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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE

Local News Coverage of a National Movement:  
An Analysis of Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns in 8 States

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by

Alice Motes

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Francesca Polletta, Chair  
Professor Edwin Amenta  
Professor David J. Frank

2014



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## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

Local News Coverage of a National Movement:  
An Analysis of Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns in 8 States

By

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Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2014

Professor Francesca Polletta, Chair

Scholars consider news media coverage an important factor in understanding social movements' success. Some organizations are more successful in gaining coverage than others. Scholars suggest this relates to organizational characteristics, political contexts, and journalists' media routines and news values. Media coverage can be further distinguished into substantive or favorable coverage as defined by organizations getting not just mentioned, but quoted and getting their claims or demands in coverage. Moreover, local media differ from national media in their focus on local voices and actors. But, what does local media coverage of a national movement look like in local contexts? When reporters have access to national, state affiliated, or local organizations, which organizations speak for the movement? Do journalistic news values and routines apply uniformly to all movement actors in coverage?

This study addresses these questions using a content analysis of 1113 newspaper articles appearing across 8 daily capital city newspapers ranging in dates from 2000-2011. Using

data from the content analysis a small dataset was created for statistical analysis. This study finds that organizational characteristics, tactics, political contexts, and journalists' routines and news values influence the quality and quantity of coverage that organizations receive. Overall, local organizations dominate coverage, especially during legislative and public referendum fights. However, coverage tends to focus on just a small handful of local organizations and coverage is subject to a rigorous balancing norm. These are either established local organizations or newly formed issue specific coalition organizations. National organizations appear more consistently than state affiliated organizations, but the quality of their coverage is best in judicial contests and limited in legislative and referendum contests. An examination of other actors in coverage reveals that not all movement coverage is rigorously balanced like organizations' coverage. Religious organizations, bystanders, and the photographs accompanying coverage are unbalanced. These results indicate that organizational characteristics, tactics, political contexts and local journalists' priorities influence local news media coverage outcomes. Further, some elements of a movements' coverage can escape the strong balancing norm to provide valuable opportunities for favorable coverage.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Social movement scholars have long considered media attention to be an important factor in movement organizations' emergence, operation, and success in achieving their goals. Vliegenthart, Oegema, and Klandermans (2005) suggest that media attention is essential to not only the success, but the survival of movement organizations. Movement organizations need the media in order to mobilize, gain legitimacy, inspire public sympathy and otherwise draw in third parties to conflict (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). Media coverage also influences political agendas, policy processes, and broader public opinion about an issue (McCarthy, Smith, and Zald 1996). Further, media can be understood as "master forum" that provides a point of intersection for all the discourse surrounding an issue from political, legal, religious, movement organizations, and scientists' arenas (Ferree et al. 2002). In this way, media attention becomes an integral mediating institution between movement organizations, political elites, and the broader public. This is especially true during political contests in the legislature or public referendum when a movement's issue is being addressed and decided by elected political elites or the public. These circumstances can present a high stakes opportunity for movement organizations to influence the terms of the debate, mobilize their members, recruit sympathetic third parties, influence public opinion, and apply pressure on political elites through coverage. However, journalists and editors control access to coverage, playing a gatekeeping role. Thus, those with access to media coverage have their voices amplified over others in political debate. In this way, media coverage becomes all the more important to organizations during political contests because it is not evenly distributed. Some organizations

receive consistent coverage throughout a political contest, while others achieve only occasional or no coverage. Furthermore, media coverage of organizations is not uniformly positive and some organizations receive more favorable or quality coverage than others.

Movement scholars argue that this disparity in coverage is the result of three related factors: characteristics of the organizations, the political context in which they act, and the practices and priorities of journalists and media outlets. Organizations attract media attention by signaling that they are legitimate, credible sources through their membership size, access to resources, having a paid and professional staff, and through the tactical choices they make, such as sponsoring legislation or initiating litigation. Similarly, if an organization is operating in a favorable political climate such as when sympathetic legislators take up some of their issues, these emerging political opportunities spill over into increasing media coverage opportunities as media attention follows the political elite's attention. Journalists evaluate the newsworthiness of events and issues in relation to news values of importance, drama, local impact, novelty and human interest. Journalists also place a high value on producing balanced or objective stories by presenting both sides of an issue. As a result, movement organizations that receive coverage end up providing media attention to their opposition as well. These shared values and practices make journalists and editors gatekeepers to media coverage and produce a kind of coverage that can privilege some types of news and actors over others (Gamson 2007). Movement organizations that have particular organizational characteristics, operate in specific political contexts, and are able to appeal more to journalists' news values will receive not only greater amounts of coverage, but likely more substantive coverage as well. Usually, this means that larger, more established and mainstream movement organizations

appear in the media. Favorable media attention, in turn, makes it more likely that a movement organization will gain favorable political outcomes.

While movement scholars often treat these factors as operating for most kinds of movements and media, there is evidence to suggest that local media and movement interactions are different than national media and movement interactions. In particular, local media tend to prioritize local voices, local actors, and local contention. This has important ramifications for movements that have organizations engaging both at the national and local level. When local newspapers have a choice of whether to interview a spokesperson from a national or a local organization do journalists seek out the more recognizable, larger national organization? Or do they eschew national groups in preference to homegrown actors? Do journalists prefer local organizations in all coverage contexts or do national level organizations still have opportunities to gain favorable coverage in some contexts? Do journalistic news values and routines apply uniformly to all movement actors in coverage? If visibility is vital to movement organizations' success, then the answers to these questions have implications for how both local and national organizations are positioned by local media.

The contention over same sex union recognition provides an opportunity to study the dynamics of local media's coverage of movement organizations. There are movement organizations in support of same sex union recognition and in opposition to it that operate at the national level but that target both federal actions (such as passing a constitutional amendment to ban same sex marriage) and state actions (such as filing lawsuits to challenge marriage bans). Additionally, after the passage of Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, which banned same sex unions at the federal level, the focus of contention shifted toward state level

policies. As a result, both sides of the movement have active organizations operating within each state and have prominent national organizations (or their state affiliates) that forge partnerships with local organizations. They thus present local media with a choice of organizations to cover in stories on the contest over same sex unions.

I begin this chapter by outlining the importance of media to movements. Then I address three factors that influence the coverage of movement organizations. These factors are organizational characteristics, political contexts, and media routines. Next, I outline how local media and local contexts may constitute a distinct site for scholarship of movement and media interactions. Finally, I end with a brief description of the case and an overview of the work.

### **Movements and Media**

Movement scholars consider media coverage important to understanding movement organizations' operation, survival, and success. This is because media coverage influences public opinion, political and public agendas, and policy processes. Indeed, one way of understanding media coverage's impact on the political process is as a communication platform between movement organizations, politicians, and the public (Ferree et al. 2002; Koopmans 2004). As a result, newspaper coverage has been a widely used source of data for scholars interested in studying the impact of social movement organizations' activities on the broader political and cultural landscape (Earl et al. 2004). There is ample evidence to suggest that attention is justified.

Scholars suggest that newspaper coverage plays an agenda setting role (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Cooper 2002; McCombs 2005; Sayre et al. 2010; Winter and Eyal 1981). Newspaper coverage increases both the salience and the public's knowledge of issues and

electoral campaigns, which in turn increases political behaviors such as signing petitions, voting, attending meetings, and writing letters (Druckman 2005; Weaver 1991). Indeed, Barabas and Jerit (2009) find that the volume, breadth, and prominence of news stories in major news outlets that occur prior to a survey are better predictors of survey respondents' policy specific knowledge than their demographic characteristics or socioeconomic status.

Scholars studying cognitive theories of newspaper coverage suggest several possible explanations for newspapers' role in public agenda setting. Cognitive priming suggests that the more experience individuals have with an issue, the greater the effect of media coverage because they are sensitized to the subject (Demers et al. 1989). In contrast, the theory of unobtrusiveness suggests the opposite – those with little experience with an issue will turn to the media as a guide (Winter and Eyal 1981). Related to the theory of unobtrusiveness is the psychological mechanism of need for orientation, which adds a dimension of relevancy to the analysis of how uncertainty influences agenda setting. A need for orientation occurs when an individual has little knowledge of an issue, but has deemed it relevant. As a result, media will have a stronger agenda setting effect for those individuals seeking information about an issue that they have deemed relevant (Hester and Gibson 2007). Hester and Gibson (2007) find evidence to suggest that gay issues are unobtrusive, meaning people turn to the media to guide them on the issue. Accordingly, they find that local newspaper coverage has agenda setting effects that increase the salience of same sex marriage issues. Similarly, newspaper editorials favorable to gay and lesbian rights have been shown to positively influence public opinion, especially if the coverage is protracted (Chomsky and Barclay 2010). This suggests that local



paper coverage could be more influential for the same sex relationship recognition movement than it is for other movements, providing a strong case for measuring any of these effects.

Movement organizations often pursue media coverage as a goal because of its potentially powerful and influential role in gaining mobilization and applying pressure to elites (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Rohlinger 2006; Ryan 2004; Sobieraj 2010). Media attention in newspaper coverage is usually measured by the length of the article, placement within the newspaper, inclusion of a graphic or picture, and how often and where an actor is mentioned throughout the article (Andrews and Caren 2010; Earl et al. 2004; Oliver and Myers 1999). Most movement organizations seek positive media portrayals, as this publicizes their cause to potential supporters as well as establishes their legitimacy as a player in the political landscape (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Lipsky 1968). However, not all coverage of movement organizations and their activities is substantial or positive. Media coverage can be further distinguished by looking at preferred framing, standing and demands (Amenta et al. 2012; Andrews and Caren 2010; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). Movement scholars use the term standing to refer to a type of media coverage characterized by organizations being treated as a source, providing either direct or indirect quotes (Gamson 2007). In this way, the organizational actor has the opportunity to present its take on the subject of the article rather than just being talked about. While media attention broadly is thought to confer legitimacy on organizations, achieving standing is often considered a strong indicator of legitimacy. Indeed, journalists claim that they choose sources based upon their potential impact as players within a contest, meaning that inclusion in coverage bestows legitimacy on organizations and increases their likelihood of future media coverage (Gamson 2007). However, organizations can be quoted in

ways that are not favorable or are tangential to their cause. We can further distinguish the quality of coverage by looking at whether the demands of an organization are included in coverage. Demands represent a more substantive type of coverage wherein an organization gets its claims or interpretations of policies communicated with little or no distortion. This can be particularly important in contests over meaning (Amenta et al. 2012). In sum organizations receiving standing and demands receive more substantive coverage than organizations that do not get quoted or claims into coverage.

Much of the scholarship about media attention focuses on coverage of collective action and protest events (Earl et al. 2004). Tactics to achieve coverage can be characterized as either outsider or insider. Outsider tactics, such as protest events, are considered newsworthy because they provide drama and interest. Insider tactics, like co-sponsoring legislation, appeal to established news routines of covering the activities of officials and government (Andrews and Caren 2010; Sobieraj 2010). Coverage is often focused on the characteristics of protest events, such as the size of the event, whether disruption occurred, and the event's proximity to the capital (Oliver and Myers 1999). Coverage focused on the characteristics of events is considered episodic and less favorable than thematic coverage, which addresses the grievances and demands of the protesters. Scholars suggest that movement organizations through strategic, organized efforts can achieve favorable coverage, ideally in the form of thematic coverage (Earl et al. 2004). Organizations often produce an event or episode with the explicit hope that thematic media coverage will result (Sobieraj 2011). However, disruptive actions are less likely to result in substantive coverage compared to assertive actions taken to more directly challenge political institutional power-holders (Amenta et al. 2012). Andrews and Caren (2010)

conclude that media coverage of organizations is less derived from the tactical choices made around an event than from the organization's broader reputation and visibility.

### **Organizational Characteristics**

The characteristics of movement organizations are often identified as potential factors in predicting more substantive coverage and achieving standing. In particular, greater coverage has been associated with the resources, degree of organization, age, membership, existence of a paid staff, coordination, strategic planning, and tactical choices of a movement organization (Andrews and Caren 2010; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; McCarthy et al. 1996). Scholars point to the professionalization and sizable membership of organizations as signals to reporters of "newsworthiness" (Andrews and Caren 2010; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). In this way more established, larger organizations are not only able to pursue media attention more readily because of their resources, but they attract more media attention based on the legitimacy that those resources signal to time-strapped journalists who are looking to quickly identify leading voices in a contest. These organizations are also more likely to develop and maintain relationships with journalists, which leads to more coverage. Organizations that operate at the national level are more likely to have these resource rich organizational characteristics (Barker-Plummer 2002). This potentially puts smaller local organizations at a disadvantage. However, we would expect better resourced local organizations to receive greater media attention than their local counterparts with lesser resource capacities.

### **Political Contexts**

The political context within which an organization operates provides another important element to understanding how organizations gain media attention. Organizations operate

within distinct political contexts which present opportunities and obstacles that shape the strategic choices of organizational actors. Organizational actors shift their tactics and objectives as they attempt to find the path of least resistance to their goals. Cultural factors such as a favorable discursive environment and message resonance also influence newspaper coverage (Ferree et al. 2002; Koopmans 2004; McCammon and Muse 2007; Snow and Benford 1988). Consequently, movement organizations may act in response to favorable political and discursive environments, such as a sympathetic party gaining control of the legislature. However, organizations may also be compelled to act if they face an active and strong countermovement operating in a favorable context (Koopmans 2004; Meyer and Minkoff 2004; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). If movement organizations find sympathetic political elites that signal receptivity, this in turn may increase media attention toward the issue because of journalists' routines that prioritize covering political elites and government activities (Koopmans 2004; Meyer and Minkoff 2004).

The influence of media on movement organizations extends beyond organizations attempting to achieve coverage. Koopmans (2004) points out that the media provides important feedback to movement organizations about elite, third party, and the broader public's perception and reception of an organization's message and activities. Media coverage of these other actors' interpretation of events provides important feedback to movements about the effectiveness of their tactics and strategies. In particular, media coverage of actors responding, reiterating, or contradicting a movement's message helps to increase the visibility and legitimacy of an organization. This is especially so if the actors are sympathetic elites.

Amenta et al. (2012) contend that it is the combination of certain political contexts, coverage situations, and collective actions which produce substantive coverage in newspapers. Organizations that engage in assertive tactics that directly challenge political actors or institutions through such actions as electioneering, sponsoring legislation, contentious meetings, and litigation will garner more and better quality coverage than extra-institutional tactics such as disruptive protests. Further, state-initiated actions that involve an organization as a player within the ongoing debate will more likely produce thematic and more extensive coverage. Amenta et al. (2012) importantly point out that media coverage is not necessarily always based on showy protest events and organizations do not always just target the state.

### **Media Routines and News Values**

Journalistic practices and news routines influence the coverage social movement organizations receive. Most movements scholars account for journalists' influence by taking coverage to indicate either convenience such as an event's proximity, a slow news day, or professional standards such as newsworthiness or reporting on influential players (Gamson 2007; Oliver and Myers 1999). Journalists and editors are often portrayed as gatekeepers who are deeply ensconced in an institutional and professional culture that produces consistent and homogenous coverage outcomes (Cook 1998). For example, institutional logics are said to guide editors' preferences for generalist reporters and government or official sources for news, and for reducing news gathering costs and minimizing the possibility of alienating elites (Gans 1979). Similarly journalists tend to favor official and elite sources in part because they often have routine interactions with legislatures and political figures through "beats" or regularly assigned issue areas that they cover. In contrast, movement organizations are less likely to

consistently interact with journalists and lack the perceived authority of government sources (Gamson 2007; Tuchman 1972). Journalists have a symbiotic relationship with their sources wherein they need stories and their sources need media coverage. Indeed, political elites seek out media coverage as an effective way to influence their constituents and their fellow legislators during policy formation (Cooper 2002; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). Likewise, movement organizations seek out media attention to gain support and pursue goals, but movement organizations are more dependent on journalists than the other way around since journalists often have a choice of sources including official sources and other movement organizations (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). However, movement organizations that regularly operate within particular beats sometimes develop relationships with the journalists assigned to them. Indeed, time strapped journalists will attempt to cultivate organizations as sources and organizations in turn will attempt to build relationships with journalists. Previous media coverage lends an organization legitimacy and may increase the likelihood of an organization receiving more coverage when subsequent reporters come looking for a source (Gamson 2007; Oliver and Myers 1999).

Newsworthiness is a guiding principle cited by editors and journalists for why stories get written and published. Newsworthiness is judged by audience interests, often resulting in news focused on perceived relevancy and on spectacular, sensational events (Tuchman 1972). Movement actors, knowing that journalists seek newsworthiness, will stage events in the hopes of achieving coverage. They often attempt to conform to news routines and practices. Organizations will project a groomed, professional image, in part by coaching participants in what to say in hopes of achieving a newsworthy legitimacy (Ryan 2004; Sobieraj 2011).

However, journalists savvy to these techniques approach movement organization staged events with skepticism and seek out movement participants who seem authentic and uncoached (Sobieraj 2010). Despite seeking out these unscripted voices of movement actors, reporters still prefer movement messages that contain clear demands and realistic solutions (Sobieraj 2010). Increasingly, news value is shifting focus away from routine reporting of “hard news” on government and political activities toward “soft news” that provides compelling, dramatic human interest stories with broad audience appeal (Wolfsfeld 2011).

Another major journalistic practice that impacts the coverage of movement organizations is journalists’ commitment to objectivity. This idea of objectivity is so central to the professional identity of journalists that they employ what Tuchmand (1972) calls “strategic rituals of objectivity.” While journalists are committed to providing objective coverage they often are working under tight deadlines and with scarce resources that limit their abilities to thoroughly investigate and evaluate the issues in contention. In order to avoid accusations of bias they rely on a balancing norm, wherein they identify two influential, but opposite perspective on the subject and present them side by side, carefully allocating similar time to each position (Dunwoody and Peters 1992; Entman 1989; Gans 1979). There are several implications for movement organizations of this norm. In general it means that larger, more mainstream movement organizations are more likely to get coverage, while more radical and disruptive organizations are less likely to be covered because journalists seek out representative and mainstream voices to represent each side of an issue (Bennett 1990; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gamson 2007). Conversely, if there is a broad consensus about an issue then the balancing norm has the potential to provide a platform to an extreme or

minority position because journalists tend to portray conflict as dyadic. To avoid bias, they will grant equivalency to both sides. An example of this is in conflict over climate change, which is broadly accepted among the scientific community, but a small minority of detractors consistently receives coverage (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004). Finally, for movements with a countermovement, balancing bias means that any media attention will be shared with the opposition (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). In this way, journalists' attempt to achieve neutrality produces coverage that favors larger mainstream organizations and depicts political issues as a dyadic conflict between two clearly defined positions.

Despite their professional commitment to objectivity, journalists are not merely gatekeepers but also play a role in the political process by commenting, shaping and framing political contention through their analysis (Ferree 2003; Gamson 2007; McLeod and Hertog 1992). Indeed, scholars have noted that some newspapers have ideological orientations that influence the sources used in coverage, the policy preferences communicated by stories, and the focus of news attention (Clayman and Reisner 1998; Page 1996; Sampedro 1997). With the respect to same sex unions, the ideological orientation of a newspaper and its editorial staff has been shown to influence the quality of coverage of same sex union recognition movement received (Chomsky and Barclay 2010; Pan, Meng, and Zhou 2010).

### **Local Contexts and Local Media**

Movement organizations are responsive to the local political contexts within which they operate. In particular, national social movement organizations often deploy communication strategies aimed at local, regional and national levels (Ryan 2004) and the gay rights movement is no exception (Schilt 2003). However, specific contextual politics such as localized alliances,



interests, ideologies and even anti-intellectual populism can greatly influence the local organization of national movements (Jasper and Sanders 1995). Einwohner and William Spencer (2005) suggest that movement activists frame national themes through local lenses such that local contexts can influence how debates occur and what shape they take. This influences how local media covers movements. National movement organizations can create tools and resources for local activists to take action locally – such as providing scripts for how to file complaints about homophobia in local media (Schilt 2003). Indeed, national gay rights organizations increasingly have been forging ties with regional and local organizers (Fetner 2008). While there is evidence to suggest national movement organizations adjust their operations to fit a local context, it is unclear whether these changes result in greater media attention despite national organizations' greater resources and perceived legitimacy. In contrast, movement organizations working at the local level may even have a slight advantage since they can gain greater access to local officials, more easily form coalitions with local elites and, as a result, gain more local media attention (Stearns and Almeida 2004). In this way, we can see how local political contexts may influence the operation and opportunities for national and local organizations to gain media coverage.

Furthermore, movement and media dynamics may work differently at the local level. Some scholars caution against lumping local and national papers together (Andrews and Caren 2010; Barranco and Wisler 1999; Hester and Gibson 2007). Local newspapers can be distinguished from national papers by their scope of coverage. There is evidence to suggest local papers follow prestigious national newspapers' lead when they cover national events, but they tend to frame the story through a local lens (Meraz 2009; Vinson 2003). In addition to

seeking out local angles they also focus on local authorities and local organizations, often capturing a greater diversity of these local groups in their coverage than national newspapers. Indeed, the greater diversity of local organizations' forms and practices makes local newspaper coverage of these organizations all the more useful in expanding our understanding of the dynamic between movement organizations and media coverage outcomes (Andrews and Caren 2010; Chomsky and Barclay 2010). Further, local newspapers are also more likely to cover proximate events with greater breadth and volume than national newspapers (Barranco and Wisler 1999; Earl et al. 2004). Barranco and Wisler (1999) suggest that national newspapers are much less likely than local newspapers to capture the local variations in political opportunity structures and local variations in protest forms. Indeed, Hester and Gibson (2007), studying contention over same sex marriage in Atlanta and Chicago, found that once an issue becomes "local" the coverage of local papers has a stronger impact on public agenda setting than national coverage. Local papers play an important role in local political discourses, providing a major source of information for the public, especially for local political contests (Druckman 2005; Oliver and Myers 1999). In part, this is a result of national papers dominating the market for national and international news, thereby pushing local papers into competing by providing greater space for, focus on, and more comprehensive coverage of local issues (Andrews and Caren 2010; George and Waldfogel 2006; Vinson 2003). The coverage of social movement organizations at the local level is subject to greater bias than national papers (Earl et al. 2004). Indeed, the location, disruption, business interest, size, and day of protest have all been shown to have an influence on local coverage of movement events (Oliver and Myers 1999). In sum, local newspapers may have a distinct set of priorities distinguishing them from national media

coverage. These priorities have important implications for national and local social movement organizations seeking media attention.

When local reporters are faced with a choice between using a national, state-affiliate, or local organization, which do they choose? On the one hand, national organizations, with their greater resources and visibility, appeal to reporters' preferences for credible experts and leading voices. National organizations may be better able to respond to reporters' requests with dedicated media liaisons and media friendly resources. Local organizations may not have the same resource capacity. But local organizations may be able to leverage their status as local actors, especially if they are established local players and can build relationships with local journalists to gain media attention. State-affiliate organizations likely exist somewhere between national organizations and local organizations as having better resources, but without the local relationships that local organizations have (Andrews and Caren 2010). We should also ask whether the political contexts in which these organizations operate advantage some organizations over others in gaining favorable coverage. Do local reporters seeking out local voices advantage local organizations in all types of coverage? Does engaging in assertive tactics garner better media attention for all levels of organizations or do these tactics only benefit certain levels of organizations? The answers to these questions have significant implications for national and state affiliated organizations seeking media coverage in local contests and for local organizations competing with national and state affiliated organizations for coverage. Do local organizations' voices get drowned out by larger national voices in local disputes? Or are non-local actors at a disadvantage no matter what the political context or tactics they employ?

## **Case: Same Sex Union Recognition Movement**

The contention over same sex marriage centers on whether or not same sex couples have the right to marry and gain the privileges accorded to state recognized relationships. These include such rights as filing joint taxes, the ability to visit or make medical decisions for a partner in the hospital, and rights to inheritance. Marriage equality advocates claims center around the idea that access to marriage is a fundamental right and denying same sex couples the right to marriage is discrimination. Advocates suggest that same-sex couples' relationships are equivalent to those of heterosexual couples and that same-sex couples are being relegated to second class citizenship by being systematically denied access to the financial, legal, and social rights and privileges of marriage. Traditional marriage supporters claims tend to focus on traditional definitions of marriage, suggesting that there are unknown societal consequences to altering the definition of marriage to include same sex relationships. In particular, they suggest that the purpose of marriage is produce children, which same sex couples are unable to do. Further, they suggest that children need both a mother and father as role models and that the children of same sex couples do worse than their peers. Other arguments against recognizing same sex couples come from religious and moral objections to same sex relationships.

The same-sex union recognition movement began in the 1970s, but did not gain serious traction until 1993 when the Hawaiian Supreme Court declared the state's ban on same sex marriage was unconstitutional. This surprising success inspired initially resistant national gay rights organizations to throw their support behind the individuals who began the litigation and take up the issue in earnest. The Hawaii decision also set off a huge backlash, resulting in a number of states moving to ban same-sex unions. In turn, this mobilized supporters within

states. The issue was settled swiftly at the federal level when Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. Since the federal decision came quickly and because marriage is usually regulated at the state level, most of the contention over same sex unions has occurred at the state level. Indeed, since the Hawaii decision, same sex marriage has been taken up in every state and in many states the issue has been revisited several times. While the movement began as focused on marriage, several other same sex union recognitions emerged in response to proponents' desire to have their relationships recognized. These other statuses are civil unions and domestic partnerships. The rights and obligations that each entail varies by the states or cities that enact them, but they emerged as either a compromise between marriage and no recognition or as the only viable option after same sex marriages were banned. These statuses inspire varied support from advocates and opponents. Some opponents of same sex marriage are focused on preserving the traditional definition specifically, but do not object to other statuses being created to recognize same sex couples as long as marriage is reserved for opposite sex couples. Others oppose all forms of recognition for same sex couples. Likewise, some marriage equality advocates, especially early on in the movement, advocated for alternative forms of recognition as an easier sell than marriage. However, some advocates do not accept alternative forms of recognition, suggesting they are unacceptable and only stepping stones towards the full equality of marriage.

The same sex union relationship movement provides a good case to study the dynamics of local media coverage of social movement organizations for a number of reasons. First, the contention over same sex unions occurs mostly at the state level, but also has large national organizations operating at the federal and regional level across multiple states. Indeed, the

same sex marriage movement as a subset of the larger gay rights movement has proven to be one of the most important and controversial contests in recent years (Bernstein and Naples 2010a). Indeed, some people even compare it to the civil rights movement in its scope and importance. As a result, it often inspires an immense amount of media coverage, producing ample variation to study at the national, local, and even city level. Second, it has a strong opposition that is similarly situated at the national and local levels enabling an easy investigation of media objectivity through balancing norms. Third, the focus on state contests results in an incredible variety of political contexts and opportunities. In some cases, an early ban on same sex marriages resulted in very little movement activity or a shift in focus to an even more local contexts, such as the city level. In other cases, immense mobilization on both sides resulted in nearly constant activity. Movement organizations have simultaneously operated at the federal, state, and city level, providing a variety of social movement actors from city specific organizations to state wide operating organizations to national groups. As a result, organizations from all levels have had the opportunity to participate in actions that may have been initiated by other organizations. In turn this has provided a diverse set of choices for journalists seeking sources and has created a potentially competitive environment for movement organizations seeking media attention. Further, the movement, both pro and con same sex unions, has engaged multiple political venues, facilitating comparisons between them. Marriage equality advocates tend to prefer to pursue goals in judicial arenas and increasingly in legislative venues, while traditional marriage advocates prefer public referenda and legislatures (Pinello 2006; Werum and Winders 2001). It is not uncommon for venue-hopping to occur within one state such that a referendum contest results in a judicial challenge, providing varying

political opportunities for opponents and supporters (Andersen, 2005; Bernstein & Naples, 2010). Fourth, the various venues that the same sex marriage movement operated within and the cultural goals of the movement mean the movement has engaged with a variety of actors beyond political elites and movement organizations, including public bystanders and religious groups (Bernstein 2003). This is particularly true when contests occur in populist venues such as public referenda.

In this way, the same sex marriage movement has provided local journalists various coverage opportunities in multiple venues as well as a diversity of movement organizations as potential sources for their stories. In turn, social movement actors with various organizational capacities have operated in a variety of contexts, some of which may make the organization more or less appealing to the particular priorities of local journalists. This has implications for how national organizations pursue media coverage in local contests and implications for how local organizations pursue media attention when in competition with larger national organizations. Indeed, the immense mobilization and interest in same sex unions may present a possible limitation of this study. The local dynamics of media coverage may be quite different for a movement that does not command as much media attention. However, for movements that are highly mobilized, well covered, and active at national and state levels this case will provide important insights into how local media priorities shape the coverage of organizations.

### **Overview of the Work**

This study investigates how organizational characteristics, political contexts, and the distinct priorities of local media interact to produce news coverage. I use newspaper data from eight capital city newspapers to explore coverage outcomes during contention over same sex

unions. These states were selected to maximize variation along several angles including region, political context, policy histories, mobilization level, circulation, and types of unions being contested. I conducted a content analysis of the articles to identify movement organizations and assess the quality of their coverage. Based on the content analysis I created a data set for statistical analysis of coverage outcomes. After a discussion of the methods and data of this study in Chapter 2, I address three sets of questions.

In Chapter 3, I use negative binomial regressions of coverage outcomes to analyze the factors that garner movement organizations different types of coverage in local newspapers. Specifically, what kinds of organizational characteristics, tactics, political contexts, and media factors are associated with not just being mentioned in a news story, but gaining more substantive coverage in the form of quotes and demands. Do the resources or the scope of operations of organizations matter? What about engaging in collective action? Or using assertive tactics? Does receiving prior coverage lead to more coverage? What about having favorable editorials or beat reporters? Do these factors matter for just being mentioned or also for gaining more substantive coverage? To anticipate, I find that organizational characteristics, tactics, political contexts, and media factors are associated with media attention. Specifically, I find significance for the organization's scope of operation (that is, if it was local, state-affiliated, or national), use of assertive tactics, appearing in the control year, beat reporters, if a bill was before the legislature, percent of pro same sex union editorials, and circulation on coverage.

In Chapter 4, I take a more qualitative look at the coverage of social movement organizations. The second central set of questions has to do with how organizational



characteristics, tactics, political contexts, and journalistic practices come together to produce news coverage of social movement organizations? I am interested, specifically, in the relations between local media, on one hand, and local, state-level, and national organizations, on the other. How are national, state-affiliate, and local organizations covered? When reporters are faced with a choice of sources, do they favor large, resource rich national organizations or do they choose local homegrown movement organizations? Do reporters prefer local organizations in some political venues, but not others? Do all local, state affiliate, and national organizations receive similar quality of coverage? Is that coverage universally subject to the balancing norm? I find that just a handful of local organizations dominate coverage overall, but especially in referendum and legislative contests. However, national organizations still appear in coverage. That coverage is often not substantive, however, except in judicial contests. I also find that the balancing norm is for the most part rigorously applied to social movement organizations.

In Chapter 5, I examine other actors that appear in coverage. The third central question that I address is whether all movement actors are subject to the same rigorous balancing that social movement organizations are subject to. Are there other types of coverage and actors that can carry the movement's message, but escape these balancing norms? I find that the coverage of church organizations and bystanders is skewed in ways that suggest they are not consistently subject to balancing norms. Furthermore, I find that the visuals accompanying stories are similarly skewed. This is important because it suggests several ways in which some movements may be advantaged in gaining coverage in spite of the balancing norm.

Finally, in Chapter 6 I offer concluding remarks and suggest directions for future research.

This study extends the movement scholarship that moves beyond the focus of protest event coverage to consider the broader media environment of movement coverage. It expands on this scholarship to focus specifically on local media contexts and how they present distinct media environments for social movements. Most previous studies focusing on the impact of local contexts on media coverage have centered on events (Earl et al. 2004; Oliver and Maney 2000) with few exceptions (Andrews and Caren 2010). This is the first study to focus on the local media context and coverage outcomes for social movement organizations across this many newspapers and time periods. Additionally, it is the first study to address the media coverage outcomes of movement organizations in the same sex union recognition movement across this many newspapers and states. Further, this study extends the scholarship examining the use of non-movement actors in the coverage of movements.

## CHAPTER 2 METHODS

The research findings of this study derive from two methods of analysis based on one set of data. First, I used the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti to conduct a content analysis of eight capital city newspapers. Based on those findings I created a small dataset to conduct a quantitative analysis of some of the data to evaluate the significance of patterns that emerged during the content coding. I address the methodology and outcomes of this quantitative portion of the study in Chapter 3. In this chapter I will address the methodology used to produce the qualitative data in this study. First, I provide a short policy history of each state to provide some background on the political context and the logic behind their inclusion in the sample. Then I address how I sampled and coded the newspaper articles.

The purpose of this study is to examine the coverage of social movement organizations in local newspapers. It should be noted that I am using capital city newspapers to talk about local media, but these types of newspapers because of their proximity to the capital may represent a distinct kind of local media that is larger and more likely to focus on state legislative activities. These newspapers likely differ from much smaller local newspapers further from the capital. Further, the use of newspaper data to examine social movement activities raises questions about selection bias and description bias, particularly with respect to the coverage of events (Barranco and Wisler 1999; Earl et al. 2004; Oliver and Maney 2000). However, Earl et al. (2004) conclude that these biases are within acceptable limits and newspapers remain useful as an important source of data for movement scholars. Furthermore, this study is less focused on using newspapers as a historical record of movement activities and more focused on the newspaper coverage itself as a movement activity outcome.

There has been an immense amount of mobilization and media attention surrounding the same sex union recognition movement. I focus on the coverage of capital city newspapers in eight regionally paired states. I selected these states based on their relative regional similarities but divergent paths of contention through political venues. Thus, I attempt to capture any regional variations that may affect coverage to better investigate how local contexts influence media outcomes. Focusing just on capital city newspapers presents some advantages and limitations. Just looking at the coverage of capital city newspapers may limit the possible generalizability of this study to other local papers not in capital cities. However, it also presents a few advantages. Capital city newspapers and their journalists have easier access to political elites and the legislative and judicial workings of government within each of these states. This increases the likelihood that they may cover contention occurring within these institutions and subsequently that they may cover more of movement organization's activities. Alternatively, the preference of journalists for official sources and their routine access to those elites may actually diminish the opportunities of movement organizations to gain coverage. In this way, focusing on capital city newspapers may make it easier to attribute the use of sources to journalists' decisions and not to issues of accessibility. Therefore, keeping this element of newspaper's proximity to government activities constant allows easier comparisons of the influence of organizational characteristics, tactics, and political contexts on coverage outcomes for organizations within similarly situated media environments.

### **State Contexts**

The regionally paired states in this study are: Illinois and Ohio; California and Washington; New York and Connecticut; and North Carolina and Virginia. Below I outline a brief

policy history of the same sex union recognition movement in each regional pair of states with a particular focus on the shifts between political venues. This serves two purposes. First, it facilitates examining and comparing any regional influences that may be affecting coverage. Second, it provides a variety of political contexts from multiple regions to better evaluate the overall influence of political contexts on local newspaper coverage.

### **Illinois and Ohio**

Ohio and Illinois provide an interesting contrast in the level of mobilization surrounding the same sex union recognition contention. In Ohio, advocates for same sex unions were shut out relatively early in terms of the national movement's mobilization because of a quickly passed state constitutional amendment. In contrast, Illinois only ever had a statutory ban on same sex marriages, leaving it open to challenge and resulting in far greater activity within the state.

In 2004, the Ohio legislature passed a statute banning same sex marriage and prohibiting the recognition of out of state same sex marriages. That same year Ohioans voted to pass a referendum amending their constitution to ban not only same sex marriages, but any legal status that approximates marriage. Over the next decade same sex union recognition advocates only found success with cities and counties adopting domestic partnership registries. However, by 2014 a judge ruled that Ohio's ban on recognizing out of state marriages was unconstitutional.

By comparison, Illinois has been much more active in part because while their legislature moved fairly early on in 1996 to ban any recognition of same sex marriages, they never passed a constitutional amendment. As a result, this left the legislature open to possible

revision and from 2007 to 2013 there were attempts to make same sex marriage legal. After a few failed attempts at passing same sex marriages the legislature voted to recognize civil unions in 2011. In 2012 opponents in the legislature introduced a bill to repeal the civil union, but it failed. That same year marriage equality advocates launched a legal challenge to civil unions, but by 2013 the Illinois legislature passed a bill to grant same sex couples the right to marry.

### **California and Washington**

Since 2000 California has had constant activity surrounding same sex unions across the legislature, the judiciary, and public initiatives. In response to the Hawaiian Supreme Court decision that found banning same sex unions unconstitutional 61% of Californians voted for a referendum limiting marriage recognition to opposite sex couples in 2000. However, the Democratically controlled California legislature was sympathetic to the issue and quickly responded to the initiative by establishing domestic partnerships rights for same sex couples. In fact, every succeeding year the legislature expanded the range of rights associated with domestic partnerships. From 2004 to 2008 the legislature moved beyond domestic partnership rights and took up the issue same sex marriages every year and succeeded in passing it twice in 2005 and 2007. However, both times the governor vetoed it in deference to the California Supreme Court, which was simultaneously considering a challenge to the ban on same sex marriage. In 2008, the California Supreme Court declared the ban on same sex marriages unconstitutional. Six months later a referendum to add a constitutional amendment defining marriage in California as only between a man and a woman narrowly passed with 52% of the vote. A court challenge followed eventually making its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 2013 made a narrow technical ruling that effectively overturned the proposition.

In contrast, Washington's experiences with same sex unions have been slightly less contentious and intensified later. After a failed attempt in 1997 the Washington legislature banned same sex marriages in 1998. The Washington Supreme Court revisited the issue in 2006 but ruled to uphold the ban on same sex marriage. However, the following year the legislature passed a limited form of domestic partnerships and proceeded to expand them in both 2008 and 2009. In 2009, a referendum to expand the rights of domestic partnerships to make them equivalent in all but name to marriage narrowly passed with 53% of the vote. At the time Washington was one of only two states that attempted to expand the rights of same sex couples through ballot initiative – a tactic preferred by opponents to same sex unions. Marriage equality advocate's success with a public referendum, but failed judicial challenge presents an interesting reversal of the usual pattern of outcomes. In most cases, opponents of same sex unions win ballot initiatives and advocates find success in the judiciary – a pattern that California conforms to.

### **New York and Connecticut**

New York and Connecticut provide another interesting contrast with both taking different paths to legalizing same sex marriage. Both New York and Connecticut never had outright bans on same sex marriage, but New York was much more active in challenging this de facto ban. Throughout 2004 and 2005, several New York villages and city councils declared they would recognize same sex marriages. This resulted in a court case in 2006 that declared same sex marriage as not guaranteed by the New York constitution. In 2007 and 2009 there were two legislative attempts at passing same sex marriage. However, after a court case and executive directive from the governor New York began recognizing out of state marriages in 2009. Soon

after in 2010, the legislature passed an extremely limited domestic partnership bill. Finally, in 2011 same sex marriage passed in the legislature. In contrast, the contention in Connecticut took a different course. Connecticut became an earlier adopter of same unions and in 2005 became the second state in the country to pass civil unions. In 2007, the legislature attempted to recognize same sex marriages, but failed to gather sufficient votes. By 2008, a legal challenge to civil unions by marriage equality advocates made its way to the Connecticut Supreme Court. They ruled that refusing same sex couples marriage was unconstitutional and that the legislature must pass a law recognizing same sex marriage. Initially, the legislature was reluctant, but under pressure from the judiciary, they replaced all marriage laws and gendered references to gender neutral terms in 2009.

### **North Carolina and Virginia**

Both Virginia and North Carolina present a fairly unreceptive climate for advocates of same sex unions. However, North Carolina's Democratically controlled legislature was reluctant to move beyond a statutory ban on recognizing same sex unions. As a result, North Carolina for many years was the only southern state without a constitutional amendment banning same sex unions. The legislature did act early on in 1996 to ban out of state marriages and followed up in 2005 to pass an official ban on same sex marriages within the state. From 2004 to 2011 opponents of same sex unions in the legislature introduced legislation every year to get a constitutional amendment banning same sex unions on the ballot, but were blocked by Democrats. In 2011, Republicans took control of both chambers of the legislature and passed a constitutional amendment to be ratified by the public that banned all forms of same sex union recognition. In 2012, the referendum passed with 61% of the vote.



In contrast, Virginia is a more typical example of the contention over same sex unions in southern states with an early adoption of both statute and constitutional amendment bans, which reduce the options for state level mobilization on the issue. In 1997 Virginia's legislature passed a ban on same sex marriage. The legislature followed this up in 2004 with ban on civil unions or any other types of partnership recognition. In 2006, Virginians passed an all-encompassing constitutional amendment that banned same sex marriage, civil unions, and any other non-marriage recognition of "unmarried couples", gay or straight. In 2014 a federal court declared the ban on same sex marriages in Virginia unconstitutional, but issued a stay on the decision.

### **Data Source and Sample Selection**

The data in this study derives from a content analysis of 1113 newspaper articles appearing across 8 daily newspapers in years ranging from 2000 to 2011. These newspapers are: *The News & Observer*, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, *The Sacramento Bee*, *The Olympian*, *The Hartford Courant*, *The Times Union*, *The State Journal-Register*, and *The Columbus Dispatch*. I draw articles from three years of coverage appearing in each of these newspapers. I identified a major recent event that occurred in each state, such as a legislative bill, judicial decision, or a vote on a public referendum and include articles from two time periods: (1) the entire year in which the event occurred and the entire year preceding it and (2) a control period of coverage that occurs four years before the event. I include this control period for several reasons. First, it enables another point of comparison for coverage that focuses on the variations that may occur within these states based on whether or not a movement is highly mobilization throughout all time periods or is more recently mobilized. Second, it enables an examination of whether

previously covered organizations have an advantage in receiving subsequent coverage. This further allows an examination of the relationship between media coverage and organizational characteristics such as reputation, perceived legitimacy, and longevity.

Interestingly, despite identifying one major event for each paper the highly mobilized nature of the movement meant that they were engaged in multiple political venues either simultaneously or successively in each state. As a result, all of the newspapers in my sample cover actual legislative, judicial, and public referendum contests or failed attempts to initiate contests in each of these venues. While unexpected, this facilitates the examination of whether local media contexts and/or political venues shape coverage outcomes.

Table 2.1 Total Number of Articles Sampled by Year, Newspaper, and Circulation

State	Newspaper	Circulation	Articles in Sample	Years
CA	Sacramento Bee, The	293,705	320	2004, 2010-2011
CT	Hartford Courant	191,500	162	2005, 2008-2009
IL	State Journal-Register, The	57,259	69	2007, 2010-2011
NY	Times Union	100,628	115	2007, 2010-2011
NC	News & Observer, The	177,361	99	2007, 2010-2011
OH	Columbus Dispatch, The	252,564	122	2000, 2003-2004
VA	Richmond Times-Dispatch	191,732	167	2002, 2005-2006
WA	Olympian, The	33,848	59	2007, 2010-2011

Note: Circulation estimates from NewsBank.

The newspapers articles in this study come from the NewsBanks’s online collection *Access World News*, which includes local, regional, and national newspapers. I conducted full text searches in the years of interest for “same sex marriage”, “civil unions”, “domestic partnership”, “homosexual marriage”, and “gay marriage”. Discussions of same sex unions often invokes multiple statuses and including all of these terms increases the likelihood of capturing a greater range of discussions surrounding all types of same sex unions. Additionally,

this facilitates capturing any coverage of other states' contention that may be over a different same sex relationship status than the state within which the coverage occurs. In this way, I capture a larger proportion of the broad discussions of same sex unions in each state.

Since the focus of this study is on how media routines and news values influence the coverage of movement organizations and the movement more broadly I exclude letters to the editor, wedding announcements, and obituaries from the analysis. The remaining articles fall into two broad categories: news, news analysis, features, and lifestyle articles or op-eds and editorials. The op-eds and editorials comprise only 24% of all articles in the sample. I made the scope of inclusion for articles as broad as possible to better assess the overall range of quality of coverage excluding only the most incidental of mentions. Accordingly, I exclude any articles that make only one mention of same sex unions. For example, an article that merely lists same sex unions as part of a series of issues under consideration would not be included. Any article that contained two or more mentions of same sex unions would be included. This more or less equated to two or more sentences about same sex unions in the article. Despite this fairly low threshold for inclusion 68% of all articles in my sample cover same sex unions for half or more than half of the article.

The newspapers in this sample range from fairly small circulations like *The Olympian* with just shy of 34,000 to a high of nearly 294,000 from *The Sacramento Bee*. However, several of the papers have somewhat similar circulations to each other. Indeed, *The News & Observer*, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, and *The Hartford Courant* are all around the same circulation. Both *The Sacramento Bee* and *The Columbus Dispatch* on the high end of circulation numbers and *The Olympian* and *The State Journal-Register* on the low end of circulation are closer to

each other in circulation than any other the newspapers in the sample, providing for a greater variety of comparisons of low and high circulation papers. Similarly, the years that articles in the sample range over an eleven year period with several overlaps, especially in the more recent contention. However, it is important to note that the very earliest control years for *The Columbus Dispatch* in 2000 and the *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* in 2002 yielded very few articles (8 in total) compared to other years. Overall, this variety of ranges facilitates examining any possible influence of circulation or year effects in the data by enabling the comparison of similar and dissimilar circulations and years across papers.

## **Content Analysis**

### **Actors**

Every actor mentioned in an article I coded into one of five categories: bystander, civic leader, corporation or business, expert, political elite, church organization, or social movement organization. I also coded each actor as supporting, opposing, or neutral toward same sex unions. Few actors registered neutral opinions, but the group with the most neutral actors were political elites, who during contests or elections would equivocate about their positions on the issue. However, these neutral political actors only accounted for about 7% of political elites with most political elites clearly stating support or opposition to same sex unions.

Each of these actor categories is mutually exclusive except for the civic leaders and church categories. Some religious organizations have spokespersons or are mentioned or quoted without a specific individual identified from that organization. In these cases, the code church is applied. However, sometimes religious organizations are represented by someone identified in coverage by a title, such as reverend or pastor. These are often are smaller local

church organizations. Subsequently, I code these actors as civic leaders and the church they represent receives a separate code as a religious organization. Moreover, not all titled religious leaders are associated with a religious organization. These actors I code as civic leaders. This is mainly important because I add a code for quotes to these two actors and if a civic leader is quoted representing a local church, then that one quote is counted twice: once for the civic leader and once for the church organization. It is unlikely that this overlap between civic leaders and church organizations poses a serious problem for this analysis since for the most part I consider church organizations and civic leaders separately. I further discuss the non-religious actors included in the civic leaders code in the broader discussion of actor codes below.

### **Bystanders**

I coded actors as bystanders if they were not identified by any other political or social status in coverage. This code also includes any actors that may be mentioned alongside a movement or organizations, but are not identified as being an official representative of that organization. This includes people interviewed at events such as protests or mentioned as litigants in cases being represented by movement organizations as well as people who provide “person on the street” reactions to contention.

### **Civic Leaders**

Civic leaders are any actor that has a socially recognizable position in society and was distinguished by that identity in coverage. For example, if the President of Ohio State University weighed in on the issue of domestic partnerships and was explicitly identified as the President of Ohio State University I would code her as a civic leader. However, if she was not identified explicitly within the article with a title then she would be coded as a bystander. Religious

leaders and celebrities are also included in this code, since they are distinguished from average citizens in their social status and coverage.

### **Corporations and Businesses**

Corporations or business actors include any spokesperson or individual who is identified in coverage by a business affiliation. This includes large corporate spokespeople and small business owners whose businesses are included in their identification in coverage.

### **Experts**

Experts are any actor that is identified in coverage by their expertise to offer critical or informed analysis of the issue. This category mostly includes strategists, think tank spokespeople, professors, lawyers not affiliated with a social movement organization, and others who are explicitly identified simply as “experts” in coverage.

### **Political Elites**

Political elite refers to any actor who holds a position within any government branch or agency at any level including judges, legislators, county clerks, governors, mayors, etc.

### **Church Organizations**

As discussed before, church organizations are any religiously affiliated organization including local churches and national governing bodies. I include two separate codes for local and national churches. I exclude religiously affiliated organizations that have explicit political objectives such as state specific Catholic Conferences which are the lobbying arm of the Catholic Church from this code. Instead, they I code them as social movement organizations.

Table 2.2. Actors by Ideology and Percent of All Mentions

Actors and Ideology	Mentions	Percent
Bystander Con	175	3.8%
Bystander Neutral	4	0.1%
Bystander Pro	624	13.4%
Civic Leader Con	184	4.0%
Civic Leader Neutral	16	0.3%
Civic Leader Pro	189	4.1%
Business Con	8	0.2%
Business Neutral	4	0.1%
Business Pro	75	1.6%
Expert Con	20	0.4%
Expert Neutral	74	1.6%
Expert Pro	81	1.7%
Political Elite Con	695	14.9%
Political Elite Neutral	123	2.6%
Political Elite Pro	1024	22.0%
Movement Org Con	475	10.2%
Movement Org Neutral	6	0.1%
Movement Org Pro	567	12.2%
Local Church Con	116	2.5%
Local Church Neutral	6	0.1%
Local Church Pro	69	1.5%
National Church Con	74	1.6%
National Church Neutral	7	0.2%
National Church Pro	40	0.9%
<i>Total Con</i>	1747	37.5%
<i>Total Neutral</i>	240	5.2%
<i>Total Pro</i>	2669	57.3%
Total	4656	100.0%

### Social Movement Organizations

The social movement organization code comprises any mention of an organization or explicitly identified representative of a social movement organization. This includes any organization explicitly identified as a principal or supporting member of contests (e.g. co-sponsoring legislation, joining a coalition, etc.) and any organizations that act as representatives

for supporters or opponents during a contest. For example, a community center for gays and lesbians that expresses support, opposition, or speaks on behalf of gays and lesbians during a contest I coded as a movement organization.

The three most mentioned actors are political elites, social movement organizations, and bystanders accounting for 79% of all actor mentions. Overall, the majority (57%) of actors mentioned in coverage are marriage equality actors. Bystanders, businesses, experts, and political elites all skew toward marriage equality actors, while traditional marriage actors represent more of the local and national churches mentions. Civic leaders and social movement organizations actors are more evenly divided.

### **Quotes**

I applied a code to all actors that received a direct or indirect quote in an article. Direct quotes are any quotes that appear with quotation marks. Indirect quotes are any statements that are attributed to a speaker or organization without quotes. For example, “Mayor Michael B. Coleman said he supports expanded health benefits...” attributes a statement without quoting the actor verbatim. In many cases, actors receiving more in depth coverage are directly and indirectly quoted. As a result, the combined number of quotes attributed to an actor can outnumber their mentions. Since quotes are a measure of substantive coverage and receiving both direct and indirect quotes usually indicated lengthier coverage this variable remains valuable as an indicator for substantive coverage.

### **Demands**

Since the focus of this study is on the coverage outcomes of social movement organizations an additional code was applied to these organizations if they got a demand into



an article. I coded any statement that included a claim, grievance, or conveyed a preferred outcome as a demand. Demands for traditional marriage advocates center around historical and popular definitions of marriage. Marriage equality activities' demands focus more on rights and discrimination. Only 45% of social movement organizations got at least one demands in their coverage compared to 81% of organizations with at least one quote.

Social movement organizations' mentions, quotes, and demands make up the dependent variables for my quantitative analysis and I address the details of their coding and descriptive characteristics in greater depth in Chapter 3.

### **Organizations' Level of Operation**

Another variable of interest in this study is the scope of operations of a social movement organization. I coded each movement organization in the coverage as either local, state affiliated, or national. Local organizations run the gamut from smaller organizations that operate at the city level to larger organizations that operate at the state level. State affiliated organizations are any branch of a larger national organization that focuses on and operates within the state, but maintains ties to the national organization. National organizations are comprised of any organization that operates across multiple states and aims to influence national level contests. I determined the level of operation for each organization by examining the way reporters identified it in coverage (e.g. "Lambda Legal, a national advocacy group...") or by looking at the mission statements and "about" pages on the organization's websites.

Of the 201 organizations in my sample 110 (55%) are local, 30 (15%) are state affiliated and 61 (30%) are national. Despite only comprising a little over half of all organizations we can see in Table 2.3 that local organizations comprise most of all mentions (63%), quotes (70%), and

demands (70%). Additionally, we can see that across these organizational levels the distribution of marriage equality organizations (pro) and traditional marriage organizations (con) is fairly equal with two notable exceptions. Pro state affiliated organizations are quoted much more (77%) than their equivalent con groups, but these groups are mentioned and get demands in more equal proportions. Similarly, national con groups are quoted much more (77%) often than their pro counterparts. I examine these variations and the broader influence of scope of organizational operation on newspaper coverage outcomes in Chapter 4.

Table 2.3 Mentions, Quotes, and Demands by Organization Level and Ideology

Organization Level	Mentions		Quotes		Demands		
	<i>Ideology</i>	count	%	count	%	count	%
<b>Local</b>		654	63%	685	70%	175	70%
	<i>Con</i>	289	44%	317	46%	91	52%
	<i>Pro</i>	365	56%	368	54%	84	48%
<b>State</b>		82	8%	161	16%	13	5%
	<i>Con</i>	36	44%	37	23%	6	46%
	<i>Pro</i>	46	56%	124	77%	7	54%
<b>National</b>		306	29%	137	14%	63	25%
	<i>Con</i>	150	49%	106	77%	29	46%
	<i>Pro</i>	156	51%	31	23%	34	54%
<b>Totals</b>		1042	100%	983	100%	251	100%

Note: Neutral organizations are excluded from this table.

## Conclusion

The design of this study offers several advantages that facilitate comparisons and strengthen overall conclusions about how local media environments influence movement organization's coverage outcomes. First, this study includes a large number of articles drawn from a relatively large number of newspapers providing a substantial amount of data for analysis. Second, these capital city newspapers are similarly situated in their proximity to

government activities, but vary across several factors including circulation, high and low coverage, region, years of coverage, political venue coverage, and the types same sex unions that are contested. Third, this study includes measures of the quality of coverage for social movement organizations enabling a more nuanced examination of what produces substantive and favorable coverage. Fourth, this study moves beyond just social movement actors to examine the broader ecology of actors that appear in movement coverage. However, this study is not without limitations. I address these limitations alongside suggestions for future work in the conclusion in Chapter 6.

### Chapter 3 Mentions, Quotes, and Demands

Scholars have long held that media coverage plays an important role in the emergence, operation, and success of movements. However, some movement organizations are more successful in gaining media attention than others. Social movement scholars argue that coverage outcomes are shaped by three sets of factors. One set consists of the characteristics or activities of organizations themselves. A second set is the cultural or political contexts within which organizations are operating. A third set is the practices and professional pressures of journalists and media outlets. It is through the confluence of these three sets of factors that media coverage of movement organizations is shaped. The norms and practices of journalists to seek out opposing voices, cultivate sources, focus on local actors, and have routine political beats influence the type of coverage movement organizations receive (Gamson 2007; Oliver & Myers 1999; Entman 1989; Gans 1979; Tuchman 1978). Indeed, movement organizations seeking media coverage will strategically attempt to appeal to those routines through formal organizational structures, such as creating media liaisons or creating media friendly resources (Rohlinger, 2002; Staggenborg, 1988). Organizations also attempt to draw media attention through their tactics such as dramatic protest or creating compelling spectacles (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Sobieraj, 2010). Organizations may groom their members to be more media savvy about the messages they convey (Sobieraj, 2011). Additionally, political contexts can shape movement organizations' actions and tactics as opportunities emerge, such as a sympathetic political party gaining control of the legislature. This in turn can increase the receptivity of the media to movement claims as they gain more action within traditional political institutions (Koopmans, 2004; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004).

Not all media attention is equivalent. Scholars argue that the quality of media coverage of organizations differs based on how movement organizations appear in news stories. Movement organizations may be only mentioned, but being quoted is preferable. Most preferable is to have the group's message or demand included in the news story in a relatively unaltered way. Coverage broadly, but especially quality coverage (as indicated by quotes and demands) is considered valuable for movement organizations since it serves to draw attention to their cause, build legitimacy, mobilize sympathetic actors, apply pressure to political elites and policy makers, and influence issue attention through agenda setting (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Gamson, 2007).

In this chapter I investigate differential media attention as measured by mentions, quotes and demands using data generated from the content coding of social movement organizations' coverage in eight capitol city newspapers. Most variables I created from the content coding, but some of the organizational characteristic and political context variables I constructed using various online sources. I find that some organizational characteristics, political contexts and media variables influence coverage outcomes. In particular, resources, the scope of operation of an organization, the presence of a bill before the legislature, the use of assertive tactics, appearing in previous coverage, and the percent of articles written by beat reporters. The percent of pro-same sex union editorials only influenced quotes and circulation only influenced mentions. Protest tactics, party control of the legislature, appearing in multiple states, and ideology were not significant. These findings suggest that organizational characteristics, political contexts, and media routines and news values influence the quantity and quality of media coverage.

## Resource Mobilization

Scholars argue that an organization's size, resources, age, membership, and having a professionalized paid staff matter for gaining media coverage. As a result larger, more organized groups are better equipped to both pursue media attention and maintain contacts with journalists. Additionally, these same qualities signal to journalists the legitimacy and newsworthiness of those organizations as important, credible players in the political landscape and broader community (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Oliver & Myers, 1999). As a result, these larger, more established organizations have an advantage over smaller organizations in the amount and quality of coverage they can secure (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). Organizations operating at the national level often have the resources capacities that signal legitimacy including a status as credible experts, receiving grants, maintaining large memberships, and paid staff. These same qualities facilitate the relationship between time strapped journalists looking for easily accessible, information rich, and credible sources and organizations seeking media coverage (Barker-Plummer, 2002). In contrast, smaller, local organizations may have more limited capabilities that put them at a disadvantage both when seeking media attention and when reporters are seeking sources. One can imagine an approximate hierarchy of resources based on the scope and ambition of operations of a social movement organization, such that nationally operating organizations have more resources than state-affiliated and local organizations. However, we can also expect that the preference for better resourced organizations will permeate through these categories, such that better funded local organizations will receive more coverage than smaller local organizations. This suggests the first two hypotheses:

H1: Better-funded organizations will get more coverage overall, as well as standing and a representation of their demands in coverage.

H2: National organizations and state level affiliates of national organizations will get more coverage, standing, and demands than home grown ones.

### **Political Context**

Political context plays an important role in how social movements garner media coverage. The political, cultural, and discursive environments within which organizations operate encourage or discourage the actions of activists through the opportunities presented. For example, a shift in the political party control of a legislature may present new opportunities for social movement organizations to mobilize. Organizations act as strategic actors who are aware of and responsive to these political contexts. As a result of that awareness, the political context influences the strategies, tactics, and goals of organizations as they make choices to take the path of least resistance to achieve those goals. Accordingly, movement organizations may choose to act when they have a favorable political and discursive environment or they may be forced to respond to a countermovement's actions who have a favorable context (Koopmans, 2004; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996). Pursuing or avoiding media attention represents one part of the broader strategic and tactical choices that organizations make in response to the broader political contexts of opportunities and threats from allies and opponents (Rohlinger, 2006). In this way we can see how discursive opportunities for media coverage are embedded within political contexts and movement organization's tactical responses to those contexts (Koopmans, 2004; McCarthy, Smith, & Zald, 1996; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004).

Other scholars suggest that it is the combination of particular types of coverage situations, political contexts, and collective action that result in coverage. Specifically, organizations that participate in assertive actions, such as electioneering, contentious meetings, litigation, and movement-sponsored legislative actions that directly engage or challenge political actors or institutions, will garner more media coverage than extra-institutional collective actions such as disruptive protests. Indeed, taking on these political institutions produces better quality coverage for organizations in the form of more standing and demands (Amenta, Gardner, Tierney, Yerena, & Elliott, 2012). This suggests the next three hypotheses about political context:

H3: Movements that are aligned with the regime in power will get more coverage, standing, and demands.

H4: Movement organizations that use assertive tactics get more coverage, more standing, and more demands.

H5: Movement organizations get more coverage, more standing, and more demands when a bill is before the legislature.

## **Media**

The preferences and practices of journalists can influence the coverage that movement organizations receive. Media scholars suggest journalists are guided by principles of news values (or news worthiness) and news routines. Since journalists have countless options when it comes to what to cover in their stories they are constantly making choices about what is important or newsworthy. Additionally, they can be assigned specific “beats” or issue areas to routinely follow, such as the activities of the state legislature. In this way, journalists act as gatekeepers to coverage for those seeking media attention.



Journalists prefer using political actors as sources because they perceive them as more authoritative than social movement organization actors (Gans 1979). Additionally, journalists often have more regular access to political actors and develop relationships with them by covering the same routine issue area. This should apply to movements as well. Reporters who consistently cover the same area have more opportunities to develop relationships with movement organizations that may be operating in those same issue areas. Indeed, reporters will cultivate movement actors as sources. And movements attempt to cultivate reporters as well. Though as Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) point out this symbiotic relationship is asymmetric as movement organizations are more dependent on journalists than the other way around. Additionally, media coverage lends legitimacy to social movement organizations and may influence a reporter's perception of the importance and newsworthiness of an organization. As a result, organizations that have been covered before may have an advantage in gaining future coverage. This may be either through direct familiarity with the journalist or through a presumed vetting by previous journalists' coverage (Gamson 2007; Oliver and Myer 1999).

Journalists' commitment to the value of objectivity is enacted in part in what has been called a balancing norm. This too profoundly influences the coverage of movement organizations. In the pursuit of neutrality, journalists seek out opposing views on issues. The result is coverage that focuses on dyadic conflict and gives equal attention to both sides of an issue (Oliver & Myers 1999; Entman 1989; Gans 1979; Tuchman 1978). Paradoxically, a further result may be the magnification or legitimization of a minority position. For example, in the climate change debate, scientists who deny the existence of climate change represent a very

small minority of the broader scientific community, but they receive similar coverage to those in the majority as a result of balancing norms (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004). Another way in which the balancing norm may affect movement coverage is that reporters seeking out opposing voices create opportunities for countermovement organizations to gain media attention off the back of another organization's actions (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996).

Despite these attempts to achieve neutrality, journalists and editors also play an important role in shaping and framing political contention through their commentary on and analysis of events (Feree 2003; Gamson 2007). Page (1996) suggests that newspapers can act as political actors seeking to influence policy indirectly through shaping policy preferences of both mass and elite audiences. Some newspapers are broadly perceived as having ideological orientations and some scholarship suggests that editorial processes within each paper can produce variations in the focus of news attention (Clayman & Reisner, 1998; Page, 1996). Sampedro (1997) finds that the sources found in newspaper's coverage were more likely to align with the editorial ideological orientation of the paper. Further, Oliver and Maney (2000) suggest that editorial predispositions influence the selection of stories, such that left wing papers are more likely to cover movement activities. There is some evidence to suggest that coverage of the same sex marriage movement is subject to these influences. Pan, Meng, and Zhou (2010) find that a newspaper's ideology affects the reporting on same sex marriages. Chomsky and Barclay (2010) find that editorial support of same sex marriage is associated with more prominent article placement in newspapers.

The particular dynamics of local newspapers may also influence the way in which political contention gets covered. In particular, local newspaper coverage of movement

organizations may be more likely to be biased than national newspaper coverage (Earl, Martin, McCarthy, & Soule, 2004). Local papers tend to seek out local angles and local actors. They are more likely to not just cover local contention, but to give it more extensive coverage (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Druckman, 2005; George & Waldfogel, 2006; Oliver & Myers, 1999) When faced with a choice of social movement actors to cover, journalists may eschew non-local organizers in favor of homegrown actors. As a result, smaller, local organizations may actually have an advantage in gaining media coverage even relative to a larger national organization with more resources (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Oliver & Myers, 1999). These possibilities suggest several hypotheses some of which compete with the previous hypotheses:

H6: Because of the norm of balancing, pro and anti-movement organizations will get the same amount of mentions, standing, and demands (contra H1, H2).

H7: Left-leaning newspapers will grant more coverage to movement organizations including more mentions, standing, and demands.

H8: Organizations that get coverage during non-contentious periods are likely to get covered during contentious periods, regardless of whether they are the best funded (contra H1, H2).

H9: Homegrown organizations will get more coverage, standing, and demands than national organization or state level affiliates of national organizations (contra H2).

H10: Where reporters are beat reporters, organizations will get more coverage, standing, and demands.

## **Methodology**

To help evaluate these theories about coverage outcomes, I created a small dataset from my coded newspaper articles. A total of 201 organizations appeared in the coded articles and each one represents a case in the dataset. The three dependent variables are counts of the mentions, quotes, and demands that each organization received. The independent variables are

a mix of variables I created from the newspaper codes and information found from other sources. I discuss the source and creation of these below.

**Dependent Variables: Mentions, Quotes, and Demands**

There are a total of 1048 mentions among 201 organizations for an average of 5.2 mentions per organization. However, most organizations (62%) receive only one or two mentions, while half of all mentions are concentrated among just 20 organizations. Marriage equality supporters averaged 4.6 mentions, while traditional marriage organizations averaged about 6.6 mentions.

Table 3.1 Descriptives of Dependent Variables

	Mentions	Quotes	Demands
Sum	1048	990	252
Range	1-49	0-60	0-23
<u>Average</u>	5.2	5	1.3
<i>Pro</i>	4.6	4.2	1
<i>Con</i>	6.6	6.4	1.7
<i>Local</i>	6	6.3	1.6
<i>State</i>	2.8	4	0.5
<i>National</i>	5	3.2	1.1

The quotes dependent variable represents both indirect and direct quotes from the newspaper articles. Direct quotes were any statements made with direct attribution with quotation marks. Any statements directly attributed to the actor without quotation marks, such as “she went on to suggest that...” were counted as indirect quotes. As such, an organization directly and indirectly quoted in one article will have a quote count of two even though it only appears in one article. Conversely, an organization directly quoted in two separate articles will also have a quote count of two. As a result it is possible this variable is inflating the number of

quotes attributed to organizations. However, in most cases if an organization receives both direct and indirect quotes it is in conjunction with lengthier, more comprehensive coverage. Since the concern of this variable is to capture a measure of the quality, not quantity, of coverage, the inflation of a single, but lengthier quote to the level of two separate, but shorter quotes does not appear to fundamentally undermine the usefulness of this variable. However, this particularity of the variable should remain salient when interpreting the averages and counts for quotes in comparison with the mentions. Overall, the average organization received five quotes. Marriage equality organizations averaged 4.2 quotes per organization, while traditional marriage organizations averaged 6.4 quotes. National organizations on average received about half (3.2) as many quotes as local organizations (6.3).

Demands were coded based on whether or not an organization got a grievance or demand into their quotes or coverage. For traditional marriage organizations this mostly consisted of claims surrounding historical definitions of marriage, biological arguments against same sex marriage, the social risks of same sex marriage, and people's right to self-determination through direct democracy or the tyranny of unelected judges. For marriage equality organizations, demands focused on rights, discrimination against gays and lesbians, the equivalency or sameness of heterosexual and homosexual romantic relationships, and the need to protect minorities from direct democracy or through courts. Additionally, if any organization made a statement about a specific desired outcome, such as that people should be able to vote on same sex marriages or the legislature should not approve this bill, then it was coded as a demand. A total of 252 demands were recorded for an average of 1.3 demands per

organization. Local organizations and traditional marriage organizations on average succeeded slightly more than national or marriage equality in getting demands into their coverage.

### **Independent variables**

#### *Resource Mobilization*

The resources variable consists of the budget and assets information reported by non-profits on their IRS 990 tax forms. These forms were located through a database of the website of the independent non-profit newsroom Propublica ([propublica.org](http://propublica.org)). If the organization appeared in multiple years I used the average of their income and assets. Since for the most part the income and assets of these organizations seemed to remain fairly stable over the course of a few years, if an organization's income and assets were not available, then the nearest available year was used. Additionally, these differences flattened out when I created an ordinal variable to facilitate the analysis. By creating this variable I also address the wide disparity in resources reported by these organizations, which range from under ten thousand dollars of income and assets to over fifteen billion, reported by The Knights of Columbus a Catholic fraternal organization. In particular, the organization with the highest reported income significantly skewed the average income.

There were some limitations to this method, including the fact that it only covered non-profit and tax exempt organizations. In fact, organizations that are faith-based, subsidiaries of a parent organization, or that did not reach a minimum threshold of income and assets are not required to file a form or can submit an abbreviated form. A bivariate analysis of a dummy for resources reported proved to be statistically significant ( $p < .000$ ) when predicting mentions, quotes, and demands. This indicates that there may be a systematic bias in which organizations

report their incomes. Additionally, in the case of public referenda and legislative battles, ballot measure committees and umbrella organizations formed that did not turn up in IRS form searches. For those organizations, I used the total money reportedly raised during their campaigns as a proxy for their financial resources and added them to the resource variable. I obtained these campaign figures from the non-profit, non-partisan National Institute on Money in State Politics ([followthemoney.org](http://followthemoney.org)), which maintains a campaign finance database.

In total, I was able to locate financial information for 141 organizations, leaving 60 organizations without any information. It is likely that these organizations are smaller, faith based, or are included in a parent organization’s report.

Table 3.2 Resources Ordinal Variable Ranges

Rank	Range	Average	# of orgs
1	400-199,999	91,769	26
2	200,000-499,999	322,965	28
3	500,000-999,999	670,429	17
4	1,000,000-9,999,999	3,323,692	42
5	10 million or more	60,076,217*	28

Note:\* excludes the highest organization

Due to the large range of resources and the fact that organizations with greater resources were more likely to report their incomes, thus skewing the sample to larger organizations, I created an ordinal variable. Those organizations I was unable to find financial information on I coded into the lowest rank. Even when excluding the disproportionately high income reported by the top organization, the overall average of reporting organizations was a little less than \$13 million. This demonstrates the tendency of better financed organizations to make information available. Indeed, the largest category of organizations that had information available reported between one and ten million dollars of income and assets. There appears to

be a higher proportion of national organizations (35%) among reporting organizations compared to non-reporting organizations (20%).

This suggests another way to think about the resources and organization of SMOs, specifically by considering their scope of operation. An organization operating at the national level likely has more resources than an organization that operates at the state or city level. Indeed, national organizations represent 68% of the top financial category, but only 8% of the lowest category. Certainly the connection between scope of operation and resources does not line up perfectly. But at the very least, organizations that have national ambitions or attempt to act at the national level may signal a greater newsworthiness as potentially important, authoritative players compared to organizations with more narrow scopes. Alternatively, those organizations that aim to be influential players in more targeted, local arenas may garner the interest of local reporters interested in local stories. In this way we can think of distinguishing between national, state-affiliated, and local organizations as another way to examine how organizational characteristics such as resources and scope of operation may affect coverage. I assigned each organization a rank as a national (3), state affiliate (2), or local organization (1) to create an ordinal variable. I determined the organization's rank either directly from newspaper coverage that identified the organization's scope of operation or by examining the websites of the organizations, in particular their mission statements. Of the 201 organizations, there were 110 local, 61 national, and 30 state affiliate organizations.

### **Political Context**

Political context and specifically regime power was operationalized by which party controlled the state legislature during the time of contention. I retrieved the publicly available



data produced by Carl Klarner at Indiana State University about state partisan balance from 1937 to 2011 from his website (Klarner 2014). Specifically, Klarner created an additive scale of democratic power in each state legislature such that 1 = Democratic control of both chambers, 0 = Republican control of both chambers, .5 = Democrats control one chamber, Republicans the other, .25 = Republicans control one chamber, split control of the other, .75 = Democrats control one chamber, split control of the other. The measure for the states in this study ranged from 0-1. California, Connecticut, Illinois, and Washington were under complete Democratic control (1), while North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia were under complete Republican control (0) during their respective years of contention. New York had a .5, indicating a split control of the legislature. The overall average was .65, indicating that most of the coverage that occurred in this sample occurred in political climates favorable to marriage equality activists.

Assertive tactics as defined by Amenta et al. (2012) are institutional activities that engage or challenge political elites and institutional actors. I created a dummy variable for assertive tactics wherein an organization was coded 1 if it engaged in activities that actively challenged political elites or other institutional actors. In most cases, this meant the organization was engaged in one or several of the following activities: electioneering, litigation, contentious meetings, or an article explicitly stated that a particular organization sponsored legislation or a ballot initiative. Not included were activities that are mostly concerned with persuasion or providing information such as letter writing campaigns, petitions, press conferences, or lobbying activities. Based on this definition, only 74 organizations or 37% of all organizations engaged in assertive tactics. However, these organizations are much more

successful in garnering coverage averaging 10.6 mentions, 10.1 quotes, and 2.6 demands. In comparison, organizations that do not engage in assertive tactics average 2.1 mentions, 1.9 quotes, and .5 demands.

Next, I created a dummy variable to broadly measure the intersection of institutional activities of organizations, political contexts, and media coverage. If there was a bill before the legislature during the year of contention and an organization received coverage in that time period, then I coded it as 1. About 140 (or 70%) of all organizations appeared in a year of contention while a bill was before the legislature. This number is likely slightly inflated by the fact that the measure does not account for organizations that appeared in multiple states. However, the effect may be fairly minimal considering that only 21 (or 15%) of those 140 organizations appear in multiple states. Most organizations coded as 1 in this variable appear only in one state. This reflects the fact that seven out of the eight states had some legislation pertaining to the debate over same sex unions during the year of contention. In part, this is because several states' legislatures had to approve referendums before they could go to the public.

## **Media**

Next, I assigned each organization an ideological orientation to assess whether either side of the contention over same sex unions was being favored or if they received similar enough coverage to suggest that a balancing norm was affecting coverage. Traditional marriage organizations are coded zero, marriage equality organizations as one and neutral organizations

as two. There were only four neutral organizations<sup>1</sup> and while they appear in the counts for mentions and quotes, I coded them as missing values for demands since their purpose in asserting neutrality was not to make demands. This can be distinguished from an organization that was mentioned and quoted, but did not succeed in getting any demands in their coverage and is coded as zero.

Evaluating the potential bias of a paper and editorial staff is tricky. However, editorials and columns are spaces within the newspaper that explicitly acknowledge suspending expectations of rigorous journalistic neutrality, allowing reporters and editors to weigh in on issues. Additionally, editorial pages as a curated, filtered platform explicitly reflect the priorities of the editors to highlight positions from outside contributors. Based on this, I used the percentage of editorials or columns that explicitly endorsed the demands of the marriage equality movement compared to those that endorsed the traditional marriage movement as an indicator of the ideological orientation of the paper and editorial staff. Organizations appearing in that newspaper received the percentage of editorials and columns supporting marriage equality. If the organization appeared in multiple newspapers then I assigned an average of each of the scores. Most organizations faced a sympathetic staff with an average of 67% positive editorials and columns. However, this was not for lack of variation as the percentages ranged from 0% in Washington's *The Olympian* to 100% in Illinois' *The State Journal-Register*.

In order to get at the dynamics of previous media coverage's relationship to current contention's coverage I created a dummy variable for organizations that appeared in the

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<sup>1</sup> These neutral organizations are: Boycott Watch, California First Amendment Coalition, Citizen Voice, and NAACP Sacramento.

control time period four year prior to the year of interest. There were 76 organizations that appeared in the control year compared to the 125 that did not. When examining the control year's organizations, those that appear in multiple states (21) are slightly inflating the average mentions, quotes, and demands when compared to the averages of organizations that only appear in one state during the control year. However, this is in small part mitigated by the fact that multiple state organizations that do not appear in the control period appear to also be inflating the non-control year organizations. On both counts the inflation of the averages most affects mentions and quotes, but demands remain relatively stable in the face of minor inflation.

The potential preference of local reporters for local actors over national ones can be evaluated by looking at the organizational level or scope of operations variable I created for the resources variable since it accounts for local, state-affiliated, and national organizations.

Newspapers with journalists who routinely cover an area of interest, such as the legislature or judiciary, may produce better quality coverage for movement organizations. For this study a beat reporter is any journalist that authored ten or more articles in the sample, thus indicating a familiarity with the issue area. The percentage of articles written by these journalists within each paper was calculated and assigned to organizations that appeared in that paper. If an organization appeared in multiple papers, then I used the average of each score across all the papers it appeared in. The average percent of articles written by beat reporters was 43% and ranged from a low of 33% in Ohio to a high of 52% of all articles in Virginia.

## **Controls**

I include three other variables in the models. The first is the circulation numbers of the newspaper that the organization appears in. If the organization appeared in multiple newspapers, then I assigned the average of the circulations of those papers. Circulation numbers ranged from about 34,000 in Washington to about 294,000 in California. The average circulation was about 162,000. The next variable I included is a dummy for groups that organized protests, rallies, or other disruptive collective action. Only 34 organizations participated in or organized protests, events, or other disruptive activities. A significant strain of social movement research on media coverage addresses protests, so it was included as a control variable. Finally, I included a dummy for organizations that appear in multiple states to attempt to control for their possible skewing of the results. There are 33 organizations that appear in more than one state.

## **Analysis**

Negative binomial models were employed in the statistical analysis because each of the dependent variables of mentions, quotes, and demands are not only composed of count data, but also are overdispersed ( $p < .000$ ). The observations on the demands model is smaller than the 201 organizations in the entire dataset because neutral organizations are omitted from the demands category. Running the models with a the resource rank variable that treated organizations without financial information as missing values resulted in the significance of that variable to drop. However, the other variables all remained significant and no other variables became significant. Furthermore, removing resource rank and running the models did not dramatically change any of the coefficients or significance.

Table 3.3 Negative Binomial Regression Models of Mentions, Quotes, and Demands

Variables	(1) Mentions	(2) Quotes	(3) Demands
Resources	0.134*** (0.0501)	0.149** (0.0618)	0.116 (0.0872)
Org. Level	-0.361*** (0.0865)	-0.417*** (0.102)	-0.476*** (0.148)
Party Control of Leg.	0.281 (0.231)	0.121 (0.279)	-0.377 (0.361)
Assertive Tactics	1.349*** (0.141)	1.351*** (0.171)	1.432*** (0.228)
Bill Before Leg.	0.694* (0.363)	0.776* (0.437)	0.768 (0.564)
Pro/Con	0.193 (0.132)	0.0501 (0.157)	0.0568 (0.216)
% Pro Editorial	0.445 (0.367)	0.743* (0.415)	-0.162 (0.620)
Control Year	0.354** (0.146)	0.660*** (0.177)	1.106*** (0.251)
% Beat Reporters	3.315*** (1.272)	1.551 (1.498)	5.480*** (2.046)
Circulation	2.63e-06* (1.52e-06)	2.63e-06 (1.81e-06)	3.21e-06 (2.55e-06)
Protest	0.115 (0.178)	-0.0212 (0.225)	0.0500 (0.298)
Multiple State	0.298 (0.253)	-0.0192 (0.310)	0.376 (0.392)
Constant	-2.234*** (0.853)	-1.619 (1.018)	-4.073*** (1.272)
Alpha	0.458*** (0.653)	0.759*** (0.108)	0.745*** (0.194)
Observations	201	201	197

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

### Resource Mobilization

The two resource variables suggest organization's resources matter for garnering media attention. These variables are strongly correlated,  $r(139)=.48$ . The scope of an organization's operations is consistently and highly significant ( $p<0.01$ ) across all the models of mentions,

quotes, and demands, but the resource rank is only significant for mentions and quotes.

Running each of the models with the interval variable instead of the ordinal ranked variable produced no significant findings. Based on this Hypothesis 1 is partially accepted, resources are associated with mentions and quotes, but not demands.

In contrast, the organizational level variable is significant across all models and in the case of mentions and demands actually increases in significance when run in the full model. The negative coefficients indicate that the expected counts for mentions, quotes, and demands of non-local organizations are lower than local organizations. This is Indeed, local organizations account for 61% of all organizations mentioned and on average local organizations receive more mentions, quotes, and demands compared to national organizations. Overall, this suggests that it may not just be resources, but rather other organizational characteristics in combination with resources that influence media attention. Based on this Hypothesis 2 is rejected and Hypothesis 9 is accepted, local organizations are more likely to receive coverage than national or state organizations.

### **Political Process**

The political regime variable as measured by party control of the legislature is only significant in a bivariate model for mentions and is not significant in the full model of mentions or any of the models of quotes and demands. In part, this variable may not be capturing the political environment as well as other possible metrics. This is especially the case when considering the prevalence of public referenda and judicial challenges in the contention over same sex unions. Both of these activities can and do occur independently of a sympathetic or reluctant legislature, often generating sizeable media attention. As result, it is possible that this

measure is not gauging the influence of political contexts as well as it could. Indeed, as we will see below, the role of legislature activity may be important to gaining mentions, but that attention may not necessarily relate to whether or not there are supportive allies in legislature. However, based on this evidence Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

The use of assertive tactics is consistently statistically significant throughout all models of mention, quotes, and demands. Indeed, the exponentiated coefficients for assertive tactics reveal that the number of mentions, quotes, and demands is almost 4 times higher for organizations engaged in assertive tactics. This suggests that assertive tactics provide an effective strategy for organizations seeking not only media attention, but better quality media attention in the form of standing and demands. This confirms Hypothesis 4.

As another measure of political environment a legislature taking up the issue of same sex union recognition proved to be significant for organizations achieving mentions and quotes, but falls off when looking at demands. These results suggest that a legislature engaged in policy debates about a movement's issue does increase coverage of organizations, but does not result in the most prized type of high quality coverage in the form of demands. Indeed, one can imagine that when a legislature is considering a bill, movement organizers must compete with political elites who are not only actively weighing in on the issue, but also are preferred by journalists as authoritative sources. This may result in a double edged sword for organizations. On the one hand, a legislature debating a movement's issue increases overall attention to their issue and by extension increases the likelihood of a movement organization being mentioned or quoted. On the other hand, the increased competition from political elites may limit the depth of coverage of the organization, reducing opportunities for its demands to be covered. Based



on these results Hypothesis 5 is partially confirmed. A bill before the legislature does produce greater mentions and standing, but not necessarily demands.

## **Media**

The media variables had mixed results. In the full models, the ideology of an organization has no effect on the organization's coverage. This provides evidence that media attention does not significantly skew toward one side of the debate or the other. It also suggests that a balancing norm is in place, resulting in nearly equal amounts of coverage for both sides in contention. When running the models with just media variables, we do see ideological orientation having an effect on mentions and quotes, but not demands. This is likely because of the disproportionate number of pro and local organizations in the sample, but when we control for the other variables in the full model, the effect drops out. This confirms Hypothesis 6, which states ideology will not influence coverage because of balancing norms.

As a rough indication of the ideological orientation of a newspaper, the proportion of a newspaper's positive editorials and columns about same sex unions only increases an organization's likelihood of gaining standing. Indeed, editorials and columns regardless of opinion often mention and frequently will quote both sides on the issue in order to illustrate a point. It is possible that editorial staffers who favor same sex unions are more invested in the contention over the issue, and that this results in their giving standing to the organizations on both sides that are involved. This partially confirms Hypothesis 7.

An organization appearing in the control period coverage has a significant positive effect on media attention, particularly on getting demands into coverage. This confirms Hypothesis 8 and suggests a few possibilities about how the characteristics of organizations and the practices

of journalists may relate to media coverage. First, previous coverage lends organizations the credibility and visibility that may lead to more coverage. Second, previous coverage indicates that the longevity of organizations may matter, namely that more established organizations which are engaging in sustained activism are more likely to gain media attention. Interestingly, as we will see in Chapter 4 I find that some of the best covered organizations during referendum battles form during the referendum process and do not often persist past the referendum vote. This suggests that under some circumstances newly formed organizations are not necessarily at a disadvantage compared to more established organizations. Finally, reporters may have cultivated these organizations as credible, influential sources and this may result in increased media coverage during the next round of contention.

The percent of articles written by beat reporters is significant for mentions and demands, partially confirming Hypothesis 10. This suggests that journalists familiar with an issue area increase an organization's opportunities to be covered. Reporters with a routine beat or familiar with an issue area also may be more familiar with the actors in that area. They may have cultivated organizations as trusted sources. Additionally, beat reporters may already be familiar with the arguments of the organizations, increasing the odds of their inclusion in coverage, but not necessarily the number of quotes. To some extent this variable and the control year variable are both measuring the effect of repeated interactions and familiarity between journalists and movement organizations that can positively influence media outcomes.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, the findings presented here suggest that media attention is a function of organizational characteristics, political context, tactics, and media routines. Movement scholars have argued that each of these elements play a role in allocating media attention to organizations. These findings suggest, however, that local news contexts may present organizations seeking media attention with a different set of opportunities and obstacles. While resources have long been identified as an important factor contributing to the success of movement organizations, here I find that while resources are associated with getting mentioned and quoted it does not necessarily help organizations get demands into coverage. Further, non-local organizations, which are usually larger national organizations, are at a disadvantage in garnering media attention across mentions, quotes, and demands. This preference for local organizations suggests that resource capacity alone does not drive coverage priorities in local media. However, national and state-affiliated organizations do appear in local coverage. This indicates that reporters do have a choice of organizations when covering contention over same sex unions. Reporters prefer authoritative sources and seek out important players in political contexts. This suggests that they would favor larger national organizations, which are easily recognizable as influential and have the capacity to provide credible information and expertise (Gamson 2007). On the other hand, the capacities that indicate legitimacy for national organizations may not matter as much in a more local context. Here, journalists seeking local angles prioritize different indicators of legitimacy and newsworthiness. In fact, local organizations may have distinct advantages over more resource rich national organizations in regional newspapers because of these local dynamics of media

coverage. This is especially true as local media try to leverage local niche coverage to survive the shifting media landscape. Furthermore, local organizations may also benefit from the ability to create and maintain ties to local reporters. In contrast, national organizations may not have the capacity or incentive to maintain contacts with local media across the entire country, preferring to maintain contact with national papers.

Ties to reporters relate to the finding that prior coverage is associated with gaining media attention during the current round of contention. While both local and national organizations can and do appear in previous coverage it is more likely that local organizations benefit from this coverage because of local reporters' overall preference for local actors and the opportunity for local movement organizations to cultivate relationships with those reporters. As a result, established local organizations that achieve coverage in previous years may benefit from being perceived as a newsworthy source and from cultivating relationships with reporters on the beat. This finding is all the more impressive considering many of the best covered organizations in this sample do not appear in their newspaper's control period because they formed specifically for a legislative or referendum battle. However, these organizations do conform to journalists' priorities for homegrown perspectives and referenda have a dramatic newsworthiness that attracts media attention. The degree to which newly formed organizations during referenda get extensive coverage suggests that there are still other pathways to media coverage in a local context. In particular, organizations engaging in assertive tactics that challenge established institutional actors manage to engage both journalists' preference for newsworthiness and the routine coverage of political institutions, resulting in more and better coverage. The relevance of tactics and the prevalence of newly formed organizations receiving

extensive media coverage suggests that the political context and public arena within which organizations are operating may also factor into how reporters prioritize and utilize organizations as sources.

Overall, these findings suggest that resources, political context, and tactics matter, but that they matter in ways mediated by local reporters' priorities to seek out local actors, close to the action. In this way more established local organizations exist in a goldilocks zone where they are just big enough to have the resources to signal legitimacy, establish, and maintain ties with reporters, but are small enough that their limited regional scope of action appeals to journalists' preferences for newsworthiness based on local angles and proximity. This does not exclude national and state-affiliated organizations from local coverage, but these priorities shape how local media employs national and state-affiliated organizations as sources. This is explored in Chapter 4.

Another important finding is that local media does not provide more coverage to one side of the debate over same sex union recognition, despite previous findings that suggest local media is more biased than national media (Earl et al., 2004). This demonstrates the continuing normative importance of objectivity to journalistic practices and the persistent power of the balancing norm even among smaller more regional papers. In fact, Vinson (2003) suggests that the limited resources of local papers to conduct extensive investigations or conduct thorough fact checking actually encourages local journalists to seek out and include all sides of a debate in the attempt to avoid accusations of bias. While the findings of this chapter provide support for the claim that journalists adhering to balancing norms give social movement organizations

equal coverage, we will see in Chapter 5 that this balancing norm does not apply uniformly to all aspects of organizations' coverage and to other actors covered in the debate.

## Chapter 4 Local and National Organizations in Coverage

In the last chapter, I present evidence to suggest that media attention is associated with characteristics of the organizations being covered, features of the political context, the tactics used by movement groups, and routines of newsreporting. Several variables are statistically significant across mentions, quotes, and demands. I find that the resources and level of organizational operation was important. Non-local actors are less likely to receive coverage compared to local actors. One of the strongest effects on coverage is an organizations' use of assertive tactics, which engage political actors and institutions as opposed to extra institutional tactics like disruptive tactics. In contrast, organizations' use of protest tactics is not statistically significant for coverage. Additionally, organizations that appeared in the control year before the year of contention received greater coverage. This suggests two possible factors that may account for this finding. First, organizations must be able to survive between coverage periods suggesting they have the resources to do so. Second, being in previous media coverage may have increased their familiarity and perceived legitimacy to reporters. Indeed, the percentage of articles written by beat reporters is significant when looking at mentions and demands, but it was most significant for demands. This suggests that reporters' familiarity with an issue area may influence the breadth and depth of coverage. Whether a bill was before the legislature is a significant factor only in influencing in mentions and quotes, but not demands. This suggests that the political context of contention may have an effect on the quality of coverage. The percent of pro marriage equality editorials is only significant for quotes. This may indicate that sympathetic editorial staffs that are more invested in the contention over same sex marriage

are more likely to grant those organizations standing, but they do not necessarily increase the likelihood that organizations get coverage or get their demands into the paper. The circulation of a newspaper proves significant only when looking at mentions. Party control of the legislature and an organization's appearing in multiple states are not significant. Notably, the ideology of the organization is not significant either, indicating that organizations on both sides of the contest are receiving similar coverage, in line with journalists' balancing norms. In this chapter I explore how local news values, specifically the preference for local voices, mediates how broader media routines, organizational characteristics, tactics, and political context shape movements' coverage.

The major organizational characteristic that is of interest for this chapter is the organization's scope of operation specifically whether it operates at a national or local level. I begin this chapter with a short overview of the coverage of local and national organizations. Then I briefly address the coverage of state affiliated organizations and why I have mostly excluded them from this analysis. Next, I examine the coverage of local organizations with a particular focus on balancing norms and the use of coalitions during referenda and legislative contests. I end the section on local organizations discussing two cases that provide illustrative exceptions to the otherwise very strong balancing norm. After this, I turn to look at the coverage of national organizations, specifically examining how they are employed as credible experts, portrayed in supporting roles during legislative and referendum contests, used as proximate actors to national level contention, and as principal actors in judiciary contests.

Both local and national organizations appeal to the news values and routines of journalists. Local organizations have a distinct advantage over national organizations because of



local media's strong preference for local voices and angles. Local angles serve to emphasize the proximity, drama, and connection of the contention to the audience. Additionally, this emphasis on local actors provides one of the main market advantages that local papers can leverage against larger, national papers to attract readership (Vinson 2003). However, this preference for local actors does not extend equally to all actors. Instead, I find that coverage focuses on just a handful of local organizations. This coverage of just a few organizations in each state reflects the intersection of reporters' balancing norms, the tactical choices of organizations (e.g. forming coalitions during contention or using assertive tactics), and the nature of the political venue in which the contention occurs (e.g. in the more populist legislative and referenda venues versus the non-populist judiciary).

While local organizations are favored in the number of mentions, quotes, and demands they receive, national organizations still appear in coverage. There are several ways that national organizations feature in local coverage. Their greatest advantage may be when journalists are looking for established, legitimate sources to provide expertise and credible information. National organizations often have extensive media friendly resources and a dedicated media-savvy staff available for journalists (Rohlinger 2002; Staggenborg 1988). Additionally, reporting on the participation of national actors in local contention imbues the local story with drama and national importance. Moreover, national organizations have an opportunity to gain coverage in local papers when these papers cover national events. When reporters are covering national level contention, the priority they place on using sources closest to the action can supersede the priority they place on using local voices. The result of which may be opportunities for national organizations to gain local media attention. This priority of

using sources close to the action also benefits national organizations when they participate in litigation at the state level. Newspaper coverage of the judiciary provides national organizations more consistent coverage compared to the legislature or referenda. National organization's greater presence in judicial coverage likely relates to national organizations' tactical preference for the venue and the greater resources necessary to participate in it. This also likely reflects the less populist nature of the venue, which lessens any accusations of outsider interference in state affairs.

### **State-Affiliated Organizations**

Absent from this analysis is state-affiliated organizations. I am choosing to focus on national and local organizations because most of the organizations directly involved in the contention over same sex unions are either national or local organizations. Indeed, only 15% of organizations that appear in my sample are state-affiliated and they account for only 8% of all mentions, 7.5% of all quotes, and 5.5% of demands. Of the 30 state-level organizations, only 5 are primarily concerned with either marriage equality or traditional values. Most of the remaining organizations (22) are allied progressive organizations such as affiliates of unions, ACLU, NAACP, and the Log Cabin Republicans. These organizations for the most part only receive one or two mentions. There are only a few traditional marriage state level organizations in my sample. State specific Catholic Conferences appear in six of the states and appear to be the most commonly mentioned and quoted state affiliated organizations. Indeed, the Connecticut Catholic Conference was a prominent figure in the coverage of legislative contention in that state. Similarly, litigation brought by the Catholic Charities of Illinois petitioning for an exemption from a newly passed civil union law received a significant number

of mentions and quotes. In fact, the coverage of their litigation actually equaled the coverage of national organizations and reduced the usual dominance of local organizations to only half of all the coverage.

The two most mentioned and quoted pro state affiliate organizations are the AARP of Ohio, which opposed a referendum that would ban all same sex relationships, and the ACLU of Connecticut, which was actively lobbying in favor of a civil union bill when the leading local marriage equality organization refused to support it. However, for the most part national organizations on both sides do not appear to have formal organizations operating at the state level. Also, it is possible those state affiliated organizations involved in the contention found themselves caught between being not quite local enough to appeal to journalists for a homegrown narrative and not quite big enough to add the kind of drama and national importance national organizations offer.

Nevertheless, even when state affiliates are in high coverage contests, they do not garner as much attention as national or local organizations. The Connecticut Catholic Conference benefited from being directly involved in lobbying efforts, but still receives less than half the number of mentions as the principal local traditional marriage organization in the same fight. And that is still better than the Conference's closest marriage equality state-level counterpart, the ACLU of Connecticut, which was involved in the same contention, but receives less than half of Connecticut Catholic Conference's coverage and less than a quarter of its local organization counterpart. In comparison, the mention counts of both the principal local organizations in this same contest are two of the highest in the sample and differ by only one mention. This suggests that not only are state affiliated organizations somewhat peripheral to

both the movement and the coverage of same sex union contention, but unless they are the principal initiators of contention they will be passed over by reporters in favor of local organizations. Indeed, the state affiliated organizations that receive the best coverage are those groups that are engaged in assertive tactics. One reason these state affiliates may be overlooked by journalists is because many of them are multiple-issue organizations, while the most prominent local or national organizations tend to be single issue organizations. Single-issue organizations in general have been shown to receive more coverage than multiple issue organizations (Rohlinger 2002).

### **Local Organizations**

Overall, local organizations make up the majority of organizations mentioned in coverage, accounting for 63% of all mentions. This holds true across most of the states, ranging up to a high of 73% of mentions in Washington. However, there are two exceptions: New York and Illinois. In New York, local organizations and national organizations share almost the same amount of coverage. By contrast, in Illinois local organizations account for half of all mentions, but the remaining half are evenly split between state affiliated and national organizations. (I have already discussed the case of Illinois in the section about state affiliates and I will address New York in the national organization analysis.) Despite the fact that there are more local marriage equality organizations than local traditional marriage organizations they both receive almost the same amount of mentions. This is because local traditional marriage organizations average more mentions per organization than local marriage equality organizations. In other words, both pro and con organizations receive similar numbers of mentions, but the marriage

equality organizations” coverage is split across a larger number of organizations. As a result, local traditional marriage organizations are more likely to repeatedly appear in coverage.

There are a small handful of organizations (15 or 7% of all organizations) that garner twenty or more mentions. One might expect that large national organizations that appear in multiple states and across multiple years might dominate this high coverage category in the aggregate. In fact, local organizations make up 73% (or 11 out of 15 organizations) of all these very high coverage organizations. Furthermore, these very visible organizations are almost evenly split between marriage equality and traditional marriage organizations suggesting that the balancing norm may be more rigorously applied during very high coverage situations. Indeed, I discuss more evidence of this later in this analysis.

In addition to accounting for the majority of overall mentions (63%) local organizations also receive the majority of substantive coverage. They account for 70% of all quotes and 74% of all demands. This suggests that for local organizations, just measuring the quantity of mentions may capture a useful approximation of the quality of media coverage they receive as well.

Local organizations make up the largest part of coverage, but it is for the most part just a handful of these organizations in each state that receive the most coverage. If we look at just the top two organizations mentioned in each state across all the coverage we can see that they receive a disproportionate number of mentions, quotes, and demands.

Table 4.1 Top two mentioned organizations' percentages of mentions, quotes, and demands

	Total orgs.	% of orgs.	% mentions	% quotes	% demands
California	87	2%	19%	19%	17%
Connecticut	23	9%	60%	68%	67%
Illinois	16	13%	45%	45%	20%
North Carolina*	29	7%	38%	31%	25%
Ohio	37	5%	37%	43%	41%
New York*	28	7%	35%	52%	43%
Virginia	30	7%	44%	49%	53%
Washington	14	14%	36%	63%	38%

\* Denotes a national organization is one of the top two organizations.

As we can see in Table 4.1, the top two mentioned organizations comprise anywhere from 19% to 60% of all mentions and in some cases account for an even greater percentage of quotes and demands. In all but two states these highly covered organizations are local organizations. The two exceptions are North Carolina and New York, where a national organization comes in second to the top local marriage equality organization in total mentions. In both of these cases the coverage of the local opposition is divided between several organizations. In New York, no real oppositional local movement organization appears. Instead, local opposition mostly comes from political elites and church groups. As a result, the National Organization for Marriage appears more frequently in coverage for its activities including mounting an ad campaign, organizing rallies, and threatening dissenting politicians with election challenges. Similarly in North Carolina, much of the traditional marriage movement's coverage divides between several organizations. In contrast, the marriage equality side's coverage in North Carolina focuses just on Equality North Carolina, the largest gay rights

organization in the state. The Human Rights Campaign is the second most mentioned in North Carolina, but those mentions mostly focus on the organization's supporting role in aiding Equality North Carolina. I address these exceptions in greater depth below. For the remaining states in this study the top two mentioned organizations in each state are local organizations, one from each side of the contest.

The concentration of coverage amongst just a handful of organizations reflects a confluence of factors, specifically, journalistic routines and news values, organizational tactics, and political context. There are several aspects of reporting routines and news values that encourage journalists to focus on just a handful of sources during contention. Fundamentally, reporters tend to portray political contention as being between two clearly defined, but opposite sides. Additionally, reporters are interested in identifying the most influential or important players in contention. They may rely on their previous knowledge of the issue area and on their familiarity with movement organizations that have received coverage.

Alternatively, the tactics organizations employ such as initiating litigation or successfully getting an initiative on a ballot may signal newsworthiness to reporters. Organizations can also signal this importance when they create coalition or umbrella organizations for specific legislative or referendum campaigns. Organizations' decisions to form coalitions reflect the demands placed on them by the specific political contexts they are working within. This is especially true during referendum campaigns, which require an immense amount of time, organization, and resources and, as a result, incentivize coordination between ideologically allied organizations. These elements of reporters' news values, organizational tactics, and political contexts, when combined with a strong balancing norm, result in coverage that tends to focus on one or two

organizations on either side. Below we will see how balancing norms, reporters' news values, organizational tactics, and political contexts influence coverage outcomes.

Overall, local organizations make the most appearances in contests over legislation and public referendums, but they do still appear in judicial coverage. Regardless of venue, coverage of organizations is concentrated among one or two local organizations on both sides of the issue. Some of these local organizations appear in previous coverage, but interestingly, many of the organizations that receive the most coverage have formed specifically for the fight. This is especially true during referenda when organizations create an umbrella organization to coordinate their efforts. Movement scholars have argued that having establishing and maintaining ties to media outlets is important to gaining media attention (Rohlinger and Brown 2013; Rohlinger 2002). In this case, however, newly formed organizations garner consistent coverage.

Referendum battles about same sex unions inspire an immense amount of media coverage. Several aspects of this political context seem to be important. For one, referenda turn the focus of politics onto the broader public, which makes it easier for reporters to connect the policy issue to individuals (or more accurately their readers) since they will be deciding the issue. Additionally, ballot initiatives, especially highly contentious ones, make it easier for reporters to heighten the drama and accentuate the importance and influence of the public. Indeed, reporters can leverage a considerable number of compelling personal stories out of the contention over same sex unions to interest their readers. The fact that referendum battles often take place over the course of several months allows both movement organizations and reporters to build up the tension and importance of a vote to increase mobilization and



readership, respectively. In the lead up to a referendum, organizations are usually engaging in a variety of activities such as airing dramatic tv advertisements, litigating against their opposition, canvassing, fundraising, and organizing rallies or events. Indeed, organizations during referenda must make their appeal to a diverse public for an extended period of time all while dealing with the opposition's equally unrelenting campaign. In contrast, judicial and legislative contexts focus on a relatively small number of political elites and there are limited opportunities for formal input, such as during oral argument or committee hearings. In this way we can see how the political context of referenda can fundamentally shape movement activities and in turn journalists' coverage.

In particular, the tendency for coverage to coalesce around two organizations during referendum battles may be an outcome of both journalistic adherence to balancing norms, specifically to portraying contention as being dyadic, and movement organizations' strategic efforts to deal with the special challenges that public referenda present. Specifically, movements will form coalitions or umbrella organizations for the duration of a specific campaign to facilitate and coordinate the effort. Coalitions often form among ideologically aligned groups that share social ties when they face a shared threat (McCammon and Van Dyke 2010). Coalitions for marriage equality usually form among organizations within the movement as well as across broader allied multi-issue progressive groups, such as the ACLU. This is especially the case during referendum battles, which not only inspire a shared threat, but also require immense resources to fight, thereby promoting ties between organizations. Traditional marriage organizations also form coalitions, but they are less likely to be cross-movement and

are characterized rather by inter-dominational collaboration between religiously oriented movement organizations and churches.

### **Coalitions**

Coalitions offer significant benefits for movements, especially for those operating during referendum challenges, including coordinating campaigns, operations, and mobilizations by pooling resources and staff. Additionally, coalitions present a unified front as a show of strength that can present a powerful challenge to opposition and apply greater pressure to political elites. Ideally, coalitions that come together for specific opportunities or in response to specific threats produce a stronger, more efficient and effective campaign compared to what each individual organization could accomplish on its own or in competition with each other (Van Dyke 2003; McCammon and Van Dyke 2010). Movements may also create separate organizational entities to spearhead campaigns to encourage broader coalition building, especially during referendum challenges where crosscutting broad support is advantageous. Forming ballot committees or political action committees may also present a practical advantage depending on a state's campaign fundraising laws. Moreover, while movements may forego the name recognition that some of its more familiar established organizations have when creating umbrella groups, they also create opportunities for temporary, issue specific collaborations with organizations that might otherwise be wary of being associated with the broader movement or its individual organizations. Additionally, creating a focal point amongst a field of organizations operating within a state ensures message consistency and facilitates coverage by providing journalists one contact point for their stories as well as appealing to their tendency to portray political conflict as between two unified sides. However, coalitions do

present some challenges to movement organizations as well. The necessarily expansive nature of coalitions can result in the broadening of claims in ways some organizations may find unacceptable (Tarrow 2003). Coalitions can require that member organizations compromise about tactics, goals, and messages to accommodate other members. Indeed, coalitions may be fragile because of the tenuousness of the ties that bind cooperating groups. However as we shall see, organizations operating during referenda and occasionally during legislative battles form coalitions. For the most part, these coalitions do successfully leverage reporters' inclination to seek out prominent representatives to gain media attention, but largely the coverage they secure is subject to rigorous balancing norms.

### **Referenda Coalitions: California, Ohio, and Virginia**

The coverage in California illustrates this tendency for journalists to defer to the dyadic nature of referenda. In 2008, two major events in a short period shaped contention over same sex marriage. The first came in May 2008 when the California Supreme Court declared a ban on same sex marriages to be unconstitutional. A public referendum, Proposition 8, quickly followed in November 2008 adding an amendment to California's constitution defining marriage as between one man and one woman. This particular fight drew an immense amount of coverage from *The Sacramento Bee*, with 67% of all articles in 2008 about same sex unions published in the few months between the ruling and the day Prop 8 passed. Articles about the issue were published several times a week with an average of about 26 articles per month during the lead up to the referendum vote. One might expect that this breadth of coverage would result in a greater diversity of organizations represented as reporters sought out new, local angles on the same story. Instead, despite the fact that 61 organizations appeared during

this contest, the Yes on 8 and No on 8 organizations comprised 30% of all mentions that year and received more mentions than the next nine organizations combined. This is all the more noteworthy considering that both these organizations got their first mentions half way through the year, in July of 2008.

Throughout this coverage journalists rarely include No on 8 and Yes on 8's principal parent organizations in coverage. Protect Marriage California ran the Yes on 8 campaign and the No on 8 campaign was run by Equality For All. After the referendum campaigns begin in earnest, Protect Marriage California only appears three times, two of which are just in a list of supporters of the proposition. In the lead up to the beginning of the initiative battle Protect Marriage receives five mentions. Similarly, Equality for All only appears three times in total and not at all after the referendum battle has begun. The coverage before the referendum battle identifies both organizations as leaders in the contention. In this way we can see how journalists consistently deferred to the independent identities of these coalition organizations during the campaign as opposed to using their parent organizations or other members of the movement as sources.

Why do we see such extensive coverage of these two organizations? Broadly, it appeals to journalist news routines and news values as well as reflecting the tactical choices of organizations operating within the political context of public referenda. Journalists tend to portray political contention as a dyadic battle between two sides. Accordingly, time-strapped journalists seek out the two most representative voices in contention to provide a balanced story and avoid accusations of bias. As a result, reporters attempt to identify the most important and influential players in contention for their stories. As we shall see below, the

political context of referenda encourages organizational tactics, specifically centralized coalition organizations, that serve to emphasize this dyadic interpretation and through their accumulation of resources and activities signal strongly to reporters that they are the most influential actors. In turn this not only amplifies reporters' balancing norms, but concentrates it on a small group of movement organizations.

The political context of public referenda presents a unique set of conditions that encourage organizations to make strategic choices that lead toward greater centralization and concentration. Foremost, referendum battles require an immense amount of resources and as a result organizations tend to coordinate their efforts through a lead organization. In this way, organizations will form coalitions to produce a centralized seat of operation where they can pool resources and coordinate statewide efforts. In this way, organizations intentionally or unintentionally signal to journalists that they are the most influential actors and are leading the movement. Thus, we can see how the choices of organizations to consolidate their efforts combine with journalists' routines and news values to produce coverage that concentrates on just two organizations.

Returning to the example of California and Proposition 8, we can see how many allied organizations on both sides of the movement channeled money into the two most covered organizations. I used the National Institute on Money in State Politics ([Followthemoney.org](http://Followthemoney.org)) records on campaign contributions to examine how organizations funneled money to the No on 8 and Yes on 8 campaigns. The organization behind Yes on Prop 8 was Protect Marriage California. Their ballot committee received large donations from several national organizations including the National Organization for Marriage, Knights of Columbus, Focus on the Family,

American Family Association, and Concerned Women for America. On the other side, Equality for All, the organization behind No on Prop 8, received large donations from a mix of local and national organizations including Equality California, Human Rights Campaign, California Teachers Association, National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. Some of these contributing organizations received their own coverage during contention, but nowhere near as much coverage as the top two organizations. Several of these organizations had their own political action committees dedicated to raising money, much of which they donated to their lead organizations. Indeed, there was an immense amount of money and interest in this campaign, creating a resource rich environment that may have helped promote collaboration by reducing inter-organization competition within the movement (Van Dyke 2003). Furthermore, the expense and cost of running campaigns during referendum and legislative battles can become newsworthy itself and in several states news coverage focuses on these financial and fundraising aspects.

This concentration of both resources and coverage on just a few organizations during referendum battles occurs in Ohio and Virginia's articles as well. In Ohio, two coalition organizations dominate that year's coverage, accounting for 46% of all mentions. By comparison, both the parent organizations only received a quarter of the mentions the coalition organizations did in the same year. Interestingly, in Virginia the two coalition organizations received the same amount or less coverage than their parent organizations. This is because most mentions of the coalition organizations accompanied references to their parent organizations, resulting in greater coverage for the parent organizations. However, though perhaps an unintended outcome, this limited the ability of those coalition organizations to

establish independent identities, a potentially important distinction for building temporary issue-specific support. Regardless, it meant that that during Virginia’s referendum fight, four organizations represented 73% of all social movement organization mentions. While the inclusion of all four of these organizations still demonstrates the strength of the balancing norm, it also serves to illustrate how journalists can choose to treat coalition organizations as merely subsidiaries of existing actors or as their own entities only occasionally linked to their parent organizations. Indeed, in this way California presents one end of the spectrum where the parent organizations’ connections to coalitions are rarely mentioned once the contest begins in earnest. On the other end is Virginia, where almost every mention of each side’s coalition group includes the parent organization. Ohio’s mentions fall more toward the California side of the spectrum, but does include a few articles that link parent and coalition organizations.

### **Legislative Coalitions: New York**

While the distinct challenges of referendum battles appear to inspire the formation of coalition organizations, at least one coalition formed during a legislative push by marriage equality supporters in New York. Indeed, an article about the formation of the coalition outlines the reasons the coalition formed, specifically the lack of coordination over recent close, but ultimately unsuccessful, attempts to pass marriage equality bills in the legislature. The article presents the explanation for why these groups decided to form a coalition and in doing so outlines the challenges of multiple organizations operating separately during contests:

“With four different groups launching ads, planning rallies and pressuring legislators, the push to legalize same-sex marriage has in the past been a multi-headed beast.

‘As well intentioned as all the different groups are, and as far as the whole goal is concerned, everyone is on the same page, but it is a bit like herding cats,’ Matt Titone, an openly gay Democrat from Staten Island, said Wednesday.” (*The Times Union*, April 21, 2011)

Later in the article, a coalition member suggests that forming a coalition is an important show of strength and will increase activists’ ability to apply pressure to legislators through more efficient mobilization. Regardless of whether that happened, the coalition did not garner as much coverage as one of its members, Empire State Pride Agenda. The two most mentioned organizations in New York are Empire State Pride Agenda and National Organization for Marriage. While the coalition organization is the third most mentioned it still only receives half as many mentions as Empire State Pride Agenda and a third of the number of quotes. In part, this is likely due to the fact that the coalition only formed and operated for about two months. Yet, Empire State Pride Agenda still receives more mentions and quotes during that time period than the coalition organization, even though some of those mentions are alongside the coalition group. In this example, we can see how journalists may prefer to use more recognizable organizations in their stories. Indeed, of all the coalition members, Empire State Pride Agenda is the oldest local organization with a long history of activism in New York. In this way journalists may not rely completely on newly formed coalitions as sources, deferring instead to more familiar established organizations. Additionally, it could be possible that the lack of an opposing coalition organization to act as an equally situated but opposite actor for balancing norm purposes diminished the appeal of using a newly formed organization over a more established, recognizable actor that could equal the status of the more recognizable opposition organizations.



### **Unbalanced Coverage: North Carolina and Connecticut**

While most of the states in this sample demonstrate an obvious strong balancing norm there is a notable exception in North Carolina's coverage. North Carolina's largest gay rights organization Equality North Carolina garner 17 (or 31%) of all mentions during a legislative battle over putting a constitutional amendment banning same sex marriage to a public vote. The next most mentioned organization is the Human Rights Campaign, a national marriage equality organization with 6 (or 11%) of all mentions. However, this coverage is not substantive and all the mentions are merely references to their support of Equality North Carolina with no accompanying quotes. The third most mentioned organization is the traditional marriage group North Carolina Values Coalition with 5 (or 9%) of all mentions. The remaining organizations on both sides have one or two mentions each. Combining all pro and con mentions for that year yields the marriage equality organizations a coverage advantage with 63% of all mentions, most of which comes from North Carolina Equality. Why do we see North Carolina Equality dominating coverage? Likely it is because they were easily identified by the journalists as the largest, most established gay rights organization in North Carolina.

While North Carolina Equality receives some coverage that focuses solely on the organization's opposition to the legislation for the most part a variety of opposition groups balance their coverage until North Carolina Values Coalition emerges. Indeed, the same three journalists wrote almost all of the articles about North Carolina Equality and the various traditional marriage organizations. This suggests that reporters' familiarity with North Carolina

Equality – one of the only organizations to appear in previous years’ coverage and the year of contention—may have advantaged that organization when those reporters were looking for sources to represent the marriage equality position. It also suggests that until North Carolina Values Coalition emerged there was no clear traditional marriage group that journalists favored. Half of all articles with organizations offering commentary on the legislation under consideration mention North Carolina Values Coalition, but the remaining half of mentions are split between other opposition organizations, many of which appear only once. The other mentions of traditional marriage organizations receive events-based coverage about rallies or buying ad time in support of the legislation. Most of those same articles include commentary from Equality North Carolina as the marriage equality movement organization of note. North Carolina Values Coalition was founded in the same year as the legislative battle, but unlike Equality North Carolina, it is only identified in coverage as the main proponent of the legislation after the contest is over. This suggests that this newly created organization’s participation during the legislative contention may have signaled and solidified its importance as an influential player in the broader contention, earning it the moniker of “leading the opposition”.

In this way we can see how older established organizations that participate in institutional politics such as Equality North Carolina gain more consistent coverage than organizations that engage in more extra-institutional activities such as organizing rallies. This describes the situation of a few of the low-mention marriage equality organizations. In one case, marriage equality activists disrupted legislative proceedings, but Equality North Carolina commented on the disruption, decrying their actions. This demonstrates the preference of journalists to use an established, more mainstream organization even when the cause of

coverage was another organization engaging in disruptive tactics (as Gamson & Modigliani [1989] found). The coverage of traditional marriage organizations also reflects this preference for organizations engaging with political institutions. Just like marriage equality organizations, traditional marriage organizations receive limited coverage when they engage in protests and rallies. Whereas, the best covered organization was directly involved with lobbying the legislature. Despite the availability of various traditional marriage organizations, the fact that the marriage equality movement had a clearly identifiable mainstream organization that journalists were familiar with and was regularly engaging in political institutions yielded an overall coverage advantage to the organization and the movement in North Carolina. However, this clear advantage in mentions (63%) is slightly muted when it comes to the number of demands each side gets into coverage, with marriage equality advocates only accounting for 55% of quotes and demands. This may indicate that when reporters grant organizations quality coverage they are more careful about balancing the quotes and demands in the article lest they be accused of providing a platform for only one side. In sum, while North Carolina's mentions appear to strongly skew in favor of marriage equality organizations, the actual quality of coverage they receive compared to the opposition is really much more balanced.

In contrast to North Carolina, the legislative battle in Connecticut appears extremely balanced between two clearly identifiable organizations on either side that almost exactly split the 60% of all coverage they receive. These two organizations are actually the two most mentioned organizations in this study despite occurring in a state with only the third most articles and less than half as many articles compared to California, the highest coverage state. Even though these two organizations appear evenly balanced, when looking at their quotes and

demands we see that the marriage equality organization Love Makes a Family receives more quotes and more demands than the traditional marriage organization Family Institute of Connecticut. Love Makes a Family actually accounts for 42% of all demands in Connecticut's coverage and the most demands any one organization receives across all newspapers.

Why do we see Love Makes a Family get such a disproportionate number of demands into their coverage? Love Makes a Family was operating in a favorable political environment in 2005 when the Democratically controlled Connecticut legislature proposed a bill to legalize civil unions. However, when Love Makes a Family, an established organization with a history of working with the legislature, was presented with this opportunity, it upset expectations by refusing to support the bill and arguing that anything less than marriage was unacceptable. This disruption of both political and journalistic scripts resulted in an immense amount of coverage. For journalists this added even more drama, novelty, and intrigue to the political contention with infighting and controversy between Love Makes a Family and the other marriage equality organizations supporting the civil union bill. Indeed, Love Makes a Family found some minor support in a few legislators willing to vote against the bill and as a result Love Makes a Family got some coverage as a matter of routine coverage of the legislation. Importantly, this upset the normal journalistic tendency to portray conflict as between two opposing sides. The presence of a third position necessitated an explanation for why this organization seemed to be acting against its own interests. As a result this created an opportunity for Love Makes a Family to get their demands into coverage with greater frequency than their fellow marriage equality organizations and their opposition. Additionally, the refusal to support the civil union bill was newsworthy enough to inspire its own coverage. Even after Love Makes a Family acquiesced to

supporting the civil union bill, its initial refusal to support the bill is included in the coverage, often accompanied by its rationale and thus its demands. However, the increased opportunities for coverage for Love Makes a Family also opened opportunities for their opponents through balancing norms, resulting in the increased coverage of the leading opposition movement organization, the Family Institute of Connecticut. While Family Institute of Connecticut got the same number of mentions, it is slightly less successful in garnering quotes and demands compared to Love Makes a Family. Despite not equaling the substantive coverage as Love Makes a Family, the immense amount of media attention that surrounded Love Makes a Family's controversial position and the contest still resulted in Family Institute of Connecticut garnering the most demands for traditional marriage organizations and the second most demands over all.

One way to understand the immense advantage Love Makes a Family gained in their media coverage is as a disruptive challenge to institutional power-holders. Indeed, Love Makes a Family disrupted journalistic and political expectations, but did so with a history of working within political institutions and seemingly acting against their self-interest. In this way, Love Makes a Family leveraged their organizational reputation, favorable political context, and acting in a way that disrupted expectations to gain coverage based on journalists' news values of drama and novelty as well as their routine coverage of the legislature. As a result, Love Makes a Family was able to get quality coverage in the form of standing and demands. However, as a result of balancing norms this immense amount of coverage provided opportunities for their main opposition also to receive quality coverage.

## **National Organizations**

While local organizations make up the majority of coverage, national organizations still appear fairly regularly in regional coverage of same sex union contention. However, coverage of national organizations in these papers is mediated by the strong preference of journalists for local voices and focus on local angles. One important outcome of local journalists' emphasis on local actors and local voices is it limits the opportunities for national organizations to get higher quality coverage including quotes and demands. We can see this reflected in the fact that national organizations are only slightly less mentioned on average than local organizations (4.7 to 5.6), but they have far fewer quotes on average (3.7) than local organizations (6.3). This is less true for demands, where national organizations average 1.1 demands and local organizations average 1.6 demands per organization. However, as we will see, national organizations still have some opportunities to achieve higher quality news coverage by appealing to other journalistic news values that supersede or compliment their strong preference for local voices.

Overall, I find that national organizations' coverage falls into several types of coverage that relate both to journalists' priorities and organizations' characteristics, tactics, and the political context of contests. Broadly, national organizations receive coverage that focuses on (1) their role as credible experts, (2) their supporting role to local organizations during legislation and referendum, (3) their position as proximate actors to national level contention, and (4) as principal actors in state level judiciary contests. These types of coverage are explored in greater detail below.

## Facts and Expertise

When national organizations appear in local newspaper coverage they usually figure in ways related to their status as national players and experts, often specifically in relation to local organizations or local contention. Journalists use national organizations to highlight or comment on the national significance, impact, and context of local events. While this sometimes affords the opportunity for national organizations to speak for themselves, it often results in coverage that merely invokes national organizations' names to indicate national interest in local contention or as the source of relevant statistics or facts. Indeed, the most minimal inclusion of national organizations is their appearance on lists of various political actors who support or oppose the local contest. Often this is to emphasize the importance of local contention within a broader national context of contention. Only occasionally will these types of mentions result in a quote, but it does occur. We can see this in the example below about Washington's legislature voting to create a domestic partner registry:

National groups were watching the vote with interest.

"I would say this is historic because it is Washington's first step toward providing statewide recognition for same-sex couples, and some of the basic protections that they deserve under the law," said Tara Borelli, staff attorney for Lambda Legal, a national nonprofit group that advocates for the civil rights of gays, lesbians and bisexuals. (*The Olympian*, April 11, 2007)

Here the reporter is leveraging Lambda Legal's status as a national organization to emphasize the national newsworthiness of the action occurring at the state level. National organizations will also gain coverage by providing expert information or facts that journalists can draw upon in their articles. In some cases, this just results in an organization listed as the source of information at the bottom of a series of facts, a brief history of the issue, or position

summaries. Other instances have the organizations included in the main text of the article. We can see this below where the Human Rights Campaign appears in an article about domestic partnership benefits being extended at The Ohio State University:

“Nationwide, more than 200 colleges and universities offer some form of domestic-partner benefits, according to the Human Rights Campaign, a gay advocacy group based in Washington.” (*Columbus Dispatch*, July 10, 2004)

While both sides’ national organizations appear as authoritative sources for expert information, particularly for nationwide trends, marriage equality organizations appear to play this role more frequently than traditional marriage organizations. Unlike local organizations with more limited resources, these national organizations likely have the ability to collect, maintain, and produce relevant information on the status of national contention in anticipation of inquiring reporters. Indeed, it is rare for local organizations to provide these sorts of facts outside of locally administered polls during referendum battles. Interestingly, national marriage equality organizations appear much more frequently in this role than traditional marriage organizations. A cursory look at national marriage equality organizations’ current and previous websites from the years of contests using the Internet Archive ([thearchive.org](http://thearchive.org)) suggests that marriage equality organizations prioritized creating this type of reporter-friendly resource. Indeed, organizations that prioritize media attention and strategically cultivate reputations as trustworthy sources of information are likely to earn more media coverage (Rohlinger and Brown 2013; Rohlinger 2002). This appears to be the case with the Human Rights Campaign, which more than other organizations, appears as the source of facts or expertise.



## **National Level Commentary**

While local papers are more interested in telling local stories, national level contention does sometimes find its way into coverage. This most often occurs during presidential elections, congressional actions, when national religious denominations issue official proclamations, and when national groups organize nationwide actions, such as boycotts and national days of prayer. Some of this coverage comes from wire reports, which made up about 6% of all articles in this study. However, local papers still do write about national events, especially when they have Washington bureaus able to cover congressional actions involving state representatives or senators. When national coverage does happen in local papers it presents an opportunity for national organizations to gain coverage based on their status as national players and their proximity to the action. In particular, the often lengthy and extensive coverage that elections inspire incentivizes journalists to pursue different angles on campaigns, including focusing attention on appeals to various constituencies such as sexuality minorities and religious voting blocs. This phenomenon happens at all levels of city, state, or federal elections. Indeed, local elections also provide local organizations opportunities to gain coverage on their issues, but federal election coverage provides an important opportunity for national organizations to gain coverage in more regional papers. While some local organizations weigh in on national level contention or elections, more often national organizations appear in this coverage because their scope of operations lends authority and credibility to any broad statements they may make about the attitudes or behaviors of their constituents. In this way, national organizations represent a convenient and credible spokesperson for their voting bloc to reporters who may not have the time or resources to survey the various national communities and work out a

broad consensus among them. Below we can see an example of a national traditional marriage organization providing post-presidential election analysis:

“In 11 states, proposals to ban gay marriage - all successful - also helped drive the conservative turnout.

‘That was an issue that really galvanized people and turned a lot of votes out in states where it was on the ballot,” said Roberta Combs, president of Christian Coalition of America. “And I think that had a tremendous impact on the election.’” (*The Sacramento Bee*, November 4, 2004)

Here we can see the Christian Coalition of America providing an authoritative quote on the behaviors of voters in eleven different states’ referendums. Instead of spending time finding out which organizations were leading the battles in each of those states, reaching out to them, and determining the range of motivations for each state’s voters, this reporter could rely on the national status of the Christian Coalition of America to justifiably represent the broader national mood of religious voters. Interestingly, this was only one of two appearances of the Christian Coalition of America in my sample and the other appearance was also commentary on the national election in Ohio’s coverage. Both of these articles were written by local reporters, suggesting that national organizations gain authority and credibility because of their scope of operation and as a result, during periods of national contention and national elections, gain opportunities for better quality regional coverage. Elections in particular seem to provide opportunities for deeper political analysis in which journalists address the complexities of voting bloc. Indeed, elections provide opportunities for movements to inject their issue into the electoral agenda because of the increased media attention to public debates about policy matters and candidates positions (McCarthy et al. 1996; Sobieraj 2011). Following from this, I find that election coverage opens up opportunities not only for mainstream national

organizations, but also for more niche national and local organizations such as a national African American gay rights organization and multiple issue traditional values groups.

### **Supporting Roles**

Using national organizations as a source for facts, expertise, or to elevate the importance or drama of events helps journalists who are trying to write compelling stories about local and national contention, but national organizations also receive coverage based on the support they provide to local organizations during local contention. Indeed, national organizations are included in coverage not only because they are watching and commenting on state level contention, but also because they are participating in local contention. Much of this coverage focuses on the financial support provided during referendum and legislative battles. Referendum battles in particular require an immense amount of resources to organize events and volunteers, gather signatures, commission polls, hire consultants, and buy advertisements. The resource intensive nature of legislative and referendum contention provides a wide range of ways for organizations to participate in the fight. This often includes national organizations that not only have much greater resources at their immediate disposal, but also have the capacity to tap into extensive national networks and have the fundraising experience to raise additional funds. This is particularly true in referendum fights which often inspire the formation of broad coalitions in response to a shared threat (McCammon and Van Dyke 2010).

The expenditures made during political contention are a longstanding interest of journalists and a routine aspect of political reporting. Indeed, the money spent by organizations to try to sway legislators or the public during contests is usually newsworthy enough to include in coverage and often inspires one or two articles that focus solely on it. Some of the most

widely reported involvement by national organizations in local contention concerns their financial contributions to local organizations. Below we can see how substantial donations by opposing sides of the referendum battle in California garnered media attention:

The American Civil Liberties Union has reported donating \$1.2 million to defeat Proposition 8, the ban on gay marriage, on the November ballot. The \$1.2 million donation is the single largest check written to the campaign. (*The Sacramento Bee*, September 8, 2008)

Leading the effort to overturn gay marriage is the Connecticut-based Knights of Columbus. The Catholic fraternal organization has contributed \$1.25 million, according to campaign finance statements on the secretary of state's Web site. (*The Sacramento Bee*, September 23, 2008)

The attention national organizations received based on their financial support in local contention is likely the result of a combination of factors. Foremost, it reflects the fact that national organizations are able to and do make large, newsworthy donations to local organizations during legislative and referendum battles. Interestingly enough, while these large donations will garner mentions, they do not result in quotes from these organizations. Indeed, it is more likely that a local organization will comment on the donation than the national organization. More pragmatically, the coverage of national organizations' financial contributions also reflects the fact that journalists likely find it easier to obtain information about the financial ties of national organizations to local organizations, since they are required to report donations to the state. In contrast, reporters may find it more difficult to investigate other ways national organizations may be participating in local contention or supporting local organizations because of time constraints, lack of access, or lack of transparency on the part of the organizations.

Despite this, national organizations do have some opportunities for their claims to be included in the coverage of a specific kind of financial expenditure, namely expensive advertising campaigns. While local organizations also receive coverage about advertisement expenditures it generally makes up a much larger proportion of the quality coverage of national organizations' participation in local contention. Unlike regular spending coverage, the coverage of advertisements and spending for both national and local organizations provides an opportunity for the content of that advertising to be included, increasing the odds that demands will be included as well. This type of coverage presents one of the few opportunities for a national organization to get its claims covered in a more substantive way during local contention. In the following example from a legislative battle to strengthen religious exemptions in Connecticut we can see the demands of the organization included by way of covering the content of the advertisement:

Meanwhile, the National Organization for Marriage has launched a \$1.5 million television ad campaign "highlighting the threat that same-sex marriage poses to the core civil rights of all Americans who believe in marriage as the union of a husband and wife," the group said. In the ad, which is running in Connecticut and four other states, an actor portrays a member of a New Jersey church group that lost its tax-exempt status because it did not permit a same-sex civil union to take place in its beach pavilion. The group is also conducting a phone campaign. (*The Hartford Courant*, April 21, 2009)

Here we can see how the tactics and resources of this national organization become newsworthy because of the cost of the ad campaign and the local connection to the ongoing contest in the state. As a result, the ad campaign appeals to journalists' interest in reporting on stories that will impact the local community, such as an advertising blitz before a crucial vote. In this way, it appeals to journalists' norm of civic responsibility surrounding public decision

making (Oliver and Maney 2000). It also appeals to journalists' interest in emphasizing the drama and passionately held positions surrounding the local legislation by including both the advertisement's narrative and the considerable money spent by the organization. In this way the National Organization for Marriage's resource-dependent tactic of buying advertisements directed at the broader public placed it squarely within journalists' priorities in covering dramatic contention and events that have both local impact and national interest.

Most coverage of movement organizations during contention focuses squarely on local organizations and the coverage national organizations do receive is less likely to include quotes or demands in legislative and referendum venues. National organizations' coverage during legislative and referendum contests for the most part portrays them as supporting players in the contention, although sometimes coverage does not explicitly tie national organizations to any local organization. However, there are indications in coverage that these national organizations may be participating a great deal in local contests. The largest national gay rights group Human Rights Campaign, which appears in every state except Washington, best exemplifies this. Most of its coverage focuses on the financial support it provides local organizations, but there are references to Human Rights Campaign contributing resources that may have a larger impact on the operation and tactics of local organizations, such as providing training and personnel to local organizations. In North Carolina's referendum contest, the Human Rights Campaign provided two staffers to the leading local organization. During Ohio's referendum it organized canvassers and public meetings to raise consciousness. In New York's legislative battle it was reported as paying for a video campaign, organizing canvassers, and co-hosting a fundraiser for state legislators who supported the bill as well as being identified as

part of the pro marriage coalition group. In Virginia, during a local gay rights lobbying day at the legislature a senior field organizer with Human Rights Campaign trained the participants. None of these actions were the focus of the coverage, but they portray the Human Rights Campaign as acting in a supporting role to a local organization. This likely reflects the broader shift within the fight over same sex unions to state level contention that spurred new networks and coalitions between national and local actors (Dugan 2005; Fetner 2008). Indeed, the second most mentioned pro marriage group, the American Civil Liberties Union garner some coverage for their lobbying activities in California and Connecticut. In Connecticut they are explicitly identified as part of a local coalition pressuring the legislature. This seems to indicate that national organizations, or at the very least the Human Rights campaign, may be more involved in contests at the local level than coverage may suggest. Further, it is possible that national organizations may actually have a much greater influence in the operation of these local organizations than is portrayed in media coverage.

National traditional marriage organizations also appeared to be involved with local organizations during legislative and referendum battles, but to a lesser extent and they receive much more coverage that portrays their involvement at the local level as seemingly independent of other local organizations. Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council both provided assistance to a local Ohio group in gathering signatures for a referendum. Two local family values organizations were mentioned as being affiliated with Focus on the Family, but it is unclear how involved the organizations were. For the most part these national organizations appear without explicit connection to a local organization. The Family Research Council bought radio ads in North Carolina, but are never explicitly connected to any local

organizations. Knights of Columbus organized a rally in New York with local politicians and churches, but are the only organization mentioned in the rally's coverage. Similarly, Focus on the Family sent out direct mailers urging the passage of a marriage amendment in Virginia, but with no apparent connections to any local organizations. Even though it is the most mentioned national traditional marriage organization, coverage of the National Organization for Marriage includes one mention of collaboration with a local organization during a rally in North Carolina. The fact that the state level activities of these national organizations are not related to a collaborating local organization marks the coverage as distinctive from that of the Human Rights Campaign and the American Civil Liberties Union's activities. This suggests several possibilities about the relationship between organizations and their coverage during legislative and referendum battles.

First, it suggests that national marriage equality organizations may have greater ties to local organizations, while national traditional marriage organizations act more independently of local organizations at the state level. Certainly, national organizations have access to greater resources than most local organizations and can engage in local contests in very resource-intensive ways, such as paying for ad campaigns, robocalls, and contributing to local politicians. None of these tactics rely on resources that local organizations are likely to have, such as an existing local network of volunteers. Another possibility is that marriage equality organizations are more transparent about their ties, while traditional marriage organizations are less transparent. Rohlinger (2006) suggests that just as some organizations seek media coverage, others may make a tactical decision to try to avoid coverage and obscure ties to other organizations. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that some traditional marriage



advocates purposely obfuscate their financial and organizational ties to the Mormon church (Gordon and Gillespie 2012). Another possibility is that traditional marriage organizations do have connections to local organizations, but those organizations are more often local churches and are less likely to merit mention in political coverage than are formally political organizations. I explore this dynamic in Chapter 5.

While almost all the coverage in each state favors local organizations there is one notable exception in New York. National organizations outnumber local organizations (9 to 5) and came close to garnering half of all mentions during the legislative contention. While the most mentioned marriage equality organization is a local organization, the most mentioned traditional marriage organization is the National Organization for Marriage. Indeed, the National Organization for Marriage receives more than twice the number of mentions as the most mentioned local traditional marriage organization and receives the most mentions in New York overall. In fact, the local traditional marriage organization only receives one mention before the legislative campaign during a demonstration at the capital and the remainder of its coverage revolves around litigation after the bill passed the legislature. By comparison, the National Organization for Marriage appears before and after the bill passed. In line with the types of coverage national organizations receive more generally, its coverage focuses on expenditures and the advertisements it aired, but it also includes a rally and threats of electoral punishment to any defecting Republican legislator. The organization receives some coverage after the contest based on its campaign against a local politician and in an article about the next steps opponents to same sex marriage could take in New York.

Why do we see the National Organization of Marriage mentioned so much in New York compared to other states? In part, it is likely due to the various actions it took within the state, perhaps especially its use of assertive tactics in its aggressive electioneering. In contrast, the Knights of Columbus were similarly active and achieve a fair amount of attention, but its coverage focuses more on religious exemption concerns with the bill under consideration. In large part, the emphasis in coverage on the National Organization of Marriage likely reflects the fact that no local traditional marriage organization emerged as the leader in the fight. There is one mention of a local traditional marriage umbrella group called the Coalition to Save Marriage in New York, but it does not appear in any subsequent coverage. This is despite the fact that a reporter who went on to cover much of the remaining contention and writes several of the articles featuring the National Organizations for Marriage authored the article. This may reflect the tendency for disruptive tactics to get initial, but often short-lived media attention (Gitlin 1980). In this way, we can see how the lack of an established local traditional marriage organization opened up the opportunity for an active national organization to gain more media attention. Additionally, the National Organization for Marriage unlike the Knights of Columbus is a single issue organization and is not explicitly religious, making it more suitable as a balancing organization for the single issue marriage equality organizations. Here, journalists' priority on identifying important, influential players in pursuit of the balancing norm outweighs their preference for local voices. In this way we can see that the characteristics and tactics of organizations during contention mediates journalists' preferences for local voices and the strong news routine of identifying leading actors to balance articles.

## **The Judiciary and Political Venues**

Contests over same sex unions occur in multiple political venues within states, sometimes within months of each other. Activists on both sides have distinct preferences based on the perceived receptiveness of each venue and have found varying successes in them (Werum and Winders 2001). Traditional marriage activists prefer public referendums, while marriage equality activists prefer the judiciary (Meyer and Boutcher 2007; Pinello 2006). Legislatures are becoming more contested despite earlier evidence suggesting that they favored traditional marriage activists (Barclay and Fisher 2008; Werum and Winders 2001). Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that legislators use the introduction of bills to signal to state judiciaries to either leave the issue to the legislature or to encourage judicial intervention (Barclay and Fisher 2008).

The focus of contention at the state level and across multiple venues results in myriad opportunities for local and national organizations to become involved in the contests and gain coverage. However, as we can see in Table 4.2, I find that national organizations are not only least likely to appear in public referendum coverage, but they are also less likely to achieve standing or get any demands in that venue as well. In contrast, they appear more frequently in coverage of the judiciary and those appearances are more likely accompanied by quotes.

As we can see below in Table 4.2, 81% of mentions in the judiciary include a quote for national traditional marriage organizations and 79% of mentions include a quote for national marriage equality organizations. However, local organizations on both sides that appear in judicial coverage also had high percentages of mentions that include quotes. This suggests that

national and local organizations that participate in contention in the judiciary are more likely to receive quality coverage.

Table 4.2 Mentions, Quotes, and Demands of Organizations by Arena

<b>National Organizations</b>										
Arena	Traditional Marriage					Marriage Equality				
	Mentions count	Quotes count	%	Demands count	%	Mentions count	Quotes count	%	Demands count	%
Public Referendum	29	6	21%	2	7%	27	12	44%	3	11%
Legislative	44	19	43%	12	27%	44	25	57%	12	27%
Judicial	52	42	81%	10	19%	33	26	79%	10	30%
Election	18	14	78%	6	33%	15	10	67%	1	7%
Protest/Event	14	6	43%	2	14%	10	7	70%	2	20%
Other	11	6	55%	2	18%	31	21	68%	7	23%

<b>Local Organizations</b>										
Arena	Traditional Marriage					Marriage Equality				
	Mentions count	Quotes count	%	Demands count	%	count	Quotes count	%	Demands count	%
Public Referendum	159	121	76%	48	30%	149	92	62%	27	18%
Legislative	86	69	80%	31	36%	140	106	76%	51	36%
Judicial	62	53	85%	23	37%	30	22	73%	3	10%
Election	14	12	86%	4	29%	16	8	50%	0	0%
Protest/Event	20	14	70%	6	30%	56	30	54%	11	20%
Other	41	33	80%	12	29%	59	50	85%	15	25%

\*Arena categories are not mutually exclusive. % indicates percent of mentions.

Indeed, previous scholarship has suggested that organizations that participate in assertive tactics such as litigation are more likely to get quality coverage (Amenta et al. 2012). As a result, it is likely that national and local organizations are benefiting from media preferences for covering challenges to political power that engage political institutions. Indeed, if we look at the national organizations that receive the most mentions across all papers, five out of the top ten national organizations focus on legal issues. After the Human Rights Campaign and National Organization for Marriage, the two most prominent organizations on either side, the next two organizations are the Alliance Defense Fund and the American Civil

Liberties Organization, both large legal organizations. In fact, legal organizations account for 34% of all national organizations mentions, but represent only 16% of national organizations, suggesting that litigation is associated with greater coverage.

It is also possible that a combination of resources and tactics result in national organizations participating more often in judicial arenas. Indeed, litigation requires a highly specialized set of skills that national organizations may be better equipped to provide and have more experience in than local organizations. Certainly, some of the largest and most prominent national gay rights organizations are legal in nature, reflecting the movement's preference for initiating challenges in judicial venues (Meyer and Boutcher 2007; Pinello 2006). However, as marriage equality activists have been seeing greater success outside of the judiciary and in legislatures there are increasing numbers of legal challenges coming from the traditional marriage movement. As a result, it is possible that national legal organizations are receiving more coverage in the judiciary because they are more active in it. However in this study, these national organizations are usually representing either local litigants or local organizations that are challenging the state or other organizations. In fact, many of the judicial challenges in this study came from local organizations, but national organizations handle the case. Interestingly, when journalists had a choice between the local organization litigant and the national organization's representative, usually both receive quotes or the national organization is quoted. Why do we see national organizations given equal if not greater coverage in these judicial battles? It likely relates to the status of national legal organizations as experts, journalists' preference for identifying the most influential actors, and the broader logic of the judiciary as a non-populist arena of contention.

National legal organizations represent specialized experts who offer journalists highly credible, albeit tendentious, interpretations of the legal proceedings. In this way, they can provide interpretations for the journalist of the importance of the proceedings or decisions, often adding a sense of the national importance and interest of the case. Additionally, the adversarial nature of judiciary lends itself to reporters' balancing norm, such that they can easily get two authoritative sources on either side to produce competing narratives of the proceedings or decision. Local organizations for the most part cannot offer that type of authority or expertise. However, local organization often provide a more dramatic and approachable interpretation to help translate the significance of the decision to the reader. In the following example from an article about the California Supreme Court ordering San Francisco city officials to stop issuing marriage licenses to same sex couples we can see these different roles:

“This is what we asked the court to do,” said Glen Lavy, senior lawyer at the Arizona-based Alliance Defense Fund, which had requested a halt to the licenses on behalf of three San Francisco residents. “I don't have a crystal ball, but I think it is very good for our side that we have a 7-0 order.”

Another gay marriage critic, Randy Thomasson of the Campaign for California Families, told a press conference on the Capitol steps, “This is a day of celebration for the people of California. This is a victory for the law, for our republic and for the sanctity of marriage for a man and a woman.” (*The Sacramento Bee*, March 12, 2004)

As we can see the national legal organization provides a legal interpretation, while a local organization provides a more emotionally wrought interpretation. Indeed, the fact that local and national organizations are providing two desirable and complimentary elements to the stories journalists are writing may suggest why they receive quality coverage side by side in the

judiciary. In contrast, journalists writing about legislative and public referenda contention likely do not need to rely as heavily on the legal expertise of national organizations to convey the significance of the story. In this way the judicial context provides national organizations a more equal footing to local organizations within the hierarchy of journalistic news values and routines. As touched on before, there are barriers to entry in the judiciary involving both resources and expertise that favor national organizations meaning that they may be at an advantage based on journalists' priorities to seek out highly credible and authoritative sources. Beyond this though, the very nature of the judiciary and journalists' interest in covering actors close and invested in the contention creates a favorable environment for national organizations to gain coverage. Indeed, the judiciary is a non-populist, argument based venue that can possibly lead to national implications through legal precedent and possibly escalating appeals, such that any case that starts as a state case could become a national case. In this way, national organizations have a greater claim to belonging in a state's judicial contest.

In contrast, national organizations participating in public referendums and to a slightly lesser degree legislative contention are less credible as having a vested interest and more likely to be seen as outsiders meddling in state affairs. Indeed, during legislative and public referendum battles both sides attempt to discredit each other with accusations that out of state interests are running their opposition's campaign. The fact that national organizations receive minimal coverage during public referendums suggests a few possibilities. It could be that national organizations do not receive coverage because they are not actually involved much beyond the financial contributions that they make and therefore are receiving an appropriate amount of coverage based on the degree of involvement. Alternatively, they may

in fact be more involved in local contests, but because they lack the credibility of being a local, invested actor journalists eschew them in favor of easily identifiable local organizations. The legislative venue presents a more mixed set of opportunities since organizations are appealing to both political elites and the public. Indeed, as we have seen national organizations appear to be more active during legislative challenges, but do not gain standing as often established local actors or as often as they do in the judiciary. Indeed, national organizations may be wary of appearing in coverage during legislative or public referendum coverage lest they be accused of meddling in the state's self-determination. However, the non-populist nature of the judiciary does not burden national organizations with that particular credibility issue for journalists or the public. In this way we can see how the greater resources and expertise of national legal organizations combine with the characteristics of state judiciaries as stepping stones to national contention and the priorities of journalists to cover assertive tactics as well as principal and proximate actors to produce opportunities for high quality coverage for national organizations.

## **Conclusion**

The quality and quantity of coverage movement that organizations receive is the result of the interplay between journalists' news values and routines and organizational characteristics, tactics, and political context. In particular, journalists' preference for local actors results in a major advantage for local organizations. However, journalists' tendency to portray political contention as a dyadic contest between two clearly defined sides and the rigorous application of balancing norms during political coverage results in only a small handful of organizations receiving consistent or substantive coverage. This is especially true during referendum and legislative battles. When facing the distinct challenges of waging a referendum



battle, local organizations often form temporary coalition organizations to pool resources, coordinate activities, and possibly gain temporary issue specific support from other actors that might otherwise be reluctant to collaborate with the parent organizations. In this way, those organizations participating in the coalition both encourage and benefit from journalists' tendency to seek out the mainstream leading organization. However, the degree to which journalists are likely to cover these newly formed organizations over more recognizable and established organizations appears to vary.

When reporters do choose to focus on these newly formed coalitions the quantity and quality of coverage is usually high. For established, mainstream organizations, then, there is little risk to forming coalitions since they are more likely to share ideological preferences and tactics. As a result, if journalists focus on the coalition then its claims and the broader movement will get more coverage. However, even if reporters eschew the coalition organizations, then the reputation of these larger local organizations will likely still garner them more coverage than other less established local organizations. Indeed, other more radical organizations may be less likely to join coalitions since it might require more drastic tactical or ideological compromises.

As a result, if a coalition forms and journalists focus on it as the leading local representative voice in their coverage of the contest then the presence of these coalition organizations may end up altering the media opportunities and, in turn, the media tactics of organizations engaged in the same contest. In this way, the priorities of journalists to focus on leading organizations and the presence of such a leading coalition organization combine to produce a media environment that ends up privileging a few more mainstream voices over

others. This may not present an ideological or tactical quandary for some organizations, but likely does for others. Indeed, if the goal of movement organizations is to gain media coverage for the broader movement, then coalitions provide an alluring option, particularly during referendum and legislative battles. However, the formation of these coalitions encourages reporters to focus all their media attention on the coalition reducing the opportunities for smaller, less mainstream organizations to receive any consistent or high quality coverage. It may even make these smaller organizations appear to be more fringe or radical than they are if they do not participate in the coalition. When there is no established mainstream flagship organization we see a variety of organizations receiving coverage, as was the case with the traditional marriage organizations in North Carolina. While this may advantage those individual organizations, there may be a disadvantage to the movement more broadly. There are advantages for movements to present a uniform, unified, and stable organizational identity. On the other hand, a greater diversity of organizations receiving coverage may lend the movement an appearance of broad support. However, this seems less likely to occur based on reporters' preference for both local and established, leading organizations. In this way, we can see how organizational characteristics, tactics, and journalistic priorities to seek out and balance local, leading organizations shape how local organizations gain media attention.

While national organizations are generally at a disadvantage in regional coverage because of local journalists' priorities to seek out local actors, they do appear in coverage under particular sets of circumstances. National organizations gain coverage based on their ability to act as credible experts, provide authoritative commentary on national contention, and provide support to local organizations, particularly during referendum and legislative contests. National

organizations appear most in this supporting role, receiving coverage for donations made to organizations or for throwing their weight behind one side of the contention, but the quality of their coverage is fairly limited as journalists rely on local organizations to speak for the movement. However, in judicial contexts national organizations find greater success in achieving quality coverage including quotes and demands because of their increased credibility as proximate actors and their ability to provide legal interpretations and implications of the contention. Additionally, the local movement may actually benefit from downplaying the involvement of national organizations in legislative and referendum battles. In this way, they can emphasize the homegrown nature of their claims and defuse any claims of outsider national organizations as meddling in the self-determination of states, something that could be especially important during referenda and to a lesser degree during legislative battles. However, even though national organizations may not be as likely to receive quality coverage in terms of quotes and demands during referenda and legislative battles their status as large, reputable organizations operating at the national level serves to emphasize the drama and importance of local contests by connecting it to the broader national contention and as a result provides them a small foothold in coverage. Overall though, during referendum and legislative contests national organizations lack the credibility gained by being perceived as close to the action and genuinely invested or possibly affected by the outcome. However, this credibility gap is slightly easier to overcome in judicial battles where state rulings have implications for national contention. Additionally, national organizations often take the lead in these battles because of their greater resources and legal expertise further increasing their news appeal. In this way, we can see how the confluence of journalistic news values for proximate actors,

political contexts, and organizational characteristics and tactics result in more limited opportunities for national organizations to achieve quality coverage in regional media compared to local organizations.

## Chapter 5 Religious Organizations, Bystanders, and Visuals

While organizational characteristics and choices made by social movement organizations play an important role in the coverage they receive, these factors interact with journalists' norms and practices in shaping coverage. Journalists have a professional ethic that prioritizes objectivity, accuracy, and truth (Ferree et al. 2002; Hafez 2002). Indeed, many journalists pride themselves on being able to discern the truth or authenticity of the stories or people they cover (Jameson and Entman 2004; Sobieraj 2010). Objectivity occupies such a central role in the professional definition of journalism that journalists develop what Tuchman (1972) describes as 'strategic rituals' to guard against threats to their credibility. While journalists prioritize objectivity, their practice of that principle is governed by the other constraints of their profession including the limited time and resources they have to produce quick and accurate news reporting. As a result journalists develop routines to perform objective reporting by developing trusted sources, treating officials as authorities, and identifying the most prominent competing voices to represent both sides of a contentious issue.

The news routine of balancing competing perspectives within a news article is a well-documented aspect of news reporting with which movement organizations contend. This balancing norm allows reporters to avoid accusations of bias and can be used as a time-saving measure. Balancing norms can apply both to the quantity and the quality of sources included in coverage (Clarke 2008). When reporters faced with a multitude of positions choose to include all relevant viewpoints regardless of their prominence in the debate, the result is a balance in the number of voices represented (Donohue, Olien, and Tichenor 1985). In this vision of

journalistic balancing, social movement organizations targeting the issue in question would be included in most coverage as a matter of routine. Indeed, even smaller and less mainstream organizations would find opportunities for coverage if they had a distinctive viewpoint. However, this is an idealized vision of balance in media coverage, wherein reporters, after careful verification strive to present all sides of a story, including those that may be unsavory to powerholders (Clarke 2008). In this vision of balance, groups with grievances would find easy access to media coverage and a greater number of social movement organizations would be present in media coverage.

In practice, the realities of tight deadlines and limited resources produce a type of balancing that does not involve seeking out and verifying all sides of an issue. Indeed, Tuchman (1972) suggests that time-strapped journalists, without the time to verify the facts of a story, will instead report only two sides' claims of the facts. This allows them to avoid accusations of bias and makes it possible for them to sidestep evaluating those claims. In this way, the reporters can report the claims as facts, but do not have to devote the resources to independently verifying the actual facts of the story. As a result, reporters focus on the quality of their sources by trying to identify the two most influential perspectives and presenting them side by side, being careful to allocate roughly equal time to each (Dunwoody and Peters 1992; Entman 1989; Gans 1979). There are three major consequences for social movement organizations seeking media coverage based on these realities of reporting routines.

First, this type of balancing limits the viewpoints covered to established perspectives and dominant frames. In its most narrow manifestation, balancing merely presents competing arguments within one dominant frame. As a result, more established, mainstream

organizations have a greater advantage in gaining coverage, while smaller, more radical challengers face greater resistance to coverage (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Steensland 2008). However, this set of circumstances can sometimes work to the advantage of movements more broadly through an intentional or unintentional division of labor, wherein more radical groups create opportunities for movement coverage (e.g. a disruptive event) that result in reporters turning to the more mainstream organizations to comment (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). In this way, the broader movement can benefit from media attention even if those benefits are dispersed unevenly to organizations within the movement.

Second, balance bias can result in reporters distorting the importance of an extreme or minority perspective. Indeed, the balancing norm's emphasis on dyadic conflict by its very nature produces coverage that grants equivalency between claims of two competing perspectives (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). This often arises when reporters are unable to verify the claims made by each side and to avoid accusations of bias, report the claims of both sides. This tendency to seek out opposing viewpoints as a surrogate for verification may be especially true at smaller, less resource-rich local papers (Vinson 2003). By seeking out opposing views to fortify their claim to impartiality, reporters sometimes end up magnifying a minority or extreme perspective despite an overwhelming consensus on an issue, such as in the climate change debate or anti-vaccination movement (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004; Dunwoody and Peters 1992). In this way, some smaller and more radical social movement organizations may actually gain a foothold in the press coverage of an issue when they otherwise may have been overlooked.

Finally, the news routines that propel reporters toward seeking opposing voices to provide a balanced article can be a mixed blessing for social movement organizations. On the one hand, any substantial media coverage of the opposition will create opportunities for an equally weighty response from a member of your movement. On the other hand, any media coverage that your movement's organizations achieve likely provides a platform for your opposition as well (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Rohlinger 2002). Indeed, the religious right's activities surrounding the issue of same sex marriage provided just such an opportunity for gay rights organizations in the media (Fetner 2008). In this way, balance bias is a fundamental aspect of media coverage that organizations must navigate when seeking media coverage and pursuing broader movement goals. Indeed, the prerogative of journalists to find prominent, credible sources to satisfy this balancing norm incentivizes movement organizations to develop resources and professional staff positions to anticipate those needs (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Rohlinger 2002; Staggenborg 1988).

As we can see, movement organizations' media coverage is subject to a powerful reporting convention. Indeed, in this study I find evidence of a fairly strong balancing norm in coverage. In chapter three, I find no statistically significant relationship between the ideological orientation of movement organizations and the coverage it receives. This suggested that balancing may be at work. Indeed, in chapter four I find evidence of this balancing bias playing out in the remarkably similar number of mentions that only a handful of organizations on both sides receive in each state.

While media coverage of social movement organizations in this study does adhere to the balancing norm, organizations are not the only actors who advocate for a movement's



cause in media coverage (Ferree et al. 2002; Smith 1996). Indeed, it may make more sense to think about movements as a kind of loose grouping of formal movement organizations, allied movement groups, formally nonpolitical associations, celebrity supporters, supportive experts, and so on. Does the balancing norm apply to all the voices weighing in on contentious issues in media coverage? Social movement scholars have argued that we need a better understanding of how movement organizations interact with other kinds of actors in gaining influence (Andrews and Caren 2010; Ferree et al. 2002). In this chapter, I explore how diverse actors are represented in coverage of same sex union contention. Specifically, I ask whether these other contentious voices in the contention are able to circumvent the balancing norms that rigorously structure movement organization's coverage and in doing so effectively convey the message of the movement. Can these actors who are not classed as part of the movement promote the movement's aims? Further, can movements get favorable coverage in spite of the balancing norm by way of what is depicted visually rather than written? Activists often take great care in crafting visuals with the media in mind and there is evidence to suggest these visuals in newspapers may influence readers' opinions, evaluations, and comprehension of issues (Brantner, Lobinger, and Wetzstein 2011; Bucher and Schumacher 2006; McAdam 1996; Salzman 2003; Sobieraj 2011). In this way, movements that are able to produce and garner favorable visuals may gain important advantages over their opponents. Moreover, the space constraints of newspapers restrict the degree to which visuals can be included possibly reducing the opportunities for any opposition visual and increasing the possible advantage to movements that can provide compelling, favorable visuals.

## Actors in Coverage

A variety of actors are present in the coverage of contention over same sex marriage. . Overall, supporters of marriage equality outnumber opponents appearing in coverage, 53% to 47%. Political elites represent the largest group of actors covered (41%) and skew slightly in favor of marriage equality. Following them are movement organizations (22%) and, with almost as much coverage, bystanders (17%).

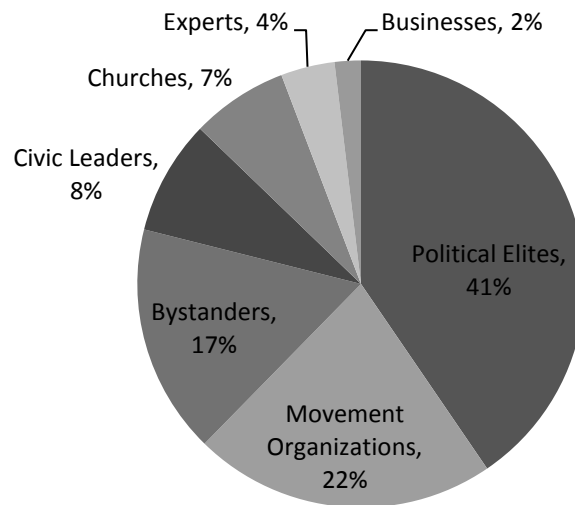


Figure 5.1 Percent of Actors Present in Coverage

Political elites through their systematic access to media coverage can be important allies to movements in disseminating their messages (Gamson 2007; Gans 1979; Koopmans 2004). Despite political elites' large presence in coverage, in this chapter, I focus on actors that, unlike elites and movement organizations, are not usually explicitly marked as political, but may still do important work in service of a movement's coverage. Specifically, I focus on religious organizations, bystanders, and the subjects of photographs. While religious organizations that appear in the coverage are sometimes treated as explicitly political actors, this type of coverage

is not uniformly applied to all religious organizations. Those religious organizations that are not directly involved in the political contests, but instead serve to provide commentary or become the focus of human interest stories surrounding the contest are treated as non-political actors even though they may convey interpretations, claims, grievances, and calls to action that align with the broader movements’ message. This is also true of bystanders that also appear in these commentary roles or lifestyle sections. Just like religious organizations that may receive special coverage in religious life sections, bystanders, such as a same sex couple hoping to marry, may also be profiled during an in-depth coverage of contests. In this way religious organizations and bystanders may provide an opportunity for the movement’s grievances and demands to be included in coverage during contests. Similarly, favorable visuals of movements’ participants or activities may provide another kind of substantive coverage that may convey the movements’ message. In this way, these elements of coverage may present opportunities for movements to get their grievances and possibly even their demands into newspapers.

Table 5.1 Percent of Organizations, Churches, Bystanders, and Photos by Ideology

	SMOs		Churches		Bystanders		Photos	
Marriage Equality	517	53%	109	36%	623	78%	279	75%
Traditional Marriage	463	47%	190	64%	176	22%	93	25%
Totals	980	100%	299	100%	799	100%	372	100%

Of the movement mentions, marriage equality organizations represent a slightly larger percentage (52.8%) than traditional marriage advocates. However, when we examine the coverage of churches and bystanders, we see that the representation of pro- and anti-marriage positions is quite different. Traditional marriage supporters dominate church mentions, while the opposite is true for bystanders, who skew toward marriage equality. Indeed, this is not the

only highly unbalanced aspect of coverage. When examining the photos included in coverage we find that marriage equality supporters are much more often the subject of those photos.

If the balancing norm applied to each of these actors and aspects of coverage we would expect to see similar percentages of pro- and con- leaning churches, bystanders, and photos. We know that churches favoring same sex unions exist because they appear in coverage across states, but they do not receive as much coverage as churches supporting traditional marriage. Based on public opinion polls taken during the period of contention, it is clear that con bystanders exist and indeed very often outnumber pro bystanders, but they receive nowhere near equal amounts media coverage. This brings into stark relief the degree to which social movement organizations are subject to a much more rigorously applied balancing norm. Certainly, this does not account for whether or not these actors are appearing next to other types of actors, but even beyond examining whether or not each article has an even tit for tat of actors it suggests that in aggregate some of these voices are amplified over similarly situated ones. In this way, we can begin to examine the ways in which some actors may escape the balancing norms that guide journalists' coverage of more formally recognized political entities.

### **Churches and Religious Organizations**

Religious organizations have long been identified as important to social movements in the United States, notably in the civil rights movement and more recently in the contention over abortion and same sex marriage. Indeed, religious organizations can provide a number of resources to movement organizations including funds, volunteers, spaces to meet, and communication networks(Zald and McCarthy 1998). In these ways, religious organizations can play a significant role in the mobilization and coordination of movement activities. Scholars

often focus on the origin or causes of religious involvement in movements, but if we are to understand religious organizations as part of a broader loosely affiliated movement we should think of contributions that extend beyond resources and mobilization networks. There is little scholarship about the role of non-movement organization actors, churches included, in garnering media coverage and conveying the message of the movement. What work has been done has focused on large national newspapers (Ferree et al. 2002) or focused on religious organizations directly in conflict with the federal government (Smith 1996). In contrast, the major players in the contention over same sex marriage are acting largely at the state level where primary media coverage comes from local regional papers. The organizations involved are usually a mixture of secular and religious groups. However, there is some evidence to suggest that some of the seemingly secular traditional marriage organizations are actually funded by religious organizations (Gordon and Gillespie 2012).

If religious organizations can be imagined as existing under the broader canopy of the movement, we might expect their coverage in the media to reflect that political status and to be subject to the balancing norm. Instead though, I find that 64% of all church mentions are of traditional marriage supporters. Certainly, the opposition to same sex marriage often comes from a conservative ideology and may just be a reflection of the greater participation of traditional marriage churches in the contention. However, if these churches were being treated like political actors then we would expect the balancing norm to prompt reporters to seek out pro same sex marriage churches for commentary regardless of their seeming scarcity. So, how do we understand the advantage traditional marriage supporting churches appear to have? I argue it relates to three intersecting factors: the unique position religious organizations occupy

within society (and by extension movements and media), the types of religious organizations involved, and the practices and priorities of local newspapers.

Churches occupy a unique position within society since they are often well organized, embedded in an extended networks of similar organizations, foster social networks within a community, and they can claim a distinct moral authority in public discourse. Indeed, it is their organizational capacity, moral authority, and autonomy from the state that make churches a formidable oppositional structure to the state within society (Smith 1996). Local religious organizations can even foster the development of formal movement organizations (Zald and McCarthy 1998). However, while churches can and do participate in politics they are also a distinctly social organization as well. As a result of these dual identities religious organizations garner coverage as both political and social actors. While churches received coverage when they were directly involved in political contention (e.g. lobbying the legislature, commenting on a court decision, etc.), it was often larger religious organizations that were covered. In contrast, smaller organizations received more coverage focusing on the religious orientation of the congregation as a measure of religious opinions in the area or as a local voice for their national denomination's official positions (e.g. a recent vote by the national governing body on the issue of same sex unions).

Indeed, newspapers often have a section devoted to covering religious activities within the community. This provides churches the kind of routine access to coverage that social movement organizations fight for in other beats. In this study, I coded those types of articles as 'lifestyle' or 'non-state,' indicating a more human interest, non-state actor focus. For journalists covering a religious or lifestyle beat, the activities and positions of the churches

themselves become newsworthy, adding another angle to the coverage of both religious life and ongoing contention. Indeed, during contention these sections will feature sometimes quite lengthy articles gauging various religious organizations' viewpoints on same sex unions. Additionally, the often contentious activities of national denominations as they struggle to define their positions on same sex unions inspire news coverage in its own right.

In this way religious organizations have a small, but established foothold in garnering media coverage since their role as mouthpiece of their constituents and more broadly their role as arbitrators of public morality make them both newsworthy and authoritative sources. This role of religious organizations also appeals to journalists' desire to find new angles to ongoing political contention such as during elections, legislative debates, and referendums.

In order to assess how religious organizations, type of media coverage and balancing norms may be interacting I created a table of church mentions by ideology and article focus. The article subject categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, if a profile of a new Catholic bishop of a church included a statement supporting a same sex marriage referendum I coded it as both referendum and lifestyle. In contrast, if the religious leader of a church gave a quote in reaction to a court ruling then I coded it as just judiciary. In order to get at whether or not churches are appearing alongside other churches or other social movement organizations I included counts of co-mentions. All counts within church co-mentions and SMO co-mentions are mutually exclusive. For example, if a con church was mentioned alongside a pro and con church it got one count in the 'both' church co-mention column. However, if a con church was mentioned alongside a pro church and pro social movement organization, then I added a count

to 'pro' church co-mention and 'pro' SMO mention. If the organization appears alone, then I coded it as 'solo'.

Table 5.2 Mentions and Co-Mentions of Churches Across Newspaper Article Subjects

Con Same Sex Union Churches Mentions and Co-Mentions									
Subject	Con Church		Church Co-Mentions			SMO Co-Mentions			Solo
	Mentions	Quotes	Con	Pro	Both	Con	Pro	Both	
Ref.	73	40	15	3	18	5	11	28	10
Leg.	46	29	7	2	10	5	8	15	7
Jud.	25	18	2	0	15	3	2	2	1
Lifestyle	67	40	16	7	27	1	8	6	9
Protest	8	6	0	1	0	2	0	4	2
Local	15	11	3	0	6	1	5	4	1
Other	21	5	4	2	5	2	1	7	5

Pro Same Sex Union Churches Mentions									
Subject	Pro Church		Church Co-Mentions			SMO Co-Mentions			Solo
	Mentions	Quotes	Con	Pro	Both	Con	Pro	Both	
Ref.	20	8	0	0	14	1	1	6	3
Leg.	33	27	2	4	16	2	10	6	3
Jud.	16	7	0	0	13	0	1	0	2
Lifestyle	52	34	5	5	33	0	9	2	7
Protest	5	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	2
Local	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other	13	3	3	3	1	2	0	4	4

Note: Counts are not mutually exclusive between subjects.

As we can in the table above, con churches are more politically active in the contention over same sex unions and as a result they feature more prominently in the coverage of political arenas. However, lifestyle articles represent one of the largest categories of mentions for both pro and con churches, equaling or exceeding the number of mentions concerning political subjects. Similarly, looking at quotes we can see churches on both sides receive substantial standing in lifestyle articles suggesting that the quality of coverage they receive in that arena may be an important possible platform for transmitting movement messages.



Table 5.3 Churches and Movement Organization Mentions by Ideology

Unbalanced Con Mentions				
Subjects	Solo	% of men.	Con+Solo	% of men.
Ref.	10	13.7%	30	41.1%
Leg.	7	15.2%	19	41.3%
Jud.	1	4.0%	6	24.0%
Lifestyle	9	13.4%	26	38.8%
Protest	2	25.0%	4	50.0%
Local	1	6.7%	5	33.3%
Other	5	23.8%	11	52.4%

Unbalanced Pro Mentions				
Subjects	Solo	% of men.	Pro+Solo	% of men.
Ref.	3	15.0%	4	20.0%
Leg.	3	9.1%	17	51.5%
Jud.	2	12.5%	3	18.8%
Lifestyle	7	13.5%	21	40.4%
Protest	2	40.0%	4	80.0%
Local	1	50.0%	1	50.0%
Other	4	30.8%	7	53.8%

Note: Counts are not mutually exclusive between subjects.

Turning to look at the broader landscape of the articles these churches appear in, we can begin to evaluate whether church mentions are balanced by the presence of either an opposing church or social movement organization. If we combine the solo mentions of each church with mentions of churches and organizations of the same ideology we can evaluate the extent to which churches appear in articles without any organizational opposition or only with allied actors. Looking at the political arenas we can see that a greater percentage of con churches appear unchallenged compared to their pro church counterparts in those same arenas. The only exception is in articles about the legislature, where pro churches appeared in half of all their articles unchallenged, while con churches appeared in about 40% unchallenged. These differences may indicate that politically active churches operating in political arenas are

able to escape a more rigorous counterbalancing. Indeed, the two most unchallenged political arenas for con churches are those in which they appear the most consistently: referendum and legislative. Further, pro churches are not as politically active in contention over same sex unions except in Connecticut where the United Church of Christ took an active role in the legislative contention. Interestingly, when we examine the percentage of unchallenged articles in the judiciary we can see that both con and pro sides achieve less independent space. This is likely a reflection of both the fact that churches are less likely to lead contention in judiciaries and that the adversarial nature of the judiciary likely encourages the inclusion of opposing voices regardless of if they are churches or social movement organizations. While it is likely that these differences are in part a reflection of the greater participation and, by extension, ease of locating con churches in contention over same sex unions, the fact that we see a substantial number of unchallenged articles in the legislature for pro churches may indicate that churches' participation in political arenas garners them attention, but because they are not strictly political actors that attention is not subject to as rigorous a balancing norm.

In contrast, when examining the lifestyle articles we find that both pro and con churches have similar percentages of unchallenged articles suggesting that this type of coverage may be distinct from political coverage. Indeed, we can see that both con and pro churches receive a similar percentage of unchallenged articles suggesting that unlike in the political arena where unchallenged coverage seems more driven by active political involvement, social coverage bestows unchallenged coverage to both sides at similar rates. In part, this is likely because lifestyle coverage often takes the church as its focus of coverage versus treating it as one of several political players and as such there is less pressure on journalists to appear unbiased.

Ferree et al. (2002) find that media coverage is more receptive to religious discourse that focuses on broad, ecumenical discourse, which is what we find in political arenas. However, these findings suggest that coverage that takes religion and churches as its subject provides a much broader range of discursive opportunities for churches. For example, the point of an article may be to examine the religious opposition to same sex unions and the article may use a local church's activities in support of a ban or the leaderships' positions to examine the issue.

In sum, in both political and social coverage churches benefit from appearing in unchallenged articles, but political coverage is driven by those churches actively involved such that opposing churches or even opposing organizations are not necessarily consistently invoked as we might expect if a strong balancing norm were operating. Indeed, churches occupy a special status as potentially allied, but distinct from other political actors within contention. This provides them with a distinct advantage in receiving unchallenged coverage in political arenas. Additionally, if a newspaper is large enough to have a religious life section and reporters who cover the religion beat then churches may have access to semi-regular coverage during contention with a recognized religious component.

Media coverage of allied churches presents movements with some potential advantages and disadvantages. Advantages include increased and potentially broader visibility as the result of social and political coverage (especially in papers with dedicated religion beats), lending important moral authority to the movement's message, and most notably the possibility of evading the balancing norm to convey that message unchallenged. On the other hand, there is the risk that churches may not actually convey the preferred message of the movement (i.e. making more extreme or radical claims). However, this is a perpetual risk for any movement

interested in garnering media coverage that is comprised of a collection of allied groups, which may be acting with their own motives and goals. That being said, unlike other movement organizations or even bystanders, churches do run the risk of invoking institutional and normative principles about the separation of church and state, which can limit or even discredit a movement's claims in the U.S. context (Ferree et al. 2002). However, these risks are more likely to come from smaller, less political savvy religious organizations. Indeed, in the coverage of churches and movement organizations we can see indications that both sides of the same sex union contention reach out to churches to garner support. By working with churches movements disseminate their messages directly to the leadership and congregants. This in turn can increase the possibilities that religious organizations will be on message if the media comes calling.

As I touch upon above, these religious organizations vary in their organizational characteristics in ways that influence the type of coverage they receive. In particular we can distinguish national denomination organizations, local congregations, and parachurch groups, which claim religious legitimacy, but do not have any formal connections to religious structures (Edwards and McCarthy 2007). National denomination organizations, such as the Catholic Church, sometimes have separate organizations whose explicit purpose is to advocate and lobby the state on behalf of their denomination. I coded these organizations as social movement organizations. Any other references to a national level or multiple state level denomination organization I code as a national church. I coded state level religious organizations or local congregations as local churches. Any other religiously affiliated group, such as parachurch groups, that did not have a congregation, but engaged in social movement

like activity were coded as social movement organizations. With these distinctions in mind we can see that while the balancing norm applies unevenly to churches, they are still subject to one of the strongest prerogatives of local media coverage: seeking out local voices.

Table 5.4 Mentions and Quotes of Churches by Organizational Level

	Con Churches				Pro Churches			
	Mentions		Quotes		Mentions		Quotes	
Local	116	61.1%	91	81.3%	69	63.3%	57	90.5%
National	74	38.9%	22	19.6%	40	36.7%	6	9.5%
Totals	190	100%	112	100%	109	100%	63	100%

Overall, local churches represent more than half (62%) of all church mentions and this is true when we look at con and pro churches separately as well. Ferree et al. (2002) suggest that the plurality of religious voices in the United States makes it difficult for formal religious organizations to gain standing, but the authors were focusing on large national papers. In contrast, we can see above that local churches compared to national churches are particularly successful in gaining standing in the regional papers in this study. Indeed, national churches' coverage is often limited to passing references used to contextualize local actors. National churches are also included when their leadership makes an official statement about same sex unions or when there is contention at their national conventions over the issue. In this way, the church's activities and internal contention itself become the focus of attention and the newsworthy event. Again though, usually the coverage will include a local congregation connected to the story. Below we can see an example of a national church contextualizing a local congregation's reaction to the legalization of civil unions in Connecticut:

The Rev. David Halmers of Emanuel Lutheran Church in Manchester said our church struggles with the issue of same-sex union because there is no clear biblical mandate. Nothing in the formal policy statement addresses it either.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the governing arm of member churches, voted this summer not to ordain openly gay ministers. It is up to individual pastors, however, to decide whether to bless a same-sex civil union in church. Halmers said he would. (*The Hartford Courant*, October 8, 2005)

National church organizations may also be wary of engaging in the state level or local contention that local congregations get involved in (Jaffe, Lindheim, and Lee 1981). Instead, they may prefer to allow local actors to take the lead on the issue to avoid the appearance of meddling in a state's self-determination. A notable exception is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which played a pivotal and visible role in passing the ballot initiative Prop 8 that banned same sex marriages in California in 2008 (Gordon and Gillespie 2012). Indeed, below we can see the tension surrounding a national religious organization being involved in state level politics:

Church members will no longer be making phone calls from Utah to California voters, Kim Farah, a spokeswoman for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said in a prepared statement Friday.

At the request of the Yes on Proposition 8 campaign, church members in Utah had been enlisted to make calls on behalf of the measure.

"However, the church has since determined that such phone calls are best handled by those who are registered California voters," Farah said. (*The Sacramento Bee*, October 25, 2008)

This excerpt draws attention to the fact that social movement organizations in the contention over same sex marriage can and sometimes do seek out the resources of national and local churches as a tactical choice. While same sex union recognition opponents have a well-documented relationship with the religious right and experience working with churches, marriage equality activists are increasingly reaching out to the

religious community (Fetner 2008). Indeed, in Connecticut the marriage equality organization Love Makes a Family received funding from a national organization specifically to create a religious-organizing project coordinator position to reach out to religious pro same sex marriage supporters.

Religious organizations are clearly involved in the contention over same sex marriage and increasingly both sides of the issue are engaging with religious organizations, utilizing their resources, networks, facilities, and moral authority to pursue political goals (Fetner 2008). Indeed, churches in this sample were involved in various activities related to movement activities, including screening videos produced by movement organizations, collecting signatures for referendum petitions, attending rallies, distributing pamphlets, joining coalitions, and lobbying legislatures. It is no stretch to imagine that some, if not most, religious organizations receiving media attention have had contact with movement organizations. Indeed, they may even been referred to a journalist or coached on how to talk to one by a movement organization when a journalist came looking for a potential source-- similar to how movement organizations coach their own members (Sobieraj 2011). As a result, religious organizations may be familiar with and capable of effectively conveying the movement's message, often, but not always through a religious frame. Add to this the fact that religious organizations garner a special type of media attention, wherein not only their political activities, but their role as social and moral arbiters makes their positions on the issue itself a newsworthy event. The familiarity with the messages and their human interest angle (especially for local religious organizations) combined with the fact that religious organizations' coverage is not strictly bound by balancing norms makes them potentially powerful voices in conveying the

movement's broader media coverage. Indeed, the moral legitimacy that religious organizations claim in political and social spheres makes them important figures in defining opinions on morality issues such as same sex marriage. This increases the potential influence they wield when media disseminates their messages (Barclay and Fisher 2003).

### **Bystanders**

While scholars are often interested in how movements can use the media to mobilize bystanders, they pay little attention to how bystanders may influence the favorability of a movement's coverage (Gamson 2007). In this study, bystanders make up a significant proportion (17%) of the actors covered, representing the largest group after political elites and social movement organizations. Marriage equality supporters secure twice as many mentions as traditional marriage supporters across all papers and overall represent 78% of all bystander mentions. This suggests that movements may not only be gaining important coverage from bystanders, but that coverage could escape traditional balancing norms to be substantially favorable and unchallenged.

Why do we see such a large share of coverage going to bystanders? It is likely the result of shifts within the larger media industry as well as in the news values of journalists. Ferree et al. (2002) finds that journalists in the U.S. place a high value on personalization and narrative, often choosing to represent issues through the inclusion of grassroots actors and ordinary individuals. As a result, there is a greater receptivity to human interest stories and a focus on the experiences of ordinary people. This shift away from political content and toward entertainment (or infotainment), human interest, and drama has been attributed to the increased commercialization of media and the economic demands of attracting an audience



(Bennett 1996; De Keyser and Raeymaeckers 2012; Koopmans 2004; Wolfsfeld 2011).

Wolfsfeld (2011) argues that the media is fundamentally interested in telling good stories, so stories that emphasize personalization, conflict and drama are more likely to be included in coverage. Additionally, journalists include personal narratives as a way to emotionally connect readers to a potentially abstract policy debate (Ferree et al. 2002). Accordingly, groups that can provide these kinds of stories have a competitive advantage in acquiring media coverage (Binderkrantz, Christiansen, and Pedersen 2014). Some movement organizations try to capitalize on this penchant for drama and personalization by presenting members of the movement as just ordinary people so as to gain credibility among reporters and readers (Smith 1996). Indeed, some movements may have a structural advantage in gaining this kind of coverage. For example, Ferree et al. (2002) suggest that debates that have emotional or morally wrought tones oblige journalists to include specific individuals' experiences because those experiences become a part of understanding positions in the debate. However, reporters are also inclined to include bystanders and ordinary people in their stories to help their readers connect their own lives to the sometimes abstract argumentation of the policy debates they are covering. Ferree et al. (2002) suggest that these debates inspire inclusion of personal stories on both sides, implying a balance between each side, such that each side gets to do their "truth-telling". However, in the coverage of contention in this study mentions of bystanders are not even close to parity. Why? Because the marriage equality movement has more compelling, dramatic stories that appeal to journalistic news values of telling interesting, evocative stories. This prerogative to tell interesting stories or provide compelling news pegs appears to evade

the rigorous balancing that other political actors are subject to and presents the marriage equality movement with a distinct advantage.

Broadly bystanders appear in news coverage in a few different ways. First, there is temperature gauging of the public on poll data or recent or upcoming political events (such as an election or a ballot initiative), where reporters will focus on reporting the attitudes of a variety of bystanders to represent a broad range of public opinion on a contentious matter. In these sorts of articles we see a careful balancing of bystanders since the purpose of the story is to highlight the variety of attitudes. Next, there are events, rallies, and disruptive actions, which tend to favor the side that initiated it. In general, reporters focus on those bystanders that were at these events likely due to their availability and proximity. We do see some balanced reporting if counter-protests or simultaneous events are occurring. It is in the routine coverage of political affairs that we start to see some of the advantage marriage equality bystanders have in receiving coverage. Indeed, marriage equality bystanders with heartfelt appeals to marry the person they love and emotional tales of hospital visitations denied heighten the drama and importance of plodding legislative activities, abstract judicial proceedings, and on-going referendum coverage. Indeed, below we can see the routine reporting of a bill passing through the legislature punctuated by an emotional commentary from two bystanders:

But some members of the gay community said the new law sends a signal that homosexuals no longer are welcome in Ohio.

"It hurts. It just breaks my heart," Gahanna resident Dorrie Andermills said. "It makes me really sad about what it says about Ohio."

Said Chad Foust of Columbus: "It's one thing to walk down the street and have a total stranger treat you as a second-class citizen, but it's another thing to have your government treat you that way. It's like a punch in the stomach." (*The Columbus Dispatch*, February 7, 2004)

Bystanders from both sides provide these sorts of combination commentary and news pegs for routine political coverage, wherein through their commentary on the events they add human interest, but marriage equality bystanders comprise many more of them.

Another major source of coverage for bystanders are articles that are less political actor focused and more social or lifestyle focused. Below we can see that marriage equality bystanders are not only mentioned the most in lifestyle articles, but often appear without any bystander opposition to balance them. However, they may appear with other non-bystander opposing actors. In fact, the fairly high counts in the political arenas are in part likely a reflection of the non-mutually exclusive coding and the considerable amount of lifestyle coverage devoted to covering reactions to events in each of those arenas.

Table 5.5 Bystander Mentions and Quotes Across Newspaper Article Subjects by Ideology

Traditional Marriage Bystanders					
Subject	Mentions	Quotes	% of Men.	Solo	% of Men.
Ref.	70	48	68.6%	18	25.7%
Leg.	47	36	76.6%	15	31.9%
Jud.	13	9	69.2%	6	46.2%
Lifestyle/other	50	41	82.0%	16	32.0%
Protest	43	28	65.1%	10	23.3%
Local	4	3	75.0%	1	25.0%
Election	12	12	100.0%	3	25.0%

Marriage Equality Bystanders					
Subject	Mentions	Quotes	% of Men.	Solo	% of Men.
Ref.	128	102	79.7%	60	46.9%
Leg.	171	120	70.2%	117	68.4%
Jud.	139	90	64.7%	104	74.8%
Lifestyle/other	264	194	73.5%	205	77.7%
Protest	131	82	62.6%	62	47.3%
Local	148	97	65.5%	93	62.8%
Election	26	22	84.6%	23	88.5%

Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Interestingly, the contention over same sex union recognition generates a lot of interest, but the post-contest coverage often features the reactions of marriage equality supporters regardless of whether they won or lost. Again, this may speak to the advantages that human interest angles and personal stories have in garnering coverage. In this case, traditional marriage advocates may be at a disadvantage because overwhelmingly they lack a personal narrative to their opposition. Instead they rely on more abstract principles such as historic definitions of marriage, ideas about socially beneficial family structures, judicial tyranny, and threats to religious freedom. Additionally, the traditional marriage movement, if using a religious frame, may also face an additional hurdle in the institutional and cultural norm of separation of church and state. This may make their grievances less credible and therefore less newsworthy (Ferree et al. 2002). Indeed, as public opinion has been shifting in favor of marriage equality and toward greater acceptance of gays and lesbians in general, traditional marriage advocates are increasingly using a religious rights frame. This may prove to be a more successful tactic since mainstream media are more likely to cover groups that employ broader principals of constitutional rights(Oliver and Maney 2000).

It is possible that some of the disparities we see between the coverage of con and pro bystanders comes down to a question of accessibility. Marriage equality bystanders may be more available, possibly as a result of tactical choices made by movement organizations. Certainly, there has been an increasing emphasis on relationships and families in the gay rights movement (Fetner 2008). Another factor that may be influencing the number of pro bystander mentions is the considerable coverage that follows a success. For civil union and domestic partnership victories there are articles delineating what exactly the law entails. Perhaps most

significantly, any same sex union victory results in articles documenting the crowds of gays and lesbians converging on city hall or county buildings. These articles invariably include the stories of one or several of the couples applying for a marriage license or registering as partners. This convergence of bystanders and activists in one centralized location during a considerably newsworthy event presents a real opportunity for the movement to gain coverage. Indeed, I would argue post victory coverage could be just as important as pre-victory coverage, especially if those victories were just civil unions and domestic partnerships, leaving the ultimate goal of marriage. Coverage of marriage victories is also important for gaining public support, buttressing the victory against any brewing opposition campaigns, as well as serving as a rejoinder to any opposing protests competing for coverage. There is no real equivalent event that generates as much coverage comparable to this for traditional marriage advocates. Certainly some victories are accompanied by celebratory events and losses are sometimes accompanied by coverage of protests, but neither of them inspires the same quality of coverage, especially with respect to highlighting the personal investment of bystanders.

While it is possible that journalists covering these marriage equality victory events do not encounter con bystanders, it may also be that the dominant narrative and tone of the articles is often celebratory such that either journalists or con bystanders themselves may be reluctant to share negative comments. Indeed, 47.3% of protest or event mentions are comprised of pro bystanders appearing without any opposing bystanders compared to 23.3% of solo con bystanders at protests and events. Overall, this suggests marriage equality advocates have a distinct advantage in garnering unchallenged media attention at these events through the combination of readily available, sympathetic bystanders with deeply emotional and

personal stories and journalistic preferences for episodic, event based coverage that the historic first same sex marriages or civil unions provide.

While this bystander advantage is most pronounced in the coverage of victories, it holds true throughout the coverage of contention. Journalists interested in a human interest angles have a wide swath of marriage equality bystanders that they can feature. Indeed, this personalization advantage is illustrated in the number of lifestyle profiles that pro bystanders garner compared to con bystanders. While activists on both sides are the subjects of profiles, marriage equality bystanders are also the subject of intimate portrayals of their families. These profiles often emphasize stories of how the couple met, illustrations of their commitment to each other through tough times, and why legal recognition of their relationship is important to them. There are few examples of such articles on the traditional marriage side. One such profile was of a Mormon couple's fifty thousand dollar donation to support a referendum against same sex marriage in California. The article emphasized their commitment to the principle of traditional marriage, their family life and the sacrifice they will have to make as a result of the donation. Another personal angle that appears is family conflict, where someone has a gay or lesbian family member, but is still against same sex unions. These types of stories were also rare. Again, journalists' interest in telling good, compelling stories structurally advantages the marriage equality movement's coverage of bystanders when faced with a choice between an emotional tale of building family and love in the face of adversity versus a passionately held policy position about the social and legal definition of marriage.

## Photos and visual framing

Activists are very aware of the power of images in media coverage, which can inspire public sympathy or discredit their cause. As a result, they often attempt to groom their events to inspire better visuals or remove any elements that could undermine their message (McAdam 1996; Salzman 2003). Some groups seeking media attention engage in showy, dramatic antics with carefully crafted props or visuals to both attract media attention and in the hopes that they can use those visuals to convey their message (Salzman 2003; Sobieraj 2011). Indeed, reporters are aware of their co-production with activists of these media photo-opportunities (Neveu 2002). Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that photographs accompanying news stories can affect public opinion formation, comprehension of the news, and evaluations of issues, particularly those with a human-interest frame (Brantner et al. 2011; Bucher and Schumacher 2006). Walgrave and Manssens (2000) find extensive visuals included in coverage can actually increase mass mobilization about a public issue.

While photos are often mentioned as being important factors in media coverage, they do not seem to be the focus of much social movement scholarship beyond their role as a possible indicator of the quality or volume of coverage a movement receives (Andrews and Caren 2010; Wilkes, Corrigan-Brown, and Myers 2010; Wilkes and Ricard 2007). McAdam (1996) suggests that movement organizations will stage dramatic visuals to elicit sympathetic media coverage in the hopes that will in turn inspire sympathy from the public. However, Wilkes et al. (2010) find little evidence for tactics influencing photo inclusion in newspapers. Instead they find that news routines, particularly the presence of a beat reporter, increase the chances of visuals accompanying coverage of events. Possibly this is because beat reporters familiar with

the movement know when good visuals will present themselves and can request a photographer for an event (Salzman 2003).

With the increasing acceptance of gays and lesbians and the gay rights movement emphasis on families, it is no wonder that news stories and images of gay and lesbian families have been increasing in the media (Fetner 2008; Landau 2009). Indeed, marriage equality activists will organize public marriages and invite the media in the hopes that the images of loving same sex couples will positively influence public opinion (Nicol and Smith 2008).

Table 5.6 Photograph Counts by Ideology and Actor

Actors	Con Photos		Pro photos	
	Con	Both	Pro	Both
Bystanders	32	16	173	19
Civic leaders	17	2	26	1
Political elites	25	7	70	7
SMOs	20	0	20	0

Certainly, that idea finds some support in this data, where the overwhelming majority of photographs accompanying coverage are of marriage equality supporters. Indeed, in the overall distribution of photo appearances, only 6.7% of photos contain both actors, 23% have con actors, and an overwhelming 70% of all photos have a pro actor featured. It's possible the advantage that marriage equality advocates have in the coverage of their bystanders extends to the photographs included with stories. To examine this possibility, I used the captions of photos in conjunction with their accompanying article to identify whether the actors pictured were pro or con. There were no identifiable photo captions in Virginia or Washington's articles, so these data are based on the other six states. I coded each photo for whether it was of a pro actor, con actor, or had both present. Each of those categories is mutually exclusive. More often than not



those with both sides in the same photo were at protests and counter-protests. Only one photo did not contain any actors and it was a picture of ballots for an initiative drive.

While some of the work on images in news focuses exclusively on events, other studies use photos as a measure of the quality or density of coverage (Andrews and Caren 2010; Wilkes et al. 2010). As we can see in the table above, pro bystanders vastly outnumber all other bystanders and while many of them appear in event coverage, a considerable number of the photos are of couples at city hall or county clerk offices getting civil unions or getting married. In fact, even the protest or event photos often feature couples prominently. Why do we see such a vast majority of pro bystanders? It is because they provide a much more dramatic and emotional visual to accompany stories than any other types of actors. Indeed, wedding photos in newspapers are not unusual, but wedding photos of same sex couples appeal to the news value of novelty, personalization, and dramatic events. Marriage equality activists actively try to tap into the emotionally evocative nature of these photos when they stage marriages of brides in wedding dresses at rallies or invite news crews to more serious weddings (Nicol and Smith 2008). Indeed, several social movement organizations in the first days following a victory held receptions and handed out flowers and buttons at city hall to same sex couples. In one case, an organization was media savvy enough to provide “just married” sashes to each couple after their ceremony at city hall, eliminating any ambiguity about the subject of the photo should it make into paper.

As with the coverage of bystanders more broadly, marriage equality activists gain a substantial advantage in the number of photos they appear in by appealing to the broader journalistic values of telling a good story with all its attendant emotional and human interest

angles. Even though much of the bystander coverage occurs after victories, it still carries the message of the movement, largely unopposed. Similarly to the coverage of bystanders more broadly this does important work to shore up support in the face of future challenges or current backlash. Furthermore, while the movement may have achieved its state-centered goals, the gay rights movement also aims to change people's attitudes towards gays and lesbians and same sex marriage (Bernstein 2002, 2003; Taylor et al. 2009). One of the movement's goals is to try to disseminate positive portrayals of families and loving committed relationships to normalize the idea (Nicol and Smith 2008). In this respect, the bystander coverage and photos do important work in service of that goal. Indeed, this illustrates how earlier scholarship focused on photographs of protest events and photographs as merely a measure of quality may be missing important elements of a movement's coverage in non-political articles and in the actual content of the photographs.

## **Conclusion**

Koopmans (2004) argues that while movement actors often face difficulties getting media coverage of their demands, sympathetic politicians with greater access to media coverage can carry their message into media coverage through supportive statements. So, why not other allied actors? If as Koopman (2004) suggests, the media is moving toward more entertainment and human interest stories, then it is in a movement organization's interest to cultivate human interest stories to convey its message, increasing its visibility and growing the movement. Indeed, as we have seen, there are distinct advantages to the amount and quality of coverage that is afforded to these less explicitly political actors. In this way, we can begin to

think of the emphasis on personalization and human interest as an increasingly important news routine that movements can exploit to gain favorable coverage.

We can see media coverage as broadly divided into coverage that takes political events or routine actions as their primary focus (e.g. legislature proceedings, protests, judicial rulings, elections, etc.) and coverage that is primarily focused on non-political actors or human interest aspects of politics (e.g religious positions on the contention, bystanders' reactions, etc. ). In politically focused articles, political elites and social movement organizations make up the vast majority of sources employed by journalists, but religious organizations and bystanders sometimes make an appearance. In this primarily political coverage, social movement organizations are subject to a fairly rigid point counter-point balancing norm, but religious organizations and bystanders appear to be less affected by this norm. Indeed, their status as non-political actors affords journalists greater leeway in using them to add drama or humanize the often abstract policy news that dominates political coverage. Yet one could argue that in this political coverage, political elites and social movement organizations are more likely to be seen as legitimate and credible actors. However, it is exactly their non-political nature that may grant religious organizations and bystanders legitimacy in this arena. Religious leaders and religious organizations can claim a moral authority and lend moral legitimacy to a movement's message, while bystanders can lay claim to a trustworthy ordinariness that invokes populist values of the integrity of the citizenry (Ferree et al. 2002; Smith 1996). These qualities may actually make them more persuasive messengers for the movement in contrast to these other explicitly political actors. Similarly, we can imagine these advantages are only magnified in more explicitly social coverage, where formally nonpolitical actors are more likely to convey the

movement's message without a proximate rejoinder from the opposition. Furthermore, photographs featuring sympathetic human interest subjects appearing alongside this social or political coverage may provide movements with another valuable route to persuasive and potentially unchallenged coverage.

Social movement organizations interested in widening their media coverage would be wise to reach out to religious organizations, especially local congregations, to disseminate their preferred messages. Perhaps more importantly, movement groups should cultivate churches to pass stories along or even pitch to journalists. Similarly, movement organizations should develop sympathetic characters to appeal to journalists' fundamental interest in telling good stories and the fact that journalists are increasingly including more regular people in hard news stories (De Keyser and Raeymaeckers 2012). Additionally, they should stage events to showcase sympathetic characters in order to increase opportunities for photos. Photos of same sex couples getting married sometimes outlasted the initial event, being included in subsequent coverage of the issue as a dramatic visual reminder. Finally, while I do not extensively address the content or quality of these actors' appearances in this analysis in a cursory examination of their coverage it appears that these actors do in fact frequently convey the messages of their respective movements. This makes sense since reporters are more likely to report on mainstream and representative opinions (Bennett 1990). While this tendency has been criticized as limiting the discursive opportunities of more radical movements, for more mainstream movements this works in their favor as non-political and/or non-movement actors weighing in on contention (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Brian Steensland 2008).

It is likely that movement organizations are already engaging in these tactics. This underscores the necessity of examining the broader ecology of actors and visuals in the coverage of movement organizations. As I have shown, movements can escape a rigid balancing norm and gain favorable coverage through less politically focused beats, appealing to journalists' priorities to tell good stories, feature local voices, and include dramatic visuals.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that media coverage of social movement organizations results from a combination of organizational characteristics, tactics, political contexts, and media routines and news values. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of understanding local media contexts as they present distinct opportunities and obstacles to movement organizations seeking coverage. The findings also underscore the importance of studying the broader ecology of movement actors' coverage beyond just social movement organizations, such as religious organizations and bystanders. Below I address the overall findings and implications of each chapter, addressing Chapters 3 and 4 together. Then I cover the broader implications of the study as a whole before moving on to the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

In Chapter 3, I find evidence to suggest several aspects of organizational characteristics, tactics, political contexts and media routines influence not just being included in coverage, but also the quality of coverage that organizations receive. I find resources are important to gaining mentions and quotes, but not demands. The scope of operations of an organization is significant for gaining mentions and more substantive coverage in the form of quotes and demands. In particular, non-local organizations are less likely to gain coverage suggesting that organizational characteristics beyond just resources relate to coverage outcomes. Further, I find mixed evidence to suggest political contexts matter for movement organizations' gaining coverage. Party control of the legislature is not significant, but a movement related bill being considered by the legislature is significant. Further, whether an organization uses assertive tactics to engage or challenge these political institutions is significant. The legislature

addressing the issue is only significant for mentions and quotes, not demands. This suggests that organizations receive some increased attention when the legislature addresses their issue, but they are likely competing with political elites for coverage and as a result are less likely to get the depth of coverage that might otherwise include their demands. However, organizations using assertive tactics to engage with and challenge political elites and institutions are much more likely to receive quality coverage. In contrast, engaging in protest actions was not significant. This suggests that organizations that engage in a contentious manner with political institutions are more likely to receive coverage than those who use extra-institutional tactics, such as protest (as Amenta et al. [2012] also found).

The media variables also had mixed results. There was no evidence to suggest traditional marriage or marriage equality organizations received biased coverage. This is reflected by the fact that their coverage overall falls in line with the strong balancing norm that shapes journalists practices. The percent of editorials supporting same sex unions as a rough measure of ideological orientation of the newspaper only influenced the number of quotes, suggesting that supportive editorial staffs are more likely to grant standing to organizations, but this advantage does not necessarily extend to mentions and demands. Interestingly, despite a number of well covered, newly-formed organizations that emerged during the coverage of referendum battles, an organization first appearing in coverage in the control period was significant for all levels of coverage and especially for demands. Similarly, the percentage of stories written by beat reporters was significant for mentions and demands. Together these variables make a strong case for the importance of repeated interactions between organizations and journalists. This implies several important aspects to organizations,

journalists, and media coverage. First, that organizations must have enough resources to survive and participate in each of these times periods. In turn, this suggests that organizations that are familiar to journalists are more likely to be covered and likely are better resourced. Even if a reporter does not have direct ties to an organization previous coverage implies that it met the news value criteria of another reporter increasing its perceived legitimacy and thus its ongoing coverage.

In sum, I find that organizations that are local, operating when a bill is under consideration, engaged in assertive tactics, have supportive editorial staff and beat reporters, and have appeared in previous coverage are more likely to garner media attention. However, as I find in Chapter 4 the influence of these organizational characteristics, tactics, and political contexts are filtered through local media priorities in ways that shape the quality of coverage organizations receive.

In Chapter 4, I examine in greater depth what coverage outcomes look like for organizations in local newspapers finding that local media tends to disproportionately cover only a small handful of local organizations. Further, I find that the characteristics of organizations, their tactics, political contexts and journalists' news values and routines influence coverage outcomes. Overall, local organizations dominate coverage and the coverage they receive is more likely to include quotes and demands compared to local or state affiliated organizations. This is particularly true in legislative and referendum contests. However, the coverage of local organizations is concentrated among just a handful of organizations which fall into one of two categories: larger, established local organizations or newly formed coalition



organizations. Often, established local organizations found these coalition organizations and are joined by a variety of broadly affiliated local, state affiliate and national organizations.

For a number of reasons, the political context seems to be particularly important when reporters are choosing which organization to focus on in their coverage. First, journalists' preference for homegrown voices is all the more accentuated in legislative and referendum contests because such contests engage the public much more than the less populist judiciary. Second, organizations facing the often resource-intensive costs of contests in legislative and especially referendum venues sometimes form coalitions to pool resources, coordinate activities, and present a strong united front. Often these coalitions become the focus of media attention during the contest. In this study, some articles focused almost exclusively on coalition organizations, while others mentioned them but always in conjunction with their parent organizations suggesting that not all reporters immediately accept newly formed coalition organizations.

During these legislative and referendum contests media attention tends to concentrate around a small handful of organizations. There are three factors that combine to encourage this outcome. First, journalists prefer local actors close to the contests. Second, journalists tend to reduce political contests to a dyadic conflict represented by two equal, but opposite voices. Third, the pressure of operating within legislative and referendum contests incentivizes the formation of issue specific coalitions, which in turn resonates with reporters' seeking balanced, representative voices. One consequence of this is that mainstream local organization's voices are amplified in local coverage. For the most part, mainstream local organizations benefit from this tendency to concentrate coverage onto coalitions, but as a result, smaller more radical

organizations or larger national organizations may find it much more difficult to gain coverage during local political contests. Furthermore, large established organizations have little to lose by joining a coalition since it is likely that they will have to make very few ideological or tactical compromises, unlike more radical groups that might join a coalition. Additionally, if reporters choose not to cover coalition organizations larger local organizations are still likely to be better positioned to receive coverage than other smaller organizations.

However, if there is no easily identifiable mainstream, leading organization this opens coverage to a greater diversity of organizations. I find this in the case of North Carolina where a variety of traditional marriage organizations appeared in coverage of a legislative contest until one organization emerged as the lead and consequently became the focus of coverage. While this situation may benefit smaller organizations and even provide them the opportunity to propel themselves into the role of a leading organization in the eyes of local reporters it may weaken the movement overall and strengthen the position of their opposition. Indeed, in North Carolina, the lack of opposition resulted in the main marriage equality organization gaining an immense amount of coverage compared to any other organization. Similarly, for national organizations the lack of an easily identifiable lead local organization may provide the opportunity for more and better quality coverage as I find in New York's legislative contention. Here the National Organization for Marriage managed to gain a greater foothold in coverage because of the lack of a clear leading local organization.

While generally local newspapers strongly prefer local organizations as sources, national and state affiliated organizations still appear in coverage. For the most part, there are fewer state affiliated organizations and they are least likely to get covered compared to local and

national organizations. In fact, the best covered state affiliated organizations were ones that were engaged in assertive tactics (specifically judicial contests) or those engaged in a contest where the leading local organization took a more radical approach leaving a vacuum for a more centrist view. In contrast, national organizations get a fair amount of regular coverage in local newspapers, but for the most part that coverage is less to include quotes or demands compared to local organizations. Instead national organizations appear in coverage as credible experts, providing authoritative commentary on national level contention, and as supporting players to local organizations during legislative and referendum contests. The best quality coverage national organizations receive is when they are engaged in litigation. In this venue, national organizations are much more likely to get quotes and claims into coverage. In addition to having the necessary resources to participate in the judiciary, national organizations can lay greater claim to having a vested interest since state level rulings often have larger, national impacts. Similarly, national organizations get better quality coverage when commenting on national level contention because their status as national players aligns with the national context and journalists' preferences for proximate actors. In both of these cases the venue's implications for national level contention increases national organizations' legitimacy as sources because they are credible experts closest to the contention.

There are several implications for movement organizations seeking coverage in local newspapers based on the findings of Chapters 3 and 4. Journalists' preference for local voices puts local organizations seeking coverage at an advantage over state affiliated or national organizations, especially in legislative and referendum contests. However, a fairly limited number of local organizations receive consistent coverage. Local organizations seeking this kind

of routine or sustained coverage need to appeal to journalists' news values and routines that guide their evaluation of the legitimacy and influence of organizations. Local organizations should emphasize their direct connections to local contests and their status as spokespersons of local interests. Local organizations engaging with political institutions build credibility and legitimacy as local players and increase their exposure to any beat reporters that may be covering traditional government activities. Additionally, organizations can work to recruit sympathetic elites and can choose to act when elites take up their issues, which increases opportunities for both sides of the contest to be covered. Organizations should also engage in assertive tactics, which directly challenge and engage these political institutions or political elites. Indeed, some smaller local organizations in this study garnered media coverage by engaging in electioneering during local city elections and being contentious at city meetings. Furthermore, organizations can make themselves receptive and accessible to media inquiries in order to develop a reputation as a reliable, quick, and accurate source for quotes and information. They can create resources and have a dedicated media liaison to promote the organization's activities and field questions from reporters. Moreover, since getting media attention increases an organizations perceived legitimacy organizations can try to leverage their prior coverage to get more media attention by targeting the same media outlets or reporters.

Local organizations may benefit from forging ties with and soliciting funds from larger national organizations as reporters' often find these local ties to national level organizations and contention newsworthy, but are more likely to grant the local organizations standing in this type of coverage. Further, organizations can join coalitions for issue specific contests, which may only garner them some coverage if they are not the principal organizing group since media

attention will likely focus on the leading coalition organization. However, in general, choosing to participate in a coalition can be beneficial since an organization may increase its reputation by working with other mainstream organizations while also enabling it to pursue its own policy preferences outside of the view of the media (Rohlinger and Brown 2013).

State affiliated organizations face a tougher challenge in garnering local news coverage as they tend to be not local enough when reporters are looking for local voices and not national enough when reporters are looking for national perspectives. In part, this may be the result of movements having well developed local and national organizations that outcompete state affiliated organizations. Alternatively, it may reflect the dearth of single-issue state affiliated organizations in this particular movement case. Despite this, state affiliates can gain greater quality coverage if they engage in assertive tactics or if there are no clear leading local organizations engaged in the contest leaving a vacuum to be filled by the next proximate leading organization.

While not nearly as covered as local organizations, national organizations do gain some media attention from local newspapers. National organizations are unlikely to get substantial coverage in local contests that are more populist like public referenda or legislative battles. This is especially true when there is an easily identifiable local organization reporters can turn to. Instead, national organizations seeking attention in these contests can leverage their status as national players and credible experts to provide reporters with contextualizing information about how the local contest fits into the broader movement. While much of the coverage national organizations receive from being credible experts gets them into coverage it is rare for that coverage to result in standing or demands being included. The exception is when national

organizations can harness their status as national players and representative of a broader voting bloc during national level contention or national election coverage by local papers. In these cases, they represent a more authoritative, legitimate source because they fulfill journalists' priorities for finding actors close to the action. As a result, when local papers, which normally focus on local issues, do cover national contention and national elections it presents an opportunity for national organizations to gain more substantive coverage in these more local markets. Accordingly, during these times when even local papers are turning to cover national issues national organizations interested in gaining local coverage are likely to find a much more responsive audience if they reach out to local papers by providing information or press releases. This is especially the case if reporters are looking for an equivalent status countermovement organization to balance an article about national level contention.

During local contests, national organizations can focus on building ties with local organizations. Donating money to local organizations may be especially fruitful since media attention tends to focus on financial expenditures during political contests. Although the focus of such stories is often on the local organization receiving the donation, reporters' interest in outside financing of local contests can garner high quality coverage if national organizations directly engage in expensive advertising campaigns and the content of those ads becomes part of the story. In this way, national organizations can indirectly get their demands into local coverage. The most consistent and substantive coverage national organizations receive is when they engage in assertive tactics, especially litigation and electioneering. Local papers are usually already covering local elections, but national organizations throwing their weight around in one of these elections becomes a story in and of itself; a story often providing more substantial

coverage that details why a national organizations would be supporting or opposing a local candidate. State level litigation provides national organizations the opportunity to leverage their status as experts, principal players, and claim a greater investment in the outcome of the contest (as a possible stepping stone to federal action) to gain a foothold against any local actors that may also be involved in the case. In this way, national organizations with the resources and that are seeking local coverage should identify and represent local interests in state level litigation.

In these ways we can see how national organizations are fighting an uphill battle when it comes to trying to get covered by local papers. And again, this is mainly because their scope of operations is incongruent with local media's focus on local voices and local connections. It is only under certain circumstances when their status as national players becomes an asset with regards to providing credible expertise, weighing in on articles focused on national contests, and engaging in political venues with tactics that make them principal actors with a legitimate claim to the outcome affecting them. As a result, national organizations may be able to garner more interest from local reporters if they emphasize their local connections to local contention, while also retaining their status as national level players. Further, the strong balancing norm that pervades media coverage and prioritizes finding equivalent, but opposite voices makes national organizations less likely to get into coverage when there is no national countermovement engaging in local contests. For the most part, the routes to coverage for national organizations outlined above largely hinge on their ability to participate in resource intensive ways, such as through donations, ad campaigns, and litigation. However, smaller

national organizations can still leverage their status as national players and as representative of a national constituency to gain coverage.

In Chapter 5, I move beyond social movement organizations and examine other actors that appear in local newspaper coverage. I find that other allied actors escape the rigid balancing norms that social movement organizations are subject to in their coverage because of their non-political status and journalists' interest in telling compelling human interest stories. Furthermore, I find that photographs that accompany movement coverage is overwhelming of bystanders and also escapes balancing norms. These actors may be gaining very favorable coverage for the movement by conveying the message of the movement unchallenged and in less politically focused articles. Specifically, I find that religious organizations supporting traditional marriage outnumber those that support marriage equality. While it is likely that more religious organizations do support traditional marriage, if these organizations were subject to a rigorous balancing norm marriage equality church organizations would appear just as frequently despite their apparent scarcity, particularly in articles that take religious organizations as their subject. I also find that marriage equality bystanders far outnumber traditional marriage bystanders in coverage. Similarly, I find that marriage equality supporters far outnumber traditional marriage advocates as the subjects of photographs that appear in coverage, the majority of which are of bystanders.

These actors are able to achieve more unchallenged media coverage than their social movement counterparts because of their non-political status. Church leaders stake a claim to coverage upon their status in society as moral arbiters, while bystanders appeal to a sense of the trustworthy ordinariness and integrity of the citizenry. Furthermore, the sympathetic



bystanders that appear in coverage and photographs appeal to journalists' increasing interest in personalization and telling compelling stories. This presents advantages for both sides of the same sex union contention. Traditional marriage activists gain favorable and largely unchallenged media coverage in religious life coverage and gain an extra voice during political coverage as the religious point of view, especially if other allied secular oppositional voices exist in coverage. Meanwhile, marriage equality activists benefit from the fact that traditional marriage supporters do not have as compelling or sympathetic bystanders and therefore are at a disadvantage in garnering favorable coverage in lifestyle or soft news articles.

The degree to which these other allied actors appear in unbalanced coverage serves to underscore how social movement organizations must contend with the balancing bias in their attempts to gain favorable coverage. It further suggests that organizations have a real incentive in cultivating these allied actors and encouraging journalists to cover them. Certainly, religious organizations can and do frequently participate in political contention, but smaller, local religious organizations present another opportunity for movement organizations to harness these church leaders' status as moral arbiters to gain media coverage. Further, if the opposition is already engaging with these types of organizations it is in a movement's interests to reach out to local religious organizations to counter the opposition's presence and to cultivate allies that can be proffered to reporters looking for religious angles on a story. Indeed, one way to try to combat an opposition's advantage in religious coverage would be to emphasize the movement's support among sympathetic religious organizations by actively including them in movement activities, such as rallies, lobby days, steering committees, etc. However, actively including religious organizations into broader movement activities is not without risks. Cultural

and institutional norms of separation of church and state can undermine the media opportunities of movements that are too aligned with religious values or religious frames (Ferree et al. 2002).

The increasing focus on human interest stories and the personalization of news coverage provides another set of opportunities for movement's to get their message covered, possibly unchallenged. This is especially true for movements that have sympathetic actors for journalists' to write compelling human interest stories about. In order to appeal to these news values movement organizations can construct frames and narratives that speak to journalists' priorities in local angles and compelling stories by creating sympathetic characters and even supplying reporters with people to interview. Further, organizations can create opportunities for these sympathetic bystanders to be photographed. Preferably, in situations that can visually communicate the underlying claims, such as a same sex couple being denied a marriage license. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the same sex marriage movement is creating compelling visuals in pursuit of media attention as well as political and cultural goals (Nicol and Smith 2008; Taylor et al. 2009). However, it is possible that movements may not have claims that easily translate into a compelling visual or story that can be written about a bystander. There is also a risk that focusing on individual struggles may make the movement's claims easily dismissible or harder to translate into preferred policy outcomes. Although work on narratives suggest that stories can be a powerful political tool for movements because of this personalization (Polletta 2006; Stewart 2012), journalists may resist activists attempts to provide them with prepared and groomed bystanders preferring to find individuals they perceive as more authentic bystanders themselves (Sobieraj 2011) .

Overall, there is a danger to the movement that religious organizations and bystanders will produce unfavorable coverage by espousing radical or distorted claims. However, this is a risk that movements already deal with from more radical organizations and from their own participants, who they try to coach with talking points (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Sobieraj 2011). Organizations already face the risk of their message being distorted by the media, so it would seem an acceptable risk to the broader movement for religious organizations or bystanders to weigh in. Further, journalists' interest in representativeness of voices lessens the likelihood of very radical movement messages being included in coverage (Bennett 1990). Even if these non-political actors do convey distorted or radical messages organizations can easily dismiss those claims as not representative of the mainstream movement. In this way, reporters' interest in pursuing religious angles and human interest stories exposes movements to no more risk than they might otherwise be exposed to in coverage. However, if these actors do faithfully convey the messages of the movement without being subject to a rigorous balancing norm they provide an important advantage in media coverage for movements. As a result, these actors could be playing a vital role in transmitting the movement's preferred frames and claims, especially considering the movement organizations' interest in gaining media coverage to increase public support and raise awareness of their issue. Moreover, favorable and unchallenged coverage that appears in less politically focused areas of newspaper such as lifestyle or religious life sections may reach readers that might eschew more explicitly political coverage of movement activities, thereby extending the reach of the movement's message. In this way, the presence of movements' issues in these less explicitly political sections of the

newspaper may play an important role as an understudied indicator to help understanding the agenda setting function of media attention for movements.

### **Implications**

This study finds that organizational characteristics, tactics, political contexts, and media values and routines play an important role in understanding how local newspapers cover social movement organizations. This has several implications for understanding how local papers cover movements and the potential influence movements may have via media coverage. First, I find that local media priorities for local voices means that an organization's scope of operation matters for the quality and quantity of coverage it will receive. This has implications for well developed movements that have organizations that operate simultaneously at the state and national level. Second, I find that organizations operating at all levels are more likely to be covered when engaged in assertive tactics. This suggests that national and state affiliated movement organizations may still be able to gain local media coverage through tactical choices. This adds important evidence from local papers to support Amenta et al.'s (2012) finding that movements gain better quality coverage in national papers when employing assertive collective action strategies. Third, I find that political contexts matter for which organizations get covered. Specifically, the more populist political contexts of legislative and referendum contests favor local organizations, but judicial arenas are more open to national organizations. Again, this has implications for any movement that engages in multiple arenas and has local and national organizations operating in state level contests.

Fourth, I find that coverage concentrates around a handful of organizations. Usually these organizations are the largest, more established local organizations in legislative and

public referenda fights or are coalition organizations formed for issue specific contests.

Andrews and Caren (2010) find a similar concentration of organizations in local coverage of the environmental movement. This has implications for movements that have a diverse population of organizations operating within a state suggesting that local media only consistently covers the most mainstream of voices within the movement. Fifth, I find a strong balancing norm in coverage of social movement organizations. This matters for movements with well developed countermovements, since the media coverage of organizations will almost always carry a rejoinder from their opposition. Conversely, this benefits organizations that are allocated space to respond to their opposition's coverage. Further, this has important implications for the most mainstream of movement and countermovement organizations that may be mismatched in their resources such that media attention will produce a degree of parity between them that does not exist in the other facets of their operation. Indeed, Fetner (2008) suggests that the religious right is much larger and richer than the gay rights movement, but in this study both sides of the same sex union recognition contention received roughly equal amounts of coverage because of the balancing norm. In this way, smaller, poorer movements may benefit from balancing bias in the amount of media attention they receive.

Sixth, I find that religious organizations, bystanders and photos accompanying coverage escape the rigorous application of balancing norms. This presents a potentially significant opportunity and advantage for movements to gain favorable media coverage of their issues. In particular, this can benefit movements that engage with moral or religious institutions, can cultivate stories about sympathetic bystanders, and/or target cultural and non-political institutions. Conversely, it puts movements that are unable to easily build ties with religious

institutions or produce sympathetic bystanders at a disadvantage in the broader, less organizational focused media coverage that can accompany contention. This suggests that movements may want to cultivate diverse memberships and community membership at events to encourage beneficial bystander coverage. Furthermore, they could encourage these rank and file members to develop their own personalized narrative for why they are present. In this way, movements may encourage narratives that conform to the broader movement message without outright prescribing talking points, which that have been shown to discourage coverage(Sobieraj 2011).

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. First, during the time period of this study the same sex union recognition movement was a highly mobilized and well developed movement with an equally mobilized and well developed countermovement. Coverage in these local media contexts may look different for movements that are not as extensively developed or do not operate at multiple levels of contention. Indeed, one could imagine coverage might look different for movements that are much more centralized at the national level with few local organizations. Furthermore, movements without a well developed countermovement may not be subject to as rigorous a balancing as the movement organizations in this study though there is some evidence to suggest the balancing norm guides coverage regardless of an opposition's strength (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004). Second, the contention over same sex union recognition inspires an immense amount of coverage including non-political coverage of religious organizations and lifestyle articles. As a result, other movements without as much media interest in their issue may not receive as many opportunities for in-depth coverage, such as

coverage including religious organizations or stories from bystanders. Third, this study looks only at one movement within the United States. The ability of movements to jump from venue to venue and from state to state or state to federal level is a reflection of the multiple access points of the United States' political system. This may diminish the influence of political contexts on coverage in other countries without similar multiple access points. Moreover, other countries do not have the same cultural and institutional norms concerning the separation of church and state, which may influence how religious organizations get covered, or the same professional norms for journalists, which may influence how different actors are cited as sources (Ferree et al. 2002). Fourth, this study only looks at the capital city newspaper in each state without examining the diversity of the broader media environment of newspapers and other media outlets both nationally and within the state. It is possible that coverage of contention that is further from the capital or occurs at much smaller papers looks different than the coverage patterns in this study. However, there are some studies of multiple news sources conducted within one local context that suggest some of the findings in this study such as the influence of political context on coverage, focus on a small handful of organizations, and local media's preference for proximate actors may be present throughout varying levels of local media (Andrews and Caren 2010; Oliver and Maney 2000).

Finally, another major potential limitation of this study is it uses newspaper coverage as a primary source of data during a time when traditional printed newspapers are in decline and rapid shifts in digital communication technologies are producing myriad sources for people to find information and news online. As a result, movements may be dealing with an increasingly mercurial media environment compared to the newspaper media environment in this study.

Furthermore, it is possible local media newspapers will become less important because of the crisis in newspapers. Indeed, newspapers are in a crisis because of declining revenues in part related to the rise of online news outlets which have altered news production practices and values, patterns of consumption, and cut into advertising revenue (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009; Siles and Boczkowski 2012). This decline has resulted in reduced staff, reduced ability to produce original content, and overall reduced resources available, which have implications for the coverage of local politics (Siles and Boczkowski 2012). The decline and consolidation of news markets may result in increasing homogenization of news coverage and increasing reliance on content produced more centrally.

This could have important implications for movements seeking media coverage. For instance, this concentration of coverage could serve to increase attention onto better-known, mainstream organizations or even refocus local coverage onto national organizations. Alternatively, the encroachment of larger national papers into local paper's markets often causes remaining local papers to focus more on local stories to fulfill a niche local news market (George and Waldfogel 2006). In this case, movement organizations that have clear local ties and can emphasize the local connections of contention may gain more coverage. Further, this increasingly locally-focused media environment, where reporters have fewer resources and time to spend verifying sources and information, may increase the dominance of established local movement organizations because of their local reputations and reporters' familiarity with them. Moreover, these conditions increase the likelihood of strong balancing norms governing coverage as an expedient alternative to verification and fact checking for time-strapped reporters (Vinson 2003). The increasing consolidation and encroachment of larger national



papers into local media markets could present movement organizations, especially local ones, with a different set of media priorities. There is evidence to suggest that national papers can vary greatly in their interest in local voices. Vinson (2003) finds that some national papers pursue local angles in their coverage, while others make no special effort to include local angles in their coverage instead actively cultivating an explicitly national identity.

The question then becomes, how do these national newspapers cover local contention when they are increasingly far from the local politics and community? Do they still seek out local organizations or do they rely on national organizations with which they may already have ties? As I pick up below, this in some ways parallels the challenges of emerging online media that is serving a wide audience and may be writing stories about contention far away from their sources. Finally, this study does not address alternative media coverage of these organizations, which may be increasingly important with the decline and consolidation of local media outlets. Furthermore, if the decline of local media does result in a greater emphasis on the reputation of organizations, then alternative media could become an important route for organizations to build their reputation translating that alternative media coverage into mainstream media attention (Rohlinger and Brown 2013).

The rise of online news media may present social movement organizations a different kind of media environment with distinct news values and priorities. Indeed, online media operate under very different production and distribution conditions than traditional newspapers. One principal difference is the lack of a deadline for online media. This has two major implications. First, it means there is a rush to post news as quickly as possible and second, because it is published in a digital environment it can be constantly revised as new

information is received. This puts pressure on organizations seeking media attention to be equally rapid in their responses to media inquiries. As a result, this may provide a major advantage to organizations with the resources to have established media contacts, that produce media-friendly resources, or that can otherwise take advantage of the feedback and interaction features afforded by online media. Further, these new digital communication technologies can increase the ability of movement organizations to produce and gather news to provide to these new media sites (e.g. cell phone video footage of police brutality). There is much greater interactivity between consumers and producers of online media than traditional media sources (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009). The rise of online media has been said to increase the visibility and importance of ordinary people even in hard news items (De Keyser and Raeymaeckers 2012). Some argue that the rise of online communication has produced a class of citizen journalists and bloggers as an alternative media infrastructure, but many of them seldom produce original content; instead they are writing news analysis that relies on traditional news outlets for information (Reese et al. 2007). Further, some scholarship indicates that online media reproduces the traditional model wherein audiences continue to be concentrated around a small number of elite sources (Hindman 2008).

In fact, there is a cohort of professional online journalists emerging among the largest, most visited online news sources (e.g. the Huffington Post, BuzzFeed, and Gawker Media). These journalists have their own professional standards that embrace some traditional journalistic values, but reject others (Agarwal and Barthel 2013). One of the traditional norms that these online journalists are rejecting is the idea of formal objectivity instead positing a norm of fairness likely because of online media news sites greater interest in cultivating a

distinctive identity (Agarwal and Barthel 2013). Considering the strong influence the balancing norm has on the coverage outcomes in this study this has important implications for how online media may present movement organizations with a different set of challenges in gaining favorable or substantial coverage. Further, online media sites are not tied to any locale and as such do not necessarily serve or have established ties to local communities, political elites, and local social movement organizations. Rather, they often write for a general audience which they imagine as national or international (Agarwal and Barthel 2013). This sort of media environment likely favors nationally recognizable social movement organizations. Moreover, it may reduce the importance of being a well known, established local player since these online journalists may have fewer ties to the area. In short, proximity and local embeddedness may decreasingly serve as a primary route to quality coverage for local movement organizations. However, it could increase the importance of being the principal actor involved in contentious activities for all levels of organizations, but especially local organizations. In this new media environment, smaller, newer, and noisier movement organizations may be able to outcompete more established local organizations. Furthermore, these new online media news outlets may become increasingly important to reaching younger members of the news reading public.

### **Future Research**

The findings of this study and its limitations suggest several potentially productive avenues for future research. Foremost, this study suggests future scholarship of local newspaper coverage of movement organizations should attend to the ways in which organization's characteristics, tactics, and the political contexts within which they operate are shaped by local media news values and routines. Oliver and Maney (2000) suggest a similar kind

of triadic relationship between political processes, protest, and the news media, but my findings suggest that relationship should be expanded from just protest to all movement organization activities. Indeed, as Amenta et al. (2012) point out movement organizations receive coverage for a range of activities beyond disruptive collective actions like protest. In particular, they find assertive collective action tactics produce substantive coverage. This study provides supporting evidence for this claim, reiterating the importance of studying the broader coverage of movement activities, especially if they engage in assertive tactics in understanding coverage outcomes. Further, this study underscores the importance for future scholars to distinguish between organizations that are merely mentioned and those that receive more substantial coverage in the form of quotes and demands. In this study, national organizations often appear to gain considerable coverage, but that coverage is for the most part less substantial than the coverage received by other equally present local organizations. Put another way, measuring just the presence of local organizations in local media coverage likely more accurately reflects substantive coverage than similarly mentioned national organizations. Furthermore, this study finds evidence to suggest that local reporters have a distinct preference for local organizations with established reputations, but future studies should move beyond looking at just coverage outcomes and interview local newspaper journalists about these relationships and how local media contexts differ from national media environments.

I find that local media coverage focuses on just a small handful of organizations, but I do not examine the broader population of movement organizations. Future studies would be well served to consider the diversity of organizations that operate in the local coverage area compared to those that appear in coverage and under what circumstances. This has important

implications for understanding how mainstream media gatekeeping amplifies some voices over others. Furthermore, future work on local media outlets should consider the coverage organizations may be gaining in alternative media outlets since these organizations may be leveraging alternative media attention to gain mainstream media coverage (Rohlinger and Brown 2013). Furthermore, this line of inquiry could also be productive to investigate the implications of online media coverage for the reputations of organizations and any subsequent traditional media coverage. Also, it might be fruitful to examine the participation of organizations in various political arenas and compare these populations to the organizations that appear in coverage as a way to better gauge the gatekeeping processes of media outlets against political processes and organizational characteristics and tactics. Are there some organizations that participate in local contests, but receive little to no coverage? To what extent is not appearing in media a strategic choice (Rohlinger 2006) versus an outcome of broader news values, political contexts, and organizational characteristics?

In this study I find that religious organizations, bystanders, and photos that appear in coverage escape the rigorous balancing norm that applies to social movement organizations. This suggests that a movements may be able to convey their message through these allied actors in an incredible favorable coverage without a rejoinder from the opposition. Based on this, I echo the call of previous scholars to evaluate the broader ecology of actors that appear in coverage about movement issues (Andrews and Caren 2010; Koopmans 2004; Steensland 2008). If these actors are doing important work for the movement, then studying the coverage of these non-organizational actors may provide further insights into how media, movements,

political elites, political processes, and publics interact to produce not just coverage outcomes, but broader political opportunities and even cultural shifts.

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