



Queering the Way: Investigating the Relationship Between LGBT+ Advocacy and Policy Advancement

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ABSTRACT

The modern LGBT+ rights movement in the United States has pushed both political and social advancements forward since the mid-twentieth century, furthering the fight for equality. Even as hundreds of anti-LGBT+ bills have been proposed and passed in states across the country throughout the last decade or so, they have remained a force to be reckoned with. This study analyzes the specific tactics used by LGBT+ activists and nonprofits from the mid-twentieth century to present day, through the framework of Douglas McAdam's Political Opportunity Theory to explain how campaigns or movements are made successful. Political Opportunity Theory, or Political Opportunity Structure, argues social movement success is most dependent on the availability of political opportunities (McAdam, 2013). The study primarily draws on interviews of LGBT+ activists and aligned policy makers, both archived and original, ultimately seeking to determine which advocacy strategies most effectively advance political and social acceptance. Using political theories, previous scholarly literature, and activist interviews, this study found that many factors contribute to the overall success of an advocacy campaign: access to resources, ability to mobilize populations, clear goals and strategy, and strong relationships between outsider activists and political insiders. The goal of this report is to advise the creation of effective policy change inside political arenas and social change both through advocacy and through increased LGBT+ support from powerholders in government, to further promote LGBT+ equality and understanding in the United States.

1. INTRODUCTION

You are composed of many different pieces, each of which has been collected and assembled to create something whole and one. These pieces can be otherwise known as identity, which is one's understanding and expression of themselves. Throughout American society historically and presently, sexuality and gender identity have remained as significant parts of a person's identity, for better or for worse. The idea that society has been built for specific identities is gaining ground—see the work of Roy L. Brooks on

Critical Race Theory—making clear that identity-based marginalization has been a problem that has existed in society all along. This understanding explains why those with pieces of identity that do not fit into the values of their society generally face social and political hardship. For gender and sexual minorities, represented by the label of LGBT+ Americans, even trying to exist openly as oneself can be considered a political act. The ability for these minorities to live freely has only come about through means of political and legal activism, including resistance to conservative attacks on

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LGBT+ civil freedoms and fundamental rights. This fight continues to rage on today, affecting millions across the country.

The subsequent problems caused by this lack of equality spans across every different sector of life and are both created and solved primarily through two modes: legislatures and judiciaries. In 2022 alone, there have been close to 250 anti-LGBT+ bills introduced across nearly every state, most of them targeting trans people (Equality Federation 2022). In some states, legislatures have barred doctors from providing appropriate hormone treatment to trans youth who need it to minimize their gender dysphoria (the discomfort one feels when their assigned sex at birth does not align with their gender identity) before puberty makes irreparable changes to their bodies (“Doctors Who Provide...” 2022). Numerous states have introduced, and Florida has passed, bills that impose restrictions on teachers who may wish to discuss LGBT+ people or topics in their classrooms (Franklin 2022). While the language of the Florida law stops short of outright banning discussion of LGBT+ topics, it only allows discussion that is “age appropriate.” This is deliberately vague, meant to cause conflict between educators and parents over what exactly is “age appropriate” with respect to LGBT+ topics and history. The reality for LGBT+ people, including children and youth, is that their civil rights are under constant attack for no reason other than their identity. Bills and laws like this one are especially hurtful because they effectively erase LGBT+ people and topics from the classroom and capitalizes on LGBT+ stigma to solidify gender identity and sexual orientation a morality issue.

Another current example of legislatures attacking LGBT+ civil liberties is the response to transgender people in athletics. Lia Thomas is a collegiate swimmer and trans woman, who, despite breaking records in her sport, faced backlash and calls to disqualify her from the sport all together because of her gender identity (Sanchez 2022). The struggle over trans inclusion

in athletics has become a political hot topic fueled by transphobic rhetoric. Legislation has popped up in states across the country to make this inequity more apparent than it already is, by denying transgender individuals the ability to participate in school athletics.

Another primary mode for the development or denial of LGBT+ rights is seen through the judiciary system. For decades activists have brought cases to all levels of the judiciary, with successes gradually building in scale. For a recent example, the landmark Supreme Court Decision *Bostock v. Clayton County* (2020) was a consolidation of three cases of LGBT+ employment discrimination. Gerald Bostock was fired from his job after expressing interest in a gay softball league while working in Clayton County; Donald Zarda was fired from his job as a skydiving instructor after telling a co-worker that he was gay; and Aimee Stephens was fired from her job at a funeral home after she began transitioning her gender. In each of these cases, the Supreme Court ruled that this discrimination was unconstitutional, but it was only after these three experienced attacks on their selves and their livelihoods that this change was made. It is also worth noting that affirmation of rights by the Supreme Court, and the positive outcomes of these cases, was never guaranteed, highlighting the significance of these pivotal political moments.

This case represents a certain culmination of the transgenerational fight for LGBT+ protections in this country. Since the mid-twentieth century, there has been an increase both in the amount of LGBT+ activists, activism-based nonprofits, and LGBT+ policy makers at both the state and federal levels. The mobilization of LGBT+ activist groups in the 1960s spurred the development of the political identity as it is known today and put these issues on the radar. Much of the political theory used in this study was born during this period following the Civil Rights Movement through the end of the twentieth century, where LGBT+

activists began applying theory to their own experience. However, it was not until legislatures and courts took on these issues that political change could occur.

What confounds recent anti-LGBT+ political action is that social support and acceptance for LGBT+ people in the United States is higher today than in decades past: between 2001 and 2019, Gallup reports a 34 percent increase in the number of Americans who believe that gay or lesbian relationships are acceptable (Naylor 2021, xvii). On the campaign side, more outwardly identifying LGBT+ people are running and being elected into office than ever before, with approximately 700 LGBT+ elected officials across all levels of government in 2019 (xviii). Social progress acts as a driver for political progress, with acceptance opening the way for increased policy makers and public administrators that won't stand for inequality.

Despite the relatively high number of LGBT+ policy makers in elected office and activism being more visible now than ever thanks to social media, there are still political and social battles taking place throughout the country. The federal Equality Act, which would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the protected classes under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, continues to be stonewalled in Congress. Discrimination takes on social and political forms when laws are passed in states which codify inequitable treatment of LGBT+ Americans.

It is widely believed that activism is what forces political leaders and the public to pay attention to injustice or unfairness. In one instance, the modern American LGBT+ rights movement began with the Mattachine Society in the 1950s and rapidly expanded following the Stonewall Inn Riots in 1969 (Valelly 2012). There have been several phases of the modern LGBT+ rights movement in the United States, each of which were reacted to in a different way by state and local governments across the country.

Is this backslide simply a result of activist tactics not working, or are there other factors at play? What are some options and strategies that queer (especially trans) advocates have to combat this backlash, and how have they worked in the past? How can their success be replicated from one policy goal to another within the LGBT+ rights movement? Ultimately, this study aims to find how public administrators connect with activists (and vice versa) and which tactics have been most effective at creating social change while minimizing backlash. This will include hearing from both the "insider" public administrators and the "outsider" activists, as well as the bridges between them. Through interviews with queer political and social advocates who have all done valuable work in the fight for LGBT+ freedoms, this study posits how well the modern LGBT+ rights movement can be explained by Douglas McAdam's Political Opportunity Theory.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study will use several social and political theories as a baseline for the research to answer these questions about LGBT+ advocacy and policy advancement. This literature review section provides an overview of those theories and connects them to certain aspects of LGBT+ advocacy. The review focuses on social theories of political progress and advocacy networks, rather than other models (such as economic theories of social progress).

2.1. POLITICAL AND LEGAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

This study will operate primarily under the Political Opportunity Theory, or Structure. This theory combines three factors to explain the lifespans of most political movements, those being: "expanding political opportunities, established organizations, and the social psychological process of 'cognitive liberation'" (McAdam 2013, p. 51).

Expanding political opportunities is generally understood to be done through, “dramatic events and/or cumulative change processes that render established regimes more vulnerable or receptive to challenge” (p. 51). These could be represented by a particular episode, like a protest that gains extensive media coverage, or a result of a long-standing advocacy campaign—like a law being passed or a court decision. Some events that could be considered political opportunities in the LGBT+ rights movement include: the Stonewall Riots in 1969, the AIDS epidemic, and the first litigation efforts mounted by victims of discrimination (such as those affected regarding marriage or employment). AIDS activists in the 1980s and beyond fought for healthcare and family rights. Those early cases brought by activists (partially in response to the AIDS Epidemic) ultimately paved the way for the passage of employment protections and marriage equality years later. The pressure placed on political institutions by these efforts has historically created political opportunities for change, as they demonstrate that the people are standing against what systems are already in place. In this way, political opportunities, while seemingly random, can be created by activists, organizations, and advocacy efforts done at all levels, leading to the second factor McAdam discusses.

Next, McAdam “focuses on the extent to which ‘insurgents’ have access to the kinds of existing organizations or informal networks thought to serve at the organizational locus of emergent mobilization” (McAdam 2013, p. 51). Connecting individuals that have the drive and determination to push for political change is a crucial step in seizing a political opportunity—especially when said individuals have the resources necessary to properly promote and encourage change. This might mean a plaintiff in a discrimination case connecting with a nonprofit that will represent them in court, or an activist collaborating with local organizations or other groups where they can spread their objectives and gather support. Along

with seizing political opportunities as they arise, connecting those in command with the networks and resources needed to make something happen offers a deep potential for political change.

However, according to McAdam, a third factor is necessary to truly grasp a political opportunity: “the process of ‘cognitive liberation’ by which some critical mass of people come to define their situations as unjust and subject to change through group action” (McAdam 2013, p. 51). A movement does not become a movement until enough people become a part of it. Political institutions in the United States can be enormous and still slow-moving; it takes a village to raise a policy change. Gaining name recognition for the issue, increasing social visibility, and mobilizing identity-based groups to fight for certain goals collectively is how political opportunities are taken advantage of. Political scientist Rick Valelly explains that the number of activist organizations focused on LGBT+ social and political progress increased dramatically following the Stonewall Riots in 1969 (Valelly 2012) which spurred further visibility as pride protests became annual events across the country. It was at these protests that activists further mobilized queer people and their allies, encouraging people to come out and band together under a common name.

It is important to note that in most parts of the United States, a large amount of LGBT+ civil liberties have been secured through courts, not legislatures. As touched on previously, many pieces of legislation with the aim to protect or expand on LGBT+ civil liberties were not passed. For example, the legalization of same-sex marriage was achieved through litigation (Lau 2018, p. 27), as was federal employment discrimination protections (Bostock 2020).

Political theorist Ellen Anderson has built off of the general Political Opportunity Structure in her work, framing it specifically in the judicial arena to flesh out an adjacent theory: Legal Opportunity Structure. This structure has similar dimensions

to the original, but with the added condition that someone must frame their political goal within a judiciable question. Political goals must fall within categories the court already recognizes as law to be achievable in this method; constitutional, statutory, administrative, common, case, or any combination of them (Anderson 2004, p. 9).

These theories can be exemplified by the beginnings of the marriage equality movement in Hawaii in 1993. Evan Wolfson, an attorney who convinced Lambda Legal, one of the oldest organizations which advocates for LGBT+ equality primarily through litigation, to support the case, recalls that a recent change in the makeup of the court was what allowed the case to be heard (Gash 2015). This was a significant decision that only appeared because a legal opportunity presented itself amidst activism. This represented a trend of LGBT+ support in a group that had previously seen LGBT+ people demanding rights and liberties. In this case, the Hawaii court did not end up legalizing same-sex marriage (Gash 2015) but because the case was brought out in public, the fight for marriage equality was now out of the bag, opening it up to be a policy goal.

However, the activists behind social and political movements more broadly do not have full control over political institutions and the decisions they make. Often political opportunities are not successful even when the advocacy is wide-reaching and strong because of external factors. Legislatures, executive departments, and judicial institutions do not always respond to the pressure placed on them by advocates. Many scholars have explored this phenomenon, and I borrow from their frames of thinking throughout this paper to examine what strategies of advocacy lead to successful policy outcomes (legislative or judicial).

2.2. LGBT+ SOCIAL EQUITY WITHIN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In the public policy field, LGBT+ rights are generally considered a civil rights issue.

According to Professor Lorenda A. Naylor from the University of Baltimore, social equity should be a responsibility of public administrators, and it has to be institutionalized through various professional organizations outside of government (Naylor 2021, p. 6-9). In her view, the rule of law is a cornerstone of social equity, and it has been practiced by policy makers through federal law (such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964) and court decisions (such as *Bostock v. Clayton County*).

Naylor writes that the reason legal rights for LGBT+ people “lag behind” in their rights compared to others is because sexual orientation and gender identity were not considered “protected classes” in discrimination lawsuits, which may explain why it took the Supreme Court until 2003 to affirm a civil protection for queer people. Despite this, the majority of LGBT+ progress at the federal level has been driven by the courts, rather than legislators (Lau 2018, p. 25). This would suggest that litigation is a primary way that activist citizens and groups can directly engage the government, but, like the marriage equality case in Hawaii, the makeup of the judges needed to have a willingness to consider these rights existed.

Where did this willingness come from? It has to do with the increasing social acceptance of LGBT+ people, no doubt driven by activist work. Political progress can often times be driven by social progress, both of which appear to be driven by activists’ tactics. However, if acceptance of LGBT+ people is increasing, why the current political backlash to many of their rights across the country?

2.3. THE ROLE OF ACTIVISTS AND CULTURAL FRAMING

Professor Erin Mayo-Adam argues that grassroots activism plays a similarly important role in advancing LGBT+ social and political progress as larger nonprofit organizations, but it receives less attention than them (Mayo-Adam 2020, p. 5). Since

local movements, which encourage community involvement and bottom-up change, are harder to map than ones that take place in locations with a larger populations or reach, their impact often goes unnoticed. However, the formation of political movements remains driven by “rights episodes,” what Mayo-Adam calls moments which represent a struggle for a rights win or against a rights loss.

This may explain why LGBT+ political progress appears to take place when it does: it represents the culmination of a struggle by activists to achieve a certain right or set of rights, whether in the form of legislation or court ruling. For example, regarding the quarter-century long fight for marriage equality (beginning with the first Court case in 1994 in Hawaii), activists all over the country were able to mobilize around a specific issue. By unifying the messaging and creating a specific political goal, activists were able to direct social change toward that goal until it became law. Also, by going state to state, activists were able to achieve policy wins in areas where the level of social progress was appropriate to avoid backsliding (one major exception being the state of California). In this way, smaller advocacy groups were able to band together, creating a snowball effect of progress beginning in areas where LGBT+ people were more socially accepted and moving outward.

Building on this, Public Affairs and Administration Distinguished Professor Charles Epp describes a “culture-centered” and “rights consciousness” explanation for rights revolutions. He says that cultural frames shape what claims people can conceive and what “kinds of changes that they view as within the realm of possibility” (Epp 1998, p. 17). However, Epp still acknowledges the necessity of material support in the deliberate creation of a rights episode, including financial supports for plaintiffs (p. 17). Essentially, by gaining social exposure for LGBT+ rights through publicity gained by rights litigation, activists can

hit two birds with one stone. On one hand, they are opening up people’s idea that LGBT+ people can have certain rights. On the other, they are directly demanding those rights from the government via the courts.

2.4. BRIDGES BETWEEN THE OUTSIDE AND THE INSIDE

Political scientist Ken Kollman studied the relationship between outside lobbyists and inside policymakers in the 1990s. He found that “politicians use grass-roots contacts as a sort of hyper-concentrated version of what people are thinking back home,” (Kollman 1998, p. 155). In this way, it can be assumed that activists represent the wishes of the constituency. For example, a representative from a grassroots organization can express what a specific community thinks about an issue to their local, state, or national representative as a form of lobbying. However, there are some exceptions to this, like when activists want to put a new issue on the table that the public may not be adequately informed about, or when the contacts politicians maintain are not representative of the constituency’s wishes. Kollman ultimately concludes that Interest Groups and Public Opinion are formed by each other, and only with both can policy be created (p. 157). Combined with Naylor’s view that public administration is responsible for enforcing social equity, Kollman’s ideas show that interest groups or nonprofits are the sort of “watch-dogs” that hold the government accountable for doing so. This also highlights the importance of nonprofits working as bridges between outside activists and inside policymakers.

However, Kollman mostly focuses on the power of special interest groups to lead policy makers away from creating policy that would solely benefit a majority of people. For instance, LGBT+ equity in policy does not inherently benefit most of the American population. In fact, some groups may say that it harms the interests of those

such as religious or hate groups. This aspect of his work may indirectly explain backlash to LGBT+ rights advancement in recent decades, since it shows how minority opinion groups can manipulate policymaking to serve their interests (like tobacco companies, for example).

Political researcher Ben Smitton found that the LGBT+ rights movement has effectively established itself within the “political spatialities” of Washington, D.C. to create “pro-equality social reform,” (Smitton 2017). With the establishment of groups like the LGBT Equality Caucus in Congress, or nonprofits like the Victory Fund creating networks for activists to do work within Congress, the fusion of the LGBT+ movement into the politics of the US federal government is clear (Smitton 2017). This fusion would not be possible without the work of the LGBT+ co-chairs. Smitton’s work also solidifies the role of nonprofits as bridges, literally providing fellowships and opportunities for LGBT+ professionals to push for political change inside the policy machine.

However, how these larger organizations were able to bring the fight for social and political change to the Congress is only part of the story. Individual grassroots activists and organizations still play a vital role in pushing pro-equality social and political progress to the forefront of mainstream issues. Throughout this paper, I seek to understand how these two sides-- the outside activists and the inside policymakers--connect to each other in the context of the LGBT+ rights movement.

2.5. THE CURRENT MOMENT

Examining transgender rights issues is one way to examine what the current LGBT+ movement looks like. In 2009, when Barack Obama assumed office, this issue was “largely invisible on the nation’s agenda” (Mezey 2020, p. 2). However, the Obama administration became committed to advancing the “constitutional and statutory rights of the

transgender community” especially with respect to employment, education, and military service (p. 2), primarily by quietly adding gender identity protections alongside sexual orientation protections.

This commitment on behalf of the Obama administration represented both a receptiveness on their part to work toward political change, and a strengthening of transgender advocacy networks. In a sense, it was a “right person, right time” circumstance. Additionally, after marriage equality became law, an opening emerged within the movement for trans rights issues to take center stage. In 2016, Donald P. Haider-Markel and Jami Taylor argued that many legislators were not “ready” for transgender issues, citing circumstances in New York and Maryland where transgender protections were removed from certain bills to advance them (Ball 2016, p. 60). They also argued that there was not much public awareness of transgender issues, and that education tactics must be implemented by activists to make political ground (p. 60).

Between 2016 and 2022 there have been a few “rights episodes” specific to transgender rights across the nation. For example, the Bostock Supreme Court decision in 2020 affirmed employment protection for transgender people, representing a rights win. In court, public administrator decisions are directly influenced by activists and advocacy-focused nonprofits. An organization with the mission of advancing LGBT+ equality may offer to represent plaintiffs in civil rights cases, where judges hear direct advocacy during oral arguments. In a way, it makes sense that LGBT+ political progress moves more quickly through the courts, as it gives activists a better opportunity to create a change. There are fewer parties to get on the same page in court than in a legislature, so an activist only needs to convince the relatively smaller number of judges on a bench than the larger number of representatives in a legislature to secure a rights win.

It is in legislatures where political progress can be slower, and where more “rights episodes” have ended in a rights loss. In 2015 alone, 15 anti-LGBT+ bills were passed into law across the states, and the trend has not slowed down since (Ronan 2021). It seems these were a direct result of political backlash against LGBT+ political progress. Support for the federal Equality Act—which would explicitly include LGBT+ citizens in the protections afforded in the Civil Rights Act of 1964—has stalled in Congress (Ronan 2021). Laws created to ban transgender children and teenagers from accessing hormone treatment or use the bathroom they identify with are becoming increasingly common across states (Ronan 2021). In Oregon, a state with strong protections for its LGBT+ citizens, a school board in the city of Newberg has banned the display of LGBT+ Pride Flags in schools for being “politically divisive” (Selsky 2021).

2.6. OTHER THEORIES AND STRATEGIES

One theory related to the development of civil rights for LGBT+ people is that of “sequential rights”. This theory posits that the order that sexual orientation nondiscrimination is protected is: regulation of sexual activity, followed by employment, same-sex civil unions, marriage equality, and ending with parenting rights (Lau 2018, p. 25). This theory also highlights that gender identity nondiscrimination rights generally lag behind sexual orientation nondiscrimination rights (Lau 2018, p. 25).

While the specific ordering of these rights may not be entirely accurate, the idea that the development of some types of rights leads to the development of others (a snowball effect) seems to have some merit. For example, after the Supreme Court struck down same-sex marriage bans nationwide, some federal courts of appeal began interpreting Title VII’s prohibition of sex-based employment discrimination to include sexual orientation (Lau 2018, p. 27). This theory was

published prior to the Bostock decision, but it can be concluded that once federal courts began interpreting Title VII in this way, it made it easier for the Supreme Court to do the same five years later.

Another theory, incrementalism, explains rights development as happening slowly, one piece at a time. This theory observes the path of policy development for LGBT+ rights to consist mostly of “piecemeal policy changes,” that change with time rather than major federal legislation (Norman-Major 2015, p. 355). These changes include the expansion of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) protections in 2011, the Social Security Administration recognizing both individual change of gender and same-sex marriage taxes, and military benefits for same-sex couples in 2013 (Norman-Major 2015, p. 356-359). However, “having a human rights law protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people...provides a base for organizing” (Swan & Swanzy-Parker 2015, p. 128). Without some sort of base to start from, activists have nothing to focus in on and push forth via their work.

In Minnesota, a 2012 state constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage was on the ballot. Looking at the election data, we can pick out some key strategies that contributed to the rejection of the amendment and successful defense of LGBT+ marriage rights in the state. Those strategies included: support from key officials—particularly from city governments—taking a visible role in the anti-amendment campaign; using celebrities that have access to money and visibility; and appealing to voters’ faith (Bibus 2015, p. 103-105). The strategies in this case can be boiled down to allies, faith, money, and time, which is like what the political opportunity structure theory says but deviates in that it is framed in a more social context. Appealing to voters and their social values, including socioeconomic and religious demographics from

all backgrounds, helps when executing a successful political campaign, so it stands to reason it would help for an advocacy campaign to be successful as well. However, this is only possible if there is a well-organized coalition around a specific campaign issue (Swan & Swanzy-Parker 2015, p. 128).

Returning to the Smitton example, integrating advocacy with government structure and action is another strategy activists have used. One example is in Washington, D.C., where the Transgender and Gender Identity Respect Campaign became the first government-funded campaign focused exclusively on the betterment of transgender and gender non-conforming people (Jenkins 2015, p. 176). The government funding a social advocacy campaign is useful in that it expands activists' social and political reach, providing more material support to their mission to help protect thousands of lives. This is, again, more in the social frame of Political Opportunity Structure and is unique in that the political institutions are directly interacting with and often supporting advocacy efforts which put pressure on other political institutions.

A final strategy I found in my research is the creation of task forces with the purpose of supporting LGBT+ rights advancement. In 1975, after unsuccessfully lobbying the Oregon legislature to pass a law banning sexual orientation discrimination, activists instead successfully asked the governor's office to create a task force on gay civil rights (Nicola & Shepherd 2020). In doing so, activists were able to collect accurate information on homosexual men and women in Oregon, using it to make recommendations on legislation and administrative policies that promoted civil rights for LGBT+ Oregonians (Hart 1978, p. 1) all with the support of the state government. This is valuable in that it helps to break social anxieties and uncertainties, signals support from state executives to activists, and provides a roadmap for

legislators to follow. Creating a task force helped to normalize queer identities, bringing them into someone more conceivable to the average citizen. From there, the collected and published data gave a rational basis to the fair treatment of queer people in Oregon. With the foundation given by the final report, activists in Oregon were able to secure rights in the following decades.

2.7. EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

Figure 1 illustrates the efforts taken by activists to create political change, and then the results of their efforts. The space between each segment of Fig. 1 represents efforts made by activists—including protests, demonstrations, and campaigns—over the course of several years at all levels of government.

1950	The Mattachine Society is established, one of the first LGBT-specific activist groups. The right to employment was a "major concern" for this activist group (Baumann, Dillon, & Dillon 2020).
1953	President Eisenhower issues Executive Order 10450, allowing LGBT+ employees to be fired with no cause (Bronski 2011).
1954	The Sisters of Bilitis is established, one of the first LGBT-specific activist groups. The right to employment was a "major concern" for this activist group (Baumann, Dillon, & Dillon 2020).
Protests where LGBT people dressed in formal attire and picketed outside office buildings began, they were to prove that gays and lesbians were employable and respectable people.	
1964	The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is passed, banning discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, or sex (Baumann, Dillon, & Dillon 2020).
1965	Activist activity and demonstrations increase nationwide. Activist groups begin collecting data about the state of employment discrimination in the country (Baumann, Dillon, & Dillon 2020).
1969	The Stonewall Riots in New York bring the LGBT rights movement to the public consciousness. (Baumann, Dillon, & Dillon 2020).
Following the Stonewall Riots, acts of civil disobedience and protests began to increase in conjunction with increased exposure in the press.	
1975	The first legislation prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is introduced in the House of Representatives (Bronski 2011).
1982	Wisconsin becomes the first state to prohibit discrimination in private and public employment on the basis of sexual orientation (Mooney, Knox, & Schacht 2009, p. 467).
1993	Minnesota becomes the first state to prohibit discrimination in private and public employment on the basis of both sexual orientation or gender identity (Preston 2016, p. 76).
1994	ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, is introduced in the House of Representatives, which would have prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (later versions include gender identity) (Bronski 2011).
2012	The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rules that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 does not allow employment discrimination based on gender identity, arguing that it is a form of sex discrimination (Naylor 2021).
2015	The federal Equality Act is first introduced in both Houses, which would prohibit all discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (Naylor 2021).
2020	The U.S. Supreme Court rules that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (Naylor 2021).

Figure 1: Timeline of employment discrimination prohibition

3. METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study is to do a primarily qualitative analysis of insider and outsider tactics for political and social change related to the LGBT+ movement in the United States. To this end, the primary research method conducted over the course of this project was interviewing. I also

used the literature review to compile some case studies about LGBT+ campaigns in the United States throughout the past several decades.

To conduct the interviews, I contacted LGBT+ professionals who either currently work or formerly worked at a queer advocacy-focused nonprofit or in a legislative or political role at the state or federal level. The selection of interviewees was primarily a convenience sample, as I could only talk to the people who 1) responded to the request and 2) were available to be interviewed. The request contact method was primarily done via e-mail, with just three of the requests conducted over the phone. In all, fifteen interview requests were sent out over the course of the six weeks of research, and six interviews took place. Each of these interviews was between thirty minutes and one hour, and all but one of them were conducted remotely through video calls and were recorded. One interview (with Rebecca Dinwoodie) was conducted in person and was transcribed live. Afterwards, transcripts for each interview were generated from the recordings and used for analysis.

To identify potential interviewees, I researched significant LGBT+ activists and groups and compared them to theories of tactics for political change. I then looked into notable judicial cases, policies, and nonprofits related to the advancement of LGBT+ rights, studying which tactics lead to their creation and implementation. Finally, I asked my advisors for connections they had to professionals in the nonprofit and policy fields as each of them related to LGBT+ rights and activism in one way or another. This proved to be the most effective method to recruit interviewees.

The purpose of the interviews was to see what motivated each professional to participate in pushing for political change and how they have gone about doing so. In the end of this paper, I plan to compare this data with the literature review to determine how LGBT+ social progress happens, and more specifically, what role is

played by outsider activists, insider policymakers, and collaboration between the two. What relationship did outside activists have with insider policymakers, and vice versa? What types of tactics did they use to create a win or fight back against a loss of rights? What do they think of the current moment regarding trans bathroom, sports, and healthcare issues, and how activists and policymakers can work together to secure those rights? This research was conducted in compliance with the University of Oregon's Institutional Review Board.

The interviews themselves were semi-structured; I developed questions based on the interviewee's own experience and made sure to leave enough space for the interviewee to give detailed and personalized answers. As this research was conducted during a time of great political uncertainty for LGBT+ people, many of the interviewees discussed work that they are currently doing at the organizations they represent. In no case was confidential information given in an interviewee's answer.

Following the interviews and content analysis based on the literature review, I broke down the themes of the data, categorizing the data by advocacy tactic, issue, and level of success (or if it's still ongoing). There is some quantitative analysis present, as I categorize successes and failures or frequencies of particular tactic, but the qualitative analysis was the primary focus.

3.1. INTERVIEWS

The professionals interviewed and their descriptions, in the order they were interviewed, are as follows:

Diego Miguel Sanchez currently works as the Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Partnerships at PFLAG National. Previously he was the Director of Public Relations and External Affairs at the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts and the AIDS Action Council in DC. He also served as

Congressman Barney Frank of Massachusetts' Senior Policy Advisor, becoming the first transgender senior legislative staff member on Capitol Hill.

Vivian Topping is the Director of Advocacy and Civic Engagement at Equality Federation. She has done extensive work in campaigns all across the country including, Freedom for All Massachusetts, Competitive Arizona, Florida Competes, For Florida's Future, Freedom Michigan, and serving as a Texas field organizer at Human Rights Campaign.

Evan Wolfson J.D. is currently the Director of Freedom to Marry Global; he founded Freedom to Marry in 2001, continuing to lead the organization through 2016. Freedom to Marry was a nonprofit with the mission to secure marriage equality in the United States, and it was formally ended upon meeting this goal. Freedom to Marry Global strives to support national movements for marriage equality in countries all around the world.

Brian K. Bond is the Executive Director at PFLAG National and Straight for Equality. He also served as the executive director at the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund from 1997 through 2003. Beyond his nonprofit leadership, he worked in politics as the Deputy Director at the White House Office of Public Liaison during President Obama's first term, and as the Director of LGBT Outreach at the Democratic National Convention in the mid-1990s.

Rebecca Dinwoodie is the co-director at the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics at the University of Oregon. Before taking on this role, she volunteered and worked at Basic Rights Oregon, a nonprofit that helped to pass LGBT+ rights legislation in the state--including protections for marriage equality, family rights, and employment discrimination prohibition.

Candace Gingrich worked as the Associate Director of Youth & Campus Engagement and

Internship Coordinator at Human Rights Campaign for over two decades. They are also well known as Newt Gingrich's half-sibling, who is a Republican politician who oversaw the passage of the Defense of Marriage Act which made it legal to deny same-sex couples marriage rights. Candace Gingrich is now retired and remains a public figure in the LGBT+ rights movement in the United States.

4. FINDINGS

I began each of the interviews by asking for a general overview of the interviewee's career with advocacy and/or policy, then dug into specific campaigns or activities they engaged with along the way. Once each interview was concluded and transcribed, I compared each interview to find patterns or similar answers/experiences. In doing so, I organized these patterns into categories, which I will use to help synthesize my findings. Additionally, I will be viewing these findings through the lens of Political Opportunity Theory and Legal Opportunity Theory as they apply.

The categories I created were (listed in no particular order):

- Necessary Resources
 - Insider and Outsider Relationships
- Successful Advocacy Activities
 - The Power of Stories
 - Public Education
- Strategy in Movements and Campaigns
- Current and Future Fights
 - Democracy

There may be some overlap within these categories (sharing stories could be viewed as a successful advocacy activity, for example), so specific ideas or concepts that arose repeatedly may appear in multiple categories if applicable.

4.1. NECESSARY RESOURCES

The crux of McAdam's and Anderson's respective Political Opportunity Structure and Legal Opportunity Structure theories is that certain conditions need to be met for a political or legal opportunity to arise. Once that happens, insurgents or activists need to have resources or support in order to seize those opportunities. Since all of the interviewees in this study had experience working on advocacy campaigns for LGBT+ rights, they knew what types of resources were needed in order to make a campaign successful.

Firstly, it is important to define what distinguishes a campaign from a movement. In discussions about advocacy and social organizing, terminology is often misused when there are clear differences between social advocacy structures; a campaign is not a movement, but sometimes campaigns are attributed as such and vice versa. I find that a campaign has a singular goal (like passing a specific policy or getting a certain court ruling), and a movement is a broader coalition of campaigns that are all related to each other in some way.

Within the interviews I conducted, most of the answers given when asked the question "What were some of your greatest advocacy/ policy successes and what made them successful?" centered around specific campaigns (either local, state, or federal). Based on these answers and the literature in this study, I find that the necessary resources for a successful LGBT advocacy campaign are time, money, labor, allies, unity, and a democratic environment.

One of the more concrete illustrations of necessary campaign resources was given by Vivian Topping, who worked on several LGBT+ advocacy campaigns across the nation. One of them she directly impacted, the Massachusetts Gender Identity Anti-Discrimination Initiative was a state-wide ballot referendum in Massachusetts in the 2018 mid-term election. It sought to defend the trans-inclusive language in the state's anti-

discrimination statute from a veto by public referendum. Topping worked on the Yes on 3 Campaign, which encouraged voters to support this ballot initiative; it ended up passing, preserving transgender rights in the state. In our conversation, Topping identified what resources the campaign had and why they contributed to its success.

She said, "We had a lot of time. Unlike most other campaigns, we had a significant amount of lead-up to this." According to Topping, time proved essential in ensuring that a strategy could be developed, that adequate resources could be organized, and that the messaging of the campaign would not be rushed. Additionally, although campaigns tend to have a prescribed end-date (for example, an election night), a negative outcome of that "rights episode" or "political opportunity" might force a campaign to continue fighting a long game. Evan Wolfson, founder of Freedom to Marry, said of campaigns: "Nothing's gonna happen overnight." Brian Bond, the Executive Director of PFLAG, echoed this sentiment: "Some people think things can happen overnight...there's multiple priorities going on at the same time."

The next resource, money, is relatively straightforward: if you do not have enough money to pay to get an initiative on the ballot, play an advertisement on TV, or send letters to voters about your campaign, it likely will not succeed. Topping said that Yes on 3 was "able to raise significantly more money than [their opposition]." She added that they, "also were able to control the narrative, in the press," showing that money provides access to greater visibility for a campaign and its messaging. So when one side has more money than another, they have a significant advantage at achieving their goal. Topping later mentioned that because of her campaign's strong fundraising, their opposition struggled to gain ground, but "if they had had just enough money to go on TV, I think that the difference would've been pretty significant."

Similarly, Candace Gingrich, who worked at the Human Rights Campaign for over twenty years, mentioned the importance of gaining visibility—not only for the cause, but for LGBT+ people in general. They said when they first started at the Human Rights Campaign, they embarked on a town hall tour spanning 52 cities across the country. While this tour was firstly a fundraising tactic, they said it doubled as a series of “friend-raising” events in “places like Greenville, South Carolina and like Boise, Idaho.” Coupled with standard media such as television, radio, and print, they said that it was “that exposure, that visibility, that representation...[that] made a difference,” in getting people organized and connected to the Human Rights Campaign in both urban and rural areas.

Another basic resource is labor. Without adequate labor, your campaign may not have a large enough reach to be successful. When discussing her experience organizing campaigns, Topping reflected, “Do you have enough actual people — people who are able to do this work on the ground, who are able to focus on this? If you don't...then you're not gonna win.” Advocacy activities cannot be done without labor, and these findings align with Bibus’s writings on the 2012 Minnesota ballot measure election campaigns, which discuss the importance of canvassing and developing materials for media in getting a campaign’s message out. Bibus wrote that Minnesotans United, a pro-LGBT+ campaign, had over 27,000 volunteers statewide by the campaign’s conclusion, and this strength in numbers is what allowed the campaign to call 900,000 people and reach 400,000 in person to support their cause (Bibus 2015, p. 106). Campaigning is a job and without adequate labor, a campaign will not succeed.

Beyond these three basic needs, there was also talk of creating and maintaining ally coalitions to reach success. Diego Sanchez, who is the Director

of Advocacy, Policy, & Partnerships at PFLAG National, spoke highly of the need to work alongside other organizations to broaden your scope and make your messaging more appealing. He said that once you have a core of advocates, you should reach for support from communities outside your own giving the faith and business communities as examples.

Rebecca Dinwoodie, who worked at Basic Rights Oregon, also spoke to the significance of the business and faith communities as allies. She said that in Basic Rights Oregon’s work to help pass the Oregon Equality Act and the Oregon Family Fairness Act, they wrote letters to the editor for newspapers in towns that had swing votes and engaged in media campaigns with allied communities. In her example, she said they had “media campaigns with loggers, republicans, [and] farmers, advocating on TV and other places for these bills,” that would enshrine LGBT+ equality into state law.

Vivian Topping also cited having broad coalitions of organizations as contributing to the success of Yes on 3. She said that their broad coalition included groups ranging from sexual assault advocacy organizations to law enforcement agencies and from individual community leaders to businesses. The fact that all these organizations were saying “‘vote yes,’ all at the same time,” is what Topping cites as a key component of the campaign that led to its success.

Candace Gingrich agreed with the importance of coalition building. When discussing the current struggle to pass the federal Equality Act, they said that many groups, including the Human Rights Campaign, the National LGBTQ Task Force, GLAAD, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and the Antifa League are all talking about it. Most of these examples are LGBT+-specific organizations, but some are engaging in other advocacy work. Gingrich highlighted the strength in numbers that comes from having allies for the purposes of advancing policy, and they also spoke

about their experience with the Coming Out Project. They said the project, “started with people who were allies coming out as allies. And then, celebrities were able to...come out and be part of it.” Allyship helped pave the way for political progress, which required strong coalition building.

Gingrich also said that, regarding the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, their main partner was The Workplace Project—a nonprofit related to equality in the workplace. This partnership started the corporate equality index, leading to corporate America gradually becoming publicly supportive of the legislation. Gingrich said that, “The companies could say, ‘It’s good business here to treat people fairly and equally.’” So coalition building can bridge between the non-profit and the public sectors, in addition to the private sector. These answers are reinforced by Anderson’s theoretical condition that the availability of allies is one factor that determines the success of a political and/or legal opportunity (Anderson 2004, p. 9), but come short of explaining another intrinsic quality of a successful campaign.

Another dimension to allyship is unity or incorporating allied organizations into a campaign or movement where they all act in synergy with each other. This idea of all similar organizations being on the same page in a campaign and working together to meet the goal is crucial when growing a campaign, broadcasting messaging, and incorporating allies into a campaign. Sanchez, who coordinates the national PFLAG organization, works on “helping our local chapters work in coalitions,” or unifying to tackle bigger problems rather than fighting alone. Unity can be internal in large organizations, like this PFLAG example, or represent many different stakeholders coming together on a single campaign, like the following example.

Topping says that another factor that contributed to Yes on 3’s success was that the

“opposition was really split, so their campaign wasn’t as unified as ours was.” Being able to build a campaign and maintain unity is difficult, but it is crucial in making sure no efforts are wasted. Additionally, unifying can allow an organization to tap into more resources. For example, Dinwoodie discussed how Basic Rights Oregon focused their organizing on more rural areas of the state, bringing people from all over to the capital for lobby days. By unifying people from underrepresented areas across the state, it granted more people the opportunity to join the campaign. This unification process is similar to what McAdam described in his second factor of political opportunities, where activists must connect to existing resource structures to seize an opportunity to enact political change (McAdam 2013, p. 51).

To finish off the list of necessary resources is one that is perhaps most taken for granted in the United States: a democratic environment. Wolfson said that a “charter of legal rights, guarantees and freedoms,” like the U.S. Constitution, “can be used to pressure and push the government to do things.” He also named the independent judiciary, the guarantee of a free press, the right to protest and to organize as all necessary to practice advocacy activities or a campaign at all. Without the right to advocate for one’s beliefs guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution, none of this work would be possible.

4.2 INSIDER AND OUTSIDER RELATIONSHIPS

Brian Bond spoke about the relationship between those inside political institutions (insiders) and those outside them (outsiders). He argued that both outsiders and insiders need to have the same goal in mind, but that outsiders need to understand the limitations that insiders have placed on them. Bond’s answers strengthen the conclusions that Kollman made in his writing, that the two tracks inform each other: the outsiders

hold the insiders accountable, and the insiders listen to the needs of the outsiders, as does his work experience in both government and nonprofits.

In the mid-1990s, Bond was made the Director of LGBT Outreach for the Democratic National Committee, working with party leaders to carve out a space for LGBT people in policy. He said that, “from the inside perspective, it was getting both the DNC and then President Clinton and his team to be more inclusive, both on policy, but also in words,” such as getting politicians to say the words “gay,” “lesbian,” and so on. Pressure from advocates led the DNC to create this specific position, and it was through that position that Bond was able to essentially campaign on the inside for LGBT+ inclusion and equality. Being included in conversations about how much money was being spent on “get out the vote” campaigns across the country helped Bond to promote LGBT+ equality as a financial interest to the party.

Just as outsiders need to build a coalition of allies to create success, so do insiders. Based on his experience working in advocacy, Bond argued that all activists ultimately have two main goals. These are: “to put pressure on the government to create a need for change ... [but also] to figure out how to build a mechanism of trust with the decision makers.” This was the point he hit on the most during our conversation: the trust between inside and outside actors. He said it was necessary for there to be synergy between advocates and people on the inside because there are people on the inside advocating too.

For Bond, the major inside ally for LGBT+ rights during his time of working for the party was former President Barack Obama. However, Bond made clear that government employees serve their bosses, which could be a president or a governor, and their allegiance must be to their boss first, so advocacy goals might not be reached right away or at all. He noted that “when you work for the President of the United States...your loyalty

is to that individual...and it works if you actually believe that individual is going to get shit done.” Building allies inside political institutions, especially ones with a high level of political power or influence, is another critical piece of the political progress, though as Bond said: “trust is crucial in an advocacy space, but it's hard.”

To summarize Bond's testimony, a level of trust among outsiders and outsiders, insiders and insiders, and between outsiders and insiders, seems to be necessary to move social change together. This also makes logical sense; no policy can be moved by one person alone, the outside cannot pass policy alone, and the inside cannot pass policy the outside wants without advocacy efforts. This finding corroborates Kollman's conclusions about nonprofit and activist tactics — that political change needs both people inside and outside to move it, and that outsiders push insiders to make changes. However, Bond qualified this idea with the precondition that trust between the two sides also needs to exist.

Bond emphasized that this trust is difficult to cultivate, “especially when it's, you know, you. Part of it's coming from your heart, part of it's coming from your experiences.” Being a member of the LGBT+ community is an important part of people's identities, so it can be difficult to place trust in strangers that occupy spaces in political institutions that have either ignored or condemned their identity for decades. However, to create change, one must trust that the political opportunity is present both on the inside and the outside.

4.3. SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

The main portions of these conversations with advocacy leaders were discussions on what made their past work successful. These discussions delivered upon two different, main ideas: what they had, and what they did. The types of advocacy activities that contributed to the success of their campaigns can be broken down into seven groups:

using personal narratives and stories, mobilizing voters and campaign volunteers, publicizing the campaign's message, creating public education campaigns, developing robust resource distribution networks among advocacy organizations, engaging in civil disobedience, and taking part in drafting the policy itself.

4.4. THE POWER OF STORIES

Telling the stories of LGBT+ individuals was the concept brought up most by each of the interviewees, and it makes sense why. Charles Epp discussed how culture can inform policymakers when coupled with solid material support (Epp 1998, p. 17), and storytelling is a powerful tool to create cultural impact. When combined with McAdam's concept of connecting people to resources that help them create change (McAdam 2013, p. 151) this seems to explain why each interviewer brought up constituent stories in their answers. In nearly every case, the interviewer highlighted the importance of personal narratives and stories in lobbying and campaign messaging. Since the political point is also personal, many of the interviewees discussed how telling stories of queer people's lives was particularly important at creating change, especially with legislators.

One of the primary ways stories can be used as tools for political change is through lobbying. Diego Sanchez argued that, "What you do on the ground can be heard by legislators and be respected," and that, "They always need examples of family stories to illustrate why the side that needs to be winning." Rebecca Dinwoodie also pushed this idea, saying, "Putting forward these voices makes it so that the legislature might be able to relate to more, and might be more open to hearing the message." This falls into the definition of lobbying and is an appeal to emotion that makes a discriminatory law's impact more tactile in people's minds. Hearing about the impact of a marriage ban or employment discrimination can sway people to join the marginalized peoples' side.

On the other end of the spectrum, Vivian Topping discussed the importance of using stories to debunk myths. She said that it was important when talking to people to address right-wing talking points against LGBT+ (particularly trans) people to get them to "really think it through and remember," using stories to do so. This is a way of giving people tools to combat misinformation and humanize LGBT+ people. Brian Bond also discussed the power of stories to sway people to your side through humanization, saying that stories from parents and family members about the impact on kids makes a possibility in moving people up the "ladder of engagement." When people see LGBT+ people as people, it becomes harder to deny them their rights or see them as the negative, dehumanized stereotype they are often portrayed as. This may lead them to want to participate in a pro-LGBT+ campaign, or at least cease spreading anti-LGBT+ rhetoric.

One of the major campaigns that used stories was the campaign to pass ENDA, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which has floated around Congress since 1994. Candace Gingrich said that one of the roadblocks with ENDA was that most Americans thought it was already illegal to fire somebody for being queer, meaning they didn't care to advocate for it. This necessitated explaining what the Act was for and involved getting people to share their stories of LGBT+ employment discrimination with their members of Congress and the public. Gingrich said, "If you don't know somebody's story, you're not going to understand how an issue impacts a person."

ENDA never became law, but that does not necessarily mean that the use of stories was unsuccessful in every way. Bond also qualifies the use of stories with legislators, saying that it might not be effective right away or with a particular legislative cycle. He said that activities like connecting LGBT+ people and/or their parents to talks with a member of Congress do have an impact, either direct or indirect. Bond said that the

immediate goal might be lost, but that, “Even if that Senator doesn't vote for the legislation you want, maybe that Senator or member will ratchet down the [opposing] rhetoric.”

This idea speaks to a campaign's “long game” strategy being a necessary resource for a campaign's success. Gingrich brought up the same point in their strategy to pass ENDA: “When it was time to lobby members of Congress...we could go to them and say, ‘You didn't read about this in the newspaper...but here's your constituent.’” Stories have the power to transcend time and can have impacts beyond pushing policy in the short-term. Changing people's hearts is the primary function of sharing these stories, to the degree that they then join the cause, or at least tone down their opposition.

The idea that stories are useful tools for creating political change speaks to how social change appears to be a main driver for political change. It can be concluded that activists need to start their campaigns with a goal of making social change to make their political goals more socially acceptable. Personal narratives are an effective means to make social change, either in preparation for a planned “rights episode” like a ballot measure or just to build on over time.

However, this can be flipped on LGBT+ activists. Stories of people that were harmed or slighted by LGBT+ people can be used to socially reject LGBT+ people further and motivate people to back anti-LGBT+ bills. Returning to the example of transgender athletes, stories of people that were beaten in their sport by a transgender person circulate with the narrative that transgender people have unfair advantages in gendered sports (Sanchez 2022). The consequence of these narratives being built up is two-fold: it leads to broader support for bills banning transgender athletes from participating in sports, and it contributes to the dehumanization of transgender people. This is the type of thing LGBT+ activists do not want to happen, and when both proponents

and opponents of LGBT+ rights use this method, it further politicizes the issue.

4.5 MOBILIZING VOTERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Bringing everyday people into the field of advocacy was echoed largely throughout many of the conversations I had for this research. Sanchez also discussed the core of the advocacy done at PFLAG, where people are mobilized by getting them to go to rallies, visit their legislators, and speak at hearings. Sanchez also touched on the importance of highlighting the vote in activist messaging, saying, “The reason that it's important is because in addition to the President, you elect who nominates every judge. Then you also have the Senate who has to vote for that judge at every federal level.” He then brought it back to lobbying by saying, “Then the advocacy steps in: once the President nominates a judge, then you start advocating with the Senate to move them forward or to stop them.”

Rebecca Dinwoodie characterized her work at Basic Rights Oregon as unique compared to work she had done in other states; “Since Oregon has ballot measures, we had lists of voters and activists and donors in the state, something other states didn't have.” With this information, Basic Rights Oregon was able to do sophisticated vote counting efforts where they were able to identify voters who could be or needed to be swayed to BRO's side in upcoming elections.

McAdam's third factor of a political opportunity, creating a critical mass of people (McAdam 2013, p. 51) resurfaced in Dinwoodie's discussion about bringing LGBT people into the advocacy fold. She expressed that Basic Rights Oregon is “good at doing a mix of social events that are fun and political events to bring the entire community in.” She brought up the idea of an “arc of activism” to describe how people were brought into the movement: “bring people into the movement through fun and community, then

seeing rights wins motivates more participation - creating lots of ways into the community...was about togetherness: feeling safe and good to be queer, but also with opportunities to mobilize people." A critical mass cannot be made when the community is isolated, and breaking those barriers while giving queer individuals agency to make political change certainly helped create the political opportunity that led to marriage equality in Oregon.

Dinwoodie also spoke about the importance of social movements and media representation, arguing that the political movement works in conjunction with the coming out movement. She spoke of the snowball effect that began in the 60s as people started talking about homosexuality which led to these issues becoming political ones nationally. Then "bit by bit, National Coming Out Day, college campuses, and churches having to decide what they thought, it wasn't just happening at the political level." On the social level, Dinwoodie highlighted that representations of LGBT+ people in media were critical in mobilizing people. She gave an anecdote from the late 1990's: "Ellen DeGeneres coming out mattered. We helped organize [*The Ellen [DeGeneres Show]*] watch parties in swing districts to get more volunteers."

Finally, Dinwoodie explained how meeting people where they were was beneficial to getting them to join a campaign. Her work involved the entire state of Oregon, where she organized and ran voter registration talks in places like churches, colleges, and bars with the purpose of registering queer people to vote in swing districts. Of this work, she cited, "The Internet, especially in rural areas," as a crucial tool in helping people realize they were not alone in their queerness. Spreading awareness of queer issues while allowing the average queer person to engage actively in work on the campaign served both political needs (meeting the campaign's policy goal) and social needs (increasing LGBT+ visibility and acceptance).

4.6. PUBLICIZING THE MESSAGE

Increasing awareness of queer issues and campaigns meant to solve them both with queer people and the general population is another key activity contributing to the success of LGBT+ rights campaigns. Not only does it put LGBT+ issues on the table, allowing people to conceive of a solution to them but it also contributes to mobilizing queer populations as political forces and promoting social acceptance of LGBT+ people (Epp 1998, p. 15-17). However, as explained in some of the interviews, finding the right mode of publicizing the message is critical to getting the advocate's desired outcome.

One salient example of campaign messaging was brought up by Rebecca Dinwoodie. During her time campaigning for same-sex marriage in Oregon, she said the initial messaging the community came up with was: "There are more than a thousand rights and responsibilities that come with marriage, and LGBT people should have the same rights and responsibilities as other couples." These include hospital visitations, the right to choose a burial plot, inheritance rights, among many other things. However, this messaging "kept not winning," according to Dinwoodie, which she attributed to the "yuck factor," which is the assumption that straight voters would not want to think about two men kissing or having sex.

However, once the messaging was switched away from "rights and responsibilities" to "love is love," the campaign started to gain traction. By asking people questions like "How do you feel about your marriage? That's what we want," and saying, "We want our relationships recognized civilly," people started to become more supportive of marriage equality in the state. Dinwoodie noted this shift happened only after the message was shifted from something more "cerebral" to something more digestible within the culture. This agrees with Epp's concept of culture influencing

political decisions, since social cues and consciousness influences whether one with political power can conceive of a right existing (Epp 1998, p. 15-17).

Candace Gingrich had a similar experience at the Human Rights Campaign, specifically citing the use of social media and email as highly useful in expanding the scope of their organization's advocacy efforts. They said that having the ability to send instant messages to the masses to keep them informed and aware was a great way to keep younger voters especially engaged in and beyond election years. Many of these social media posts and emails centered queer stories, so as much of this work is political, it is also personal. Getting to the heart of queer personhood is what inspires people to join the advocacy fight and for people to decide to support policy advancement for LGBT+ rights. However, Gingrich also noted that "we also know [the internet] is very easily used for disinformation," in this case perpetuating harmful stereotypes about LGBT+ people.

Speaking to a similar phenomenon, Vivian Topping said that her organization had a clear understanding that their opposition's message was rooted in myths and stereotypes about LGBT+ people. In her experience, sending the message had a critical timed element to it. If the opposition had gotten a "big, broad enough audience" first, they would, for example, "control the narrative with these fear-mongering commercials about trans people in bathrooms." It is evident that publicizing the message, while working toward social acceptance of LGBT+ people, must also dispel negative myths and perceptions of LGBT+ people.

4.7. PUBLIC EDUCATION

Another facet to successful campaigns is the educational component. When discussing cultural frames in political movements, Epp talked about "rights consciousness" which essentially suggests that rights cannot be won unless people are

cognizant of them. Further, the public's consciousness of the rights of a certain group must be accurate (or not co-opted by opposition) to have a better chance of winning a rights episode. People may be against LGBT+ rights advancement because they do not know enough about it; lack of knowledge can make people more susceptible to believing anti-LGBT+ myths. Making clear not only what the policy on the table is but also why LGBT+ people deserve to be treated equally is crucial in making sure voters are informed while also swaying them to one side. This is the "changing minds" piece of the "changing hearts and minds" idea.

Vivian Topping had to combat many myths in the various campaigns she has worked on, and she said much work was done to combat rhetoric that transgender people were dangerous. Part of this work was canvassing, which involved "just asking folks 'what's your first reaction to non-discrimination protections for trans people?'" Then her and her team would bring up their opposition's message and walk people through it and why it was disingenuous. She said that

"The entire crux of our campaign was us being able to have those conversations with voters ahead of time."

This type of work is very labor-intensive, but ultimately worth it for both political and social progress gained. Rebecca Dinwoodie also discussed how Basic Rights Oregon did more "broad education" and was there to whenever there was an anti-gay ballot measure. Candace Gingrich echoed this sentiment, saying, "If people don't know us, they're going to continue to believe stereotypes and myths and misconceptions." This solidifies the idea that education is the primary way to change people's minds. Alongside storytelling that highlights the humanity of queer people, public education campaigns are good ways for activists to clarify their message and get people to think more fairly and more humanely about LGBT+ issues. Most of this work is done by

larger organizations with more resources but it can also be done by smaller-scale groups and campaigns if they get the support they need.

Education can be used to make people more socially accepting of LGBT+ people, but this type of activity can also do the reverse. Topping, Dinwoodie, and Gingrich all discussed combatting stereotypes and misconceptions of LGBT+ people, but it should be mentioned that campaigns which reinforce those negative perceptions can do similar work in opposition to social and political progress. In the case of the current rise in anti-LGBT+ legislation across the country, it is not a stretch that the spread of negative stereotypes—especially that of transgender people—can contribute to society becoming less accepting of LGBT+ people and more receptive to harmful legislation.

4.8. RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION

Combining McAdam's, Anderson's, and Epp's theories generates the assumption that a mechanism to distribute resources to activists should exist to properly seize a political, legal, or social opportunity. In particular, Epp discusses support networks for individuals pursuing litigation, and this idea can be applied more broadly to a movement, especially when nonprofit organizations are involved.

Candace Gingrich's work at the Human Rights Campaign shifted from the legislative side to the foundation side, which mostly covered fundraising, education, and outreach, over the course of their time there. They said that they spent their time "learning and finding out what college students were trying to do and asking "how can we help you achieve that?" In this way, they were providing resources and tools to enable students to do that kind of advocacy on the ground — like funding a queer resource center on campus, for example.

Additionally, in the wake of the current

legislative assault on LGBT+ rights taking place across the country, they highlighted the importance of helping those who are impacted directly by loss of civil liberties. They said to "acknowledge the little things...volunteer at a shelter, if you can donate five dollars...because those are the things that are going to be our little sandbags that keep the really bad stuff from happening." Direct aid to those affected can be considered a form of activism and helping those who are struggling is necessary to maintain unity as a community. McAdam's political opportunity factor of connecting insurgents to resources they need can be seen here. Not only in the fact that people are getting supplies and finances to protest, but also to foster community and unity.

They also mentioned how direct aid helped push along the political and legislative work by increasing visibility and support networks for LGBT people more broadly. This follows Epp's logic of cultural consciousness influencing policy. They said, "We're not going to achieve equality from the closet," and they credit campaigns like the Coming Out Project, despite not having a specific political goal, with impacting successful legislative outcomes. With this work, "it went from, 'oh, those people' to my neighbor, my aunt, my teacher...and that had a huge impact on things." This along with direct aid is the type of support that "supports everyone," and helps to grease the gears in the political process to create political change.

4.9. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Returning to McAdam's Political Opportunity Theory, a type of "spark"—an event that grabs people's attention or makes an issue obvious—can be helpful, if not necessary, to build momentum in a movement or a campaign. Many times, a "spark" manifests as an act of protest, as it has throughout the LGBT+ rights movement in the United States since the mid-twentieth century. The theory holds that without there being an event to motivate

people for a cause, it can be harder to reach a critical mass necessary to create political change.

In our conversation, Candace Gingrich acknowledged the importance of civil disobedience, primarily in the form of marches and protests, in creating public visibility and motivating people politically. They said that it is important to participate in that work if you can, because “it’s that solidarity...it recharges you and reinvigorates you...to be standing shoulder to shoulder with people that are with you on an issue and that care very much and passionately about it.” Qualifying this, they said, “It sparks that conversation, [which] hopefully is portrayed accurately in the media, so people that might not have attended the rally can know that it happened.” If portrayed in a negative way in the media, the message can be lost and can turn people away from supporting the cause.

However, getting attention on the issue at all is crucial to creating change. They said that “for every march that happens in the street, a senator opens their ears.” Without these marches or other organized protests originating in the mid-twentieth century, there would not be a Coming Out Day, and many organizations doing broad advocacy work today would likely not exist. Gingrich said, “The rallying, the student walkouts in Florida, in Idaho, in Iowa, students going to the state capitals, being very present in Texas...” is what forces people to recognize that injustice or unfairness is taking place.

4.10. DRAFTING POLICY

Diego Sanchez talked about the importance of having a “seat at the table” in his work with the Democratic National Convention when drafting the party platform. He also worked as a senior chief policy advisor for a member of Congress, so he had power there to draft the language of the bills his office produced and sponsored. When LGBT+ people can be a part of drafting policy which affects them, a strong political opportunity

is revealed. However, this could only be created if there were allies on the inside that gave those marginalized people the opportunity to participate, highlighting the necessity of amicable insider/outsider relations. Moreover, Brian Bond, who also worked for the Democratic Party, added that “the most important piece of the LGBTQ Victory Fund at the time was to have a seat at the table,” solidifying this point.

This strategy, while arguably the most effective in getting LGBT+ policy made and implemented, is the most difficult to set up. An activist would either need to be a worker on the inside, like Sanchez and Bond with the DNC, or have robust relationships with insiders who would allow them to draft bills. It is common for lobbyists to write bills and submit them to a member of Congress to consider. However, without a relationship between the insider and the lobbyist or issue, it is less likely to be introduced. Bond’s job at the DNC was created specifically out of a desire to mobilize LGBT+ voters, and Sanchez’s connections while working in nonprofits gave him the opportunity to advise the Democratic Party’s 2008 platform. For outsiders to draft policy or to become insiders, the political institution must see value in giving them the space to do that work, which I will expand on in the *Democracy* section.

4.11. STRATEGY IN MOVEMENTS AND CAMPAIGNS

Implicit in the Political Opportunity Theory is the idea of strategy, which includes the methodology for a campaign or a movement. Legal Opportunity Theory adopts a singular method — the judiciary — to reach a rights win, but the strategy can also be more specific to a particular case. Crafting a strategy to gain the resources and meet the conditions necessary to create a political opportunity, in addition to the strategy necessary to win a specific right, is crucial in how social movements function.

Evan Wolfson discussed the importance of strategy—both in movements and individual campaigns—to achieve success. On why he believes strategy is important to campaigns, Wolfson said, “The Constitution is at best a promise, not a reality. So, we have to make it real, we have to deliver on it, we have to enforce it.” In saying this, Wolfson is asserting that every activity that a campaign does should be in service of the goal, which should always be to force the government to afford the rights enshrined in the Constitution to the people. Whether rights are gained through legislation or litigation as the primary method, the rights always emanate from the Constitution; it is the methods of gaining those rights that determine strategy.

To explain his point, Wolfson used a metaphor that he discussed in previous interviews—the “ladder of clarity.” The top rung represents “where you want to go...the goal,” the next rung is the strategy, the next is the “mix of vehicles,” and the last rung represents action steps (Wolfson 2015, p. 237-240). He echoed this metaphor in our conversation, and it provides a clear roadmap for how to structure a campaign. Notably, this is the structure he used for his work in a same-sex marriage campaign, which ended up succeeding in 2015.

Part of having a strategy is understanding the “long game” of a campaign or movement. Wolfson said that knowing that achieving political and social change through campaigns requires time, building a plan with a longer time span is beneficial in keeping a campaign on the right track. To make a long-term strategy, Wolfson argues that a campaign organizer must know “how to organize appropriately, how to get buy-in [and] recruit allies.” Within these broader goals, Wolfson also highlighted the importance of planning tactics such as messaging, persuasion, electoral work litigation, legislation, and fundraising so they work together to serve a campaign’s overarching strategy. Keeping all

these things in mind while executing a campaign is likely part of why having time, money, and people on-hand is necessary to achieve success.

In previous interviews, Wolfson discussed how the marriage equality campaign was “multi-method,” meaning that it used a combination of litigation, public education, direct action, lobbying and legislative work all in service of a single strategy with a single goal (Wolfson & Johnson 2014, p. 851). For these methods, there are different vehicles you can choose, the primary ones being a court or a legislature.

Due to the fact many LGBT+ rights wins have been achieved through the Supreme Court, including the right to marriage equality, it makes sense why many advocacy campaigns use litigation as their methodology. Based on his experience with Freedom to Marry, Wolfson said that “litigation alone was not sufficient [citing numerous case losses for LGBT rights] ...what we then argued and developed...was a strategy that combined the methodologies litigation with the other methodologies and approaches to enable that litigation in the Supreme Court to succeed.” This answer agrees with Anderson’s condition for litigation strategy, that the question needs to be justiciable to succeed with this method (Anderson 2004, p. 9).

The other primary method LGBT+ rights campaigns implement in their strategies is legislation. Through this method, Wolfson explained that lobbying would be a central activist activity, but even then, it is likely that other methodologies will need to be drawn upon to achieve success. For example, using the media as a method for running a public education campaign in conjunction with lobbying legislators. He also brought up electoral work, fundraising, and direct-action protest as supplementary methods to the primary legislative. Essentially, Wolfson argues that successful campaigns organize themselves around a specific decision-maker, tailoring their activities to

synchronize with whichever primary method is chosen. In doing so, he also lists several activities that the other interviewees mentioned as successful activist activities, solidifying their importance.

Wolfson employed this ideology into his organization's marriage equality strategy. He explained how his strategy was to work on three tracks (legislation, judicial decisions, and social opinion) simultaneously: "We were going to build a critical mass of states where same-sex couples could marry, because...marriage happens at the first instance in the states." Here he is echoing McAdam's third necessity for political opportunity being critical masses. Organizing and strategizing around the various resources and activities activists have at their disposal is crucial in creating rights wins, and often it takes several years for activists to create that "critical mass" necessary to do so.

4.12. CURRENT AND FUTURE FIGHTS

At the conclusion of all the interviews, I asked each interviewee what they thought about the current political environment for LGBT+ issues at all levels across the country. For the most part, answers to this question were centered around a concern about education and anti-LGBT+ bills (anti-trans bills especially) cropping up around the country. There was also a focus on intersectionality and how the LGBT+ community might seek to further their work with other identity groups, such as the Black community, in the future for civil rights.

Candance Gingrich found that the coalition work that was done between groups representing different populations was itself a form of intersectional advocacy. They said, "it's all about intersectionality. We've been doing intersectionality in advocacy... coalition work is intersectionality." Linking the LGBT+ struggle to other current political battles, they brought up other political targets, such as reproductive rights.

They said that these issues are often used to rally up political bases around a common enemy for the purposes of achieving a political goal. In this case, contesting LGBT+ rights is something used to motivate more conservative voters to support the Republican Party on their own, simply because the Democratic Party supports LGBT+ rights. This is the story for other civil rights campaigns and movements, as will be discussed.

There was discussion with Diego Sanchez about how the current political attack on LGBT+ rights could spur even more pro-LGBT+ advocacy. Referring to the 2020 murder of George Floyd, Sanchez said, "Some things are driven by an incident. We have the high rate of trans women being murdered. Those are all incidents that lead to an issue." Other examples of incidences that start movements include firings or children being sent home from school on account of identity classifications. An incident of injustice can provoke a response through all kinds of advocacy channels, such as protesting or lobbying.

This focus on intersectionality was mirrored in the other interviews. Vivian Topping began her answer by addressing the current political backlash against Critical Race Theory and book bans in public schools that also affect LGBT+ people. She said that the anti-CRT bills, which ban discussions of systemic racism in public schools, being proposed and passed in states throughout the country also include prohibition of LGBT+ topics and history. Topping mentioned that these types of bills have been proposed for years, calling them "Don't Say Gay" bills. This is a particularly salient point as Florida recently passed its own "Don't Say Gay" bill.

Topping took care to discuss the current LGBT+ political environment in Florida, as it has changed dramatically since the bill was passed. She said that in 2021, Florida passed the first anti-LGBTQ law in their state in 23 years (a trans athlete ban). In response, Equality of Florida, a pro-LGBT+ organization, has been working to stop future anti-

LGBT+ bills from becoming law. Regarding the 2022 “Don’t Say Gay” bill, they ran large-scale digital ads about the bill with public figures like Chasten Buttigieg and President Biden speaking out against it. They thought they were in a good position, since the 2021 trans athlete ban “moved really quickly” into law seemingly because it did not have as much publicity.

However, despite having broad ally coalitions, other necessary resources, and strategies that have been successful in the past, this campaign against Florida’s 2022 “Don’t Say Gay” bill seems to have failed. This points to a larger political problem that stifles political participation and diminishes fairness, which will be a topic of discussion later in this section. Topping discussed the stark uptick in anti-transgender bills nationwide: in 2019 there were 35 anti-trans bills, but in 2021, there were 198 (Equality Federation 2022). This is eight times as many bills in only a two-year period of time. In trying to explain this rapid increase, Topping said, “I think that we are dealing with a different Republican party than we had before.” Meaning, a Republican Party that aggressively villainizes a social group, exploiting societal biases and negative perceptions of marginalized groups, to serve their own political gains.

Historically, this type of villainization ended up having a strong impact on LGBT+ political and social organizing. Rebecca Dinwoodie noted that in response to all the anti-LGBT+ measures being proposed and passed, “people were forced to get organized.” As a result, LGBT+ people themselves became politicized and Oregonians had to think about their position on the matter. If someone had a family member who came out, “it had a different implication because people were voting on the rights of their family members and friends.” Here, social acceptance begets political support, so portraying the LGBT+ identity something to be outlawed allows anti-LGBT+ advocates to politicize

the LGBT+ identity while serving their own political goals.

Ever since the late 1960’s, LGBT+ people have been viewed as a political issue. Activists fight for their rights and campaigns fight for their votes. Vivian Topping predicts that “there will be a significantly higher investment in LGBTQ folks... prepping for 2024 [elections].” She believes that the focus on trans youth as a wedge issue only benefits anti-LGBT+ advocates, and that investment will be needed to prepare for that threat. Similarly, Candace Gingrich spoke about the need to pass gay conversion therapy bans federally and across states. They discussed how the extra layer of religion and faith “adds a layer of complexity” to getting that policy through — and certainly is the case for most LGBT+ policies more broadly.

Evan Wolfson brought up the need to educate and prepare future activists and public leaders. Of his work “growing the next generation of leadership to make sure it’s diverse and strong,” he said, “It is a...diffused form of advocacy...in a sense that it is trying to inspire and instruct a next generation who you hope mostly will go out and do good things.” This could also be categorized as “changing hearts and minds,” to motivate people to participate in the fight for LGBT+ rights, but ultimately, it is up to the individual’s discretion what they want to do with any power they may acquire in their life.

Candace Gingrich also touched on the impact of advocacy on the next generation to grow the movement. They said folks, including children, “see this [anti-LGBT legislation] and see that it’s bullshit,” but that they do not have the ability or capacity to fight against them. It is important, in the landslide of legislation condemning adults and children for aspects of their identity, that effected groups feel empowered to make changes. They need to see a place for themselves as elected officials, decision-makers, and activists. This is all

so, as Gingrich put it, “They can be the ones who undo what others have done.”

4.13. DEMOCRACY

Without the democratic structure that the United States has in place, none of this advocacy or rights-chasing would be possible. Working within the democratic political institutions of the federal, state, and local governments across the country is crucial in making sure people’s rights are protected.

Brian Bond said that his work at the Victory Fund had the goal of getting people elected within a party structure, which meant that LGBT+ candidates needed to be treated fairly in the media. At the end of the day, finding supportive votes and turning them out is the primary goal of all LGBT+ political activism. In the 1990s, the Democratic National Committee identified LGBT+ voters as a significant enough voting block to create a position solely for outreach. Bond said, “It’s amazing how things move faster if you have something to give and guess what the community had: votes.” Votes are political currency, and once LGBT+ people proved themselves a large-enough interest group to democracy, they were treated legitimately by the institutions.

This phenomenon also includes LGBT+ political and social allies. According to Candace Gingrich, part of their strategy at the Human Rights Campaign in 2005 was to hold voter registration events at universities in swing districts. As a result, the youth vote “exceeded itself in the past twenty years” and “most of the candidates supportive of LGBT+ rights were elected.” This speaks to the importance not only of mobilizing queer populations in democratic participation but finding groups that are also supportive and mobilizing them too. In this case, the ally group was younger voters, showing that ally coalition building is also key in voter identification as well as other activist activities.

Brian Bond argued that activists should always be concerned with finding and targeting votes. He cited following demographic changes in cities and states and changing a campaign’s messaging accordingly as integral to connecting with voters and recruiting them to your interest group. However, because of tactics like gerrymandering and voter suppression, both parties have created an environment where Bond says, “People are pandering to their base in the primary, and there is no real general [election].” The democratic environment which allows interest groups to use their vote to mandate political change is degrading, and whether that benefits or harms LGBT+ rights, Bond argues “[it’s] a problem for advocacy. That’s a problem for democracy. That’s a problem for this country.”

Echoing this concern, when asked what important political fights he saw happening currently or foresaw, Wolfson said, “defending our democracy itself.” This concept was an underlying theme in each of the conversations I had with the interviewees, especially when we discussed things happening in the current day. When democracy is rigged, it can make certain policy changes much harder, if not impossible to achieve. The activist tactics discussed in this research all operate under the assumption of a free and fair democratic system, and without that, there is little to be done. This rigging (such as with gerrymandering and voter suppression) can explain the halting of the federal Equality Act and other progressive bills in the current Congress. Either way, defending democracy and defending the vote is crucial to defending the rights promised to the people in the Constitution, as handed down by the three branches of the government and all the states. As Candace Gingrich put it, “It’s lifesaving stuff. Legislation can and does save lives.”

CONCLUSION

This research illuminates not only what advocacy

needs to work, but also why we need advocacy to work. While the subject pool was relatively small, each interviewee had a strong story to tell and unique insight into the fight for LGBT+ rights. However, be sure to keep this limitation in mind when digesting these ideas and further your research into the subject.

Social equity is a responsibility of public administrators, and outsider activists keep them accountable for upholding it through policy. This is done at a smaller grassroots level and at larger organizational levels. Change seems to happen during specific moments as a response to unfair treatment or policies, and the momentum snowballs with either rights wins or losses. Networks are created outside the government to create social change, and when enough pressure has built, political change follows. Interest groups and nonprofits act as the direct lines of communication between activist ideas and policy makers, and spaces within the federal legislature have been created for LGBT+ activists to do work for policy change.

To be successful, advocacy campaigns need adequate time, money, labor, unity, allies, and access to a democratic environment. What counts as “adequate” depends on the scale of the campaign. Allies can be either coalitions built with other organizations for the purposes of pushing for a particular policy, or coalitions with the aim of promoting social change and acceptance for LGBT+ people. Since advocacy is a form of political participation in a democratic process, democratic institutions need to be robust, and legislators must be receptive to the needs of the constituency for advocacy to work. Additionally, building trust between insiders and outsiders with governmental institutions is crucial to ensuring a synergy between the two sides, which leads to a better chance of successful policy outcomes.

Successful advocacy strategies employed in the LGBT+ rights movement in the United States include using personal narratives to influence

legislators, educate the public, and personalize the struggle for rights to promote social acceptance; having a strong and clear public education campaign to dispel myths about LGBT+ people and counter bigoted resistance equality; distributing resources to activists and/or individuals that need them; and the participation in and the unbiased reporting of acts of civil disobedience (like protests) to promote the message and create direct action toward a particular advocacy goal.

Having a strategy and beginning with a clear goal that includes the particular methodology, actors, and action steps necessary to achieve that goal is beneficial to campaigns by helping them make effective use of their resources. Also, being patient and playing the long game with strategy is most often the reality of advocacy.

Activists involved in current fights, including the stonewalling of federal LGBT+ equality policy and the cropping up of anti-LGBT+ bills and laws in states across the country, are all facing a particular struggle caused by the recent eroding of democratic norms and institutions. When the Republican Party gerrymanders legislative seats at the state and federal level, and the Republican Party is determined to prevent LGBT+ equality from being realized, it is very unlikely any political progress in this area will be made. Additionally, purposely making the LGBT+ community a political target to rally up the conservative base is further stoking divide and creating an increasingly unsafe environment nationwide for LGBT+ people.

It is important to keep in mind that LGBT+ people are not the only ones under threat with this current political reality--women, Black and Indigenous people of color, Asian people, and people with disabilities are too. Resentment toward these groups that has existed for centuries is currently being used to prevent social, political, and economic equality by the White, male, and Republican elite. In this fight, coalitions must stand together and push for each other's needs to

be met by the government, calling not only for certain policy goals, but for the proper democratic norms and institutions that the country needs to effectively serve its population.

Protecting the process that creates policy is crucial to protect vulnerable populations, LGBT+ and beyond, and therefore advocacy methods need to be properly assessed. Without advocacy and the tireless work of many people (including those that took part in this research project), we would not be anywhere near where we are today in terms of civil rights for LGBT+ people. There is always hope for resistance to unfair treatment if you start with yourself and keep these ideas in mind as you go on living in the world. Anyone can be a force for good but understanding how to best use your power through collectivizing, strategizing, and doing the work on the ground can open the door to a better future for all people, regardless of identity.

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