Validating a Vow:
Framing the Fight for Same-Sex Marriage in Contemporary Print Media

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Same-sex marriage activists and anti-marriage advocates utilize print media to convey their ‘frames,’ certain conceptualizations of a divisive issue designed to sway public opinion. This discourse has featured two competing sets of frames termed as “morality” and “equality.” Morality, including notions of tradition, God, and family, initially appeared as a dominant frame in print but the equality frame, encompassing notions of diversity, tolerance and inclusion, has seemed to increasingly resonate with voters. In this thesis, I evaluated if the content of a frame and the unity, diversity and scope of a same-sex marriage coalition influenced increased rates of transmission to print. In order to address these questions, I compiled 120 randomly sampled articles from four different states—Arizona, New York, Maryland and Minnesota—that displayed a two-phase same-sex marriage campaign featuring both failure and success. I determined that the transmission of the morality frame remained constant in the second phase of a campaign—even as the equality frame arose in print discourse beginning in 2011. As indicated by Maryland and Minnesota, the equality frame appeared in both phases of their respective same-sex marriage campaign—regardless of outcome. Finally, the organizational structure of same-sex marriage coalitions changed between phases but did not seem to have an impact on rate of frame transmission. This leads one to re-consider the influence of framing practices in the same-sex marriage debate but also the impact of coalition behavior for future campaigns.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Evan Wolfson, executive director of Freedom to Marry, issued a statement in 2005 in an annual press release that has served as the impetus for same-sex marriage campaigns from Iowa, Connecticut and Vermont to Maine, Maryland and Washington.

There is this notion known as framing, a concept that allows one to be very clear about the values and real vision of what you stand for… and making an honest case for it with the right language and even the right messengers and repeated messages over time. Therefore, when it comes to same-sex marriage, it is very important that this discussion is about the values of love and commitment… fairness and freedom. These are American values and it violates those values for the government to discriminate against committed couples who seek to marry. (2005 Freedom to Marry Annual Report, 4)

Framing, as defined by Dennis Chong and James Druckman (2007), is a practice “by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (106). Activists on both sides of the argument have developed countless
conceptualizations about same-sex marriage to sway public opinion on the issue. Activists from national organizations such as Freedom to Marry and the Human Rights Campaign preach love, freedom and fairness. On the other side of the battlefield, moral conservatives vehemently oppose changes in the legally affirmed institution of marriage between a man and woman, presenting their arguments in terms of traditional values and stability. Of particular interest, here, is that the battle is fought in newspaper forums across the country. Pan, Meng, and Zhou (2010) note “numerous studies have demonstrated that mainstream newspapers would produce more powerful influences on people’s perceptions of public policies and political issues than television news” (631). In light of the increased exposure and visibility of print media, the presence of particular frames may play a key role in shaping debate on the issue. Yet, who has won the fight to frame?

Activists successfully advocated for legalization of same-sex marriage in 17 states, and pending court appeals, gay marriage bans in Oklahoma, Utah, Virginia and Kentucky are likely to be overturned. Is the appearance of certain frames in newspapers one of the reasons for the success of same-sex marriage campaigns? Robert Entman (1993) argues that it could be, stating particular frames “define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies… which expose persistent patterns in news coverage” (52). News media then can choose to promote these messages, establishing a dominant stance on the issue through consistent coverage. Yet, activists are still waging the battle against traditionalists in 30 other states. In this thesis, I evaluate content of frames as well as the organizational structures of same-sex marriage coalitions, determining if changes in these variables influence the successful transmission of particular frames. I conduct an empirical analysis of two-phase same-sex
marriage campaigns in four states, examining the activist organizations participating in each state and investigating how the hierarchical structures of these coalitions shape media behavior.

Case Selection

This thesis seeks to evaluate the conditions under which same-sex marriage activists succeed in translating their messages to print media. How do activists convey their messages when the movement seeks to legalize marriage? In turn, what strategies do activists use in a movement to combat the prohibition of marriage? If activists decide to re-structure their messages or seek to alter the structure of the coalition they are associated with, they may also better facilitate the transmission of frames to print media. I compared four states in light of the institutional mechanisms\(^1\) that they used: Minnesota, Arizona, New York and Maryland. The state legislatures in Minnesota and Arizona approved amendments to prohibit same-sex marriage, and yet, voters utilized ballot initiatives to overturn these prohibitions. Meanwhile, the state legislatures in Maryland and New York both initially rejected bills to affirm same-sex marriage, but after another proposal, reversed their decisions in approving same-sex marriage. It is also important, though, to note the distinction between “offensive” and “defensive” campaigns. Activists in the “defensive” stance were tasked with renouncing initiatives to ban same-sex marriage in Minnesota and Arizona. Meanwhile, in New York and Maryland, organizations advocated “on the offensive” for campaigns that legalized same-sex marriage.

Each of the activist coalitions in these states—even in Arizona, which to date has not legalized gay marriage—has successfully advanced a cause in favor of same-sex marriage. Even though there are two differing strategies at work—the offensive in New York and Maryland as

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\(^1\) “Institutional mechanisms” in this case is a two-part definition: (1) whether the vote relates to a ban or affirmation of same-sex marriage and (2) whether the vote was conducted via a referendum or through a legislature.
opposed to the defensive in Minnesota and Arizona—each of these campaigns eventually secured a favorable outcome for gay rights activists. With these similarities and differences in mind, I am able to evaluate comparable activists’ messaging strategies and the effectiveness in which they are translated to print media. Figure 1 shows the cases selected for this study, depicting a breakdown of the strategies, procession of institutional mechanism, and eventual outcomes for each state.

Insert Figure 1 About Here

Literature Review

There is a substantial amount of research on the impact of frames on political movements\(^2\), particularly as they relate to same-sex marriage. Also relevant to this thesis are strategies to earn media coverage, which in turn, rely on the reciprocal relationship between journalists and activists. This section also reviews the existing literature on general framing practices, frames employed in the same-sex marriage movement and the interactions between journalists and activists.

Framing Theory

Activists and politicians are able to influence a shift in perspective toward a particular issue through highlighting particular aspects to the mass public. Essentially, as Iyengar (1996) states, they can “organize everyday reality” by promoting “particular definitions and interpretations of political issues” (20). Presentation is at the very core of framing’s potential power. As Entman (1993) states, “it is through the selection and salience of certain aspects of an issue that texts embody specific meanings about and perceptions of that issue” (53).

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\(^2\) A “political movement” is when a social group collaborates and advocates for the achievement of a bill or other form of initiative.
Druckman and Chong (2007) also elaborate upon three layers of cognitive processing that make framing effective. First, a frame must be stored in memory and made available for future use. This often depends on the media’s consistent use of such a frame and its effective diffusion to the public. Second, the “consideration must be accessible, meaning its activation potential must exceed a certain threshold so that the consideration is retrieved from long-term memory” (109). In other words, an available frame will be more likely to be employed when the issue is prompted by an activist or a media source. This leads to the third and most relevant factor of framing for this thesis, a process by which Druckman and Chong notes “out of the set of accessible beliefs, only some are strong enough to be judged relevant or applicable to the subject at hand” (119). Same-sex marriage activists and opponents shape their frames through this procedure, vying for expression in print mediums. They attempt to paint the issue in a way that will resonate with a person’s core values. For example, many advocates seek to promote a conception of same-sex marriage that is salient and accessible. Through that three-step process, is prodded to connect their values to a particular frame in the media and shape a perspective in alignment with this frame.

Same-Sex Marriage Frames

What are these frames that have dominated same-sex marriage discourse – and how have they evolved over time? Pan, Meng and Zhou (2010) determined that “the bulk of studies found that the news coverage of the legal standing of gay marriage is framed in terms of two core values: morality and equality [in regard to civil rights]” (633). According to Lenon (2011), morality “articulates an anxious future whereby extending civil marriage to same-sex conjugal couples represents a threat to society, to the social and psychic development of children and to civilization itself” (353), while equality calls for a civil-rights based “demand for recognition of
loving conjugality and ‘marriage-like’ same-sex relationships” (353). Morality seemed to be the more prominent frame in many newspaper forums over this past decade while equality had not yet been clearly articulated and properly diffused to the public. Marital traditionalists see the fight for same-sex marriage as a challenge to the presumed superiority and sanctity of heterosexual marriage—not as a way to expand access to a valued social institution.

Previously, activists fought for same-sex marriage as an inherent right but never explored how they truly mirrored heteronormative unions. The argument once began and ended with the notion that allowing same-sex partners to marry is a choice that exists as a fundamental right and imposes no harm on society. Same-sex marriage campaigns resembled civil rights movements but the issue was not that simple. Since no one has the right to marry persons of the same sex, the demand for the right to same-sex marriage is not analogous to the blacks’ demand for the right to study at the same schools as whites or a woman’s demand for the right to vote. Without this right, the morality argument reigned in print and same-sex marriage could never be deemed as proper or acceptable in society; more rather, it was an anomaly. In the morality frame, opponents effectively highlighted the adverse societal impact of gay marriage. Pan, Meng, and Zhou supplemented this argument, asserting in their 2010 comparative study of the liberal New York Times and the conservative Chicago Tribune that the Tribune better “persuaded its news audiences to realize the impact of gay marriage on American society” (602).

However, the equality frame has critically transformed and expanded, now encompassing three distinct sub-frames of diversity, tolerance and inclusion. To explain briefly, many same-sex marriage activists have adopted a framing construct that, as Hull (2001) describes, has “entailed… a positive message of acceptance and the condemnation of prejudice” (219). This frame—a new conceptualization of homosexual union that is particularly potent because it
accommodates the health and vitality of a new type of family—has gained traction for same-sex marriage activists. Leaders of these organizations pay special attention to the ideals of love, honor and commitment in the heteronormative American family, noting they can apply to same-sex couples as well. Duncan (2006) argues that “marriage has been seen as a way of securing an egalitarian vision of dignity and regard for all types of adult relationships” (29). Activists no longer needed to rely on same-sex marriage as a—non-existent—equal right, but more rather, could portray harmonious, stable homosexual marriages with broad ideals of love and commitment. Same-sex marriages were no longer threatening, a change spurred by these new frames that painted heterosexual marriage as “less relevant in structuring intimate relationships… and an open, less restrictive institution.” (Duncan, 29) Therefore, tolerance, diversity and inclusion have served as available and accessible frames, constructs that now resonate with American voters. Gates (2004) argues in his text that “it signals a kind of openness to people who are different. It sends a signal to people, straight or gay, that this is a place where they can potentially thrive” (3). It creates a chain reaction by which same-sex marriage activists feel invigorated, garner a wide series of donations from newfound fundraising sources and seemingly succeed in their campaigns. Yet, has the expansion and clarification of this re-articulated equality frame necessarily led to successful transmission of frames to the print medium?

**The Journalist-Activist Connection**

The relationships between journalists and activists also impact activists’ efforts to shape how marriage is framed in the media. Same-sex marriage activists, for example, mostly failed to align with the criteria that journalists employ for media coverage and exposure to frames. For example, Sarah Sobieraj (2010) notes how the path to inclusion requires one to be credible and
reliable, thereby “being politically reasonable if they wish to appear in print… and part of being reasonable is providing simple, clearly articulated messages” (521). Activists, in the eyes of media sources, must associate with a well-organized coalition that is large, diverse and conveys a clear message—or in other words, possesses standing—to warrant press attention.

The successful translation of these frames, though, also relies on an organization’s standing. Standing, according to Sobieraj (2010), lends “an actor with a voice [and not] merely as an object being discussed by others.” (509) More specifically, Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) elaborate how standing represents “the extent to which the group is taken seriously by being given extensive media coverage, regardless of content” (121). Standing is imperative if an organization wishes to convey a frame to print media. However, Gamson and Wolfsfield (1993) point to two other vital factors that influence successful transmission of frames. There is “preferred framing, that is, the prominence of the group's frame in media discourse on the issues of concern as well as movement sympathy—that is, the extent to which the content of the coverage presents the group in a way that is likely to gain sympathy from relevant publics” (121). The emergence of these two criteria accompanies an increasing likelihood that an organization will receive media attention and, from there, be able to transmit its messages to print.

When journalists evaluate an organization’s standing, they also evaluate its resources and reputation to determine whether to promote certain frames in their content. Andrews and Caren (2011) respond that “more resourceful organizations are better able to establish and maintain relationships with the news media and may also be better able to signal the legitimacy of the organization and its claims” (857). Organizations that possess authority—via funds, size of network or its political connections—all carry more standing and display more consistent news
coverage. A favorable presentation that resonates with journalists’ desire to generate media attention will inevitably lead to increased coverage. Mazur (2009) argues in turn that “quantity and saliency of coverage matter more than content because mass audiences are more influenced by media signals” (793).

How do organizations effectively generate these signals though? Pan and Kosicki (1993) accentuate that “resources are not distributed equally…. actors strategically cultivate their resources and translate them into framing power, a process known as frame sponsorship” (53). There is a network at play in this process, favoring certain activist groups over others. Organizations are geared to find frames culturally resonant with particular news sources. They then curry favor with influential political actors who will lend credence to a strong, accessible and broadly resonant frame. Ryan, Carragee and Meinhofer (2001) further assert that “considerable resources available to those who hold institutional power contribute to their sponsorship of frames and to their ability to have these frames influence public discourse” (177). Authority, relationships with political elites, size and diversity all contribute to an organization’s success in frame transmission. In a media climate that demands name recognition and sponsorship, the most effective coalitions would imaginably have the most success in transmitting their frames to print.

Hypotheses

Elites and political activists use framing practices to craft an issue in a particular light, prompting the target audience to shift its attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Gaines and Garand (2010) define homosexual marriages through the morality and family frames, “emphasizing same-sex couples’ lack of access to the fundamental rights and legal securities associated with marriage” (556). Elite bias in framing is still centered on morality and family frames. With the
passage of the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, legislators sought to ban same-sex marriage and reinforce language in pre-existing laws that made same-sex marriage illegal. The entrenched morality frame has impeded the efforts of same-sex marriage activists. Therefore, when considering the two same-sex marriage campaigns—each failure followed by a success with the exception of Arizona—in the four states described, morality and frames should be the most accessible and applicable in this debate.

H1: Anti-marriage activists use morality and family frames in both phases of the campaign.

The notion that morality and family frames still shape the discussion on same-sex marriage is quite problematic for activists. Opponents of same-sex marriage have successfully transmitted more salient frames of morality and family values to print, using frames to control discourse on same-sex marriage. However, Pizmony-Levy and Ponce (2013) argue that same-sex marriage activists have begun to curtail this trend. They allude to a recent re-invention of the language of civil rights—an equality frame that is now situated outside of the realm of morality. It incorporates notions of diversity, tolerance, and inclusion that may especially be evident in the second phase of the aforementioned state campaigns. Sobieraj (2010) posits that the growing authenticity and standing of frames figures prominently in its visibility in the print medium. Over the past few years, as these frames have come to life, the second hypothesis posits these equality frames would appear more frequently in print in the second phase of a campaign.

H2: Activists use frames focused on diversity, tolerance and inclusion in the second phase of the campaign.

Even if these frames prove to resonate with the public, their transmission to print depends on sponsorship from a large, unified, and diverse coalition of organizations. The frame’s successful transmission also depends on sponsorship from a sizable, unified coalition that
incorporates a diverse array of interests. The four states used in this study—Maryland, Minnesota, New York and Arizona—all produced successful outcomes with the assistance of these coalitions. Journalists are more inclined to advance frames from an organization that matches this criterion. With a new series of frames, and the construction of an influential coalition to convey them, same-sex marriage activists can hope to see the transmission of frames to print.

H3: Activists in states with coalitions that are large, unified and diverse will have more success in transmitting frames than activists in state campaigns with coalitions that are not large, unified and diverse.

Methodology and Coding Scheme

Methodology

I conducted a content analysis on 12 newspapers from the four profiled states—Arizona, New York, Maryland and Minnesota. The newspapers were selected on the basis of ideological diversity and location in a densely populated region. The full list of newspapers can be found in the appendix of this thesis. All articles were published within three months of the vote to legalize same-sex marriage or reject its prohibition. I drew each article from the LexisNexis database, utilizing key search terms such as “same-sex marriage” and “gay marriage” in concurrence with each of the four states. I also paired these search terms with the major participating coalitions from each state. After eliminating letters to the editor and contributor-based pieces, the 500 remaining articles were numbered and with a web-based number generator, I randomly selected
120 articles. I then coded these articles. A second reader reviewed 10 of these articles. I obtained an inter-coder reliability score of .90 (out of 1).³

*Coding Scheme*

I used a four-variable coding scheme, listed in the appendix of this thesis, to analyze the appearance of frames and their sponsoring coalitions in a series of randomly sampled articles from these newspapers. These four variables are: (1) the phase of the same-sex marriage campaign, (2) organization mention, (3) activist quote and (4) content of the frames. Each of the four variables was then indexed on a number-based scale from values of “0” to “3.” In the following paragraph, we will explore these outcomes in greater detail. The content analysis can be applied to each of the articles from the same-sex marriage campaigns in these four states.

The first variable denotes the “phase” of the same-sex marriage campaign in each state. A “0” indicates that the date of an article falls within the first phase of a campaign. A “0” would be scored for all Arizona-based articles written in 2006, and in New York, all articles written in 2009. Additionally, in Maryland and Minnesota, a reader would indicate a value of “0” for all articles written in 2011. Conversely, a “1” for an article is used for all dates found within the second phase of the campaign. In this case, a “1” would be scored for all Arizona-based articles written in 2008, and for New York, all articles written in 2011. Again, in Maryland and Minnesota, a “1” would translate to all articles dated from 2012.

From there, the second variable analyzes if a same-sex marriage coalition appeared throughout the article. A “0” indicates that the journalist failed to include any mention of an

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³ In order to calculate intercoder reliability, I input results from both coded articles from the control and the second coder into SPSS to calculate Cohen’s Kappa which resulted in an inter-coder reliability score of .90.
organization in his or her article. A “1,” meanwhile, denotes that a same-sex marriage organization was included at one point in the piece. A “2” indicates the writer chose to mention a pro-marriage coalition at multiple junctures in the article while a “3” translates to a quote used by a representative of that coalition. Similarly, the third variable seeks to discover if the articles included activist quotes, and ultimately, if they invoked any morality or equality-based frames. A value of “0” indicates the lack of an activist quote in the article. A “1,” meanwhile, is used for all activist quotes that are unrelated to the cause of same-sex marriage. A value of “2” indicates the appearance of an activist quote that generally supports same-sex marriage, but ultimately, does not invoke a frame. If the quote invokes a same-sex marriage frame, the article would receive a value of “3” for this variable.

Finally, the fourth variable sheds light on the appearance of frames in each of these articles. Does the article contain frames focused on morality and family, or more rather, an equality frame that incorporates messages of diversity, tolerance and inclusion? A “0” indicates that the article failed to contain any specific same-sex marriage frames. However, a “1” connotes the use of a “morality” and “family” frame, constructs that portray heterosexual same-sex marriage as a sacred institution. In order to score an article a “1,” an article must produce key words such as “stability,” “family values,” “traditional,” “protection,” “fundamental,” and “God.” This frame, and its associated terms listed above, connotes marriage as an heteronormative institution. Lee and George (1997) both argue that this frame states that “the law of marriage has long embodied the understanding that marriage, as a moral reality, is an inherently heterosexual institution.” (146) Same-sex marriage serves as a foil to this construct. Meanwhile, a value of “2” for this metric indicates the appearance of a new equality frame, featuring foundational concepts of diversity, tolerance and inclusion that have displayed great
success in recent campaigns. “Diversity” depicts same-sex marriage as a practice that, due to its distinctive perspective, is a unique contribution to society. Meanwhile, along much of the same lines, inclusion states that same-sex marriage should be considered as equally viable to heterosexual marriage. Discrimination is regarded to be morally unjust and many activists allude to a ‘language of love and acceptance.’ The third and final frame of this grouping, tolerance, extends this hatred for discrimination even further, positing an unconditional acceptance of same-sex marriage. Key words associated with this frame include “freedom,” “fairness,” “love,” “commitment,” “inclusion” and “tolerance.” Sanders (2012) notes that this new consortium of equality frames connote foundational “values of autonomy, equality, and sexual freedom that consequently are supportive of same-sex marriage.” (1423) A list of key words associated with both the “morality” and “equality” frames can be found in the appendix of this thesis.
Chapter 2: A Weakening Message of Morality

I coded 120-articles and sought to identify key frames falling under two main frames: morality and equality. Key words—based on a survey of anti-marriage activists’ messages—that fell under a morality and family frame in the content analysis included “stability,” “tradition,” “virtue,” “fundamentalism,” “sanctity,” and “God.” Forde-Mazrui (2011) argues that this frame—and its corresponding messages—indicate same-sex marriage is an enduring, critical institution, and by altering this tradition, irreversible consequences to our society ensue.

As stated earlier in this thesis, many citizens regarded homosexual marriage as an anomaly. In a Pew poll conducted in 2004, just 31 percent of those sampled supported same-sex marriage. As a result, it is not a surprise that tradition emerged as the dominant frame in many newspaper forums while equality remained as an invalid message. Haider-Markel (2001) argued that, with the public’s resounding renunciation of same-sex marriage, elected officials were eager to adopt morality-based policies. The debate shifted to a discussion of children and the moral obligation to preserve heterosexual marriage. As a result, the first phases of campaigns had to overcome this major obstacle—and often at the expense of defeat (with the exception of Arizona). The first hypothesis of this thesis posits that morality frames should have appeared in a majority of the newspaper articles in the content analysis—even during the second phase of the campaign. Without an effective equality frame, and continued support from both citizens and elected officials, anti-marriage activists feasibly would expect to see a consistent record of success in transmitting morality as well as family frames to newspaper forums.

H1: Morality and family frames are used in both the first and second phases of a same-sex marriage campaign.

Morality and Family Frames across the States

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Based on the content analysis, the morality and family frames appeared in 30 percent of the 120 sampled articles (36 of the articles). Meanwhile, the six key words associated with these frames arose in varying degrees. “God” had appeared in fourteen articles, “values” arose in eight pieces, “protection” was invoked five times, “traditional” and “fundamental” emerged four times, and finally, “stability” was used just once. Figure 2 illuminates the percentage-based use of each of the morality frames for the four state campaigns.

*Insert Figure 2 About Here*

“God” exists as the most utilized frame in this content analysis due to its overt religious connotation. Same-sex marriage challenges the biblical definition of heterosexual unions. Soule (2004) describes how numerous national conservative organizations such as Focus on the Family, the National Campaign to Protect Marriage, the Liberty Counsel, and the Traditional Values Coalition, for example, all exhibit notable Christian ties. The campaigns against homosexual unions stem from its contrast to God’s dictates. A March 8, 2011 *Baltimore Sun* article alludes to anti-marriage activists’ belief that God solely advocates for heterosexual marriages. Schuman (2008) further builds on this assertion, arguing that God views homosexuality as a sin and same-sex marriage exists as an unacceptable extension of that sin. This is where the “tradition” message, found in six of the 60 articles, comes into play. The *Minnesota Star Tribune*, for example, presents an assertion in 2011 that marriages are heteronormative. Garlinger (2004) argues that “opponents of same-sex marriage have not retreated from the belief that the word ‘marriage,’ whatever it designates, is intrinsically heterosexual” (43). Homosexual unions are regarded as abhorred outliers amid a context of

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4 “This afternoon, opponents of gay marriage from Pennsylvania played bagpipes outside the lawmakers’ offices, displayed a banner that read: "God’s Marriage = 1 man & 1 woman.” – Julie Bykowicz, “House Girds for Same-Sex Marriage Debate, *Baltimore Sun*, March 8, 2011
conventional heteronormative marriages. The notion that tradition is under siege emerges—or more rather, the *fundamental* need for a *protection* of these *values*.

Interestingly, those other three key words—fundamental, protection and values—also connote the notion that heterosexual marriage is in danger of collapse and requires preservation. A November 27, 2009 *New York Post* titled ‘Fed Up Faithful’ quoted an anti-marriage activist who sought to “act aggressively to stem the tide of the siege of Christian values in America.” The justification for banning same-sex marriage seems to be an impetus to respect tradition and the norm. Therefore, evidence of 36 articles—out of a total of 120 pieces—that contained morality and family frames supports that assertion.

*First Phase of Each State Campaign*

Morality and family frames were used in 32 percent—or 19 of 60—of all sample articles from the first phase of each state campaign. In Arizona, morality frames were used in 53 percent of sample articles from 2006. However, in each of the other states, that number was lower. In 15 sampled articles from New York in 2009 as well as Maryland in 2011, only 27 percent and 20 percent respectively contained morality and family frames. Meanwhile, Minnesota’s 2011 campaign contained just 13 percent of articles with these frames. Figure 3 demonstrates the percentage of articles for each state that contained the morality frame in its first campaign.

*Insert Figure 3 About Here*

*Arizona*

Arizona proved to be the only state for which a majority of the 15 sampled articles in the first phase of the campaign contained morality and family frames. Furthermore, half of those 10
articles were coded due to the use of the word “protection.” The other key words within this morality frame, save for tradition (which was invoked twice), were only coded for once in this sample set of 15 articles. This message of protection, as stated earlier, is invoked to defend assaults to the institution of traditional marriage. Anti-marriage activists seek to preserve the male-female union. Proposition 107, designed to codify heterosexual marriages in the state constitution, stated as follows:

To *preserve and protect marriage* in this state, only a union between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage by this state or its political subdivisions and no legal status for unmarried persons shall be created or recognized by this state or its political subdivisions that is similar to that of marriage.

Anti-marriage activists—in this case, the Protect Marriage Arizona Coalition—focused on those two words, drawing upon state-based approval of the amendment to galvanize a predominantly conservative citizenry. Naturally, anti-marriage organizations would have more clout in states that align with their political ideology. Haider-Markel (2001), in fact, noted that advocacy coalitions target favorable venues strategically to pursue their policy goals.

Arizona, as a conservative state with a significant Catholic population, would more readily embrace and identify with the morality and family frames. Consider the coalition’s mission statement on its webpage (Arizona Together Coalition, 2006), which ultimately, stated “marriage between a man and woman is the basic building block of society… marriage is the sure foundation of all that is noble in our civilization.” “Protection” then arose as a critical outcome for anti-marriage activists. The moral implications for a “sinful” union of same-sexes were interpreted to be disastrous. The National Association of Marriage Enhancement, in an

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5 “Peter Gentala, legal counsel for the Center for Arizona Policy, which is backing the proposition, said the measure has ‘a single, common purpose and that is protecting marriage from contemporary challenges.’” – ‘Phoenix mayor, ex-University of Arizona president oppose gay marriage amendment,’ August 23, 2006, *Arizona Daily Star*
October 27, 2006 news release further argued that “this amendment to Arizona’s constitution will affirm marriage’s traditional definition, ensuring it for future generations by prohibiting its redefinition by activist judges and others” (2). As evidenced by the preponderance of morality frames in the articles within the Arizona Daily Star (Arizona’s primary newspaper) and the Arizona Republic, anti-marriage activists seemed to have an ideal forum to promote their messages.

New York

Meanwhile, in New York, the morality frame was not nearly as pervasive. Only 33 percent of sampled articles from the first phase campaign displayed this code. In this case, it was a poor forum for anti-marriage activists in a largely liberal state. Kucinski (2009) noted, that as a result of the efforts of the Empire State Agenda, New York State’s leading marriage coalition at the time, the State of New York has shown consistent support for same-sex relationships through numerous court decisions, granting of several benefits, and a prohibition of discrimination based upon sexual orientation. This support has arguably made life easier for same-sex individuals in relationships. “Protection” reasonably did not arise once in this portion of the content analysis. Instead, the key words of “God” and “values” emerged in multiple pieces—and even then, on only two mere occasions.

However, in contrast to Arizona, the vote rested in the legislature’s hands rather than of the citizenry in New York. While the Empire State Agenda, the leading pro-marriage coalition, poured funds and invested almost one million dollars into the campaign, the New York State Catholic Conference had an even greater role in lobbying senators, representatives and journalists. The organization’s message extended into print forums and influenced the use of
both “God” and “fundamentalism.” Protection, unlike in Arizona, did not figure into New York’s anti-marriage narrative. While the morality and family frame were not as evident, the organizational clout of the NYS Catholic Conference played a pivotal role in striking down the pro-marriage bill in the legislature. This critical aspect known as standing will be discussed in a later chapter of this thesis.

**Maryland**

In Maryland, just 27 percent of morality and family frames were invoked in the sample of articles drawn from the first phase of the same-sex marriage campaign: two involved the word “God” while the frames of “fundamental”\(^6\) and “traditional” were each used once. Again, a sizable religious influence exists in this state reputed for its Catholic ties.

State legislators proposed the Civil Marriage Protection Act, with the approval of Governor Martin O’Malley, in February 2011. In light of this initiative, lawmakers, rather than the citizens at the ballot box, again had to vote to determine the legality of same-sex marriage in the state. Similarly, to New York, Maryland’s Family Alliance and Maryland’s Catholic Conference successfully lobbied legislators to vote against this piece of landmark legislation. Their organizational resources and ‘standing’ carry significantly more influence among legislators as opposed to the voting population. These advocacy coalitions, according to findings from Haider-Markel (2001), are successfully able to “mobilize local chapters of member groups, activate elected officials, and help coordinate a national political campaign on a specific issue” (6). The key here, of course, is to have access to the legislature. Based on the invocation of

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\(^6\) "More importantly, our fundamental concern about redefining marriage is for the sake of our whole society, and particularly for children and their elemental desire to know, and ideally to be raised and loved by, their biological mother and father.” – Annie Linskey, ‘Gay marriage has the votes to pass state Senate,’ February 17, 2011, *Baltimore Sun*
“God” as a repeated frame, Maryland’s Family Alliance and the Catholic Conference were able to organize and tap into these shared political networks.

The importance of transmitting such a message inevitably stemmed from the political clout of African-American congregations in heavily Democratic districts—voters that could determine the outcome of the legislation. However, the relative lack of morality frames could also be traced to an assertion from Filteau (2011) that the Catholic influence in this heavily Catholic state is in fact decreasing. God—and the impetus to protect marriage—do not carry as much clout among a younger, more secular citizenry. Ultimately, a referendum could have changed the eventual outcome (as it later did in November 2012).

**Minnesota**

Finally, in Minnesota, there were just two morality and family frames in this 15-article sample from the first phase of the campaign. The two morality and family frame articles used the key words ‘protection’ and ‘tradition’ in this sample. The scarcity of such frames could perhaps be traced to an ineffective change in strategy on behalf of anti-marriage activists. In considering the newfound successes of same-sex marriage coalitions, Ziegler (2012) argued “they [heterosexual coalitions] responded by focusing less on the social harms produced by gay couples and more on the freedom of belief and the parental rights of citizens potentially opposed to same-sex marriage” (467). In this case, when considering same-sex marriage as a social harm, it fits well into the morality framework. However, if citizens were to perceive same-sex marriage as a choice and righteous decision, the morality frame would fail. This failure, meanwhile, has competed with a equality frame that resonates with citizens and has expanded in scope by influencing—and propelling—its message to other favorable states. (Haider-Markel, 2001)
Now, as anti-marriage activists assume an argument based on belief and procreation, they adhere to an argument that worked well in previous states—but failed in those that featured a new set of frames. With just two morality and family frames in a 15-article sample of Minnesota newspapers, that trend seems to be quite evident. However, now it is vital to evaluate if these framing strategies succeeded in the second phase of the campaign. Are these morality and family messages still as viable as they once were?

Second Phase of Each State Campaign

For each state involved in this content analysis, the second phase of the campaign occurred one to two years after the first phase. After applying the same coding scheme to 60 articles from this secondary set, a content analysis revealed that the aggregate use of morality and family frames remained somewhat constant. Ultimately, 28.3 percent of all articles from this phase—or 17 of 60 sampled pieces—contained morality and family frames. There was just a four percent decrease in use—or two fewer articles—of morality frames during each of these second campaigns. Figure 4 demonstrates a similar percentage of articles in each state—with the exception of Arizona—that featured the morality and family frame in the second phase of the campaign.

Insert Figure 4 About Here

I find support for my first hypothesis: morality and family frames were invoked in both phases of each same-sex marriage campaign. Figure 5 illustrates the change in use of these frames between both phases of a state-based same-sex marriage campaign.

Insert Figure 5 About Here
State-by-State Analysis

Most states, however, experienced a decrease in use of the frame. In Arizona, the morality frame had been coded in just 40 percent of articles. However, it also proved to be the only state where, in the second phase of the campaign, anti-marriage activists actually prevailed—even amid a strong counter-equality frame. In the other three states, anti-marriage activists did not alter their strategies, choosing to employ the same ratios of frames. New York featured 26.7 percent of articles with that particular code as opposed to 33 percent. In Maryland, the percentage of articles that featured the morality frame remained at 26.7 percent throughout both phases. Minnesota remained the lone state to experience an increase, displaying 20 percent of articles with a morality code as opposed to 13 percent.

Arizona

As stated above, morality and family frame use in Arizona dropped by over 20 percent during the second phase of the campaign in 2008, appearing in 40 percent of sampled articles. Meanwhile, there were a series of anti-marriage activists in the Protect Marriage Arizona Coalition who changed their framing strategy to effectively counter the equality frame (which will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter). In 2006, these activists conveyed strong rhetoric that predominantly centered on “protection” of heterosexual marriage. In 2008, the key word of “protection” was not used in any sampled articles. The key words of “fundamental” and “traditional” were only used twice while “God” and values” each only appeared in one article.

In its place, a separate message emerged: to protect benefits for same-sex unions while also enshrining the traditional definition of marriage. No morality frame dominated print discourse but anti-marriage activists altered their messages. The overriding message was an
Acknowledgment of same-sex unions’ legitimacy. In the process, marriage was a concept solely attainable to opposite-sex couples. This appealed to a wide demographic, and as stated earlier, a consensus in public opinion propels representatives to promote and approve the corresponding Proposition 102 initiative. Furthermore, the Protect Marriage coalition erased a major fundraising disadvantage to pro-equality activists and had much greater success in exposing voting demographics to these less harmful messages.

With these two factors in mind, voters approved the proposition and crystallized a prohibition on same-sex marriage in the Arizona constitution. This case is an anomaly; anti-marriage activists in the other three states failed to shift their messages—and alter their frames—to appeal to a national audience increasingly in favor of same-sex marriage.

New York

In the second phase of New York’s same sex marriage campaign in 2011, the percentage of morality and family frames utilized in the 15-article sample decreased from 33 percent to 26 percent—the equivalent of one article. The same frames were utilized; “God” and, in this case, “tradition” were each invoked twice. The NYS Catholic Conference still played a pivotal role in coordinating with the state Conservative Party to lobby representatives, garner support for their messages, and influence their transmission into print. However, anti-marriage activists adhered to the same framing strategies, invoking these frames in both phases of the campaign.

Meanwhile, Governor Andrew Cuomo organized the New Yorkers United for Marriage coalition—a vast difference from the uncoordinated pro-marriage coalitions in 2009. He organized the promotion of an effective set of equality frames that appealed to a notably larger

7 “God” authored the family, not “man,” said Reverend Thomas Johnson, part of the religious faction supporting the efforts of the anti-marriage Conservative Party – Rick Karlin, ‘Demonstrators want Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve,’ June 20, 2011, Albany Times-Union
number of younger, more accepting voters in the state. As Haider-Markel argued, public officials are likely to rally around a consensus opinion from their constituents. Many state senators such as Joseph Addabo Jr. bolstered this claim, noting in a June 25, 2011 *New York Times* article that “79 percent of the people who contacted his office on the issue were against gay marriage in 2009. This time, the 4,839 of 6,015 people who called or wrote were in favor.”

However, due to a constant rate of transmission coupled with a decreasing effectiveness in morality and family frames, I found no support for my hypothesis in New York’s second campaign.

**Maryland**

The 2012 campaign for same-sex marriage in Maryland, commonly referred to as the vote for Question 6, had an identical number of morality and family frames. However, the frame “God” was used three times while “traditional” was used once. The two frames indicate the importance of Catholicism and religion in this state. The morality and family frames endured due to their resonance with African-American and Catholic demographics, the most potent in the state—and the most prone to influencing the vote on the issue. Derek McCoy’s Maryland Family Alliance and the state Catholic Conference exerted an identical amount of influence in transmitting their frames to print publications such as the *Baltimore Sun, the Capital*, and the *Frederick News Post*.

However, another key idea that changed the tenor of the same-sex marriage discourse in Maryland is the alternative framing of “God” for pro-marriage activists. God, in this case, was

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8 This statistic was pulled from a 2011 Quinnipiac University national poll that questioned New York voters on the inevitability of gay marriage in the state.

9 Pastor Luke J. Robinson in a 2012 *Frederick News Post* article argued on behalf of his conservative coalition that “same-sex marriage goes against the wishes of God and to do so will lead to social, political, and cultural catastrophe.” – Associated Press, ‘51 percent approve same-sex marriage referendum,’ November 7, 2012.
used by organizations within the umbrella coalition of Marylanders for Marriage Equality to affirm same-sex marriage and free love. This appealed to many liberal-leaning congregations. As Sherkat et. al (2011) noted, “the latest generations of conservative Christians have become more tolerant in their views of gay and lesbian [marriage]” (167). While anti-marriage activists remained rigid in their use of these religious frames, the other side converted the frame to resonate with liberalizing congregations. Again, we see that an adherence to a use of these frames in both phases of the campaign led to failure. Question 6 passed with 52.4 percent of the popular vote in a referendum initiative.

**Minnesota**

Minnesota featured the fewest morality and frames out of four states in the first phase of the campaign. In the second phase, the three sampled newspapers only produced one additional frame (or three articles)—but under much different circumstances. The Amendment 1 campaign in 2012 revolved around a clause in the state constitution that would have crystallized the definition of marriage as between one man and one woman. The key word “traditional” appeared in two out of the three instances that the morality code had been utilized. However, anti-marriage activists here referred to outdated framing devices. Minnesota for Marriage, the chief anti-marriage coalition in the state, produced a strategy that bolstered the “traditional definition of marriage… which must be put in the constitution so that judges and politicians can’t redefine marriage in the future without the approval of voters.”

As stated earlier, the failure to promote innovative new frames hampered the cause of anti-marriage activists. According to Ryan (2012), “notable opposition to the law [for traditional marriage] has now come from inside the church, from groups of priests opposed to the

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10 This quote was cited from a June, 26 2012 article in the Rochester, MN *Post Bulletin.*
amendment and from Catholics who have joined organizations opposed to the proposed statute”

(3). Morality and family frames still appeared in 26 percent of this sample of articles. Instead, Minnesotans United for Marriage mobilized vast resources, increased standing, and successfully re-tooled their frames to appeal to these once-conservative congregations. And it worked: approximately 53 percent of voters struck down the traditional marriage amendment.

Summary

As seen above, I find support for the first hypothesis. To varying degrees, morality and family frames are used in both phases of a same-sex marriage campaign. Their continued use in the second phase has indicated a failure on behalf of anti-marriage activists to respond to changing attitudes and demographics. These outdated framing strategies have also potentially paved the way for a competing equality frame. As stated earlier in this thesis, Soberaj (2010) indicates that this new conceptualization of equality, in receiving greater exposure over several recent same-sex marriage campaigns, has emerged into prominence. She also alludes to the fact that this trend stems from increased coordination from same-sex marriage activists—and parleys into positive results. The exception is Arizona, where actually, anti-marriage activists made the same adjustment and attained a ban of same-sex marriage. However, coordination of resources still proves to be incredibly important for a same-sex marriage movement.

However, this thesis explores the ability for activists and organizations to transmit frames to contemporary newspapers. In the following chapter, I explore if there is a greater transmission of equality frames to print—especially in the second phase—versus morality frames.
Chapter 3: An Empowering Set of Equality Frames

In this section, I look for evidence that newspapers adopted a new frame set forth by same-sex marriage activists—the new “equality” frames. Rather than regarding same-sex marriage as an inherent right, as a “different” institution, key words such as “diversity,” “tolerance,” “inclusion,” “love,” “fairness,” “freedom,” and “commitment” are all used to frame these couples in a way that heterosexual couples can connect and identify with. Jackson (2010) asserts that there is a “changing character of marriage towards companionate forms, discourses of love, and the particular emotional attachments involved” (26). It has helped to erase a demonizing portrait of same-sex couples, bolstering the legitimacy of same-sex marriage messages in print. The above information supports the second hypothesis of this thesis.

\(H_2: \text{Activists use frames focused on diversity, tolerance and inclusion in the second phase of the campaign.}\)

Frames Used

Equality frames appeared in approximately 41 percent—or 49—of a total of 120 sample articles. This figure illustrates a 13 article increase from the sampled pieces that featured a morality and family code. The new equality frames were actually more prevalent than the morality and family frames in the entire set of newspaper articles. Meanwhile, the six key words associated with this code arose in varying degrees. “Freedom” appeared in 16 articles, “love” appeared in 15 articles and “fairness” appeared in seven articles. “Commitment” and “tolerance” appeared in five and four samples respectively while “inclusion” appeared just twice. Figure 6, found below, illuminates the percentage-based use of each of the new equality frames in each of the four state campaigns.
“Freedom” and “love” were the two most frequently used key words in this discourse, likely because they directly contest the chief arguments against same-sex marriage. Again, anti-marriage activists argue homosexual love does not qualify as a ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ relationship. Love\textsuperscript{11} is an enduring, passionate bond between two individuals. When placed in a morality and family framework, this is a practice that has historically been limited to opposite-sex couples. Yet, love has increasingly been promoted as a general, universal message that can apply to all couples—regardless of sexual orientation. Additionally, Osterlund (2009) states the practice is ‘democratized,’ a site for the meeting of equals and an uninhibited expression of self. The US government has embraced this shift, a trend that, according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), ensures any loving bond will be recognized—including those between same-sex couples. As a result, activists have been compelled to utilize and link this frame to same-sex marriage, especially with recent government approval and a re-definition of affection.

Activists, building off of this notion of love, then argue that same-sex couples should have the freedom\textsuperscript{12} to partake in a fully inclusive practice. Falsani (2011) connotes that, for same-sex marriage activists, couples should speak frankly and honestly, proclaiming their union as a political right. More importantly, one should be able to select a partner who could be of the same sex. In a June 20, 2011 Albany Times-Union piece, local New York Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum led a contingent of Christian and Jewish leaders to chant “God is love” through the hallway of the Albany state capital. Religious doctrine now supported the freedom to express

\textsuperscript{11} One of God’s greatest gifts to us is our human capacity to love one another. The ability of two people to enter into relationships and form families of love and care is one expression of this gift. – Maggie Clark, ‘Senate Approves Same-Sex Marriage Bill,’ February 24, 2011, The Capital

\textsuperscript{12} "If you live in America, and you expect equality and freedom for yourself, you have to extend it to others," said Sen. James Alesi, a Monroe County legislator who is the first sitting Republican senator to declare his support for the bill. – Jimmy Vielkind, ‘Same-Sex Deal is Closer,’ June 14, 2011, Albany Times-Union
love. As a result, the frame of *inclusion*\(^{13}\), while not often used, is closely linked to the above two frames. The ‘democratization’ of marriages and relationships has led to an increasing appearance—and approval—of these three key words in print.

Furthermore, while mentioned less frequently, the terms of *commitment, tolerance*, and *fairness*\(^{14}\) were all cited in articles throughout both phases of the four state campaigns. Schechter (2008) describes commitment as a wholesale dedication to one’s partner. As mentioned earlier, commitment has shifted from an exclusively heteronormative context to a broader framework for *all couples*. Activists must now promote acceptance and tolerance for these once-ostracized couples. Schechter further affirms in a study of over 50 same-sex couples that “marriage had brought them [participants] closer to their families and those family members “mellowed” and “transformed” in their acceptance of the couple.” When the abstract idea of homosexual marriage becomes a reality, other members of society are likely to identify with a couple that is just in love and as committed to one another. This notion of equality, according to one of the sampled 2009 *Albany Times-Union* articles, leads to tolerance. With these key words in mind, 41 percent of articles contained terms revolving around this new equality frame.

*First Phase of Each State Campaign*

Equality frames were used in 38.3 percent—or 23 of 60—of all sample articles from the first phase of each state campaign. In Arizona and New York, the total percentage of articles with the equality code was 13 and 26.7 percent respectively. By 2011, the number of articles with such frames appeared on a more frequent basis. In Minnesota, 46.7 percent of pieces

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\(^{13}\) The Unitarian Universalist Association, for example, has an ongoing public advocacy campaign called “Standing on the Side of Love” that encourages people of faith to call for respect, inclusion and compassion. – ‘*Area congregations weigh for, against same-sex marriage*’, September 29, 2012, *Frederick News Post*

\(^{14}\) When the inability to marry is for no reason other than the sex of the couple, our notions of fairness and equity under the rule of law are offended. Equal protection under the law is denied under the law as now written. – ‘*Gay Rites Still Illegal*, December 3, 2009, *Albany Times Union*
featured an equality frame, while in Maryland, 66.7 percent of sampled articles received this code. Figure 7, found below, demonstrates the percentage of articles for each state that contained a group of equality frames in each of the first campaigns.

*Insert Figure 7 About Here*

**Arizona**

Arizona, while featuring a preponderance of morality and family frames in print forums throughout the first phase of its same-sex marriage campaign, displayed just two equality frames in that same time period. “Love” and “fairness” were each invoked just once in the sampled batch of 15 articles. Johnson (2012) additionally notes that exposure to equality-based frames was non-existent in 2006. The lack of equality codes corroborated this and other empirical findings. As stated earlier in this thesis, an equality frame that portrayed same-sex couples as a marginalized demographic failed to resonate with voters. It only perpetuated the notion that same-sex couples were “others.” Activists thus promoted this message of morality and journalists translated it to print.

Interestingly, same-sex marriage activists succeeded in this campaign due to an entirely different approach. These activists, primarily from the Arizona Together coalition, were actually the first to shy away from an approach of promoting civil equality for same-sex couples. In order to win the campaign in Arizona, activists chose to focus on the loss of domestic benefits that individuals would suffer as a result of Proposition 107. Organizations such as the Arizona Human Rights Fund and the Human Rights Campaign struck against this message of “inequality,” arguing that the bill impeded citizens’ quality of life.
They did not contest the ban on same-sex marriage, which potentially would have alienated several key demographics—particularly elderly couples who spurred approval of the bill. Consider the example of Al Breznay and Maxine Piatt, domestic partners that also would stand to suffer from the initiative in Proposition 107.

Going door-to-door, we met a lot of people who were unaware of what Proposition 107 meant. They thought it was just an anti-gay thing… so from there we would explain how this would hurt Maxine and me. Once we did, though, they said they’d vote against it. They didn’t even hesitate. (Al Breznay, ‘Proposition 107 Causes Stir,’ Arizona Daily Star, October 5, 2006)

Activists framed the proposition as an initiative that deprived both heterosexual and homosexual residents of an inherent right to health insurance and benefits. The equality frame, appearing just twice in print forums, was not salient in this campaign. However, Arizona became the first state to overturn a proposed constitutional ban on gay marriage—and in the process, the first state to shift away from an outmoded equality frame.

New York

Meanwhile, in the 2009 phase of the same-sex marriage campaign in New York, equality frames also appeared in just four of 15 sampled articles. The “freedom” key word appeared twice while tolerance and fairness arose once each. Yet, morality and family frames were not pervasive in print discourse either, appearing in just one additional article. This raises the question; did transmission of frames to print matter at all in the New York same-sex marriage campaign? As suggested by Haider-Markel in a previous chapter of this thesis, the Empire State seemed to present an ideal forum through which to build a successful campaign and gain momentum for the cause of same-sex marriage. However, it seemed, as was the case with Arizona in 2006, that an effective equality frame was not cultivated.
How, then, did activists manage to lose this campaign in a ‘favorable venue?’ The answer rests in public apathy. Legislators who presented swing votes, such as Republican state senator James Alesi, were not compelled to vote for same-sex marriage because constituents failed to mobilize in favor of such an opinion. Findings from Herrick (2009) bolster this notion, asserting that political ambition and initiative affected whether legislators worked on or prioritized Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual issues. This allowed the New York State Catholic Conference and Conservative Party to exert political influence on these representatives, ensuring that their political status rested on such a vote. Without a safeguard of constituent approval, representatives such as Alesi and Dean Skelos renounced the proposed same-sex marriage initiative. Thus, equality frames failed to figure prominently in the outcome of this campaign because political elites and journalists did not receive an incentive to support same-sex marriage.

**Maryland**

In the first phase of Maryland’s same-sex marriage campaign, 11 articles were coded for the equality frame—in other terms, 73.3 percent—of 15 sampled articles. “Freedom” and “love,” the two most prevalent key words within this frame, appeared in four and three cases respectively. The other terms each arose in at least one article. How, in two short years, did the equality frame emerge as a prevalent aspect of print discourse on the issue? The equality frame had finally been re-tooled to attempt to counter the entrenched traditionalist arguments against same-sex marriage. Activists, in this case, transformed the meanings of “love,” “freedom” and other key words to adapt to the framework of a largely devout Catholic population. Equality Maryland, a large same-sex marriage advocacy organization with standing, tailored its message

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15 “Gays and lesbians who want an equal right to be shackled for eternity in a contract of marriage should be granted that privilege to love… nothing can ever really separate us from the love of God” – Elizabeth Cupino, *The rise of the marriage license*, February 17, 2011, *Frederick News Post*
to indicate that God approved the freedom to select and love a partner of the same sex. Various congregations throughout the state had the potential to swing the vote in favor of the Civil Marriage Protection Act. Governor Martin O’Malley as well as media elites such as Bill Clinton and Mayor Michael Bloomberg leveraged their political clout to facilitate the adoption of frames from organizations such as Equality Maryland to print publications such as the *Baltimore Sun, the Frederick News Post, and The Capital.*

However, even with the lopsided appearance of such frames in these forums, same-sex marriage still failed to pass. Church-going constituents voiced their disapproval for the initiative and spurred many representatives like Delegate Tiffany Alston from Prince George County to renege support of the bill. Public opinion diverged from the frames espoused by media elites and advocacy coalitions. As Haider-Markel (2001) warned, this leads to a failure to properly mobilize and enact passage of an initiative. Even though transmission to print increased, the equality frame did not diffuse and resonate among critical voting populations before the February 2011 vote. This, according to Druckman and Chong (2007), is integral to a frame’s salience and accessibility.

**Minnesota**

In Minnesota, equality frames appeared in 40 percent of the sampled articles from the first phase of the state’s same-sex marriage campaign. “Commitment” and “freedom” appeared twice while “fairness” and “love” arose once each. Minnesota United for All Families, the leading pro-marriage coalition, promoted a message that, much like Maryland, advertised the freedom to love in a religious context.16 Congregations were exposed to a set of frames that

16 “Love is love. It’s a fundamental human right, not one that can be approved or disapproved by a vote,” – Peter Passi, ‘Same-Sex Supporters Stage Big-Hearted Gesture in Duluth,’ February 14, 2011, *Duluth News Tribune*
portrayed same-sex marriage as an accepted institution via scripture. That message may have resonated with the congregants.

Minnesota United for All Families employed a frame that appeared in print forums to a much greater extent but failed to diffuse in print to the congregations that were integral to its success. Herrick (2009) argues that the length of time a policy has been on the agenda may affect its viability among a voting population. Citizens still did not have the opportunity to actively engage with the frames and express that support to legislators in the state House of Representatives. Instead, they were swayed by the increased fundraising capacity of an array of anti-marriage organizations and the same-sex marriage ban passed. The second hypothesis is partially affirmed. Additionally, by the Minnesota and Maryland same-sex marriage campaigns, the new equality frame already emerged in print forums.

These findings raise several questions. Would the rate of transmission for equality frames remain constant—or even increase in Maryland and Minnesota with the rise of these new, retooled key words? Would an increase of equality frames occur in the second phase of the Arizona and New York campaigns thus affirm the aforementioned hypothesis? That will be determined in the following section.

Second Campaign

After applying the same coding scheme to 60 articles from each of the second phase campaigns, a content analysis again revealed that the rate of transmission for equality frames remained constant. Ultimately, 43.3 percent of—or 26—total articles contained the equality frame. There was just a 2.3 percent increase in the number of articles that featured an equality frame. Figure 8, meanwhile, demonstrates a similar percentage of articles in each state that
displayed the equality frame, revolving around frames of diversity, tolerance and inclusion, in
the second phase of the campaign.

*Insert Figure 8 About Here*

This second hypothesis articulated that the equality frame would solely arise in the
second phase of a same-sex marriage campaign due to more organized coalitions and resonant
messages. Yet, in Maryland and Minnesota, these messages appeared in both the first and second
phases of the campaigns. According to Jackson (2010), same-sex marriage activists, irrespective
of the stage of a campaign, did not begin to use this frame until 2011. Equality, rather than just a
blanket statement advocating for minority rights, was clearly re-interpreted to accommodate
more resonant frames focused on tolerance, acceptance and openness. Once organizations with
standing and authority properly articulated and promoted these new equality messages,
journalists could be expected to publish these messages in their respective print forums.
However, this frame failed to arise in either of the phases for the campaigns in Arizona and New
York. Each concluded in 2008 and early 2011 respectively. Thus, I find no support for this
hypothesis. Diversity, tolerance and inclusion frames appeared in both phases of the
campaign—but only those after 2011. Before then, they did not exist.

*Analysis of Change in Use of Frames for All States*

In two states, there was a decrease in use of equality-based frames. Arizona had two
articles with the equality frame in the first phase, and in the second, the state had just one article
with this frame. In New York, there was a decrease from four to three. In Maryland, however,
there was an increase from 11 to 12 articles, and in Minnesota, the increase was from six to ten.
Figure 9 illustrates the change in use of these frames between both phases of a state-based same-sex marriage campaign.

*Insert Figure 9 About Here*

**Arizona**

Just one mention of “love”\(^1^7\) arose among the 15 sampled articles from Arizona’s campaign in 2008. The equality frame’s salience, just like in the first phase of the state campaign, did not figure prominently in the second phase. In 2008, anti-marriage activists highlighted the importance of a clearly articulated message, shedding light on the newfound, narrow aim of Proposition 102.\(^1^8\) Dreher (2010) asserts that, when frames and messages are concise, but also as generalized as possible, they prove to be most successful. In this case, the moral impact that a renunciation of Proposition 102 presented made far more sense; it appealed to a large heterosexual, religiously guided population while targeting just a small subset of same-sex couples. Advocates for both Equality Arizona and Wingspan, a potent gay, lesbian, and transgender coalition based in Tucson, failed to overcome this daunting challenge without an effective frame to assert that same-sex couples should be considered as equals. Each of these organizations also had far less standing. As a result, 56 percent of voters chose to institutionalize the constitutional amendment that prohibited same-sex marriage in Arizona.

\(^1^7\) The Rev. Frank Bergen, a former Catholic priest now serving the Episcopal Church in parochial ministry, spoke both of the biblical teachings to be just, loving and humble, as well as the U.S. Constitution’s guarantees of equality… the state constitutional amendment proposed on the November ballot does not uphold those principles of love and justice, he said. – Patty Machelor, *Clergy Against Ballot Measure on Marriage Voice Objections*, September 24, 2008, *Arizona Daily Star*

\(^1^8\) “Only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state.”
**New York**

The shift in framing practices in New York for the 2011 same-sex marriage campaign also was insignificant. Two articles produced a reference to “love” while one featured the key word “commitment.” Instead, Governor Andrew Cuomo organized a massive umbrella coalition known as New Yorkers United for Marriage that exerted pressure on legislators to vote for same-sex marriage. An effective equality frame had not emerged in print forums for same-sex marriage before 2011. Therefore, I find no evidence for the second hypothesis which asserted that activists would learn from framing failures and re-tool their messaging strategies. Instead, citizen engagement and outreach mattered much more. Activists did not target print forums, but instead, focused on connecting constituents with their state representatives. Coalitions mobilized citizens to lobby legislators, focusing on legislators with swing votes. Consider the case of State Senator Joseph Addabo; the New Yorkers United for Marriage field team compiled 2,000 postcards from residents who favored same-sex marriage and “buried him in paper.” The approach, in spite of a lack of reliance on frames, worked and the Marriage Equality Act came into being—even without the transmission of an effective equality frame to print.

**Maryland**

Meanwhile, in Maryland, 80 percent of the 15 sampled articles featured the equality frame. Four articles were coded for freedom while love and fairness each appeared in three pieces. Tolerance and inclusion also arose in this subset of sampled pieces. While the transmission of frames remained constant, activists in Maryland benefited from a clearer message—unlike in the case of Arizona. Religious demographics observed revisions in the Civil Marriage Protection Act, the proposed referendum that supported same-sex marriage:

Establishes that Maryland’s civil marriage laws allow gay and lesbian couples to obtain a civil marriage license, provided they are not otherwise prohibited from marrying; protects clergy from having to perform any particular marriage ceremony in violation of their religious beliefs; affirms that each religious faith has exclusive control over its own theological doctrine regarding who may marry within that faith; and provides that religious organizations and certain related entities are not required to provide goods, services, or benefits to an individual related to the celebration or promotion of marriage in violation of their religious beliefs.

The frames that were used so readily in 2011 now resonated more deeply with religious congregations. Catholics for Equality (2004), in their mission statement for example, stated “today’s celebration in Maryland is a reminder to all American Catholics that our faith community plays a critical role in advancing LGBT equality” (4). The waning conservative influence on religious faith, as observed by Sherkat et al (2011), plays a critical role in more liberal attitudes toward social issues—such as same-sex marriage.

Essentially, the equality frame that elites transmitted to newspapers aligned with important religious constituents who held more liberal social views. With this shift, citizens established a respect for the choice of same-sex couples to express their love through matrimony. With the support of both elites (thereby maintaining a steady flow of equality frames to print) and a liberalized, religious population, the initiative passed with 52.4 percent of a referendum vote. However, as evidenced by the lack of change in framing practices, demographic changes and different organizational strategies seemed to lead to this change in outcome.

Minnesota

Meanwhile, Minnesota was the lone state in this content analysis to experience an increase in the appearance of equality frames during the second phase of the campaign. 66.7 percent of—or 10—articles in this sample displayed such a code as opposed to just six.
“Freedom” and “love” each arose four times while “inclusion” and “tolerance” emerged just once. The increased transmission of frames here stemmed from the standing of Minnesotans United for All Families, an umbrella coalition similar to New Yorkers United for Marriage and Marylanders for Marriage Equality. These key words in particular arose from the organization’s central tenets: “Love is the law” and “a commitment to ensure that allowing all loving and committed couples the freedom to marry remains a priority.” By March 2012, 200 local chapters were promoting this message. Andrews and Caren (2011) note the expansiveness of a coalition leads to an increased ability to transmit frames and messages to print forums.

Richard Carlbom organized a formidable field operation to articulate the message—and it worked. Religious congregations and previously conservative voters were swayed by a barrage of messages, advertisements, and grassroots appeals from local field operatives. Media elites throughout the state sponsored Minnesotans United for All Families’ messages to increase the coalition’s standing, and in turn, its ability to transmit these frames to print. The message was far clearer and the coalition was far more organized. It “cultivated more than 1,000 house parties, built a donor base of more than 40,000 names and pressed supporters to have one-on-one dialogues with those on the other side.” In this case, the equality frame experienced increased transmission due to the efficacy of its sponsoring coalition.

Summary

I find little support for the second hypothesis here. The equality frame, revolving around messages of diversity, tolerance and inclusion, remained mostly constant throughout both stages of each campaign. Furthermore, the emergence of these key words did not rely on activists’

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20 Richard Carlbom, the organizer of Minnesotans United for All Families, proclaimed that his coalition’s goal was to ensure that “people of all faiths, in all communities, and of all political affiliations [united] on the principle that freedom means freedom for everybody.”
adjustments to a first-phase failure; instead it depended on the year that the campaign occurred. As Jackson (2012) asserts, the conceptualization of marriage shifted to universalize love and accommodated companionate marriages—i.e. among same-sex couples—only by late 2011. In Arizona and New York, these equality frames did not yet exist. Meanwhile, in light of the later campaigns in Maryland and Minnesota, the equality frames arose in both stages.

What does account for the increased transmission of these equality frames during same-sex marriage campaigns? If the diversity, tolerance and inclusion frames appeared throughout both phases of the campaign, is there another critical factor at work spurring changes in these outcomes. In the next chapter of this thesis, I investigate the influence and authority of the coalitions that sponsored and promoted such frames. Does a shift in organizational behavior and standing ultimately influence increased rates of frame transmission—and the operations of these campaigns—between phases?
Chapter 4: Is Coalition Building Critical?

The concluding hypothesis in this thesis states that activists in state campaigns will experience more success transmitting frames as a part of a coalition that is larger, more united and diverse. According to Froehlich and Rudiger (2006), coalitions are judged on the merits of their scope (how large the organization is), unity (if the disparate organizations espouse one common platform), and diversity (if the combined partner organizations resonate with as broad of an audience as possible). As discussed in the previous two chapters, the percentage of morality as well as equality frames that appeared in print forums did not change between campaigns. That raises the following question: Are the unity, diversity, and size of a coalition related to the rate of frame transmission to print forums?

H₃: Activists in states with coalitions that are large, unified and diverse will have more success in transmitting frames than activists in state campaigns with coalitions that are not large, unified and diverse.

Criteria Utilized to Measure Coalition Strength:

Three variables were used to measure the success of organizations in transmitting their messages to newspapers: “coalition mention,” “quotes paired with coalition mentions” and “activist support quotes.” While these variables do not evaluate the transmission of frames, they can provide an insight into whether the coalitions are formidable and organized enough to exert enough “standing” and authority to transmit their messages to print.
A “coalition mention”\textsuperscript{21} simply connoted the appearance of an organization’s name in print. The appearance of such a variable implies that journalists feel a particular organization has enough credence and “standing” to appear in their articles. Organizations with expansive resources present the most ideal opportunity for journalists—and for increased rates of frame transmission. Similarly, the “activist support”\textsuperscript{22} and “quotes with coalition mention” variables imply that journalists will even go so far as to promote a particular viewpoint. Print sources inevitably skew news articles in a certain ideological direction by layering in quotes and other facts that paint the issue in a particular light. Ryan, Carragee and Meinhofer (2001) further support this argument by claiming that print reporters typically co-opt the viewpoints of challengers through use of a stronger and well-supported frame.

Comparing Coalition Mentions between Campaign Phases:

In this section, I will compare the number of times the three variables were coded for in the first and second phase of these four state campaigns. I found that there was great consistency for the “frames with coalition mention” metric (which only involved pro-marriage coalitions and pro-marriage frames). While 23 articles received this code from the first phases, 23 earned this score in the second phases of the campaign. In light of failure, coalitions would imaginably seek to unite and re-craft their message to resonate with a wider audience, resulting in an increased transmission of frames as well as the coalition itself. However, instead, there was an equal

\textsuperscript{21} Ken Clark, campaign director of the Arizona Together campaign, said in the next two weeks a volunteer force of "thousands" will mobilize against the proposed amendment as new coalition members enlist in the group's cause – George B. Sanchez, ‘Opponents of Marriage Proposition Widen Fight, August 15, 2006, Arizona Daily Star

\textsuperscript{22} “The stakes are much higher now, following Maine, and it would be an enormous boost to the movement to prevail in New York,” said Matt Foreman, a gay rights advocate who has served as the head of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Empire State Pride Agenda, New York’s leading gay rights group. – Danny Hakim and Jeremy Peters, ‘Fate of Same-Sex Marriage Bill in Albany Unclear,' November 8, 2009, New York Times
mention of organization mentions. Eight additional articles, meanwhile, received a code of “activist support.” Figure 10 illuminates these shifts in coalition strength.

Insert Figure 10 Around Here

The most important measure to analyze for the purposes of this thesis will be the “frames with coalitions” variable. Changes in this variable could suggest a relationship between alterations in organizational behavior and increased appearance of a particular frame.

First Campaign

As stated earlier, 38 percent of articles from the sample—or 23 articles—received a “frames with coalition mention” code. Arizona, Minnesota and New York featured 40 percent of articles—or six articles—that mentioned a pro-marriage coalition. Maryland had five such articles. With many coalition mentions in the first phase of the campaigns, it is clear that coalitions in each state already exhibited a size and level of unity as well as diversity that would merit successful transmission of frames. Figure 11, found below, illustrates the percentage of articles in each state that displayed a combined frame/coalition mention.

Insert Figure 11 About Here

Arizona:

The two warring coalitions at the center of the Proposition 107 debate were the Center for Arizona Policy (CAP)\(^\text{23}\)—a nonprofit socially conservative organization standing for the three

\(^{23}\) According to CAP’s website, the organization’s mission is: a respect for existing laws, political structures, religions and cultural norms that preserve the family, chastity before a heterosexual marriage, and the sanctity of human life.
tenets of life, marriage, and religious liberty—and the Arizona Together coalition, which included Equality Arizona\textsuperscript{24} and focused on protecting rights of LGBTQ citizens.

CAP, founded by Len Munsil in 1995, declared a goal, that according to its website, “works with elected officials at all levels of government in Arizona to make our state the best place to raise a family.” (www.centerforarizonapolicy.com, 2006) The organization desired to undercut this notion of “equality” to instead emphasize the institution of traditional marriage. The rhetoric of morality, family and preservation discussed in this thesis aptly aligns with this organization’s mission. As a group that also receives extensive funding from the National Christian Charitable Foundation, CAP is well-endorsed. The anti-marriage cause in Arizona, though, consisted of many groups like CAP and United Families Arizona. These chapters did not coordinate their operations and failed to possess a unified aim. Ryan, Carragee and Meinhofer (2001) bolster this notion with the idea that “the lack of resources available to marginalized groups represents an enduring problem in efforts to advance their definitions of political issues through the news media” (181). Each organization, as its own independent body, failed to offer enough resources to exert enough standing in print forums. In turn, the frame of traditional marriage is much more difficult to transmit to print.

Same-sex marriage activists in the state also managed to formulate a large, united—and diverse—coalition coined as “Arizona Together.” The umbrella organization included the Arizona Human Rights Fund, Equality Arizona as well as local chapters of the Human Rights Campaign and Freedom to Marry. Ken Clark, campaign director in 2006, said “volunteer forces

\textsuperscript{24} Equality Arizona’s mission is: “To be the preeminent LGBTQ advocacy organization for the State of Arizona and to work collaboratively to establish a comprehensive network of individuals and organizations to secure, protect and defend the equal civil rights and welfare of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people in Arizona.”
in the thousands were spurred to mobilize against the proposed amendment as new coalition members enlisted in the group’s cause.” These grassroots efforts allowed for the effective promotion of a message that Proposition 102 represented inequality and injustice to all citizens of Arizona. This coalition incorporated four organizations that expressed a shared goal of defending the civil rights and welfare of not only the LGBTQ community but all residents of Arizona. They also wielded vast resources from a greater national chapter and boasted the fundraising to attract attention from journalists. Equality Arizona existed as part of a national alliance of state-based LGBTQ advocacy organizations. Human Rights Campaign and Freedom to Marry, meanwhile, as the nation’s largest gay and lesbian rights organizations, drew upon their “national network and million-dollar war chest” to ensure victories for pro-equality candidates and mobilize staff workers. As Kaplan (2008) asserts, coalitions are built around powerful frames that resonate broadly and are launched by united coalitions. It is no surprise, then, that 40 percent of all articles analyzed from this campaign contained an equality frame coupled with one of the four organizations.

**New York**

In the first phase of the New York same-sex marriage campaign, 40 percent of articles in a 15-piece sample also received a “frames with coalition mention” code. Executive director of the Empire State Pride Agenda (ESPA) Alan Van Capelle, a statewide political advocacy organization that advocates for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights, served as the main proponent for transmission of frames. In fact, by 2005, it was the largest such state-wide organization in the country. According to the political action committee’s website, it dispatches volunteers from across the state, from dozens of regional chapters, to “educate policymakers, build coalitions and mobilize allies, lobby government officials and organize and empower the
LGBTQ community.” In 2009, this infrastructure was also evident. ESPA possessed formidable “standing.” The difference, though, hinged on one key factor: While a leading player in such a movement, it attempted to promote the fight for same-sex marriage independently from organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign and Freedom to Marry. Unlike in Arizona, even though there was an identical rate of transmission, organizations with such “standing” need to work in tandem to influence a positive outcome. Martin (2003) asserts that “community-based” organizing is critical—in other words, identifying multiple issues of interest among a series of groups and organizations produce a powerful response and influence a potential outcome of a campaign. Evan Wolfson, director of Freedom to Marry, noted, ultimately, that “there were a lot of players and a lot of organizations but not the truly united effort that has come together to work hand in glove with the governor and legislative leaders.” As a result, New York lost its campaign by six votes in the legislature. “Standing” is vital but also needs to be exerted by a coalition that appeals to voters with one shared goal.

The opposing side—consisting of the New York State Catholic Conference, Conservative Party and state chapter of the National Organization of Marriage—rallied around a common cause: to thwart a same-sex marriage bill. With this concerted effort, and shared resources, the anti-marriage coalitions managed to broad-cast their message across a wide variety of platforms and mobilize across the state. Powerful frames, according to Druckman and Chong (2007), arise out of persistent exposure and eventual accessibility. Joseph Alesi, Dean Skelos and other state representatives felt co-opted into voting against same-sex marriage because constituents did not

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25 The following is a statement that features a frame with coalition code: Alan Van Capelle, executive director of the Empire State Pride Agenda, said gay rights advocates would hold the Senate to its pledge to vote before the end of the year. He said he trusted senators “to honor the commitment that is made in these marriages.” – Jeremy Peters, ‘State Senate Delays Vote on Same-Sex Marriage Bill,’ November 10, 2009, New York Times
favor same-sex marriage. In addition to mobilizing constituents, officials such as Michael R.
Long and Ruben Diaz—vocal members of the Conservative Party—were able to use this lack of
support to their advantage. Therefore, even though journalists did not trust these sources and
these fringe organizations did not possess “standing,” their unity and political power were
enough to produce a renunciation of same-sex marriage. As Kaplan (2008) notes, the “powerful”
do not always get their way because effective coalition building can be more influential.

Maryland

Out of Maryland’s 15-article sample from the 2011 campaign, 33 percent of articles—or
five articles—received a “frames with coalition mention” code. Equality Maryland, a local
chapter of the national Equality Federation, was the largest entity in Maryland to focus on
advocacy and education for LGBTQ social and political movements A list of accomplishments
include: increase of domestic partner benefits and a more far-reaching set of penalties for
perpetration of hate crimes. Media have taken note of such an extensive list of feats—and the
support that Governor Martin O’Malley and celebrities such as Brad Pitt and Susan Sarandon
have lent to the campaign. Therefore, newspapers such as the Baltimore Sun and Annapolis
Capital incorporated the coalition’s frames of religious equality into several of its articles on the
issue. In a statement made preceding the State Senate’s vote on the Civil Marriage Protection
Act, the organization asserted that “marriage and family are about love and commitment, and we
are committed to helping pass marriage equality.” The frames were successfully transmitted due
to the extensive infrastructure of Equality Maryland. According to a spokesman from the
organization, six expansive action teams were launched throughout various counties in a
successful effort to mobilize 10,000 new supporters of gender identity non-discrimination
protections and marriage equality. With the assistance of the Maryland Black Family Alliance,
EQMD targeted a critical demographic in a state with a 40 percent African-American population. Swank and Fahs (2012) posited that these kinds of “social networks boost political engagement since they often convey the attitudes and disseminate the logistical information that makes activism possible” (74).

However, Equality Maryland existed independently of a host of other same-sex marriage organizations that included the Human Rights Campaign, Progressive Maryland and the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland. Resources were not shared and a wide array of messages from different organizations did not resonate with voters. Hallahan (1999) argued that this ability to present a united message with certain target groups is critical for same-sex marriage coalitions. Meanwhile, in a state with a particularly powerful Catholic faction, the Maryland Catholic Conference absorbed a host of smaller organizations and religious congregations in counties and towns from across the state. The groups notably worked in tandem to present a message, which according to Mary Ellen Russell of the Maryland Catholic Conference, “do not rest on a simple concern for the interests of religious institutions only but continues to provide no protections for an individual’s religious freedoms.” The cohesion and the diversity of this coalition contributed to the transmission of a resonant series of frames revolving around religious freedoms and preservation of traditions.

_Minnesota_

Out of a 15-article sample from the first phase of the Minnesota campaign in 2011, 40 percent—or six articles—received a ‘frames with coalition mention’ code. OutFront Minnesota, the foremost organization in the state to promote same-sex marriage, contributed to frame transmission with an expansive network of regional and local chapters cultivated since 1987. Three separate programs were created within this umbrella organization—OutFront Minnesota,
OutFront Minnesota Community Services and OutFront Minnesota Action. By relying on an expansive volunteer base and extensive voter registrations, trainings, and grassroots petitions, OutFront conducted outreach to every district in the state and traveled to 46 cities. In turn, the supporter network increased by over 38 percent—to 68,000 citizens—in just one year. Martin (2003) would attribute such an increase to a successful approach of community-based organizing, a mobilization effort that unites citizens with a disparate set of interests. Pro-marriage governor Mark Dayton and a host of other political representatives chose to voice their support to overturn the bill. Monica Meyer, executive director of OutFront, noted this was promising for the cause in Minnesota. “Standing” proved to not be an issue, but ultimately, Minnesotans United for All Families was an emergent coalition at the time. It did not diversify enough or expand through the state to make an impact in the same-sex marriage discourse.

Meanwhile, the Minnesota for Marriage Group, an organization comprised of a “broad-based group of community and faith leaders and organizations devoted to preserving—in Minnesota’s constitution—the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman,” was more successful in presenting a unified message to a wide variety of demographics. Minnesota’s same-sex marriage campaign was religiously grounded in a protection of the heteronormative institution of marriage. Therefore, this coalition’s ability to target a wide array of faith-based congregations was integral in ensuring a delayed and prolonged outcome. As Froehlich (2006) noted, “the ability to effectively communicate a programmatic agenda to the public is an important prerequisite to garnering public support for a political player” (18). Meanwhile, OutFront—without a well-developed, expansive coalition in Minnesotans United for All Families—struggled to mobilize and accrue that same level of support. Meyer, in an
interview, expressed frustration at the organization’s single-handed challenge—and failure—to overcome the marriage ban.

**Second Phase of the State Campaign**

For all states except Arizona, there was an increase in the number of articles mentioning the coalition. The goal is to seek out a potential link between a coalition re-structuring and increased transmission of frames to print forums. However, in evaluating the total of “frames with coalition mentions” in this content analysis, just 24 articles received the code—a one piece increase from the first campaign. Interestingly, more effective coalition-building does not typically result in increased transmission of frames to print, invalidating the third and final hypothesis. If anything, the construction of unified, large and diverse coalitions does not influence rate of framing transmission, but may impact voting behavior and exposure of a particular message. Ryan, Carragee and Meinhofer (2001) note it is coalition-building that allow for successful campaigns. However, the goal is to analyze rates of frame transmission in print. As can be seen in Figure 12, illuminating the rate of transmission among all four states in the second campaign, the rate actually remained constant.

*Insert Figure 12 About Here*

**Analysis of State-by State Campaigns**

Among the four second-phase campaigns, only Maryland experienced a decrease, featuring 20 percent—or three articles—as opposed to five in the first campaign. Arizona’s rate of transmission remained constant—with 40 percent of articles that featured such a code—throughout both phases. Minnesota and New York both experienced fairly marginal one article
increases from the first to second phase of the campaign. Figure 13 illustrates a comparison in rate of transmission between both phases of each state’s same-sex marriage campaign.

*Insert Figure 13 Around Here*

**Arizona**

Two years later, the Center for Arizona Policy, the primary conservative proponent in 2006, joined the Yes for Marriage group, a consortium that included an array of organizations such as the Leseur Family Trust, Crisis and Pregnancy Centers of Greater Phoenix as well as the Pete King Corporation. Additionally, the coalition received the endorsement of such noted candidates as Tim Bee, Jim Weiers and John McCain. While the rate of transmission remained identical to that of 2006, six out of 15 sampled articles received the “frames with coalition mentions” code. Along with the addition of representatives and other religious demographics, the message was far simpler. The “Yes on Marriage” campaign in 2008 presented a focused effort to preserve the sacrosanct nature of traditional weddings. According to a spokesperson for CAP, the goal was to “keep marriage clear and simple between a man and woman.” The goal resulted in an influx of funds—17.6 million dollars—that far exceeded the “No on Marriage” campaign, a figure that was 17 times greater than the pro-marriage coalition. The coalition also exported its message through five television ads, dozens of radio spots and thousands of volunteers from across the state. Morris (2007) alludes to how former ‘policy losers’ “have the incentive to mobilize into an advocacy coalition and will work to attract new members to their cause… the current policy losers will then also work to alter the debate by attempting to reframe the policy issue” (845). The active effort to re-frame the debate and incorporate new political as well as religious members allowed for potential success. Rate of frame transmission did not seem to
Conversely, this shift in framing technique perhaps undercut the efforts of the Arizona Together coalition—re-configured as the “Vote No on Prop 102” coalition. Interfaith congregations from across the state banded together to combat the initiative. However, they paled in comparison to the fundraising dollars and the well-diffused nature of the anti-marriage coalition. While this same-sex marriage coalition held “standing” from its victory in 2006, and maintained a consistent rate of frame transmission, it perhaps failed due to a more unified and widespread opposing grassroots base. Sam Holdren, public affairs director for Equality Arizona, noted that “we were only able to talk to a limited number of voters with a very narrow message… while the supporters were able to inundate people’s mailboxes and phones and a lot of money to run a really effective campaign.” The prevailing frame also did not change—even though the opposition radically changed its message. The focus of Proposition 102 now was on the shoulders of homosexual marriages, depriving “Vote No on Prop 102” of a key demographic of senior citizens. Morris (2007) also emphasizes that “these winners will not attempt to shift the policy venue or to reframe the policy image… and if a credible threat is made against their policy position, these organizations have the potential to become prospective policy losers” (842). The pro-marriage activists thus failed in 2008.

New York

New York, meanwhile, experienced the greatest increase in rate of frame transmission, featuring 53 percent of sampled articles with a “frames and coalitions mentions” code. On April 20, 2011, New Yorkers United for Marriage formed out of a disparate group of organizations such as Freedom to Marry, Human Rights Campaign, ESPA, Marriage Equality New York and
the Log Cabin Republicans. This effort offset the major issue of the first phase, avoiding miscommunication, scattered messages and a lack of shared resources. 30 full-time organizers mobilized millions of constituents from across the state to promote a message of love as well as commitment. In addition to that effort, the coalition increased its “standing” by recruiting such noted figures as President Clinton and Barbara Bush to promote such a message of marriage equality. Kaplan (2008) bolsters this notion, arguing that by amplifying latent frames through credible sources, a coalition has a far greater ability to transmit frames to print forums.

Meanwhile, as Morris (2008) stated, the policy winners were unable to adapt to the sudden strategic advances of the pro-marriage New Yorkers United for Marriage. These same representatives that were once approached by Long and Diaz to vote for a message of traditional marriage now received thousands of constituent calls to legalize same-sex marriage. Constituents, in light of a concerted and united effort from a far-reaching coalition, received a clear message to identify with key words of commitment and love. As Brian Ellner, then-director of the Human Rights Campaign mentioned, “We have an enormously popular governor committed to getting this done now, strong support from New Yorkers all around the state and a group of advocates who are highly coordinated.” The threat to political status now remained non-existent—and yet it still remained as the opponents’ chief, albeit outmoded, strategy. In this case, increased standing and a coalition re-structuring perhaps helped increase frame transmission.

Maryland

In Maryland, meanwhile, the rate of frame transmission actually decreased in a state where religious-based messages had less and less viability. The prevailing messages were
fairness and freedom, both of which were rapidly absorbed by the newfound Marylanders for Marriage Equality coalition. This new consortium, comprised of ACLU of Maryland, Equality Maryland, AFL and CIO, Progressive Maryland, the HRC and 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, aimed to expose a wide variety of demographics to such a pro-marriage message. Again, Marylanders for Marriage Equality embodied a large-scale degree of unity, size and diversity—three central tenets of coalition-building. As Nicholson-Crotty (2006) posits, heterogeneity in the population decreases the likelihood that representative institutions will pass certain policies because such diversity makes it more difficult for a repressive organization to control the legislative agenda. Labor, legal, social, healthcare and same-sex interests are represented here, allowing for these messages of marriage and freedom to reach voters—and influential donors—via a widespread grassroots network.

Meanwhile, the Maryland Marriage Alliance, driven primarily by the National Organization of Marriage and the Maryland Catholic Conference, adhered to this outmoded forum of religious preservation. Frank Schubert and Derek McCoy—directors of the co-sponsoring NOM and MMA—adhered to a platform where Question 6 would gravely undermine a child’s religious freedom and biblical teachings. In a forum dominated by fairness and freedom, the strategy no longer worked. Even with a formidable amount of resources and “standing” from a previous victory, the coalition struggled to accrue momentum. According to a representative who chose not to be named from Equality Maryland, “seemed disorganized and held few events.” Baumgartner and Jones (1993) would then argue that the Marylanders for Marriage Equality coalition “redefined the basic dimension of conflict to their advantage, thereby

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26 “Question 6 is about fairness and equality under the law for all same-sex marriage couples,” said Josh Levin, campaign manager for Marylanders for Marriage Equality. – The Capital
attracting a host of previously uninvolved citizens” (26). Frame transmission again remained constant but the composition and mobilizing strength of the sponsoring coalition greatly shifted.

*Minnesota*

Meanwhile, in Minnesota, rate of frame transmission only increased slightly—even as the Minnesotans United for All Families coalition formed and flourished. The contours of the battle shifted when OutFront Minnesota joined the aforementioned coalition, which included 700 local and regional chapters. The diversity of the consortium—ranging from sexual assault centers and teacher unions to social services organizations and corporations—proved to be a huge asset in promoting a message of love and fairness to these demographics. Over the course of an 18-month campaign, according to the coalition website, there were 27,000 volunteers across the state and more than 87,000 individual donors. Millions of conversations were logged. Carlbom expressed that “in addition to changing the messaging, the campaigns also poured energy into finding ways to stage personal conversations, in the hope that much as the pollsters found people’s attitudes changed as they discussed their values about marriage, undecided voters might resolve their concerns.” This aligns well with an idea from Swank and Fahs (2012) that political parties, committed partisans, and movement activists can motivate activism through different persuasive techniques such as face-to-face conversations, phone calls, e-mail, direct mail, etc.

Ann Kaner-Roth, a project director for Project 515, one of Minnesotans United’s various organizations, alluded to as much, citing that “from the beginning of the campaign, we tried to create a very large and open table for folks who might not agree on much, but do agree on equality issues for same-sex couples.” This approach perhaps resulted in a financial influx totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars, a mobilization of voters and organizers from across the state, as well as the ability to increase frame of transmission to print.
Minnesota for Marriage struggled to diverge from its strategy of targeting faith-based groups. While this tactic paid dividends in the previous campaign, it failed to do so in light of a much stronger, more cohesive coalition that successfully targeted opposing political parties, labor unions and even business interests. Younger voters also were swayed by a growing sentiment of fairness, love and commitment from these youthful grassroots organizations under the umbrella Minnesotans United for Marriage coalition. The message of traditional marriage resonated less with the overall population and paled in comparison to the much more diverse and unified coalition on the opposing side.

The changing cohesion, size and diversity of a coalition ultimately failed to spur a notable increase of frame transmission—as was indicated in the third hypothesis. This leads to a series of questions on the importance of frame transmission in ‘validating a vow.’ Is it, instead, the power inherent in coalition building? While these and other questions raised throughout the thesis cannot be answered here, potential avenues for discussion will briefly be explored in the concluding section of this thesis.
Conclusion

Summary of Results:

The first hypothesis I test in this thesis posited that morality and family frames would be employed throughout both phases of a same-sex marriage campaign. I found evidence to support this hypothesis. After drawing a comparison of both phases from each state-based campaign, the aggregate use of morality frames was constant—with a standard deviation of one to two articles. In light of the fact that campaigns experienced a different outcome in the second phase, it is interesting to note that the frames associated with a renunciation of same-sex marriage still persisted.

However, the second hypothesis, which stated that an equality frame revolving around the notions of diversity, tolerance and inclusion would emerge solely in the second phase of the campaign, was designed to counter the morality frame. After experiencing failure, I anticipated that activists adapted their strategies and promote a new frame that resonated more with voters. I expected to see an increased rate of transmission to print forums. Yet, I found that the re-tooled equality frame itself had not been developed until 2011. Activists in campaigns before that date did not resort to such a framing strategy. After 2011, the re-tooled frame had actually been expropriated and utilized in both phases of the campaign as evidenced by an analysis of both Maryland and Minnesota. This innovative, cutting-edge frame ultimately did not follow from a re-adaptation. More rather, pro-marriage activists used it as a first frame of reference for a campaign after 2011 and actually did not alter it throughout their efforts. Before then, it had not been used at all—regardless of the phase—and did not have a bearing on successful outcomes in campaigns such as in New York. The findings from the content analysis illuminated this trend, and as a result, I find no support for the second hypothesis.
Finally, the third hypothesis posited that activists in large, unified and diverse coalitions would have more success in transmitting frames than activists in coalitions that were not large, unified and diverse. I find support for this hypothesis. Large, unified and diverse coalitions certainly were proven to experience more success than those that were scattered or inchoate. However, rate of frame transmission did not significantly change as a result of coalition-building. I suspect that these organizations in the initial campaigns had “standing” and experienced success in print forums, but ultimately, were unable to thrive on a grassroots level and failed in legislative sites due to certain coalition-based flaws. With such changes, rate of transmission remained constant but contact with voters and endorsements from legislators increased significantly.

**Implications**

The findings of this thesis ultimately raise questions regarding the power of framing in the same-sex marriage debate. As seen above, the content of frames perhaps could have had a rather insignificant impact on the outcome of each of these four campaigns. The rate transmission remained fairly constant in regard to morality and equality frames. It also endured in spite of coalition change. The larger issue is the effectiveness of coalition-building on the outcome of a same-sex marriage—or general social movement—campaign. As can be seen above, Arizona, New York, Maryland and Minnesota all experienced successful outcomes after structural changes to the coalitions that promoted pro-marriage causes. In this thesis, it is useful to explore the various frames currently promoted in the discourse of same-sex marriage and utilize those as potential avenues for further discussion on the topic in other states. However, the most interesting finding suggests a need to build coalitions that can mobilize citizens and
resonate with voters as well as legislators. That, ultimately, is how a vow could be validated and the “framing fight” could be won in print media.

**Avenues of Future Study**

For future study, it may be useful to explore a causal link between framing practices and same-sex marriage outcomes. In this thesis, I am only able to present correlational findings. I speculate about the relationship between the content of frames and coalition structure on rate of frame transmission, but do not control for all the factors that could influence the outcome of same-sex marriage campaigns. Finally, this thesis primarily focused on contemporary print, which in 2006, still proved to be a dominant media forum. However, in the past eight to nine years, the Internet and social media have soared as preeminent forums of discussion. Print is ultimately losing its foothold in the media landscape. As a result, it would also be beneficial to translate this content analysis to social media forums and discover if frames can be mined from posts on Twitter, Facebook and other cyber-discussion boards. Additionally, a cross-sectional study could be launched to explore if the rate of frame transmission differed across both print and online forums. The possibilities are endless as same-sex marriage continues to consume the nation as a hot-button issue. Hopefully, the findings mentioned above still hold great potential for the future of activism in the same-sex marriage debate—whether that is through analyzing coalition-building or the crafting of frame content.
## Charts and Tables:

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFFIRM SAME-SEX MARRIAGE</th>
<th>PROHIBIT SAME-SEX MARRIAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE “OFFENSIVE”</strong></td>
<td><strong>THE “DEFENSIVE”</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LEGISLATURE</strong></td>
<td><strong>REFERENDUM</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAILED</strong></td>
<td><strong>FAILED</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PHASE 1:**
- **NEW YORK (2009)**
- **MARYLAND (2011)**

**PHASE 2:**
- **MINNESOTA (2012)**
- **ARIZONA (2008)**

**LEGISLATURE**
- **SUCCEEDED**

**PHASE 2:**
- **NEW YORK (2011)**
- **MARYLAND (2012)**

**LEGISLATURE**
- **SUCCEEDED**

**BILL DID NOT PASS**

**BILL DID PASS**
Figure 2

Percentages of Articles with Morality Frame Key Words for AZ, NY, MD, and MN, 2006-2012

Data was used from 120 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix.

Figure 3

Percentage of Articles with Morality and Family Frame Key Words in Phase 1 of AZ, NY, MD and MN Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns, 2006-2011

Data was used from 60 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix
Figure 4

Morality and Family Frame Percentage in All Articles from Phase 2 of AZ, NY, MD and MN Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns 2008-2012

Data was used from 60 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix.

Figure 5

Comparison of Morality and Family Frame Use in All Articles from AZ, NY, MD and MN Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns 2006-2012

Data was used from 120 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix.
Figure 6
Percentages of Articles with Equality Frame Key Words for AZ, NY, MD, and MN, 2006-2012

Data was used from 120 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix.

Figure 7 Article Percentage of Equality Frame Key Words in Phase 1 of AZ, NY, MD and MN Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns 2006-2011

Data was used from 60 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix.
Figure 8  Equality Frame Percentage in All Articles from Phase 2 of AZ, NY, MD and MN
Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns 2008-2012

Data was used from 60 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix.

Figure 9  Comparison of Equality Frame Use in All Articles from AZ, NY, MD and MN
Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns 2006-2012

Data was used from 120 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix.
Figure 10

Percentage Comparison of Coalition Mentions and Displays in All Articles from AZ, NY, MD and MN Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns 2006-2012

Data was used from 120 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix.

Figure 11

Percentage of Frames with Coalition Mentions in Phase 1 Articles from AZ, MD, MN, and NY Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns 2006-2011

Data was used from 60 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix.
Figure 12

Percentage of Frames with Coalition Mentions in Phase 2 Articles from AZ, MD, MN and NY Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns 2008-2012

Data was used from 60 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix

Figure 13 Percentage Comparison of Frames with Coalition Mention Between Phase 1 and Phase 2 Articles from AZ, MD, MN and NY Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns 2006-2012

Data was used from 120 sample articles from all listed newspapers in the appendix
Appendix:

Coding Scheme:

V1: Date/Year
- Articles are given a “0” if they are listed in the time period for the first phase of a same-sex marriage campaign
- Articles are given a “1” if they are listed in the time period for the second phase of a same-sex marriage campaign

V2: Organization Mention
Does the article provide an explicit mention of one of the same-sex marriage coalitions for the four states mentioned above?
- Articles are given a “0” if there is no mention of one of those coalitions
- Articles are given a “1” if there is mention of a pro same-sex marriage organization
- Articles are given a “2” if there are mentions of multiple coalitions
- Articles are given a “3” if there are mentions of and frames from that coalition

V3: Quote Only
Does the article provide a quote from an activist that invokes one of the frames?
- Articles are given a “0” if there is no quote from an activist from one of these coalitions.
- Articles are given a “1” if there is a quote from an activist that is unrelated
- Articles are given a “2” if there is a quote from an activist that mentions support of same-sex marriage but not an explicit mention of that specific frame
- Articles earn a “3” if there are one or more quotes that explicitly states one of these frames

V4: Frame Content
Does the article contain frames focused morality and family or diversity, tolerance, and inclusion?
- Articles are given a “2” if they use frames of diversity, tolerance, and inclusion – i.e. provide specific mention of words such as love, commitment, fairness, freedom, tolerance and inclusion
- Articles are given a “1” if they use frames of morality and family – i.e. provide specific mention of words such as stability, tradition, protection, God, fundamental and values
- Articles are given a “0” if neither of these frames – and none of these words – are used
Key Words Associated with Morality and Equality Frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morality</th>
<th>Equality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
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<td>Tradition</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
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<td>Values</td>
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List of Newspapers

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<th>Arizona</th>
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<td>Annapolis Capital</td>
<td>Rochester Post Bulletin</td>
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<td>Albany Times-Union</td>
<td>Frederick News Post</td>
<td>Duluth News Tribune</td>
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Bibliography


