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Love and marriage and local TV news: an analysis of news coverage of same-sex marriage during elections since legalization in Iowa

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University of Iowa

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LOVE AND MARRIAGE AND LOCAL TV NEWS:
AN ANALYSIS OF NEWS COVERAGE OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE
DURING ELECTIONS SINCE LEGALIZATION IN IOWA

by

Shawn Paul Harmsen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in
Mass Communications in the
Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

August 2016

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Frank Durham

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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has been approved by the Examining Committee for the
thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
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This work is dedicated to my Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Questioning friends and family, especially my sister Shelly and her wife Tina, and to their simple dream of living a life free of legal and social discrimination

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acknowledge here. I hope I have lived up to the implied expectations of this faith.

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ABSTRACT

In 2010 and again in 2012, a previously overlooked Iowa Supreme Court judicial retention vote, which appears periodically on the back of Iowa's November ballot, became a top political story. The catalyst for this elevated attention was the 2009 unanimous decision by the court in *Varnum v. Brien* that made Iowa only the third state in the nation to legalize same-sex marriage. Conservatives upset over the decision launched a campaign to convince voters to do something they had never done before: vote to remove a sitting Iowa Supreme Court Justice. The effort succeeded in 2010, but failed in 2012.

This dissertation looks at how local television news coverage framed the anti-retention efforts, how those frames came to be included in the news coverage, and what the news framing suggested about the way social and political power were expressed in this case. This research examined two different kinds of data: television news packages and interviews. The relevant news packages came from three Iowa television stations: one in the western part of the state, one in central Iowa, and one in the eastern part of the state. These stations represented a range of Iowa television market sizes and political demographics.

This research took a critical-constructionist framing approach to analyzing the data. This meant considering the way factors such as newsroom culture, professional values, and the influence of outside frame sponsors played a role in how the news was framed. It also meant considering how the power of the hegemonic heteronormative matrix was expressed in each stage of the construction of news stories, as well as expressed through the resulting news framing. The critical-constructionist analyses drew upon theoretical perspectives from the sociology of news, political science, and critical theory literatures.

I categorized the dominant news framing in the television news coverage as falling under the definition of morality politics, which overshadowed the subordinate civil rights news framing. Morality politics is a concept from political science that refers to an approach to a political campaign which casts an issue in terms of morals or values, often as defined from a religious perspective. This dominant framing tended to be advantageous for the conservative campaign.

I argue that the morality politics frame became dominant in the coverage in large part because of the way journalists defined and put into practice the news value of “balance,” rather than because journalists set out to tell stories which favored one side or the other. In the Iowa case, conservatives tapping into outrage over the legalization of same-sex marriage said they were not targeting the LGBTQ community but were concerned over issues of “judicial activism” and good government. When journalists attempted to balance these comments with elite legal and political sources who confined their responses to issue of law and government, reporters failed to challenge the way morality politics defined what was and was not the proper way to think about the anti-retention campaign. Ironically, what seemed like a professionally acceptable approach to provide “objective” coverage ultimately made that coverage less neutral and less balanced.

I found that conservatives were able to exercise hegemonic power in their ability to turn the low-profile retention race into a high-profile political issue, get their frames into the resulting news coverage, and in so doing attempt to reproduce the heteronormative cultural matrix. That matrix also played a role, along with reporting rituals and professional norms, in blinding journalists to the implications of the news framing they were producing.

I conclude that no matter how reporters frame this story it could never have been neutral because as frames define an issue they unavoidably make some aspects more or less

salient to the issue. This suggests that the mistake reporters made was believing they had achieved actual balance or neutrality. As a remedy, I recommend a better journalistic option would be to recognize frames are unavoidable and can define an issue in ways which are not always readily obvious. I suggest this may actually liberate journalists covering similar issues to seek out a greater variety of voices and frames which might have been avoided because of fears those frames might violate journalistic norms of neutrality, objectivity, or balance.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

This research looks at how local television news framed the efforts in Iowa in 2010 and 2012 to unseat Iowa Supreme Court Justices whose 2009 ruling in the case *Varnum v. Brien* made Iowa the third state in the nation to legalize same-sex marriage. By looking at relevant news packages and interviewing journalists, news directors, and spokespersons, I traced the way the traditionally ignored judicial retention votes became a top political story, and how particular frames entered the news. I found that despite a well-meaning intention to cover the story in a professionally acceptable fashion, traditional news values and reporting rituals blinded journalists to how their attempts to provide “balance” ultimately accomplished the opposite.

Evidence studied here suggested that morality politics was the dominant frame throughout most of the coverage, with the civil rights aspects of the issue mostly relegated to the day after each election rather than in the weeks prior. Political science literature defines morality politics as a campaign strategy that relies upon arguments based on “morality,” “values,” or even “sin” to motivate supporters. In the Iowa case, this concept gets modified because while the conservative campaign engaged the logics of morality politics, they also felt the need to couch their campaign in issues like “judicial activism.” I conclude the ability to get news coverage of the anti-retention campaign and to get this modified morality politics framing as dominant in that coverage reveals an exercise of political and social power in defense of the hegemonic heteronormative cultural matrix.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: AN INTRODUCTION TO ISSUES OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE, RETENTION OF STATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICES, AND TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE IN IOWA	1
The Background of Same-Sex Marriage in Iowa	2
Legal, Political, and Social Change in Iowa and the United States	6
Focusing on Same-Sex Marriage	9
Organizing This Inquiry	11
CHAPTER TWO: A CRITICAL-CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH TO NEWS FRAMING	14
Morality Politics	15
Defining News Framing	20
Understanding the Product and the Process: Constructionist News Framing and Sociology of News	22
The Constructionist Tradition	23
Sociology of News	26
Framing from a Public Relations Perspective	33
Understanding the Production of Power: Critical Framing Theory	35
Critical Framing	36

Hegemony and the Hegemonic	38
Articulation.....	41
The Effect of Hegemonic Processes on the LGBTQ Social Movement	43
Research Questions	47
CHAPTER THREE: ARCHIVES, INTERVIEWS, AND METHODS OF DATA	
GATHERING AND ANALYSIS	52
Why Iowa and Why Television News?.....	52
Why Local Television News?	54
Multi-Stage Data Collection.....	57
Gathering the Story Data: Recruiting Stations, Accessing Archives, and Generating Field Notes and Transcripts.....	57
Qualitative Framing and Textual Analysis.....	64
Gathering Interview Data: Recruiting Subjects, Conducting Interviews.....	67
Analyzing the Interviews	70
Qualitative Reflexivity and Validity	71
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS PART ONE: NEWS FRAMING IN LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS PACKAGES	
Identifying and Constructing the Most Common Frames	76
Morality Politics...with a Twist.....	79
Judicial Activism, Traditional Marriage, Slippery Slope, Will of the People	81
Defending Against Morality Politics.....	90

Judges Were Correct, Protect the Courts, Same-Sex Marriages Bring Joy, and Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right	91
Which Voices and to What Effect? Interview Subjects and Frame Dominance.....	97
Most Frequent Soundbite Subjects.....	98
Dominant and Subordinate Frames	100
Changes over Time and by Location.....	102
The Meaning of News Framing in 2010 and 2012.....	106
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS PART TWO: INTERVIEWS	110
Decisions and Values in Reporting	112
Reporters and Balance.....	117
News Directors and Balance	121
Getting into and Shaping the News.....	125
Public Relations and Balance	127
Hegemony and Power in News Framing.....	133
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION	138
Framing and Morality Politics.....	140
Implications for Sociology of News.....	143
Journalists Covering Morality Politics Issues	144
Using the Iowa Case as a Hypothetical Example.....	147
Theoretical, Methodological, and Pedagogical Implications for Studying Local	

Television News	152
Pushing Forward Framing, Visual Framing, and Sociology of News	152
Methodological Implications.....	154
Pedagogical Implications	156
Limitations and Areas of Future Study	159
Future Research.....	161
REFERENCES.....	164
APPENDIX A – ORIGINAL STATION INVITATIONS	181
APPENDIX B- FIELD NOTES/TRANSCRIPT EXAMPLE 1	182
APPENDIX C - FIELD NOTES/TRANSCRIPT EXAMPLE 2	189
APPENDIX D – EXAMPLE OF STATION LETTER OF AGREEMENT	194
APPENDIX E – INVITATION LETTER TO REPORTERS	195
APPENDIX F – QUESTIONS FOR REPORTERS	196
APPENDIX G – QUESTIONS FOR ISSUE ADVOCATES	197
APPENDIX H – QUESTIONS FOR NEWS DIRECTORS.....	199
APPENDIX I – DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF NEWS PACKAGES FROM CENTRAL IOWA (DES MOINES) MARKET 2010 AND 2012.....	200
APPENDIX J – DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF NEWS PACKAGES, EASTERN IOWA MARKET 2010 & 2012.....	203
APPENDIX K – DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF NEWS PACKAGES, WESTERN IOWA MARKET 2010 & 2012.....	204

APPENDIX L – EXAMPLE 4.1 FROM FIELD NOTES ON STORY 1	205
APPENDIX M - IMAGES OF 2010 AND 2012 ANTI-RETENTION BUSES	206
APPENDIX N – EXAMPLE 4.2 FROM FIELD NOTES ON STORY 15	207
APPENDIX O – SCREEN CAPTURES OF NOM AD	208
APPENDIX P – EXAMPLE 4.3 FROM FIELD NOTES ON STORY 4.....	209
APPENDIX Q – EXAMPLE 4.4 FROM FIELD NOTES OF STORY 4.....	210
APPENDIX R – EXAMPLE 4.5 FROM FIELD NOTES OF STORY 22.....	211
APPENDIX S – EXAMPLE 4.6 FROM FIELD NOTES FOR STORY 26.....	212
APPENDIX T – EXAMPLE 4.7 FROM FIELD NOTES OF STORY 24.....	213
APPENDIX U – EXAMPLE 4.8 FROM FIELD NOTES FOR STORY 20.....	214
APPENDIX V – LIST OF INTERVIEWS	215
APPENDIX W – GLOSSARY OF TELEVISION SCRIPT ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY.....	216

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	News Packages by Year and Station	60
Table 4.1.	Most Common Morality Politics/Anti-Retention Frames	77
Table 4.2.	Most Common Pro-Retention / Pro-Same-Sex Marriage Frames	79
Table 4.3	Top Interview Sources by Number of Stories in Which They Appear	99

CHAPTER ONE: AN INTRODUCTION TO ISSUES OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE,
RETENTION OF STATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICES, AND TELEVISION NEWS
COVERAGE IN IOWA

Iowa Code section 595.2 is unconstitutional because the County has been unable to identify a constitutionally adequate justification for excluding plaintiffs from the institution of civil marriage. A new distinction based on sexual orientation would be equally suspect and difficult to square with the fundamental principles of equal protection embodied in our constitution. This record, our independent research, and the appropriate equal protection analysis do not suggest the existence of a justification for such a legislative classification that substantially furthers any governmental objective. Consequently, **the language in Iowa Code section 595.2 limiting civil marriage to a man and a woman must be stricken from the statute, and the remaining statutory language must be interpreted and applied in a manner allowing gay and lesbian people full access to the institution of civil marriage.**

Iowa Supreme Court Justice Mark Cady, *Varnum v. Brien* decision (2009).
(Bold added for emphasis)

With the above paragraph, the Iowa Supreme Court on April 3, 2009 made Iowa the third state in the country to legalize same-sex marriage. These few sentences located near the end of the 70-page decision put Iowa at the forefront of a larger national debate on whether or not the marriage rights of opposite-sex couples should be extended to gay and lesbian couples who wanted their relationships to have the same legal and social recognition. The court case in Iowa ended with this Iowa Supreme Court ruling and a big win for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Questioning (LGBTQ) community. But even as the court case ended, a new fight spurred by the case was just over the horizon.

This decision placed the members of the court, who agreed unanimously with this ruling, squarely in the crosshairs of local and national conservatives. Those conservatives decried the ruling because they said it flew in the face of their religious values and tradition. They then made their own history by launching an unprecedented and ultimately

successful campaign that ousted three of the justices up for a retention vote the following year.

This dissertation is interested in the news coverage of that backlash. I ask how and why local television news journalists in Iowa framed this collision of same-sex marriage and judicial retention the way they did in 2010, and again in 2012.

The critical-constructionist framing analysis herein triangulated its results with two different kinds of data. The first kind was television news packages relating to same-sex marriage in the three months leading up to each election. The second kind was interviews with journalists who created some of those news packages, news directors, and official spokespersons who appeared with regularity in those news stories. The resulting analysis examined the way news framing in this case expressed social and political power and traced some roots of that power expression back through the process of news story creation.

The Background of Same-Sex Marriage in Iowa

The original lawsuit was filed by six same-sex couples who had been denied marriage licenses by Polk County officials who said they were following an Iowa law passed in 1998 that defined marriage as only between one man and one woman.¹ The group, with Tricia Varnum as the lead plaintiff, filed a suit and demanded their rights to marriage under the Iowa Constitution's Equal Protection clause. In 2007, District Court Judge Robert Hanson agreed the Iowa marriage law was unconstitutional and ordered the law be struck down. His ruling was immediately appealed and he issued a stay on his order

¹ Polk County includes state capital Des Moines.

until the case could be considered by Iowa's highest court.

When Justice Mark Cady in April of 2009 wrote the unanimous opinion for the court in the case, known as *Varnum v. Brien*² or sometimes just *Varnum*, he noted that this decision was going to become part of the larger national debate on same-sex marriage. History showed he was not wrong.

The head of an Iowa LGBTQ organization, who was working in Washington D.C. at the time of the *Varnum* ruling, remembers the shockwave it sent out across the country. This was despite the fact Iowa was the third state to legalize same-sex marriage. The advocate explained that Massachusetts and Connecticut, the first two states to legalize same-sex marriage, have reputations of being politically and socially liberal states, and so Iowa's legalization meant something different:

What blew people away was the Iowa ruling...I think what it did for LGBT people around the country is they heard about it...and if Iowa could do it, maybe Missouri could. Maybe Alabama could someday. Maybe Washington State (Interview 8, LGBTQ Advocate³).

The ruling also had meaning for Iowa journalists. While the Iowa Supreme Court ruling marked the last step in the legal process for same-sex marriage in Iowa, the stories about same-sex marriage were far from over. One news director interviewed for this research explains that the *Varnum* ruling helped legitimize coverage of same-sex marriage:

At that point it really became a major story. Before the case, it was an issue but it

² Brien is the named defendant of the case, who is listed on the case documents as: Timothy J. Brien, In His Official Capacities as Polk County Recorder and Polk County Registrar.

³ See Appendix U for numbered list of interviews.

was not a mainstream issue. And after the ruling, Iowa was one of the first in the nation to have legalized same-sex marriage. So it put us in a really unique spot. So almost any same-sex marriage issue story or related story became a lead-worthy type of story (Interview 11, News Director).

After the *Varnum* ruling went into effect, TV stations covered same-sex wedding ceremonies, and there was another spike in same-sex marriage related news packages on the year anniversary of the April ruling. One news director explained when the same-sex marriage issue collided in August of 2010 with judicial retention it was a must-cover story:

It think that was the hottest topic in 2010. I don't think anyone could have predicted that, back in 1962 when the retention policy was adopted, that three justices would be removed from office. I don't think anyone had an idea that that sort of impact would come. I certainly did not...It was, you know, it was a big moment and we knew it was a big moment in Iowa's politics (Interview 10, News Director).

This big moment in Iowa politics started in August of 2010 when the newly legal status of same-sex marriage became a lightning rod for conservative activism in Iowa (Frost-Keller & Tolbert, 2011). The justices themselves became political targets, with a historically unexciting judicial retention vote that turned into a "cause celebre" for anti-gay marriage activists from Iowa such as Bob Vander Plaats and Congressman Steve King (R-IA). The Iowans were joined in the effort by national groups such as the National Organization of Marriage (NOM), The Family Leader, and Newt Gingrich's Crossroads 360 SuperPAC (Boshart, 2010; Curriden, 2011; Mills & Maharry, 2013). While same-sex marriage and LGBTQ equality in general were not exactly new to the political arena, the

amount of targeted political discourse and campaign spending tied to the topic during the August to November political season in 2010 was a first in Iowa history (Schulte, 2010).

In the November 2010 midterm elections, three of the seven Iowa Supreme Court justices were up for retention.⁴ They were Chief Justice Marsha K. Ternus and Justices David L. Baker and Michael J. Streit. Prior to this election, no sitting Iowa Justice had failed to get voter approval. Typically they won easily with around two-thirds of votes in favor of retention (Iowa Judicial Branch, 2010; 2011). But in 2010, all *three* lost their seats on Iowa's highest judicial bench, with nearly two-thirds of voters rejecting them. Political science scholars Frost-Keller and Tolbert (2011) argued that this was not just about the justices; this was an example of morality politics at work.

Discussed in greater detail in chapter two, morality politics refers to the defining of an issue, such as same-sex marriage or abortion, as an issue of morality rather than, for example, civil rights or access to safe health services (Donovan, Tolbert, Smith, & Parry 2005; Moscovitz, 2010; Weber & Thornton, 2012). Because of the way political actors engaged morality politics, the 2010 Iowa retention battle also provided a testing ground for conservative post-legalization political strategies.

In 2012 Justice David Wiggins, another of the *Varnum* judges, was up for retention. Once again a campaign was launched by conservative religious groups to unseat the justice, once again a bus tour took the "vote no on retention" message across Iowa, and once again the targeted justice refused to campaign on his own behalf because of concerns

⁴ In Iowa, Supreme Court justices are nominated by a non-partisan committee of attorneys, who use a merit-based system, and are appointed to the bench by the sitting governor. When the law was passed in the 1960s the stated intention was to remove, as much as possible, political influence from Iowa's judicial system. However, they are periodically up for a retention vote on a statewide ballot. This vote occurs every eight years on a staggered basis. (Iowa Judicial Branch, 2010; 2011).

it would be unethical for a justice to do so. However, in 2012, the anti-retention campaign failed, and Justice Wiggins remained on the bench.

In both years the decision not to campaign had significant implications for journalists because it complicated the standard approach to political coverage. There was a supporting campaign launched on the justices' behalf by a coalition of pro-court and pro-LGBTQ rights groups. These groups, such as Iowans for Fair and Impartial Courts and One Iowa had to play catch-up in 2010, but were better prepared two years later. Perhaps in part because of this pro-retention effort, and perhaps in part because of shifting attitudes, in 2012 the campaign to oust an Iowa Supreme Court justice failed. In 2014 there were no Iowa justices up for retention.⁵

Legal, Political, and Social Change in Iowa and the United States

With the rapidly changing social and political situation for LGBTQ equality over the past 20 years, an overview of some of these changes helps us understand why Iowa's 2010 elections became such a political flashpoint, such a big news story, and an important moment worthy of scholarly study.

In 1997, Hawaii became the first state to offer same-sex couples domestic partnership benefits. Alaska became the first state to change its state constitution to ban same-sex marriage a year later. In 2003, Massachusetts courts made same-sex marriage legal. In a backlash to the Massachusetts decision, over the next couple of years about half the states in the country changed their constitutions to block same-sex marriages (Pew, 2015c). In 2008, the Connecticut Supreme Court made that state the second in the nation

⁵ In the 2016 election Justice Mark Cady, who wrote the *Varnum* decision, as well as fellow *Varnum* justices Daryl Hecht and Brent Appel will be up for retention. They will be the last of the seven justices who unanimously agreed to the ruling legalizing same-sex marriage to face the retention vote.

to allow same-sex marriage, and the following year the Iowa Supreme Court made a similar ruling and Iowa became the third same-sex marriage state (Pew, 2015c). As the dominoes started to fall, slowly at first, and then faster, the legalization of same-sex marriage typically came in one of three ways: a court ruling, a referendum vote, or action by a state legislature (see Figure 1.1 below). This culminated a 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling making same-sex marriage legal across the nation. Figure 1.1 traces the spread of same-sex marriage legalization across all 50 states starting in 2003.

Now that same-sex marriage legalization is nationwide, it would be easy to forget how this progression was anything but certain or smooth in the years leading up the US Supreme Court's 2015 ruling. When some LGBTQ advocates started speaking out for out for marriage equality in the late 1980s and early 1990s, conservative policy makers reacted, and by the mid-1990s same-sex marriage was a national political issue. In 1995, Utah became the first state to enact a state DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act) law, a group of statutes to prevent same-sex couples from being married (Pew, 2015c).

In 1996, Democratic President Bill Clinton signed the federal Defense of Marriage Act (only 81 of 535 members of congress voted against it), that upheld the right of individual states to ban same-sex marriage and prohibited the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriage (Clinton, 2013; Pew, 2015c).⁶ Even when some states, including Iowa, started legalizing same-sex marriage other states continued fighting against it, ultimately leading to the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court case.

⁶ Nearly 20 years later Clinton would call for the law to be abolished by the US Supreme Court, saying he now believed the law to be inherently discriminatory and unconstitutional and that signing it was a mistake. (Clinton, 2013).

YEAR	STATE	COURTS, LEGISLATURE, OR BALLOT MEASURE?
2003	1. Massachusetts	■ State Supreme Court
2008	2. Connecticut	■ State Supreme Court
2009	3. Iowa 4. New Hampshire 5. Vermont District of Columbia	■ State Supreme Court ■ Legislature ■ Legislature ■ Legislative Process
2011	6. New York	■ Legislature
2012	7. Maine 8. Maryland 9. Washington	■ Voters ■ Voters ■ Voters
2013	10. California 11. Delaware 12. Hawaii 13. Illinois 14. Minnesota 15. Rhode Island 16. New Jersey 17. New Mexico	■ US Supreme Court ■ Legislature ■ Legislature ■ Legislature ■ Legislature ■ Legislature ■ State Courts ■ State Courts
2014	18. Indiana 19. Oklahoma 20. Utah 21. Virginia 22. Wisconsin 23. Oregon 24. Pennsylvania 25. Colorado 26. Nevada 27. Alaska 28. Idaho 29. West Virginia 30. North Carolina 31. Arizona 32. Wyoming 33. Kansas 34. South Carolina 35. Montana	■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts ■ Federal Courts
January-May 2015	36. Florida 37. Alabama (lingering legal challenges)	■ Federal Courts
June 2015	38-50. The rest of the country	■ US Supreme Court

FIGURE 1.1. Same-Sex Marriage Legalization Timeline. Source: Pew Research.

In addition to the political and legal changes in the years surrounding the 2010 and 2012 elections, the public started to change how it felt about same-sex marriage. In 2009, when Iowa became the third state in the nation to allow same-sex marriage, only about a third of Americans supported allowing same sex couples to wed. By May of 2015, that number had risen to fifty-seven percent (Pew Research, 2015d).

Public opinion in Iowa seemed to mirror the national trends. In 2009, a poll by the *Des Moines Register* showed Iowans split between whether they would support a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, with about 41 percent saying they would vote yes on such a measure and 40 percent saying they would vote “no,” with the remainder unsure (Clayworth & Beaumont, 2009). Less than three years later, only 38 percent of Iowans polled would have been in favor of a state constitutional ban on same-sex marriage; 56 percent said they would vote against a same-sex marriage ban, and only 6 percent weren’t sure (Petroski, 2012).

Focusing on Same-Sex Marriage

The cultural, social, and legal position of LGBTQ individuals, while still not on par with those of heterosexuals, has nonetheless undergone a transformation in the last 30 years. In the mid 1980s, it would have been difficult to believe that in the next three decades openly gay men and women would be able to serve in the military, that the coming out of prominent actors would largely be met with a shrug, and that popular television programs like *Glee* would feature main characters who are openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transsexual and portray them in long-term and three dimensional romantic relationships.

If a person from the 1980s could have envisioned Olympic hero Bruce Jenner making the very public transition into Caitlyn, he or she most certainly would NOT have

guessed at the strong support for Jenner that included praise from a sitting US President (Rosen, 2015). And of course, few would have believed that same-sex marriage would become legal across the country.

None of which is to suggest that the fight for LGBTQ rights has accomplished its goals, that there isn't still widespread homophobia, or that one aspect of this dynamic struggle should be privileged about the others. One cannot say, for example, that the debate over hate crime legislation in the wake of the death of Matthew Shepard or the ongoing efforts to pass ENDA (The Employment Non-Discrimination Act) are somehow more or less worthy of investigation.

Likewise, I do not presume by focusing on coverage of same-sex marriage local television election coverage to say same-sex marriage was the most important issue before LGBTQ activists. It was, however, one key part of the ongoing struggle for LGBTQ equality. Advocates and opponents of same-sex marriage drew upon the same history, same legal situations, and same cultural understandings as did advocates and opponents of other facets of LGBTQ equality. In many cases, the individuals and organizations advocating or opposing same-sex marriage were the same as those disagreeing over things like ENDA, hate crime legislation, and even the proper 'place' for LGBTQ persons and causes in society.

Not only did LGBT advocates and opponents often draw from the same historical and cultural well when crafting their messages, but so did journalists. A central premise of this study is that journalists and their coverage were simultaneously products of the larger culture in which journalists lived, and were shapers and influencers of that culture (Berkowitz, 2010). Berkowitz (1997) defined news as "a human construction that gains

characteristics through the social world from which it emerges” (p. xii). As I considered the news framing in the stories about same-sex marriage and judicial retention, I asked how that connection between journalists and the social world was revealed in the way those stories were created.

Organizing This Inquiry

This research zeroes in on the collision between same-sex marriage and Iowa’s judicial retention in 2010 and 2012. I drew upon framing, sociology of news, and critical theory to examine the local television news coverage of this collision in the weeks leading up to the November election in each year.

Broadly speaking, I was interested in the factors that contributed to the news framing of this issue and what that framing revealed about the exercise of political and social power. Of interest was how the news was framed, how the values and practices of newsgathering influenced that framing, and how advocates on both sides of a debate worked to influence the journalists who were writing the news. Finally, by comparing and contrasting finished news products with descriptions of what happened behind the scenes, I traced part of how social and political power came to be expressed and challenged through news framing.

To accomplish these goals, I viewed local television news packages that fit the criteria of the study, and interviewed reporters who wrote those stories. I also interviewed the news directors at the three Iowa television stations that granted me access to their archives, as well as an advocate and an opponent of same-sex marriage who were featured in several of the news packages I studied.

Chapter two explains the theoretical foundations for this study. It offers a review of scholarly literature in four main areas: constructionist framing theory, sociology of news, critical framing theory, and critical feminist theory. In this research, the constructionist approach to framing and its interest in how frames enter the news is augmented by sociology of news literature that speaks to the practices and values implied by the news content and expounded upon in reporter interviews. The critical framing material is augmented by literature from critical feminist theory that presents examples from the women's movement, and other parts of the LGBTQ equal rights movement, to help recognize the hegemonic in the Iowa case studied here. Also in chapter two is a brief review of two other theoretical perspectives. The material from the study of public relations helped to qualify the analysis of interviews with professional spokespersons. The literature on morality politics from the political science field offers a theoretical perspective and deeper understanding of a dominant frame found in the news packages.

Chapter three describes the qualitative interpretive methods used to gather and analyze two different data sets: television news texts and interviews. Chapters four and five are both analysis chapters, one focusing on each of the different types of data. Chapter four discusses the findings of the framing analysis of the television news packages that included the same-sex marriage topic in the three months leading up to the 2010 and 2012 November elections. Interviews with reporters, news directors, and advocates are analyzed in chapter five.

Chapter six further explores the implications of the findings from chapters four and five. It examines in more depth the way news workers and professional news sources engaged cultural norms and professional values in ways that influenced the final news

product. It then suggests from these findings ways in which news workers might navigate difficult stories in which a strict adherence to the appearance of reportorial objectivity can become an obstacle to accuracy and truth-seeking. Chapter five also discusses the place of this research in the larger journalism and mass communication scholarship, as well as a cross-over contribution to political science.

CHAPTER TWO: A CRITICAL-CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH TO NEWS FRAMING

How did Iowa local television news reporters report on newly legalized same-sex marriage when it became an election issue? How did those stories define the political issues and suggest which parts of the debate were most important to consider? What role did process and professional values play in influencing how those stories were told? What does the way news is gathered and told tell us about how dominant and subordinate groups struggle over social and political power? What does this mean for society and social movements such as the one striving for LGBTQ equality? This dissertation seeks to answer questions about how news is constructed and what that construction means through a critical-constructionist approach to framing theory that draws upon sociology of news and critical theory.

This chapter explains the theoretical foundation that guides this research. Framing as a theoretical construct gives a way to discuss the observations and analysis of news products and news process, as well as to explore the exercise of power underlying both. This approach engages at least two traditions within the field of framing: the constructionist and the critical (D'Angelo, 2002). D'Angelo and Kuypers (2010) argue in favor of such theoretical integration in a framing study, calling it "an ineluctable part of news framing analysis" (p. 5). D'Angelo (2012) suggests an integration of different approaches to framing research, appreciating what each distinct concept brings to the task, while also exploring ways they fit together in a larger discussion of frames and framing. Or as Matthes (2012) suggests, integrative framing research works toward drawing "a complete picture of the whole framing process" (p. 248).

In addition to constructionist and critical traditions in news framing, this study of Iowa television journalists draws upon the sociology of news literature to help understand the process of story creation and analyze the interviews with reporters and news managers. Critical theory informs the framing analyses of local television news packages and the interviews with news workers and frame sponsors. By showing how other theoreticians and researchers have defined and described hegemonic forms of power, especially as it pertains to the LGBTQ community, these concepts can then be applied to the news coverage of same-sex marriage in Iowa during the 2010 and 2012 election seasons.

These three theoretical traditions, framing, sociology of news, and critical theory, can work together to look at what might be called the ‘Three P’s’: the product, the process, and the power revealed by them. This dissertation also uses, to a lesser degree, theories on social movements and morality politics from the field of political science to help contextualize the ongoing fight over LGBTQ rights in general, and Iowa’s political fall-out following the legalization of same-sex marriage in particular. Morality politics will be discussed in more detail below.

These theoretical approaches allow key questions to be asked. Pointedly, what was the role of media in this fight over same-sex marriage and Supreme Court justices in Iowa? How did the media take part in that meaning-making process? And what can understanding the media’s role in that process suggest about the norms and values that make up news culture?

Morality Politics

Before discussing the way this research will use framing theory, I examine a theory from the political science discipline to assist with understanding the framing used in the

Iowa case. As such, it is important tool for the framing analyses in chapters four and five.

Morality politics is defined in political science literature as an issue that, in contrast with something like tax policy, is primarily framed as an issue of “values,” “morals,” or “sin.” Anti-abortion campaigns (Luker, 1984), anti-sodomy laws (Cain, 1993), drug and alcohol policies, prostitution policy (Wagenaar & Sietske, 2012), gambling (Nelson, 2013) the fight over birth control (Haider-Markel & Meier, 1996), and of course marriage equality (Lax & Phillips, 2009) are all examples of what political science researchers consider morality issues.

Such issues can generate emotional reaction without requiring a voter to gain and process large amounts of new information. After all, “Everyone is an expert on morality,” according to Haider-Markel and Meier (1996, p. 333). This is in contrast to other kinds of public policy debates such as trade policy or health insurance regulation, that require a greater level of technical knowledge before a person can legitimize any claim of being well informed on the given issue (Nelson, 2013).

Wagenaar and Sietske (2012) suggest recognizing that an issue is being engaged on the level of morality politics by understanding that it fits to a significant degree most of six conditions that they summarize here:

Our argument is that if policies are driven by explicit ideology, almost exclusively owned by the general public, impervious to facts, discussed in emotionally highly charged language, concerned more with the symbolism of heroic measures than the details of implementation, and prone to sudden policy reversals, we can characterize them as morality politics (p. 286).

In the coverage of same-sex marriage and judicial retention in 2010 and 2012 in Iowa, the framing of the arguments by anti-retention groups and the trajectory of the issue

fit this conceptualization of morality politics. The campaign featured an ideology driven, religiously-connected narrative that enflamed a public backlash to same-sex marriage. By engaging the issue within a morality politics frame which tends to level the playing field between facts and opinions, conservative groups effectively side-stepped opposing arguments based on legal expertise. Because the outcome of the retention vote could not have changed the legal status of same-sex marriage in Iowa, I argue this anti-retention effort was always fundamentally symbolic, which also suggests this case can be understood within a morality politics frame.

Wagenaar and Sietske (2012) suggest the way morality politics and its ideological foundations frame the political discourse sets boundaries on what is acceptable or unacceptable in the debate of an issue. They argue this tactic attempts to “naturalize a particular moral and cognitive order” with the goal “to become hegemonic in that it effectively crowds out other ideas and positions to the point they appear dubious, wrong, or even utterly unintelligible” (p. 283). As will become apparent during the review of literature in the following subsections, this description of how morality politics works bears similarities to the way news framing is understood to work.

In addition to complementing framing theory, morality politics provides a theoretical understanding for the broader political impact of the retention vote, especially in 2010. Morality politics helps explain other observable expressions of political power that were felt in other 2010 election contests in Iowa. Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith (2008) looked at 20 states that had statewide ballot issues in 2004 — the year of the presidential contest between George W. Bush and John Kerry – in which marriage was defined as between one man and one woman. They found that in those 20 states, the same-sex marriage ballot issue increased the importance of this issue in the minds of voters, and

primed voters to consider more strongly a candidate's position on same-sex marriage when making a decision. They also found a lopsided motivational effect, with social conservative voters, typically Republican, feeling a greater degree of voting motivation from their opposition to same-sex marriage than socially progressive voters felt from their support of it.

The implication of the Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith (2008) study was that ballot issues that tapped into morality politics provided a tool for political elites to motivate a voting base on one ballot issue that also paid political dividends on the rest of the ballot. Thus it was possible to use one ballot issue to influence the outcomes of other races. The 2008 study also implied that morality politics is a tool that fit the needs of political and social conservatives better than it does for progressives.

Frost-Keller and Tolbert (2011) extended this concept to their study of the 2010 Iowa gubernatorial race, which shared a ballot with the Iowa Supreme Court retention vote. Using poll data surrounding those elections, they found evidence that "Iowa voters were informed of the importance of the judicial retention elections and had tied the vote to the issue of same-sex marriage" (p. 264). They explain voter polls showed the judicial elections had become a referendum on the *Varnum* decision, which in turn boosted turn-out of conservative voter in an election year without a presidential contest at the top of the ticket. They wrote:

Ballot measure campaigns can indiscriminately prime individual voting decisions up and down the ballot because voters use partisan stereotypes to link their preference on a policy (e.g. same-sex marriage) to the party best able to deal with that issue. Readers must wonder whether those mobilized to throw out the three Supreme Court judges went to vote for the political party most capable of dealing

with conservative moral issues (i.e. Branstad and the Republican Party). The survey data suggests this was the case (Frost-Keller & Tolbert, 2011, p. 263).

And indeed Iowa Republicans had a good day on November 3rd, 2010 when they recaptured the governorship, gained solid control of the Iowa House, and came within one seat of removing Democrats from control of the Iowa Senate.

To say an issue was framed in terms of morality politics is not to say every group debating it needed to argue in terms of morality (Haider-Markel & Meier, 1996). For example, while anti-abortion groups frame abortion as a morality issue, pro-choice advocates may frame it as an issue of privacy or of women's right to control their own bodies (Luker, 1984). Likewise, opponents of same-sex marriage often cast it as a morality issue while supporters might argue it is a matter of civil rights (Frost-Keller & Tolbert, 2011; Hull, 2001).

However, the desire by activists to have the public view an issue a particular way does little good unless the preferred frames get disseminated to the public. Oliver and Johnston (2005) suggest social movement research can use framing as one way to understand this dissemination of ideology. By applying framing theory to the concept of morality politics, this study asks: how did conservative activists convince so many voters that this was a question of morality, "family values," or even "judicial activism against those values" when it could just as easily have been understood as a question of equality, social justice, judicial independence, or even the rule of constitutional law? Later analysis chapters will look for answers by examining "how frames are sponsored by political actors and how journalists employ frames in the construction of news stories" (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, p. 215). That approach can in turn help lead to a deeper understanding of the ideological process of framing as a means of guiding policy discussions through

“resonance with supportive cultural elements” (Reese & Lewis, 2009, p. 782), especially when those frames attempt to engage cultural elements of morality.

Defining News Framing

While never on the ballot, the debate over same-sex marriage played a role in Iowa elections after the Iowa Supreme Court issued a ruling making it legal. Without an actual ballot issue regarding same-sex marriage, the Iowa Supreme Court Justice retention races served as way for conservatives to take their anger about the *Varnum* decision to the voting booth. In 2010 and 2012, same-sex marriage was an issue on the national political stage, and positions on marriage were part of party and candidate platforms. Journalists covering Iowa would have been able to choose from a number of competing frames put forward by activists and politicians as well as frames they might garner from exposure to coverage of related issues in the national press.

Frames are ubiquitous, helping individuals understand and communicate about a complex world by connecting new information to existing knowledge that gives important contextual cues about the new information (Goffman, 1974). Gitlin (1980) describes frames as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse” (p. 7). These symbol handlers can be politicians or members of their staff (Grabe & Bucy, 2002), social movement activists (Snow, et al., 1986), media-savvy official spokespersons (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) and journalists (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). By speaking with reporters, news directors, and spokespersons this research considered the role of some of the significant symbol handlers involved in the news framing that appeared in the Iowa television news packages.

This is not to suggest that framing is important solely because it is a method of

information sharing; a frame is more than an apparent theme or story subject. As Entman (2007) explained, framing goes far beyond just sharing a set of facts or quotes. It sets the boundaries of the discussion to be had about those facts by “activating the schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way” (p. 164).

Entman (1993) described frames as having an active role in society as they help tell the story “in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Reese (2001) explains that “Frames are *organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world” (emphasis in original) (p. 5). Gamson and Modigliani (1987) also include the dimension of time when they define a frame as “a central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (p. 143).

The refinements by Entman (1993) and Reese (2001) of Goffman’s (1974) and Gitlin’s (1981) definitions of news framing support this study of same-sex marriage news coverage in several ways. As the first effort to unseat justices began in 2010, the campaign had yet to be categorized as a typical political story about government officials, a symbolic attack on the civil rights of the LGBTQ community, or a symbolic defense of traditional family values. Entman’s description of frames as carriers of moral evaluation resonates strongly with the morality based arguments and politics surrounding the struggle for LGBTQ equality. Reese’s definition of framing as something that is persistent over time speaks to the historical nature of how LGBTQ issues are framed, and the work of structuring the social world supports the way in which this dissertation asks questions about the expression of power.

Further, D’Angelo (2002) supported the idea that a framing analysis benefits from

engaging multiple paradigms into a “research program” by identifying news framing, investigating where frames come from, understanding the ways in which frames interact with prior knowledge, and examining how frames “shape social level processes such as...policy issue debates” (p. 873). He argued that framing researchers, starting from a shared core of understanding about framing, should then “draw liberally from available theories in order to examine particular aspects of the framing process” (p. 872). In that spirit, this analysis of Iowa’s judicial retention vote coverage drew from the constructionist framing tradition and critical framing tradition to examine how news stories were constructed and what kinds of power were expressed in that construction and the resulting news stories.

While the framing analysis of local television news in this dissertation pays heed to D’Angelo’s (2002, 2012) suggestion about the utility of an integrated research program, it is useful in a discussion of theoretical foundations to discuss the constructionist and critical framing traditions separately. This dissertation also takes D’Angelo’s (2012) advice about drawing upon useful theories to help examine particular aspects of framing. Sociology of news provides decades of newsroom research and theorization to the constructionist framing analysis done here. Critical theory and critical gender theory add depth to the critical framing analysis of coverage of same-sex marriage.

Understanding the Product and the Process: Constructionist News Framing and Sociology of News

Iowa television reporters assigned to cover the judicial retention votes in 2010 and 2012 would have had to research the issues, interview sources, consider video, and decide how they wanted to tell the story. They would do this the while working under deadline pressure, their understandings of accepted professional practices, and cultural

understandings of what was important to talk about. In other words, reporters were the nexus of a multitude of influencing factors as they framed the news.

D'Angelo and Kuypers (2010) explained how some of these factors work to create the final product:

Sources frame topics to make information interesting and palatable to journalists, whom they need to communicate to wider publics, and journalists cannot not frame topics because they need sources' frames to make news, inevitably adding or even superimposing their own frames in the process (p. 1).

This means there was, by convention, a shared control of the frames presented to the Iowa local television news audience. Reporters derived their control by deciding who to interview, which parts of the interview(s) to use, which other frames to introduce into the story, and how to frame the overall account. The standard reporting process also dictated that the primary building blocks of a story came from "what actually happened" at an event or during an interview. So while reporters had professional leeway in the ways they framed the story, accepted journalistic practice placed limits.

Reporters did not create frames from whole cloth. Iowa television reporters, like anyone else, drew upon their own existing knowledge to make sense of the information and events they were covering (Liebler, Schwartz, & Harper, 2009). They also tapped into their perception of an imagined audience to turn that gathered information into a narrative structure that they felt would be understood by the audience (Entman, 1993).

The Constructionist Tradition

At a basic level, constructionists see journalists as information processors who interpret and then repackage the information from sources for an audience, sharing

information and ways to think about that information in the process (D'Angelo, 2002).

Constructionists are focused on the ways those frames enter the news through the process of newsgathering and reporting. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) classified three points of entry for news framing during the process of news story construction: cultural resonances, sponsor activities, and media practices. In the present case, reporters juggled the shifting and uneven cultural acceptance of the LGBTQ community, a story driven by anti-retention groups, and professional understandings of the proper way to cover an election season story.

Iowa local television journalists were simultaneously consumers and shapers of the communities and culture in which they lived and reported (Berkowitz, 2010). Cultural resonance refers to the way in which those journalists and their sources understood the culture around them, and how they crafted messages based on that knowledge to resonate with existing themes in that culture (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). This gave reporters the ability to grasp which frames would make sense to, and be accepted as valid by, the audience. Reporters who are unable to understand the culture they were reporting to, and reporting on, would struggle to be seen as competent journalists. Even if they were capable of gathering information, if local television news reporters were unable to communicate in a way that was understandable and interesting they would have failed at their task.

Because frames work by connecting to pre-existing schema (Entman, 1993), news framing becomes a way to grasp how reporters covering the anti-retention campaign accomplished this communication task. A reporter or source who understood the culture and could resonate with it could effectively influence how the audience understood the issue (Gitlin, 1980).

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) said frame sponsors can either be reporters or can

be the sources used by reporters. Sources from organizations that hire media savvy public relations practitioners make the clearest frame sponsors. These groups benefit from the spokespersons' knowledge about how journalists do their jobs and the most effective way to engage those journalists.

Snow and Benford (1988, 1992) suggested the organizational sponsors have a practical interest in getting their frames into the news. They argued social movements have better success at mobilizing resources if the public agrees with them about the nature of a problem, who or what should be blamed, and what to do about it. Similarly, in the case of those trying to unseat Iowa Supreme Court justices, if such sources could convince the audience that same-sex marriage legalization was a problem and the justices were to blame, they might garner more support for their cause on Election Day. Getting favorable frames into the news would also help undermine opposition, or as Gamson (1989) explained, a "particular frame may favor the interests of a particular organization whom the source represents, helping it to further its programs or neutralize its opponents" (p. 158).

Pan and Kosicki (1993) also identified journalists and their sources as important elements in the process that results in news framing. They argued that framing research should interpret frames based on an understanding of how each group has socially defined roles of either newsgathering or advocacy, both drawing upon a culture reporters and spokespersons shared with each other and with the audience.

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) said the third area to consider in the constructionist approach to framing is the area of media practices. They argue that far from passive transmitters of messages from frame sponsors, journalists and their "working norms and practices add considerable value to the process" (p. 7). Because television news reporters

covered same-sex marriage during election seasons following legalization, I was interested in the way this culturally informed newsgathering and reporting process played a role in the news framing. To make that analysis more effective, I turned to the sociology of news literature.

Sociology of News

The intention here is not to conflate the framing and sociology of news traditions, but to allow them to complement each other. Sociology of news concepts enriched the larger framing study in this examination of Iowa television news coverage in two ways. The first is that they guided the execution and evaluation of interviews with journalists about their news production process. The second contribution of the sociology of news literature was in its particular understanding of texts as artifacts representing newsroom and cultural values.

This dissertation focused on a body of work about news practice and culture that gathered steam in the 1970s. According to Tuchman (2002):

During the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, many media sociologists discarded the functionalist legacy. Despite the different sources of theoretical inspiration and their more or less explicit ambition of opposing the powers that be in news and politics, the alternative positions all emphasized a notion of ‘production’ – news is made, not found. Further, it is not the attitude or ‘bias’ of individual journalists, but their social and organizational context which primarily determines how news is made (p. 80).

Over the past 40 years, sociology of news research has explored the complexity of

newsroom culture, including the influence of professional values (Gans, 1979, 2003; Schudson, 1981), logistical challenges, organizational demands, economic concerns (Berkowitz, 1990; Tuchman, 1978), adaptation to changing technology (Singer, 2010), and often routine-based sources of biases among journalists and their managers that bleed over from wider cultural norms and attitudes (Gans, 1979; Alwood, 1996; Gross, 2001; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Berkowitz describes the way the social (1997) and cultural (2010) influences that guide journalists to construct a particular version of reality in a news report can help a researcher understand that culture:

The cultural scholar sees journalists as people living and working within the culture of a newsroom, a media organization, and a society. And it views the texts that news organizations produce as an artifact of the culture that represents key values and meanings (Berkowitz, 2010, xii).

In the Iowa case, news workers at different stations who covered the retention vote could be expected to have shared a number of professional values and approaches to covering the news. Journalists are for the most part self-aware of their normative role in democracy (Philo, 2010; Schudson, 2010) and tend to believe on a fundamental level they exist to serve the public as watchdogs of powerful governmental and private institutions (Rosen, 1999; Gans, 2003; McNair, 2009). Individually, journalists can be expected to have a deep, almost religious, commitment to normative journalistic ideals of objectivity and the search for truth as guided by professional standards that may or may not be clearly articulated (Berkowitz, 1997; Schudson & Anderson, 2009). Journalists may also have underlying normative values about which they may not be reflexively aware (Berkowitz 1997; Niblock, 2007).

Gans (1979) identified a number of enduring values that were present but not always recognized as values. To the extent they were noticed, these values were not understood by journalists to violate the norms of objectivity and balance. These enduring news values included ethnocentrism, a belief in responsible capitalism, a valuing of rugged individualism, and privileging of small-town pastoralism. Gans (1979) said these values profoundly influence journalists' decisions about what is considered newsworthy and why it is newsworthy, but at the same time those values are so thoroughly internalized that those who hold them "easily forget they are values" (p. 186). For Gans, part of deciding what is or is not newsworthy involves deciding what is or is not normal. Researchers have identified a tendency for journalists to define 'normal' from a heteronormative point of view when covering LGBTQ issues such as same-sex marriage (Barnhurst, 2003; Landlau, 2009; Liebler et al., 2009; Moritz, 2010).

Gamson & Modigliani (1989) described the journalistic tendency to reduce controversy to two competing positions, and then to seek out competing spokespersons. While on the surface seeking out competing viewpoints seems journalistically obvious, in practice it limited the discussion and debate over same-sex marriage and judicial retention in Iowa. Tuchman (1974) found that when journalists set out to "get both sides," they often failed to broaden the discussion because of a tendency to privilege official sources from within the political establishment. This tendency can have a powerful effect on the way entire stories and issues are framed, because: "in many cases, the critics may share the same unstated, common frame as officials" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 8). So, if the sources picked to criticize the anti-retention effort were former supreme court judges and current and former lieutenant governors, the overall story ended up framing the issue as

one about an attack on government instead of, for example, an attack on Iowa's LGBTQ community.

In the case of the 2010 and 2012 Iowa judicial retention races, the balance norm posed an unusual challenge for reporters. In a normal political contest there would usually be at least two competing candidates, and journalistic balance could be achieved by getting comments from all for a given story. But in the retention races there were no competing candidates on the ballot. Complicating matters even further, the justices all refused to give public comments about their retention races, saying they felt it would be unethical to do so. Who reporters decided to interview, or not, then became an interesting exercise in maintaining long-standing journalistic norms in the face of an unprecedented political situation.

Norms can also be understood as informing the routines of newsgathering. Routines are ways of assigning duties and responsibilities such that journalists look most often in particular physical or topical places for news and tend to rely on already known, expert, or official sources as a matter of course (Berkowitz, 1997, 2009; Ekstrom et al., 2010; Tuchman, 1978). In addition, some parts of those newsgathering routines differ among print, broadcast, and online media.

Part of the newsgathering routine for television is to seek out the best possible video and audio to tell the most compelling story possible (Berkowitz, 1990; Tuchman, 1978). As certain norms might privilege official sources, others specific to television might make it more likely they will cover events that have promising visual opportunities, such as a rally or protest. But whatever the specific medium and related routines, Gans (1979) suggests understanding the values behind the newsgathering practices will require a kind of

detective work, “The values in news are rarely explicit and must be found between the lines – in what actors and activities are reported or ignored, and how they are described” (pp.39-40).

For journalists such as those studied here, such implicit journalistic norms and the newsgathering routines exist not only within a newsroom but also in a media company with its own concerns about attracting an audience, generating revenue (McChesney, 2000; McChesney & Nichols, 2010), and promoting values held by owners and other management (Breed, 1955). Breed (1955) suggested these values, that he called management policy, are rarely explicitly communicated, but are learned and enforced along with other professional values in a process of observation and newsroom socialization.

Soloski (1997) argued journalistic professionalism gives reporters an independent power base that could potentially challenge business-oriented management while simultaneously existing as a self-regulation mechanism. In practice this professional self-regulation, along with internal news operation policies, tended to avoid threatening an outlet’s economic interests or the larger societal economic structures (Gans, 1979). Soloski (1997) argued that objectivity is the most important professional norm to journalists, although “the question of whether or not objectivity is possible in its scientific sense is neatly side-stepped” (p. 143). Breed (1955) also saw professional practice as a means for some reportorial autonomy. For example, Breed said reporters have some discretion in several areas:

He [sic] can decide whom to interview and whom to ignore, what questions to ask, which quotations to note, and on writing the story which items to feature (with an

eye toward the headline), which to bury, and in general what tone to give the several possible elements of the story (p. 333).

Breed also found that while this process could be guided by a desire to challenge authority, it could also be guided by other sets of values and concerns, some of which may be so deeply ingrained as to not be recognized as values.

Tuchman (1978) described the result of this reporting process as news being influenced by a combination of news values and a sense of professionalism that incorporates some internalized alignment with organizational needs. She wrote:

As professionals, they know how to institute routines associated with the rhythm of newswork. And as professionals, they were familiar with the news organization's need to generate stories and to control the idiosyncrasies of the glut of occurrences by dispersing reporters in a news net flung through time and space (Tuchman, 1978, p. 63).

Tuchman argued this "news net" was itself a manifestation of an often unexamined set of values about which happenings to which groups of people would be considered newsworthy, and which would slip through the holes in the net. Concerned with the way male-dominated news rooms covered the women's movement, Tuchman argued this gender imbalance in the news room was responsible for some of those gaps in the proverbial net. Compounding the problem, the reporters in an overwhelmingly homogenous newsroom were prone to see their point of view as obvious common sense, and remained blind to the problems with their coverage.

This concern over the ability of reporters who are outside of the group being

covered has direct relevance to a study of Iowa television news coverage relating to same-sex marriage. As will be discussed in more detail later, only one news worker interviewed professed knowledge of even having a gay or lesbian colleague. Tuchman's work suggests this lack will have some impact on the way the story is covered, an effect about which news workers might very well be unaware.

When researchers studied newsrooms in the middle of the 20th century, the economic situation was very different from what news departments have faced over the past two decades. This scarcity of resources can also influence the coverage in a number of ways important to consider when investigating Iowa television news coverage in 2010 and 2012. Concerns over an outlet's economic interests, and the ability for that outlet to continue financially, have taken on new urgency in many cases as news organizations have undergone repeated cycles of layoffs and other cuts since the 1990s. This can have an effect on the general morale of a news department going through various forms of convergence (Singer, 2004; Ekdale, Tully, Harmsen, & Singer, 2015) or suffering from cutbacks, increased workload, and low and/or stagnant wages (Cushion, 2007; Ekdale, et al., 2015).

This reduction in resources meant news departments were more limited in the number of potential stories they could turn into news packages. A more precarious employment situation can also mean reporters are less likely to rock the boat by questioning the values underlying their coverage, or even have time to do that questioning (Breed, 1955) as fewer news workers struggle to fill multiple daily newscasts. It can also make them more reliant on groups that can afford official spokespersons who are accessible and already understand what the reporter needs to meet tight deadlines

Framing from a Public Relations Perspective

The role of official spokespersons and public relations tactics is important in any political story, but the news stories studied here would not exist without them. It was only through the effort of conservative groups upset over same-sex marriage that the Iowa Supreme Court retention vote went from a story that generated no interest in television news rooms to a top story in 2010.

Understanding official spokespersons as some of the primary sources of news frames for journalists gives an additional layer of insight in the overall news framing process (Marland, 2012). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argued that one of the clearest examples of what they called “frame sponsors” is the organizational spokesperson who has a sophisticated understanding of how reporters function. Taking this cue, I included interviews with two of the most heavily interviewed frame sponsors in the three months leading up to the November elections.

Since Edward Bernays, the so-called “father of modern public relations” (New York Times, 1995), wrote *Crystalizing Public Opinion* in 1923, the PR profession has been interested in understanding and influencing news coverage as part of its mission to gain popular support for its clients. As the profession developed and its influence grew, it also became a subject of scholarly research along with other mass media professions, such that by the end of World War Two a leader in the field could already refer to himself as a “longtime student of public relations” (Harlaw, 1945, p. 551).

Framing theory has informed the scholarly exploration of public relations along with studies of journalism, political science, and sociology. Of particular use with this study of television news packages covering the efforts to unseat justices over the *Varnum*

decision is the connection of framing with political public relations made by Snow and Benford (1988, 1992, 2005). Their work suggests that a public relations practitioner for a social movement, or counter-movement, can be expected to have certain goals. For example, a spokesperson might attempt to frame a movement's objectives so that they align with some other value that is considered likely to gain widespread support (Snow et al., 1986). An example from this dissertation would be opponents of same-sex marriage framing their opposition as protection of traditional family values.

In addition to theories that engage framing at the level of messaging, public relations work also draws upon the sociology of news work of Gans (1979), Tuchman (1978), Gamson (1989) and others. As Gamson and Modigliani (1989) explained, being media savvy has powerful advantages for those trying to get their frames into the news. Johnson-Cartee (2005) described a symbiotic relationship between reporters and public relations practitioners that involves a contest over how news will be framed. She argued that while journalists may have the final say in what goes into their stories, in practice elite sources play a big role in shaping what that coverage will look like:

Journalists rely on elites who meet journalistic norms for source selection. First elites satisfy the availability criterion in that they tend to be geographically close and socially similar to working journalists; and elites have the power and resources necessary to attract and sometimes command journalistic attention. In addition, elites often speak officially for large organizations (Johnson-Cartee, 2005, p. 220).

This ability to influence coverage suggests that nurturing a relationship with individual journalists and news departments would be a priority for experienced spokespersons. Boorstin (1992) argued this enabled a public relations practitioner to get

coverage of what he called a “pseudo-event,” which included things like press conferences and political rallies such as those seen in the Iowa coverage. He noted that whomever held such an event and attracted coverage would enjoy a great deal of influence over the composition and perspective of the resulting news stories. Analysis of the interviews with the spokespeople included in this dissertation paid particular attention to how they described the kinds of messages they wanted to get across and strategies they used to accomplish that goal.

Understanding the Production of Power: Critical Framing Theory

D’Angelo (2002; 2012), Entman (2007) and Reese (2001) argued that a critical approach to framing research can consider the political and social power underling the creation and dissemination of frames in news products, products such as the TV news packages covering the Iowa Supreme Court retention votes in 2010 and 2012. Reese (2001) says framing research needs to be firmly grounded in what is actually present in news stories. But he also cautions that the utility of descriptive characteristics, such as the frequency in which a frame appears in the news, can be of limited value because “the most important frame may not be the most frequent” (Reese, 2001, p. 1). He argued for scholars to also consider how the issues are constructed as issues within news stories because, “to classify issues into categories, such as ‘economy’ or ‘crime’ obscures the important questions of how they are defined in the first place” (Reese, 2001, p 2). Taking a cue from Reese, this research provides enough descriptive characteristics to demonstrate a firm grounding before moving into the critical analysis.

The question of who got to define the meaning of the Iowa judicial retention votes in 2010 and 2012, and how frames constructed those meanings, suggest the exercise of

political and social power. Carragee and Roefs (2004) argue such a concept of power is a vital, and too-often absent, part of what studying frames and framing can add to mass media scholarship. They argued:

By identifying frames as little more than story topics, attributes, or issue positions, some contemporary approaches to framing neglect the ideological nature and consequences of the framing process as well as the power relationships that influence that process. Framing research that ignores the ways in which frames construct meanings and interests served by those meanings deprives the concept of its theoretical and substantive significance (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, p. 219).

In terms of this study, taking such an approach meant adding layers of analysis to consider the deeper meanings behind frames used to tell stories about the legalization of same-sex marriage in Iowa.

In the next section of this paper, I describe in more detail the definition of critical news framing. I then drill deeper into some concepts from critical theory which are salient to the analyses in chapters four or five. I use Williams (1977) as the foundation of a discussion on media hegemony. Hall (1985) plays a key role in the way I define articulation. I rely heavily on the works of D'Emilio (1993), McRobbie (2005), and Van Zoonen (1994) to discuss critical feminist and LGBTQ scholarship as it relates to the themes of hegemony and articulation.

Critical Framing

Carragee and Roefs (2004) credit Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980) with being among the first to link Goffman's (1974) framing concept with the "structural and ideological processes involving journalists, their news organizations, and their sources" (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, p. 216). They argue in favor of framing research that follows this

critical tradition of considering how the news product that comes from this process can reflect these implicit ideologies as part of their reproduction of social and political power.

Gamson and Modigliani (1989), typically considered constructionists, also connect with critical framing most clearly through a formulation that includes consideration of how culture informs news framing and related practices. For example, they suggest that sometimes journalists unconsciously either give official sources the benefit of the doubt in terms of legitimacy, or assume a non-official source has a higher burden of proof for the same legitimacy (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). This would seem to tie into Williams' (1977) critique of actions which are unreflexively assumed to be normal or natural. Tuchman (2002) also makes this connection between routine and ideology.

If Gamson (1989) and Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) constructionist approach leaves space for theoretical connections between culture and framing (D'Angelo, 2002), Reese (2001) clearly describes the way news framing acts to organize information culturally:

"Cultural" frames don't stop with organizing one story, but invite us to marshal a cultural understanding and keep on doing so beyond the immediate information. These are "strategic" frames that speak to a broader way to account for social reality... In Vietnam frames for example... the culturally wide ranging "Cold War" frame contained within it a vast array of deeply rooted assumptions, and ways of understanding global relations... Thus these frames distill and call up a larger world of meaning.... Ultimately, frames are of greatest interest to the extent they add up to something bigger than an individual story" (p. 6).

That broader, culturally engaged nature of news framing is the focus of the critical

portion of this framing analysis of Iowa television news coverage. The following subsection discusses the hegemonic manifestations of power in news processes and texts.

Hegemony and the Hegemonic

By trying to understand the interaction between competing social movements and local television news media in Iowa, I used framing to ask “the political and social questions regarding power central to the media hegemony thesis” (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, p. 214). Williams (1977) offered a concise history of the evolution of the concept of hegemony, taking it from its Marxist roots through Gramsci before extending the theory into a discussion of hegemony as a dynamic contested process, not a fixed state nor a complete totalitarian domination. Williams explained that Gramsci distinguished between the idea of rule via hegemony and a form of domination by coercion. Hegemony operates at the level of cultural pressure, more diffuse but also more pervasive and invasive. Transcending culture or ideology, Williams’ concept of hegemony incorporates elements of both into an understanding of the struggle between domination and subordination in an ongoing process. Williams (1977) said this represents:

A saturation of the whole process of living – not only of political and economic activity, but of the whole substance of lived identities and relationships, to such a depth that the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system *seem to most of us as the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense*” (p. 110) [emphasis added].

The emphasized portion of this quote is a key to understanding the way hegemony is understood to work and how it stays invisible to those who are caught in it. In the case of reporters covering the same-sex marriage debate in Iowa, the reproduction of the

hegemonic in news frames does not need to be the result of a conscious desire or any conscious intent on the part of a journalist or a news department. Rather Williams gives an understanding of how the power of hegemony does its work while largely staying invisible to those implicated in it.

Williams (1977) refused to detach his discussion of the nuances of hegemony from the reality of the “messiness” of actual everyday life. Because of this, he embraced the fluid and complex power relations in society rather than demanding the drawing of strict, static and clear demarcations in line with some kind of pure but abstract theoretical formulation. This led him to see hegemony as a lived process of experiences and relationships, not a singular system or structure. It also allowed for the consideration of what he called counter-hegemony and alternate hegemony as groups with unequal power struggle over that power. Therefore, he recommended talking about the “hegemonic” instead of the “hegemony,” and “the dominant” instead of “domination.”

Williams (1977) also talks about the importance of tradition in understanding how the ongoing hegemonic process works in the whole process of living. He argues that tradition, often overlooked by previous Marxist thinkers, is more than a “surviving past” but actually a clear signpost of those hegemonic limits and pressures. For news workers, the tradition of journalism is interwoven with the learned professionalism that comes from formal education and informal learning from older reporters in the newsroom (Breed, 1955; Gans, 1979).

Hall (1976) argued that embedded in television news programming there are verbal and visual codes supporting the dominant ideology. In the case of his study of the British news program *Panorama*, Hall suggested a conservative political group influenced news

coverage in a way that helped it gain political power. He says the Thatcherites introduced their own description of a reality rooted in the myth of individualism and individual struggle in a way that ignored the structural rootedness of racial and sexual inequalities. While able to exercise a certain amount of direct political control, the Conservatives also strove to control the message so as to change what the public considered 'common sense.' The more they could get the public to accept the foundations of social reality as described by Conservatives the less the basic premises of their policy arguments faced public scrutiny, and the more they could capitalize on a hegemonic effect in solidifying their power base (McRobbie, 2005).

Reese and Lewis (2009) gave another example of how a frame adopted by news media can demonstrate hegemonic dominance over time. They argued that when a group with an agenda can successfully get its frame into news reports, it can start the process through which a particular frame goes from being seen as one possible viewpoint to being accepted as (nearly) the only 'common sense' viewpoint. In their research, they identify a three-step process that took the phrase "War on Terror" from a White House creation, reported as such, to a ubiquitous sobriquet for everything from the invasion of Iraq to warrantless wiretaps:

Seeking indications of the degree to which the frame was accepted we distinguished through an inductive process among three types of engagement: (1) transmission, a shorthand reference to specific national policies; (2) a reification of that policy, dropping any sense of its constructed aspect; and the most problematic, (3) a naturalized, uncritical way of seeing the world (Reese & Lewis, 2009, p. 783).

The approach of Reese and Lewis is relevant to this study for two reasons. The first is that it takes into consideration the way frames enter the news cycle through the agency of savvy public relations efforts by groups with a vested interest in a particular issue. An example in this dissertation might be the bus tours used by anti-retention groups to garner press attention in various media markets. Second, it considers news frames over time, tracing the process from simple transmission, reification, and finally naturalization. When a frame reaches the stage of naturalization, it has achieved the greatest state of privilege because it is no longer questioned. In other words, it becomes part of what Williams (1977) calls the hegemonic, something that seems to be the result of “simple experience and common sense” (p. 110).

Articulation

“Articulation” is another important concept from critical-cultural theory that will be important to the theoretical understanding of the meaning behind some of the frames in the 2010 and 2012 coverage. Hall (1985) described articulation as the ideological joining of different practices or ideas in “a connection or link, which is not necessarily given in all cases, as a law or fact of life” (p. 113). Instead, it is “politically and ideologically produced in a particular historical moment” (Kinefuchi, 2015, p. 449). Once articulated, the two different things, that need not have any inherent similarities, are to be understood as if they function together (Hall, 1985).

Articulation has cultural precedent in the history of anti-LGBTQ rhetoric. For over a century, this ideological process worked to define the LGBTQ community as a “moral threat” to the nation, often tying the LGBTQ community to threats against physical safety and national security. Whichever form it took, this process of articulation served the

hegemonic interest in not only reinforcing societal norms hostile to the LGBTQ community, but also enforced those norms through legislation and the use of force by police.

As gays and lesbians started to form communities in cities from the mid-Twentieth century on, gay and lesbian bars became an important part of those communities, providing the rare social space in which attraction to members of the same sex did not result in immediate public censure (Cain, 1993). However, this refuge was far from absolute. As these communities started to coalesce, community leaders, from pastors to politicians, would speak out against the members of the LGBTQ community, and would call for police crackdowns on places like gay bars (Alwood, 1996).

The rhetorical backlash gained new force in the 1970s from increasingly prominent conservative Christian leaders such as Jerry Falwell and his so-called “Moral Majority” (Barnhurst, 2007). Falwell and groups like his remained a loud voice for anti-LGBTQ rhetoric throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and into the 2000s, speaking out against each new positive development for LGBTQ activism, from attacking efforts during the 1980s to destigmatize gays and lesbians in the *New York Times*, actor Ellen DeGeneres’ public coming out, or efforts to legalize same-sex marriage (Gross, 2001).

Gay men and lesbians were, and still are, sometimes linked to more concrete threats by linking homosexuality to pedophilia a resulting danger to children (Cain, 1993; D’Emilio, 1993; Alwood, 2001). The LGBTQ community is also historically articulated by opponents with a variety of health concerns, from being a “perversion” requiring treatment (Foucault, 1976) to the spreaders of the “gay plague” of HIV/AIDS (Sewell, 2014).

Starting early in the 20th century, the rhetorical attacks expanded out from issues of public morality to include issues of national security. One example of this historical articulation is the linking of the LGBTQ community with the Red Scares that started during WWI and the Russian Revolution and continued through the middle of the 20th century. Gays and lesbians were portrayed as national security risks who, because of being gay in a society that did not accept them, would be easily blackmailed into helping communist sympathizers (Cain, 1993). This articulation tapped the fear of Americans who were convinced that the Soviets threatened the existence of the U.S. as they knew it. Linking homosexuality with communism provided sufficient excuse for waves of purges of gay men and lesbians from government jobs (D'Emilio, 1993).

In the case of backlash to the *Varnum* decision in Iowa, legalized same-sex marriage was articulated with imagined threats to gun ownership, private property rights, and families while also tapping the moral outrage of conservative Iowa voters. Engaging voters with an emotional appeal in this way is part of how a morality politics campaign is theorized to work.

The Effect of Hegemonic Processes on the LGBTQ Social Movement

As Williams (1977, 2011) suggested, there are multiple ways to understand the role of the hegemonic process in relation to the struggle over acceptance and equality for the LGBT community. Because it is a dynamic shifting process, the specific manifestations of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic activities vary in different times and places. With that in mind, it is still possible to view overarching themes that relate to hegemonic power as expressed by the dominant heteronormative group. As LGBTQ activists fought for marriage equality in Iowa and around the country they were simultaneously challenging a

dominant view that marriage was between a man and a woman, while also trying to get legal access to an institution that could be considered part of a broader set of traditional values hostile to the LGBTQ community (Stein, 2010).

In the pre-Industrial era as described by D'Emilio (1993), cultural norms were strongly against same-sex attractions and relationships whether for economic or other reasons. Even if there wasn't a classification of homosexual in the modern sense before the end of the 19th century, as both Foucault (1976) and D'Emilio (1993) argue, various legal codes outlawed the expressions of same-sex attraction for centuries before then, such as England's 1533 Buggery Act. These existing prejudices against same-sex sexual acts seemed to find a different expression as the medical and psychiatric professions created the classification of homosexual in the late 19th century, a classification articulated with deviance and mental illness used for most of a century as a medical excuse for the reproduction of hegemonic power over the LGBTQ community (D'Emilio, 1993; Foucault, 1976).

Likewise, the LGBTQ movement consistently encountered the institutionalization of anti-homosexual sentiment into law codes and formalized persecution. For example, during the Red Scares of the 20th century, when simply being gay or lesbian was considered enough of a security risk people were fired from their government jobs (Cain, 1993). These firings blurred the line between the hegemonic process of pervasive cultural heteronormativity and outright use of coercion. In the more recent Iowa case, this encoding of heteronormativity into legal codes can be seen in the passing of the 1998 law that defined marriage as only between one man and one woman. This was the law that the Iowa Supreme Court struck down in 2009.

Butler (1990) described cultural heteronormativity as a matrix of expectations based around the normalization of heterosexuality that reaches into what Williams might characterize as the whole life experience. She argued that this “compulsory heterosexuality” establishes the power relations between men and women, and the very definitions of what it is to be a man or woman becomes a naturalized part of the environment (p. 416). In addition to the implications for women, this matrix excludes, in a multitude of ways, even the possibility that homosexual attraction and behavior can be legitimized (McRobbie, 2005).

Van Zoonen (1994) also made connections between the broader goal of critical theory to understand power in society as expressed through the media, and issues of power and gender. Van Zoonen and McRobbie (2005) both traced a history of the feminist movement from early problems with ethnocentrism through continuing growing pains to make the women’s movement more inclusive. They also noted the conservative backlash the women’s movement engendered. Parallel and often entwined in later years with the LGBTQ rights movement, the history of the women’s movement offers a point of comparison with the struggles of the LGBTQ movement. Van Zoonen (1994) also discussed the encoding of gender in media artifacts. Her description of the way heteronormative gender roles are normalized in the mass media compliment Butler’s (1990) formulation of the “heterosexual matrix” and Williams’ (1997) description of media artifacts as part of a hegemonic process.

In other words, one might expect a media artifact created under the influence of the dominant hegemonic to be written in a way that may subtly or overtly reinforce a view of the world that supports, or at least does not challenge, this heterosexual matrix. Hardin and

Whiteside (2010) argue that when journalists use frames that reinforce gendered myths, they can “naturalize the arbitrary, a process often explained as hegemony, so that it becomes taken for granted even at the expense of large social groups such as women and racial minorities” (p. 314). This research extends Hardin and Whiteside’s logic to the coverage of issues relating to Iowa’s LGBTQ community ahead of the 2010 and 2012 elections.

Applying hegemonic theory to mass media representations of gays and lesbians, the work of Gross (2001), Alwood (1996), and Barnhurst (2007) demonstrated the hegemonic process at work in entertainment and news production. The unspoken and pervasive acceptance of a worldview of straight as ‘normal’ and gay as ‘aberration’ is an example of what Williams (1977, 2011) would have described as a hegemonic process at work, complete with a power imbalance, a dominant group with its position widely accepted as simple common-sense, and a struggle over that terrain of normality between the dominant and subordinate group.

Finally, the feminist perspective adds a dimension to the understanding of the LGBT movement both in terms of direct experience and of comparison between the two. Woman and members of the LGBTQ community have historically fought against the same male-dominated heteronormative view of the way society should function. More recent waves of feminism have embraced in many cases the cause of equal rights for gays and lesbians. Yet, one can see in the exclusion of lesbians and women of color from some of the earlier iterations of the feminist movement the pervasive and powerful quality of these hegemonic forms of dominant ideology, as groups fighting against one facet of the hegemonic embraced other manifestations.

From the early framing of the homosexual identity by non-homosexual “authorities,” to the expression of “tradition” as codified into laws restricting gay rights, to the newsroom and entertainment industry cultures that ignored or caricatured gays and lesbians as fools or villains, to the conservative backlash against same-sex marriage in Iowa, the history of the LGBT community is filled with examples of struggles against hegemony.

Research Questions

This study asked how local television journalists developed and employed frames in their coverage of same-sex marriage and LGBTQ issues. It asked how those frames came to be, where they came from, which frames seem more dominant and which subordinate, and which might be missing. The constructionist-critical approach to this research meant the focus of these questions was on the relationship between the newsgathering process and social power.

This dissertation looked at the local television news packages during election seasons following the Iowa Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage in the state. More specifically, I was interested in the stories that dealt with the same-sex marriage controversy as a political issue. I first asked descriptive questions about the news packages, grounding the later analysis firmly within the evidence (Babbie, 1998; Durham, 1998).

Because this is a framing study, the first task was to identify the patterns of messages in the coverage (Gitlin, 1980) that did the work of defining the “problem” presented by marriage equality, suggested to the audience the moral implications of same-

sex marriage, and outlined the boundaries of the ensuing debate (Entman, 1993). The first task then was to identify frames in the news packages, and so the first research question (**RQ1**) asked: “How did Iowa local television news coverage frame issues related to same-sex marriage / LGBTQ equality during the election cycles following the April 3, 2009 *Varnum v. Brien* decision?”

I was interested in television news packages and their combination of audio and visual communication. By applying methods of film analysis (Howells & Negreiros, 2012; Rose, 2011) to a visual framing analysis (Grabe & Bucy, 2002), I asked (**RQ1a**): “How is this news framing accomplished in the multiple layered television news texts according to visual framing theory?”

Reese (2001) invited the researcher to consider frames as “strategic” in that they operate across multiple news stories to add up to “something bigger,” to a distillation of cultural meanings (p. 6). That led me to explore a cultural understanding of news framing by considering how the entire body of coverage created a mediated image of social reality. This point suggested several questions, the first of which was to consider who gets quoted in the coverage. Research Question 1b (**RQ1b**) was: “Who are the most common frame sponsors in the coverage?”

Carragee and Roefs (2004), Reese (2001), and D’Angelo (2002) argue that the value in framing research is not only in identifying frames and their meanings, but also in considering how an ongoing pattern of news framing reveals which frames exercise the greatest influence. Therefore this research asks two more questions. “Which frames appeared to be dominant” (**RQ1c**)? “Which frames appeared to be subordinate” (**RQ1d**)?

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) and Reese and Lewis (2009) argued that changes in news framing over time reveal the location of social and political power by allowing a

researcher to observe shifts in that power. This suggested the need for two more sub-questions in the broader identification of news framing in the news stories. Research Question 1e (**RQ1e**) was: “Did the dominant and subordinate frames change or remain the same during the period under study?” Research Question 1f (**RQ1f**) was: “If the frames changed, how can the change be accounted for theoretically?”

This research captured a cross-section of Iowa television markets, from three different geographical regions of the state, each with a different size audience and with differing levels of access to governmental sources. The sample size of 29 news stories split unequally between the three stations did not lend itself to certain kinds of comparisons, however this research can make observations about the three separate bodies of news reporting. Therefore, Research Question 1g (**RQ1g**) asked: “What were the differences, if any, among the news coverage found at the three different news stations?”

The final part of the analysis in chapter four seeks to provide answers to Research Question 1g (**RQ1h**): “What did this news framing mean within the context of these two election seasons?”

Journalism researchers have long found it useful to consider the ways in which the values, norms, conventions and routines of news work play a role in how journalists tell their stories (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980). In this study, I have identified reporters who wrote the stories that were studied, and interviewed several of them. One of the questions I wanted to explore in those interviews was (**RQ2**): “How did Iowa local television journalists describe their own process when reporting these stories?”

In looking at the overall news framing of the packages, RQ1 and RQ1a looked at the way journalists put all of the reporting components together. RQ1b looked at one part of this journalistic decision making by considering which sources, or frame sponsors, made

it into soundbites in the news coverage. RQ2 asked how journalists described making the decisions which led to the framing described in chapter four. Taking a cue from Gans (1979), I attempted to read “between the lines” (p. 39) to understand the news values at work. Research Question 2a (**RQ2a**) asked: “What did the description of the process reveal about the news values which guided them?” Research Question 2b (**RQ2b**) asked: “What did these values mean for the way the issue was framed?”

Reporters derive some autonomy from their professional status, but also work in a newsroom that has its own management tasked with overseeing the daily operations and offering guidance and direction for those journalists according to understandings of professional and organizational expectations (Breed, 1955). Therefore, I asked (**RQ3**): “How did the news directors describe their managerial decision-making process behind coverage of same-sex marriage as an election season issue?” I also asked (**RQ3a**): “What did the news directors’ descriptions of values that guided that process mean for the newsroom culture which in turn influenced the news framing?”

In addition to considering the experiences of news workers, framing research also considered the role of media savvy spokespersons (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). I was interested in the ways in which a person or organization functioning in a professional public relations capacity worked to help their cause by getting a particular frame into the news. I then ask with Research Question 4 (**RQ4**): “How was power expressed in the way conservative frame sponsors turned a previously ignored judicial retention vote into a top election related story?” The second question about frame sponsors (**RQ4a**) was: “How did these spokespersons describe drawing upon their understandings of reporters and the reporting process to manage relationships with reporters and their newsrooms?” Research Question 4b (**RQ4b**) asked: “What did this relationship management mean for the resulting

news framing?”

The final question, (**RQ5**), asked: “What do the news texts, interviews, and framing analysis reveal about the presence of hegemonic power in this coverage of same-sex marriage in Iowa?”

The next chapter describes how the evidence to answer these questions was gathered and the methods by which that evidence was analyzed.

CHAPTER THREE: ARCHIVES, INTERVIEWS, AND METHODS OF DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

This research project depended on two main sources of material: archived copies of television news packages and interviews. The texts under consideration included the audio-visual content of the broadcast news stories themselves along with transcripts of interviews with the news workers involved in gathering and reporting those stories. Interviews were also conducted with the news directors at all three stations included in the study and with two leading and outspoken issue advocates, one supporting same-sex marriage and one opposing it. This approach allowed me to triangulate the evidence by looking at two different kinds of data: news texts and interviews.

This chapter has three main goals: to explain the value of studying local television coverage of Iowa's political battles over same-sex marriage following legalization, to describe how data were collected, and to indicate how data were analyzed.

The first section of this chapter explains why coverage of the judicial retention and same-sex marriage issue in Iowa, specifically television news coverage contained in news packages, presents an interesting case for study

The second part discusses more specifically how the television news packages were chosen, accessed, and analyzed. The third part discusses how interview subjects were identified, strategies used for conducting the interviews, and how transcripts of those interviews were analyzed. The chapter concludes with a discussion about reflexivity and validity in qualitative research.

Why Iowa and Why Television News?

Iowa presented a valid case for this research for at least three reasons: (1) its position as an "early adopter" of legalized same-sex marriage, (2) its resulting role as one

of the first post-legalization push-back sites with state and national groups targeting justices who ruled that same-sex couples have the same marriage rights as heterosexual couples, and (3) the possibility of evidence that supports the idea that debate over same-sex marriage had implications across the ballot.

As discussed in chapter one, when Iowa legalized same-sex marriage it sent ripples across the country, energizing LGBTQ activists seeking their own marriage rights. It also energized opponents. The 2010 Iowa retention race became a testing ground for strategies to push back against marriage equality. It was a moment in time in which same-sex marriage was still very new, staunch conservatives were still upset over the ruling, and majority public opinion had not yet swung over to support same-sex marriage. The results of the 2012 retention race, in which an Iowa Supreme Court Justice kept his seat on the bench, suggest there had been a window when backlash might have gained traction with a majority of voters. By focusing on the Iowa case, I have sought to better understand how journalists framed this new angle to an ongoing political and cultural story. I also sought to understand how that framing was influenced by the reporters' professional values, news gathering processes, and news sources.

The Iowa case is also relevant because it looks at the manifestation of morality politics in news framing. As described in chapter two, morality politics is a tactic of framing issues as revolving around morals, values, or sin in such a way as to engage voters on an emotional level while requiring low information gathering costs for those same voters (Haider-Markel & Meier, 1996). Morality politics also works to affect other races and issues on a ballot during an election by priming voters to consider whatever the morality issue is when considering other contests. For example, if there is a ballot issue on same-sex marriage voters might consider the position of candidates across the ballot on

same-sex marriage as more relevant in the process of picking a candidate (Donovan, Tolbert, & Smith, 2008).

Framing the judicial retention race in Iowa in a way that engaged the logic of morality politics opened a broader political strategy of using rhetorical power to gain political power. As one spokesperson here reported, conservative groups could not have gotten their message out to the voting public without journalists. The Iowa case gave a chance to look at how and why those frames enter news stories. The Iowa case could also be seen as an attempt to influence and intimidate non-elected government officials, such as judges, beyond Iowa's borders. Legal scholars saw the effort to punish Iowa Supreme Court justices for the *Varnum* ruling as having implications for the entire U.S. legal system (Curriden, 2011).

Finally, Iowa politics and issues gain a measure of broader importance because of the Iowa first-in-the-nation caucuses. 2010 was not a caucus year. However, some candidates spend years building support in Iowa ahead of a presidential nomination bid (Redlawsk, Tolbert, & Donovan, 2011). Whether they were Democratic politicians hoping to shore up support among progressives, or Republican politicians hoping to connect with angry conservative voters, they would have needed to address the new legal reality of same-sex marriage in Iowa. For some Republican hopefuls such as Mike Huckabee, Newt Gingrich, and Rick Santorum this even meant campaigning in person against Iowa justices as part of the bus tour or donating funds to the campaign.

Why Local Television News?

Pew Foundation research (2013) overlapping the time frame of this study suggested that local television news was the most popular source of news in the average American

home. It found that 71 percent of people nationally watch local television news in the home, compared to 65 percent who watch network news in the home, 38 percent who watched cable television news at home, and 38 percent of Americans who accessed their news online via laptop or desktop.

More recent audience research shows local news remaining strong, with slight increases in audience size in 2014, as newspapers and cable news continued to drop (Pew Research, 2015a). Presently, local television news is also seeing strong growth in revenue, up seven percent from 2013 to 2014, in part due to increased political advertising in the wake of the January 2010 United States Supreme Court *Citizens United* decision's removing limits on campaign contributions. Growing audiences and growing revenue suggest that local television news will remain a significant way in which people consume news, well worthy of scholarly study and understanding.

Scholars have long recognized the cultural importance of television news and its role in how members of society understand the world around them. Critical-cultural pioneer Stuart Hall (1974) argued television news stands in a "pivotal but ambiguous position" (p. 26) of building and reinforcing the informal but powerful "common sense ideology" (p. 25) that tends strongly to limit critique of dominant power structures. This limiting effect isn't necessarily, a result of government censorship or malevolent intent on the part of the reporters or news organizations. Rather, Hall suggested this effect was a result of television journalism combining traditional news values and professional practices with the necessity of meeting the technical requirements for producing "good television" (Hall, 1974, p. 24).

Four decades after Hall's observations about television news, research focused on television news remains important to journalism and mass communication scholarship,

although it remains relatively understudied. There is noticeably more published research examining print news as compared to broadcast news, especially local television news (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). There is also a general imbalance between the volume of research focusing on forms of visual framing and framing communicated through printed text (Matthes, 2009). The dearth of scholarly research on local television news is even more apparent in smaller TV markets. However, to study local television news in Iowa is to conduct small-market research, with even the biggest market in the state (Des Moines, the state capital) not cracking the top 70 markets in the country.

In Iowa and across the nation, small-market television stations also serve as important training grounds for journalists. After college, many reporters and news workers start their careers in smaller markets, typically moving on over time to bigger markets in larger cities or working their way into broadcast or cable network news operations. These early jobs represents an important time in the enculturation process, as rookie reporters learn how to understand and meet the demands of working in a newsroom and how to please their bosses and colleagues (Breed, 1955). Lessons about news routines and values learned and reinforced can become internalized to the point of seeming like “common sense.” These lessons are carried with reporters who decide to move on to new jobs. In other words, the values and norms of small market television stations, including those in Iowa, tend to ripple out into the larger news media.

Small-market television news is an interesting place to look because it has not been thoroughly studied, is an important source of information for Iowa voters, it is a site of early enculturation for reporters new to the profession, and it offers an opportunity to explore the potential of applying framing theory to local television news and its video texts.

Multi-Stage Data Collection

In order to make sure the interviews connected with the news packages, it was necessary to complete the data collection in phases. The first phase involved finding the news stories themselves and making detailed field notes and transcripts of those television news packages. The second phase was to identify and invite the reporters who wrote the stories, as well as the most prominent issue advocates and news directors, to participate in interviews.

Gathering the Story Data: Recruiting Stations, Accessing Archives, and Generating Field Notes and Transcripts

Several methodological challenges had to be overcome in studying local television news coverage of same-sex marriage across two Iowa election cycles. Iowa offers only a relatively small number of television stations to choose among, and of those, only a few agreed to grant me access to their on-site archives.

Of the possible story styles in television news, a package represents the greatest investment of time and other resources. This means topics for news packages are seen as the most worthy of that investment. Packages themselves are inherently multilayered with audio and video elements, edited together and reviewed before appearing to an audience. They are then archived after they aired. The more resource-intensive format of a television news package was a limiting factor of the number of stories that were produced and aired during the time under study.

Because this is a visual framing study of television news, looking at news packages aligned with Altheide's (1996) suggestions about theoretically informed selection of texts for study as part of a valid qualitative methodology. In this research, selecting television

news packages made theoretical sense because they would likely contain the largest variety of frames and those frames would be expressed through words, video, and audio.

Using a station directory from the Iowa Broadcast News Association (IBNA), a dozen possible television stations were identified as possible sites for study. In early 2014 invitations were sent out to the news directors at those stations with a preface from the IBNA executive director (see Appendix A).⁷ The original intent was to secure as diverse as possible a cross-section of Iowa television markets, with at least one in Northwest Iowa, one in Des Moines, and one in Eastern Iowa.

The most strongly conservative Northwest portion of the state has the lowest population density with just under 150,000 television homes, most of them rural (Nielsen, 2015). The more progressive leaning Des Moines is the state capital, the biggest market with 426,000 television homes (Nielsen, 2015), and has the highest population density. Eastern Iowa is more of a mix, with a combination of rural agricultural counties, larger blue-collar cities including Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, and college towns such as Cedar Falls and Iowa City. The Eastern Iowa market is listed as having 336,000 television homes (Nielsen, 2015).

Of the twelve stations I invited, five refused citing corporate policies forbidding them from participating in any scholarly research, while four others failed to respond at all. Three stations agreed to participate. This participation captured the originally envisioned cross-section: One of the stations was in Northwest Iowa, one in the state capital in Des Moines, and one in Eastern Iowa. I decided to conduct a census of stories relevant to same-

⁷ The researcher was a member of this organization in the past as a news professional, and renewed the membership as an academic after returning to Iowa for graduate school.

sex marriage that aired during the three months prior to Election Day that met the two criteria of being news packages and originated at stations that granted me access to their archives

Archival research at these three stations started in late 2014 and continued through early 2015. Each station allowed me access to an internal computer filing system that enabled the use of search terms and specific date ranges. The technology thus allowed for searches of news packages using key words relevant to the research (e.g. same-sex marriage, gay marriage, Varnum, supreme court, etc.) that aired from August to November in each election after same-sex marriage legalization.

For 2010 stories, all stations had archived news packages saved on digitally formatted magnetic tapes that were numbered and dated.⁸ Each archived story on the database included the tape number on which the corresponding story could be found, often with corresponding time code information. Stations use multiple tapes simultaneously when archiving in this fashion, and each tape can hold up to a few dozen stories. This meant there were dozens of tapes that might have had stories on them from a three month period. Therefore the searchable computer archive index became a very useful tool. Unfortunately, at one of the stations a computer crash had removed all records of stories from 2010. The tapes, however, remained. This meant searching manually through 63 tapes for news packages on same-sex marriage.

By 2012, stations in this research had either switched to archiving video on internal

⁸ DVCPRO tapes were standard in Iowa television stations during this time period. They are commercial grade tapes that recorded digital video and audio on cassettes that were about the size of audio cassette tapes. This technology acted as a bridge from analog tape to flash drives and internal hard drives for video capture and storage.

hard-drives or were in the process of switching from tape to hard-drive video archiving during that campaign season. The search process remained essentially the same, but story retrieval was speeded by the ability to click on a computer link to the story, rather than tracking down a physical tape kept in a storage location.

Both archived tapes and footage stored on hard drives could only be played or accessed on equipment in each station. Access to this equipment was part of the participation agreement. I worked with the news directors to schedule newsroom visits on days and times that would be least disruptive to news operations. Typically this meant avoiding ratings periods and special event coverage, and occasionally rescheduling site visits due to breaking news and severe weather coverage. Site visits also happened during the period between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., when reporters and photographers were more likely to be out in the field and not using the playback equipment located in the stations' edit bays.

In total, this method yielded twenty-nine relevant news packages from the three stations, all from 2010 and 2012 (see Table 3.1). A more detailed description of the stories can be found in the following chapter and Appendices I, J, and K.

Station	2010 Total	2012 Total	Combined
#1 – Eastern Iowa	7	1	8
#2 – Des Moines (Central Iowa)	11	6	17
#3 – Western Iowa	3	1	4
TOTALS	21	8	29

Table 3.1. News Packages by Year and Station.

Although this research included 2014 in its search parameters, no packages with

same-sex marriage as a topic were aired during the 2014 election season on any of the three stations.

After the stories were identified and tapes or files located, they were analyzed using a repeated set of steps. The initial viewings provided the overall message of the story. Then each story was watched multiple times and detailed transcriptions and notes were taken to create a field text. After the transcripts and notes were finished, the stories were watched again and compared to the field texts to ensure accuracy; additional notes were made during this holistic viewing that made themes and potential frames more apparent.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) explained that carefully constructed notes are the first step in a longer process of thick description:

Qualitative interpretations are constructed. The researcher first creates a field text consisting of field notes and documents from the field... The writer-as-interpreter moves from this text to a research text: notes and interpretations based on the field text. This text is then recreated as a working interpretive document that contains the writer's initial attempts to make sense of what he or she has learned (p. 26).

Appendices B and C offer examples of the field documents I created from two individual news packages. Appendix B describes a package that relies more on newly shot footage. Appendix C describes a package that uses a larger amount of file video.

Wojcieszak (2009) notes the nature of television news is that it contains a mixture of modes of transmitting messages using combinations of visual and audio elements. This research addresses the creation of field texts for multifaceted communication by borrowing from and adapting a multi-column approach often used for television scripts. In these field

notes the left column is essentially a transcript of the verbal text of the story, either the narration that the reporter wrote and recorded to be edited into the final news package or the soundbite from an interview subject. The middle column is a description of the video and other audio components of the news packages. The left column contains notes regarding my original thoughts while in the field, a first of several interpretive iterations. This field document format is derived from the way television news story scripts are written, although the video notations for this research are much more detailed and there would be no third column for notations.

The portions of the field notes that captured the reporter narration and sound bites were straight-forward exercises in capturing words verbatim. Taking valid field notes of the other video and audio components was more of a challenge. The act of translating visual communication into written words unavoidably involved interpretation in order to translate images into textual descriptions. In order to keep this part of field text creation methodologically rigorous, I took cues from the field of visual and film studies. Important to that process were the early foundational works of Metz (1974) and Wollen (1969) that discussed ways semiotics might be applied to film studies, Bordwell's (1986) work on categorizing the components and conventions of video storytelling, the methodological descriptions of visual communication research by Rose (2011) and Howells and Negrieros (2012), and the visual framing work of Grabe & Bucy (2002). The following description of the components noted as part of the generation of field texts is an amalgam of those works.

The basic component of visual storytelling is the "shot." A shot refers to a continuous view from one camera. An individual shot can be all from a static location, or

involve apparent camera movement. Typical movements include a zoom where the subject of the shot seems to get closer or further away, a pan where the view sweeps from side to side, or a tilt, which is like a pan, but along the vertical axis. Shots also take a particular perspective on a spectrum from having a very wide field of view to an extreme close-up, but by convention are categorized as wide, medium-wide, medium, medium-tight, tight, and super-tight. The perspective can also be level with the subject of the shot, looking down, or looking up. Other elements of shot composition are also noteworthy, such as descriptions of what is actually visible and audible in the shot, and the motions and other actions of those in the shot. The way people are dressed, the place they are talking, how they talk and move, how others react to them, and background can all contribute to the construction of a frame within a news story.

As well as considering individual shots, I paid attention to the way those shots were edited together. One example of an editing technique is simply sequencing together related images to form a kind of visual wallpaper to run behind the reporter's narration. This could be a series of shots of the exterior of the Iowa Supreme Court building, for example, while a legal concept such as judicial review of constitutionality is being discussed in the narration. Visually, such a sequence relates to the dialogue, but lacks narrative flow.

In contrast, a sequencing of shots into a mise-en-scene reflects a more deliberate attempt to relay some bit of information or some idea. If a shot is analogous to a word in written language, a mise-en-scene represents a series of shots that would be analogous to a sentence. These cohesive narrative portions of video can support, exist alongside, or even challenge the reporter's narration or interview soundbite. An example might be a sequence of shots of a same-sex wedding that work together to tell a story about a ceremony and the emotional value of that event to those participating. Another mise-en-scene found in some

of the news packages was one of people gathered to demonstrate for a particular side of the issue, using signs, actions, natural sound, and other components to create an impression.

The right hand column of the field text is the first attempt in the field at interpretation of the data in the first two columns. Not yet a fully formed interpretation of the textual, visual, and audio frames, the notes in this column served as the precursor for the later stages of qualitative framing analysis described below.

Qualitative Framing and Textual Analysis

This research addressed questions of meaning, power, and culture, taking its cue from the work of researchers who argue for a critical-cultural, qualitative, textual analysis approach to framing. This approach allowed for the consideration of questions related to hegemony and political and social power (Carragee & Roefs, 2004), as well as investigation of antecedent conditions that produced frames (D'Angelo, 2002). It also specifically called for examining frames across time and checking them against other evidence, such as interviews with journalists and sources (Reese, 2001). Therefore the methodological approach I used in this research was a qualitative approach to framing analysis, with its emphasis on textual analysis and interpretation (D'Angelo, 2002; Reese 2001).

This approach was especially well suited to this inquiry because it enabled examination of the textual, audio, and visual components of a television news stories as separate pieces, while also considering the larger meanings and news framing work done as those components worked together in the news text. All of these components were carefully noted in field texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) through multiple viewings (see Appendices B and C). Taken together these components of the news packages created a source of audiovisual media communication that Grabe and Bucy (2002) argued most

effectively compliments “human information-processing abilities” (p. 266).

Stuart Hall, who pioneered the application of critical-cultural research to television, described the “long preliminary soak” (1975, p. 15) as an important part of his interpretive method. That process for this dissertation started with research of LGBTQ history, how the LGBTQ community was covered in the news, and how that coverage changed over time. My engagement with new data started with the viewing of stories and creation of field notes. I then organized, reflected upon, re-organized, and iteratively interpreted those notes. I then conducted interviews about those stories. I transcribed those interviews and then submitted those transcriptions to their own process of thematic interpretation and organization, results of which were folded into the broader critical framing discussion.

Lindlof (1995) describes empirical qualitative research in general as asking, almost exclusively, questions aimed at understanding, which is obtained through inductive reasoning using any of a variety of methods, including interpretive analysis and interviews: “Through induction, data slowly resolve into concepts and specific research propositions through the investigator’s own increasing skill at understanding” (Lindlof, 1995, p. 56). To accomplish this task, I worked through the data multiple times. The process started with the identification of possible frames in the text and audio and video components of the news packages, as seen in the far right column of the field texts. The interpretive analysis continued with repeated readings of those field texts, the organization of those field texts, and a refinement of the patterns of meanings that appeared at different television stations and in different years (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007).

This research continued through successive waves of interpretation, using the language and theoretical perspective of framing outlined in chapter two, following a blueprint described by Denzin and Lincoln (2008), in which they said:

The writer as interpreter moves from this (field) text to a research text: notes and interpretations based on the field text. This text is then recreated as a working interpretative document that contains the writer's initial attempts to make sense of what he or she has learned. Finally the writer produces the public text that comes to the reader. ... The interpretive practice of making sense of one's findings is both artistic and political (p. 26).

As with Reese and Lewis (2009), some of the first steps in the process resemble those taken in a quantitative content analysis of the data, providing descriptive statistical snapshots of the news texts. This level of analysis begins to sketch a picture of the "concepts and relations among those concepts" (Hertog & McLeod, 2001, p. 140). Then the analysis moves into a broader cultural approach, which Reese and Lewis (2009) describe as understanding how "underlying master narratives structure...concepts and guide the processing of new content. This approach emphasizes the dynamic aspect of frames, which are used to assimilate and makes sense of new information" (p. 780).

As the iterative process refined the interpretation of frames and how the news was framed, I also considered broader levels of dominant news framing that defined not just the different points of view in the debate, but the entire issue. In other words, the goal was to identify "a central organizing idea or story line that provides an unfolding strip of events weaving a connection among them" that then framed the story in terms of what "the controversy is about, the essence of the issue" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). For example, did those Iowa news stories suggest at their essence the retention vote controversy was about the function of a branch of government, the civil rights of Iowa's LGBTQ community, or some other fundamental organizing principle? Interpreting these

frames and broader news framing involved considering how “reporters and sources made use of pre-existing cultural resources, codes, and genres of interpretation” (Reese & Lewis, 2009, p. 780) to conduct this framing. The final results of this process, what Denzin and Lincoln (2008) called the public text, included examples from the news texts to support those interpretations, also an approach used by Reese and Lewis (2009).

Gathering Interview Data: Recruiting Subjects, Conducting Interviews

Three distinct groups were interviewed as part of this research. The first group included reporters who created the news packages studied in the first phase of the research. The second group included prominent issue advocates, or what Gamson and Modigliani (1989) referred to as frame sponsors, who appeared in those news stories. The third group included the news directors at the stations that agreed to take part in the research. I made an audio recording and transcribed each interview.

Interviewing is a well-established strategy for scholars hoping to understand how journalists think about their role as journalists and their work reporting the news (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Deuze, 2010; Lindlof, 1995). There is also a tradition of boosting the validity of interview results by triangulating with other methods such as surveys of news workers (Singer, 2004; Ekdale et al., 2015), ethnographic observation (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979), or news texts (Reese & Lewis, 2009). Interviews with journalists have also played an important role in research into coverage of LGBTQ issues (Gross, 2001; Moritz, 2007).

Because this part of the research involved human subjects, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained in accordance with institutional guidelines. The IRB approval required that all participants remain unnamed and their anonymity be preserved as much as possible despite the public profile of all participants in this research. Formal

letters of agreement from each station granting permission to invite employees to be interview subjects also were required (see Appendix D). The researcher was unable to track down four of the 22 reporters identified from archived stories at the three stations included in this study. Invitations were sent out to the remaining 18 (see Appendix E). Seven journalists participated in the hour-long interviews.

These semi-structured interviews were conducted in two ways. If the subject was still employed at the station, the interview was conducted at the station in an editing bay. During the interview the archived news package(s) that the journalists created would be watched, and I asked questions about the process of reporting that story (see Appendix F). For example, they would be asked if they could remember how the story got assigned to them, who they chose to interview, how they worked with a photographer to capture images and edit the final package, and why they made those choices. They were also asked to discuss their own application of journalistic ethics and practices to covering stories about same-sex marriage and other LGBTQ issues.

The stories in this research were reported three to five years before the interviews took place. To help bridge the expected memory gap, this approach borrowed from the anthropology field a tactic called “photo elicitation.” The method can be traced back to Collier (1957) who used photographs to jog and focus subjects’ memories, a process he described as resulting in interview recollections that were “precise and at times even encyclopedic” (p. 856). Harper (2002) noted that researchers had adapted the technique over the years to use a range of visual stimuli from artistic photographs to family snapshots to film in order to aid the recall of interview subjects. Some scholars have even provided interview subjects with cameras and later asked them about the pictures they had taken (Bagnoli, 2009).

Using a reporter's work as a memory aid has also been used in journalism studies, albeit in a slightly different way than this dissertation research. While studying the interaction between print journalists and sources, Reich (2006) used copies of news stories to help those reporters recall details of their newsgathering process in creating those stories. Because interview subjects in this dissertation were asked to remember specifics about stories they had covered years earlier, and because those stories were visual, a slight modification of the photo elicitation approach was a natural fit for this research.

The modified photo elicitation technique was possible with three of the seven reporters I interviewed, and accounted for five of the 29 news packages identified as relevant to this research. Interview subjects reported that watching their archived stories did stimulate their memories and helped them remember details about covering each story.

Four of the seven reporters, who together wrote nine of the 29 news packages studied here, no longer worked at the same station, having either moved to a new market or in some cases having left the news business altogether. In most of these cases, the person to be interviewed was only reachable by telephone. However, capturing the memory aid benefits of photo elicitation was attempted by sending a copy of a story transcript, without the interpretative notations, to the interview subject. While not as effective as viewing a recording of the news package, as with the reporters interviewed by Reich (2006), the participants I interviewed reported that being able to refer to the transcripts helped them remember particulars of covering those stories.

In addition to journalists, I talked with others whose job it was to influence journalists. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) identify a classification of professional advocates who act as frame "sponsors" involved in "speech making, interviews with journalists (and) advertising" with jobs that "breed sophistication about the news needs of

the media and the norms and habits of working journalists” (p. 6).

From viewing the news packages, I identified two issue advocates who rose to the level of frame sponsors as described by Gamson and Modigliani, one from each side of the issue. Both agreed to be interviewed, and were interviewed in person. Because the questions weren’t focused on specific recollections of individual stories, photo elicitation was not used during these semi-structured interviews. Questions for these frame sponsors (see Appendix G) explored their perceptions of interactions with the news media, as well as their strategies for getting their message to journalists and for getting those journalists to pass those messages or frames on to the public.

Finally, the news directors of all three participating stations were interviewed. As with the issue advocates, these semi-structured interviews were not focused on individual news stories so photo elicitation was not used. Instead, the questions (see Appendix H) involved the news management decisions, actions, and concerns related to these stories. As with reporters, the conversation was largely about news practices and how journalistic ethics and professional standards were engaged when stories about same-sex marriage became a part of election coverage. Once again, the interviews were flexible enough to follow the direction of the conversation that flowed from the prepared questions.

Analyzing the Interviews

Analysis of the interviews started with re-listening to the interviews to create full transcripts. I then coded and re-coded for themes (Ekdale, Singer, Tully, & Harmsen, 2015). To help identify themes and insights into the news framing process, the analysis drew upon previous work in the areas of sociology of news and news framing. As described in more detail in the previous chapter, 40 years of work in this area suggests journalists have sets of values, not always fully articulated, that nevertheless influence

what stories are covered and how they are covered (Gans, 1979, 2003; Deuze, 2010).

Intertwined with the values of newsroom culture are news practices that can be understood as an expression of those values and of the daily operations and allocation of resources to cover the news (Tuchman, 1978; 1997; Berkowitz, 1990; Schudson, 2011). Schudson (2010) notes the expression of these news values and practices on television has significant consequences for political coverage, and the resulting public understanding of the issues and people involved in the democratic process. He argues this has been true for decades, stating, “By the 1972 elections, television was the central forum of American national politics and everyone knew it” (Schudson, 2010, p. 283).

I started the interview analysis with knowledge of earlier findings about newsroom culture and applied those insights to the interviews in the Iowa case studied here. Particular attention was paid to comments pointing directly or through subtext to the influence of news values (Gans, 1979, 2003), the established rituals and practices of the newsgathering process (Tuchman, 1978), and the way reporters interacted with their sources (Berkowitz, 2009).

Using a process similar to the analysis of news texts described earlier in this chapter, I transcribed the audio recordings and identified and categorized and re-categorized themes using successive interpretative documents such as preliminary tables containing thematic descriptions. This process culminated in the final public text contained in chapter five.

Qualitative Reflexivity and Validity

Rather than making a claim of detachment, qualitative researchers demonstrate reflexivity by being forthright about their own perspective and rigorous in the application

of their chosen theories and methodologies (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007).

The logical positivistic goal of being an “impartial” researcher is not therefore a requirement of a qualitative study. However, the reflexive requirements of qualitative research dictate transparency from researchers about their preexisting ways of looking at an issue. Researchers have found honesty about their own position was more important than pursuing detachment. For example, Blee (2002), when interviewing women inside the Hate movement (neo-Nazi, skinhead, etc.), was able to establish rapport with interview subjects in this “unloved” group by being open about her non-agreement with the women’s views while promising to listen to what they had to say and to treat them fairly.

This honesty is essential to the validity of qualitative research. By the same token, Lindlof (1995) explains that failing to be transparent and reflective undermines that validity:

Validity is always at issue in qualitative research because of the danger that the researcher may impose his or her own unwarranted personal definitions on what is observed. This is especially true if he or she infers too much before the bulk of the data has been collected. One certainly cannot go into a scene as a blank slate simply waiting to be written on, but neither should one approach it with all prejudices left unexamined and intact. Striking an optimal balance is a difficult and probably endless task (p. 216).

I have identified at least two areas in which special attention to reflexivity is warranted. The first involves my active support for same-sex marriage; I have close gay and lesbian family and friends, some of whom who have gotten married since the *Varnum* decision. The second involves my professional background as a former radio and television

journalist who worked several years in Iowa.

In the first case, I recognized the need to constantly question assumptions and biases when conducting interviews and when collecting and analyzing data. Indeed, my position as an LGBTQ ally and an activist scholar provided its own incentive to “do it right,” creating as accurate and insightful a finished research product as possible. To do less would have been not only a disservice to the scholarship of the field, but also would compromise the utility of any findings and conclusions to social movements taking up the equality banner.

In the second case, I recognized that I needed to maximize the interpretations and insights made possible from having been a part of the news culture, while minimizing the risk of blind spots resulting from familiarity. I also recognized a potential reluctance to be critical because of past professional association. The sociology of news literature helps in this area, providing a body of research against which observations and conclusions may be compared.

In addition to an ongoing dedication to reflexivity during stages of individual interpretation and the application of inductive logic, this research will also exist within a methodological and theoretical framework that requires rigor of data collection and analysis. The process necessarily must be transparent and open to critique, always based on systematically produced and indexed field notes (Jensen, 2002).

Pan and Kosicki (1993) instruct framing researchers to interpret and identify frames based on the researchers’ understanding of meanings shared within a culture. But they do not stake claims of validity on the cleverness or inherent interpretative ability of an individual scholar. Instead, they also argue validity is derived from the “systematic procedures of gathering data of news texts in order to identify the signifying elements that

might be used by audience members” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 58).

Babbie (1998) suggests another way to address the question of validity is to aim for construct validity. This form of validity involves considering how elements of the text ought to theoretically behave. “Construct validity, then, can offer *weight of evidence* that your measure either does or doesn’t tap the quality you want it to measure, without providing definitive proof” (Babbie, 1998, p. 134). Or as Durham (1998) explains, a claim of construct validity should include the “demonstration of a significant resonance between reliably collected evidence and rigorously applied theory” (p. 106).

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS PART ONE: NEWS FRAMING IN LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS PACKAGES

This first analysis chapter describes local television news packages that included the topic same-sex marriage during the 2010 and 2012 election coverage seasons, and this chapter discusses how the news framing worked to define the issues and the values most salient to understanding the anti-retention campaign. The next chapter, with a focus on interviews with reporters, news directors, and spokespersons, will triangulate findings from this chapter regarding how and why certain themes of news framing became dominant and others subordinate.

Triangulation by looking at news products and talking with news workers has a long history in the news framing field, including Gitlin (1980) and Reese and Lewis (2009). This approach also takes inspiration from Grabe and Bucy (2002) who looked at televised political coverage and at the different roles of the producers of television news and the political operatives Grabe and Bucy refer to as image handlers.

This chapter gathers answers for the question asked in **RQ1** about how local television news framed the issues related to same-sex marriage leading up to the 2010 and 2012. It does so by starting with an overview of the most common frames identified in the news packages in this case. Next, this chapter looks at how the interplay of audio and video elements combined in the news packages to express those frames, as asked in **RQ1a**.

This chapter considers the questions of which frames appear to be dominant (**RQ1c**) and which are subordinate (**RQ1d**), as well as considering which types of sources appeared in the stories most often (**RQ1b**) and if and why news framing changed over time (**RQ1e & RQ1f**) and if there were differences among the stations (**RQ1g**). This analysis of television news packages ends by making an argument about what this news framing

meant within the context of these two election seasons (**RQ1h**).

As described in detail in chapter three, the framing analysis of news stories worked through several stages, starting with repeated viewings of news packages and the creation of field documents (see Appendices B and C). I then reviewed the field documents and created ever-narrowing lists of themes and “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7) that resolved into the categories of frames listed below in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

In all, I identified eight different frames that appeared in the news coverage. Four of these frames corresponded to the position of those who were upset over same-sex marriage legalization and wanted the justices ousted. Four others corresponded to those who either were supportive of same-sex marriage or judicial retention.

These eight specific frames were building blocks of patterns of news framing that over time created the dominant morality politics framing and the much less common civil rights news framing. These building block frames, through dominant, increasingly common, and unchallenged use, “add up to something bigger than an individual story” (Reese, 2001, p. 6). To put it another way, I argue that not only is it valuable to understand the ways reporters told stories that carried frames from opposing sides, but it is also important to understand the way the frames overlapped inside of the larger news framing process.

Identifying and Constructing the Most Common Frames

The eight frames never appeared alone in a story, but worked in some combination with other frames in the same category or counter to frames from the other side. In the overarching category labeled “Morality Politics” were frames that called for Iowa Supreme Court justices to be unseated in the wake of the *Varnum* decision (see Table 4.1). The

frames within this category, named after the general thrust of each particular argument against the justices, are: “judicial activism,” “traditional marriage,” “slippery slope,” and “will of the people.”

On the other side, labeled here as “Pro-Retention,” were frames that supported the justices, supported the LGBTQ community, or both (See Table 4.2). The frames in this category broke down to “justices were correct,” “same-sex marriage brings joy,” “protect the courts,” and “same-sex marriage as a civil right.” The second of these categories, “same-sex marriage brings joy,” is different from the others because 12 out of 16 times this frame appears only as a visual frame. As will be explored in more detail below, this meant file video was used as b-roll while the reporter was talking, without any supporting soundbites from a member of a same-sex couple.

Frame	Number of Stories in 2010 (% out of 21)	Number of Stories in 2012 (% out of 8)	Total Number of Stories (% out of 29)
Judicial Activism	17 (81%)	5 (63%)	22 (76%)
Traditional Marriage	12 (57%)	6 (75%)	19 (66%)
Slippery Slope	10 (48%)	3 (38%)	13 (45%)
Will of the People	8 (38%)	4 (50%)	12 (41%)

Table 4.1. Most Common Morality Politics/Anti-Retention Frames.
(Most stories contained more than one of these frames).

Table 4.1 shows that the most common morality politics frame was that the *Varnum* decision was an example of liberal judicial activism, having appeared in 80 percent of stories in 2010, and in nearly two-thirds of stories in 2012. This was followed by frames that suggested that *Varnum* was an attack on traditional marriage, it was a slippery slope toward an attack on other traditional values and rights, and that the whole idea of the Iowa Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage was a usurpation of the democratic will of the

people.

This count of frame frequency is not meant to suggest a one-to-one relationship between frequency and importance or dominance, a connection Reese (2001) cautions against. Instead, this frequency is meant to provide a sketch of the coverage, to be filled in later in this chapter during analysis of how each frame typically appeared in the news coverage.

What does start to come into early focus is how these frames “promote(d) a problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). In this case, these frames worked separately and together to tell a story that same-sex marriage was a problem, a problem caused by activist judges, judges who did something morally bad, and who should be punished with a “no” vote on their bid for retention.

Table 4.2, while also looking at the leading frames in this category, shows some importance differences with the framing described in Table 4.1. First, these frames simply showed up less often overall than the variations of frames related to morality politics. Second, the next most common frame in Table 4.2 almost always was carried only by visual images and natural sound, rather than the other seven frames that are communicated by combinations of visual components and soundbites from interviewed sources. Because this video was typically the only representation of the LGBTQ community in these stories, especially the stories in the weeks leading up to the election, this finding seems to be similar to what Moscovitz (2010) found in a study of broadcast network television news which displayed a pattern of video of, but few soundbites with, everyday gays and lesbians.

Frame	Number of Stories in 2010 (% out of 21)	Number of Stories in 2012 (% out of 8)	Total Number of Stories (% out of 29)
Justices Were Correct	12 (57%)	2 (25%)	14 (48%)
Same-Sex Marriages Bring Joy (usually just file video)	12 (57%)	4(50%)	16 (55%)
Protect The Courts	10 (47%)	3 (38%)	13 (45%)
Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right	7 (33%)	3 (38%)	10 (34%)

Table 4.2. Most Common Pro-Retention / Pro-Same-Sex Marriage Frames
(Most stories contained more than one of these frames).

If one considers only news framing examples that included a reporter’s narration or soundbite, by far the most common frames in Table 4.2 were the “justices were correct” and “protect the courts” frames. The framing showing the civil rights implications of the backlash to same-sex marriage were much less common. The civil rights framing, and to some degree the positive same-sex wedding ceremony video, represented a style of pro-retention framing that argued from the perspective of the LGBTQ community. This reflected fundamental differences with the “justices were correct” and “protect the courts” frames, which argued in favor of retention from a legal or governmental perspective.

Morality Politics...with a Twist

As discussed in detail in chapter two, morality politics refers to a particular way of framing a political debate so that the most salient characteristics of the debate hinge on questions of values, morals, or even sin. Wagenaar and Sietske (2012) described qualities of morality politics that include an “explicit ideology,” require little to no additional information for the lay person to feel like they have an informed opinion, is “impervious to facts,” plays to emotion, and can be “concerned more with the symbolism of heroic measures than the details of implementation” (p. 286).

The opposition to Iowa Supreme Court judicial retention fit well within this morality politics description. This opposition originated from the ideology of Christian

conservatism, and used religious tradition as the cause for opposing same-sex marriage. The backlash to same-sex marriage was charged emotionally. Regardless of experience with same-sex marriage or constitutional law, voters tended to feel they had enough information to have a strong opinion in this controversy. Given the fact the continued legality of same-sex marriage did not hinge on the retention vote, the impact of unseating the justices was symbolic. Soundbites from conservative sources often spoke of sending a message to any would-be activist judges.

However, there is one way in which morality politics were framed in this Iowa case differently from the description of morality politics in other political battles. For example, in several states in 2004 voters had to decide on ballot issues aimed at preventing same-sex marriages (Donovan, Tolbert, & Smith, 2008). There was no such ballot issue addressing same-sex marriage in Iowa in 2010, but three of the justices who issued the *Varnum* decision were up for retention. No Iowa justice had ever failed to be retained, and so conservative groups needed to connect the retention vote over the backlash to the same-sex marriage decision, thereby engaging the logics and potential benefits of morality politics. A successful campaign would need to tap into the anger and resentment that followed *Varnum* if it was going to gain any traction attracting voters' attention to a historically overlooked issue on the back of the ballot.

At the same time, shifting cultural norms in the first decade of the 21st century made vitriolic anti-gay rhetoric less acceptable to mainstream society (Barnhurst, 2007). This meant that conservative groups opposing retention needed to accomplish a balancing act. This connection between anger over same-sex marriage and judicial retention would need to be framed in way that would suggest valid reasoning other than simple revenge or a

dislike of gays and lesbians. In addition, anti-retention frames would need to undermine the legal experts who would line up to support the Iowa Supreme Court justices. All of this had to be packaged in a way that would be acceptable enough to reporters that they would include those frames in the resulting news stories. The end result of this process, the frames that appeared and the way reporters carried out the news framing of the anti-retention messages, is the focus of the next several sub-sections.

Judicial Activism, Traditional Marriage, Slippery Slope, Will of the People

Before tracing the process of various examples of news framing that will appear in the next several pages, it is necessary to spend some time discussing the way in which this dissertation approaches the challenge of using printed narrative to describe video. A television news package combines video, audio, soundbites, and reporter narration into a single multi-layered text. The simultaneity of these communication elements within the package can be a challenge to adequately describe in a printed-word-only narrative form.

As described in more detail in chapter three, this research borrows from work done in film and television studies (Howell & Negrieros, 2012; Metz, 1974; Rose, 2011) and visual framing studies (Grabe & Bucy, 2002) to structure the analyses of these news packages and overcome this challenge.

The approach used here will be to describe typical examples from the news packages in the narrative of this chapter, while placing in the appendices the corresponding excerpts from the field notes that demonstrate graphically the way the audio and video components worked together. As explained in chapter three, these field notes have a left-hand column that contains the words a viewer would hear spoken by the reporter or one of the sources interviewed by the reporter. The right hand column shows a description of the

other video and audio elements that are happening while the reporter or source is talking.

Story 1 (see Appendix I) that aired in the Des Moines market on August 1, 2010 was the first story to air of all of those studied in this research. The story centered on a rally at the state capitol by conservative group National Organization for Marriage (NOM) and a counter-rally by same-sex marriage supporters. The rally was one of several that would be held as part of a bus tour around the state that generated support for, and coverage of, the anti-retention effort.

Within the first 20 seconds the story carried several of the visual and textual components representing the broader morality politics news framing by introducing the “activist judges,” “will of the people,” and “traditional marriage” frames (see Appendix L). The story starts with a few seconds of a crowd of about 50 people standing outside near the state capitol building and chanting, “Let us vote!” The reporter’s narration then starts by explaining the chant: “The organization’s message is simple: let the people vote to overturn the Iowa Supreme Court ruling allowing same-sex marriage” (Story 1).

While viewers hear the reporter, they see a montage of protesting crowd members complete with handmade and professionally made signs as would be expected at a political rally (Grabe & Bucy, 2002). These signs, which figure prominently in the series of shots, featured slogans like: “Marriage Equals (with a male and female figure with a plus sign between them)” and the even more defiant: “Don’t Mess with Marriage.” These visuals connected directly with the morality politics goal of making this issue about a battle over same-sex marriage.

After the reporter finished speaking, the story cut to a soundbite with Brian Brown from NOM, a soundbite that worked to connect the idea that it was the justices up for retention who behaved as liberal activists. “We’re here activating and energizing

supporters here in Iowa to stand up and say enough is enough. Courts should not be imposing their will on the people of the state” (Story 1). This soundbite, the reporter’s narration, and the natural sound that started the piece all provide examples of what the “will of the people” frame looked and sounded like in news coverage.

This example also typifies how the frames that act as components of the overarching morality politics news framing often worked together, sometimes simultaneously, as when the reporter is describing NOM’s wish to have a vote on same-sex marriage (will of the people), while the images are of people holding posters clearly supporting the traditional view of marriage. Meanwhile, the entire point of the story was that there was a new campaign to get voters to cast ballots against the retention of three of the justices who were a part of the *Varnum* decision.

In looking at how frames were communicated in a concrete sense in this example that used words and images typical throughout the coverage, it is possible to expand the line of inquiry into deeper constructionist and critical framing questions. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that news framing enters the story construction process in three possible ways: media practices, sponsor activities, and cultural resonances.

In Story 1, this was event-driven coverage, or what Boorstin (1992) called a pseudo-event, with a rally and counter-rally that provided easy access to people for interviews and easy opportunities to capture video of demonstrators. In less than a half minute, this story captured the dramatic elements of people chanting and provided images of signs about same-sex marriage, a topic seen as controversial and, thus, newsworthy (Gans, 1979; Schudson 2011). Having provided an event and established itself as newsworthy, NOM cleared the first hurdle to getting its frames into the news and before the public.

The example from Story 1 also gives insight into the ways in which conservative activists acted as frame sponsors. NOM, and other groups such as the Family Leader, had consistent success with getting their spokespeople interviewed and getting their visual framing in front of news cameras. As Grabe and Bucy (2002) explained, the careful visual staging of planned events like rallies and speeches is part of the tool kit for any media savvy group, and has been for many years.

Not only did conservative groups successfully get their visual frames into the newsgathering process by gathering groups of protestors and making sure those protestors had appropriate signs, but also through the use of a giant visual frame on wheels. In both 2010 and 2012 the campaigns to unseat Iowa Supreme Court justices used elaborately painted tour buses (see Appendix M). The buses accomplished three significant goals in terms of fulfilling their role of influencing the construction of the resulting news framing by creating spectacles that would be “interesting and palatable to journalists” (D’Angelo & Kuypers, 2010, p. 1) .

First, as they traveled the state, at each stop a scheduled rally would attract news coverage. Advance notice of the stops gave newsrooms time to schedule the necessary resources for coverage, making it a relatively easy catch in what Tuchman (1978) called the “news net.” Because the tour brought the sources to the reporters around the state, it also reduced logistical barriers to coverage (Berkowitz, 1990). In some cases one rally spurred some kind of nearby counter-rally, such as seen in stories 1, 14, 15, 23, and 27. In this way the bus tour increased its own efficacy in getting coverage by, even if accidentally, catering to the journalistic norm of balance by providing easy access to competing spokespersons (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

Second, the tour buses provided a backdrop for speakers at a rally and an eye-

catching image for news photographers, a vital ingredient when dealing with television news (Grabe & Bucy, 2002). In addition, because one common technique in television news is to write to the video, sometimes the video influenced the reporter track. For example, in Story 15 (see Appendix N), the story opened with a reporter saying: “One look at the big red bus and it’s easy to see Iowans for Freedom are fired up.” At the same time the audience heard these words, they saw a wide angle shot of the bus (see Appendix M) that has a slow zoom into the front of the vehicle, followed by cuts to medium-tight shots of parts of the bus’s paint job. In one, the viewer sees a picture of Justice Wiggins with the words “Vote NO activist judges,” followed by another quote attributed to Wiggins that makes it seem he would like to get around the Iowa Constitution.

The third way the tour buses exemplified the way frame sponsors influence the way journalists framed the news was that the buses carried sources who could be classified as elites. Not always the same person at each rally, the people on the bus included heads of organizations such as NOM and The Family Leader and political figures such as conservative presidential hopefuls and an Iowa congressman. Not only did members of this group meet journalistic norms for source selection as outlined by Johnson-Cartee (2005), but also capitalized on “power and resources necessary to attract and sometimes command journalistic attention” (p. 220).

I argue that the “activist judges” and “will of the people” frames were part of a rhetorical articulation which simultaneously linked the retention vote with the *Varnum* decision and attempted to distance the anti-retention vote from accusations of anti-gay bigotry. However, the fullest breadth of articulations with conservative hot-button issues took place in the “slippery slope” frame.

A story that aired on October 17, 2010, carried this frame in a soundbite from

Republican Iowa Congressman Steve King, who said Iowans should vote to unseat the justices because “...they will make more outrageous decisions. And judges who can find unimagined rights will take your rights away” (Story 26). As with the other frames that fit under the morality politics framing umbrella, the slippery slope frame was consistently argued by conservative frame sponsors in 2010 and 2012. A soundbite that aired in a news package on September 9, 2012 with conservative activist Bob Vander Plaats captured the thrust of this argument:

If they'll redefine the institution of marriage they won't even blink an eye when they take away your private property, when they take away your guns , when they tell you how to educate your children or when they take away your religious liberty or when they take way your freedom of the press (Story 15).

The example from Story 15 is far from an isolated moment of overzealousness on the part of a person being interviewed. The *Varnum* decision was consistently linked with these and other typically conservative fears. In addition to the concerns mentioned above, at various times in the 29 news packages conservative activists are on camera suggesting that the justices or the *Varnum* decision threatened families, motherhood, children, churches, the Boy Scouts, traditional values, and the foundational structure of society.

This approach makes sense in terms of the role of articulation, as discussed in chapter two. Hall (1985) says the point of articulation is to create a connection between two things, which require no inherent similarities, and create a belief that these things function together in some way. As part of a hegemonic process, articulation can be a tool used for political and ideological ends (Kinefuchi, 2015).

In the “slippery slope” news framing in 2010 and 2012, the articulation was

between the already decided *Varnum* case and a set of suggested threats. The attempt was to articulate the new legality of same-sex marriage with a host of hot-button conservative issues, and to articulate an already-decided case with some hypothetical future action. Remembering that the whole point of the exercise was to mobilize conservative voters, this articulation ‘upped the ante’ by tapping into as many emotional triggers as possible. It also preempted criticism of the futility of voting based on dissatisfaction with the *Varnum* ruling when the vote would not change the results of that ruling.

It was relatively easy to express this slippery slope frame in a soundbite, but harder to express in terms of a visual frame that might get picked up by reporters. Signs and slogans at live events accused the justices of acting as activists who ignored the rule of law or the will of the people in their decisions. But the more powerful visual framing of the slippery slope concept would come from a different source: excerpts from televised anti-retention campaign ads. During the 2010 race, NOM (2010) bought ads in television markets around the state targeting the justices up for retention in November. The ads were styled after typical political attack ads, with ominous music, an outraged-sounding announcer, and text blasting the targets of the ad. The NOM ad also featured a polished production with eye-catching visuals (see Appendix O).

In addition to narration explaining what the “activist judges” were threatening, the ad had montages of images to reinforce this message. In one shot, as pictures of the three justices revolved in the background, a young woman was kissing a baby in slow motion. In the following shots, a background intended to look like the Constitution had a series of revolving snapshots showing scenes a viewer was to interpret as under threat because of *Varnum*. In one snapshot, a parent helped her child with homework. In another, hunters in camouflage and blaze orange posed for a picture. In another what looked like a Boy Scout

saluted while standing in front of a church. Revolving with that image was another of kids standing and facing a flag with their hands on their hearts, and a young family on a picnic.

The reason this description of a campaign ad is relevant to a news framing study is because portions of the ad appeared in television news packages, carrying with them the “slippery slope” and other frames. In one case, Story 4, the story was about the unprecedented attack ad aimed at Iowa Supreme Court judges. In other stories, the ads provided visual and audio content that could be edited into news packages. One reporter interviewed for this research said the NOM ad visuals sometimes helped meet the challenge of providing compelling video for an abstract concept, as will be discussed in chapter five. As with some of the observations about the frame sponsoring benefits of the bus tour, again a well-funded and organized campaign found itself better able to influence the final news framing by journalists. As Carragee and Roefs (2004) might point out, these would be cases in which the news framing that appeared in the final news stories offered clues about the exercise of power. Existing social, financial, and political capital combined to allow conservative groups to launch this campaign and get it covered in the news, thereby reproducing its ability to generate those forms of capital.

At first glance it might appear that only the frames that directly engaged traditional or same-sex marriage would have been most clearly part of the broader morality politics news framing. But as Reese (2001) argued, frames organize information culturally in a way that relies upon a viewer to “marshal a cultural understanding and keep on doing so beyond the immediate information” (p. 6). This opens a door to greater understanding of what is happening in the news framing in the 2010 and 2012 stories.

The reason the “slippery slope,” “will of the people,” and “activist judges” frames all fit within morality politics news framing is because they all relate to a body of

conservative cultural cues and understandings. Same-sex marriage flies in the face of conservative Christian ideology that is deeply connected with conservative politics. But other ongoing political and social issues and certain tropes also resonated with the same group of conservative voters.

The specter of liberal judges following the lead of left-leaning politicians has haunted conservative political rhetoric for decades (Luker, 1984). Conservative rhetoric has long stoked fears that the government would soon begin confiscating guns. In 2010, the Boy Scouts were part of an ongoing controversy over rejection of gay scouts and leaders. The mantra “family values” is a perennial cornerstone of conservative political campaigns. Conservative talk show hosts and pundits have long lumped these and other issues under the umbrella of an ongoing culture war, and so in myriad ways the interconnection between these issues has been firmly linked in political rhetoric.

Another piece of the cultural puzzle in 2010 and 2012 that influenced the resulting news framing was the lessening acceptability of outright homophobic statements. Conservatives argued they were not targeting LGBTQ Iowans because they also claimed to be upset over activist judges, had a desire for a popular vote on same-sex marriage, and were afraid of slippery slopes to a number of imagined future lost rights. They argued what they were really worried about was their interpretation of the proper functioning of government and society, an approach more palatable to shifting mainstream sensitivities than overt attacks on the LGBTQ community. However, it was also clear that same-sex marriage legalization was driving the attack on the justices. Further, by arguing side-issues that still resonated within the same pool of conservative concerns as same-sex marriage, the slippery slope frame was well within the boundaries of morality politics.

Story 8, which aired on October 13, 2010, captured this phenomenon most clearly.

The story was about a group called Interfaith Alliance, which was the only religious group shown in any of the 29 stories which supported same-sex marriage. In the story, the Interfaith Alliance criticized conservative Bob Vander Plaats and The Family Leader for taking anti-retention campaign contributions from the American Family Association (AFA), a group that advocated the removal of gays and lesbians from public office and other anti-gay measures.⁹ Vander Plaats responded to the charges, saying, “We have no accountability for their comments...they’re just being a supporter. We have a lot of other supporters” (Story 8). However, later in the story the conservative spokesman defended AFA by arguing that the real extremists were the people supporting same-sex marriage.

This exchange captured the dilemma of the official conservative campaign to unseat the justices. The campaign needed to tap into conservative anger over same-sex marriage and would have risked alienating that support with outright rejection of anti-LGBTQ messages and groups. But there was also at least some appearance of distancing from those groups and their messages.

Defending Against Morality Politics

When the National Organization for Marriage and the Family Leader launched campaigns in August of 2010 there appeared, even in the earliest news packages, groups of people who showed up to counter-protest. These early counter-demonstrators largely held up signs and spoke in support of same-sex marriage and LGBTQ rights. It would be a few weeks before a group made up predominately of Iowa attorneys would form Iowans for Fair and Impartial Courts and launch some kind of coordinated counter-campaign, which would shift the focus to judges and courts.

⁹ The American Family Association is listed as an “extremist group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Judges Were Correct, Protect the Courts, Same-Sex Marriages Bring Joy, and Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right

Entman (2007) argued that frames should be understood as more than just a sharing of quotes or opinions, as also encouraging “target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way” (p. 164). Or as Gamson and Modigliani (1987) put it, frames provide a larger meaning to the news stories by providing some kind of “central organizing idea” (p. 143). The frames defending the justices can be thought of as having aligned with one of two central organizing ideas. The first was typified by a desire to protect the justices or Iowa’s judicial system. The second, relatively less prominent in the Iowa coverage, organizing idea was typified by framing the issue as one of civil rights with a concern about the impact of the anti-retention campaign on members of the Iowa LGBTQ community.

The frames that explicitly defended the judges and the courts almost always featured some kind of legal expert or other elite source, such as a high-ranking state politician. For example, in Story 4, the story focusing on the NOM ad, the reporter interviewed the district court judge who first ruled Iowa’s old marriage law unconstitutional. This decision at the trial court level started the *Varnum* case’s journey to the Iowa Supreme Court. In the story (see Appendix Q) Judge Robert Hanson tells viewers, “Those justices did exactly what they were required to do, namely, to assess the constitutionality of the particular statute.” As the reporter introduced this sound bite, the visual framing reinforced the concept of professional expertise, by showing a middle-aged man in a dress shirt and tie talking to the reporter in an otherwise empty courtroom. The air of official expertise continued during the soundbite, as Hanson spoke in calm, measured

tones, patiently explaining legal principles. Then the reporter track continued by paraphrasing Hanson's position, "Hanson says this ad is an abuse of the justice retention process. He says the retention is for Iowans to determine if justices are fit to judge, not based on popularity and how they have ruled on a particular issue" (Story 4).

This messaging and style was typical of the various sources who expressed these pro-justice frames throughout the body of coverage examined here. As D'Angelo and Kuypers (2010) point out, journalists needed to draw upon sources' frames as they reported the news. Even though journalists could add frames, journalistic norms typically required the news framing reflected in some way what comes from news sources.

At the same time, Iowa journalists had the power to pick who they interviewed for these stories. In the Iowa television news packages the interviews that balanced conservative arguments were largely with elite sources. It was not surprising that the news framing patterns in the coverage looked like they did. As argued in chapter two, this reliance on elite sources and the resulting frames they sponsored began to suggest a hegemonic effect of these perspectives had been adopted as normal or natural.

The visual framing surrounding these elite sources reinforces this hegemonic critique, that journalists paid much closer attention to elite and official sources than everyday LGBTQ Iowans. For example, in Story 4 (See Appendix P), Judge Hanson appears professionally dressed and the interview is conducted in an official setting: an empty courtroom. While not all of the interviews throughout the 2010 and 2012 coverage were in courtrooms, the visual framing of the interviews tended to support the expert credentials of the source. For example, some interviews had shelves of legal books in the background. Others had the state capitol building. These visual cues reinforced the official

status of these interview subjects.

Other visuals and supporting background audio that supported the pro-judge, pro-courts framing included video of signs asking voters to vote “yes” on retention, shots of the exterior and courtrooms of the Iowa Supreme Court building, still images of the justices, and file video of the justices sitting on the bench during a court hearing. These visual frames underscored the expertise and officialdom of these elite sources, but did not carry a narrative message in the way the same-sex wedding video did.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the most common pro-retention frame in the news coverage was typified by the argument that justices were correct in their decision when they applied the Iowa constitution’s equal protection clause to the *Varnum* case. Purely by the numbers, the framing of same-sex marriage as a cause for joy and celebration was the second most commonly occurring frame. However, in 12 of the 16 times news packages showed same-sex marriage in a positive light, the work of the frame was done with file video without an accompanying soundbite of an LGBTQ source talking about the impact of the anti-retention campaign on them or their families.

This is another case in which Reese’s (2001) point about frequency not always being the most important characteristic in news framing seems to apply. This research argues that the numbers of frames in this case could mislead a person into believing the civil rights aspects of the story reached a rough parity with the morality politics news framing. However, this research argues that the rarity of actual voices from the Iowa LGBTQ community, particularly in the weeks leading up to the elections, diminished the

framing impact of the pro-same-sex marriage images.¹⁰ This is not to say that the visual frames were not important or potentially powerful, but that complimentary combinations of video and soundbites make stronger use of the communicative power of the television medium (Grabe & Bucy, 2002).

Examples from Story 22 and Story 26, as shown in Appendices R and S respectively, typified the kinds of video seen in the news packages and how that video was used to help tell the stories. Story 22 was a news package about a speech that embattled Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Marcia Ternes gave at a college. The reporter summarized the background, “In 2009, Ternes’s court struck down a state law defining marriage as between a man and woman. The court ruled it violated the equal protection clause of the Iowa constitution” (Story 22). While the reporter spoke, a series of shots built a *mise-en-scene* that told a story of same-sex wedding happiness. The close up of a young girl and a man holding long branches pulled back to reveal they were standing on the steps of a courthouse, and as the view widened they and others raised the branches to form an arch under which two women dressed in white pantsuits walked while each held the hand of a young boy between them. Everyone on the screen was smiling, laughing, or cheering. This cut to a tight shot of two hands holding each other, presumably the hands of the recently married couple. The scene then cut to an entirely different place and two different women holding a small child and exchanging an embrace and kiss. However, the only soundbites in the piece were from Ternes, captured while she spoke at the podium.

Story 26 details how Vander Plaats’ attack on the Supreme Court justices alienated

¹⁰ While a viewer with conservative sensibilities might have a negative reaction to video of a same-sex couple getting married, hugging, or kissing, for the purposes of this dissertation these are classified as positive representations based upon the apparent strongly positive emotional response of the people in the video.

former staff member and friend Dan Moore. In fact, by the time this story aired in October of that year, Moore was the head of the group Iowans for a Fair and Impartial Court, which formed ostensibly to educate Iowans about the state's judicial system but was for all practical purposes formed to argue against the anti-retention campaign. Soundbites in the story were from either Vander Plaats or Moore, and focused on either the constitutional appropriateness of the *Varnum* decision, the appropriateness of the anti-justice campaign, or personal criticisms of each for the other.

As in Story 22, some of the file video used in the story invited the viewer to consider the issue in terms other than legality and governmentality. At one point while the reporter set up a soundbite from Moore about legal issues, what appeared on the screen was a shot of two women apparently being married to each other. This was followed by a close up shot of their hands, and then a wider shot of people around them clapping and smiling. A little later in the story, as the reporter paraphrased Vander Plaats' claims the *Varnum* ruling was judicial activism, his anti-*Varnum* sentiment was juxtaposed with file video of one man sliding a wedding band onto the finger of another man while they and the woman officiating appeared very happy.

This use of video of same-sex couples celebrating is theoretically relevant from a cultural perspective because of what it suggests about the culture inside and surrounding these news departments. Berkowitz (2010) argues that "texts that news organizations produce...represents key values and meanings" of the newsroom and society (p. xii). As noted in the discussion about the acceptability of sources, so also television news must weigh the acceptability of video. With the widespread use of video of same-sex couples getting married, hugging, and kissing the texts offer clues as to what reporters and news

departments felt were acceptable representations of LGBTQ persons. Not only are these clues evidenced in the news texts themselves, but also came up in the interviews that will be discussed in chapter five.

More than just visual filler, the celebratory video challenged the various versions of the morality politics framing that suggested same-sex marriage directly threatened a host of other societal institutions or was an early warning that those societal institutions were about to be threatened. The joyful emotions in the wedding video countered the sentiment that same-sex marriage as a “bad thing.” But as argued above, despite the positive emotional content of the visuals they nevertheless failed to capture the full range of communication available in the television medium, in the majority of cases. This would have stunted the ability of the visual frame to accomplish the goal of defining the issue around a concern for the civil rights of LGBTQ Iowans.

In 10 of the 29 stories studied for this research, frames appeared that suggested the attack on judicial retention was best understood as an attack on the civil rights of the LGBTQ community, although even when present it was not typically the dominant frame in those stories. An example of this framing comes from a story about Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Marcia Ternus’s speech at an Eastern Iowa college forum in late September of 2010 (See Appendix U). The story began with a reporter saying, “Slavery in the 1830s. Segregation in the 1950s. Now same-sex marriage in 2010. Chief Justice Marsha Ternus made that comparison to a room full of Loras College students today. She says gay marriage is this generation’s social issue” (Story 20). The package made the connection even more clear with a soundbite from Ternus, “As these cases show, respect for civil rights has a rather long and remarkable tradition in Iowa” (Story 20).

In this part of the story the video of Ternus speaking and people listening mostly worked to establish place. The story later used file video of same-sex couples celebrating weddings, as described earlier in this chapter. This example from Ternus was remarkable because it was a rare example of an official source focusing on the civil rights aspect of this issue. More typically, if a story had a soundbite expressing the civil rights frame, it would have been from counter-demonstrators picked from the crowd or from same-sex couples interviewed the day after the election.

The frames that portrayed same-sex marriage as joyful and same-sex marriage as a civil right, whether through soundbites or video, suggested a different definition of the anti-retention efforts. Entman (1993) would argue this then changes the way the frame invites the audience to evaluate the moral dimensions of the issue. Rather than seeing the moral dilemma as a tension between tradition and a branch of government, it recasts the tension as between tradition and human rights. In the first formulation, the government and its agents were cast as the impersonal villains attacking the rights of conservative Iowa citizens. In the second, far less common, approach, tradition became impersonal and the Iowans under attack were members of the LGBTQ community.

Which Voices and to What Effect? Interview Subjects and Frame Dominance

As discussed in chapter two, there is a transactional quality to news framing, a shared control. In the Iowa case, interview subjects provided their own frames that reporters then decided to use, ignore, counter, or modify in the news reporting process (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). Reporters needed to base reports on what they actually gathered and observed which placed some limits on the flexibility reporters had when framing their stories. At the same time, part of the newsgathering process was deciding

which sources to interview and how to use those interviews within the boundaries of professional reporting norms (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

Most Frequent Soundbite Subjects

Research Question 1b (**RQ1b**) asks, “Who are the most common frame sponsors in the coverage?” As discussed in chapter two, the frame sponsors being considered in this question are the sponsors who get included in the news packages as sound bites. Table 4.3 (see below) provides a summary of the findings that answer RQ1b, followed by a discussion of what those findings mean.

Looking at all 29 stories, Bob Vander Plaats appeared in a soundbite in 13, or in nearly half of them. Conservative sources other than Vander Plaats spoke in stories seven times. This meant that in 20 stories there was a soundbite with a conservative spokesperson. On the other side of the issue, a similar number of stories (18) featured a sound bite from an attorney, legal expert, or other public official. In all cases except the story about a college forum talk by Chief Justice Marcia Ternes described above, these elite sources discussed the legal appropriateness of the *Varnum* ruling or the need to protect Iowa’s judicial system. In only six stories were members of the LGBTQ community featured speaking about same-sex marriage or how they saw and interpreted the anti-retention campaign, with three of those (Stories 24, 25, & 28) coming the day after either the 2010 or 2012 elections.

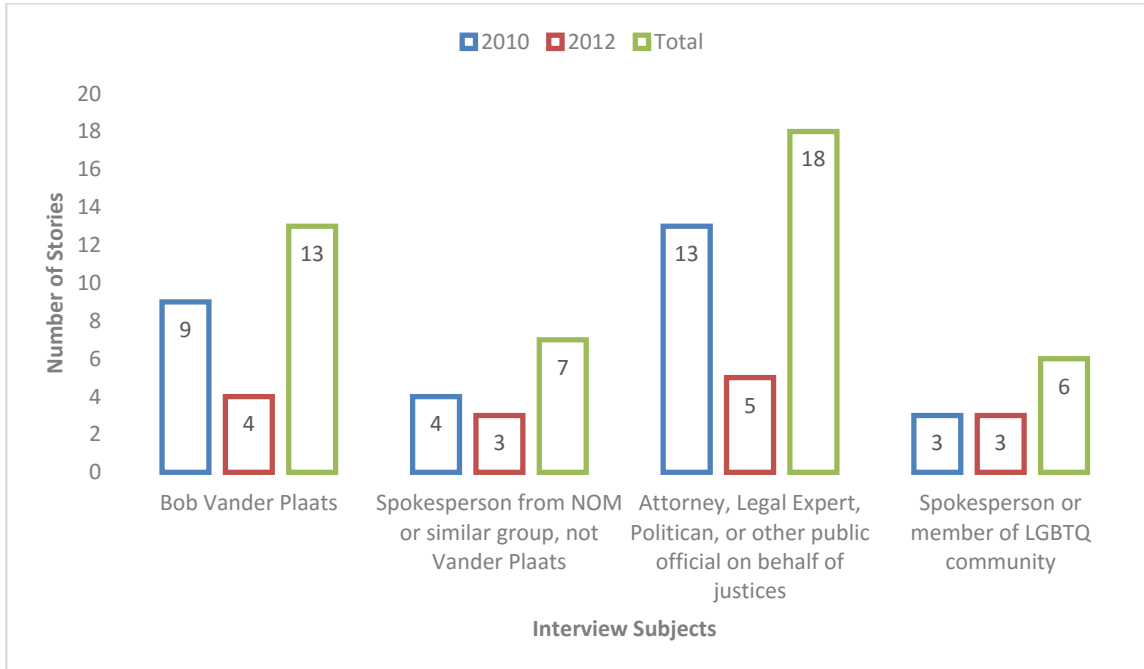


Table 4.3. Top Interview Sources by Number of Stories in Which They Appear

One category in this table is somewhat different from the others, in that the only individually named source is Bob Vander Plaats, head of conservative group The Family Leader. I separated him out of the group of other conservative spokespersons in this table precisely because his frequent appearances were unique in the coverage. In the other categories the same individual interview subject rarely shows up more than once in both years combined, and only one person, Donna Red Wing from One Iowa, showed up in three stories. In 23 of 29 stories about an anti-retention campaign that was spurred by legalization of same-sex marriage, no same-sex couples or clearly identified members of the LGBTQ community were shown in a speaking role.

This research argues these counts are important not as a way to keep score, but in the way they speak to underlying news values. These findings support the idea that journalists tended strongly to rely on elite sources, in this case for both sides of this particular issue. As Johnson-Cartee (2005) argues, this can be a result of social and

geographic proximity and resources to attract coverage.

In the Iowa case, the overall story appears to be driven by conservatives upset about same-sex marriage legalization. Without them and their campaign, there is nothing newsworthy about the judicial retention vote. Once those conservative groups decided to target the justices, they were able to be taken seriously via the benefits of financial and organizational resources and name recognition. Once journalists found themselves covering the story, the journalistic value of balance demanded they get an opposing viewpoint (Schudson & Anderson, 2009). To achieve this balance, journalists strongly favored other elite sources, and with them soundbites that carried the frames defining the issue in terms of legality and governmental agencies.

Dominant and Subordinate Frames

Wagenaar and Sietske (2012) describe morality politics as an issue defined by its ideology that engages an emotional reaction without requiring supporters to gain or be bothered by contradicting facts or expertise, with a willingness to accept goals either concrete or symbolic. As argued at the beginning of this chapter, the Iowa case involved a new twist on this formula in that conservative groups needed to engage retention on the level of morality politics while also suggesting they were really concerned about issues of judicial activism or some less-than-democratic breach of the will of the public.

With this in mind, this research found the morality politics news framing to be dominant overall in 2010 and 2012 television news packages (**RQ1c**). Most obviously, the various frames that fit under the umbrella of morality politics news framing appear in greater frequency and consistency in the coverage (see Table 4.1). In addition, the way reporters sought balance for anti-retention arguments often did so with frames that did little

to challenge the way conservative groups were defining the issues through the morality framing.

The frames that came from the conservative sources repeatedly linked the conservative morality-based objections to seemingly neutral questions of proper government. Questioning the legality of a state supreme court to rule on the constitutionality of a law, which is explicitly the job of a state supreme court, made sense as a political strategy when linked to the logics of morality politics.

When reporters sought balance to conservative groups arguing from within the morality politics framework, they often talked to legal and political elites. These sources argued in terms of the judges correctly interpreting the constitution or the need to protect the courts, but rarely mentioned the civil rights dimensions of the controversy. While seeming to provide the balance of frames and counter-frames (e.g.: “activist judges” vs. “judges were correct”), it did little to challenge the way morality politics framing defined the issue and its moral dimensions.

As a result this research argues that the resulting news framing, while including sources who argued against some of the claims made by conservative groups, often remained wholly within the morality politics framing established by conservatives. The “judges were correct” and “protect the courts” frames could be seen as reinforcing the morality politics news framing because they tacitly acknowledged the legitimacy of arguing this topic was about judges and courts and not civil rights. To the extent reporters selected these elite sources because it seemed natural or common sense, as discussed further in chapter five, it is possible to see the hegemonic at work (Williams, 1977).

The difference becomes easier to understand when considering the subordinate frame (**RQ1d**) identified by this research, which is the civil rights news framing. This frame cast the anti-retention vote as concerned primarily with making a symbolic attack on the civil rights of the LGBTQ community.

The civil rights frame was most evident in soundbites or reporter tracks that defined the anti-retention campaign and resulting debate as, at its core, a civil rights issue. It did this explicitly in soundbites calling it a civil rights issue or implicitly when stories considered the emotional impact of the campaign on same-sex couples and their families. The civil rights frame appeared in only seven of the news packages that aired in the weeks before the 2010 or 2012 elections (see also Table 4.2), and could only be considered the dominant frame in two of those stories. The other three times (Stories 24, 25, and 28) were reaction stories the day after the elections.

These last three stories, which all focused on the emotional impact of the anti-retention campaign on same-sex couples and their families, suggest that considering the perspective of same-sex couples talking about being same-sex couples was a valid journalistic choice in telling this story. Yet it was an angle that apparently seemed less valid during the pre-election public debate. Chapter five will explore the reasoning behind this choice in the analysis of reporter and news director interviews.

Changes over Time and by Location

As described above, this dissertation argues that the morality politics news framing was dominant overall in the Iowa television news coverage, and the competing civil rights frame was significantly less common. One of the questions this dissertation asks is if there was a shift over time in the dominant and subordinate nature of these two frames (**RQ1e**),

such as what Reese and Lewis (2009) described in the arc of acceptance of the ‘war on terror’ frame.

This research did not find the same kind of three-step progression Reese and Lewis (2009) found. The biggest difference between 2010 and 2012 coverage was that there were considerably fewer stories in 2012, but the general pattern of framing was not very different from year to year. However, this research did find evidence of some shifts in what kinds of framing were dominant within each year’s anti-retention campaign coverage.

This research also found evidence that in the Iowa stories studied here the morality politics framing behaved in a similar fashion to the ‘war on terror’ frame in other ways. As argued above, the morality politics framing in this case was articulated with concepts of judicial activism and governmental operations. This meant even though stories featured soundbites from competing sources, when stories balanced conservative spokespersons with elites discussing legality or the value of Iowa’s court system, both sides were arguing the issue as defined by the conservative campaign. In contrast, when reporters focused on the civil rights aspect of the story, either through sources who discussed the issue explicitly in terms of civil rights or on the impact of the anti-retention campaign on LGBTQ Iowans, the morality politics frame was challenged.

Looking more closely at the changes over time, the times when the civil rights framing most clearly challenged the morality politics framing tended to be in August, the first month of anti-retention campaign stories in each year, and again the day after elections. With just one exception (Story 8), stories that aired in September, October, and the first days of November saw morality politics as the dominant news framing.

Constructionist framing theory and sociology of news help account for the meaning behind these shifts in news framing (**RQ1f**). One part of constructionist framing theory is that one way frames enter a story is through media practices (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) and one of the deeply entrenched guiding principles of journalistic practices is the desire to be perceived as providing balance in stories while avoiding the perception of having taken a side (Gans, 1979; Schudson & Anderson, 2009).

Based on what appears in the packages, as Election Day approached the less likely it was the civil rights frame would be dominant in a given story, or even show up outside of a possible implication carried by same-sex wedding celebration videos. Constructionists also consider the role of frame sponsors in the newsgathering process, and based on the stories themselves as groups formed that spoke out against the anti-retention campaign those groups provided for reporters elite legal experts and politicians. This would be expected to have some impact on the resulting news framing. But it also seems that reporters might have felt increasingly uncomfortable looking outside the confines of elite sources who limited their engagement with the controversy to issues of government.

This contrasts with the seemingly freer approach to seeking non-elite sources from the LGBTQ community for post-election reaction stories. Presumably, those same-sex couples also had feelings about the anti-retention campaign before Election Day. In chapter five, this dissertation again considers this issue of when civil rights framing was, and was not, deemed journalistically appropriate through interviews with journalists and news directors.

While I found mostly similar kinds of coverage among the three stations, there were still a few noticeable differences between them (**RQ1g**). The most obvious difference was

that there were more stories overall by the Des Moines station, followed by the Eastern Iowa station, and then the Western Iowa station. This is not surprising, however, because the larger markets tend to have more reporters, photographers, and other resources that translates into the ability to tell more stories. What is more interesting is the slightly different tenors of each station's overall coverage.

All stations covered the same bus tour, used similar file video from same-sex weddings and the NOM attack ad, and had soundbites with many of the same elite sources from the same pro- and anti-retention groups. However, the Des Moines market coverage relied most heavily on elite sources for all soundbites. That is not to say the Des Moines station ignored the perspective of the LGBTQ community. This perspective got top billing in Story #13, aired in August of 2012 as the retention vote was again being targeted by conservatives. It was a story about a panel discussion and meeting by LGBTQ advocacy group One Iowa to discuss strategies to help support Justice Wiggins, spurred by the results of the 2010 retention vote. But again, the soundbites were either from elites or given from crowd members in the context of speaking at a podium at a forum controlled by elite sources. The Des Moines station did portray same-sex couples and their families in a favorable light through the use of video as explained earlier, but did not feature stories during the time frames under study from the perspective of 'average' LGBTQ community members, something the station did do at times outside of the election season window.

The Eastern Iowa station also had a story about a One Iowa meeting to discuss political strategy, but this one was in the first week of August in 2010 as conservatives were starting to launch their anti-retention efforts. As a result the meeting focused on Iowa legislative races, a topic eclipsed after this point by the retention vote. The Eastern Iowa

station did twice air news packages that were dominated by the perspective of same-sex couples, with soundbites with these Iowans and video of them with their kids. The Western Iowa station carried a similar type of story. All three of these stories aired the day after the election, and both of the One Iowa stories aired in early August, again demonstrating a pattern mentioned earlier regarding the timing of stories with dominant civil rights framing.

Part of this difference between the Des Moines coverage and coverage in other places is likely due to the much easier access to elite sources in the state capitol, including Bob Vander Plaats who had relocated near Des Moines when he took over at the Family Leader, which is based in the city. Des Moines is also the home of the offices of LGBTQ advocacy group One Iowa. All of this suggests these kinds of elite newsmakers would be much easier to catch in the news net (Tuchman, 1978) for a Des Moines station. Proximity is one of the practical considerations that influences choice of interview subject (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). On the other hand, the state's largest city has an LGBTQ community, and so reporters had the same physical proximity to those LGBTQ community members as to political and legal elites. This suggests other news values may have been in play, such as the premium placed on seeming to be balanced and impartial (Gans, 1978; Schudson & Anderson, 2009). This question will also be addressed in the interviews in the following chapter.

The Meaning of News Framing in 2010 and 2012

News stories themselves are representative artifacts of newsroom and cultural values (Berkowitz, 2010), and so are valuable as this chapter concludes by considering: “What did this news framing mean within the context of these two election seasons?”

(RQ1h). This dissertation understands deeper meaning by considering how the dominant framing organized and structured the meaning of the issue (Reese, 2001).

This dissertation argues that the overall dominant type of news framing in this coverage structured the issue to engage the cultural cues necessary to activate conservative voters. In doing so, it fits comfortably within the political science definition of morality politics. Even when conservative spokespersons framed the issue as over concerns of constitutionality and government overreach, the connection remained with conservative anger over same-sex marriage. In some cases, such as with the slippery slope frames, not only did the morality politics news framing remain connected to *Varnum* backlash but also worked to articulate *Varnum* with a host of other conservative fear triggers.

This is a contrast to the subordinate civil rights frame, which challenged the basic assumptions necessary to a morality politics frame. Specifically, the civil rights frame structured the issue so that those with the biggest stake in the *Varnum* decision were same-sex couples and their families. The civil rights frame also argued against the attempt to define the issue as primarily about anything other than an attack on same-sex marriage or a symbolic attack on the LGBTQ community.

In arguing that morality politics news framing was dominant overall and that this frame can be understood as more beneficial to the conservative side of the controversy, the point is not to suggest a political bias on the part of either journalists or their management. Instead the argument here is that news values and professional norms of newsgathering acted to reproduce the hegemonic in news stories.

As discussed in chapter two, hegemony operates to support a political or cultural

system, but in a way that escapes notice because its pervasiveness makes it seem the result of “simple experience and common sense” (Williams, 1977, p.110). This means hegemony can remain invisible to those wrapped up in its processes. In predominantly seeking balance to conservative groups with other elite political and legal sources who argued within the problem definitions of morality politics news framing, the news packages themselves suggest that journalists found this to be the most appropriate way to achieve balance. As will be described in more detail in chapter five, the journalists covering this story seemed to perceive the story as important to their audience and expressed a desire to do the right thing by treating both sides fairly. But in the decision of what appropriately constitutes balance and impartiality lies the power of the hegemonic. For example, no journalist studied here would consider a story in which, for example, a soundbite from Bob Vander Plaats would go completely unchallenged. However, it was also true that none of the packages studied here challenged the conservative narrative by focusing on a same-sex couple and their family until the day after the election.

This research has noted this discrepancy multiple times because it may be the key to bringing to light the hegemonic process underlying the coverage. The existence of those stories with same-sex couples and their families talking about how the anti-retention campaign affected them demonstrates that journalists considered this to be a journalistically valid angle for a news story. But the timing suggests it was a viewpoint that seemed inappropriate in some way as voters were learning about the issue and deciding how to vote.

In other words, it seems to journalists it may have been ‘common sense’ to stick to elites during the weeks before the election, possibly to avoid accusations of bias. While it

is impossible to tie this to the outcome of either the 2010 or 2012 votes, it is possible to say this choice did have a consequence in the way the stories constructed the mediated reality of the issue. This construction of reality with both sides most often arguing inside the morality politics news framework did little to challenge hegemonic notions of heteronormativity essential to the conservative position.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS PART TWO: INTERVIEWS

The most commonly described news value, talked about by everyone who was interviewed, was expressed through answers about the need to tell both sides, to be balanced between the two sides, and to avoid seeming to take sides. Often packaged together with adjectives like “fair,” “neutral,” and “objective,” reporters covering this story said they would ask themselves: Was my story balanced? As this chapter will describe, for reporters and managers, “balance” was a practical guide to reporting on a controversial topic, an axiom, and an Achilles heel.

I found evidence that reporters and news managers were not the only ones to consider newsroom values, the logistical requirements of the news gathering, and reporting rituals. Spokespersons described how they could get their frames into the news by anticipating reporters’ needs and understanding the journalistic idea of balance. These frame sponsors also described balance as a criterion of what treatment they expected and a lever with which to move journalists.

Interviewing journalists and others involved in the process of creating news texts allowed me to peel back the layers of the news gathering and reporting process and recognize the way social and political power were expressed in that process (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Reese & Lewis, 2009). This chapter takes the observations of the framing analysis in chapter four and extends those findings into question about how the reporters, news managers, and spokespersons described their roles in the local television news coverage of the 2010 and 2012 retention votes.

To discuss these findings, this chapter first examines the way reporters described how they covered this story and why they decided to do it that particular way (**RQ2**), what

that process says about the values underlying it (**RQ2a**), and what that meant for the resulting news framing (**RQ2b**).

Reporters, in addition to being a part of the broader culture, were also part of the culture of their individual newsrooms. The values, norms, and routines of this newsroom culture were guided in part by news managers who directed daily operations and handled managerial duties ranging from story assignments to promotion and disciplinary actions (Breed, 1955). This chapter considers the way news directors described their managerial decision making when it came to this Iowa case (**RQ3**) and unpacks what that process meant for the culture of their newsrooms (**RQ3a**).

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that an important category of frame sponsors is the organizational spokesperson who has a sophisticated knowledge about reporters and newsgathering. In order to gather support for their social movement or counter-movement, spokespersons needed to successfully get journalists to at least include some of their frames in the coverage, and at most get stories that completely fit within a sympathetic frame (Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Snow & Benford, 1992). This research considered how a spokesperson might accomplish those goals. I asked how anti-retention frame sponsors got their issue into the news (**RQ4**), how these sponsors used their knowledge about reporting to manage their relationships with journalists (**RQ4a**), and what that meant for the news framing of the issue (**RQ4b**). This chapter concludes with a discussion of what the conclusions drawn from the analyses in chapters four and five suggest about the way hegemonic power was expressed and challenged in this case (**RQ5**).

Decisions and Values in Reporting

Local television news journalists interviewed here were asked about their newsgathering process as they covered the same-sex marriage related stories during the August to November election seasons in 2010 and 2012. They spoke about how they navigated the many choices facing them while reporting these stories. These descriptions suggested the kinds of traditional news values that guided the coverage, either explicitly or “between the lines” (Gans, 1979, p. 39).

The local television news reporters interviewed for this research described a process that included both practical challenges tied to the routines of television news reporting and more general ideas of pursuing balance in their reporting. One reporter recalled what it was like to try and get the balance they wanted from the Iowa Supreme Court Justices on the 2010 retention ballot:

I remember that being a real challenge, because, as a reporter you are trying to tell both sides of the story and you want to make sure you are putting a balanced story out there. When one side was putting out all these commercials and all these ads and people were speaking their mind and the other side is not really defending themselves and not saying much back, it makes it really, really challenging to tell a balanced and a fair story (Interview 1).

From a practical standpoint, reporters said they needed to think about how much time they had to gather video and interviews and return to the station with time to watch field tapes, select soundbites, note video content, write their stories, and have them edited and ready to air before the early or late evening newscasts.

Each of these practical concerns carried with it decisions that reporters had to make. How far could they go to get video or conduct an interview? What kind of story did they need to tell and with whom should they talk? These and other questions like them were sometimes answered as a matter of routine, sometimes as a matter of considering news values, and most often as a combination of the two.

In early 2010 reporters felt they had no reason to cover a judicial retention vote, a story topic with limited visual opportunities and for all of its history up to that point no real public controversy or concern. But by August of 2010 conservatives were making a concerted effort to tie the retention vote to the 2009 *Varnum* decision. One reporter recalled where it seemed this effort originated:

It wasn't Iowans who were upset about the Supreme Court Justices, who were upset about the ruling that they made striking down the ban on same-sex marriage, but it was people from out-of-state. You had, I can't remember the big name people, but I remember there were some big-name right-wing conservatives leading this charge. You had the political groups and religious institutions who had put in a ton of money (Interview 2).

Not all reporters were as convinced, at least in retrospect, that the volume of coverage in 2010 reflected the true level of interest among most Iowans. One reporter recalled that not even all conservatives he talked with seemed very upset about *Varnum*:

When it came down to the grand scheme of things you had people who were very passionate on each side of the issue, but for the majority of people they would look at this and say, 'this doesn't really impact my life' or 'if this (same-sex marriage)

happens, so be it, the world isn't going to end,' is what some people would say to me behind the scenes (Interview 3).

Once television newsrooms decided this story needed to be covered, the next step was deciding how to cover it. The visual aspect of television is a source of its power and popularity as a source for news (Grabe & Bucy, 2002), but the resulting desire to have good video can also complicate and limit the reporting process (Berkowitz, 1990). This made it a story reporters and news directors called the biggest issue of that election. But one reporter explained, even though it was a big issue it did not lend itself to the kind of compelling visual storytelling prized by television news departments:

I don't know that we succeeded in making this visually interesting, it was a challenge with this particular story, but, this topic we knew what kind of file video we had access to. It wasn't an easy story because there wasn't always a lot of video, especially if you were at a news conference, so it wasn't as visually compelling (Interview 3).

As discussed in chapter four, the use of file video proved important for the visual framing that appeared in the news coverage. Video of same-sex weddings carried the message that same-sex marriage brings joy, while video from the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) visually communicated the "slippery slope," "traditional marriage," and "activist judges" frames. Reporters said part of the reason for using file video was practical; journalists had been invited to cover same-sex weddings right after the *Varnum* decision went into effect, but once covered those events weren't something actively sought out by reporters. One reporter explained why it made sense visually to use excerpts from the NOM ad, "I know when you start off a TV news package you want to kind of start it

with a bang and get people's attention, and those attack ads, they get your attention. That's the whole point of them" (Interview 1).

But it was not just about creating visual interest. The reporter recalled it was also a matter of practicality to use file video to augment a package about an evening speech in time for the last newscast of the day:

You are also limited on your time. It had to be on at 10 o'clock. I remember we had to videotape this lecture and get it into a story and get it onto the air. And what do you really have to work visually wise for a justice? So you are trying to get the viewers' attention right off the bat with those ads (Interview 1).

File video helped fill the need for compelling video, but the news also required video that showed what was new, what had happened that day. While the industry in general has seen more and more reporters shoot and edit their own video, the reporters who agreed to be interviewed for this research all worked with photographers who captured the new video and edited together the news packages, often mixing new footage with file tape.

Reporters approached this collaborative effort differently. Some said they felt the photographers were professionals who should be allowed to do their jobs with minimal direction from the reporter. One reporter described it as a matter of respecting the photographer: "I am a frustrated photographer myself, so I recognize the expertise required. So unless I feel really strongly about something, I'll decide the audio content of the story, how to track it, and let the photographer decide the visual content" (Interview 4).

Others approached this interaction more as a collaborative effort that started sometimes even before they left the station on their assignment, retrieving from the station

archives the file video they thought they wanted to use. One reporter said ideally it was like having a psychic connection to their photographer, anticipating what was going to be needed and being able to communicate through gestures and eye contact what things to capture on video as an event was happening. Reporters said once back to the station they looked through the new footage, took notes from the interviews to pick soundbites they might want to use in the story, and then wrote their stories.

After the story was written and approved by the producer, anchor, or other news manager, the reporter recorded their narration and the photographer edited it together. Most reporters said there was usually one more step in the process. As one reporter described it, “I would watch the story before it aired and make sure I was on board with it, and I might make a few changes here and there” (Interview 1).

What was clear from the reporter interviews was that photographers played an important part in the reporting process, being responsible for the video as it was captured during the day’s assignment, and then having some discretion on which video to edit into the final package. What was unclear was the identity of the specific photographers who worked on each package. Their names were not included in the script, and reporters who get might get paired up with a different member of the photographer pool on any given day, could not say with certainty who they worked with on a story from years earlier.

Despite the inability to identify the photographers who worked on specific stories with the reporters, the photographers were all working within the same newsroom culture as the reporters. They would need to capture video, including video of the tour buses and demonstrations discussed in chapter four, in a way that would be professionally acceptable. They would also answer to the same news management as the reporter if the video or

editing did not meet the standards of that newsroom.

Reporters and Balance

Reporters talked about the practical aspects and complexities of reporting within the television format and standard reporting routines which placed some limits on what they could do to produce a story in one day. Journalists also reported that they were well aware of the controversial nature of this story. This dissertation argues that the primary values revealed by the description of the reporting process and the navigation of this controversy were either related to the reporting rituals and requirements of the television format or centered around the concept of balance (**RQ2a**: What did the description of the process reveal about the news values which guided them?).

One reporter shared how an awareness of political and controversial aspects of the story had her producers going to some lengths in order to maintain their strict interpretation of balance:

Being in a state that is so purple and in a state where people always accuse you of being Republican or Democrat or left-wing or right-wing or whatever it is, you have to kind of safeguard yourself and make sure you crossed all your t's and dotted all your i's. I remember that, whoever my producer was back then, taking out a stopwatch. I think was on a cellphone, trying to figure out how much sound I had given to each side. Because that was really important, especially with this issue. We didn't want to look like we were on either side (Interview 2).

Other reporters described sharing the same general concerns. They said they tried to make sure their stories felt balanced, although they did not go quite as far as breaking out a

stopwatch.

Gans (1979) identified controversy and conflict as characteristics that make a story newsworthy, criteria the Iowa case easily met. However, one reporter explained the controversial nature of the story also had some journalists treating it with “kid gloves:”

If someone gets irritated or offended, even if there is no basis to get offended, you might get called into the office. And that’s something that nobody really wants. So when you’re dealing with, especially two groups where I think both sides can be looking to be offended in this case, it was a minefield when you were covering it (Interview 5).

This imperative to find balance becomes a very functional value in the sense that it offered reporters an avenue for approaching their stories that they felt offered shelter from the threat of criticism from the public, or from their bosses. Reporters and news directors did report getting some angry comments from the general public via phone, email, and social media. However, none of them remembered any specific instances, nor did any interview participants remember any complaints that required any managerial intervention or disciplinary action.

This fear of transgressing professional standards and the fact no significant cases of actual transgressions were remembered seems to suggest a kind of enculturation in that the idea or threat of being called out as unprofessional created a kind of social control in the newsroom (Breed, 1955; Schudson, 2011). It also suggests a hegemonic process in which the values have become internalized to the point of automatic self-discipline, not requiring overt action on the part of management to enforce those values.

Chapter four argued that morality politics news framing dominated the coverage in both 2010 and 2012. In the majority of packages conservative spokespersons were countered with soundbites from legal and political elites. The framing analysis in chapter four concluded that in the majority of stories both sides, although disagreeing on particulars, argued from within the same morality politics framework.

Analysis of the stories and the interviews supports the idea that the way reporters defined balance and then carried out that notion of balance played a big role in this news framing. As described above, journalists reported believing their stories would be subject to closer-than-usual scrutiny from passionate groups supporting or opposing same-sex marriage. One advantage then in defining balance within the morality politics frame, and seeking balance from soundbites with elite sources who discussed judges and courts, was that it allowed reporters to frame stories that could allude to same-sex marriage while avoiding placing it at the center of the story. Despite the stated intentions to stay neutral or balanced, this dissertation argues that this framing ultimately undermined neutrality and balance because it tacitly agreed with the conservative claim that this was not a campaign centered on revenge over the *Varnum* decision.

This is not to say that reporters covering this story had an anti-LGBTQ agenda. Journalists who were interviewed seemed sympathetic overall to LGBTQ equality, at least by the time they were interviewed in 2015. One journalist discussed having an LGBTQ co-worker and how that made him feel conflicted about providing coverage of some kinds of anti-gay rhetoric:

One that always stuck in my mind was, ‘same-sex couples are damaging children, and they are hurtful to children.’ These false claims, those are probably one of the

things that was most frustrating to me from a personal standpoint. We had someone in our newsroom who was in a same-sex relationship and raising a son together, and so, to me it was hurtful, knowing someone personally. And as a reporter I also felt, yes this is their side and this is what they are saying, but where is the line? (Interview 3).

This dissertation is also not arguing that the journalists were simply buckling to outside pressure in their coverage, even if the awareness of this pressure was pervasive throughout the interviews. It would run counter to the professional journalistic ethos to think of yourself as letting an outside group, or even to some extent management, dictate the way a reporter tells his or her story (Rosen, 1999; Schudson & Anderson, 2009). The sociology of news literature suggests an overt attempt to dictate coverage to a reporter would be expected in many cases to trigger resistance from journalists who perceived a threat to their professional autonomy (Breed, 1955; Deuze, 2010; Soloski, 1997).

Instead, this dissertation argues that the way reporters defined and practiced balance in this coverage created a professional blind spot. As chapter four described, the civil rights frame appeared in relatively few stories. Of the six stories in which the civil rights frame was dominant, only three aired before Election Day. This analysis reached three conclusions about how news values can explain this observation about the news framing **(RQ2b)**.

The first conclusion was that reporters felt telling stories with a dominant civil rights frame in some way failed to offer balance. The second was that an internalized traditional news value regarding balance tended to make reporters blind to the way that avoiding the civil rights frame and the viewpoint of everyday members of the LGBTQ

community actually worked to throw their coverage out of balance. The third was that this blind spot made reporters more susceptible to manipulation from the conservative side of the issue.

News Directors and Balance

Television news directors, like newspaper editors described by Breed (1955), have important official and unofficial duties in a newsroom. They have organizational managerial authority and influence decisions on hiring, firing, and promotion. They also have professional cache from their own journalistic experience and job title, making them influential to the values and culture of a newsroom culture (Breed, 1955). As a reporter works in a newsroom those values, not always explicit, are learned and can be internalized to the point a reporter follows them automatically, not recognizing their presence (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978, 2002). Therefore this research was interested in the decision-making at the newsroom management level, because it also speaks to the way news workers share and reinforce newsroom culture and its values.

The interviews found that just as with reporters, news directors found the retention vote story to be very important, were aware of its controversial nature, and were very concerned with meeting their professional standards for balance. All three news directors spoke of the need for reporters, despite their personal feelings or even sexual orientations, to detach themselves from their feelings about same-sex marriage and remain neutral and objective.

However, this is not to say that behind-the-scenes values of newsroom leaders were always neutral in all aspects of the story. One news director cited his experience covering the courts as a reason he was particularly unhappy with an attack on what he saw

as a valuable public institution. Based on this experience, and within the self-image of acting as a kind of public watchdog, this news director felt justified in having an opinion on this story:

I think it's important to have opinions about the issues we cover. You want to keep it out of your story, but I just felt that from a government process standpoint, the battle that was being waged was just wrong... But in terms of government process and systems that seem to be working well and have served the state well for 50 years, it seemed to me that outside influence was trying to undo that over one decision that they disagreed with. It was something that, a story that needed to be told (Interview 12).

This news director felt that rather than the judges and courts being a distraction from the issue of same-sex marriage, as this dissertation argues, the debate over same-sex marriage was a distraction from an imminent threat to Iowa's judges and courts. He explained:

I think the critical thing about this was separating out the opinions about same-sex marriage from 'is this the right thing to do from a government process standpoint.' Separating out the sanctity of our judicial process from the emotion of the same-sex marriage story, I think was the challenging part of the story. Something that we had to focus on, to make sure that that message was getting told, and that people weren't just lining up for same sex marriage or against same-sex marriage (Interview 12).

News directors talked about the amount of autonomy reporters had in the telling of their stories, autonomy that still needed to be exercised within the boundaries of

traditionally defined professionalism. They all said they were not aware of any reporters who were gay or lesbian, adding that when it came to the job of reporting, news directors would have the same expectations regardless of sexual orientation. “If I don’t trust a reporter, gay or straight, to be able to cover a story fairly I have bigger problems on my hands,” said one news director (Interview 11). Another news director agreed, “People leave their sexuality at the door. That’s not something that they’re not, but they just have to come with the journalism hat on, their reporting hat on” (Interview 12). Those expectations revealed a connection with the traditional news values discussed by Gans (1979), Schudson (1981) and others working in the area of sociology of news.

All three news directors used words like “neutrality,” “balance,” and “fairness” to describe the professional behavior they expected from their reporters. They said these standards applied just as much to a person who might oppose same-sex marriage as to a supporter; opinions and stances should not be detectable in the news stories. “Part of what we do is to not inject any of our own opinions or emotions into a story,” said one news director (Interview 10).

Another reality of working in television is that the smaller the market the more likely it will be a person’s first reporting job. One news director explained in that case the influence of news management is even more direct, “This industry has a lot of young people in markets of our size. That required a little additional staffing and background work, meetings and briefings explanations and prep for interviews and other things” (Interview 10).

After being a norm for journalists for over a century (Schudson, 1982), clearly valuing neutrality in reporters and balance in reporting has been a long accepted way for

journalists and their bosses to evaluate performance. As performance criteria, these are influential on multiple levels. Journalists tend to internalize these values and in doing so self-regulate behavior in and out of the newsroom (Schudson and Anderson, 2009). Externally, transgressing the balance norm too often or too strongly has possible negative implications for professional reputation, promotions, and even maintaining employment (Breed, 1955). Because a news director exerts influence or control over these variables that are typically important to journalists, reporters have a vested interest in understanding the professional values news directors espouse and then reporting accordingly. Because the news directors clearly valued a traditional approach to balance, and occupy an influential position in the newsroom, I argue this reinforced reporters' understanding of the proper way to tell the story. In other words, the values described by the news directors influenced the newsroom culture which in turn influenced the news framing (**RQ3a**).

Neither reporters nor news directors spoke as if they had an anti-same sex marriage agenda or hostility toward the LGBTQ community. I argue none was necessary, because of the way these news values were defined and put into practice by both journalists and news directors. The news packages and the interviews suggested that before the news packages framed the retention vote for the audience, journalists had already framed it for themselves by defining what constituted balance.

Interview participants repeatedly expressed their strong personal adherence to the news value of balance, which is broadly assumed in the profession to create "neutral" or "objective" stories (Gans, 1979). But in the Iowa case, analysis of the frames and interviews provides evidence that the acceptance of this value was capable of creating blind spots among journalists. This is consistent with problems Tuchman (1978) found

with the coverage of the women's movement by male dominated news rooms. She found that reporters were often blind to the way their own personal values colored their judgment of what could be deemed balanced in the first place. Alwood (1996) found a similar problem when "straight" newsrooms were much more likely to interview psychologists, politicians, and religious leaders about the LGBTQ community than to interview a member of that community about issues important to it. In both pieces of research, journalists privileged sources which supported a male dominated heteronormative perspective. Yet those journalists argued their choices were "common sense" and well within the bounds of their professional values.

Getting into and Shaping the News

Journalists interviewed for this research, some of them with decades of experience reporting in Iowa, said they could not remember covering an Iowa Supreme Court retention race before 2010. This meant that before the usual task of getting their frames accepted by reporters and into the news coverage, anti-retention groups had to first make this a story newsrooms would cover. In other words, even before the contest between reporters and spokespersons over news framing could begin (Johnson-Cartee, 2005), there had to be a reason for the contest.

In 2010, conservative groups such as National Organization for Marriage and the Family Leader had the resources to launch an anti-retention campaign that was deemed newsworthy. One anti-retention spokesperson remembered the momentum they were able to create with advertising and events. He said:

We have a bus that comes in, and you know this as a reporter, it generates media, it generates attention. It's an opportunity to get your message out. I think it was an

effective strategy. There's usually national leaders that would join us. I think we had Rick Santorum join the bus tour. We had Bobby Jindal join the bus tour. I think a couple others. I think Newt Gingrich in 2010 on the bus tour. They wanted to be part of that (Interview 9).

Hardin and Whiteside (2010) argue that "a critical approach that draws on media hegemony theory considers frames from within the context in which they are produced" (p. 314). With the stories studied here being driven by anti-retention groups, this research argues that none of these stories can logically be outside the context of the social, financial, and political power that led to them being considered newsworthy (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). So on this fundamental level, no matter what news framing was dominant, all 29 stories represented the hegemonic expression of a heteronormative power matrix (Butler, 1990) attempting to delegitimize homosexual attraction and behavior (McRobbie, 2005).

Journalists and news directors spoke of the anti-retention campaign as unexpected and impossible to ignore. They talked about their perception that this had become an issue of great interest to the audience in 2010. They also talked about that interest waning two years later, a perception reporters and news directors attributed to greater acceptance of same-sex marriage in Iowa, that there was only one justice up for retention, and the fact that it simply was not as "new" as it was the first time. This translated into fewer stories in 2012. This suggests the presence of what Williams (1977) called "invasive and pervasive cultural pressure" (p. 110). In seeing their coverage as the result of meeting their duty to provide important information to their communities, the intentional creation of controversy by conservatives over judicial retention, where none had existed before, was obscured. When the ability to elevate that controversy waned, so did the attraction of the story to

newsrooms.

This is not to say that reporters or news directors were lying or disingenuous in their interviews about their perceptions that they were providing coverage of a topic of interest to the public. Instead the intent here is to recognize that part of the hegemonic power expressed in this case was the ability of conservative groups, through a well-funded multi-faceted campaign that tapped into the logics of morality politics, to create that interest. Once the pressure from conservative groups wanting attention seemed to news departments to be coming from the general public, this imperative to cover started to seem “as the pressures...of simple experience and common sense” (Williams, 1977, p. 110).

This research also argues that especially in 2010, newsrooms became caught in a feedback loop that amplified the diffuse yet pervasive cultural pressure to pay attention to this story. The more they covered the topic, the more people paid attention to it and saw it as a legitimate issue in the upcoming elections, the more newsrooms saw a need to provide coverage of a retention vote the public thought was important. The more insistent this loop became and the more its roots were lost to view, the more this case displayed hallmarks of a hegemonic process at work (Reese & Lewis, 2009; Williams, 1977, 2011).

As a result I understand the way conservative frame sponsors exercised social and political power (**RQ4**) was to draw upon resources such as money and access to conservative political elites, to create a situation in which journalists would see no alternative to providing coverage.

Public Relations and Balance

The spokespersons interviewed for this research, one from each side of the issue,

both fit Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) definition of a frame sponsor as a media savvy spokesperson working for an established organization. Both had resumes that included significant political or advocacy work that involved a great deal of contact with journalists. Both described drawing upon this experience to achieve success in getting their frames into news coverage, and if possible getting the reporters to frame the entire issue from their perspective.

Because this dissertation is studying television coverage, frame sponsors had good reason to pay attention to the various ways they could influence the visual framing of the news stories (Grabe & Bucy, 2002). The buses, gatherings of demonstrators, and signs were some of the visual components discussed earlier in this chapter and in chapter four. In addition, both spokespersons considering having a professional appearance as part of their responsibility as a visual symbol of the causes they served.

Both also talked about ways in which they would try to build good will, or at least good rapport, with reporters. One key to this was being available when reporters needed them. Because they understood the deadline pressures of reporters in general and television reporters in particular, they described understanding the advantages of being available on short notice. They also understood the value of giving ample notice of upcoming events so newsrooms could plan ahead. "The tour schedule was charted out in-house. We did that. We did news releases and robo-calls to get activists out. News releases to let the press know you are going to be there" recalled an anti-retention spokesperson (Interview 9).

In addition to grasping the logistical requirements of those working within the television format, frame sponsors also benefitted from an understanding of the professional journalistic values and norms. Part of this understanding was that while journalists

controlled the final story, reporters also were limited in their frame choices by what was gathered in the field (Breed, 1955). One spokesperson explained this made staying on message very important, “I know it’s maddening for the media person, when they try to bring us off message, and we keep bringing it back. But we’re very, very clear about why we’re there” (Interview 8, LGBTQ Spokesperson).

A spokesperson for anti-retention efforts explained how staying on message and consistently giving reporters the same frames was a strategy that served to link same-sex marriage, judicial retention, conservative hot-button issues, and morality politics. He explained:

We pivoted out of marriage quickly. Even though we knew we had a lot of support for (traditional) marriage, we also wanted to broaden the scope. We wanted to talk to the farmer out there who had private property. We wanted to talk to the home-school mom and the private school dad who was sending their kids through home-school or private-school, and saying ‘what if the court says that breaks the 14th Amendment? That kids are getting different starts?’ (Interview 9, Anti-retention Spokesperson).

As described in chapter four, this articulation was part of how social and political power was expressed through news framing of this issue. There was a political benefit to be had by sidestepping accusations of a campaign based on homophobia and revenge. At the same time there was a benefit to making sure supporters understood the connection to same-sex marriage and other morality politics issues.

Simply presenting frames to a journalist through soundbites and manipulation of

visual elements provided no guarantee they would become the dominant news framing or even included in the final news package. News framing can be understood as a series of contests or struggles between reporters and media spokespersons (Grabe & Bucy, 2002), starting with the selection of what issues will become news (Gans, 1979) and continuing even after a story is broadcast.

Because political stories are ongoing and frames can change and adapt over time (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), a media savvy spokesperson has reason to want to influence the body of coverage, not just a single story. An understanding of the journalistic value of balance was an important lever with which spokespersons knew they could put pressure on reporters and their news departments in order to influence framing over time. One spokesperson describes the overall treatment as fair, but also felt empowered to challenge unfavorable coverage:

I think the journalists, for the most part, both times, 2010 and 2012, and in my campaigns, treated me fair. And if there was an incident, which I would say would be rare, that we felt that was misleading or unfair, we called them out on it.
(Interview 9, Anti-retention Spokesperson).

This quote demonstrates that this spokesperson knew that in news packages there would be some kind of opposing viewpoints, but this was not described as problematic. Rather, the spokesperson recalled feeling empowered to “call them out,” if they felt the coverage was “misleading or unfair.” The spokespersons recognized criticism that appeared based on journalistic values such as fairness (balance) would be more likely to strike a nerve and influence in a positive way future reporting. In other words, the more they could argue for their desired coverage with the reporter’s own values, the more likely

they were to have some success.

Fairness through the interviews with journalists, news directors, and spokespersons was defined in terms of balance, of point and counterpoint, frame and counter-frame. This was broadly described as satisfying journalistic requirements. Yet the simplicity of this formulation of balance overlooked a fundamental problem: whoever makes the first point can define what the counterpoint should be.

As discussed at the start of this chapter, this issue was driven by the anti-retention campaign, meaning they started off making the first points, or put another way, offering the first frames. If a conservative group argued that the justices overreached their authority, the counterpoint would seem logically to be that the justices acted correctly. If the conservative spokesperson discussed activist courts about to run amok, the counterpoint was to defend the courts as valuable state institutions. As long as reporters stuck to this script, they could make an argument of having provided balance. However, this tack failed to challenge the claims of the anti-retention campaign that they were not motivated by a desire for revenge or that the anti-retention campaign was not an attack on Iowa's LGBTQ community. Because the counter-points so closely followed the points of the conservative groups, the civil rights aspects of the story remained largely overlooked.

A contributing factor to the dominant news framing that developed in this body of coverage was that some of the groups of attorneys who stepped forward as opposition to the conservative campaign, such as Iowans for Fair and Impartial Courts, included Democratic and Republican attorneys who shared common cause in their affront at this attack on the judicial system. However, this group also had a need to avoid advocating directly for same-sex marriage and LGBTQ rights outright to avoid alienating conservative

members of their coalition. Members who were judges may also have wanted to maintain their own professional standards of neutrality. These groups or other legal and political elites were the ones who appeared most of the time to provide the counter-frame in the stories.

However, journalists still could have sought out other groups and perspectives in the weeks leading up to the elections. But to have done so would have invited criticism that the reporters and stations were exhibiting bias by reaching beyond the frames being offered by elite sources and spokespersons. Criticism is not a new thing for journalists. But this criticism directed at internalized news values, in the language of those values, may have greater impact on journalists. That is not to say that there was ever a verbalized threat. Rather, that the true power of this dynamic was that it was understood by spokespersons, reporters, and news managers, without ever necessarily having to be spoken out loud.

Research Question 4a (**RQ4a**) asked: “How do these spokespersons describe drawing upon their understandings of reporters and the reporting process to manage relationships with reporters and their newsrooms?” Research Question 4b (**RQ4b**) asked: “What did this relationship management mean for the resulting news framing?”

Interviews revealed at least two ways that that these relationships were managed. The first was through an understanding of the logistics and format of television reporting. Spokespersons worked to be accessible, gave advance notice of appearances and events, and provided visual elements that would support their desired framing. The second was through an understanding of journalistic values, especially the desire for stories to be considered balanced. Anti-retention spokespersons crafted messages that influenced what journalists would consider as the common sense options for interviews to provide that

balance. By understanding and playing to these professional values, they turned those values into a way to influence journalists and the overall news framing.

In other words, not only were anti-retention groups able to influence the way their own argument was framed via consistent messaging and visuals, but they were able to influence the kinds of frames that would be used to oppose them. The resulting pattern of dominant and subordinate news framing in 2010 and 2012 supports the conclusion that this attempted influence enjoyed a great deal of success, especially in the weeks before Election Day.

Hegemony and Power in News Framing

The hegemonic implications of this study's findings have woven through chapter four and chapter five, and this final section of chapter five ties those threads together. Research Question 5 (**RQ5**) asks: What do the news texts, interviews, and framing analysis reveal about the presence of hegemonic power in this coverage of same-sex marriage in Iowa?

By necessity, framing research must identify and interpret frames, the communicative devices within each news story, which work to organize how the issue, its effects, and its possible solutions are defined (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980). But this represents just part of what framing research can accomplish. *Frames* are pieces of communication, but *news framing* can consider those frames, how they got into the news, how they work by connecting with cultural cues, and how they support or challenge the dominant social, political, and cultural power structures (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; D'Angelo, 2002, 2012; D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Reese, 2001; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

This research found evidence that the expression of hegemonic power was present in detectable ways in each component of the news-gathering process. I argue this can be seen in the way this story became a story, in the way reporters interpreted professional standards of balance and neutrality, and in the dominant and subordinate news framing in the stories themselves. The framing analysis in chapter four suggests there was a struggle in news stories between opposing groups trying to get their frames into the news coverage, and interviews revealed journalists felt conflicting ethical pressures as they covered this story. This is not surprising. As Williams (1977) described, there is a great deal of ‘messiness’ and struggle between dominant and subordinate perspectives in the way hegemonic power is expressed in society and in mass media.

The Iowa case reflects this struggle in that there were at least three different perspectives struggling in the news coverage of the retention vote. The most common and consistent perspective throughout the coverage was from the conservative group that argued within the morality politics frame. The second perspective was represented by those who argued against the conservative campaign, but did so in way that failed to challenge the way the morality politics frame had been constructed. The third, and clearly subordinate position within this struggle, challenged the morality politics frame by framing the retention vote as, at its core, about the civil rights of the LGBTQ community.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Iowa Supreme Court judicial retention vote, which happens every eight years on a staggered basis for each justice, was historically low profile. Before 2010, judicial retention was generally not seen as newsworthy enough to warrant a television news package. In 2010, it was considered by interview participants to have been *the* political story of that election. They also reported that while it was still

relevant to their news coverage in 2012, it was considerably less important than it had been two years earlier.

The transformation of judicial retention into a top story in 2010 reveals an observable expression of hegemonic power in this case. Conservatives needed to make judicial retention a focal point of the 2010 election. One anti-retention interview subject explained that local television news was a “necessary part” of getting their message through to voters (Interview 9). The first challenge then was to convince news managers there should be a story at all, and then to continue to act in ways likely to push its rise in the news agenda. Social and political power were used in three ways to accomplish this goal, each of which involved tapping into existing parts of the culture, particularly the dominant heteronormative matrix.

The first way was to mobilize existing organizations such as the National Organization for Marriage and The Family Leader, who were able to raise money and organize and coordinate the anti-retention campaign. The second was to make use of higher-profile elite sources to get a publicity boost. Such sources included presidential candidates and members of Congress, whose presence greatly increased the likelihood of coverage. The tour bus and rallies fit Boorstin’s (1992) definition of a “pseudo-event,” a planned event scheduled and staged by a person or group with the goal of getting reported. This then is an instance of using the power of influence and money to exercise the power to get into the news.

The third way that conservatives accomplished the goal of capturing attention from journalists was through the articulation (Hall, 1985) of judicial retention and same-sex marriage. As discussed in chapter four, this articulation allowed conservative groups to tap

into resentment over the legalization of same-sex marriage and mobilize supporters to attend events, which also boosted the chances of news coverage (Boorstin, 1992). This articulation also allowed conservative groups to take advantage of the way news operations perceived stories relating to same-sex marriage to be of interest to their audiences. One news director interviewed for this research explained that on the heels of the *Varnum* decision, stories about same-sex marriage were much more likely to be considered newsworthy in general.

That same-sex marriage was considered controversial reveals another important way in which the subtle but pervasive nature of the hegemonic was at work in this case. Same-sex marriage by its very nature challenged the dominant heteronormative matrix (Butler, 1990; Van Zoonen, 1994), setting up a newsworthy conflict (Gans, 1979). In other words, this was only a story because same-sex marriage was an affront to some group or ideology, and journalists recognized this affront as a controversy worthy of coverage. That ideology, in this case the conservative position on same-sex marriage, needed to be seen by journalists as having a degree of legitimacy in order for the group's unhappiness to be newsworthy. That the conservative position could be easily understood and accepted as a valid political position points to the operation of hegemonic social and political power. By the middle of August 2010, it would have been unthinkable for newsrooms to have neglected covering this topic on multiple journalistic grounds. Nevertheless, I argue that the factors that made coverage seem unavoidable relied upon the existence of a dominant hegemonic heteronormative matrix to be challenged by same-sex marriage.

The power of the hegemonic heteronormative matrix can also be understood by comparing the coverage in 2010 with that in 2012, when it did not function as well. In the

Sherlock Holmes story “The Adventure of Silver Blaze,” the important clue to solving the mystery was the dog that did not bark because it did not sense anything wrong. Or, to modify the metaphor for the drop in the number of television news packages about judicial retention in Iowa from 2010 to 2012, the dog that did not bark as loudly. I theorize that the drop in interest in 2012, represented by fewer news stories and the ultimate failure of the anti-retention campaign, suggests one factor was a shift in the hegemonic power of the heteronormative cultural matrix. By 2012, there was growing acceptance of same-sex marriage in the broader culture, making the anti-retention effort seem less newsworthy. In other words, there was at a cultural level less for the metaphorical dog to bark about.

Whatever the ability to sway voters on judicial retention, the ability to express hegemonic power did not hinge only on the Election Day outcome on this issue. As Wagenaar and Sietske (2012) define morality politics, the goal can be “concerned more with the symbolism of heroic measures” (p. 286) than with stated objectives. This definition is a good fit for the Iowa case, because despite the objection to same-sex marriage being the *casus belli* behind the campaign, the conservative groups had no way to reverse the *Varnum* decision. Given the inability to change the legal status of same-sex marriage, this campaign is perhaps best understood as a symbolic way to fight for traditional marriage definitions, as well as supporting conservative candidates (Frost-Keller & Tolbert, 2011). In this way, the hegemonic was working to reproduce both its social and political power through exercising its power to attract news coverage.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

With this study I explored the process, results, and meaning of the news framing of the 2010 and 2012 Iowa Supreme Court retention votes. These retention votes, typically ignored by the news media, became a news story because of a court decision that made Iowa the third state to legalize same-sex marriage. I supported this critical-constructionist framing analysis with work from the areas of sociology of news, critical-cultural media studies, and morality politics. This study was interested in the various ways frames entered the stories, the multi-layered audio and visual framing within those stories, and what the cultural meanings of the frames suggested about the expression of social and political power. I gathered and analyzed two kinds of data: relevant local television news packages and interviews with journalists, news directors, and professional spokespersons from opposing sides.

Chapter four focused on a critical-constructionist framing analysis of television news packages covering the anti-retention campaigns. I identified the morality politics framing as the overall dominant framing throughout the coverage. Within the morality politics framing were four main frames used by conservatives: “activist judges,” “traditional marriage,” “slippery slope,” and “will of the people” frames. I argued that two of the frames used in opposition to the conservative talking points and to support judicial retention, “justices were correct” and “protect the courts,” disagreed with specific points made by conservative groups but failed to challenge the underlying problem definitions of the dominant morality politics framing. In contrast, the subordinate civil rights frame, which was either expressed explicitly through soundbites or implicitly through file video, challenged the way conservative groups defined their effort to unseat Iowa Supreme Court

justices.

In chapter five, interviews revealed insights into why the news framing in the packages looked like it did. The common thread tying together interviews with reporters, news directors, and spokespersons was the idea of journalistic “balance.” Balance, often lumped together with ideas of “objectivity,” “neutrality,” and “fairness,” worked in this case as a guide for newsrooms covering a controversial story. However, in practice it also blinkered journalists from perceiving the problematic nature of balancing conservative sources with legal and political elites who were rarely quoted discussing the civil rights aspects of the issue. For their part, spokespersons expressed an understanding of balance as a way to judge the coverage and as a possible lever with which to move the coverage into a more favorable position.

Chapter four and five also discussed the ways hegemonic power was reproduced in this context. The traditionally overlooked retention race came to be considered newsworthy after conservative groups tapped financial and social resources to elevate the issue and get covered by news media. Journalistic routines and values got reporters to largely report this as a story about a branch of government as opposed to a story about civil rights. Both the effort to make the retention race newsworthy and the ways journalists understood the balance norm tapped into an understanding at some level of the dominant heteronormative cultural matrix.

The next section of this chapter discusses how the combination of framing theory with morality politics worked to build both theoretical perspectives. The morality politics literature offered a conceptually rich depiction of a type of political campaign that helped understand the news framing in this case. The framing study of the actual stories suggested

that in practice the rhetoric surrounding some morality politics based campaigns, such as those involving LGBTQ rights, is evolving.

This chapter continues by looking at how the combined theoretical perspectives in this research helped illuminate how hegemonic power was expressed in this case. The middle portion of this chapter discusses how these findings, along with the additional material from the interviews, add to the sociology of news literature. Building from the findings of this research in the context of sociology of news, this section of the chapter concludes by exploring the implications for best professional practices when covering similar kinds of stories.

The second to last section of this chapter discusses the way this research applied theory and method to the study of local television news in ways that might offer useful insights for other research into this category of news media. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this research and suggestions for future inquiry.

Framing and Morality Politics

One of the contributions of this work to scholarly research is the application of political science literature on morality politics to a critical-constructionist framing analysis. In the Reese and Lewis (2009) study of how the phrase “war on terror” went from White House propaganda to a ubiquitous frame disconnected from its roots, the phrase itself served as a marker that could be traced through news stories over time. I discovered a number of interesting linguistic aspects of the Iowa case, such as the decision on when and whether to use the phrases “gay marriage,” “same-sex marriage,” “traditional marriage,” and “natural marriage.” However, there was no equivalent to the “war on terror” phrase when it came to understanding the broader news framing in this case. Morality politics

filled that space and offered its own body of understanding and research which dovetailed with the framing literature used in this study.

Because critical framing theory addresses the ways media framing expresses and reproduces political power (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014), drawing upon political science literature proved an appropriate choice. A qualitative framing analysis invites an inductive process in which a researcher identifies and classifies frames and framing based upon the material being studied. I found that process enriched by applying morality politics to the news framing studied here. D'Angelo (2002) suggests news framing research not only identify frames, but where they came from, how they interact with prior knowledge, and how they shape political debates. Morality politics is theorized to originate from a conservative ideology (Haider-Merkel & Meier, 1996). In this study such a frame resonated with how people already felt about same-sex marriage, rather than having required the acquisition of knowledge about civil rights or constitutional law. This means morality politics operated by interacting more with prior emotion than prior, or even new, knowledge (Nelson, 2013). Because morality politics shapes political debates by tapping into and encouraging those emotional responses, whether aimed at some clear legislative goal or to make a symbolic stand, it is a useful lens with which to view this Iowa case (Wagenaar & Sietske, 2012).

Grounding my framing discussion within this body of literature supported the way I understood the framing to resonate on a cultural level. It also helped me to recognize the way some apparent counter-frames to conservative frames failed to challenge the way morality politics defined what was important about the issue. In this sense, developing the morality politics concept here enriched the application of framing theory.

Political science scholars have already noted the way in which conservative groups have argued against same-sex marriage using a morality politics strategy (Donovan, Tolbert & Smith, 2008; Frost-Keller & Tolbert, 2011), so it came as no surprise that morality politics would appear as an important frame in the news coverage of the Iowa Supreme Court retention vote. What was unexpected was the way in which the rhetoric which carried the frame was modified in this case, while still engaging the same internal logics of a morality politics campaign strategy.

Conservative groups needed a way to engage the benefits of morality politics by linking the Iowa Supreme Court retention vote with same-sex marriage, while simultaneously suggesting that their argument was not really about same-sex marriage at all. On one hand, they needed to tap into moral outrage among conservatives upset over the *Varnum* ruling in order to make supporters care about judicial retention. On the other hand, growing cultural acceptance of the LGBTQ community made an outright attack on LGBTQ rights a shakier strategy than it might have been even a decade earlier (Barnhurst, 2007). While some groups and demonstrators might still have shown up with signs advocating violence and predicting damnation for members of the LGBTQ community, from an official campaign perspective such tactics were increasingly likely to delegitimize their position in the eyes of journalists and the public.

This finding suggests two things. First, morality politics-based framing offers a powerful tool to understand some political campaign communication strategies and to recognize how it resonates with an audience if it becomes part of the overall news framing. The second is that greater interpretive effort may be required in order to recognize morality politics frames in the future. In other words, researchers examining political discourse

should not take at face value claims that efforts to disenfranchise members of the LGBTQ community from equal civil rights are about some other topic. Rather, the Iowa case suggested that more thorough culturally and historically aware interrogation of political rhetoric is required before deciding if there is a morality politics connection.

This approach may prove particularly important in understanding the political and communication strategies of those actively promoting the dominant heteronormative matrix in the face of a shifting culture. For example, in the 2010 retention race it became not only necessary to connect same-sex marriage to judicial retention but to provide some rhetorical cover for the anti-retention effort through arguments about judicial activism and slippery slopes. Understanding this strategy, how it worked, and taking a hard look at its validity and sincerity may prove useful in understanding ongoing anti-LGBTQ efforts, including those claiming “religious liberty” as a justification for anti-LGBTQ legislation.

Implications for Sociology of News

This dissertation drew upon the sociology of news for both its constructionist and critical framing analyses. The constructionist framing approach with its interest in how stories are constructed and frames get into the news benefited from sociology of news research on journalists, their news values, and their newsgathering routines (Gans, 1979; Reich, 2006; Tuchman, 1997, 2002). The discussion of news values and their connection to commercial and business interests (Schudson, 1981; Tuchman, 1974), broader cultural norms and biases (Gitlin 1980; Schudson, 2011; Tuchman, 1978), and adherence to internal professional norms (Breed, 1955; Deuze, 2010; Schudson & Anderson, 2009; Tuchman, 2002) were vital to how I theorized the way social and political power were expressed in this case.

The resulting analyses contributed back to sociology of news scholarship in the findings related to how Iowa television journalists interpreted traditional news values and how that influenced the news framing. This dissertation particularly adds to the body of research that discusses the way reporters define and portray “balance” in their stories, and the related and overlapping concepts of fairness and objectivity (Gans, 1987, Rosen, 1999; Schudson, 2011; Schudson & Anderson, 2009). The Iowa case found reporters often turned to elite sources for interviews. This was consistent with research that found a similar pattern in reporting in general (Tuchman, 1978; Soloski, 1997) and in reporting on LGBTQ issues in particular (Moritz, 2010; Moscovitz, 2010; Rodriguez & Blumell, 2014). I also found evidence that this was partly due to a judgment that elite sources best defined balance in a way that provided defense against complaints of bias or unfairness.

Journalists Covering Morality Politics Issues

This dissertation offers a critique of local television news, the newsgathering process, and those involved in the process. This critique does not question the motives or dedication of the journalists and news managers. Indeed, the findings of this research hinge in part on an understanding of just how dedicated these news workers are to their self-image as ethical and dedicated professionals in the larger journalistic community. Journalists and news directors described making choices throughout their news gathering and reporting based upon these professional values. Based on the responses and supported by the way the news packages were written and edited, the most salient of these values was often the balance norm.

However, I argue that the way these news workers put the balance norm into practice ended up throwing the coverage out of balance. Journalists and news directors

described feeling the most neutral way to cover the retention vote was to cover it by focusing on the courts, at least in the weeks leading up to the election. In some ways this seems logical. After all, the question on the ballot was whether or not Iowa Supreme Court justices should stay on the bench. But that logic begins to break down when the race is considered in the context of the *Varnum* decision, which was an ever-present aspect of the story. There would have been no story without conservative anger over same-sex marriage legalization. By focusing on issues of law and the judicial system, news packages tended to avoid dealing with what the backlash meant to same-sex couples and their families. The interviews and news packages suggested that while journalists were aware that the anti-retention campaign had an impact on Iowa's LGBTQ community, this part of the story was mostly avoided in pre-election coverage. This indicates that seeking out these LGBTQ perspectives, as opposed to those of political and legal elites, would have been considered *unbalanced*, or biased.

The problem was that any choice journalists could have made in sources and approaches to their stories would have had consequences for the news framing, and news framing by its very nature is both ubiquitous and biased. Framing theory tells us news framing works to define an issue, suggest the moral values involved in an issue, and in so doing set the boundaries of discussion over an issue (Entman, 1993). Through a process of inclusion and exclusion, news framing will magnify or shrink "elements of the depicted reality to make them more or less salient" (Entman, 1991, p. 9). Through their choice of sources, the news stations involved in this research largely, even if unintentionally, kept their coverage within the morality politics frame. In failing to recognize that was what they were doing, journalists also failed to challenge the underlying way the morality politics

framing defined the issue. This lack of challenge then became tacit acceptance of those definitions, and thus was unbalanced and not neutral.

At the same time, journalists did recognize moving the story into a civil rights frame as something other than neutral. For one thing, it would have called into question the sincerity of conservative attempts to cast the issue as about government. Stories that showed the emotional toll on everyday Iowans in same-sex relationships would have cast the conservative effort in an unsympathetic light. Morality politics framing defined as important the outrage of conservatives upset that same-sex couples could be married. In contrast, the civil rights frame defined as important the way same-sex couples felt fear and anxiety over the political and social muscle-flexing of groups dedicated to taking away their right to be married. As has already been described, the morality politics frame was the dominant one throughout the coverage, especially in the weeks before Election Day.

Because of the way news framing advantages and disadvantages certain aspects of a story, there was no neutral choice for reporters to make. However, this was not the real problem. The real problem was that journalists and news directors believed they had found a neutral way to tell the story because the news packages fit the usual journalistic norm of finding two opposing sides to argue against each other. Once journalists judged they had met this traditional news value of balance, of neutrality, there was little incentive to continue questioning that judgment and its implications. Yet, in the Iowa case such questioning could have opened the door to a shift in coverage, and somewhat ironically, better actual balance in the resulting news framing.

Using the Iowa Case as a Hypothetical Example

As a former broadcast journalist and news director, I am well aware of the daily pressures of reporting the news, the usefulness of established practices in meeting those demands, and the power of internalized and shared professional values. The day-to-day reality in local television news is that each day brings a new assignment, a new topic, and a new set of challenges. As a result, the sets of standard practices and underlying news values have a great deal of practical utility. They help get the job done. It is assumed they help get the job done well. This assumption can be wrong in significant, but fixable, ways.

This is not to say Iowa journalists and news directors did their jobs while on some kind of professional autopilot, lacking any reflection or careful thought. At the same time, the daily demands of reporting or overseeing the reporting of news do not lend themselves to the kind of broader view I was able to undertake over months of data collection, analysis, and writing. The evidence presented here suggested journalists and news managers took seriously their responsibility to tell what they saw as an important and historic story. I questioned the frequency of the use of elite sources, but did not suggest these sources should have been overlooked or ignored in the coverage. Instead, I argued that the news values and practices that journalists found valuable in other contexts worked to create a blind spot in their decision making process when covering the anti-retention campaign.

Therefore, one goal of this research was to use this example of Iowa local television news coverage to help make that blind spot visible to journalists and news directors, and in doing so empower them to factor it into their coverage decisions. Evidence presented here suggests journalists largely felt focusing on the civil rights aspects of the story was too

biased in the weeks leading up to Election Day, while stories which this research identifies as having fit under the morality politics frame were seen by journalists as neutral. Once journalists judged which approach was neutral and which was not, the influence of newsroom culture and professional self-regulation can be recognized in the resulting interview choices and news framing. However, realizing that there was no truly neutral option meant journalists had more professional ethical freedom to seek out and include the civil rights frames than they realized. In other words, if news framing had inevitably favored a particular perspective, then a neutral story could not have been possible. If a neutral story were not possible, some of the rationale behind decisions to tell the retention story so often from the perspective of official sources disappears. And if a neutral story was not possible, then there was ultimately no ethical difference between choosing to tell stories from within an overarching morality politics frame or a civil rights frame.

In a practical sense, the conclusion here is that focusing on the governmental aspects of this issue ultimately failed to provide the balance or neutrality prized by news departments. This would seem to reduce the imperative to cover the stories from these angles, and increase the relative acceptability of the civil rights frame. A more truly balanced approach, to the extent such a thing was possible, would have been to challenge conservative spokespersons with everyday same-sex couples in more stories, especially those before Election Day. Not just because as a supporter of LGBTQ equality I am inclined to appreciate those perspectives, but also because the evidence suggests more complete and truly balanced coverage ultimately demanded it.

This discussion is not intended to second-guess the coverage of this issue in 2010 and 2012 by Iowa television stations. Those stories cannot be retold. Rather, the point is to

take the lessons from this experience and apply them to ongoing coverage of LGBTQ issues and other issues which touch on morality politics. Journalists today are increasingly being called upon to cover anti-LGBTQ efforts which are being articulated with “religious freedom” in the same way that the same-sex marriage backlash was articulated with concerns over “judicial activism” in Iowa in 2010 and 2012. In addition to offering advice regarding the covering of political controversies over LGBTQ issues, lessons this research gleaned from that Iowa coverage may help journalists navigate coverage of other complicated and emotion-laden issues. From funding cuts for Planned Parenthood to employers arguing for the right to deny certain kinds of healthcare coverage, the current trend from conservative groups is to make their arguments on religious freedom grounds. This creates an ethical question parallel to the one Iowa television reporters faced in 2010 and 2012: How to cover the same morality politics issues if conservatives groups try to articulate an ongoing struggle with a new argument?

Traditional news practices and values suggest the way to do this is to get some good soundbites from conservative sources and then get the other side. But which other side? If, as in the Iowa case, conservatives argue they are really upset at activist judges, does a journalist seek out legal professionals who argue this point, or same-sex couples who argue the campaign is really targeting them and their rights, even if symbolically? Iowa journalists most often chose the former, and as explained earlier, most likely did so because they felt it was the correct professional approach because it achieved journalistic objectivity through the mechanism of “balance.” However, as this research argues, failing to provide adequate counter-framing to the core premises of a modified morality politics argument (e.g. that this issue engaged the logics of morality politics while introducing

rhetoric legitimizing the anti-LGBTQ rights campaign under the guise of concerns over judicial propriety) also had consequences that favored the conservative side of the argument. This is a point which appears to have been underappreciated by journalists and news directors in this study. Based on interviews, this blind spot seems to have been attributable to a combination of accepted newsgathering practices and interpretations of professional values, not out of any conscious intent. It also seems a side-effect of this blind spot was to have made it easier for conservative groups to manipulate and influence the coverage.

By pointing this out, this research strives to offer a resource for a research-based and yet professionally applicable understanding of framing and its implications for news coverage. This hopefully will add to the ongoing newsroom decision making discussions about the coverage of morality politics issues, especially those which intersect with social movements in general and LGBTQ issues in particular. It also provides an argument for including framing options discarded because of concerns they might violate neutrality on a controversial issue, because neglecting these counter-frames is also demonstrated in this research to violate neutrality.

Rather than relying on traditional journalistic approaches to achieving balance, I suggest an alternative approach might better accomplish the journalistic mission when reporting stories such as the backlash over same-sex marriage legalization in Iowa. In other words, those tried-and-true reporting rituals are not up to the task of reporting on issues of civil rights of historically oppressed communities in the face of increasingly savvy oppositional political and public opinion campaigns which engage the logics of morality politics. One way to meet this challenge is to recognize the historical and cultural context

to each new controversy or campaign, and to give equal weight to voices which provide an active counter-frame. This may require some effort if, as in the Iowa case, those voices will not be easily reachable spokespersons or other elite sources.

One can imagine the very different tenor of news coverage in the Iowa case if every time a person stood in front of a bus and talked about activist judges they were countered with a same-sex couple talking about how they interpreted the anti-retention campaign and its emotional toll on them and their children. While not legal experts or political elites, these members of the LGBTQ community were certainly stakeholders in the issue. Journalists who interviewed same-sex couples the day after the elections to get their opinion on the results recognized this fact. That LGBTQ perspective would have been just as valid in the days and weeks leading up to the election. Evidence shown here suggests that through their interpretation of news values, reporters and news directors seemed to have talked themselves out of recognizing that validity. The observations and arguments in this research are intended to empower journalists to include more of these kinds of voices in future coverage of similar issues. This research is meant to give journalists insights into the shortcomings of typically accepted news values and practices, and provide a basis for reflecting upon, and if necessary challenging, routine news gathering choices.

I also intend to give journalists and news directors a resource upon which they can draw when making a case for that coverage, or for defending from backlash their choices to take the story in directions the spokespersons pushing the story did not intend. This may be especially helpful as news workers explain a more sophisticated understanding of their practices and values to management and spokespersons who are often all too willing to impose their understandings of what news is supposed to be, an understanding which

serves to advance goals which have nothing to do with a commitment to the journalistic mission.

Theoretical, Methodological, and Pedagogical Implications for Studying Local Television News

Studying local television news offers fecund territory for researchers to push the boundaries of framing theory and explore methods of scholarly inquiry. With its emphasis on visual communication, local news also provides an opportunity to understand how reporting and photojournalism combine as part of the newsgathering process, an area ripe for more visual framing studies. Local television news, especially small market local television news, is a place where many new journalists learn how to be a functioning part of the professional news culture. This suggests an area of interest from a sociology of news perspective. Studying local television news also presents some challenges and opportunities unique to the visual medium.

Pushing Forward Framing, Visual Framing, and Sociology of News

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the way in which this study advance scholarly research by using morality politics to inform the framing analysis. This research also explored the ways in which a critical-constructionist approach to a framing analysis helps advance the hegemonic theory of the media. This approach recognized the effect of influences working at the level of “common sense” and culture throughout the construction of the news coverage. By connecting this with sociology of news literature, this dissertation builds upon the work of Tuchman (1978, 2002) and her insights into how unquestioned values and professional blind spots develop in newsrooms and influence the news.

Not only did the interpretive power of framing theory work well to study the process, product, and power of local television news coverage in Iowa, but this research also built upon the visual framing literature. Earlier work (Grabe & Bucy, 2001) informed the way I recognized and understood the visual framing in the Iowa coverage. In turn, my research demonstrated the importance of visual framing even with an issue that presented relatively few compelling video opportunities for television reporters and photographers. As a result, my research considered the way a mix of newly shot video at press conferences, rallies, and interviews, was combined with file video and excerpts from campaign commercials to fill the visual storytelling gap. Important visual framing came from signs and the tour bus in the newly shot video. Important file video in the news packages included images of same-sex wedding celebrations and excerpts from an attack ad aimed at Iowa Supreme Court justices. All of these images worked as either part of the dominant morality politics framing or the subordinate civil rights framing.

Grabe and Bucy (2002) argued that when compared to framing studies of print news, there was a considerably smaller volume of visual framing research. In a study of the body of framing research, Matthes (2009) echoed this observation, noting that the majority of visual framing studies looked at still images, not video. My research builds the body of visual framing research of news video texts by examining the multiple audio and visual dimensions of television news packages. Local television news has had decades to understand and hone the craft of telling stories, typically with only one to two minutes of airtime, in a visually dominated format. This suggests a rich area of reporting rituals and journalistic judgment which would benefit from further visual framing studies. And not only would this help understand a traditional form of media, but the visual framing work

done on local television news can offer theoretical understandings and methodological techniques which might prove useful in the study of online visual and multimedia representations of information.

This research also adds to the sociology of news literature by unpacking the way in which balance and other journalistic values worked to influence the resulting news framing in a way which favored the conservative anti-retention campaign. Not an accusation of conscious bias on the part of journalists against same-sex couples, I argue well-intentioned adherence to a particular interpretation of professional standards blinded reporters to the ways their reporting had actually become unbalanced. The pervasive evidence of this phenomenon across newsrooms and successive years offers evidence about the shared values of a broader professional culture.

Methodological Implications

There were practical challenges that presented obstacles to this research into local television news that might face other researchers considering similar work. For example, the sample size made any possible meaningful quantitative analysis problematic. The allocation of newsroom resources, especially in smaller markets, meant there would be a limit to the number of stories a news department could produce on a given topic in a three month timeframe. Depending on how recent the coverage desired for study, there could be other complications unique to local television news. Unlike newspapers articles which might be collected in various databases or accessed at a local library, many older local television news stories are privately archived. For my research going back to 2010, stories were on tapes that only existed in on-site archives which required special permission to access. As noted in the chapter three, this permission can be difficult to obtain. What is

more, these tapes tend to be on a commercial medium which requires specialized equipment for playback. To some extent, more recent stories might be accessible online for several years after broadcast, but searching via Google or other external search engines may not produce as comprehensive a result as a station's internal computer database. A researcher contemplating the study of local television news should be aware of these potential access issues and design her study accordingly.

At the same time as access might limit the number of stories to be studied, the complexity of multi-dimensional news texts can create an overload of information. In a single news package a researcher will have to consider the interplay not just of a text narrative that combines the reporter's words with quotes from sources, but dozens of shots, the various qualities of those shots, how those shots are edited together, and how they interact with each other and the other elements of the story as described in chapters three and four. I found the flexibility of an inductive and interpretive qualitative framing approach an effective way to meet these challenges. This approach allowed for a depth of analysis that started by identifying frames. From that start, it factored in multiple parts of the framing process, how frames were sponsored by particular sources, how frames worked culturally, and how news framing was influenced by the news gathering process (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

Another advantage of a critical-constructionist framing approach in studying local television news is that it allowed for an analysis that inductively understood not just frames, but the meaning and process behind news framing. In this research, one key finding was the complex way morality politics framing was engaged in this news coverage in a series of articulations between Iowa's Supreme Court, same-sex marriage, and other

conservative hot-button issues. Once the critical analysis yielded that result, the constructionist approach allowed for the consideration of how news values and reporting practices played a role in making morality politics the dominant framing.

Pedagogical Implications

Students preparing for news careers will leave journalism schools and go to work in news rooms where professional enculturation will be a significant component of their first years in the business, as discussed in chapter three. Their ability to navigate this process with some success will have implications for their ability to obtain job security, promotions, and potentially the next job in a bigger market. During this time rookie reporters will be building their professional cache and should not expect to have the social capital necessary to overtly challenge the values and practices of their senior colleagues and managers. At the same time, new reporters would be well served to have a firm educational foundation for them to continually recognize and critique the way they are doing their jobs.

Educators may be doing a disservice to students, if they set them up to start a new job primed for a head-to-head confrontation with their bosses, a confrontation a new reporter would not be expected to be in a position to win. At the same time, the mission of journalism research and education is to develop an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of current journalism practice and to help improve the profession. In this study, I have navigated these opposing tensions with three practical suggestions of how this research might serve to inform journalism educators as they prepare students for journalism jobs. Ultimately, all three of these suggestions are meant to enhance a core mission of journalism: telling complete, accurate, and independent stories which help audience

members better understand their world and then act upon the best information possible.

The first suggestion ties directly to the utility of teaching journalism students to recognize the value of understanding news framing and how it works. This research demonstrates the need to at least introduce the students to the concept of frames as building from arguments carried by sponsors into overarching definitions of an issue and what about the issue is most important. In this research, I argue that by countering conservatives with legal experts, journalists were inadvertently accepting the way those conservatives were attempting to define, or frame, the entire issue. In this way educators can first give aspiring journalists a kind of “heads up” to be looking for these larger meanings. Awareness is an important first step of many educational processes. Framing theory also offers a way to discuss and understand how individual arguments, or frames, can add up to the larger framing of an issue. Incorporating these discussions into journalism classes engages critical thinking and analysis skills vital to successful reporting. This study of how framing can be understood to have worked in the coverage of same-sex marriage backlash in Iowa demonstrates this process and its implications.

The second way this research can support journalism pedagogy is the way it speaks to the importance of sourcing. This study joins a body of literature which probes the way the selection of sources has a profound impact on the kinds of stories which journalists can tell. It also highlights some of the weaknesses of overreliance upon easily accessible elite sources. This is not a new concept in journalism or journalism education. What this research adds is another way of showing the potential benefits of cultivating sources among non-elites who belong to groups which are often denied the same voice in news coverage as the official sources who talk about them. Source cultivation of this nature can

be difficult and time consuming, but in terms of the coverage of ongoing issues such as LGBTQ rights, the cultivation of these sources can have long-term benefits by making more thorough and inclusive reporting possible.

Third, I suggest a pragmatic pedagogical approach to incorporating the idea that traditional newsroom values and practices can and should be continually questioned and challenged as a necessary component of keeping the journalistic profession healthy and accomplishing the things it ideally sets out to do. I believe it is okay to prepare students for the fact that long time professionals will not always be open to suggestions for change from a new reporter. The practical lesson is that as new reporters they will need to build their reputations and social capital within the newsroom, but as they do so they can continue to think critically about their reporting practices and the kinds of meanings that are carried in their stories.

By gaining experience and building a reputation for telling good stories, a new reporter will find themselves with a greater voice in the newsroom. This should be an ongoing process which may see them rise to their own positions of newsroom leadership. I argue that by applying the lessons from the first two pedagogical recommendations, understanding how framing works in their news stories and the importance of more varied sourcing, reporters will have an advantage in telling the kinds of stories which will get them recognized. Moreover, this research suggests reporting which fits comfortably within traditional news values while pushing the boundaries of how those values are applied. Or in other words, this opens the door to using the logics of news to dismantle the typical process of news gathering and reconstruct it in a way that helps reporters meet the challenge of telling stories about issues such as LGBTQ rights in the face of media-savvy

groups adept at using an understanding of news values to exert influence over news coverage.

Limitations and Areas of Future Study

In this study I was interested in the way local television news reporters covered the issue of same-sex marriage as it appeared as part of an anti-retention campaign in Iowa in 2010 and 2012. Having been a radio and television journalist in Iowa and being a supporter of LGBTQ equality, this research interest touched upon my professional, personal, and academic interests. However, studying local television news coverage from a few years earlier presented some inherent limitations as well as some unexpected difficulties.

One of the inherent limitations of this study and its desire to examine television news packages was that success or failure was going to depend on access to proprietary archives and data systems. Another challenge was to get interview invitees to agree to participate. As discussed in chapter three and earlier in this chapter, these limitations had implications for the number of news packages that could be accessed for study, and the number of reporters who could be invited. Ultimately, I had enough data in the form of news packages and interviews to address the research questions of interest here. However, the data pool was not optimal for a quantitative analysis, limiting the potential for triangulation with a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. It is likely, however, that requiring a sample size that would have worked well with a quantitative approach would have made a study of Iowa local television news coverage of these retention votes unfeasible.

This research was also limited to looking at two of the three types of framing research identified by D'Angelo (2002), the constructionist and critical. The cognitive

approach, more focused on audience reactions to frames and news framing, was not feasible in this study which launched after the 2010 and 2012 elections. However, had this research been conducted concurrent with the 2010 and 2012 elections, surveys, focus groups, or experiments might have yielded deeper understanding of the way audiences were interpreting the news framing. Such cognitive framing research may have revealed unexpected ways audience members were connecting those frames with existing knowledge and the broader culture. It may also have revealed ways in which viewers were challenging the dominant morality politics framing on their own.

Another limitation was that this study described video texts in a narrative text form. Descriptions of video, no matter how meticulous, relied upon my observations and interpretations of that video. Some studies of film and television take advantage of inter-coder reliability to mitigate shortcomings from human error and bias. However, this was problematic in my research. I had to be physically present in the stations to access and view the tapes and internal hard drive databases to watch the stories. Early discussions with stations indicated that asking for copies would either be very expensive or may have caused stations to balk at participation. With greater resources and an opportunity to repeat this study, I would have recruited other viewers to travel with me and do a parallel framing analyses of the video texts.

An unanticipated limitation to this study was the inability to identify the specific photographers who worked with the reporters on their stories. Based on my own experience, I had anticipated more reporters would have shot and edited their own material in a practice sometimes referred to as “one-man banding.” However, that was not the case for the stories I studied in this research. The photographers who did the actual shooting and

editing were not credited in the stories, and too much time had passed for reporters to be certain who they worked with from a rotating pool of photographers. This limited discussion about the visual aspects of the local news packages to the reporters' recollection about interactions with photographers on a more generalized basis.

Future Research

As this dissertation reached conclusions, it also raised new questions and suggested additional avenues for research. One of these stems from the limitation of not being able to identify and include photographers in this study. Future research might focus on the photojournalism aspect of local television news. This could be a look at the photographers' values, practices, and decision making. It could focus on the collaborative process between reporters and photographers. Or it might consider the increasingly common integration of these two roles into the same person as reporters in shrinking news departments are increasingly called upon to shoot and edit their own video.

Another area of future research interest would be representation of LGBTQ persons on local television news staffs. Statistically speaking, these news departments almost had to have had some gay or lesbian employees, yet news directors seemed either unaware of their presence or were unwilling to discuss this knowledge. Scholars have noted the implications of having (or not) a cross-section of a community in the demographics of a newsroom (Alwood, 1996; Tuchman, 1978). While we have seen high-profile television journalists such as Anderson Cooper come out, he did so after becoming an established star with a powerful career. A journalist just starting their career or in a smaller, more conservative market, might weigh the consequences of coming out differently. It would be interesting to explore the demographics of local television newsrooms, discover if there are

members of the LGBTQ community who are currently passing as heterosexual, and inquire about their reasons for making this choice.

This research found that journalists often erroneously took as synonymous the concepts of balance and neutrality, which became especially problematic in the stories I studied because of the way balance was defined. The findings in this case then raise the question: Do reporters inadvertently mislead themselves when covering other similar controversial stories? This research relied upon analysis of news texts and interviews to make inferences about how professional values were defined and applied in this case. Future research wishing to follow this sociology of news thread may want to use similar techniques, or if the situation allows, employ direct observation and other ethnographic techniques.

Another line of future research might be to see if the modified morality politics news framing is present in the coverage of other contemporary examples of morality politics issues. For example, ongoing efforts to pass so-called “religious freedom” bills allowing businesses to refuse service to LGBTQ individuals seem to be tapping into the same kinds of modified morality politics I identified in this research. Are issues not normally classified as morality politics, such as gun control or immigration, being pulled under the umbrella of morality politics logics through articulation with moralistic or religious arguments? This would potentially lead to advances in the understandings of framing theory and the way framing interacts with politics. It may also lead to cross-over research with the political science field and new areas of research about political campaigns and morality politics.

Finally, this research suggests a need to continue refining the methodology of

studying the multifaceted television news texts. Such refinements might continue pursuing qualitative methods which incorporate the necessary rigor and connection between inductive reasoning and the texts themselves, while allowing for flexibility necessary to consider the component parts of multiple stories as individual parts, as parts of a larger story, and parts of a body of coverage. Not only would refinements of the methods used in this research prove useful to future research on television news, it would offer methodological options for studying other visually oriented news such as online multi-media news texts.

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APPENDIX A – ORIGINAL STATION INVITATIONS

Good Afternoon:

Periodically, IBNA is asked to facilitate contact between researchers and our members regarding an academic project.

Below my signature line, you will find a request from Mr. Shawn Harmsen of the University of Iowa. He is seeking access to your video files concerning Cedar Rapids/Waterloo/Iowa City/Dubuque market news coverage of same gender marriage in Iowa. Please respond to him directly regarding his research request, and do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

Regards,
Jeff

Jeff Stein
IBNA Executive Director
IBNA@IBNA.org / www.IBNA.org
319.230.8988

Dear News Director:

From the muckrakers who prompted Teddy Roosevelt to create the EPA, to the coverage of the violence done to Civil Rights activists in the 1960s, to the present day coverage of social issues, journalists shed light into the corners of the intersections between politics and social justice. The ongoing struggle over gay rights and same-sex marriage in Iowa is one such intersection.

As a former radio and television journalist who is currently pursuing a doctorate at the University of Iowa, I am deeply interested in how Iowa TV news has covered this issue going back to the *Varnum* decision.

An important part of what I want to do is to view and analyze the stories that your station aired on the topics of same-sex marriage and gay rights from 2009 to present. I don't plan to start the actual research until late summer/early fall, but as part of the research proposal process I am “getting my ducks in a row” now.

This academic research will be used for a doctoral thesis, and hopefully for publication in academic journals. Having been a news director, I know I would want to know something about a person before granting access to my story library. There is a brief description of my background, as well as a link to a more detailed C.V. on my page on the Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication website at: <http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/people/shawn-harmsen-0>

I hope we can talk or be in touch via email. Please feel free to reply at shawn-harmsen@uiowa.edu or by phone at 319-325-0163. Otherwise, I will be making follow-up phone calls over the next few weeks.

Thank you in advance for considering my request.

Sincerely,
Shawn Harmsen

APPENDIX B- FIELD NOTES/TRANSCRIPT EXAMPLE 1

ARCHIVE DATA COLLECTION SHEET

STORY I.D.	Retention Package
DATE FIRST AIRED	10/26/2010
DATE EXAMINED	12/3/2014
REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER/EDITOR	XXXXXX
QUICK SUMMARY	An overview of the race, a longer package a few days before the election
SOURCES QUOTED	Bob Vander Plaats (BVP), Art Neu – former Republican lt. gov., Sally Pederson – former lt. gov.,
NOTES	3601 40.52

**Appendix B,
continued**

NARRATIVE TEXT	VIDEO/AUDIO TEXT	FRAME / NOTES
<p>ANCHOR: ONE OF THE HOTTEST CAMPAIGNS THIS ELECTION SEASON DOES NOT INVOLVE ANY OF THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL CANDIDATES. IT INVOLVES THREE SUPREME COURT JUSTICES AND THE ISSUE OF WHETHER IOWANS THINK THEY SHOULD KEEP THEIR JOBS.</p> <p>ANCHOR: NORMALLY A FORMALITY ON THE BALLOT, THIS YEAR IT'S BECOME A RALLYING POINT, TRIGGERED BY LAST YEAR'S UNANIMOUS COURT RULING WHICH ALLOWED FOR SAME SEX MARRIAGE. (TAKE PKG)</p>		<p>INTRO – SUPCO RETENTION IS A MAJOR RACE</p> <p>INTRO – THIS IS ABNORMAL</p> <p>THIS IS LEGAL/GOVT ISSUE</p>
<p>Nat Sot¹¹: "CHECK NO ON THE BALLOT BOX." [Duration:0:08] REPORTER: THREE UNSUCCESSFUL BIDS FOR GOVERNOR HAVEN'T STOPPED BOB VANDERPLAATS FROM CAMPAIGNING AGAIN. BUT THIS CAMPAIGN IS NOT FOR A CANDIDATE, RATHER, IT'S AGAINST 3 IOWA SUPREME</p>	<p>BVP (file?) being interviewed, summer day, head and shoulders shot, he is looking away from sunlight, people behind him, as is blue sky and DSM Skyline. (...bids for...) cut to moving shot, camera moves to the left and zooms in a bit on BVP standing on cap steps talking to what appears to be a reporter from a newspaper or possibly</p>	<p>T/A/V – QUICK NATS OF BVP FILE SAYING TO VOTE NO</p> <p>T – BVP FAILED GOV CANDIDATE</p> <p>T – BVP CAMPAIGNING AGAINST IASUPCO BECAUSE OF VARNUM DECISION/SSM</p>

¹¹ See Appendix V for a glossary of television news abbreviations and terminology

**Appendix B,
continued**

<p>COURT WHO WERE PART OF A UNANIMOUS DECISION THAT ENDED UP ALLOWING SAME SEX MARRIAGE :</p>	<p>radio station. Same day, sunny, outside, (..but this....) two person walking shot with BVP and reporter, (white hair, dark suit, red tie, BVP is in dark suit and dark tie), talking to each other...</p> <p>(rather its against)....grx of three photos of justices</p>	<p>V – BVP FILE AT CAPITAL, LEGITIMACY BY EXPOSURE AND AUTHORITY BY PLACE...</p> <p>V – REPORTER WALK WITH BVP</p> <p>V – PICS, NO VIDEO, OF JUSTICES</p>
<p>Vander Plaats: “To me ..If they'll do this to the institution of marriage, they'll do it to anything! Your private property is definitely up for grabs; your second amendment pretty much gone; how you educate your children, all those things are violations of the equal protection provision with their interpretation and understanding.” [Duration:0:15]</p>	<p>BVP in an interview setting, sitting in what looks like an office, plain white or beige walls. He is facing to the left, and in the background there is a window with the blinds drawn and a tall green potted plant. It appears the only light source is either on the camera or a stand next to the camera. Talks well and with animation, charismatic. As he discusses his fears, he does so with obvious distaste for the things he discusses. His speech is Midwestern.</p>	<p>T – IASUPCO ATTACKED INSTITUTION OF MARRAGE</p> <p>T – JUSTICES THREATEN EVERYTHING FROM 2ND AMENDMENT TO EDUCATION</p> <p>V – BVP IN AN OFFICE, FORCEFUL, SMOOTH AND ARTICULATE DELIVERY, NO EQUIVOCATION</p>
<p>REPORTER: A VOTE AGAINST ANY OR ALL OF THE JUSTICES WILL NOT CHANGE THE SAME SEX RULING. BUT VANDERPLAATS SAYS IOWANS NEED TO SEND A MESSAGE.</p> <p>[TAKE SOT](***SOT***)</p>	<p>Cut to fie video of IASUPCO justices filing into the bench and taking their seats.</p>	<p>T – IASUPCO VOTE WON’T CHANGE LAW (REVENGE MOTIVE?) T – IASUPCO OVERSTEPPED AUTHORITY (BVP). SLIPPERY SLOPE FRAME (AS ABOVE).</p>

Appendix B, continued		
Vander Plaats: “They went way outside their constitutional boundaries and it's a slippery slope for every one of our freedoms if we let them do that”[Duration:0:07]	As BVP starts talking, video of justices with low nats still running, starts with one of Baker obviously talking, then Streit, then Ternes,	V – FILE OF SUPCO, JUSTICES ON THE JOB
Art Neu: ” The constitutions are living documents that courts interpret and I think Vander Plaats is way off base when he says they're taking our freedoms” [Duration:0:08]	Video fades to Art Neu, 70s, white hair around back and sides of head, grey suit jacket, purple shirt, looking to right of camera, toward light, Wall behind him is wood paneling, reminiscent of a courtroom setting, but otherwise plain. Articulate and animated as he describes his thoughts on BVP.	T – CONSTITUTION LIVING DOCUMENT, BVP WAY OFF BASE (from former GOP Lt. gov). V/A – OLDER MAN/AUTHORITY FIGURE, FORMER LT. GOV, PLAIN BACKGROUND, ALSO ARTICULATE AND FORCEFUL
REPORTER: FORMER REPUBLICAN LT GOVERNOR ART NEU IS ONE OF SEVERAL CURRENT AND FORMER POLITICIANS LEADING THE OPPOSITION TO VANDER PLAATS EFFORT:	Cuts to over-the-reporter’s-shoulder shot of Neu, showing reporter listening to him talk, in a room, possibly a court room or conference room, but it’s not clear. Seems to be a single point lighting kind of shoot.	T – NEU PART OF SEVERAL POLITICIANS FROM BOTH PARTIES (OLD GUARD) OPPOSING BVP. V – JUST NEU TALKING TO REPORTER...
Art Neu: "Actually in some senses they're giving freedom to some people who were inhibited in the past. No i think he's all wrong" [Duration:0:08]	Back to face shot of Neu.	T – OBLIQUE CIVIL RIGHTS FRAME, GIVING FREEDOM TO “SOME PEOPLE” (LGBT not named directly). BVP ALL WRONG.

**Appendix B,
continued**

REPORTER: NEU AND OTHERS SAY IOWANS OBVIOUSLY HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE ANY WAY THEY WANT:	File video from courtroom, starts wide and zooms into Ternus. You can hear her audio as she speaks, and then you can hear Neu again.	T – IOWANS CAN VOTE ANY WAY THEY WANT...BUT... V – COURTROOM FILE VIDEO
Neu: “We’re only saying in this instance it’s not the right thing to do. That the judges were interpreting... a statute... They interpreted it ...We don’t think they should be tossed out for doing that.	Fade back to Neu...	T – JUDGES DID JOB CORRECTLY...NOT A REASON TO FIRE THEM V – NEU BEING INTERVIEWED
REPORTER: BUT VANDER PLAATS, WHOSE CAMPAIGN IS GETTING SUPPORT IN A STATEWIDE BUS TOUR THIS WEEK, SAYS THE COURT WENT BEYOND INTERPRETING.	Switch to outdoors, foreground four frowning and unhappy looking old white men holding red signs with a big white “NO” on them, with “activist judges” written smaller below. A few other people are visible. They are wearing fall jackets, jeans, and a couple have hats on. The grass and the trees behind them are starting to change color (bus tour)....cut to zoom that starts showing front and side of a big purple tour bus with writing and pictures on the side, and as it zooms in, you can see the pictures are big images of the three justices with the word “NO” written over them, other writing is hard to read. (This bus appeared in CR stories)	T – COURT WENT TOO FAR (BVP PARAPHRASE) T – BUS CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY V – IASUPCO PROTESTORS, VOTE “NO” SIGNS V – THE BIG PURPLE ANTI- JUSTICE TOUR BUS. FAIRLY QUICKLY SHOWN...

**Appendix B,
continued**

Vander Plaats: “And even though you might agree with this opinion, they'll be other opinions down the line that you'll totally disagree with but will have set precedent that allow courts to make law and execute law.” [Duration:0:10]	BVP back in the interview, same as before.	T – BVP: THEY WILL BRING JUDICIAL ACTIVISM TO OTHER ISSUES... THE BIG THREAT...
Sally Pedersen: “We’re encouraging people to vote yes on retention” (fade...) [Duration:0:03]	Strange sliding transition to a shot of a woman standing on a sidewalk, cars parked on a curb and in a parking lot in the background to the left. To the right what appears to be the side of a building. She is about 50, white, wearing a red shirt or dress with long sleeves. Shot is of head and half-torso. It is daytime and sunny.	T – VOTE YES... V – ANOTHER OFFICIAL LOOKING PERSON, AUTHORITY BY APPEARANCE, TITLE, AND INCLUSION IN STORY,
REPORTER: SALLY PEDERSEN IS ANOTHER FORMER LT GOVERNOR OPPOSED TO VANDERPLAATS' EFFORTS. SHE SAYS THE PROCESS SHOULD NOT RULED BY POLITICS	Camera shows a sidewalk, tilts up to show another walk-and-talk two shot, Sally on the left and Kevin on the right, walking on the sidewalk, a sunny afternoon with some brown and green grass and scattered leaves on the ground.	T – ANOTHER FORMER LT. GOV, THIS TIME DEMOCRAT (SUBTEXT: BI-PARTISAN OPPO TO BVP FROM FORMER HIGH RANKING ELECTED OFFICIALS
Pedersen: “We don’t want to have a system where judges have to look over their shoulder and decide whether their decision s are popular with the public,” [Duration:0:09]	Fade back to interview shot.	T – BVP’S PUSH HURTS IOWA’S JUSTICE SYSTEM

**Appendix B,
continued**

<p>Pedersen, cont.: “It really concerns me he's funded by outside special interest group that have their own agenda and they're coming into r state and trying to tell us what kind of court system we should have.” [Duration:0:14]</p>	<p>(popular with...) file video of Streit on the bench, talking, but audio underneath Sally, then cut to Baker, then wide shot of attorney talking to justices</p>	<p>T – CONCERN OVER OUT-OF-STATE GROUP FUNDING BVP’S PUSH. LEAVE IOWA TO IOWANS.</p> <p>V – FILE OF IASUPCO, MISE EN SCENE SHOWING JUSTICES, JUSTICES ON THE JOB...</p>
<p>Vander Plaats: “A lot of people believe this is a marriage only issue/.I tell them this is not what this is all about. This is a freedom issue.</p>	<p>Back to BVP interview</p>	<p>T – BVP SAYS NOT JUST ABOUT SSM, ABOUT FREEDOM</p>
<p>REPORTER: AGAIN TO BE CLEAR, IF A MAJORITY OF IOWANS WERE TO VOTE AGAINST THE RETENTION OF ANY OR ALL OF THE THREE JUSTICES, IT WOULD DO NOTHING IN TERMS OF THE SAME SEX MARRIAGE LAW. THAT WOULD REMAIN THE SAME. THE JUSTICES HOWEVER WOULD BE REMOVED FROM THE BENCH. THE RETENTION QUESTION FOR THE SUPREME COURT JUSTICES AND MANY OTHER JUDGES IS ON THE BACK OF THE BALLOT.</p>		<p>TAG TEXT – VOTE WON’T CHANGE LEGALITY OF SSM IN IOWA,</p> <p>TAG – JUSTICES JOBS AT RISK</p>

APPENDIX C - FIELD NOTES/TRANSCRIPT EXAMPLE 2

STORY I.D.	Story about NOM Ad
DATE FIRST AIRED	9/13/2010
DATE EXAMINED	12/5/2014
REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER/EDITOR	XXXXXXXXXX
QUICK SUMMARY	Story about outside group (National Organization for Marriage) running ads in the Iowa retention race.
SOURCES QUOTED	Bob Vander Plaats, Judge Robert Hanson,
NOTES	

**Appendix C,
continued.**

NARRATIVE TEXT	VIDEO/AUDIO TEXT	FRAME / NOTES
(PKG START)	Starts with nats and video from the ad, 3 seconds worth, showing unflattering close-ups of the judges and with pensive music and incredulous male announcer.	V/A (AD) JUSTICES AS OMINOUS
REPORTER: THE ADD CALLS 3 IOWA SUPREME COURT JUSTICES LIBERAL AND OUT OF CONTROL...	Ad continues to play, audio barely heard under narration, various images of justices juxtaposed with “wholesome” images of children, families, whom we are to infer are under threat.... Audio comes back up for Nat Pop...”out of control judges ignoring our traditions and values...”	V/A (AD) – JUSTICES (AND VARNUM) THREATEN CHILDREN, FAMILIES, DECENCY, TRADITIONS T – JUSTICES OUT OF CONTROL
SMALL BUSINESS OWNER AND PREVIOUS IOWA GOVERNOR REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE BOB VANDER PLAATS IS THE FORCE BEHIND IT.	Not very high quality file video shot of Bob Vander Plaats (BVP), head and torso, black suit and dark tie, holding a mic, speaking to somebody off camera, plain wall and window behind him. Shot is off because he is located to the left of center and is facing left, so image feels somewhat unbalanced. Only up for few seconds.	V/T – BVP AS “CREDIBLE” SOURCE
HE IS OUT OF TOWN TODAY, SO WE SPOKE WITH HIM BY PHONE...	File video, used previously, of him speaking into a stick mic outside state capitol, his face and part of one shoulder with blue sky and Des Moines behind him.	T/V - BVP – CREDIBLE SOURCE

**Appendix C,
continued**

Vander Plaats: “The whole ad purpose is to inform the voters of Iowa that you have a Supreme Court that usurps the will of the people”	Graphic of BVP, A portrait photo, face and top of shoulders, smiling, in a suit, professional photo. In background, phone keypad...	
REPORTER: IN APRIL OF LAST YEAR THE IOWA SUPREME COURT LEGALIZED GAY MARRIAGE BY VOIDING A STATUTE THAT BANS SAME SEX COUPLES FROM GETTING MARRIED.	*NATS UP* File video used earlier, presumably from a person’s home when the Varnum decision was announced, about 8-10 people, cheering, one woman runs into another woman’s arms and there is a tight bear hug/embrace...lots of cheering laughing and tears of joy... (...legalized...) cut to close up of woman’s face, can see her swallow down a lump in the throat, subdued but tears of joy are visible. (...by voiding...) cut to file of lone attorney at podium speaking to IASUPCO justices sitting at their bench.	T – SSM LEGALIZED V/A – SSM CAUSE OF CELEBRATION V/A – SSM EMOTIONALLY POSITIVE, CAUSES HAPPY PEOPLE... V – INTRODUCING TO AN OFFICIAL WHO WILL GET TO SPEAK...
REPORTER: IOWA DISTRICT JUDGE ROBERT HANSON WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO RULE THAT GAY MARRIAGE IS CONSTITUTIONAL UNDER IOWA LAW BACK IN 2007.	Cut to an over-the-shoulder shot, reporter foreground (back of head and left shoulder) and to her left and in front is a man, grey hair, 50ish, receding hairline, blue dress shirt, patterned tie, no jacket, sleeves rolled up, holding a pad of paper. It appears they are in an empty courtroom, with reporter seated where attorneys usually sit and interview subject on the other side of the table with his back to an empty jury gallery (partially visible)	T/V – OFFICIAL WHO GETS TO SPEAK

**Appendix C,
continued**

REPORTER: HE SAYS THE JUSTICES TARGETED IN THIS AD DID NOTHING WRONG.	<p>Nat pop “Legislating from the bench”...nom ad reappears with revolving images of IASUPCO judges...(Hanson is NOT among them)_</p> <p>Ad goes to shots of family (man, woman, baby in a grassy area), boy scout saluting,</p>	<p>T – JUSTICES FOLLOWED LAW</p> <p>V – JUSTICES ARE SCARY</p> <p>V – JUSTICES THREATEN FAMILIES</p>
Hanson: “Those justices did exactly what they were required to do. Namely to assess the constitutionality of the particular statute.”	Head and shoulder shot of interview subject described earlier. Same location. Speaking in calm and measured tones, as if patiently explaining something.	<p>T – JUSTICE UPHELD CONSTITUTION</p> <p>V – CALM RATIONAL OLDER WHITE GUY EXPLAINS</p>
REPORTER: HANSON SAID WHAT VANDER PLAATS IS ENCOURAGING BY THIS AD IS AN ABUSE OF THE JUSTICE RETENTION PROCESS. HE SAYS THE RETENTION IS FOR IOWANS TO DETERMINE IF JUSTICES ARE FIT TO JUDGE, NOT BASED ON POPULARITY AND HOW THEY HAVE RULED ON A PARTICULAR ISSUE.	Nat pop: “Marriage, what will they do to...(fades)”. More shots from the NOM ad, mother and child doing homework in one revolving still photo, hunters in another,	<p>T – RETENTION PROCESS BEING ABUSED</p> <p>V/A – JUSTICES THREATEN IOWANS</p>
Vander Plaats: “So to me it’s a little bit disheartening to hear judges talk about this is an abuse of the system. They need to go back to the founding where it says we’re a government of we the people and that’s why they gave us the retention vote in the first place.”	Back to FONER GRX OF BVP	<p>T - PEOPLE SHOULD GET TO VOTE – JUSTICES USURP VOTER RIGHTS</p>

Appendix C, continued		
REPORTER: VANDER PLAATS MAINTAINS THAT HE JUSTICES WENT OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION. BUT JUDGE HANSON HAS OTHER ADVICE.	More of the NOM ad, the earlier bit with the revolving justice photos.	
Hanson: “Not to go just on the basis of the content of this ad, but to go further, to go deeper, to educate themselves about the judiciary, about the retention process, so that they can exercise their vote, as I said, in a responsible and knowledgeable way.”	Same face shot as before. In background, inside of courtroom, wood paneling, American flag, empty bench .	T/V – RATIONAL AND APPEAL TO LOGIC, TO LEGAL EXPERTISE

APPENDIX D – EXAMPLE OF STATION LETTER OF AGREEMENT

(All references to individual station deleted).

7/10/2014

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to inform you that University of Iowa Ph.D. Candidate Shawn Harmsen has my permission to invite newsroom employees to be interviewed as part of his research. He has explained that he will be interested in talking to news workers about their professional process in reporting stories relating to same-sex marriage during the August to November timeframe (election season) in 2010, 2012, and 2014. He also explained that participation in interviews would be completely voluntary. This is acceptable to us. If you have any questions, you can contact me at (xxx)-xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

XXXXXXX XXXXXXXXX

News Director

APPENDIX E – INVITATION LETTER TO REPORTERS

Dear :

We invite you to participate in a research study being conducted by investigators from The University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication. The focus of the study is to examine the way in which the topic of same-sex marriage was covered in Iowa during the three election cycles following the Iowa Supreme Court Decision (commonly referred to as *Varnum*) legalizing same-sex marriage. The purpose of the study is to explore and understand the role, and the importance, of local television news as it covers a social movement (and counter-movement) during election seasons.

You have been invited to participate in this study based upon your work at (insert station) during the (insert date(s)) election cycles. I have viewed your archived news packages during that/those time(s) that reference same-sex marriage and I would like the opportunity to ask you about your process creating those stories, from story assignment to final editing of the package(s).

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an interview. I would like to schedule the interview in an edit bay, or other location where we can watch the stories while you share your memories of how you created them. The interview will be scheduled at a time and location that is most convenient for you and allows use of viewing equipment. One aspect of the study participation includes making an audio recording of the interview. If you do not want to be recorded, only notes of the conversation will be taken. I anticipate an interview should take around an hour.

This research will be conducted at several television stations in Iowa, in a variety of market sizes. While identifying individual markets might be necessary in the written results of this research, individual stations and reporters will NOT be identified by name. Further, as much as possible, any quotes used will be careful to avoid information that would allow for easy identification of research participants or their stations.

Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please decline by emailing me at shawn-harmsen@uiowa.edu or calling me at 319-325-0163. If you contact me to decline being interviewed, I will not send you any follow-up requests.

If you have questions about the rights of research subjects, please contact the Human Subjects Office, 105 Hardin Library for the Health Sciences, 600 Newton Rd, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242-1098, (319) 335-6564, or e-mail irb@uiowa.edu.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this research study.

Shawn Harmsen

University of Iowa

School of Journalism and Mass Communication

APPENDIX F – QUESTIONS FOR REPORTERS

SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Can you tell me a little about your work history as a journalist?
2. Can you tell me a little bit about your education before becoming a journalist?
3. Can you describe your current duties/responsibilities in the newsroom?
 - a. How long have you had those duties/responsibilities?
4. Have you always lived in Iowa?
 - a. If not, where have you lived?

SECTION 2 – DESCRIBE YOUR NEWSGATHERING PROCESS (Note: This section will be influenced by the content of the news stories upon which the individual reporters worked and might be repeated as necessary if there are multiple stories. Whenever possible, we will watch the story together and then questions will be asked.).

1. Do you recall what caused this story to be assigned to you? (Was it assigned as an enterprise story? Was there an event/press conference/political development that served as a catalyst for this assignment?)
2. Can you walk me through what you remember about covering this story from the time it was assigned?
3. If you haven't already discussed this, please tell me about why these particular people appeared as interviews in the news package. Were there any interviews that didn't get included?
4. If you haven't already discussed this, please tell me how you decided what kinds of video to shoot and/or edit into the final news package.
5. If you haven't already discussed this, please tell me what were your main goals / main angles you were taking with this story (or attempting to take).
6. If you haven't already discussed this, please discuss any challenges you had to overcome to report this particular story.
7. If you haven't already discussed this, how satisfied are you with this particular news story as it aired? What do you feel were its strongest and weakest points?

SECTION 3 – A JOURNALISTIC OVERVIEW OF SUBJECT COVERAGE

1. As a journalist, you are often required to cover controversial topics. Is reporting a story about same-sex marriage the same or different from covering other high-profile and controversial topics? In what ways?
2. What are the things you consider as a professional when assigned coverage of a story that includes same-sex marriage as a major component?
3. After this report (these reports) aired, what kinds of feedback, if any, did you get on your story(ies)?
4. (For veteran reporters): How far back can you remember covering stories about same-sex marriage and/or LGBTQ rights?
 - a. Do you approach those stories the same way today as you did earlier in your career? If yes, what have been the constant threads that carry through your reporting? If no, what have been the things that have changed?

APPENDIX G – QUESTIONS FOR ISSUE ADVOCATES

SECTION 1 – GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself. Where are you from originally? Where (city, state) have you lived most recently? For how long?
2. Where did you go to school? What's the highest degree you've earned?
3. Please tell me about your professional career.

SECTION 2 – BACKGROUND INFORMATION AS AN ISSUE ADVOCATE

1. How would you characterize your public position on same-sex marriage in general?
2. How would you characterize your public position on Iowa's legalization of same-sex marriage?
3. Can you tell me about your history advocating same-sex/traditional marriage?
 - a. Has your work been independent or as part of an organization?
 - b. How long have you been speaking publicly on this topic?
 - c. Has it always been in Iowa?
 - d. Did you always work in one particular area (TV market) or did you speak on this topic around the state?

SECTION 3 – EXPERIENCE WITH LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE

1. At times when you wanted to get your message out, what strategies did you use to try and get coverage from local television stations?
 - a. Which strategies seemed most (or least) effective?
2. Were you ever contacted by a reporter working on a story without first providing some kind of prompt to journalists, such as perhaps to provide your viewpoint on a story that was already being created?
 - a. If so, can you tell me anything about that/those experience(s)?
3. Once you were in a position of being interviewed or providing some kind of information to reporters, what kinds of strategies did you use to try and get the most favorable coverage?
 - a. For example, were you interviewed most often or did you also try and help line up other interview subjects for reporters?
 - b. Did you provide events/locations that showcased people or provided visual information you thought would help your cause?
4. How would you describe your overall level of satisfaction with your interactions with local television news reporters?
5. How would you describe your overall level of satisfaction with the coverage you received from local television news stations?
6. Did you notice much difference in those interactions or the coverage based on different reporters, stations, or regions (tv markets) in the state?
 - a. If yes, where did you typically feel like you would have had the "best" experience?
 - b. If yes, where did you typically feel like you would have had the "worst" experience?
 - c. If yes, can you describe any particular memories of times when you were particularly satisfied or dissatisfied with your interaction with reporters and/or the coverage you received?

Appendix G, continued

SECTION 4 – EFFICACY OF MESSAGE DELIVERY

1. Who did you perceive as your target audience(s) when you would seek out or agree to talk with local television news reporters?
2. How effective do you think you were getting your message across to that audience when your message was filtered through local television news?
 - a. Were there specific times when you thought you were able to get your message effectively delivered in this way?
 - b. Were there specific times when you thought you were NOT able to get your message effectively delivered in this way?
3. Did you have a different approach with reporters depending on if they were from a newspaper or a TV station?
4. What kinds of feedback did you get from other members of your advocacy organization (or similar group) about your ability to get your message out via local television news?
5. What is your opinion of the coverage of those who advocated a position in opposition to that you were sharing?
6. Has anything about the way you would answer the last five questions changed over the period of time that has passed since the *Varnum* decision?

APPENDIX H – QUESTIONS FOR NEWS DIRECTORS

Interview Questions for News Directors

1. Can you tell me about your education and career history?
2. How important of a story has Iowa's prohibition and later legalization of same-sex marriage been?
3. How important has it been as a political story?
4. How do you approach coverage of this issue as a news department?
5. Does coverage of a controversial topic like same-sex marriage require any additional thoughtfulness or care than a less controversial story?
6. What is (are) the biggest challenge(s) to covering these stories?
7. Are there any considerations of personality or experience when you decide which reporters or photographers to cover stories about same-sex marriage?
8. It's quite possible a newsroom staff might include individuals who have strong religious or traditional objections to same-sex marriage as well as news workers who are openly LGBTQ. As a manager, does this create a challenge for how the story is handled and discussed internally?
9. In your experience, would you say the approach to covering LGBTQ issues (including same-sex marriage) is the same today as it was 2 years ago? 5? 10? 20?
10. In your opinion who are the best sources for these stories?

APPENDIX I – DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF NEWS PACKAGES FROM CENTRAL IOWA
(DES MOINES) MARKET 2010 AND 2012.

Descriptive List of News Packages from Central Iowa (Des Moines) Market 2010 and 2012.			
STORY “SLUG”	STORY SUMMARY	ANTI-SAME-SEX MARRIAGE/ ANTI-RETENTION FRAMES	PRO-SAME-SEX MARRIAGE/ PRO RETENTION FRAMES
#1 – National Organization for Marriage (NOM) Bus Tour in Des Moines (8/1/10)	-- Anti-Justice bus tour launches	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope -- Will of the People	-- Justices were Correct -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy -- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right
#2 – Vander Plaats Announces Efforts (8/6/10)	-- Bob Vander Plaats launching anti-justice campaign	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope -- Will of the People	-- Justices were Correct -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy -- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right
#3 – Ternus Public Comments (9/9/10)	-- Embattled chief justice speaks to civic group	-- Judicial Activism -- Will of the People	-- Justices were Correct -- Protect the Courts -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy
#4 – NOM ad (9/13/10)	-- NOM has produced and is airing an anti-justice/anti-SSM ad in Iowa	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope -- Will of the People	-- Justices were Correct -- Protect the Courts -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy

Appendix I, continued			
#5 – O’Connor Visit Preview (9/27/10)	-- Former US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor to speak on behalf of Iowa justices	-- Judicial Activism	-- Protect the Courts -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy
#6 – State Bar Report (10/1/10)	-- IA Bar Association supports judges	-- Judicial Activism -- Slippery Slope	-- Justices were Correct -- Protect the Courts
#7 – What if Justices Lose? (10/8/10)	-- The consequences if there is an unprecedented retention outcome	-- Judicial Activism -- Slippery Slope	-- Justices were Correct -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy
#8 – Interfaith Alliance (10/13/10)	-- A religious group supports justices, supports equality, opposes American Family Association	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope	-- Religion Opposes Homophobia -- Same sex marriage as a Civil Right
#9 – Roy Moore in DSM (10/18/10)	-- Former (at the time) Alabama Supreme Court Justice in Iowa to attack Iowa SUPCO justices	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Will of the People	-- Justices were Correct -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy
#10 – Retention Pkg (10/26/10)	-- Election preview, summary of unprecedented retention controversy	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope	-- Justices were Correct -- Protect the Courts -- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right
#11 – Money Behind Anti-Justice Campaign (10/29/10)	-- Outside groups/money interfering in Iowa	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope	-- Protect the Courts
#12 – Justice Vote Reax (11/3/10)	-- Upset Iowans historically unseat three justices, both sides react	-- Judicial Activism -- Will of the People	-- Justices were Correct -- Protect the Courts
#13 – One Iowa Strategy (8/27/12)	-- SSM/LGBTQ rights advocates discuss sharing family stories to support Wiggins/SSM	-- Judicial Activism (implied only)	-- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right
#14 – Competing Wiggins Campaigns (9/21/12)	-- Preview of announced upcoming competing bus campaigns	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Will of the People	-- Justices were Correct

Appendix I, continued			
#15 – Dueling Bus Tours (9/24/12)	-- Anti- and Pro-Wiggins/SSM groups launch competing bus/vehicle tours from state capital.	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope -- Will of the People	-- Protect the Courts
#16 – BVP Steps up Campaign (9/26/12)	-- Continuing coverage of competing tours/campaigns	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Justices Need Punishment	-- Campaign Attacks/Hurts LGBTQ
#17 – Wiggins Race PKG (11/1/10)	-- Recap of issues/election preview story	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope -- Will of the People	-- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy
#18 – Wiggins Retained Reax (11/7/10)	-- SSM a big winner, growing public acceptance of SSM	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Will of the People	-- Protect the Courts -- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy

APPENDIX J – DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF NEWS PACKAGES, EASTERN IOWA

MARKET 2010 & 2012

Table xxx. Descriptive List of News Packages from Eastern Iowa Market 2010 and 2012.			
STORY “SLUG”	STORY SUMMARY	ANTI-SAME-SEX MARRIAGE/ ANTI-RETENTION FRAMES	PRO-SAME-SEX MARRIAGE/ PRO RETENTION FRAMES
#19 – One Iowa Rally (8/5/10)	-- SSM/LGBTQ supports strategize how to best keep rights through focusing on LEGISLATIVE races	-- Will of the People -- Traditional Marriage	-- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy
#20 – Ternus on Judges (9/30/10)	-- Chief Justice Ternus speaks to students, describes SSM ruling as in keeping with Iowa constitution, civil rights heritage	-- <i>Implied, but not stated</i>	-- Justices were Correct -- Protect the Courts -- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy
#21 – Debate Night (10/7/10)	-- SSM one of several issues debated by gubernatorial candidates	-- Same-Sex Marriage is a Political Issue	
#22 – Ternus in CR (10/19/10)	-- Ternus again in area, speaking to a group	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope	-- Justices were Correct -- Protect the Courts
#23 – Court Retention PKG (10/27/10)	-- Emotions running high on controversial issue	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope	-- Justices were Correct -- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right
#24 – Same Sex Reax (11/3/10)	-- Varnums, other couples involved in lawsuit react vote unseating SUPCO justices, unhappy		-- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy -- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right -- Results are Step Backward -- Attack on Same-Sex Marriage Family
#25 – IA Gay Marriage Reax (11/7/12)	-- Varnums again react, but this time happy. SSM more accepted	-- Will of the People -- Traditional Marriage	-- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy

APPENDIX K – DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF NEWS PACKAGES, WESTERN IOWA

MARKET 2010 & 2012

Table xxx. Descriptive List of News Packages from Western Iowa Market 2010 and 2012.			
STORY “SLUG”	STORY SUMMARY	ANTI-SAME-SEX MARRIAGE/ ANTI- RETENTION FRAMES	PRO-SAME-SEX MARRIAGE/ PRO RETENTION FRAMES
#26 – Judges Vote (10/17/10)	-- Social conservatives target Justices and retention race	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope	-- Justices were Correct -- Protect the Courts -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy
#27 – Judges Race (10/26/10)	-- A bus tour around the state to stir up anti-retention votes	-- Judicial Activism -- Slippery Slope -- Traditional Marriage -- Will of the People	--Protect the Courts
#28 – Justices Outed Reax (11/3/10)	-- SSM dads worry about their own family’s future in light of election outcome	-- Judicial Activism	-- Same-Sex Marriage as a Civil Right --Same sex Couples are Just Like Opposite Sex Couples -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy
#29 – Judge Debate (9/21/12)	-- The 2012 election will see another retention race like 2010.	-- Judicial Activism -- Traditional Marriage -- Slippery Slope	-- Justices were correct -- Protect the Courts -- Same-Sex Marriage Brings Joy

APPENDIX L – EXAMPLE 4.1 FROM FIELD NOTES ON STORY 1

Aired on 8/1/10, Des Moines market

REPORTER TRACK / SOUNDBITES	DESCRIPTION OF AUDIO AND VISUAL
(natural sound on tape (natsot}) "Let us vote, let us vote." [Duration:0:03]	Opens with nats of people chanting, medium shot that pans the crowd. 50ish people, maybe. Crowd almost all white, mix of genders. Shorts, t-shirts, tank tops, summer day, some sitting on green grass, others standing in front of their lawn chairs.
REPORTER: THE ORGANIZATIONS MESSAGE IS SIMPLE...LET THE PEOPLE VOTE TO OVERTURN THE IOWA SUPREME COURT RULING ALLOWING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE.	<p>Cut to sign, obviously being held by someone in the crowd, although no faces visible. Sign I somewhat professionally made, with row of white stars in red band at the top, white stars in blue band at the bottom, in between says "MARRIAGE EQUALS" with two figures like you would see at a restroom, one male, one female, with a plus sign between them.</p> <p>(..the people...) Cut to wide view of the crowd from the reverse angle. Some people sitting, some standing and clapping. Several people, but not crowded into each other. Some kids present, but overall age seems to skew 40-50+</p> <p>(..allowing same...) Tight shot of a sign, professional, with "DON'T MESS WITH MARRIAGE" in big letters across the middle, and "National Organization for Marriage" in smaller font underneath.</p>
Brian Brown: "We're here activating and energizing supporters here in Iowa to stand up and say enough is enough courts should not be imposing their will on the people of this state."	Medium shot of stocky white guy, looks like a farm guy with slightly thinning brown hair, in an open collared blue and white striped cotton dress shirt, facing to the left of the screen, somewhat harsh shadows on his face from direct sunlight, behind him you can see what looks like the edge of a fountain of some kind, a wide concrete sidewalk or path, and a green space with trees and several dozen people talking in clumps with each other.

APPENDIX M - IMAGES OF 2010 AND 2012 ANTI-RETENTION BUSES



Image 1: Bus used by conservative activists to tour the state during 2010 to campaign against judicial retention. Photo courtesy of Laura Belin.



Image 2: Rally stop with the "No Wiggins" bus during the 2012 campaign season. Photo courtesy of Laura Belin.

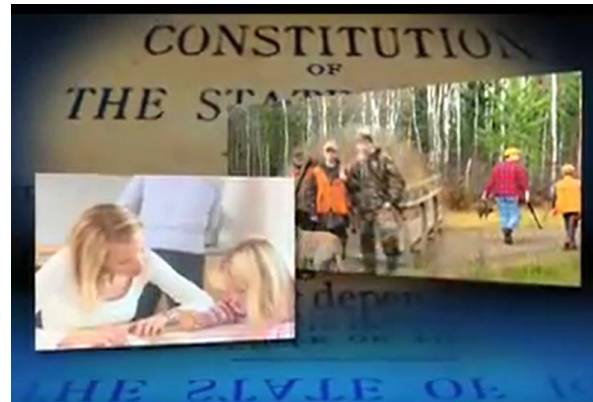
APPENDIX N – EXAMPLE 4.2 FROM FIELD NOTES ON STORY 15

Aired 9/24/12, Des Moines Market

REPORTER TRACK/SOUND BITES	DESCRIPTION OF AUDIO AND VIDEO
<p>REPORTER: ONE LOOK AT THE BIG RED BUS AND IT'S EASY TO SEE IOWANS FOR FREEDOM ARE FIRED UP. THEY WANT SUPREME COURT JUSTICE DAVID WIGGINS OUSTED FOR BEING ONE OF SEVEN JUSTICES TO DELIVER A UNANIMOUS DECISION WHICH CLEARED THE WAY FOR SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN IOWA.</p>	<p>Back to wide shot of bus on a sunny morning, no people in front of it, slow zoom into front half of bus,</p> <p>Then cut to back corner of bus and picture of Wiggins with words: "Vote NO activist judges" quote below the picture: "So tell me. In your best way. How we can get around the Constitution"</p> <p>(ousted) cut to a group of men on an almost empty hillside in morning light holding up a "No Wiggins banner"</p>
<p>(Bob Vander Plaats: "If they'll redefine the institution of marriage they won't even blink an eye when they take away your private property, when they take away your guns , when they tell you how to educate your children or when they take away your religious liberty or when they take way your freedom of the press."</p>	<p>Low angle shot of BVP, who is in front of bus, holding the mic, and addressing the crowd. He is waving his free arm and gives impression of "addressing the troops". . Very emphatic as he tries to say he is worried about Iowans' private property.</p>
<p>REPORTER: THE GROUP SAYS JUSTICE WIGGINS AND THE SIX OTHER JUSTICES RAN ROUGHSHOD OVER THE CONSTITUTION.</p>	<p>Cut to front of the bus. More "No Wiggins" in bold white on red.</p>

APPENDIX O – SCREEN CAPTURES OF NOM AD

“NOM: Liberal Iowa Supreme Court Judges: David A. Baker, Michael J. Streit, Marsha Ternus” aired on Iowa television stations in the months leading up to the 2010 November election. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0rUi0HEqgk>



APPENDIX P – EXAMPLE 4.3 FROM FIELD NOTES ON STORY 4

Aired 9/13/2010, Des Moines Market

REPORTER TRACK/SOUND BITES	DESCRIPTION OF AUDIO AND VIDEO
(NATS): “Activist judges on Iowa’s Supreme Court have become political...”	Starts with nats and video from the ad, 3 seconds worth, showing unflattering close-ups of the judges and with pensive music and incredulous male announcer...
REPORTER: THE ADD CALLS 3 IOWA SUPREME COURT JUSTICES LIBERAL AND OUT OF CONTROL...	<p>Ad continues to play...audio barely heard under narration, various images of justices juxtaposed with “wholesome” images of a family on a picnic, a parent helping a child with homework, hunters posing for a picture, a saluting Boy Scout in front of a church, all of are portrayed as being threatened....</p> <p>Audio comes back up for Nat Pop...”out of control judges ignoring our traditions and values...”</p>

APPENDIX Q – EXAMPLE 4.4 FROM FIELD NOTES OF STORY 4

Story aired 9/13/2010, Des Moines Market

REPORTER TRACK / SOUNDBITES	DESCRIPTION OF AUDIO AND VIDEO
REPORTER: IOWA DISTRICT JUDGE ROBERT HANSON WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO RULE THAT GAY MARRIAGE IS CONSTITUTIONAL UNDER IOWA LAW BACK IN 2007.	Cut to an over-the-shoulder shot, reporter foreground (back of head and left shoulder) and to her left and in front is a man, grey hair, 50ish, receding hairline, blue dress shirt, patterned tie, no jacket, sleeves rolled up, holding a pad of paper. It appears they are in an empty courtroom, with reporter seated where attorney's usually sit and interview subject on the other side of the table with his back to an empty jury gallery (partially visible) and an empty judge's bench (also partially visible).
HE SAYS THE JUSTICES TARGETED IN THIS AD DID NOTHING WRONG.	Nat pop "Legislating from the bench"...NOM ad reappears with revolving images of IASUPCO judges...(Hanson's NOT among them)_ Ad goes to shots of family (man, woman, baby in a grassy area), boy scout saluting,
Robert Hanson: Those justices did exactly what they were required to do. Namely to assess the constitutionality of the particular statute.	Head and shoulder shot of interview subject described earlier. Same location. Speaking in calm and measured tones, as if patiently explaining something.
REPORTER: HANSON SAID WHAT VANDER PLAATS IS ENCOURAGING BY THIS AD IS AN ABUSE OF THE JUSTICE RETENTION PROCESS. HE SAYS THE RETENTION IS FOR IOWANS TO DETERMINE IF JUSTICES ARE FIT TO JUDGE, NOT BASED ON POPULARITY AND HOW THEY HAVE RULED ON A PARTICULAR ISSUE.	Nat pop: "Marriage, what will they do to... (fades)". More shots from the NOM ad, mother and child doing homework in one revolving still photo, hunters in another,

APPENDIX R – EXAMPLE 4.5 FROM FIELD NOTES OF STORY 22

Aired 9/30/2010, Eastern Iowa Market

REPORTER TRACK / SOUND BITE	DESCRIPTION OF AUDIO AND VIDEO
<p>REPORTER: IN 2009, TERNUS'S COURT STRUCK DOWN A STATE LAW DEFINING MARRIAGE AS BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN. THE COURT RULED IT VIOLATED THE EQUAL PROTECTION CLAUSE OF THE IOWA CONSTITUTION.</p> <p>THAT RULING NOW IS PUTTING THE POLITICS OF IOWA'S COURTROOMS ON TRIAL.</p>	<p>– Tight shot of a legal document of some kind, although it isn't apparent that it anything involving same sex marriage.</p> <p>– Low angle shot of 8ish y.o. girl and adult male (father?) standing behind her in a ball cap in front of what appears to be a traditional county courthouse. They lift up long branches with green leaves as the camera pulls back, pans left, and tilts down to reveal more people with branches facing each other and forming an archway under which two women dressed in white pants suits, each holding the hand of a young boy dressed in dress shirt and tie walking between them, walk while other people appear to be flower petals. Everyone is happy and smiling and cheering.</p> <p>– Tight shot of two people's hands holding each other...and from white suit coats visible most likely the same couple just witnessed, probably during their wedding ceremony,</p> <p>–Apparently a different same-sex couple, two middle aged women holding a small child and then exchanging an embrace and kiss.</p>

APPENDIX S – EXAMPLE 4.6 FROM FIELD NOTES FOR STORY 26

Aired 10/17/2010, Western Iowa Market

REPORTER TRACK / SOUND BITES	DESCRIPTION OF AUDIO AND VIDEO
<p>REPORTER: SIOUX CITY BUSINESSMAN BOB VANDERPLAATS IS ASKING VOTERS TO VOTE ON NOVEMBER 2ND AGAINST RETENTION OF THREE IOWA SUPREME COURT JUSTICES WHO LEGALIZED GAY MARRIAGE.</p> <p>BUT HIS FORMER STAFF MEMBER DAN MOORE HAS STOOD UP FOR THE THREE JUDGES AND SAYS VANDERPLAATS IS OVERSTEPPING HIS BOUDARIES.</p>	<p>Opens with an indoor medium wide shot. Facing the audience and the camera is BVP speaking to the crowd, not behind a podium, dressed in a dark suit with a light tie. He is talking in a somewhat animated manner. We can hear him behind the narration, but not what he's saying. In this shot, behind him e see a podium, an American flag, and an almost life-size standing cut out picture of Ronald Reagan.</p> <p>(...City businessman)...Head and shoulders shot of BVP talking to audience, we can see the RR cutout face more clearly</p> <p>Cut to video from anti-justice commercial, the same vertical three shot of justices, on the right side is a graphic of a stylized checkoff box. Commercial keeps running for a few seconds, showing the revolving justices shot.</p> <p>(...legalized gay marriage)...Cuts to file video of A woman with a green long sleeved shirt and a woman in a striped short-sleeved shirt facing each other. Shot of them holding hands, with what appears to be an officiant in a clerical collar facing them conducting a ceremony, we see the women holding hands and then kissing. People around them clap, smile, appear joyful.</p>
<i>(skipping ahead in the story)</i>	
<p>REPORTER: BUT VANDERPLAATS SAYS THE JUDGES RULING REFLECTED JUDICIAL ACTIVISM AND THEY NEED TO BE STOPPED.</p>	<p>Cuts to different shot of BVP, BVP is talking to someone we can't see, and talking into a microphone,</p> <p>Cut to file video of two men, about 30ish, professional and wearing dark suits and ties, being married by a woman, we see one man slde a ring onto the finger of another man. It's a head and torso shot, medium tight</p>

APPENDIX T – EXAMPLE 4.7 FROM FIELD NOTES OF STORY 24

Aired 11/3/2010, Eastern Iowa Market

REPORTER TRACK / SOUNDBITES	DESCRIPTION OF VIDEO AND AUDIO
<p>REPORTER: THE SIX COUPLES INVOLVED IN THE SUIT CELEBRATED THE COURT'S RULING IN APRIL OF 2009.</p> <p>AND NOTHING IN THE RETENTION VOTE TUESDAY CHANGES THE STATUS FOR THEM...</p> <p>[</p> <p>....OR OTHERS OF THE SAME SEX WHO WANT TO LEGALLY OBTAIN AN IOWA MARRIAGE LICENSE.</p> <p>ONE SUIT PARTICIPANT SAW THE OUT-OF-STATE MONEY COMING INTO THE CAMPAIGN...AND SAW THE PRE-ELECTION POLLS.</p> <p>BUT THE VOTE WAS STILL A SHOCK.</p>	<p>–All file footage for a while: opening shot of Varnums sitting in what looks like a hotel conference room judging by carpet pattern that looks dark and hides stains as well as room dividers in the background and rows of metal cushioned seats. Varnums holding hands and holding hands of people sitting next to them. As ruling is announced, they have a visible joyful reaction, including lots of hugs and some tears.</p> <p>-- Cuts to another group, a same-sex couple hugging each other and kids</p> <p>– Cuts to medium tight of Varnum's faces, one takes off glasses to wipe tears from her eyes.</p> <p>– file of Varnums walking triumphantly hand-in-hand down a wide hallway, people clapping on either side</p> <p>– cut to a person taking a picture, cut to Varnums signing marriage license (presumably). Camera pans to person behind the counter...</p>
<p>Jen BarbouRoske:</p> <p>"The whole thing made me sick...i was very frustrated by it...fortunately my daughters were asleep at this point...because I'm not sure how I can explain this to them. "</p>	<p>Now new video, Jen being interviewed next to brick building, outdoors, with some kind of downtown or institutional multi-story building behind her. In between, what looks like a street with traffic lights. She is looking to the left of the screen. She is composed, but shows signs of being troubled and unhappy.</p>

APPENDIX U – EXAMPLE 4.8 FROM FIELD NOTES FOR STORY 20

Aired 9/30/2010 in Eastern Iowa

REPORTER TRACK AND SOUND BITES	DESCRIPTION OF AUDIO AND VIDEO
<p>REPORTER: SLAVERY IN THE 1830'S. SEGREGATION IN THE 1950'S. NOW, SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN 20-10.</p> <p>CHIEF JUSTICE MARSHA TERNUS MADE THAT COMPARISON TO A ROOM FULL OF LORAS COLLEGE STUDENTS TODAY.</p> <p>SHE SAYS GAY MARRIAGE IS THIS GENERATIONS SOCIAL ISSUE</p>	<p>-- Opening shot: Medium head and shoulders of Ternus at a podium, in front of her are visible three mics with mic flags.</p> <p>-- Ternus is dressed professionally in what looks like a black dress with a black sweater, wear some kind of gold – colored necklace,</p> <p>– Wide shot from back of what looks like a large classroom or banquet room converted to lecture, with podium at front, rows of chairs, and a combination carpet and parquet floor, plain beige walls, a chair rail. Shot is obviously down some kind of center aisle, with Ternus at the podium and several people listening. From the back, visible are everything from men in suits to undergrads with hooded sweatshirts and backwards facing cap.</p> <p>– Low angle shot with camera on the floor, creating a more dramatic framing of metal chair legs and dress some in the foreground and Ternus in the background.</p> <p>– Tight head and shoulders shot of Ternus at podium, although podium not visible.</p> <p>- Wide audience shot. About half of the 50-60 students appears to be college age students. Many appear to be older professors or college/community members. 1:01:05 – Medium shot of Ternus speaking at podium with foregrounding of slightly out of focus ear, shoulder, and back of someone's head.</p>
<p>Marsha Ternus\Chief Justice Iowa Supreme Court: "As these cases show, respect for civil rights has a rather long and remarkable tradition in Iowa."</p>	<p>1:07 – Audio up of Ternus talking at the podium, same steady shot that began just above.</p>

APPENDIX V – LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Interview #1 – Reporter

Interview #2 – Reporter

Interview #3 – Reporter

Interview #4 – Reporter

Interview #5 – Reporter

Interview #6 – Reporter

Interview #7 – Reporter

Interview #8 – LGBTQ Advocate

Interview #9 – Anti-Retention Campaign Spokesperson

Interview #10 – News Director

Interview #11 – News Director

Interview #12 – News Director

APPENDIX W – GLOSSARY OF TELEVISION SCRIPT ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

FONER	Deliberate misspelling of “phone,” referring to an interview conducted over the phone yielding only audio and no video, often paired with some kind of graphic (GRX) when used in a news package.
GRX	Abbreviation for “graphics,” typically either referring to a caption carrying the name of a person or place, or a computer generated image on the screen which may include a photographic image.
NATS	See: NAT SOT
NAT POP	Indicates natural sound (see NAT SOT) which is briefly at full volume to help set a scene, a video storytelling technique.
NAT SOT	Abbreviation for “natural sound on tape,” refers to naturally occurring or spontaneous sound captured during capture of video, not during an interview or speech.
PKG	Abbreviation for “package,” as in “take pkg,” which is a direction for the production crew to start playing a package after an anchor introduction.
REAX	Shorthand in a story title referring to a story that is in reaction to some event
SOT	Abbreviation for “sound on tape,” typically refers to a soundbite with an interview subject.