching.” For activists, media coverage functions as their “opportunity to participate in or shape mainstream public discourse,” (Sobieraj). Movements rely on large-scale communications to persuade targeted publics and amplify the issues they champion (Gamson, Gitlin). The flow of information that occurs as part of this process, even in “stages of latency,” also helps movements to build collective identity, and it facilitates other stages of mobilization (Gamson, Mattoni, Melucci). Accordingly, the media landscape has served as the arena for the contentious cultural debate over gay marriage (Moscowitz).

When it comes to media tactics, movements are diverse. Since Gitlin's foray into the field, scholars have amended his assertion to acknowledge that all movements do not need media equally; rather, media is more important to some movements than it is to others (Mattoni). Mattoni notes that movements “vary according to their consequences, targets

and objectives,” and they engage multiple audiences (Tilly). Despite this variation, activist media practices can be broadly defined as “routinized and creative social practices in which activists engage,” and which include interaction with media objects and subjects (Mattoni).

The relationship between activists and media is dynamic, asymmetrical and transactional (Gamson et al, Gitlin). Because of this power imbalance, movements are subjugated to journalistic norms and rules of news making in order to be deemed “newsworthy” (Gitlin, Sobieraj). If a movement hopes for sympathetic coverage, it must conform to media expectations of narrow demands, spectacle, drama and confrontation (Gamson, Sobieraj). Furthermore, certain platforms have unique demands. For example, television highly values visual entertainment more than print media does. This requisite to coverage leads activists to respond with strategies intended to produce spectacle (Gamson). This observation also implicitly posits the idea that certain media platforms are better suited to some content than others; or, different media platforms have constitutively different norms and values. This idea and its implications for activism will be explored later.

Journalists tend to carefully control and diffuse the image and claims of social opposition, “[absorbing] what can be absorbed into the dominant structure of definitions and images and to push the rest to the margins of social life,” (Gamson). The gay rights movement, too, faced the assimilation of their claims into the hegemony. For example, the gay rights movement professionalized its sources or spokespersons in an effort to appeal to journalistic norms and thereby gain better access to the media. However, this professionalization made resistance to heterosexist institutions less likely. When trying to “mainstream” gay marriage and persuade the “movable middle,” activists found they had to

conform to the rules of news making and in doing so had to sacrifice some of the integrity of their claims (Moscowitz).

The LGBT rights movement faced great internal tension over these decisions, whether regarding how gay marriage should be represented or what media strategies should be deployed (Moscowitz). Moscowitz also argued that the images employed by media and activists “may unwittingly work to stigmatize those unmarried LGBTQ citizens who do not fit the normative mold in this new era of visibility.” The detrimental effects experienced by the LGBT rights movement are not unique. Regardless of the issue fueling the movement, “dogged pursuit of mainstream media coverage at the expense of other approaches [to intervene in public discourse],” can render movements impotent, hindering their abilities to achieve objectives and negatively affecting their internal health (Gitlin, Sobieraj).

Media coverage is also an expensive investment of resources. Gamson hypothesized that the more resources an organization allocates to working with the media, the more successful they’ll be in doing so. Sobieraj noted the conundrum that, “[the movements] that are most needy have least access to the media services they desire and pay a higher price for them.” However, the digital revolution and proliferation of free, accessible online media platforms could even the playing field. The expansion of vehicles for user-generated content has empowered more groups with the ability to publish information online. Though it still requires unequally distributed resources in the form of “Internet access, technological proficiency and time, these new platforms substantially reduce prior inequities,” (Sobieraj).

As such, new media platforms may provide a healthier route to circumventing the mainstream media altogether, avoiding the well-documented toxic effects of the pursuit of traditional mass media. After all, scholars doubt the utility of such coverage for both social movements generally and for gay rights specifically (Moscowitz, Sobieraj). The unique social nature of new media platforms offers great potential for mobilizing groups: In Web 2.0, users can comment, can create groups and can have discussions (Sobieraj).

Despite the wealth of research on movements and media, Mattoni cites a lack of a “comprehensive conceptual framework that recognizes the intricacy of interactions between media and movements.” This is due to two interrelated biases in the literature on social movements and media: (1) the one-medium bias, which refers to the prioritization of the analysis of one medium over others, and with regard to differentiation of content therein; and (2) the “technological-fascination bias,” in which scholars address the interaction between movements and one form of media, particularly digital platforms, but fail to include interactions with multiple media platforms (Mattoni).

To better understand these complex and evolving relationships, Mattoni suggests the use of three media concepts as lenses helpful for generating more inclusive research on the relationships between social movements and media: media practices, mediation and mediatization. Media practices are “routinized and creative social practices in which activists engage,” and which include interactions with media objects and media subjects. Including media practices in research would allow scholars to better understand how media practices intersect with social practices, a set of practices oriented toward participation, organization, protest and symbolic activities. By then looking at mediation, which is the process by which media support the flow of discourses, meanings and

interpretations in societies (Couldry, Silverstone), scholars can explore how these processes have changed over time and how the role of media in protest and mobilization has shifted (Mattoni). Lastly, the concept of mediatization, which examines the interrelation between change in media and change in society, facilitates analysis of how the multiple processes of mediation have changed with the evolution of different forms of media (Couldry and Hepp).

Whether through study of media practices or mediation, adopting Mattoni's comprehensive framework helps illuminate the subtle and evolving complexities of the relationship between movements and media that are overlooked when examining one platform in isolation. The concept of diverse media practices allows research to account for mediation between digital and analog media; the roles different media technologies and organizations have within a movement; and the connections across platforms, technologies and actors. Mediation facilitates the understanding of how activists interact with media as a composite whole, across multiple platforms and technologies (Mattoni). For this reason, though my research questions are largely inspired and informed by gate keeping theory, I use the framework proposed by Mattoni to organize and direct the methods and analysis of my research.

Message Framing

As established, movements need the media much more than the media need movements. For this reason, movements are often forced to compromise their messages in an effort to gain access to the public discourse. The larger and more elite the audience, the more likely a movement will be willing to compromise its message. But gaining access to the public discourse is just half the battle. Next, a movement must invest time and

resources in developing an appealing and consistent frame within which to communicate its claims (Gamson). Frames, defined by Gitlin, are “principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters.” The marriage equality movement illustrates the opportunities and constraints that accompany access to the public discourse and their implications for message framing. As the LGBT rights movement shifted from a separatist stance critical of mainstream society to more a moderate position that highlights group similarities, media strategies were refocused to center on framing messages in a manner that “[mainstreamed and normalized] gay and lesbian identity,” (Moscowitz).

Framing defines the public’s understanding of social issues and the merits of possible solutions (Gamson, Nelson & Kinder, 1996). Framing is of particular importance to movements because “coverage of a movement origin can have an impact on public support for the cause, influence policy makers to act and affect the group’s ability to attract and retain members,” (Moscowitz). Media and movements therefore engage in a struggle over framing because of its integral connection to movements’ fates in the public discourse (Gitlin). Framing also contributes to social movements’ internal identities. Communication within a movement and with its environment help to define the group’s collective identity, rendering framing constitutive in addition to merely tactical (Mattoni, Melucci).

There are two broad categories of framing: media framing and individual framing. “Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports,” writes Gitlin. “Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely

organize discourse, whether verbal or visual.” In contrast, individual frames operate at the individual level of information processing (Entman). The current model for framing and media effects is a hybrid: social constructivism, in which audiences rely on a “version of reality built from personal experience, interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from the mass media,” (Neuman, Scheufele).

Within these broad organizing categories, scholars have proposed several subtypes of framing. Scheufele positions two frames on a dichotomy: (1) global and long-term political news frames, similar to Sibley’s concept of social representations (Kinder); and (2) short-term, issue-related frames, which can have a significant impact on perceiving, organizing and interpreting incoming information and on drawing inferences from that information (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Klandermans, Entman and Ooegema demonstrated the power of master frames invented by social movements to influence people’s motivation to support these movements. This idea was operationalized by Gerhards and Rucht into a model composed of three frame types: (1) diagnostic, which identifies the problem and attributes blame and causality; (2) prognostic, which identifies what needs to be done; and (3) motivational, which contains calls for action for engaging in ameliorative or corrective action (Gerhards & Rucht, Benford & Snow, Scheufele). Uskul and Oyserman identify the distinction between frames that appeal to individual cues versus those that appeal to collective action cues.

I organize these dichotomy-oriented conceptualizations of framing into three categories: audience-based, content-based, and time-based.

Table 1. Framing Typology

Audience	Content	Temporal
Individual v. Collective	Diagnostic v. Prognostic v. Motivational	Short-term, issue-related v. Global, long-term political views

The concept of social representation is related to message framing. Sibley defines social representations as “widely communicated bodies of knowledge that are shared to a greater or lesser extent among various subgroups in society (Farr). They include (but are not limited to) publicly elaborated arguments concerning issues of central importance to society. Social representations thus reflect socially elaborated ways of thinking about and discussing an issue.” For example, Sibley notes that both the civil rights movement and the new right of the 1980s both referenced egalitarianism, a social representation at the corner of modern democracy.

Both social representations and message frames shape the public’s understanding of issues. I conceptualize social representations as a top, overarching tier that is referenced on a second tier by message frames. I illustrate this conceptualization in the schema below, based on the Sibley’s example cited previously, and with a hypothetical representation of the marriage equality movement.

Table 2. Linking Social Representations and Message Framing

Tier 1: Social Representations	Egalitarianism		Marriage	
Tier 2: Message Frames	Civil Rights Movement	New Right of the 1980s	Pro-Gay Rights: Committed relationship	Anti-Gay Rights: One man, one woman

In Sibley’s study, the scholar examined the influence of social representations on audience’s opinions on affirmative action policy. The author found that in discussion affirmative action, study participants drew on the same values and ideas (social

representations) regardless of how the issue was framed or where the participant stood on the issue (in favor or opposed). This suggests that regardless of an individual's stance on issue, for example in favor or opposed to marriage equality, the same values are involved. This idea, as related to the gay rights movement, will be explored later. Sibley also defies other scholars by arguing that frames are limited in power and influence: "It is posited that the framing of a given social issue may influence isolated attitudes and cognitions related to specific aspects of that issue (peripheral elements); however framing should be less likely to influence relevant attitudes to the extent that they are anchored in societally elaborated associations with more general concepts and values (central and core elements)."

I have established that movements must often forfeit the authenticity of their messages in order to assimilate with mainstream, hegemonic media and gain access to the public sphere, and I have characterized this as an unbalanced transaction that unfairly costs movements. Yet Sibley argues that social representations, or hegemonic cultural pillars, are relatively immobile, and that it is only through slowly adjusting frames that a movement can incrementally shift public opinion on an issue. Therefore, in light of Sibley's study, it is plausible that movements' decisions to adopt the dominant language and compromise their message, to a degree, may not be as negative consequence as I originally thought; instead, it may be a prudent strategic decision to opt for slow but steady progress. This consideration will be further developed as I examine the strengths and weaknesses of various media platforms.

The study of framing is broad and complex, as illustrated by the multitude of types present in the literature. In recent literature, especially, the term has been used frequently and also incorrectly (Scheufele). Just as Mattoni is critical of the lack of an overarching

conceptual framework to organize research on media and movements, so does Scheufele seek to combat misunderstanding of framing by proposing a “process model” of framing research. One focus of his model is frame building, which he identifies as the study of how frames are formed and the types of frames that result from this process. A key question in the study of frame building is: “What kinds of organizational or structural factors of the media system, or which individual characteristics of journalists, can impact the framing of news content?” I seek to answer this question, albeit substituting social movements as the architects of frames rather than journalists. Edelman acknowledges that the “framing of social issues by societal groups is a result of intentional considerations ... These groups use mass media to construct opinions and reality, and their societal influence to establish certain frames of reference.”

Scheufele’s model emphasizes the value understanding the process by which frames are developed by social movements. It also provides a methodological framework for doing so. In my research, I conceptualize frames as a dependent variable that hinges on the media platform in use, the independent variable. Below, I provide an adaptation of his process model.

Table 3. Application of Scheufele’s Process Model of Framing

Inputs	Processes	Outcomes
Media platforms	→ Frame building →	Media frames

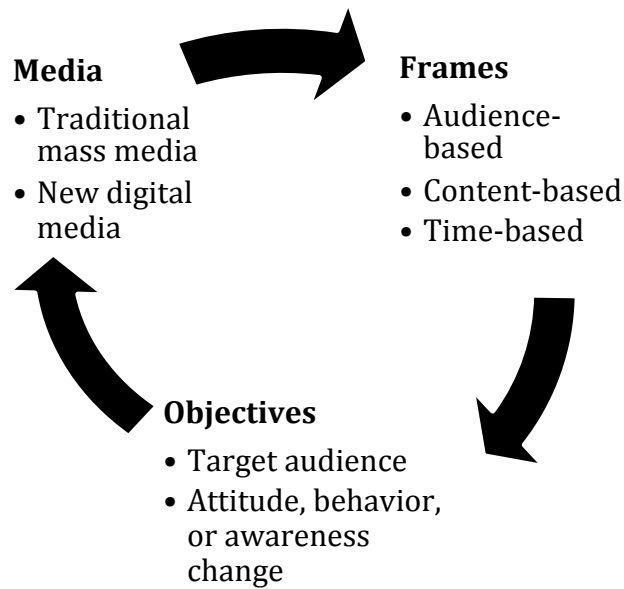
In light of his process model for understanding frames, Scheufele also proposes a number of questions worthy of research. I include below questions that are relevant to my study: (1) “What factors influence the way journalists or other societal groups frame certain issues? (2) How do these processes work and, as a result, what are the frames that

journalists use? (3) What factors influence the establishment of individual frames of references, or are individual frames simply replications of media frames? And (4) how can the audience member play an active role in constructing meaning or resisting media frames?"

Synthesis

By illuminating the role of news media as gatekeepers of the public discourse, gatekeeping theory justifies the value movements place in attracting the attention of media and gaining standing therein. It is on this foundation the complex and imbalanced relationship between movements and media is precariously perched. In response to the restrictive norms of traditional mass media and their monopoly on the public discourse, which movements seek to affect, movements often resort to compromising their initial message frames or strategically constructing new messaging frames intended to win them access to the public discourse and affect certain outcomes in their target audiences. The interrelationship of these concepts is summarized in the figure on the next page.

Figure 4. Literature Synthesis



DATA AND METHODS

Data

The focus on my research project is on associations active in North Carolina in the movement for and against LGBT rights. I expanded to include groups beyond the state, including some that operate at the national or regional level and that are thus headquartered outside of North Carolina. I focus on gay rights because highly active associations comprise each position on the issue. This high level of activity allows me to compare and contrast tactics and messaging of each camp. The entirety of rejections I received was from groups opposed to marriage equality. Out of respect for their rights, I refrained from pushing the request.

To capture the nuanced strategic decision-making processes behind message and media choices, and the factual execution of these choices, I use a blend of qualitative and

quantitative research methods. I conduct semi-structured interviews with communications directors or other chief officers of activist associations. The purpose of this method is to gather insights into the activist associations' strategic decisions and the processes behind them. A survey would be too restrictive on the responses of activist leaders; it would not foster the natural conversation that I felt would best permit the sharing of insights about which I may not have thought to inquire. In sum, I conducted seven interviews with an association leader, communications director or member of the communications staff. I felt activists in these positions would be most privy to the thought behind communication decisions, if not the originators themselves of these strategies. A description of each association is available in the appendix.

Table 4. Associations Interviewed

Scope	Pro-LGBT Rights	Anti-LGBT Rights
Local (city-county)	LGBT Center of Raleigh MeckPAC	None identified
State	Blueprint NC NC ACLU	Denied
Regional	Southern Poverty Law Center	Denied
National	Movement Advancement Project	Alliance Defending Freedom

Sampling method

In order to identify the activist leaders I wished to interview, I developed a database of existing organizations in the state and beyond that had engaged in advocacy of some form on the issue of LGBT rights and marriage equality, for and against. I started with a simple Web search of gay rights groups in North Carolina. This led me to a few websites that had made some attempt at cataloguing these groups. I combined the listings of the websites to form a list of such groups in the state.

To build a list of groups opposing marriage equality, I used two tactics: reference existing information on anti-gay groups, even if at the national level, and look to news and blog coverage of North Carolina's Amendment One campaign years prior as a snapshot of groups opposed to marriage equality. This was based on the assumption that if a group actively opposed marriage equality, it would have been actively involved in supporting passage of the amendment. I explored available blog coverage of the amendment debate, and I found several blog posts that outright identified groups that had fought to rally support of the amendment. I also looked to a Wikipedia page that had gathered a listing of groups openly opposed to marriage equality. From this list I culled groups that actively advocated on the issue, not just had a position on it.

After building a database of groups for and against marriage equality, I organized them by three qualities: scope of action, stance on the issue and perceived access to resources. I operationalized access to resources as organization staff size, funding and age.

Table 5. Organizing Qualities for Sample

Scope	Pro LGBT Rights	Anti LGBT Rights
Local (city-county)	Resources	
State		
Regional		
National		

I contacted potential participants first electronically. If I was able to identify an organization leader or communications director and their contact information, i.e. an email address or phone number, I did so. If no such information was available, I sent an invitation to the general organization email address or entered my query into a contact form on the group's website. I gathered all contact information through publicly available sources online, almost always the associations these individuals represented. Each of the seven

interviews lasted 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. In-person interviews were preferred, but phone interviews an acceptable substitute. Interviews were audio recorded unless participants indicated a different preference.

Access to resources has also long been cited as an important and defining quality of social movement organizations. I considered resources a factor that could be indicative of the communication strategies chosen by activist associations. I operationalized the concept of access to and availability of resources as staff and budget. I also took into account the age of the organization as a possible factor in the adaptation of an association to new media technologies. In an effort to acquire a sample that would meet these requisite qualities, I chose to examine the communication practices of activist associations mobilizing around the cause of same-sex marriage and homosexuality.

Relationships that were of particular interest to me included that between media and message frame, resources and strategy or social media presence, and age on social media presence.

Table 6. Independent and Dependent Variable Relationships

IV	DV
Media Platform	Message Frame
Resources	Objectives Media Platform Activity Message Frames
Age	Media Platform Activity

Methods

After transcribing each interview, I was left with close to 140 pages of data. I listened to each interview again, and I read and reread the transcripts. With each pass through the transcripts, I employed latent coding techniques to identify thematic patterns

in the interviews. Since I was seeking the nuances and complexities of activists' use of messaging and media, and the development process behind them, I used latent coding because of its usefulness in identifying the underlying or implicit meaning of a text. These implicit messages would be overlooked by a more superficial method like manifest coding (Neuman).

Prior to rereading the transcripts, I had loose coding categories in mind that were based on my reflections following each interview and key concepts that emerged in my literature review. With each pass through the transcripts, I further developed these coding categories and refined the operationalization of each concept. In my second pass through the transcripts, I looked for emergent patterns and connections, such as to what activities a discussion of institutional resources is linked. In my last pass through the transcripts, I identified exemplary cases that illustrated the broad themes that had emerged.

The six code categories I used were informed by variables of interest (see table 6) and more broadly by my research questions. I also responded to include themes that emerged in my interviews that I did not otherwise expect. The six categories included: messaging, objectives, media platforms, resources, research, and ideological right versus ideological left. More information about my operationalization of each category is available in the appendix.

RESULTS

Resources Are Critical

The availability of resources, operationalized as staff, organizational structure, budget, dues, coalitions and partnerships, influences movements' use of messaging and media and its underlying strategy. In evaluating degrees of strategizing, I conceptualize it

as investment in frame development and media practices. I operationalize the concept as message testing at high intensity and intra-organizational brainstorming or less as low intensity. Regarding organizations' communication strategies generally, encompassing use of messaging and media collectively, I identified a positive correlation between organizations that reported sufficient resources and high-intensity strategizing.

The groups that indicated they conduct polling, focus groups or other forms of message testing were those with large staff, substantial funding or were members of a well-resourced coalition of likeminded organizations. This indicates that high-intensity strategizing, which includes the development of message frames, is reserved for organizations with the greatest access to resources. Kerri, legal communications director at Alliance Defending Freedom, which has a staff of 173 full-time and 20 part-time employees, described how her organization uses polling:

"We actually, in fact, will just pay for polling, and so they'll do that across the country, and see where people are at, see what they're thinking. We'll also use polls to help guide us to see what's coming down the pipe so to speak. ... It's helpful to know what resonates with people, because when you know what resonates with someone and you have a particular message that you want to get out, you think, 'OK, this is how this resonates. How can we effectively convey our message in a way that will resonate with people?' So that's where polling and questions, you know, they become very helpful in both creating and reacting."

I also discovered a relationship between resources and priority of media platforms. Media platform priority was operationalized by asking participants to rank communication channels in order of their priority to the organization: print, broadcast, website, blog, social media, and face-to-face. Organizations reporting fewer resources ranked print and face-to-face as their top priorities. Participants explained that they viewed new media as a supplement to their broader communication strategies rather than a critical component.

Tom, communications specialist at Blueprint NC, indicated that he thinks well-placed Op-Eds are stronger contributions to building a movement than are updated websites with strategic message frames:

“There’s just not a lot of promise [on the Web]. I don’t advise people to spend time fretting about their website and doing messaging on there ... I mean if you [need to] have one it needs to be relatively dynamic and current, but if you only have a limited amount of time, I’d rather see you writing the kind of op-ed that’s going to be in [*The Raleigh News & Observer*] on Sunday than doing something on your website.”

When activists’ objective is to mobilize people, organizations that report fewer resources also prioritize face-to-face communication over using social media. Activists evaluate direct contact as a better investment of limited resources. Scott, executive director of MeckPAC, explained that MeckPAC recently used a Facebook event to announce an upcoming event and to provide information about it; at first, the event was even kept private so that it wouldn’t be “too public.” Eventually, he and his partners made the event public in order better to publicize the event, but they recognized that the number of attendees indicated on the Facebook event was not necessarily accurate. In other words, awareness of the event and nominal expression of intent to participate might not necessarily translate to action. To ensure community members took the step of actually attending the meeting, Scott and his partners turned to word-of-mouth and direct contact:

“We needed to have a secondary strategy of creating a list of all the people that had said they were going to be at that meeting, and then sending it out to our team saying, ‘OK, who on this list do you know? Can you follow up with them and get an absolute ‘yes,’ they’re going to be there? ... So we used that mechanism to mobilize people to be there, and then we used other organization’s Facebook pages to help promote the fact that there was an event.”

A summary of my findings about the implications of resource availability on messaging and media is below.

Table 7. Affect of Resources on Strategizing and Media Use

Resources	Strategizing	Priority Media Platforms
Lots	High-intensity	Relatively balanced
Few	Low-intensity	Print, direct contact

These results surprised me in two ways: First, I originally hypothesized that low-resource organizations would prefer using new media to engage the public because new media serve as basically free-entry gates to the public discourse. Instead, I found that new media were considered supplemental rather than integral. Second, an outlier in my findings about the relationship between resources and strategizing left me perplexed. Blueprint NC, an organization consisting of five staff, and only one dedicated to communications, reported that it partook in message testing. However, this anomaly was explained by its membership in a coalition of likeminded organizations. Through this coalition, the cost of testing message frames could be shared. Tom, of Blueprint NC, explains:

“We will sponsor polling or other types of research. ... Blueprint is a collaborative of about 45 partner organizations that are all progressive policy advocates...there are no dues, but they do have to sign [legal agreements] that they agree to certain principles of our work and to share information.”

Gamson emphasizes the importance that movements’ allocate more resources for working with media. Without doing so, he argues that movements’ successful interactions with media will stagnate. Consistent with Sobieraj’s claims, organizations with the greatest need for media coverage, such as the LGBT Center of Raleigh, lacked the resources necessary to make that happen. Executive director of the center, James, recounted his surprise when a media outlet recently contacted him:

“Out of nowhere, about three months ago, we were contacted by this [regional trade publication] to run a story on us, and I was kind of flabbergasted! Like what [does

the publication] get out of this? This is not a free thing – [the publication] never contacts us for anything!”

Rather than waiting for a call from a journalist, movements’ current use of resources suggests that more progress can be made in integrating new media in their communications plans, and that coalitions can serve as a useful tool for overcoming the prohibitively high cost of frame and media-based strategizing.

New Media Play By Their Own (Implicitly Biased) Rules

Although the proliferation of new media has helped democratize access to the public sphere, much like Williams prophesized, new media also constitutively pose restrictions on messaging that influence some groups more than others. Consider the difference between a traditional opinion-editorial and a tweet: An Op-Ed in *The New York Times* ranges from 400 to 1,200 words in length (The New York Times); a tweet is 140 characters or less. In this manner, the constitutive nature of new media platforms poses its own set of constraints on activist messaging. Although new media are basically financially free – a page on Facebook or Twitter requires only Internet and a device through which to access it – using these platforms isn’t without a cost to message frames.

To illustrate how new media platforms can benefit one group over another due to the nature of the groups’ message frames, I first detour to briefly to characterize distinctions in the message frames used by the pro-LGBT rights movement (and the progressive movement more broadly) and the anti-LGBT rights movement (and conservative movement more broadly). I then use the elaboration of these distinctions to demonstrate how one group can be disadvantaged on new media platforms due to conflict between the nature of its frames and the platform as a vehicle for these frames.

In four of six interviews with activists fighting for LGBT rights, participants expressed discontentment with the suitability of broadcast and social media as vehicles for their messages. This construct was operationalized as a participant referencing the incompatibility of their movement's messages with one of the aforementioned platforms within the same response. Tom from Blueprint NC explained:

“For progressive advocacy, our messaging tends to be more nuanced than conservative messaging. It's harder for us to tell our stories with a thirty second TV ad, so for that reason, print has always been very special for progressive messaging. The decline of print is making that more of a challenge for the kind of stories we want to tell.”

Tom, echoing three other leaders of the movement for LGBT rights, argued that progressive messages are complicated. Unlike the conservative movement, as one pro-LGBT rights activist purported, the progressive movement does not “oversimplify” its messages, he said. Jeff, communications director at the North Carolina Justice Center, corroborated Tom's observation:

“Certainly the flaw in progressive organizations' messaging, if I could make a broad generalization, is that our messages are more complex than the other side's messages. ... The other side's messages have a step on ours because they're very simple, they're very declarative, they're 100 percent – there's no room for doubt.”

The representative from an anti-LGBT rights organization that I interviewed articulated statements about the nature of the conservative movement's messaging that were largely consistent with Tom and Jeff's assertions. Kerri of Alliance Defending Freedom, acknowledged the conservative movement's use of simple message frames. She justified this practice as a method to get people's attention:

“Of course we're going to create catchy headlines because that's what gets people's attention, but we really aim to be factually based, to not be alarmist, to frame things in a way that will make people understand the big picture and what this means for them personally ... [We want people understand to] it's not just a niche thing

pertaining to particular set of people or an organization, but it really applies to everybody, constitutionally speaking and as an American.”

In Kerri’s characterization of message frames used by the conservative movement, she also revealed another distinction between conservative and progressive message frames as a whole: the referencing of value-oriented social representations. Above, Kerri explains that the Alliance Defending Freedom is intentional about tying framed messages to the ‘big picture,’ or fundamental social representations like the Constitution and the American identity. In contrast, Tom articulated that the progressive movement as a whole struggles with moving beyond statistical policy jargon to values-based message frames that resonate with the public:

“[Progressives] are good at reciting statistics and talking about their issues. They’re good at calling people out and calling legislators out when they misstep. But they’re not that good at being aspirational with a broader vision.”

He encourages partner organizations to make values-based message frames the priority, no matter the medium. However, as Tom explained, a nuanced, thorough argument for a policy position, such as marriage equality, inherently cannot be compressed into a sound bite or tweet. For this reason, pro-gay rights groups consistently justified their preference for Op-Eds and letters to the editor as vehicles for their claims. Simply because of the architecture of Facebook and Twitter as compact message vehicles, the LGBT rights movement and progressive movements more generally indicated that they found themselves alienated from the use of this new portal into the public discourse. Conversely, the anti-LGBT rights movement stated that they found that social media to be highly suitable platforms for their succinct, value-based claims. According to the activists’ testimonies, in this manner, the proliferation of social media has not democratized access

to the public discourse, but in some ways has rendered the playing field uneven. However, a messaging expert in the movement for LGBT rights said that the new media users' exponential appetite for photo and video is promising as a vehicle for the LGBT rights movement to communicate emotional appeals and frames.

Traditional Mass Media Reign King

Despite the emergence of new media, activists continue to conceive of traditional mass media as the primary gate to the public discourse. Activity on social media is widespread. Of activist groups interviewed, all but one was active on social media, operationalized as having a page on a Facebook or Twitter. (The organization that was not active on social media operates as a behind-the-scenes consultant. In this context, this organization does not need outward facing channels.) At the other end of the spectrum, one group had 24 social media channels. But what do gay rights and anti-gay rights activists use these social media, Web pages and blogs for? In the following table, I summarize how activist groups use new media platforms. After exploring each in depth, I explain why despite these uses, traditional mass media continue to be most valued by activists fighting for and against LGBT rights.

Table 8. Activists' Use of New Media Platforms

Platform	Pro-LGBT Rights	Anti-LGBT Rights
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing relevant information to movement supporters • Organizing for events, although not effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing relevant information to movement supporters • Sharing stories to movement supporters • Promoting video news releases, occasionally
Twitter	Driving mainstream traditional media coverage	Communicating with general public
Web	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cataloguing information • Enabling online donation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cataloguing information • Enabling online donation

Blog	Sharing customized, targeted message frames with journalists and movement supporters	Sharing customized, targeted message frames with journalists and movement supporters
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Both pro- and anti-LGBT rights organizations stated that they use Facebook as a platform for sharing “relevant information” to movement supporters, for example, upcoming legislation that would affect the LGBT community or, conversely, that would infringe upon religious freedom, a frame used by some anti-LGBT rights groups. Pro-LGBT rights groups were unique in their attempts to use Facebook to mobilize supporters for an event. (The effectiveness of the platform for this action was documented earlier.) The anti-LGBT rights group was unique in its emphasis on Facebook as a tool to keep supporters engaged and primed for mobilization, but not for the organizing and executing the mobilization itself. Below, Kerri from Alliance Defending Freedom explains her organization’s use of Facebook:

“Most of what we do [on Facebook] is just to make people aware of what’s going on so they remain vigilant, and they can maybe get involved, or they can always donate, that kind of thing.”¹

It is also interesting to situate anti-LGBT rights groups’ use of Facebook in context of the findings from an October 2014 study released by Pew Research Center. The study found that, “when on Facebook, [consistent conservatives] are more likely than those in other ideological groups to hear political opinions that are in line with their own views.” This finding reinforces the power of anti-LGBT rights organizations’ use of Facebook to share

¹ Kerri explained that one goal of using Facebook, in addition to raising awareness, is also to keep supporters “vigilant.” This is consistent with descriptions of conservative message frames as values-based, sometimes stories of betrayal. To be “vigilant” implies being wary of an aggressor.

information and keep supporters engaged: The message frames disseminated to ideological conservatives likely exist in a sphere of other matching message frames, reducing conflict and rendering the audience more receptive to activists' claims (Uskul and Oyserman).

Every activist organization interviewed had a website. Every participant echoed the use of his or her organization websites as "filing cabinets" for information, including descriptions of the organization itself, catalogs of publications and issue-specific resources for the public. Websites also contained event information and calls for donations via an online portal. Three organizations had one or more active blogs, operationalized as being updated with a new post at least once per month. Activists stated that the use of these platforms was more specialized, by which I mean the blogs were developed and maintained for specific audiences, movement supporters and members of the media, and contained strategically framed messages. For example, Jeff explained that the Justice Center's blog was developed to reach opinion editors and movement supporters. He said that it is updated regularly with op-eds designed for publication in newspapers throughout the state, which are also distributed to these outlets via email. Alliance Defending Freedom also has a blog and website designed exclusively for members of the media, containing digital media kits and white papers detailing current cases and litigation, said Kerry from Alliance Defending Freedom. She describes the purpose below:

"If it's a reporter [accessing the website], they can grab some of the pictures of our clients, or they can grab some video footage. We have sound bites for each case. So our website is really designed to be a resource for people who are writing about our stories or broadcasting our stories, so there's a lot of stuff they can grab and tools they can use, things like that."

Regarding Twitter, activists fighting for LGBT rights emphasized the power of using the platform to drive coverage in mainstream media. The first way they accomplish this is

through building buzz around their issue or event, they said. Reflective of Kreiss's findings, participants indicated that raising the level of conversation on an issue on Twitter is an economical way to drive journalists to write about the organizations' issues. Jeff from the North Carolina Justice Center explains why this tactic is used:

"I think even if we don't have time to make all the personal phone calls to every reporter in North Carolina, if we and our allies are able to tweet and retweet that content and keep that buzz going, even if reporters don't click those links, I think that influence matters, that sort of passive contact."

When journalists see an issue or hashtag populating their news feeds on Twitter, they perceive the issue to be hot and relevant, according to activists. This translates to the conclusion that audiences want to read about the issue, they said. Activists stated that journalists then write about the issues that activists champion and sometimes reference content published by the organization on Twitter. Through this practice, activists felt that they ultimately increase visibility of their issue and sometimes see their frames published in traditional mainstream media.

Pro-LGBT rights activists also said that they used Twitter to target specific journalists through strategic tweets or direct outreach via the platform. Emma from the Southern Poverty Law Center explains how she recently used Twitter to contact journalists because she lacked a way to contact them directly via phone or email:

"I wanted to make sure we had major press covering [our case], but I couldn't find our emails, because the tools we use to get journalists' contact info doesn't cover [certain publications.] So I asked somebody from our Web team to tweet at or direct message the journalist I was trying to reach about getting an email [address] to pitch to. So we were able to do that and use that to connect with the journalists, because journalists are really active on Twitter by and large."

As this example illustrates, some activist organizations lack resources that provide them direct access to traditional mainstream media. Activists believe new media to allow them to

reach journalists directly, and the public discourse for which they are the gatekeepers. Given the perceived utility of Twitter for reaching journalists and driving coverage of their preferred frames, representatives of four of six pro-LGBT rights groups identified journalists as the organizations' primary audience on Twitter.

This example illustrates a broader theme: Activists conceive of new media as supplements to traditional mass media, not replacements. Evidence of this theme is manifested throughout my results. In this instance, pro-LGBT rights activists used Twitter as a method to gain access to traditional mainstream media, in addition to traditional pitches via phone and email, advisories, news releases and press conference. Activists did not perceive value in using Twitter to reach the general public. I also demonstrated that activists create blogs and or specialized websites to house messages framed uniquely for members of the media. Earlier, I explained that low-resource organizations prioritize traditional mass media over new media, and pro-LGBT rights activists prefer newspapers to new media as an effective vehicle for their message frames.

Participants representing activist organizations consistently attributed the highest priority to developing and engaging in media tactics targeting traditional mass media. The following case exemplifies this finding: Scott from MeckPAC, a low-resource organization, neither indicated that his organization infrequently uses Facebook nor considers it integral to their communications strategy. Yet when confronted with a city council ordinance that would negatively affect the LGBT community in Charlotte, he and his team organized a planning session that convened progressive activist leaders in Charlotte to research and develop message frames and media tactics to advocate their position on the issue through traditional mass media. They ultimately produced a media kit and identified strategic

spokespersons from the community who would be available for interviews with members of the media.

“We felt it was important because we knew that there would be opposition to what we wanted to do. There’s a lot of misinformation out there about who our community is. ... We wanted to be prepared, to have those messages ahead of time...So we knew that this [ordinance] was big enough that we needed to have some kind of preparation rather than just reacting to a reporter’s question.”

Rather than using new media to combat misinformation and to advocate for LGBT community, MeckPAC mobilized key leaders in the community to invest time in developing media tactics and message frames exclusively directed to influence traditional mass media. Whether an activist organization seeks to leverage pressure on policymakers, change opinions, counter misinformation or mobilize supporters, regardless of resources or stance on LGBT rights, participants indicated that traditional mass media continue to be the preferred method for accessing the public discourse.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The dynamism of the relationship between social movements and the media is well documented, and the evolution of new media has only complicated their storied bond. My research has further identified the role that the availability of resources has on movements’ use of messaging and media. I also found that new media have not produced the idyllically democratizing affect on access to public discourse as I originally hypothesized. Lastly, I found that activists continue to prioritize traditional mass media over new media in spite of the platforms’ unique opportunities. After reviewing these findings and elaborating their significance, I will discuss the methodological limitations of my study and share suggestions for future research.

Through my conversations with leaders and staff of pro- and anti-LGBT rights organizations, I learned that availability of resources influences their use of message frames and media. The greater the resources an organization has, the more it invests in the development of strategic frames and media tactics. Representatives of organizations with fewer resources indicated a preference for pursuit of traditional media coverage when resources are limited.

Though somewhat democratizing, the nature of new media platforms also poses restrictions on messaging. New media democratize access to traditional mainstream media. The cost of a social media account or website is marginal, and activists stated that social media influence was leveraged in an effort to drive journalists' coverage of an issue or event. But when it comes to communication with the general public, activists stated that new media platforms suit conservative messages more than progressives'. Activists pro- and anti-LGBT rights described conservative messaging as more concise and value-laden frames inherently better suited for character-restrictive vehicles like Twitter. On the other hand, participants said progressive messages tend to be more complex and technical, rendering them better suited to an Op-Ed or letter to the editor.

Lastly, despite the emergence of new media, activists continue to conceive of traditional mass media as the primary gate to the public discourse. Activists continue to value traditional mass media coverage most and accordingly direct most of their efforts toward this, even their use of new media. Whether faced with a lack of resources, confronted with new media's ineffectuality for conveying a movement's message frames, or even empowered with a thriving social media presence, social movement organizations directed their efforts toward one overriding goal: coverage in traditional mainstream

media. Because they identified coverage in traditional mainstream media as the ultimate focus of their efforts, this indicates a continued preference and evaluation of traditional mass media as the best access point to the public discourse and objective attainment.

Because I identified an association between greater organizational resources and greater investment in strategy development, which Gamson correlated with enhanced movement relationships with the media, this further suggests more success. In short, success is restricted to movements with access to significant resources. Conversely, social movement organizations with limited resources continue to channel what few resources they have into communicating their preferred frames through traditional media – an expensive endeavor. As the traditional mass media’s prevalence, and with it power, continues to decline, social movement organizations with few resources will find it continually more difficult to be successful – unless they adapt to the changing media landscape. This threatens social movements’ ability to enter the public discourse as an outsider and affect change.

Should these findings be generalizable, activists’ observation that new media constitutively favor of conservative message frames poses an alarming danger to the marketplace of ideas on which the American democracy is built.² As new media become more important, this could suggest that progressive arguments will be heard and understood less by the general public. The feasibility of this extreme scenario merits

² The concept “marketplace of ideas” originated with John Stuart Mill, though Justice William O. Douglas coined this exact phrasing in 1953. It is an analogy to the economic concept of the free market, and it asserts that free competition of ideas in public discourse is imperative to a healthy democracy.

further study. Regardless, the idea that media platforms can constitutively favor some movements' frames over others is an inherently interesting consideration.

Finally, my findings about activists' continued prioritization of traditional mass media inform an update of the schemata I provided in the introduction of this paper, seen below. Social movements' ongoing enamor of traditional mass media, despite the well documented benefits of new media, suggests that social movements may be overlooking or not investing enough in new media as a route to the public discourse.

Figure 5. Traditional Relationship Between Movements and Media Gatekeepers



Figure 6. Hypothetical Alternative Relationship Between Movements and Media

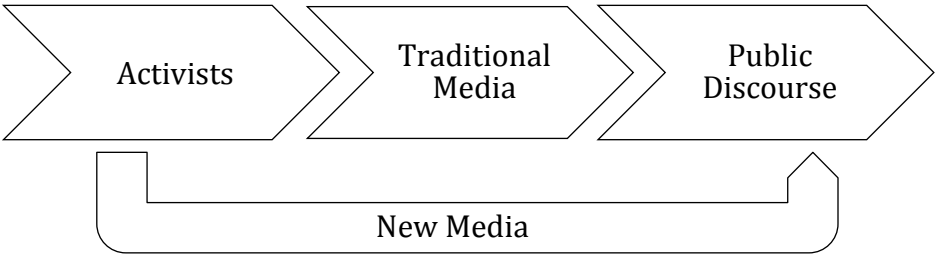
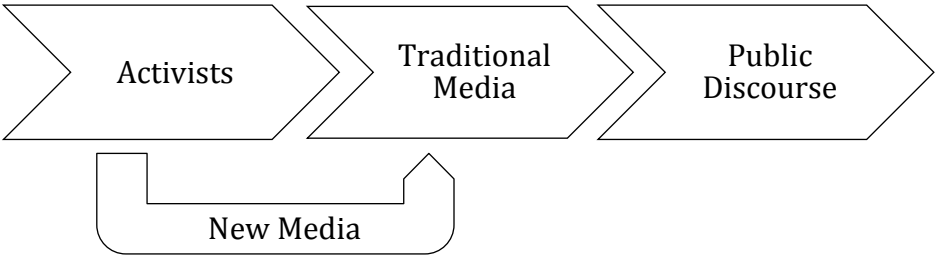


Figure 7. Results on Relationship Between Movements and Media



To situate my findings in context of the literature that informed my research, I will relate my results to the aforementioned theory. While gatekeeping theory dictates the control wielded by traditional mass media over the public discourse, recent scholarship suggests that the development of new media has eroded the existence of such gatekeepers; because of the media's now multi-axial nature, traditional media have lost their stature as the public's agenda-setters and issue-framers (Williams). Moreover, the breadth of interactive platforms could function as virtual small public spheres, fostering a unique and beneficial environment for organizing collective action (Fraser). However, the results of this study indicated that traditional media still clutch considerable influence over the public discourse, and instead new media are simply a new platform for attempts to manipulate traditional media. The utility of digital platforms for organizing collective action is also inconclusive, as illustrated by the MeckPAC case, in which direct contact was ultimately used to organize successful collective action.

Mattoni's framework furnished a new integrated method for conceptualizing the interaction between social movements and media. Categorizing activity as media practices, mediation or mediatization, she also emphasized the value of a comprehensive look at movements' engagement with multiple platforms rather than vacuously focusing on only one platform, which is not reflective of today's multi-axial media landscape and which produces a technological fascination and one-medium bias. The results of this study are a testament to the value of a comprehensive examination of the interaction of movements and media, as I would have been unable to conduct such a comparison and infer its significance otherwise. My study examined media practices and variance in mediation

across platforms, and provided grounds for making predictions about the shape of mediatization in the future.

Scheufele's process model of frame building oriented my research questions and established the value of examining the process by which frames are constructed. While I found his model to be a useful schema of the complex relationships at play in message framing, I argue that he oversimplified the process by omitting the influence of third party actors. (He focused on journalists and audiences specifically.) Gamson identified the role that third parties have in news making, rendering it important not to overlook them in the frame building process. I also suggest that Scheufele's model be updated to account for the introduction of new media to the news making and frame building processes.

My original research questions were the following:

1. How has the relationship between activists and mass media changed since the rise of new media?
2. If activists interact with new media in addition to mass media, how do they differentiate tactics?
3. How do activists develop strategies for new and mass media?

For the first question, I expected to find that new media would render traditional mass media unimportant to social movements. Instead, I found that movements' continue to exhibit their traditional dependence on mass media to access the public discourse. The primary impact of new media on the relationship between activists and mass media has been regarding how activists access the public discourse: New media provide new tactics through which activists believe they can interact with and influence traditional mass media, such as by raising the dialogue on Twitter, populating key hashtags or using the

platform to reach journalists directly. In this sense, it has democratized access to the mass media, historically more reserved for organizations with preexisting relationships and legitimacy with traditional mass media. New media have not, however, democratized access to the public discourse.

Regarding the second question, I anticipated that activists use different tactics depending on the medium with which they interact. This hypothesis held true: When using new media, activists prioritize engagement with either the media or movement supporters. When interacting with traditional media, activists' audiences are policymakers or the "movable middle," or the segment of the population who are persuadable on an issue. To the degree that activists vary tactics depending on the audience with which they're interacting and that on these platforms activists interact with different audiences, then it was affirmed that there is tactical variation. I also expected activists to employ micro-target audiences. This hypothesis was supported by the existence of blogs and Web pages strategically developed for distinct audiences, such as Alliance Defending Freedom's Web page designed and maintained especially for members of traditional mass media. However, the intensity of this variation was not as great as I forecasted.

My study illuminated aspects of the processes by which activists develop strategies for new and mass media: I found that activists use intra-organizational brainstorming to develop frames and media tactics for important projects, and some organizations even conduct focus groups, polling and other forms of message testing, indicating a high degree of professionalization. Groups employed economies of scale by sharing the costs and results of messaging research across coalitions of likeminded organizations. However, results also indicated that message frames and tactics for social media rarely result from

strategizing comparable to that devoted to traditional mass media. Interviews also revealed that resources are an important factor influencing the degree to which activists can invest in strategic development of frames and media tactics.

The results of this study are limited by the small size of the sample and its bias. I interviewed leaders or communications staff that represented seven organizations total. Though the length of my interviews with each participant was far from inconsequential, the small sample size does bring into question the reliability of my data and the generalizability of my findings. This sample was also saddled with unfortunate bias: only one participant represented an organization that advocated against LGBT rights. This was not for lack of trying – I was denied by every other anti-LGBT rights organization that I had identified for inclusion in my sample. Perhaps given more time, another researcher would have better luck. Nonetheless, this bias means that the voices and experiences of activists in the anti-LGBT rights movement are not represented, and my corresponding claims are not necessarily generalizable as representative of all anti-LGBT rights organizations.

A final nuance of my study lies in the missions of the organizations interviewed: although all were active in the movements for and against LGBT rights, only three were dedicated exclusively to this cause. This is a weakness and strength. My data may have differed should I have interviewed organizations dedicated only to fighting for or against LGBT rights; representatives of these organizations could have spoken with more authority on the frames and tactics unique to the movements surrounding that specific issue. However, because of the breadth of the organizations' goals and activities, this also made the results more generalizable to the differences in frames and media tactics used by the

ideological right and left more generally, which I identified as a goal of my study in response recent literature.

In the following table, I provide a summary of my findings about pro- and anti-LGBT rights activists in context of framing theory. I intend this to serve as a jumping off point – a tool for future examination of variance in message frames based on platform or audience, contingent upon a better operationalization of these constructs. Though my study introduced variations in frames depending on media and ideology, this topic would benefit from future study that is rooted in a schema that better quantifies these constructs, thus facilitating greater validity, reliability and identification of patterns and trends therein. As suggested by its organization below, I identify the independent variables for future study as ideological stance and medium in use. Within each cell, I then suggest identifying the objective, content frame (Gerhards & Rucht), temporal frame (Kinder, Sibley) and audience. The abbreviations indicate: “O” as objective; “CF” as content frame; “TF” as temporal frame; and “A” as target audience. I conceptualize objective as three options: awareness change, attitude change and behavior change. Audience is operationalized as media, policymakers, “fellow travelers” (i.e. supporters of the movement), the movable middle and the general public. For information on the conceptualization of content and temporal frames, refer to table 1. “Unclear” indicates insufficient data for making an evaluation.

Table 8. Schema for Future Research

Medium	Pro-LGBT Rights	Anti-LGBT Rights
Facebook	O: Awareness CF: Unclear TF: Unclear A: Fellow travelers	O: Awareness CF: Unclear TF: Unclear A: Fellow travelers
Twitter	O: Awareness, behavior CF: Diagnostic	O: Awareness CF: Diagnostic

	TF: Short-term issue-related A: Media	TF: Both A: General public
Web	O: Awareness, behavior CF: Diagnostic, prognostic TF: Unclear A: General public	O: Awareness, behavior CF: Diagnostic, prognostic TF: Unclear A: General public
Blog/ ad hoc	O: Awareness CF: Diagnostic, prognostic TF: Short-term issue-related A: Fellow travelers, media	O: Awareness CF: Unclear TF: Unclear A: Fellow travelers, media
Print	O: Attitude CF: Diagnostic, prognostic TF: Long-term global political A: Movable middle, policymakers	O: Attitude CF: Diagnostic, prognostic TF: Long-term global political A: Movable middle, policymakers
Face-to-face	O: Attitude, behavior CF: Motivational TF: Unclear A: Fellow travelers, movable middle	O: CF: Unclear TF: A:

For future research, I recommend the use of content analysis in order to quantifiably examine the variation of frames by platforms and ideology, contingent upon sound operationalization of these constructs. It is my hope that this study can form the basis or in some manner inform such operationalization. Content analysis would also enhance reliability and validity, better elucidating variation in movements' frames. I also suggest further study of the veracity of the finding of new media biases. This finding – that activists perceive new media platforms to constitutively favor frames used by socially conservative movements – was entirely unexpected. Its importance to the core of the American democracy inherently qualifies it as important to better understand, and I hope it to be proven incorrect. If its reality were confirmed, then future study would do well investigate how it can be overcome. Perhaps case studies of exceptions to the rule, i.e. progressive organizations that succeed in conveying their frames via new media, could be the starting point for such research.

Media and movements are evolving. Today, 87 percent of Americans get their news through television and 61 percent through print newspapers. But those statistics are changing: 51 percent also report that they use the Web and 44 percent social media to keep up with current events. The pro- and anti-LGBT rights movements are ongoing, though it seems nearer to resolution at least on the matter of marriage equality. Regardless, this study, in combination with years of scholarship, indicate that movements irrefutably need media, and the evolution of new media is and will continue to change the way movements communicate – whether they're ready or not. Movements' success may depend on their ability to adapt to these changes, to capitalize on advantages they provide and to identify ways to overcome the platforms' associated obstacles. Continued monitoring of when and how movements adapt will be important to the refinement of frameworks proposed by Mattoni and Scheufele and to scholars of sociology, political science and mass communication overall.

APPENDIX

Organization Database

Table 9. Organization Database

Scope	Pro-LGBT Rights	Anti-LGBT Rights
Local (city-county)	LGBT Center of Raleigh MeckPAC Lesbian & Gay Center of Charlotte	None identified
State	Blueprint NC NC ACLU Equality North Carolina	Return America Christian Action League North Carolina Family Policy Council
Regional	Southern Poverty Law Center	ProtectMarriage.com
National	Movement Advancement Project Human Rights Campaign	Alliance Defending Freedom Focus on the Family

Descriptions of Interviewed Associations

- LGBT Center of Raleigh: A resource hub for the LGBT community dedicated to community and individual development and advocacy for LGBT rights.
- MeckPAC: a Mecklenburg County nonprofit that mobilizes supporters to vote for public officials who favor LGBT rights and that advocates on issues affecting the LGBT community.
- Blueprint NC: The backbone organization of a coalition of 41 ideologically progressive organizations in North Carolina. It provides civic and communications engagement strategies to its partners.
- NC ACLU: The North Carolina affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, which uses litigation to defend individual liberty.
- Southern Poverty Law Center: A regionally-based nonprofit with a national reach that leverages civic education, litigation and advocacy to promote equality.
- Movement Advancement Project: A think tank that provides research and analysis on effective communication strategies for advocating for LGBT rights.
- Alliance Defending Freedom: A legal organization that uses strategy, training, funding and litigation to protect religious freedom.

Interview Questionnaire

How long has your organization been around?

- *Probing for history and tradition.*
- *Probing for a possible correlation between age and organizational adaptability to new media, impacted by long-established strategies or tactics, etc.*

How many staff does your organization have?

- *Probing for this as a matter of resources – simple manpower could impact how much time they have to spend on communications.*

How is the staff organized?

- *Probing for organizational structure and hierarchy.*
- *Probing for number of people on staff that work on communications.*

Take me through a typical day.

- *Probing for how time is spent, i.e. a lot or a little on communications, or even further on how communications time is spent.*

Can you tell me in your own words about your organization's goals?

- *Probing for how communication strategies may be in line with these goals.*
- *Probing for how messaging and media are conceptualized as instrumental in achieving these goals.*

Who is your organization trying to reach? To whom are you trying to tell your story?

- *Probing for leadership's understanding of audience.*
- *Probing for how this may correlate with media and messaging strategies used.*

What is the story you're trying to tell?

- *Probing for what exactly their message is, or even if they have a defined one.*
- *Probing for if they've developed a certain language or framework for their message.*
- *Can probe further for why they settled on that, how it came to be, etc.*

Does your organization use social media? How? Why?

- *Probing for how it may perceive advantages or disadvantages of social media compared to traditional platforms.*
- *Probing for if they find it better suited to some messages than others.*
- *Probing for value of broad reach versus high engagement.*
- *Probing for how organizational structure plays role and autonomy of communicators, e.g. who has access to social media accounts, does someone approve messages, etc.*

How does your organization use its website? Why?

- *Probing for similar goals under social above.*

How important is it to your organization to [X]. Why?

- Get coverage in the newspaper?
- Get coverage on TV?
 - *Probing for value of traditional media and why.*
 - *Probing for difference in conceptualization of opportunities provided by traditional media versus those by new media.*

How did you decide on these strategies?

- *Probing for process behind strategic communication decisions.*

Do you feel like they're working?

- *Probing for how they evaluate success of tactics.*
- *Probing for how they perceive tactics, messages or platforms work for some goals but not for others.*
- *Probing for how tactics fit into achieving their goals.*

Do you think you reach out to people in ways similar to other organizations? Why or why not?

- *Probing for their own self-awareness and perception of their tactics, including in context of larger field of activism.*

Coding Categories

For the purpose of guiding the analysis of interview transcripts, I conceptualized the variables of interest in six categories. Each category and its operationalization are below.

- **Messaging:** Participant references use of framing, messaging, language or storytelling.
- **Objectives:** Participant discusses goals or mission of organization or intention driving a strategy or tactic.
- **Media Platforms:** Participant references traditional mass media (e.g. print, broadcast) and new media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, websites, blogs) and correlated tactics (e.g. press conference).
- **Resources:** Participant discloses information relating to staff, organizational structure, budget, dues, coalitions or partnerships.
- **Research:** Participant cites use or absence of polling, opinion research, message testing, opposition research or focus groups.
- **Ideological Right versus Left:** Participant makes explicit generalization about obstacles or strengths of one or both hemispheres of the ideological spectrum.

Summarizing Pros and Cons of Media for Movements

In the table below, I summarize the pros and cons of media platforms as perceived by activists, and I suggest how activists evaluate the success of message frames and media tactics.

Table 10. Summarizing the Pros and Cons of Traditional and New Media

	Traditional Mass Media	New Media
Pro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, elite audience • Controls public discourse • Powerful: Possesses ability to amplify an issue, shape a movement identity and mobilize individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratizes access to the public discourse • Provides virtual, interactive, smaller public spheres • Alternative to cultural clash with traditional media in which preferred framing is forfeited
Con	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement cultures often conflict with mainstream media • Movements compromise their messages in the hope of gaining access to the public discourse • Restrictive journalistic norms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can function as just another route to influencing mainstream traditional media • Platforms constitutively benefit some movements' claims over others
Evaluating Success	How well preferred meanings and frames are doing in the media	Metrics for reach and engagement

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