

THE EVOLUTION OF A NEW CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT
ANALYSIS OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE NEWS ARTICLES FROM
1993 TO 2008

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS – SOCIOLOGY

by

Kellie A. Cochran, B.S.

San Marcos, Texas
August 2011

THE EVOLUTION OF A NEW CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT
ANALYSIS OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE NEWS ARTICLES FROM
1993 TO 2008

Committee Members Approved:

Dr. Patti Giuffre, Chair

Dr. Deborah Harris

Dr. Audrey McKinney

Approved:

J. Michael Willoughby
Dean of the Graduate College

COPYRIGHT

by

Kellie Amanda Cochran

2011

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Kellie A. Cochran, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my committee chair, Dr. Giuffre, without whose support, guidance, and patience this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Harris and Dr. McKinney, for the continued patience and good will they offered during this the course of this thesis. I am also very grateful to Kay Newling and Jaime Hornbuckle who have both been essential in providing encouragement in times of confusion and panic. Finally, I would like to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of Sociology at Texas State University-San Marcos for providing a welcoming academic atmosphere in which students may flourish.

This manuscript was submitted on June 20, 2011.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT	vii
 CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	5
<u>The Polity</u>	11
<u>The Church</u>	12
<u>The Family</u>	13
<u>Gaps in Literature</u>	14
<u>Theoretical Frameworks</u>	14
3. METHODOLOGY	19
4. FINDINGS.....	27
<u>The Early Years: 1993-1995</u>	28
<u>Stand Up and Be Counted: 1996-1999</u>	33
<u>The New Millennium: 2000 – 2004</u>	43
<u>After Legitimization: 2005-2008</u>	52
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY	65

ABSTRACT

**THE EVOLUTION OF A NEW CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT
ANALYSIS OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE NEWS ARTICLES FROM
1993 TO 2008**

by

Kellie A. Cochran, B.S.

Texas State University-San Marcos

August 2011

SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: PATTI GIUFFRE

Beginning with a historical decision in the Hawaii Supreme Judicial Court in 1993, the same-sex marriage movement has undergone many changes in identity formation and argument frames. By tracing these frames and arguments of the same-sex marriage debate through four major newspapers over a span of 16 years, I was able to follow religious, political, and family issues that arose within the larger movement. The findings indicate that the same-sex marriage debate changed over time for both the supports and the opponents. For opponents, arguments that began as an emphasis on traditional morality shift to arguments about religious persecution and the decline of American society. For supporters, arguments initially framed as egalitarian evolved into collective minority identity with emphasis on American principles of basic civil and human rights.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Sociologists have historically documented the importance of social movements in the United States (e.g. Tilly 1978; Giddens 1985). In a current campaign for social change, the gay rights movement is promoting equal rights and legal protections for homosexual American citizens. Much like the Civil Rights Movement, the gay rights movement represents a minority population, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals (D'Emilio 1986). Because minority populations often suffer discrepancies in benefits and legal rights in comparison to non-minority populations, the conditions of and justifications for those discrepancies are of concern to sociologists, political scientists, and activists alike. More importantly, the current differences in federal and state protections for gays and lesbians underscore the notion that privilege and opportunity is limited to those who represent majority characteristics and values in American society.

The gay rights movement campaigns for many issues ranging from adoption restrictions, discriminatory workplace policies, gays in the military, and state sodomy laws. Perhaps the most widely publicized cause of the movement has been the effort to legitimate and legalize same-sex marriage. It should be noted here that the phrase "same-sex marriage" is often used synonymously with term "gay marriage." Some scholars argue that same-sex marriage is the appropriate phrasing because it is more inclusive and that the term "gay marriage" denotes an unequal

or lower status than different-sex marriages (Josephson 2005). Additionally, “gay marriage” is the term traditionally used by the opposition as part of the rhetorical frame against same-sex legitimization (Josephson 2005). For the purpose of this thesis, the phrase “same-sex marriage” will be used whenever referring to marriages between two men or two women.

Same-sex marriage is a controversial issue in the United States and has been widely debated since 1993, when the Supreme Judicial Court of Hawaii ruled the denial of marriage licenses to same-sex couples as discriminatory and in contradiction to the state’s constitution. Although the Hawaii case continued to be argued in the lower courts through numerous appeals until 1998, the higher court’s action prompted a series of state-level “Defense of Marriage Acts,” or DOMAs across the country (Adam 2003). These state-level acts did not outlaw same-sex marriages but rather allowed states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages performed and legally recognized in other states. In 1996, before any legalization of same-sex marriage had occurred, a federal DOMA was passed by both the House of Representatives and the United States Senate and signed by President Bill Clinton; effectively excluding same-sex couples from obtaining the approximately 1,100 federal rights, privileges, and protections for themselves, their spouses, and their children [U.S. Code: *Defense of Marriage Act*, 110 Stat. 2419 (1996)].

On one side of the debate, opponents of same-sex marriage believe that allowing two women or two men to legally marry contradicts traditional American family values as well as firmly held religious beliefs. On the other, supporters believe that denying the rights and benefits to couples based on gender and sexual

orientation is discriminatory and condemns homosexuals to second-class citizenry. Because of the polarizing nature of the issue, opponents and supporters rely on various societal factors and social forces to legitimize their claims, including media. Contained within their use of media, participants of the debate commonly invoke images that resonate with their audiences, such as the government, religion, and the institution of the family. It is through these shared social institutions that both the opposition and the support frame their arguments and attempt to validate their claims.

Through a content analysis of articles selected from four major newspapers spanning from 1993 to 2008, this thesis evaluates how the two opposing sides of the same-sex marriage movement are represented in the newspaper media and what statements are made to reporters by participants of the movement to legitimize their respective views. I examine three primary research questions in the sample. First, how do newspapers report on the culture of the same-sex marriage debate including rallies, protests, and public campaigns? Both the opposition and the supporters of same-sex marriage utilize these methods to raise awareness for their respective sides of the debate. When news reporters report on these activities they choose what descriptions and quotes to include in their stories, effectively setting the tone for the campaigns. Secondly, how does each side of the movement use the social institutions of religion, the polity, and the family, to solidify their claims either for or against same-sex marriage? When approached by the news media, supporters and opponents attempt to convey the messages they consider important to their cause in order to validate their own message or debunk the claims of the of

the opposing side. Finally, how has the tone of the campaigns both for and against the legal recognition of same-sex marriage changed over the course of 16 years?

Since news reporting of the topic has increased in frequency since 1993 (Pan, Meng, and Zhou 2010) along with advancing legislation, opponents and supporters have had to both frame new arguments and provide reactionary answers when their own views have been called into question. Examining what changes have been made in both campaigns over the years provides an insight into how cultural changes may have influenced the arguments made.

The use of print media may seem outdated in the age of the Internet. However, researchers assert that the demographics of newspaper readership influence how the media report news (Zeidenstein 1983). Groseclose and Milyo (2005) stated that within the federal government, the news media is commonly referred to as being the fourth branch of government since it is a powerful force in shaping public opinion. Newspapers are not only used to inform Americans about relevant issues, but are also products of news corporations. Newspapers are run as profit-making businesses and news entities have incentives to format stories in ways that will be most likely to improve their reputations and increase future profits (Gentzkow and Shapiro 2006). The implications of these findings serve to verify that newspapers continue to remain relevant in shaping the discourse of social concerns.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Americans often rely on the use of core values to determine their own opinions and beliefs about political issues (Feldman 1988; McClosky and Zaller 1984; Rokeach 1973). In a study of how political knowledge shapes the impact of an individual's values on their opinion about a political issue, Brewer (2003) found that the formation of public opinion depends upon whether the public debate provides the audience with separate and competing interpretations of a value, rather than only one seemingly indisputable analysis. When forming opinions about political issues, individuals consider a range of "potentially ambiguous or contradictory considerations" (Brewer 2003: 175). These considerations, or value frames, are often used by opposing sides of a social issue and are commonly passed down to the public through mass media (Jacoby 2000; Kinder and Sanders 1996).

Value frames consist of key words and phrases designed to lead the audience in a specific direction when processing information (Hornig 1990). When an issue is presented to the public, each side relies on shared images and commonly held beliefs to build the rhetoric of their argument. Movement leaders use these rhetorical frames as a method of both defining their position and distancing themselves from their opponents (Elder and Cobb). In general, framing is a way to emphasize certain experiences and beliefs over others (Andsager 2000).

Within the media, value frames exist in many areas including newspaper articles, television news broadcasts, and other informational transmissions (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 1989; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Patterson 1993). These frames are central organizing ideas that allow audiences to determine what the debate concerns (Entman 1993; Gamson 1992; Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 1989). Since the tendency of the public is to evaluate social issues in terms of personal values, it is unsurprising to find that media frames often revolve around widely shared values such as traditional morality and egalitarianism (Brewer 2003). The public often borrows the frames from the dominant public discourse to draw connections between social issues and personal values (e.g., Kinder and Sanders 1996; Koch 1998; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Zaller 1992). Among public opinion scholars, the dominant view is that individuals use media frames of social concerns in order to determine a judgment standard with regard to a given issue (e.g., Kinder and Sanders 1996; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997).

Therefore, public debates can be thought of as the collections of the value frames used by the mass media (Brewer 2003). In particular, knowledge obtained from exposure to mass media coverage of political debates may help citizens draw connections between values and issues. Research indicates that mass media can affect an individual's perspective of social issues over time (Comstock and Paik 1991). Therefore, before beginning to review the literature specifically devoted to same-sex marriage, it is important to examine how the gay community¹ has been

¹ I do not argue that a "gay community" exists as a collectively inclusive group. It has been noted that the "community" can exist on many levels, ranging from groups of friends to an imagined collective of individuals who share same-sex attractions, and that these communities are not always in agreement with each other in matters of social issues or identity management (Lannutti 2005, Woolwine 2000)

portrayed historically by the media. This examination will provide a more complete understanding of the origins of the frames used in the modern day struggle for legal same-sex marriage recognition by tracing how the original frames have changed over time.

Prior to the late 1940's, the scientific community characterized homosexuals as sexual inverts. Specifically, they believed homosexual men to be feminine in appearance and manner while lesbians were commonly characterized as masculine. Homosexuality was considered a medical condition at this time, so there was no visible representative homosexual minority group in America (D'Emilio 1986). Without a representative group to refer to, society and the media painted a picture of gays and lesbians as simply acting in opposition to traditional gender norms and expectations. This notion of sexual inversion, combined with the limited experience of small urban gay communities that had begun to become visible, such as Greenwich Village, where homosexual men often adopted female names and personal characteristics associated with femininity, led to the first media frame of the gay man as a non-threatening and comical "sissy" (Fejes 2008).

The representations of homosexuals were most often male during this period and the few representations of lesbians were consistently framed as masculine women who were dangerous and threatening to both heterosexual women and the traditional family structure (Duggan 2000; Fejes 2008). The characterizations of homosexual men as powerless and weak along with the characterization of lesbians as manipulative and predatory can be seen as primarily based on the patriarchal

structure of American society rather than actual representations of the gay population. Men demeaning themselves to the point of acting like women was framed as laughable and less-than, whereas women attempting to elevate themselves to the status of men by way of sexual behavior was a harmful threat to be taken seriously.

After the end of World War II, traditional family norms were beginning to shift because so many women entered the workforce. Due to the widespread changes in American family life and traditional sex roles during the war, the post-war climate of American society was characterized by hyper- heterosexuality and a large-scale attempt to return to the traditional interpretations of sex, gender, and family structure (Fejes 2008). This reactionary backlash to women in the workforce served to further push homosexual men and women outside of the boundaries of behaviors that were considered acceptable. The *Kinsey Report*, released in 1948 and 1953, contradicted the feminine male and masculine female portrayals of gay men and lesbians and introduced the idea that homosexuals could no longer be easily identified. It was during this period that the American Psychiatric Association listed homosexuality under sociopathic personality deviations, thereby classifying homosexuals as mentally ill.

The media also began to increase reporting on sex crimes, with an emphasis on those crimes committed against children (Freidman 1987; Jenkins 1998). The increased attention prompted states to enact laws to prosecute “sexual psychopaths” differently than other criminals. These laws often defined sexual psychopaths so broadly that adult consensual same-sex relationships became

criminalized and homosexuals became associated with pedophiles and child molesters (Fejes 2008). Unlike the laughable sissy of the 1930s and 40s, gay men and lesbians were now viewed as dangerous and deranged sexual predators on the prowl for children and impossible to detect (Fejes 2008; Jenkins 1998).

Prior to World War II reputable news sources considered stories about homosexuals beyond the scope of respectable reporting (Fejes 2008), there are few definitive representations of gay men and lesbians in the news media of this time. In 1964, the mainstream print media published more stories about homosexuals than in the three previous years combined. This trend grew across the nation's cities in the years to come and many of these pieces framed homosexuals as sad and lonely individuals on the outskirts of society, unable to form healthy intimate connections with others (Conrad 1977; Fejes 2008). In 1966, *Time* magazine published an anonymous article describing a homosexual lifestyle as a substandard alternative to reality and went on to say that homosexuality should never be identified as anything but a destructive sickness (*Time* 1966).

Due to the increased attention on what the media termed the "problem of homosexuality," many reporters began to approach newly formed homophile organizations, organized to support homosexuals and, in a lesser fashion, push for gay rights (Meeker 2001). These groups began to offer the news media a homosexual representative to interview in order to complete their stories (Fejes 2008; Gross 1997). This was the first opportunity that gay rights activists, although they were not called so at the time, had the chance to speak on behalf of the homosexual community. This opportunity to represent the gay and lesbian

community combined with the framing of homosexuality as a serious social concern and the print media's increased attention to it may have in fact been the impetus for a reactionary gay rights movement.

Previous studies have indicated that social issues dealing with the rights of the gay community have also been controversial (Pan et al. 2010). The gay rights movement has encompassed many goals since its formation, these issues ranged from the decriminalization of homosexual relationships to discriminatory workplace policies and gay-parent adoption. In the late 1990s and early 2000s the discussion of same-sex marriage began to appear in the news more frequently than it had before (Bennett 1998). During the 2000 presidential election campaign, the debate over whether or not committed gay and lesbian couples should be allowed the same legal status as traditional heterosexual marriages began to receive more media coverage than ever before (Price, Nir, and Capella 2005). However, homosexuals continued to be framed in the news media as threatening to both a child's development and to traditionally acceptable family values (Pan et al. 2010).

Literature dedicated to media coverage of the same-sex marriage debate is growing across many academic fields but remains limited. The majority of these academic studies found that news coverage of same-sex marriage is often associated with two main themes: morality and equality (e.g. Brewer 2003; Rimmerman 2002). Researchers found that news coverage focuses on the equality frame most commonly introduced by gay rights activists who were defined by the media as gays and lesbians actively seeking full marital status (e.g. Brewer 2002, 2003; Gallagher and Bull 1996; Rimmerman, Kenneth, and Wilcox 2000). Conversely, opponents,

represented by the media as those who emphasize the problems that could arise within religious and social institutions if full marital status was allowed to same-sex couples, attempt to frame the issue in terms of traditionally accepted moral values (Pan et al. 2010).

The campaign to legalize same-sex marriage has taken many routes throughout the years; therefore it is important to examine these actions to understand the claims made by the opposition and the support in the media. Most commonly, these routes are taken through the institutions of politics, religion, and the family.

The Polity

Keck (2009) argues that within the same-sex marriage debate, legal action through the court system can be a promising course for pursuing policy changes when non-judicial prospects are limited. A study of Lambda Legal, a non-profit organization that provides legal representation for homosexual men and women in civil rights litigations, emphasizes "both the promise and the limits of legal mobilization as a tactic for achieving social reform" and illustrates that "there are at least some circumstances in which reformers can be served by turning to the courts" (Andersen 2005:216).

Many opponents of same-sex marriage criticize court judgments granting rights to gay and lesbian couples as unlawful or illegitimate acts of "activist courts" (Ball 2010). Some supporters of same-sex marriage are also critical of the judicial strategy as it could, and often does, create a backlash of anti-gay legislation (Ball 2010; D'Emilio 2006). By not including voters and not consulting public opinion on

cases dealing with social reform, court actions can serve to mobilize the opposition, destabilize moderates, and impede the cause they hope to advance (Ball 2010; Klarman 2005). It is undeniable that legislation regarding same-sex marriage helps to mobilize each side of the debate. The immediate consequence of the Massachusetts case, *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* 2003, might have been the political backlash that it encouraged (Keck 2009) rather than the victory claimed by same-sex marriage supporters. Discrimination against homosexuals has decreased in recent years, but researchers assert that this increased acceptance is not the result of judicial action but is primarily due to fundamental cultural changes (D'Emilio 2006; Klarman 2005; Rosenberg 2008).

The Church

Another aspect that has played an important role in the same-sex marriage debates is religion, although surprisingly, that has not always been the case. Although religion has traditionally had a primary role in the construction of American moral values, prior to the 1960s, religious organizations kept a safe distance from politics and political affairs (Fejes 2008; Fetner 2008). It was only until after homosexuality had begun to be decriminalized and the psychiatric community had rejected it as a mental disorder that religious institutions began to take up the cause of opposing gay rights. Over time, religious majorities have shaped the current formation and identity of the same-sex marriage movement (Fetner 2008). By promoting anti-gay rights ballot initiatives such as constitutional amendments and civil union legislation and formulating anti-gay rights party

platforms, religious conservatives have “pulled lesbian and gay movement activists into fights that they would rather not be in” (Fetner 2008:100).

Many gay rights activists prefer to take a socially conservative approach and work with smaller local bodies of government. The rationale is that smaller organizations with less power than federal branches of government might be more easily persuaded to take up their cause (Fetner 2008). Powerful religious establishments such the Catholic and Mormon churches have pushed for bans on same-sex marriage. These organizations operate within an enormous power structure and transmit information from a top-down approach, with policies or values being determined as either moral or immoral by powerful religious elites and then passed down to their congregants. This design puts the supporters at a disadvantage because they are constantly seen as being reactionary to the movements of the opposition. Same-sex marriage activists have been forced to take a defensive stance. Instead of being able to frame the arguments for the legal recognition of same-sex marriage, supporters are seen as constantly attempting to combat the frames of immorality presented by various religious institutions, whose primary objection is that same-sex marriage can and will lead to the eventual breakdown of traditional American families (Fetner 2008).

The Family

The media has been slow to provide evidence of the increase in the number of gay and lesbian families. According to the *Gay & Lesbian Atlas* that assembled the 2000 US Census data pertaining to gay and lesbian families, there are currently more than 160,000 families with two gay parents and roughly a quarter of a million

children (Gates and Ost 2004). This growth has been termed the “Gayby Boom” (Garner 2005:5). In 2009, Landau conducted a qualitative content analysis of articles and images depicting gay and lesbian families. In the collected data, the media focus was primarily centered on the children of gay and lesbian parents. Landau found that the articles generally highlighted the children in four primary ways: the children reveal their “secret” of having same-sex parents, they are framed as scientific social experiments, they are almost exclusively depicted as heterosexual, and they reinforce socially accepted male and female gender roles (Landau 2009). This finding is of particular concern because it serves to highlight a mainstream media bias. The representations of children of homosexual parents reflect the interests and concerns of politically conservative elites, including news corporation owners, who play a hand in defining public agendas. Furthermore, these elites, who control a large majority of media transmission (Brewer 2003), represent hegemonic masculinity, as they are primarily White, middle-aged, male, middle to upper middle class, and heterosexual (Gross 2001).

Gaps in Literature

Scholarly work on the gay rights movement has traced the frequency of news reporting on homosexuals over the years as well as the frames used by news media when reporting on the same-sex marriage debate (Pan et al. 2010). These studies fail to include the frames used by participants in the form of quotes included in the articles and the specific activities, such as rallies, protests, and demonstrations, being reported on. By choosing to focus only on the frame chosen by the reporter or the frequency of a topic, researchers fail to include the participants of the social

movement who are actively using the media to promote their views. It is this gap in the academic literature on same-sex marriage that I aim to narrow with the inclusion of not only the value frames chosen, but also the representations of both opponents and supporters within the mainstream print media.

Theoretical Frameworks

The study of the impacts and effects of the same-sex marriage movement is a relatively new area of research. In order to examine the research questions, this study requires an interdisciplinary approach. Although I draw from studies in the fields of communication, political science, and sociology, I rely on sociological theories of social movements and the media. My analysis is guided by three theories: deprivation theory, resource mobilization theory, and new social movement theory.

Social movement theories are focused on why social movements emerge, how social movement organizations engage their members, and of what significance, both politically and historically, is the action of social movements (e.g. Fetner 2008; Pan et al. 2010). The assumption of deprivation theory (Morrison 1978) is that all social movements rise from a sense of deprivation or inequality relative to others or in relation to people's own expectations. When applied to the same-sex marriage movement, social movement theory points to the inequality in state and federal benefits afforded to homosexual partnerships in relation to their heterosexual counterparts.

Resource mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald 1977) states that instances of social dissent and widespread grievances are not enough to generate a call for

social change. Instead, this theory maintains that social movements must also have resources to be effective. The resources of a movement are controlled by core groups of individuals operating within a social movement organization. These professionals are tasked with fine-tuning the organizational structure, raising funds, creating powerful institutional alliances, gaining the attention of the media, and acquiring supporters for their cause. Because social movements are goal-oriented, the organizational infrastructure of social movement organizations is considered to be the key resource. A successful organizational infrastructure can allow for interactions and relationships between a social movement organization and other organizations. Within the same-sex marriage movement, resource mobilization theory would claim that the victories seen by the opposition were due largely in part to their organizational ties with many powerful and wealthy religious denominations as well as conservative political organizations.

New social movement theory (Pichardo 1997) challenges resource mobilization theory. In attempting to explain the number of social movements that have presented themselves since the 1960s, new social movement theory makes two central claims. The first is that the rise of the post-industrial economy is responsible for the new onset of social movements and the second is that modern social movements are focused on issues related to human rights. Prior to the 1960's, social movements were primarily concerned with economic issues, as is the case with labor movements. With the decline of a manufacturing-based economic system and the rise of standardized work practices, issues of inequality based on identity and lifestyle came to the forefront, creating space for new social

movements. These new social movements are loosely organized and not based on a singular social issue. New social movements work to effect change at national or international levels on various issues in relation to their sets of beliefs and ideals. The gay rights movement is an example of a new social movement and the campaign to legalize same-sex marriage can be seen as one of many issues that falls under the scope of a larger movement, along with other issues such as gay-parent adoption and the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

Although these theories appear to contradict one another, each theory remains relevant to this particular study. Social movement theory helps to explain why there is a push to legalize same-sex marriage when less than 50 years ago homosexuality was criminalized and homosexuals were thought of as dangerous sexual predators. Resource mobilization theory helps to identify why the oppositional movement is so powerful and why it is possibly the origin of the modern gay rights movement. New social movement theory helps to define the scope of the same-sex marriage issue as it fits under the umbrella of the larger gay rights movement as well as why its supporters are so loosely affiliated.

Because the data in this study were collected from newspapers and analyzed according to value frames, I also relied on a social constructivist framing perspective. Each side of the movement makes claims that are designed to resonate with the core values of their audiences. In order to be successful, the manner in which statements are framed must draw upon shared cultural understandings. Social constructivism states that groups collaboratively construct knowledge in order to create a culture of shared artifacts containing shared meanings. Both the

opposition and support for same-sex marriage draw on the existing social institutions of religion, the family, and the government in order to educate their audiences and define the values and behaviors expected by their members. Much of the support for the same-sex marriage movement is reactionary to the claims of the opposition, therefore a social constructivist perspective of framing should illuminate both why and how each side constructs the knowledge and culture of their own side of the struggle.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The research questions examined in this thesis are: How do newspapers report on the *culture* of the same-sex marriage debate, including rallies, protests, and public campaigns? How does each side of the movement use social institutions of religion, the polity, and the family, to solidify their claims either for or against same-sex marriage? How has the tone of the campaigns both for and against the legal recognition of same-sex marriage changed over the course of 16 years? These research questions are aimed at uncovering how both the same-sex marriage supporters and opponents frame arguments in the newspaper media to legitimize their claims and to persuade the audiences of the movement to support their views. Qualitative researchers often use content analysis to analyze the meaning of textual data or latent content (Esterberg 2002). This method allows for the examination of what opponents and supporters of same-sex marriage say to the reporters covering their assemblies as well as how the reporters choose to frame each side of the issue.

News media encompasses many media forms including print, television, and the Internet. Scholars have found that the news is one of the most influential media when it comes to people's attitudes toward same-sex marriage (Anderson, Fakhfakh, and Kondylis 1999). There have also been a number of studies to demonstrate that mainstream newspapers produce more powerful influences on people's perceptions of public policies and political issues than television news

(e.g., Brians and Wattenberg 1996; Druckman 2005; Eveland, Seo, and Marton 2002).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s the discussion of same-sex marriage began to appear in the news more frequently than it had in previous years (Bennett 1998). This increase is most likely attributable to the beginning of the “post-gay” era that includes an increasing integration of gays and lesbians into the visible mainstream culture as well as the internal diversification efforts of the gay rights movement (Bullough, Eaklor, and Meek 2006; Duggan 2002; Ghaziani 2011; Vaid 1995; Valocchi 1999; Warner 1999). Since the media itself can be used by organizations as a tool to promote viewpoints, the sample of newspaper articles can reveal important aspects of each group including identity development and solidarity. Additionally, I examine the social forces and institutions that are used to gain membership by the opposition and the supporters. Previous research reveals that the social institutions used by both side are very similar, therefore the question of how each group uses the institutions of religion, the polity, and the family to solidify their claims either for or against same-sex marriage needs further exploration (Fetner 2008).

Academic research on the gay rights movement has traced the frequency of news reporting on homosexuals over the years as well as the frames used by news media when reporting on the same-sex marriage debate (Alwood 1996; Bennett 1998; Pan et al. 2010). These studies are focused primarily on the value frames used by the reporters and they fail to include the participants of the activities being reported on. For the purposes of this study, I include reports of participants in the same-sex marriage debate as well as the portrayals used by the media to report on

the issue. I focus my attention on how these social movement organizations engage their members through rallies, protests, and public campaigns to raise awareness for their respective sides. By using newspaper articles to answer this question, I reveal patterns in the reporting of both sides of the debate. The same-sex marriage debate has traditionally had a polarizing division between supporters and opponents so in order to gain a more complete understanding, it is important to include both sides of the cause.

I collected data from four major newspapers: *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Salt Lake City Tribune* over the course of a 16-year period. The primary search terms used were “same-sex marriage” OR “gay marriage” OR “homosexual marriage.” Additional search terms were “protest, rally, assembly, speech, activism, activist, speaker, march, opposition, and support.” The total sample size of all included articles was 938. The sample includes 271 articles from *The Boston Globe*; 212 from *The New York Times*; 269 from *The San Francisco Chronicle*; and 186 from *The Salt Lake Tribune*. In 2004 and 2008 I chose to limit the selection to 50 articles per newspaper in order to avoid skewing the findings with overrepresentation from these election years (see Table 1).

These newspapers were selected for their historical significance to the larger gay rights movement as well as the same-sex marriage debate. Besides being the most widely circulated newspaper in Massachusetts and one of the most circulated in the United States, *The Boston Globe* represents the local coverage of arguably the most important court case in favor of the same-sex marriage movement. In 2003, *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* prompted Massachusetts to become the

first state to legally recognize same-sex marriages. Because of the political and social backlash that occurred after the court's decision, *The Boston Globe* offers a wide range of articles that are applicable to the study.

The New York Times was chosen because early historical events in New York City, namely the Stonewall Riots, have helped to shape the modern day gay rights movement. Additionally, Pan et al. (2010) found that *The New York Times* differed significantly in the coverage of the same-sex marriage debate after the legitimization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts. I included *The San Francisco Chronicle* for two reasons. Historically, San Francisco has a reputation for having a large homosexual population (Armstrong 2002). The San Francisco mayor was the first to act in defiance of legal statute and issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples (Fejes 2008). The city was also the site of many of the highly publicized protests and rallies that surround the passage of Proposition 8 that effectively banned same-sex marriage in the state of California. Finally, it is well documented that the same-sex marriage oppositional movement is primarily funded and led by both Catholic and Mormon religious leaders (Fejes 2008; Fetner 2008). Where *The Boston Globe* can offer perspectives coming from an area with a large Catholic population, *The Salt Lake City Tribune* can provide views and frames used by people in an area with a substantial Mormon population.

I have collected my data through university access to Factiva, a database that contains archived newspaper articles. I have limited the data collection to the sixteen -year period beginning in January 1, 1993 through December 31, 2008. These years were strategically chosen because of the legislations and resulting

public outcries that took place during this period. The starting point of 1993 represents the year that denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples was ruled unconstitutional for the first time in the Hawaii Case of *Baehr v. Lewin*. The cutoff point for the data was set at 2008 because of the highly publicized passage of Proposition 8 banning same-sex marriage in the state of California. Although qualitative research does not aim to be representative, I have attempted to choose articles covering each year. Since the debate over same-sex marriage is often used as an election issue, I found more articles from these years than in non-election years.

I have further narrowed the data by eliminating articles reporting on the political rallies or conventions exclusively designed for candidates of federal and state offices or politically affiliated parties. Politicians and political parties serve both the public and their own professional interests and my aim is not to analyze political rhetoric or a politician's media strategy. To successfully analyze political rhetoric a researcher would be obligated to include the demographics and the majority public opinions of each politician's constituency and the results of such a study would not be applicable to my specific research questions. I am not interested in generalizing my findings to all newspapers or to all supporters and opponents of same-sex marriage, so I selected my articles based on frames and content rather than attempting to categorize every article available.

In order to facilitate organization all search parameters were entered identically. My primary categories are based on the social institutions that were represented in each article (family, polity, and religion). Once the articles were

chosen, I established a coding system for each newspaper that lists each article with an identification number and notations marking each article according to what social institutions its subject calls upon. Three language categories were then added to track the changes in the frames used by the oppositional and supportive arguments.

The first category measures the inclusivity and exclusivity of the language used by the participants of the movement. For example, opponents or supporters using words like “they” or “them” when referencing the opposite side of the debate seen as relying on the “us *versus* them” ideology were marked as *exclusive*, and no reference made to an “other” or a representation of the “us *and* them” strategy was marked as *inclusive*. Forming a collective identity often requires groups to rely on their own differences from outsiders (Gamson 1997; Seidman 1997). Armstrong (2002) emphasizes that these differences can inevitably create exclusions. Early gay rights activists relied on an “us versus them” ideology during what researchers have the “coming out era” (Chauncey 1994; D’Emilio 1983). In the “post gay” era of the 90’s and beyond, gay rights activists shifted their identity to include outsiders, the “us and them” strategy because the focus was on forming alliances with outsiders rather than drawing distinctive boundaries between them (Ghaziani 2011).

The selected articles were further tracked as being *educational* or *defensive*. In the context of same-sex marriage debate, much like any debate, each side assumes that there is problem that must be corrected (Fetner 2008). The strategy used by participants can be educational, when an attempt is made to educate the public about the facts of their argument. A defensive stance is revealed when

participants frame their argument as a response against an opposing force's position. The final delineation used in coding the articles was *deprivation* versus *special rights*. Participants quoted as believing same-sex marriage was a matter of equality were recorded in the deprivation category. Those believing same-sex marriage was not an egalitarian issue but an attempt to gain special access to marital privileges were recorded under "special rights." Through the use of these categories as well as the ones mentioned above, I was able to provide a critical analysis of the frames used both by reporters and movement participants over time.

TABLE 1.

	93	94	95	96*	97	98	99	00*	01	02	03	04*	05	06	07	08*	TOTAL
<i>New York Times</i>	1	1	1	5	2	1	4	7	4	2	19	50	41	27	10	37	212
<i>Salt Lake Tribune</i>	0	5	2	3	1	5	15	17	1	3	7	41	9	17	10	50	186
<i>Boston Globe</i>	0	0	1	2	1	0	6	7	5	6	41	50	49	37	43	23	271
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	1	2	0	11	2	6	14	12	7	4	17	50	49	29	15	50	269
TOTAL	2	8	4	21	6	12	39	43	17	15	84	191	148	110	78	160	938

* Denotes presidential election year

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The data indicate that the same-sex marriage movement changes as the years progress from 1993 to 2008. However, the initial frames provided by the support and the opposition, equal rights versus traditional morality, provides the basis for which all other arguments arise. The supporters rely heavily on the idea that they represent a minority group being deprived of fundamental human rights. The opposition remains committed to the frame that homosexuals are dangerous to society and that legitimization would lead to the ultimate destruction of traditionally acceptable representations of morality. These findings are similar to the findings of other researchers (Pan et al. 2010), but I will argue that as the identity formation of supporters moves away from marginalization and toward assimilation into mainstream culture. Also, as a significant amount religious and political opponents come to accept the frame of gays and lesbians as a minority group in need of protection, the resource mobilization techniques of two powerful religious organizations has been the primary obstacle for same-sex marriage legitimization.

I organized the data into four primary groups. Newspaper articles from 1993 through 1995 represent the beginning of the same-sex marriage debate. Research has shown that the movement began with the Hawaii same-sex marriage case *Baehr*

v. Lewin (D’Emilio 2006). Gay rights activists were unprepared to fully back this effort and it was the efforts of the opposition, primarily from religious institutions, that initially presented the idea to the public (Fetner 2008). The articles from these years provide an important foundation for the continuing social movement, as it was during these formative years that same-sex marriage supporters were developing a collective identity and framing their arguments in response to the opposition.

The findings suggest that the years between 1996 and 1999 represent key years in the movement, when gay rights activists began to make important alliances. These are also the years in which powerful religious institutions reveal the scope of their influence nationwide. The newspaper articles show that in 2000 and 2004, the same-sex marriage debate was used as a campaign issue separating liberals and conservative voters. Additionally, significant legislation was included in this time period and same-sex relationships were legitimized and alternately outlawed in various states across the country (Anderson 2005). The final set of years, 2005 through 2008, marked a shift in reporting as Massachusetts’s same-sex couples began marrying with full state benefits and the opposition increased efforts in California to ban same-sex marriage in the California Constitution.

The Early Years: 1993-1995

When the Hawaiian Supreme Judicial Court first ordered the state to find compelling evidence on which the denial of same-sex marriage licenses could be justified, the initial response came in the form of resource mobilization by religious organizations and local activist organizations. *The New York Times* published an

article in 1993 about Lutheran authorities calling on members and clergy to decide how homosexuality and gay and lesbian couplings were to be handled within the church. The Lutheran church was framed as posing an important theological question to its members that was rather progressive for the time. Reporters initially framed the question put before the church as inclusive because it was designed as a democratic process rather than a mandate sent from the top down. However, the choices offered by the council on what to do about homosexuality in the church proved to be exclusive. The choices were limited to recommending abstinence for homosexuals, tolerating a homosexual presence in the church, or blessing gay and lesbian unions. These options inherently placed heterosexual church members in a position of authority over their homosexual brethren and having the opportunity to grant them “special rights.” Also, when some voices of dissent were offered by Lutheran bishops about the appropriateness of the question even being called, one of the authors of the proposal pointed out that the church was focused on blessing loving and committed relationships between the elderly that could not marry for fear of losing pensions and that the homosexual question was added to illustrate the realistic choices the church would face if a decision was made in favor of blessing relationships that were not legally recognized.

Other religious organizations weighed in early in the same-sex marriage debate. Both *The New York Times* and *The San Francisco Chronicle* published articles in 1994 about Pope John Paul II denouncing same-sex marriages on the grounds that such couplings represented a serious threat to society. However, none of the articles provide a scientific basis for the Pope’s concerns and the reporters include

references to recent same-sex legislation in America and Europe. The newspaper articles convey the exclusivity of the Pope's directive and contain language with negative connotations when referring to the Pope's "chastising" same-sex unions and his disapproval of same-sex legislation taking place in the American government and the European Parliament. *The San Francisco Chronicle* characterized the Pope's visit to a local parish as part of new crusade against homosexuality invoking images of religious warfare. This article simultaneously represents the historically strict Roman Catholic dogma while reminding or informing readers that these new announcements of old doctrine were a reaction to matters of government or defensive, rather than the church attempting to educate their members.

Besides the Roman Catholic faith, another major religious organization with a top-down organizational structure came out in defense of traditional different-sex marriages. *The Salt Lake Tribune* published articles in 1994 about the issuance of a directive within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more commonly known as Mormons. Reports stated that the office of the First Presidency, the ruling body of the Mormon church comprised of the President/Prophet of the Church and a few select advisors, urged members to contact and persuade any government official to reject any same-sex marriage effort. *Tribune* reporters contacted Utah government officials who dismissed the idea of same-sex marriage as both a low priority and long shot. Interestingly, representatives of the Mormon Church stated again and again that the church had always attempted to distance itself from political affairs but had an obligation to intervene in extreme cases that were

threatening to traditional morality. These articles represent both the Mormon faith and the Utah legislature as working to exclude gays and lesbians from legally recognized marriage.

Early opposition to the Mormon directive was from within the church itself. Representatives of Affirmation, a support group for gay and lesbian Mormon as well as their families and friends, spoke to reporters and reminded readers of the anti-ERA campaign led by the Mormon church in the 70's and 80's. Affirmation leaders equate that campaign to the church's opposition of same-sex marriage. Agreeing that a church may teach any doctrine that they choose, Affirmation members disagreed that they had a right to interfere with matter of denying civil rights to individuals who do not subscribe to their faith. Familiar with church policies and actions, Affirmation attempted to change the early conversation from morality to the deprivation of civil rights and reporters framed the issue accordingly by first detailing church statements and actions and then offering historical proof to the contrary based on patterns of political action.

The civil rights perception of the debate was also championed by other non-religious organizations. The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) came out in support of same-sex marriage as early as 1994, although the decision caused a significant rift in their organization. It was reported in *The San Francisco Chronicle* that dissenting members believed the issue to be immoral and wanted the organization to focus on Asian issues rather than issues of homosexuality. JACL representatives countered these statements by reminding readers that of previous laws banning Asians from marrying Caucasians that were not overturned until

1967. They also sympathized with opposing members and stating that they may simply have forgotten what it was like to be discriminated against. Again, an organization turned the argument from morality to equality and aligned itself with the same-sex marriage movement as an early resource.

It was in these years that the same-sex marriage movement was in need of leaders (Fetner 2008). Articles reporting on gay and lesbian activism revealed that new activist groups, such as Gay & Lesbian Americans, were hesitant to devote themselves to pursuing same-sex marriage. The reasoning offered by the founder of this group was that same-sex legislation should focus on smaller local issues such as city and state level domestic partner benefits, parental rights, and sodomy laws. These leaders also asserted that gay and lesbian activism needed to distance itself from the direct action antics of groups like ACT-UP, whose members once chained themselves to a VIP balcony inside the New York Stock Exchange to protest the high cost of AIDS medication, and Queer Nation who responded to violence against gays and lesbians by covering billboards with slogans like “Fags and Dykes Bash Back!” The founder of Gay and Lesbian Americans stated that he left both these organizations to create a more palatable grass roots organization since the government had become more accessible. These articles reveal that the gay and lesbian activist community was not ready for the same-sex marriage push and possibly feared taking on more than it could handle. This finding is consistent with Fetner (2008), who wrote that the slow response to the same-sex marriage movement allowed the opposition to set the initial value frames of the movement.

There are few articles from these early years (only 14 for the entire 3 year period), but they effectively set the tone for the continuing debate: morality versus equality. As the following data will show, these themes continue throughout the 16 years examined. Although the incarnations of these themes shift over time, major religious institutions and activist organizations initially presented the foundational arguments for the continuing same-sex marriage movement. Nothing was found in the sample about gay and lesbian families during these years.

Stand Up and Be Counted: 1996 – 1999

The following three years served as the proving grounds for the support of and the opposition to same-sex marriage. Political officials, major religious institutions, and activist organizations all debated about which side to represent. Even though the Hawaii SJC decision was still being appealed, newspapers began to speak of the legalization of same-sex marriage as inevitable based on the decision of both higher and lower courts. It may have been this feeling of inevitability that prompted so much action by the opposition during this time (D’Emilio 2006; Fetner 2008).

The findings suggest that early in 1996, Democrats began to distance themselves from gay rights issues. One article from *The Salt Lake Tribune* described in detail a meeting in which Utah democratic leaders demanded that the partisan organization known as The Gay and Lesbian Utah Democrats (GLUD) drop the word “Democrat” from their name. This article was framed as exclusionary and even overtly hostile as it described the leader of GLUD storming out in a fury. Ironically, one Utah Democrat from the side opposite GLUD even lamented after the meeting

that sometimes it was difficult to make political progress when you are the “party of inclusion,” serving to reinforce framing of gays and lesbians as “others” outside of mainstream concerns.

Gay rights activists continued to work behind the scenes with local, state, and federal governments rather than acting in opposition. One major attempt to combat a proposed federal Defense of Marriage Act, which would allow states to decide whether or not to recognize legal same-sex marriages recognized in other states, was to link the bill to a proposed anti-discrimination law that would protect gays and lesbians in the workplace. This attempt to connect same-sex marriage backfired (Anderson 2005) and articles from *The New York Times* and *The Salt Lake Tribune* framed the outcome of these measures as gays and lesbians losing twice in one day. The federal DOMA was signed into legislation and the anti-discrimination law was struck down. In one article, the author states that while only 30% of American citizens were in favor of same-sex marriage, an overwhelming 80% were in favor of an anti-discrimination law. Reporters pointed out the discrepancy between the legislative votes and public opinion in relation to the anti-discrimination law and related this issue to the government being historically out of step with public opinion during the Civil Rights Movement. Reporters also wrote that at the time of the legislation, nine states had already enacted anti-discrimination laws to their polices and that a majority of House of Representatives members and Senators had signed employment policies banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. These reported contradictions chosen by the articles’ authors highlighted a pattern of elected officials excluding gays and lesbians

from civil rights and distancing themselves from the issues of gay rights for political purposes (Fejes 2008).

Backers of the federal DOMA continually referred to the protection of the family, but as was the case of the Roman Catholic and Mormon Church, no scientific proof or example of any threat was offered to readers. Demonstrations and protests were reported in all the selected newspapers as same-sex marriage supporters decried the legislation as unconstitutional. Willie Brown, the mayor of San Francisco, announced a decision to hold a mass wedding ceremony for same-sex couples registered in the city for a domestic partnership. This was the first public ceremony of its kind. *The San Francisco Chronicle* backed this decision in multiple articles supporting the mayor's direct action. The ceremony was designed for legal domestic partnerships and not technically civil disobedience, but it served to bring gays and lesbians together to support and celebrate their "committed, loving relationships" in full view of the public. These articles were celebratory in their tone and wrote of happy couples and family members as if to educate those outside the gay and lesbian community to the "normalcy" of same-sex relationships. This emphasis on same-sex couples as having normal loving relationships could have been strategic. In a study of three major gay and lesbian organizations, Ward (2008) found assimilation into mainstream culture to be a primary tactic in the identity formation of gay activism.

Perhaps inspired by San Francisco, other cities across the country begin to adopt same-sex registries for couples. These registries provided only limited benefits to couples but supporters were said to have rejoiced the small victories as

one more step toward legal recognition. The data reveal opponents were called on less frequently in these articles than were supporters and they were often framed as angry and “brandishing” Bibles as weapons. These “small victory” articles focused primarily on supporters of same-sex marriage and often adopted an educational tone by informing readers about benefits denied to same-sex couples rather than acting in defiance of the opposition.

After the disappointment of the federal DOMA passage, more frequent stories appeared about protests at political events and even one outside politician’s home. Additionally, more couples filed lawsuits in their home states in attempts to push their state into the debate and force them to take a stand (Anderson 2005). In response to these cases, more states begin to draft legislation restricting marriage to one man and one woman. One author of a proposed California legislation limiting marriage to one man and one woman argued that if the definition were changed, same-sex marriages would be elevated to the same plane as heterosexual marriages. This argument against same-sex marriage is not only exclusionary but also speaks to the deprivation of equal civil rights.

Large and wealthy gay and lesbian organizations like the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) began to openly criticize politicians who campaigned against same-sex marriage platforms. While certainly adopting a defensive stance against these politicians, these organizations continued to use the media to educate audiences about political obstacles and the unequal treatment of gays and lesbians. In what would have normally been a very publicly celebrated event, President Clinton attended and spoke at a Human Rights

Campaign dinner marking the first time an active President met with a gay and lesbian rights activist organization. The frame of this historical event was of a general lackluster of anticipation by the group's members. One member stated that since the HRC had been present at both of his elections, it was nice that the President was coming to dinner. Elizabeth Birch, HRC's executive director at the time admitted to reporters that many members felt deeply betrayed by President Clinton signing the federal DOMA. She went on to state that he had done a good job increasing spending on AIDS research and appointing openly homosexual individuals to the White House and that he was planning to reopen his support for anti-discrimination laws. By listing these opportunities for continued advancement she reminded readers that the push for legally recognized same-sex marriages was not the only obstacle facing gay and lesbian Americans (D'Emilio 2006).

In 1999, a Vermont court ruled that gay and lesbian couples were entitled to the same benefits as married couples and left the decision of how to grant these rights to the state's legislature. The legislature attempted to create equal domestic partnership legislation because they were reportedly unwilling to redefine marriage. Reporters from *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe* openly questioned this decision. One author claimed that "domestic partnership" was the definition of marriage and that it seemed like a waste of time to create a new institution when a legitimate one already existed. Although the Vermont court's actions were inclusive, the denial of marriage by the legislature was overtly exclusive. Perhaps a quote from one of President Clinton's own pollster effectively summed the political nature of these three years when he stated that there was

strong sentiment among Americans that people should be treated equally, regardless of their sexual orientation, but that the inclusive attitude did not extend to marriage (Adam 2003).

The politicians were slow to start taking sides, but religious organizations jumped right into the debate, as the majority of newspaper articles from this 3-year period were reporting on religious directives and activities. The already decided Mormon church increased its own involvement and encouraged its members to donate time and money to national and state-level same-sex marriage exclusion campaigns. To combat the assumed inevitability of Hawaii being the first state to allow legally recognized same-sex marriages, the Mormon church reportedly donated \$600,000 to Hawaii's Future Today, an operation run in cooperation with Catholics attempting successfully to promote an amendment to the state's Constitution defining marriage as between one man and one woman only.

The church also released a statement from the a legislative body known as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles calling the homosexual agenda a Satanic strategy to designed to divert individuals from God's plan. In another letter sent to church members nationwide, the First Presidency restated their earlier plea for parishioners to lobby legislative and judicial officials to reject any effort to legitimize same-sex marriage. Unlike the earlier letter that issued the same plea, this time the church requested that members donate secretly without mentioning their Mormon affiliation. Meanwhile the Mormon Church continued to donate en masse, giving the Alaska Family Coalition, a group fighting a same-sex marriage initiative, \$500,000 only a few weeks before the legislation was to be voted for.

Reports of dissent in the Mormon ranks also grew during this period. After the large donation was made to the Alaska Family Coalition, those who disagreed quickly created "MormonAid," a website designed to accept donations on behalf of "No on 2", the Alaska Family Coalition's counterpart. Affirmation also increased their rhetoric against the church by restating that the Mormon Church had no business in affairs of the state and that their tactics were mean-spirited. One Affirmation leader denounced the church's rationale of involvement being based on moral overtones as simply a case of individual bigotry that was hidden behind "institutionalized skirts."

Still, church spokesman Don LeFevre claimed that Mormon leaders were among the first to state that their congregants have the right to follow their own political convictions, whether or not they match those within Salt Lake's Latter-day Saints headquarters. While this statement suggested that the church was softening its stance on same-sex marriage, LeFevre added that church authorities held the position officially issued in 1994 by the First Presidency, opposing any and all efforts legally recognize marriages between individuals of the same sex.

By the end of 1999, Mormons were involved in another letter urging 740,000 California Mormons to do all they could by donating money and time to assure a successful vote on the state's Proposition 22. Unlike those before it, this letter claimed to be authorized by the highest position within the Mormon Church and was to be considered as inspired by and coming from the God. In response to this third letter, Mormon dissenters began to request that their names be removed from membership rolls and called the church's tactics hurtful and wrong. Newspapers

continued to frame the Mormon Church through its own actions and they were consistently represented as exclusive, defensive, and claiming moral authority.

After same-sex marriages were legitimized in Hawaii's lower court and the case was still in the appeal process but before the state's Constitutional amendment invalidated the case, Catholic leaders reaffirmed their position considering gays and lesbians to be "unnatural" and "disordered." Going one step forward in its exclusionary policy, the Vatican threatened moral censure for any person who knowingly favored the election of a candidate who promised to support gay rights legislation. A *San Francisco Chronicle* article detailed a controversy in northern California when 15 East Bay Catholics petitioned Oakland Bishop John Cummins to defrock a Pleasanton pastor for allowing homosexual weddings. To combat this allegation, and possibly side-step church doctrine in favor of his congregation, the targeted priest denied that he had performed any gay "weddings," but had only blessed the "friendships" of homosexual parishioners. By simply framing these couplings as friendships, the priest was able to act inclusively under an exclusive dogma.

The Catholics and the Mormons had been involved in the same-sex marriage debate since the beginning and other religious organizations were also beginning to weigh in. A Presbyterian church commission agreed to support expanded civil rights for gays and lesbians in 1996, but withheld its blessing from same-sex marriages. Unlike the Catholic and Mormon approach, this ruling was based on votes of commission members rather than passed down from a singular ruling authority. Reform Rabbis also declared their support for civil same-sex marriages

but did not agree to bless these unions. Perhaps attempting to stay true to the religious idea that homosexuality is wrong in the eyes of their Lord, these Rabbis directed their focus to their communities and call on the parallels to the Civil Rights Movement. Orthodox Rabbis came out against same-sex marriage stating that the breakdown of the family unit would lead to the dissolution of the Jewish people. As was the case when this type of family argument was presented elsewhere, the newspaper articles offered no basis or proof of these claims to the readers.

In 1999, *The Boston Globe* reported that Harvard had opened its chapel for same-sex “marriages.” The use of quotation marks by the reporter served to remind audiences that these ceremonies were only ceremonious and not legally binding or recognized (Pan et al. 2010). Prior to this act, among major Jewish and Christian denominations, only the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Reform and Reconstructionist movements of Judaism officially allowed gay and lesbian commitment ceremonies to be performed in their sanctuaries. But across the country an increasing number of individual congregations were acting in opposition to their denominations’ official stances and performing these ceremonies in spite of their doctrine. The ministers of these rogue parishioners stated in numerous articles that the decision to allow commitment ceremonies was not based on theology but on justice. Although many acknowledged that several biblical verses had long been interpreted as condemning homosexual acts, the inclusive clergy chose to focus on another Biblical command to pay attention to the outcast and the despised. Toward the end of 1999, many clergy seemed to be focused on serving their communities rather than dictating moral authority.

Regardless of all the same-sex marriage opposition's constant claims, both religious and political, that legal recognition for same-sex couples can and will lead to the destruction of the family, there are very few articles in this time frame that mention families and zero articles solely dedicated to either heterosexual or homosexual family units. It was only when the mass marriage ceremonies began that mentions of gay and lesbian families start to appear in the sample. These mentions include personal stories of participating same-sex couples and their proud parents and/or children. Reporters begin to describe loving closely bonded family units.

The data show a pattern of family stories that continue to be represented in articles about marriage ceremonies, protests, and legal action. Within these articles there is an offering of examples of gay and lesbian families that contradicts the dangerous threat the opposition claims will come to pass. Reporters rely heavily on personal stories with an emphasis on normalcy rather than seek out a professional representative on the matter.

There were two main incidents during this period that had a profound effect on the family argument. One came after the cancellation of the sitcom *Ellen*, whose title character came out publicly as a lesbian both personally and in her role on the show. Ellen DeGeneres's real life mother was thrust into the spotlight and sought after for her thoughts on her daughter's sexual orientation. Reports state that she quickly became a spokesperson for acceptance and love within gay and lesbian families and traveled the country on speaking engagements promoting gay rights.

Although not a lesbian herself, Betty DeGeneres provided a proud mother's face to the concept of gay families.

The other major incident in the media was the brutal killing of Matthew Shepard, a gay student of at the University of Wyoming. Rather than proud parents championing rights for their homosexual children, newspaper articles framed Shepard's grieving parents as the face of the consequences for gays and lesbians living in an environment that rejects them. Mr. and Mrs. Shepard unwittingly became representatives of this culture of rejection and exclusion and eventually began to speak out against violence and intolerance of gays and lesbians.

In the years between 1996 and 1999, visibility of gays and lesbians increased (Ghaziani 2011). It was during this time that the opposition's resource mobilization proved how effective it could truly be by getting same-sex marriages barred from recognition well before these couplings had received recognition at all. The frames used in the data reveal a continued reliance on the "us versus them" ideology of the opposition while the smaller support movement constructed important alliances and attempted to frame gays and lesbians as normal citizens being deprived of a basic human right (Pan et al. 2010).

The New Millennium: 2000 – 2004

In 2000, an election year, politicians allied themselves with gay rights organizations even more so than in previous years. In fact, in every newspaper article dedicated to coverage of gay pride parades from 2000 to 2004 included mentions of notable politicians including mayors, governors and senators marching alongside gays and lesbians. Many of these articles described the politicians as

seeking the newly visible and suddenly vital “gay vote.” The desire for this collective vote signals an important shift from the early days of the debate when Democrats shied away from what they considered marginal populations and special interest groups. Even though many were still reluctant to endorse same-sex marriages, it seemed that no politician wanted to be aligned with anything that could look like discrimination of American citizens.

The newspaper articles suggest that Democrats weren’t the only ones changing their ways. Historically, many Republican candidates had refused to meet with a group of gay and lesbian conservatives known as the Log Cabin Republicans. Presidential Candidate George W. Bush agreed to meet with them and seek their endorsement during his election campaign in 2000. The leaders of the partisan group stated in *The New York Times* that the Republican nominee lived up to his commitments to the group that included a promise not to speak against homosexuals from the podium, to modify antigay language in the Republican platform, and give an openly homosexual congressman a speaking slot at the Republican National Convention. These major strides in political recognition of gay and lesbian Americans not only represent a shift in political thinking, but also the frame presented by the candidates effectively legitimized a homosexual identity simply by being endorsed by public officials.

Besides seeking votes, political movements continued to pick up speed during the 5 years between 2000 and 2004. Although no state had officially recognized same-sex marriages, domestic partnership laws and civil union legislations were introduced in various states across the nation and with them came

many political protests and alignments. In *The San Francisco Chronicle*, it was reported that police officers and firefighters planned to join others on the steps of City Hall to push for gay marriage rights on what was the fifth-annual National Freedom to Marry Day. This finding uncovered an important alignment because as one reporter stated, after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, there was a renewed sense of respect for police and firefighters and the same-sex marriage movement thought it would be beneficial for heterosexual audiences to recognize that many in these professions are gays and lesbians.

Depictions of protests also increased on the opposing side of the debate. A new anti-same-sex marriage organization emerged. Claiming that they wanted to rescue families from the on-going problem of fatherlessness, the Alliance for Marriage, a multiethnic group of religious and non-religious leaders, including several prominent African-American leaders, announced their push for a United States Constitutional amendment to outlaw same-sex marriage in 2000. This organization's formation and goal was nothing new or original in the same-sex marriage debate, but the data reveal that reporters began to take on a decidedly different tone when reporting on the oppositional movement. In *The San Francisco Chronicle*, a journalist pokes fun at the conservative movement trying again to thwart efforts to recognize same-sex marriage when describing the Campaign for California Families (CCF) asking candidates for public office to sign its "Marriage Protection Pledge." When the CCF proclaimed that traditional different-sex marriage is "essential to civilization," the reporter herself mockingly counters this claim by agreeing that California civilization is highly dependent on marriage because

alimony fuels the state's economy. Other reporters point out the hypocrisies of the organization by listing the amount of wives politicians signing the pledge have had and suggesting that they had legitimate marriages annulled by the Catholic Church by way of high-priced donations.

Reports of hypocrisy and manipulative techniques of the opposition continued when it was revealed in *The Boston Globe* that a bait-and-switch tactic was used to dupe individuals into signing a petition to ban the same-sex marriages the court had effectively legalized by 2004. These individuals thought they were signing a petition for the protection of horses and claimed to be both very surprised and upset when they found their name on a list of petitioners hope to ban same-sex marriage.

In 2004, on the side of the supporters, city officials carried out two important and highly publicized acts of civil disobedience. The newly elected San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom, successor to Willie Brown, stated that gay and lesbian couples deserved the same rights as everyone else. To show his commitment to this idea, he chose to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples in February and in March. In all, the city issued about 4,000 licenses in defiance of California law before the state Supreme Court ordered Newsom to desist. The reports of this action were celebratory in nature, including depictions of family and friends joining in the festivities as well as legendary gay rights activists and founders of the Daughters of Bilitis, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon being first in line to exchange their vows.

Another mayor acting in defiance of his state's marriage law was Jason West, the young mayor of New Paltz, NY. Like Newsom, West issued marriage licenses and performed 24 same-sex marriage ceremonies before he was arrested and charged with 19 misdemeanor counts of officiating wedding without a license. The charges were later dropped but not until the court issued an injunction against West performing any more marriages. According to the articles, these acts of civil disobedience were met with celebration as well as cursory opposition relying on the same arguments about traditional family structure. The significance of the acts were the real alliances that these city leaders had made with their own local communities rather than relying on state mandates instructing them how to behave.

From 2000 to 2004, religious institutions continued their patterns of alternately forbidding clergy from blessing or performing same-sex marriage ceremonies or allowing individual congregations to decide. *The Boston Globe* reported that the top policy-making body of the Presbyterian Church narrowly approved the addition of an amendment to the church's constitution forbidding ministers from conducting same-sex unions. The decision came after a reportedly emotional debate on the same issue that has been quite controversial among other Protestant denominations. For example, *The New York Times* reported that within the United Methodist Church two ministers were actually brought to trial for violating their denomination's policy forbidding same-sex unions. Both were convicted and one was defrocked, while the other was suspended from his official duties. In the debate, supporters of the amendment championed the decisions as upholding the traditional Christian view of marriage (Fetner 2008). *The San*

Francisco Chronicle quoted one church elder as believing that the duty of the church is to serve as "a moral beacon, " once again using religious doctrine to justify exclusionary practices as having a moral authority over representations of a deviant other.

Some major religious organizations took different positions as they examined the question of whether or not they would permit same-sex unions. The Central Conference of American Rabbis, representing the leaders of Reform synagogues, voted to officially support members who officiate same-sex unions. Alternatively, the traditionally conservative Southern Baptist Convention amended its basic statement of faith to call on faithful Christians to oppose homosexuality, equating it with abortion, pornography and racism. Interestingly, and perhaps even contradictorily, racism entails an active discriminatory approach to minority populations, which is precisely what the homosexual population claims to be (D'Emilio 1986).

The LDS Church continued to oppose efforts to legalize same-sex marriage or acknowledge homosexuality as a characteristic a person is born with. Without definitive scientific proof, many gay activists and psychologists assert that homosexual attraction is biologically determined (Stein 1994). In further acts of dissention with the Mormon faith, a group of LDS parents urged the church to withdraw written materials that referred to homosexuality as a perversion on the grounds that it sent a damning message that was hurtful to gay and lesbian Mormons. Additionally with this time frame, a loosely organized group roughly 300 gay and lesbian Mormons and their family members petitioned the Mormon church

to reconsider its stance on homosexuality. A copy of the petition was released as an ad in a Saturday edition of *The Salt Lake Tribune*. The petition urged Mormon authorities to review and remove from church policies and reading materials statements about homosexuality that are false and misleading. In short, this document called on the LDS church to completely throw out their doctrine on homosexuality as “Satan-inspired behavior.” When approached by Salt Lake Tribune reporters, a church spokesman stated that the church did not make the rules but that God, thereby validating the exclusion of gays and lesbians from the Mormon faith, handed down the rules.

The Catholic presence in America continued to voice its concern over same-sex marriage after seven gay and lesbian couples filed a lawsuit to win the right to marry in Massachusetts. *The Boston Globe* reported that leaders of the Catholic Church in Massachusetts urged legislators to amend the state Constitution to ban same-sex marriage and support a ballot initiative would also eliminate health benefits offered to same-sex partners. In San Francisco, two bishops led 1,000 sign-wielding Roman Catholics on a march through North Beach to protest same-sex marriages in San Francisco. Archbishop William Levada called on members to speak out with civility before leading the procession through the streets of the faithful. Levada claimed that same-sex marriages represented a regression within society and also argued for the passage of a constitutional amendment banning same-sex unions in order to protect marriage and family. A bishop was reported as offering a similar argument used by Mormon leaders. In short, he stated that Catholics were winning because God is God. Protesting the march was a local nun who called the

act unconscionable and claimed that the faith should be focused on seeking out the excluded and the marginalized within society.

Also defying the church hierarchy, three priests took a stand against the same-sex marriage ban, calling on Catholic ideas about social justice and decrying the amendment as discriminatory to children born to gay parents. These priests asserted that the proposed amendment would serve to further harm children that they as Catholics were particularly concerned with protecting. This concern may have been due to the scandals of child abuse by Catholic priests also happening at the time. However, rather than relying on the same “threat to the family unit” argument, these priests believed that banning same-sex marriages would only weaken the family and serve to further push parishioners out of the church. This argument rejects the mandate from God perspective and instead focuses on serving the church members.

The more widely known Reverend Jesse Jackson, who had stopped short of endorsing gay marriage in previous years, said in *The Boston Globe* that he opposed a state constitutional amendment that would outlaw gay marriage and create civil unions. When meeting with *Globe* reporters Jackson expressed his irritation at the idea that the same-sex marriage fight is equivalent to African-Americans' struggle for civil rights. Various legislators and gay rights advocates have championed this comparison, but Jackson rejected the argument because gays and lesbians do not have a visible history of slavery. He did lend credence to the idea of a civil rights movement for homosexuals but distanced himself from any comparison to *the* Civil Rights Movement. While this argument is certainly understandable, it might serve

the Reverend to revisit gay and lesbian history within the bounds of the Holocaust or even further back to early American witch-hunts.

The findings suggest that the family was still seen by the opposition to be under the greatest threat from gay marriage. All four newspapers relied heavily on personal family stories when attempting to illustrate the consequences of a piece of legislation. For example, in *The New York Times* a journalist describes two men raising a toddler and doing everything they could think of to make sure he was cared for. They bought life insurance policies, health insurance policies, set up their wills for him, and went through probate court to gain legal guardianship for his non-biological father. Since their relationship was not legally recognized this was all that they had the power to do until a bill passed in Connecticut's legislative session that allowed for second parent adoption by both heterosexual and homosexual unmarried couples. The two men rejoiced at the passing of this bill and the article, much like the other family articles during this time was one of celebration and acceptance. It is almost as if without coming out and directly challenging the "threat to the family unit argument" these types of personal family stories are disproving that argument simply by living out their everyday lives.

The years between 2000 and 2004 proved to be vital for both the opposition and the support of same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage advocates achieved a major victory when Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to grant full marital benefits to same-sex relationships. The articles imply that this act also helped provided legitimacy to same-sex families as same-sex headed households were increasing framed as living similar lives to the traditionally accepted model of

male and female households. Politically, while many candidates sought the endorsement of gay rights activist groups, the issue of same-sex marriage was framed as a divisive issue and voter turnout was in favor of politically conservative candidates (Campbell and Monson 2008). During these years, both supporters and opponents increased their resource mobilization while relying on the same arguments of equality/deprivation and traditional morality/special rights.

After Legitimization: 2005-2008

After the *Goodridge* case in Massachusetts, same-sex marriage was legally recognized and given equal status on par with heterosexual marriages, opponents continued to adopt an adversarial approach based on the ideals of American democracy. They claimed that activist judges were usurping the will of the people (Barclay 2010). Opponents declared a revolution against the Supreme Judicial Court judges who wrote the ruling legalizing same-sex marriage. Cries of “stop judicial tyranny” and “let the people vote” were reported in many gatherings of the opposition. The findings show that the largest effort by the oppositional movement was another push for an amendment to be added to the Massachusetts state constitution. Accounts from in *The Boston Globe*, as well as the other three newspapers, detailed efforts by the oppositional movement to put the question to a vote. Supporters of the judicial legislation countered this cry by claiming that historically when civil rights have been left up to a popular vote, minorities have been subjected to majority tyranny (Gamble 1997). By calling on America’s discriminatory past, supporters continue to relate gay and lesbian rights struggles

to those of other minority groups and validate their own identity as discriminated minority.

Political opposition remained both within and outside of Massachusetts. The Massachusetts legislature did not agree to the pressure of a ballot measure and told opponents that they could revisit the possibility in 2012. The same arguments were being made in opposition to same-sex marriage, the frames in the articles point toward there was an attitude of “what’s done is done” in Massachusetts. One *Boston Globe* reporter remarked that after a year of legal same-sex marriage that “the sky had not fallen.” Initially, Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, also a Mormon, attempted to block outsiders from traveling to Massachusetts by relying on a 1913 law stating that non-residents would not be able to marry in the state if their marriage would not be legal in their home states. This law was initially designed to prevent interracial couples from marrying in Massachusetts if interracial marriages were not legal in their own states. Romney called on this law to keep the state from becoming the “Las Vegas” of same-sex marriage. However, Romney was unsuccessful in his campaign because the 1913 law was eventually overturned in 2008.

Many politicians still distanced themselves publicly from the issue of same-sex marriage, but for others it was a time to shine. San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom and New Paltz mayor Jason West went from rogue politicians to civil rights folk heroes. Newspaper articles represented both mayors as championed at gay pride events across the country and transitioning into important speakers for gay rights. Other leaders were honored as civil rights champions when Californians

were briefly allowed to marry before the passage of Proposition 8 passed, adding an amendment to the state's constitution restricting marriage to different-sex couples. During this short period, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon were again at the head of the line to exchange their vows and received a hero's welcome at the mass wedding ceremony.

There was cause for much celebration but the political backlash was also significant. Twenty-one states started proceedings to add amendments to their state constitutions banning same-sex marriages and in some cases, even civil unions or domestic partnerships. Conversely, only 4 states had begun to enact legislation allowing for same-sex marriage. Social conservatives claimed that the issue boosted their constituency's numbers at the polls. With the passage of same-sex legislation, supporters also reported being able to pass other anti-discrimination laws that might have seemed radical before. Although both sides were claiming victories early on, it is undeniable that same-sex recognition changed the political and cultural landscape.

After same-sex marriage legitimization, previously undecided religious leaders were forced to make a decision in regard to same-sex relationships. The data demonstrate that for some, it was a choice between the possibility of losing their congregations over their support of a state sanctioned marriage or acting against their own faith's doctrine. Catholics and Mormons continued to speak out from the pulpit and urge lawmakers to oppose same-sex marriage. The trouble for both of these organizations came during the Proposition 8 campaign in California when it was revealed that Catholic and Mormon officials behaved in much the same

manner as in previous campaigns with other states. While Catholics did not take as much criticism as the Mormons in the articles, many California residents expressed disappointment within the Catholic organization. Mormons described the Proposition 8 campaign as a public relations nightmare. *The San Francisco Chronicle* stated that Mormons comprised only 2% of California's population. However, church members, both residents and non-residents, donated up to \$19.5 million dollars to Yes on 8. The church was also accused of using scare tactics to increase support among other denominations by declaring that the clergy of many faiths would be forced to marry same-sex couples even if they did not support it. Supporters countered this statement by stating that historically there were many churches at odds with civil law and that no Catholic priest had ever been forced into marrying a divorced person and that no Rabbi had ever been forced to perform an interfaith marriage. Possibly due in part to the fact that public support for same-sex marriage decreased after it was legalized in Massachusetts (Hutchison 2008), Proposition 8 did pass in California and same-sex marriages were effectively banned.

Newspaper articles indicated that other religious organizations began to soften their approach to same-sex marriage. Not always reversing their official positions, they began to quietly look the other way when clergy members decided to officiate same-sex marriages. Because the news in both 2007 and 2008 was dominated by Proposition 8 much of religious debate relied on previous arguments used by churches that both support and oppose same-sex marriage: traditional morality versus civil rights.

Proposition 8 also dominated news reports of families during the latter years of this period. It was the first time that children seemed to be used as weapons in highly vitriolic debate. Articles warned parents that their children would be taught as early as kindergarten about the homosexual lifestyle. They told parents they would have no choice as to what morals they wished to instill in their children because everything would be controlled by the state and the homosexual agenda. The opposition claimed that children would be forced to accept gays and lesbians as part of acceptable American society and were likely to grow up to be perverted deviants. Tactics by same-sex marriage supporters focused on parents of gay and lesbian children. Pleas were issued from grandparents and parents alike, begging that their own children be granted the same rights they enjoyed. Family presence at gay and lesbian rights support events remained strong but became over shadowed by Proposition 8 coverage. Whether this was intentional or not cannot be determined, but this served to push healthy functioning same-sex households into the background for a little while.

The same-sex marriage debate proved to be very divisive to the American public in years between 2005 and 2008. Continuing to rely on frames of equality versus morality, the rhetoric of both campaigns became increasingly more emotional as children and families were pushed to the forefront during major election campaigns and ballot initiatives. Politicians also used the issue to generate support for their own campaigns or to create friction for their opponents' campaigns. Articles collected from California show increasing tensions between the supporters and opponents of Proposition 8 and by the end of the campaign it is

revealed that both groups rely on the emotional “us versus them” framework in their arguments.

By tracing the frames and arguments of the same-sex marriage debate, I was able to follow religious, political, and family issues that arose within the larger movement. The findings indicate that the same-sex marriage debate changed over time for both the supports and the opponents. For opponents, arguments that began as an emphasis on traditional morality shift to arguments about religious persecution and the decline of American society. For supporters, arguments initially framed as egalitarian evolved into collective minority identity with emphasis on American principles of basic civil and human rights.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research questions examined in thesis were: How do newspapers report on the culture of the same-sex marriage debate, including rallies, protests, and public campaigns? How does each side of the movement use social institutions of religion, the polity, and the family, to solidify their claims either for or against same-sex marriage? How has the tone of the campaigns both for and against the legal recognition of same-sex marriage changed over the course of 16 years? The initial descriptive categories I used to analyze the data became less useful as the newspaper articles increased over the time period. Few articles fit neatly into one singular category as both sides of the debate were often presented. Instead of attempting to further delineate the data, I chose instead to follow major organizational players within the debate and evaluate how their own value frames shifted over time and adapted with political policy.

The findings illustrate that initially, the four newspapers framed the stories on the culture of the debate within the context of what they were reporting on. If an article dealt with a directive from a church or political organization, then it was framed either inclusively or exclusively to reflect the ideas or content of who or what was being reported about. After same-sex marriage legitimization, possibly because the arguments both for and against remained relatively unchanged and that many warnings of the opposition had not been realized, some reporters' frames

began to change to one of irritation or boredom. This was only found in late articles depicting the opposition's campaign with several reporters going so far as to openly mock their views.

This research indicates that the debate has changed much over the years. The newspaper articles suggest that gay rights activists were not ready to fight for same-sex marriage. As Fetner (2008) asserted, they preferred to work on smaller issues with localized government bodies. However, the Hawaii same-sex marriage case and the immediate response by religious leaders persuading political officials effectively pushed gay activism into the forefront. Gay and lesbian Americans were forced to stand up and be counted for fear of losing what they had hoped would be a future battle because of the constant threat of discrimination being written into Constitutional Law.

The newspaper articles suggest that both supporters and opponents rely on social constructivist notions of the shared understandings of social institutions to deliver their messages. Opponents framed traditional family structures consisting of one father, one mother, and biological children as the only formation acceptable to society, effectively excluding all others. They also drew on the frame of homosexuals as dangerous to society and therefore detrimental to the institution of the family. Rather than framing gay and lesbian families as oppositional or defensive to their opponents' stances, same-sex marriage advocates introduced a modified version of acceptable family units. The analysis revealed an increase in newspaper representations of same-sex headed households as the debate progressed. These depictions were of families leading daily lives that were virtually

identical to the traditionally accepted idea of a nuclear family. Both sides called on a socially shared meaning of family, but depending on who was speaking, that shared meaning was either weakened or strengthened by same-sex marriage legitimization.

Gay and lesbian families were virtually invisible in the beginning of the same-sex marriage movement. Homosexuals were still depicted as promiscuous and unable to form close attachments, so a family unit probably did not sound logical to the outside world. Religious and political institutions claimed that same-sex marriage would be destructive to the family unit and in response gay and lesbian families came out of the closet to demonstrate otherwise. Currently, regardless of which side of the debate an individual agrees with, it is not uncommon to see a representation of a child having two mothers or two fathers in the news.

Liberal and conservative politicians distanced themselves from the same-sex marriage movement at its beginning. The frames with early findings reveal that politicians were not worried about the gay vote, a marginalized group. As legislation moved forward and gay and lesbian rights organizations grew both in number and political power, politicians began to take notice.

Some politicians managed to navigate successfully through both supporters and opponents, but the newspaper articles revealed that they were almost always required to answer for their actions or inactions eventually. These results indicate that supporters drew heavily on shared ideas of the American government protecting equality and democracy when calling on politicians to take a stand. By publicizing that gays and lesbians were being deprived of equal protection under the law, they cultivated a sense of deprivation, a social injustice that must be

corrected. Also, by relating the struggle of homosexual Americans to the historical plight of African-Americans, gay rights activists constructed their own identity as an excluded minority in need of government protections.

To combat the frames of deprivation and injustice, opponents relied on ideas about religious persecution and differences in civil rights movements. Newspaper articles late in the debate framed many religious leaders warning that if same-sex marriage were signed into law, religious organizations would be forced to perform ceremonies that had always been against their beliefs. Taking a defensive stance, opponents claimed that gays and lesbians were asking for special rights that would contradict religious beliefs that had been firmly supported throughout history. In order to distance the same-sex marriage movement from the Civil Rights Movement, political opponents called homosexuality a lifestyle choice. By illustrating a difference between African-American who were born into a minority and homosexuals who chose a way of life that holds inherent consequences, opponents defended that granting special rights to gays and lesbians would amount to affirming deviant behavior. The findings illustrate that throughout the debate that politicians aligned themselves to one side of the issue in accordance with the shared meanings of equality or traditional morality.

Within this 16-year span the first sitting President in history met with a powerful gay lobbying group. After this historical event, it became common for politicians to speak to gay rights groups and even a presidential candidate as traditionally conservative as George W. Bush met with and sought out the endorsement of the Log Cabin Republicans. Less well-known local politicians went

from aligning themselves with same-sex marriage organizations in acts of relatively harmless civil disobedience to being grand marshals at gay pride parades. Over time, the politicians themselves became framed by their own sides as either defenders of traditional marriage or as the champions of a new civil rights movement.

Many Christian and non-Christian religious organizations spoke of religious doctrine condemning homosexuality early in the debate. The data show that there were smaller denominations that welcomed the idea of same-sex marriage but generally had less outside influence than some of the larger, more powerful religious institutions. Throughout the course of the debate both sides called on the shared religious ideal of a higher authority offering a guiding hand but they used opposing ideology. Opponents held that homosexuality was offense and an abomination according doctrine. Supporters relied on the idea that they were called to reach out to the outcasts of society. Interestingly, both of these dogmas relegate gays and lesbians to the role of “others” or “them.” The significant distinction lies in a church’s overall position being either “us versus them,” as is the case with the opposition, or “us and them,” as represented by the support.

Over the course of the movement, many denominations that initially opposed same-sex marriage eventually softened their stances to either fully accept or tolerate homosexuality. But perhaps the major role that religion plays in the opposition to same-sex marriages is best explained through resource mobilization theory. Churches have access to ready-made audiences through their congregations. The particularly powerful organizations, the Catholics and the

Mormons, mobilized their own members early through directives sent out nationwide from the accepted religious authorities. Possibly the most extreme example of resource mobilization is the fact that these major religious institutions, with very different doctrines, actually joined forces to help organize and fund political action committees in various states. These committees were then successful in helping to pass legislation banning same-sex marriages before same-sex marriages had even been legalized.

These two standout faiths certainly had some dissension within their organizations but never once altered their stance against same-sex marriage. Interestingly enough, both of these organizations have singular authoritarian figureheads who are believed by members to be representatives of the Christian God on Earth. This means that they have divine authority over all questions of doctrine and morality. In short, what they say becomes church law simply because they say it. While they certainly rely on religious teachings to guide them, they are granted authority to make decrees that church members must follow. This absolute power has serious implications for society and social control.

This study has certain limitations. By a simple function of the sample size, these data can be analyzed from many perspectives. It could be studied from a purely political stand point, a purely religious stand point or could be taken in an altogether different perspective, such as the implications the movement has had on the economic system. Gay rights organizational structure and the tendency toward respectable assimilation into heterosexual culture could be analyzed. Many directions could be taken from this sample as well as the literal thousands of articles

in the four newspapers chosen. The most obvious limitation of this thesis is that it offers only a small snapshot of a very large civil rights movement that operates within many facets of society both, independently and interdependently, in order to negotiate the movement's path.

Since the same-sex marriage movement is an on-going movement and much has happened since 2008, the possibilities for future research are almost limitless. Research into authoritative church organizational structures and how they go about issuing directives and controlling their members could be a fascinating topic. Also, there is an obvious similarity to other civil rights movements. A direct comparison between the gay and lesbian civil rights movement and the Civil Rights Movement of African-Americans could prove to be very illuminating because after all is said and done, the larger gay rights movement could end up having just as significant a political and cultural impact as the civil rights movements that have come before.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adam, Barry D. 2003. "The Defense of Marriage Act and American Exceptionalism: The 'Gay Marriage' Panic in the United States." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12(2): 259-276.
- Alwood, Edward. 1996. *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians, and the News Media*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Andersen, Ellen Ann. 2005. *Out of the Closets and Into the Courts: Legal Opportunity Structure and Gay Rights Litigation*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Anderson, Peter B., Akram Fakhfakh, and Mary Alice Kondylis. 1999. "Attitudes Toward the Media's Portrayals of Gays and Lesbians." *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality* 2 from <www.ejhs.org> Accessed 10.31.10.
- Andsager, Julie L. 2000. "How Interest Groups Attempt to Shape Public Opinion with Competing News Frames." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 77: 577-92.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth A. 2002. *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ball, Carlos A. 2010. *From the Closet to the Courtroom: Five LGBT Rights Lawsuits that Have Changed Our Nation*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Barclay, Scott. 2010. "In Search of Judicial Activism in the Same Sex Marriage Cases: Sorting the Evidence from Courts, Legislatures, Initiatives and Amendments." *Perspectives on Politics* 8: 111–26.
- Bennett, Lisa. 1998. "Fifty Years of Prejudice in the Media." *The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide* 7(2): 30-42.
- Brewer, Paul R. 2002. "Framing, Value Words, and Citizens' Explanations of Their Issue Opinions." *Political Communication* 19: 303–16.
- Brewer, Paul R. 2003. "Values, Political Knowledge, and Public Opinion about Gay Rights." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67: 173–201.
- Brians, Craig L. and Martin P. Wattenberg. 1996. "Campaign Issue Knowledge and Salience: Comparing Reception from TV Commercials, TV News, and Newspapers." *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 305–24.
- Bullough, Vern L., Vicki Eaklor, and Robert R. Meek. 2006. *Bringing Lesbian And Gay Rights into the Mainstream: Twenty Years of Progress*. New York: Routledge.
- Campbell, David E. and J. Quin Monson. 2008. "The Religion Card: Gay Marriage and the 2004 Election." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72 (3): 399-419.
- Chauncy, George Jr. 1994. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Comstock, George and Haejung Paik. 1991. *Television and the American Child*. New York: Academic Press.
- Conrad, Peter. 1997. "Public Eyes and Private Genes: Historical Frames, New Constructions, and Social Problems." *Social Problems* 44(2): 139-154.

- D'Emilio, John. 1983. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- D'Emilio, John. 1986. "Making and Unmaking Minorities: The Tensions Between Gay Politics and History." *New York University Review of Law and Social Change* 14: 109-116.
- D'Emilio, John. 2006. "The Marriage Fight Is Setting Us Back," *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, (Nov.-Dec.): 10-11.
- Druckman, James N. 2005. "Media Matter: How Newspapers and Television News Cover Campaigns and Influence Voters." *Political Communication* 22: 463-481.
- Duggan, Lisa. 2000. *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Elder Charles D. and Roger W. Cobb. 1972. *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Entman, Robert M. 1993. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43: 51-55.
- Esterberg, Kristin. 2002. *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Eveland, William P. Jr., Mihye Seo, and Krisztina Marton. 2002. "Learning from the News in Campaign 2000: An Experimental Comparison of TV News, Newspapers and Online News." *Media Psychology* 4: 353-378.

- Fejes, Fred. 2008. *Gay Rights and Moral Panic: The Origins of America's Debate on Homosexuality*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Feldman, Stanley. 1988. "Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: the Role of Core Beliefs and Values." *American Journal of Political Science* 32(2): 416-440.
- Fetner, Tina. 2008. *How the Religious Right Shaped Gay and Lesbian Activism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Freedman, Estelle B. 1987. "Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920 – 1960." *The Journal of American History* 74(1): 83-106.
- Friedman, Debra and Doug McAdam. 1992. "Collective Identity and Activism: Networks, Choices, and the Life of a Social Movement." Pp. 156–173 in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, edited by A. Morris and C. M. Mueller. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gamble, Barbara S. 1997. "Putting Civil Rights to a Popular Vote." *American Journal of Political Science* 41(1): 245-269.
- Gamson, Joshua. 1997. "Messages of Exclusion: Gender, Movements, and Symbolic Boundaries." *Gender & Society* 11(2): 178–99.
- Gamson, William A. 1992. "The Social Psychology of Collective Action." Pp. 53–76 in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, edited by A. D. Morris and C. M. Mueller. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gamson, William A. and Amedeo Modigliani. 1987. "The Changing Culture of Affirmative Action." Pp. 137–177 in *Research in Political Sociology*, edited by R. G. Braungart and M. M. Braungart. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

- Garner, Abigail. 2005. *Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Gates, Gary and Jason Ost. 2004. *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press.
- Gentzkow, Matthew and Jesse M. Shapiro. 2006. "Media Bias and Reputation." *Journal of Political Economy* 114(2): 280-316.
- Ghaziani, Amin. 2011. "Post-Gay Collective Identity Construction." *Social Problems* 58(1): 99-125.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1985. *The Nation-State and Violence*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Groseclose, Tim and Jeffrey Milyo. "A Measure of Media Bias." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120(4): 1191-1237.
- Gross, Larry. 1997. "From South Beach to SoBe." Pp. 201-210 in *Voices in the Street: Explorations in Gender, Media, and Public Space*. edited by S. J. Drucker & G. Gumpert. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Gross, Larry. 2001. *Up From Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hornig, Susannah. 1990. "Science Stories: Risk, Power, and Perceived Emphasis." *Journalism Quarterly* 67: 767-76.
- Hutchinson, Darren L. 2008. "Sexual Politics and Social Change." *Connecticut Law Review* 41(5): 1523-1547.
- Jacoby, William G. 2000. "Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 750-167.

- Jenkins, Phillip. 1998. *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Josephson, Jyl. 2005. "Citizenship, Same-Sex Marriage, and Feminist Critiques of Marriage." *Perspectives on Politics* 3: 269-284.
- Keck, Thomas. 2009. "Beyond Backlash: Assessing the Impact of Judicial Decisions on LGBT Rights." *Law & Society Review* 43(1): 151-85.
- Kinder, Donald R. and Lynn M. Sanders. 1996. *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Klarman, Michael J. 2005. "Brown and Lawrence (and Goodridge)," *Michigan Law Review* 104: 431-89.
- Koch, Jeffery W. 1998. "Political Rhetoric and Political Persuasion: The Changing Structure of Citizens' Preferences on Health Insurance during Policy Debate." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 62 (2): 209-29.
- Landau, Jamie. 2009. "Straightening Out (the Politics of) Same-Sex Parenting: Representing Gay Families in US Print News Stories and Photographs." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 26(1): 80-100.
- Lannutti, Pamela J. 2005. "For Better or Worse: Exploring the Meanings of Same-Sex Marriage within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Community." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 22(1): 5-18.
- McCarthy, John D. and Mayer N. Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 82(6): 149-172.

- McClosky, Herbert and John Zaller. 1984. *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Toward Capitalism and Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Meeker, Martin. 2001. "Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and Male Homophile Practice, 1950s and 1960s." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10(1): 78-116.
- Morrison, Denton E. 1978. "Some Notes toward Theory on Relative Deprivation, Social Movements, and Social Change." Pp. 202-209 in *Collective Behavior and Social Movements*, edited by L. E. Genevie. Itasca, Ill.: Peacock.
- Nelson Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and its Effect on Tolerance." *American Political Science Review* 91: 567-83.
- Pan, Po-Lin, Juan Meng, and Shuhua Zhou. 2010. "Morality or Equality? Ideological Framing in News Coverage of Gay Marriage Legitimization." *The Social Science Journal* 47: 630-645.
- Patterson, Thomas. 1993. *Out of Order*. New York: Random House.
- Pichardo, Nelson A. 1997. "New Social Movements: A Critical Review." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23: 411-430.
- Price, Vincent, Lilach Nir, and Joseph Cappella. 2005. "Framing Public Discussion of Gay Civil Unions." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(2), 179-212.
- Rimmerman, Craig A. 2002. *From Identity to Politics: The Lesbian and Gay Movement in the United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Ritzer, George. 2008. *Sociological Theory*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

- Rokeach, Milton. 1973. *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: Free Press.
- Rosenberg, Gerald N. 2008. *The Hollow, Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Seidman, Steven. 1997. *Difference Troubles*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, Miriam. 2010. "Gender Politics and the Same-Sex Marriage Debate in the United States." *Social Politics* 17(1): 1-28.
- Stein, Edward. 1994. "The Relevance of Scientific Research about Sexual Orientation to Lesbian and Gay Rights." *The Journal of Homosexuality* 27: 269-308.
- Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Time Magazine. 1966. Essay: The Homosexual in America. 01-21-1966.
- Vaid, Urvashi. 1995. *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*. New York: Anchor.
- Valocchi, Steve. 1999. "Riding the Crest of the Protest Wave? Collective Action Frames in the Gay Liberation Movement, 1969-1973." *Mobilization* 4:59-73.
- Walters, Susanna. 2001. *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Warner, Michael. 1999. *The Trouble with Normal*. New York: Free Press.
- Woolwine, David. 2000. "Community in gay male experience and moral discourse." *Journal of Homosexuality* 38: 5-37.
- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zeidenstein, Harvey G. 1983. "White House Perceptions of the News Media Bias."

Presidential Studies Quarterly 13: 345-356.

VITA

Kellie Amanda Cochran was born in Tyler, Texas, on April 24, 1978, the daughter of Lyn Griffin Clark and Samuel Arthur Cochran. She entered Texas State University-San Marcos during the fall semester of 2002 as an undergraduate transfer student. She received the degree of Bachelor of Science from Texas State in December 2006. In January 2008, she entered the Graduate College of Texas State in the Department of Sociology. Upon completion, she plans to continue her education at Northeastern University as a PhD candidate.

Permanent Address: 83 Penfield Street

Roslindale, MA 02131

This thesis was typed by Kellie A. Cochran.