

Analysis of Oppositional Frames in Evaluating Movement Success:
National and Local Debates Over Sex Education Programming

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Introduction

Between March 2008 and March 2009, new reports about teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (STD) infection rates were released, a high school pregnancy pact was discovered, and the Republican party's vice presidential candidate's daughter was revealed to be 17 and pregnant. A 2008 report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that one in four teen girls is infected with a sexually transmitted disease (MSNBC 2008). Then, in June 2008 *Time* magazine reported on a pact made among 17 girls at a Massachusetts high school to get pregnant so they could raise their babies together (Kingsbury 2008). In September of 2008 Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin made headlines first for becoming Senator John McCain's running mate in the 2008 presidential elections, and quickly after for the news that her 17-year-old daughter was pregnant even as Palin promoted federal funding of abstinence-only sex education programming (ABC 2008). Finally, the National Center for Health Statistics released a report in March of 2009 revealing that, for the second year in a row, pregnancy rates had increased among adolescents (Stein and St. George 2009). The risks of teen sexual activity splattered the front pages of newspapers and became fodder for TV news analysts. As these news stories took center stage, so did the decades-long debate about how to educate American youth about sex.

National advocates of comprehensive sexuality education—which involves lessons about relationships, good and bad touching, forms of sexuality, and information about abstinence as well as methods of contraception—pointed to these news items, and to the fact that in fiscal year 2008 federal funding for abstinence-only education through the Community Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) Program (an initiative established by former President George W. Bush in 2001 that will be discussed in subsequent sections) was at its highest level yet totaling \$113.4

million dollars, as evidence that abstinence-only education did not work (HHS 2008). On the other side of the debate abstinence-only advocates argued that such alarming news required the infusion of more money into abstinence-only education programs so that adolescents would learn that the only full way to prevent pregnancy and STD infection is by abstaining from sexual activity (NAEA 2009). Both sides of the debate claimed that their brand of sex education was the answer to rising teen pregnancy and STD infection rates.

In making these claims, advocates on both sides of the debate tried to push their movement's goals forward. Ultimately concerned with the sex education messaging delivered to students, comprehensive sexuality education and abstinence-only education advocates have squared off since the 1960s in local debates over curriculum and, since the 1980s, national debates over federal support for these programs. While the developments between March 2008 and March 2009 represent only the latest versions of attention to teenage sexual activity they still prompt the question: which side of the debate over sex education instruction has seen more success in turning its movement goals into tangible curriculum and policy victories? To answer this question, however, requires that another question be answered first.

In order to find success, comprehensive sexuality education and abstinence-only education advocates have been involved in meaning-making work, attempting to connect movement goals with public sentiments and policymaker preferences. The study of the ways in which a movement presents itself and its goals falls under the category of framing analysis—a branch of social movement theory that analyzes “the ideational and expressive aspects of social movements” in gauging the ability of movement actors to “garner support for movement goals and participation in movement activities” (Hull 209; 208). It is essential to understand how it is that movement actors employ framing strategies in order to reach their goals. This thesis applies

the framing perspective to two recent cases pulled from the long history of debates over sex education instruction in order to answer how it is that social movement actors employ framing strategies to mobilize support and advance their policy agenda or, in other words, find movement success.

In particular I am interested in studying how these two movements, when looked at in conversation with each other, employ framing strategies that similarly represent a conversation. Put differently, I want too see how frames employed by the comprehensive sexuality education movement respond to, compare with, and diverge from those used by the abstinence-only education movement and vice versa. Such work has the potential to improve the relatively new field of framing theory by representing the necessity to look at oppositional movements concurrently to better understand the multiple meaning-making strategies employed by movement actors. Previous scholarly work on framing has been concerned with standardizing the “conceptual precision and clarity” of the theory, expanding the scope of study to include the use of frames by movement actors and participants, and defining what meaning-making work encompasses (Hull 210). Within the literature dedicated to better establishing what falls under the heading of framing processes, scholars have pointed to the multiple meanings that can be implied by discursive strategies as well as the necessity to assess dramaturgical components as part of a movement’s “signifying work” (Hull 210; McAdam 120). Looking at oppositional frames in conversation with each other provides another, and an important, avenue through which to study how a movement’s signifying work plays out in its frame usage. Furthermore, it provides an avenue through which to study the connection between framing strategies and movement success.

After explaining framing theory in depth I further explore the limitations of the theory as it currently stands. I then provide a brief history of the debate over sex education instruction in America. First I apply framing analysis to the sex education arguments that played out among national-level advocacy organizations over federal funding policy between 2001 and 2008 . I then look at a debate over curriculum content that took place in Montgomery County, MD between 2004 and 2008 and that activated parents' groups and national organizations alike. Finally I explore what these cases reveal and what further work can be done to improve framing scholarship.

Literature Review: Framing Theory

In the mid-1970s sociologist Erving Goffman introduced frames as “schemata of interpretation” that allow individuals to recognize and categorize events in their lives and in the world as meaningful (Snow et al. 1986, 464). Frames are organizational tools employed by individuals to contextualize what is around them and to derive meaning from these contexts. Social movement scholars quickly adopted the concept of frames to address an emerging weakness in social movement scholarship—the failure of existing theories to analyze how presentation and expression of goals and identity increased movement support and attracted membership. Such a gap was credited to the failure of scholars to look for and establish links between “social psychological and structural/organizational factors and perspectives” (Snow et al. 1986, 464).

From the notion of frames, framing emerged as a verb to describe a process of meaning construction. Framing effectively combines the social psychological and structural/organizational areas of inquiry by exploring how rhetorical, tactical, and alignment strategies are employed in order to maximize social movement relevancy among targeted publics (Benford and Snow 2000, 623). As a result, the framing perspective has gained saliency as an effective explanatory theory over the past two decades, and is now considered to be one of the four major schools of thought within social movement theory¹.

Components of Framing Theory

Framing processes are employed in order for social movement organizations (SMOs) to recruit adherents and advance an agenda through meaning-making work. SMOs make meaning

¹ The other three schools of thought within social movement theory are resource mobilization theory, political opportunity theory, and new social movement theory (McGovern 2008).

through the use of discursive and tactical strategies. Sociologists Robert Benford and David Snow (2000) argue that, for movement actors, there are three core framing tasks: (1) diagnostic framing through which the problem is identified and attributed; (2) prognostic framing through which solutions are established; and (3) motivational framing through which the need for collective action is constructed (615). Such work can be done through frame alignment or frame opposition strategies, or through the successful use of master frames.

FRAME ALIGNMENT

Robert Benford, David Snow, and their colleagues (1986) were among the first scholars to delve deeply into framing theory by looking at frame alignment processes: the ways in which SMOs link, or align, their goals with individual's interests and with the goals of other friendly organizations (464). Frame alignment processes target movement adherents and new recruits. Benford, Snow, and their colleagues have identified four distinct types of frame alignment processes—frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation.

Frame bridging

Benford, Snow, and colleagues (1986) term the process through which SMOs link “two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem,” as frame bridging (467). In other words, SMOs attempt to cast a wider net of support by connecting either to other relevant SMOs or by appealing to targeted population groups. “[Frame bridging] is communicating the idea that our problem is your problem, and your problem is our problem—you are not alone, this is a systemic problem” (Chananie-Hill, 16). The National Rifle Association employs frame bridging to connect its heuristic frame, “ensure your gun rights,” with gun-owning American citizens (<http://www.nra.org/>). The NRA

uses this frame to bridge their commitment to protecting Second Amendment rights with the practices of gun-owning Americans (Chananie-Hill, 17).

Frame amplification

Frame amplification is the process through which an interpretive frame is particularly emphasized in order to explain a specific issue or set of events and to motivate movement participation (Snow et al. 1986, 469). Snow and his colleagues identify two channels through which frames are typically amplified: values amplification and beliefs amplification. “Whereas values refer to the goals or end-states that movements seek to attain or promote, beliefs can be constructed as ideational elements that cognitively support or impeded action in pursuit of desired values” (469-70). SMOs can amplify beliefs about the severity of the issue, the locus of blame for the issue, the issue’s antagonists, the value of collective action in effecting change, and the necessity of fighting a perceived injustice (Snow et al. 1986, 470). Frame amplification frequently involves employing heuristic devices such as slogans or identifiable images (such as the rainbow associated with gay rights) that can be quickly referenced as relating to a particular movement (Chananie-Hill, 17).

Frame extension

By broadening the apparent values and goals of a movement in order to attract potential supports, SMOs engage in the process of frame extension (Snow et al. 1986, 472). In his article on the emergence of the contemporary animal rights movement, sociologist James Jasper identifies three strains of animal rights-related social movements— those aimed at enforcing humane treatment, those emphasizing animal welfare, and those defending animal rights (71). He argues that during the 1980s these different strains of the animal rights movement were able to work together at points by expanding their messages (i.e. SMOs concerned with the rights of

domesticated animals also expressing concern over the rights of wild animals and vice versa) in order to recruit adherents from a broader membership pool. Such work is an example of frame extension.

Frame transformation

Frame transformation occurs when an SMO reorganizes in order to better deliver messaging that is culturally relevant. If it becomes clear to movement actors that the frames employed are not producing, or able to produce, the intended response (mobilizing support, recruiting new movement adherents, affecting policy change, etc.), it then becomes necessary to reframe the issue to produce those results. Sociologist Scott Davies explains, “Classic examples of frame transformations are feminist and racial minority movements that have changed their own (and popular) perceptions of the conditions of women or minorities from those that are fatalist or self-blaming to those that are system blaming” (6). Frame transformation involves a process of redefinition, such as the ones cited above, and can be accomplished in two ways—through domain-specific or global interpretive frames (Snow et al. 1986, 474).

Transformation of domain-specific frames involves problematizing aspects of life “previously taken for granted...and in need of repair,” or reframing the normative “as an injustice” (Snow et al. 1986, 474). Transformations of global interpretive frames broaden perspective and change one’s “sense of ultimate grounding” (Heirich 1977 quoted in Snow et al. 1986, 475). Both domain-specific and global interpretive frames redefine, or transform, a message in order to increase a frame’s saliency.

OPPOSITIONAL FRAMING

Here the term oppositional framing is used as an umbrella term to group together those framing perspectives that focus on how movements and movement actors construct identity and

meaning through framing processes that directly contradict the identity and meaning of another, oppositional, movement.

Boundary framing

Sociologist Ira Silver, in his article examining a particular philanthropic organization in Chicago, defines boundary framing as an SMO's strategic attempts to distinguish its ideology in opposition to specific non-movement actors or antagonists (489). He identifies two distinct vocabularies of motivation; one intended to frame the problem and the other intended to frame the movement's identity. When an SMO engages in boundary framing not only does it develop a vocabulary with which to frame the problem, it does so in opposition to an antagonist's framing of the problem. Such work establishes a firm boundary between problem constructions. Similarly, not only does an SMO frame its identity, it does this work to contrast an antagonizing movement's identity construction. This boundary work helps to distinguish between movement allies and adversaries. In Silver's analysis of the Crossroads Fund, a philanthropic organization in Chicago, he illustrates how the organization works to construct its identity as one founded in "social change" philanthropy as opposed to "traditional" philanthropy (488). In so doing, the Crossroads Fund engages in boundary framing by establishing borders between its goals and organizing philosophy and the goals and organizing philosophies of other organizations (Silver, 489).

Countermovements and Counterframing

Most scholars agree that social movements develop in order to rectify a perceived injustice or problematize an aspect of society taken for granted. Sociologist Ruth Chananie-Hill argues that countermovements often develop to preserve the status quo (22). "The defining characteristic is that the (counter)movement is engaged in interaction with an oppositional

movement” (Chananie-Hill 23; Williams and Williams, 192). Chananie-Hill argues that countermovements are frequently “associated with right-wing ideologies, whose constituents ‘desire to preserve status,’ and ‘identify with the past,’ and whose leaders generally believe that they speak for the majority” (22). As a movement forms around an issue and a countermovement develops, concurrent shifts in framing occur. A countermovement engages in counterframing through which the movement’s problem construction is refuted, its character attacked, and/or through which alternative solutions are offered. The movement to define marriage as strictly between a man and a woman challenges the validity and correctness of gay marriage claims and has attempted to push legislation defining marriage as only between a man and a woman. As counterframing occurs, the movement frequently has to engage in reframing processes through which it can respond to and limit the impact of counterframes (Chananie-Hill, 24).

MASTER FRAMES

Over time, particular frames have displayed political and cultural saliency within structurally distinct movements. These frames have been generally applicable to movements that are fighting for distinctly different issues. Such frames, those that have successfully crossed movement borders while maintaining their effectiveness, are referred to as master frames (Benford and Snow 2000, 619). Master frames “have been identified as being sufficiently broad in interpretive scope, inclusivity, flexibility, and cultural relevance” (Benford and Snow 2000, 619). These master frames include rights frames, environmental justice frames, injustice frames, culturally pluralist frames, sexual terrorism frames, oppositional frames, hegemonic frames, and conservative-traditionalist frames (Benford and Snow 2000, 619; Chananie-Hill, 21). Perhaps the most utilized of master frames is the rights frame, which has been applied from the civil

rights movement to other ethnic minority rights movements, the gay rights movement, the women's liberation movement, and the animal rights movement (Benford and Snow 2000, 619; Green, 153; Hull, 207; Jasper, 65; McAdam, 117; Williams and Williams, 192).

In 2007, Chananie-Hill identified the conservative-traditionalist frame as the go-to strategy of the Christian Right. She points out, however, that non-Christians have employed this framing strategy, which is why she has distinguished between the conservative-traditionalist master frame and the Christian Right social movement. Prior to Chananie-Hill's important addition to the literature on master framing, scholars had instead identified the framing strategies employed by the religious right as oppositional or rejection framing (Hull, 209). Chananie-Hill is the first to provide a name for the discursive and tactical strategies employed by the Christian Right across structurally distinct movements.

Criticism of Framing Theory

Over the past couple of decades, as scholars have continued to apply framing theory to social movement case studies, important and relevant critiques of the literature have surfaced. Many of these critiques have focused on research methodology and the definitional scope of framing.

One strand of criticism has challenged who constitutes a movement actor and a movement audience, and which actors the scholarship should focus on (Evans 1997; Hull 2001). Sociologist John Evans (1997) has argued that framing strategies are not only employed to attract movement adherents but also to influence the media and political elites, and to respond to movement opponents (451). Because a social movement organization (SMO) has to address multiple target audiences, multiple framing strategies are frequently employed accordingly (Evans, 452). Part of this perspective is reflected in frame analysis of movement-

countermovement scholarship. In her article about the debate over a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in Hawaii, sociologist Kathleen Hull critiques the framing perspective for having so far focused almost exclusively on the work of elite actors (210).² She addresses a gap in the framing literature “by considering the framing strategies of nonelite actors” in her work (Hull, 210). According to Hull, the research approach employed by scholars to measure the effectiveness of frames in recruiting and mobilizing supporters must be expanded to analyze how non-elite actors (lay citizens) respond to SMO-offered frames in public discourse (210).

A second branch of criticism that framing scholars have debated is how to better formalize framing theory. One such debate has focused on the terminology used in developing and defining the theory. Early on scholars who took on Goffman’s conceptualization spoke in terms of frames as nouns that “contain structured content, which consists of certain related sets of rhetorical ideas drawn from cultural, political, legal, and religious ideologies,” (Chananie-Hill, 8). A different approach took hold as scholars began to see framing as a verb, a dynamic and evolving process ultimately aimed at meaning construction. An analysis of framing involves the study of the specific frames used and how social movement actors act on those frames (Chananie-Hill, 8). By expanding the scope of the theory to include the study of framing and not just of frames, scholars created the theoretical space to not only look at what frames are used by a movement but also at what meaning-making work is being done by using them.

A final critique has challenged the prevailing focus on discursive strategies in frame analysis. Doug McAdam (2000) identifies six strategic framing hurdles that SMOs have to overcome in order to be successful and breaks them down into internal and environmental

² Hull expands on David Benford’s critique of the existence of an “elite bias” in framing scholarship. She writes, “Benford (1997: 421) warns against the ‘elite bias’ of existing framing studies, or the ‘tendency to focus on the framing activities of movement elites to the neglect of rank-and-file participants, potential recruits, bystanders, and others,’ and calls for ‘more studies which include the interactions, understandings, talk, and the like of non-elites as well as of elites’” (Hull, 210).

hurdles (119). The internal hurdles, which McAdam believes have received the bulk of scholarly attention, are to attract fresh recruits to the movement and to maintain supporter commitment. Environmental hurdles, the focus of McAdam's article, are to attract favorable media attention, to activate bystander publics, to limit the social effectiveness of movement opponents, and to effect policy changes that reflect the movement's agenda (119; Evans 1997). These four hurdles aimed at the public construction of the movement's image, McAdam argues, cannot be understood solely in terms of discursive strategies. Action strategies have to be analyzed as well because of the role that strategic action plays in the "signifying work" of framing processes (McAdam, 120). He offers to the literature on framing the need to analyze discursive *and* dramaturgical tactics in measuring the effectiveness of an SMO's framing strategies.

McAdam points to an essential definitional limitation of framing theory. His assessment that scholarship has focused almost exclusively on discursive framing means that other meaning-making processes are excluded from analysis. He argues that the leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), including Martin Luther King Jr., made strategic decisions about where to stage protests, picking locations in the deep South with police heads and/or politicians prone to violence (127). Media attention thus depicted nonviolent protestors being subjected to violent force and gave visual support for, and further weight to, claims of unequal rights and inhumane treatment (128). While McAdam points to a lack of attention given to the dramaturgical, other non-discursive elements of framing have yet to be identified and elaborated on. Framing, defined earlier as the work of meaning construction, is not limited to purely discursive work. Rather the work is the packaging of language, actions, images, and sounds into a cohesive and meaningful message. These components that extend beyond discursive (verbal) frames—actions, images, and sounds—comprise nonverbal frames. In order

to be able to more fully assess how it is that framing strategies are employed to mobilize support and advance policy agendas, scholars must expand the scope of focus to include analysis of both verbal and nonverbal framing. McAdam starts this expansion by looking at the dramaturgical in his analysis of framing within the civil rights movement. Frame analysis, however, will not be complete until all nonverbal frames are folded into the scope of study.

The critiques explored above have worked to enrich framing scholarship and do not reflect serious divides in framing theory generally. These criticisms have focused on improving research methodology and solidifying, as well as on solidifying theoretical language. As mentioned above, much of the scholarship has attended exclusively to an analysis of verbal framing. As scholars have worked to get at the how of social movement success (measured here as mobilizing support and advancing a policy agenda) through their analysis of discursive framing, a cleavage has developed, one that locates frame origination in different contexts. Such a division reflects a difference in how scholars view how a movement is able to develop cultural saliency and relevancy so that public and policy support can be mobilized most effectively. In one camp are those scholars who emphasize framing strategies as reactive in that they are developed to respond to the current political and social climate in which a movement is situated (Davies 1999, Evans 1997, Green 1999, Hull 2001, Williams and Williams 1995). A competitive camp sees framing processes as proactive in that social movement actors work to create new meanings that will develop relevancy and cultural salience (Capek 1993, Green 1999, Hull 2001, Jasper 1999, Kolker 2005, McAdam 2000, Silver 1997).

Proactive and Reactive Framing Processes

As previously mentioned, a division has emerged in how scholars view the development of culturally salient and relevant frames. Scholars who analyze how framing strategies fit into

and respond to the current political and social climate in which a movement is situated utilize a reactive lens. In contrast, scholars who identify framing strategies as creating new meaning that will develop cultural salience and relevancy employ a proactive lens. These next two sections analyze case studies in order expand upon this conceptualization of reactive versus proactive lenses.

REACTIVE FRAMING PROCESSES

Reactive framing processes respond to the current political and social climate in order to achieve cultural saliency and relevance. In John C. Green's article on the development of the Christian Right social movement, he argues that the movement emerged in the late 1970s in response to a perceived moral decay in America. The major frame to come out of this time period was the "moral majority," used to indicate that members of the Christian Right believed they were speaking on behalf of a majority of American citizens who were heavily invested in preserving the moral integrity of the nation (Green, 156). The Christian Right movement emerged during a time in which major changes had occurred in American society—the passage of civil rights legislation of the 1960s, the decision handed down in *Roe v. Wade* by the Supreme Court in 1973, and the emergence of the gay rights and women's movements. The Christian Right reacted to this political and social climate by framing America as in a state of moral decay, and framing the majority of Americans as uncomfortable with the current political climate. In this particular case, the reactive framing strategies employed by the Christian Right are in line with what was said earlier about countermovement development and counterframing tactics. The movement emerged in order to call for a return to the older America (the one that was not in a moral crisis). Additionally, the movement established its goals in opposition to the

many progressively minded rights groups who had dominated American political discourse for the previous fifteen years.

Gwyneth I. Williams and Rhys H. Williams, in their article about the discursive framing of the father's rights movement, argue that the movement emerged in response to the feminist inroads into policy and society that had resulted from the women's liberation movement (192). They assert that fathers detected bias in the court system with regard to custody laws, disproportionately favoring mothers because of the prevailing attitude that women were the primary care givers in a child's life. The father's rights movement was reactive in that it responded to the current political and social climate generated by the women's liberation movement in order to advocate for father's rights, which movement adherents saw as being eroded. Williams and Williams argue that countermovements adopt particular strategies and rhetoric employed by their opponents in order to offer a competing interpretation of the problem and appropriate solution (208). As the women's liberation movement rejected its gender-neutrality claim in favor of advocating for institutionalized mechanisms to level the playing field between men and women, the father's rights movement hijacked the gender neutrality rhetorical frame because it recognized that the frame still held widespread political and cultural salience. The father's rights movement then not only reacted against the women's liberation movement in its development, but it also recycled the proven-effective framing rhetoric of gender neutrality and impartiality in order to advance a potentially antithetical agenda.

In her article on the debate over a proposed constitutional amendment legalizing same-sex marriage in Hawaii, Kathleen Hull looks at the framing strategies employed by movement actors in favor of and opposed to the legislation. Interestingly, her article presents two distinct

social movement organizations (SMO), with oppositional goals (one to pass the amendment and the other to defeat it), which both end up using reactive framing strategies. Each SMO applied rhetorical framing that was relevant to the social and political climate; it just happened to be an incredibly polarized climate in Hawaii with regards to same-sex marriage. Hull contends that opponents of the same sex marriage ban employed a rights frame to emphasize the unconstitutionality of denying a particular group of people marriage on the grounds of sexual orientation (215). Furthermore, she argues that the Christian Right publicly rejected the rights frame to show that it was an incorrectly used frame since the true debate was about upholding the sanctity of traditional marriage. Hull's work suggests that multiple and structurally distinct reactive framing strategies can be used, particularly in politically volatile atmospheres.

Scott Davies, in his article about the debate in Ontario over government funding of religious schools, looks at the evolution of the framing strategies social movement actors employed in order to increase their movement's relevancy. He looks at how two religious groups in Ontario organized in order to pressure the government to fund non-Catholic private, religious schools (Davies, 3-4). He argues that after finding that rhetorical frames overtly based in notions of religious obligation failed to activate widespread mobilization, social movement actors employed different frames they judged as carrying political currency.³ The religious organizations instead argued from the frames of multicultural education and school choice in order to reflect contemporary interests and to mobilize the broadest constituencies possible around the issue. In order to employ the multicultural education frame, the social movement actors recast their religious identities as a minority in a secular, multicultural society (Davies, 8). They used the school choice frame by heavily emphasizing the parent's right to choose the best

³ Davies explains that Ontario schools are secular spaces by law (5).

possible education setting for their child (Davies, 9). This article by Davies, unlike the other three analyzed so far, demonstrates that reactive framing is not specifically attached to countermovement formation; rather it is about reacting to which framing strategies will carry the most weight in the given political and social conditions. It is worthwhile to note, however, that a movement can react to a political climate that has changed something for the worse, according to movement adherents, or that a movement can react to a continuing climate by testing and adopting new frames and employing new framing discourses.

PROACTIVE FRAMING PROCESSES

Proactive processes occur when a movement uses frames that are unknown to be, but hopefully become, culturally salient or relevant. Proactive processes are attached to the work of making meaning and connections where neither previously existed. In her article on the environmental justice frame, sociologist Stella Capek not only explores how one community was able to successfully employ the environmental justice frame, but also describes the emergence of an environmental racism frame because of the perceived discrimination involved in housing minority communities on or near contaminated sites, sometimes on false pretenses (21). The frame gave a name to, and made an issue of, a previously unidentified but definitely contentious housing development policy. The creation of the environmental racism component of the environmental justice frame signifies proactive framing in that it developed a new framing discourse that SMOs believed would activate targeted audiences.

In Doug McAdam's article exploring the use of dramaturgical and rhetorical tactics by Martin Luther King Jr. and his organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), McAdam points to specific new framing strategies employed by the SCLC in order to advance its agenda. McAdam believes that through combining Christian themes, the language of

democratic theory, and the ideals of nonviolent protest, King and the SCLC provided multiple points through which potential adherents could access the movement (i.e. a non-Christian might still be heavily interested in the continuation and fair application of democratic ideals) (126-27). King and the SCLC also, according to McAdam, chose strategically volatile locations in which to stage nonviolent protest—areas where the risk of retaliatory violence was high, as a tactic from which primarily positive media representation would result (127). By creating situations through which protestors could be seen nonviolently protesting and then being brutalized by police forces, King and the SCLC proactively maximized how the movement and its goal of equal rights was framed by the media.

In much the same way, Emily Kolker asserts that the breast cancer movement proactively framed its fight for an increase in federal research funding by maximally controlling what messages targeted groups, such as the media, received. According to Kolker, social movement actors were able to recharacterize breast cancer, turning it from a private women's problem into a major public health crisis. Activists employed three distinctly new rhetorical frames, "breast cancer as an epidemic, breast cancer as a problem of gender equity, and breast cancer as a threat to families," which were new constructions (141-42). Breast cancer activists proactively sought out new rhetorical frames in order to maximize their clout with decision makers and in order to gain favorable attention from the media.

These three examples of proactive framing processes illustrate how SMOs can take on previously unconnected frames and apply them to their movements in order to newly construct meaning. In a way, then, the proactive framing discussed above reflects a type of frame bridging. Another trend in proactive framing processes is the use of new frames in order to do identity work. By creating accessible identities and attaching them to movement goals, actors are able to

recruit membership on the premises of shared identity. In Green's (see pages 10-11) article on the emergence of the Christian Right, he acknowledges at least two distinct waves of framing processes. The first, the moral majority, was discussed earlier. In the second wave, the Christian Right used new discursive frames in order to do identity work. Activists constructed public identities for the Christian Right and movement adherents, identities such as the "pro-family movement" and "Christian Conservative" (Green, 159). Similarly, Ira Silver's article about boundary framing and a specific philanthropic organization in Chicago acknowledges that the organization was engaged in very heavy identity work based in constructing an image that opposed the identity of other philanthropic organizations and that espoused different ideals (495). Proactive framing processes thus include identity work by SMOs as well as newly employing rhetorical and tactical frames in order to achieve particular ends.

Conclusion

A divide has developed in frame analysis, one that locates movement success in terms of proactive or reactive framing. Many of the articles referenced above have analyzed framing strategies one-dimensionally by using limited and historically untethered case studies. In other words, scholars often pick out a particular movement to apply framing theory towards, without taking into sufficient account the external forces that work with and against the movement and its goals. Sociologist Kathleen Hull's article looking at framing in the debate over a proposed constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in Hawaii provides a rich example of a deviation from this norm. She looks at the framing strategies employed by both the Christian Right and the left in conversation with each other. While it remains unnamed in her text, by looking at both sides of a contentious issue she is able to identify how social movement actors employ, what I term, reactive and/or proactive framing strategies. Proactive framing strategies create new frames that

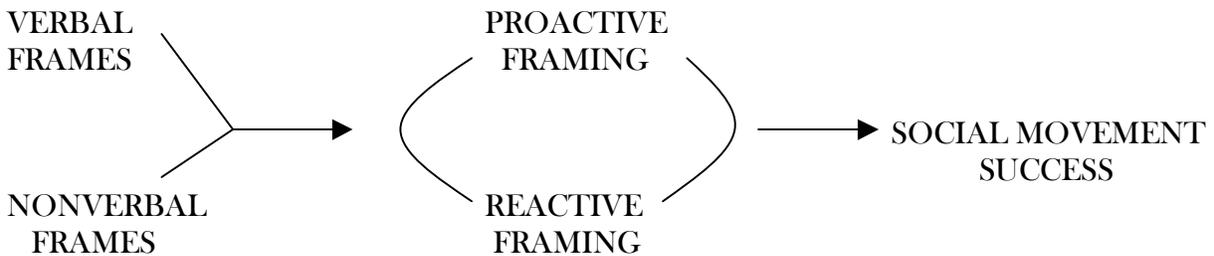
develop political and cultural saliency whereas reactive frames respond to what is already known to have political and cultural saliency. These distinctions emerge only when oppositional movements are looked at in conversation with each other.

The one-dimensionality of frame analysis has been further constrained by the overwhelming emphasis on discursive strategies in frame analysis. These scholars have conflated discursive strategies and meaning-making processes, failing to look at other types of frames that play into the work of social movement actors to advance their goals. Such limited scope has failed to take into account the ways in which images and sounds, in addition to words, influence meaning. The failure of scholars to look at the relationship between words, images, and sounds—or in other words verbal and nonverbal frames—as meaning-making entities has limited the scope of framing scholarship. It is necessary that framing be redefined to include both verbal *and* nonverbal frames, because both provide essential schemata of interpretation, to borrow Goffman's phrase, from which meaning can be derived.

Taking this definitional expansion into consideration, the rest of this thesis attempts to analyze the necessary relationship between proactive and reactive framing strategies as that relationship relates to movement success. In order to assess these dynamics I will look at the competing social movements around sex education in American schools.

Methodology

In order to fully answer how it is that social movement actors employ framing strategies to mobilize support and advance their policy agenda, it is imperative that the definition of frames be expanded to include both verbal and nonverbal frames.⁴ Furthermore, it is critical that oppositional movements be analyzed together in order to understand how meaning is created in such contexts. The model below illustrates this relationship:



In this model, verbal and nonverbal frames act as the independent variable. While I have proposed that the definition of frames—as they apply to framing theory—be changed to include both verbal and nonverbal frames, I have delineated both terms in the above model to further emphasize the importance of studying both in the process of frame analysis. The cyclical and ever-changing relationship between proactive and reactive framing strategies acts as an intervening variable. In order to more effectively measure how it is that social movement actors achieve their goals, movement frames can only be analyzed in conversation with the oppositional movement’s frames. Ultimately this model seeks to explain how social movement actors employ framing strategies to mobilize support and advance a particular policy agenda. With this in mind, social movement success—or meeting these goals—represents the dependent

⁴ As mentioned earlier, scholarly work has been done to delineate between framing the verb and frames the noun. For the purposes of this thesis *framing* will refer to the work of meaning construction, and *frame(s)* will refer to specific rhetorical ideas.

variable. Social movement success is intimately tied to how verbal and nonverbal frames are used by oppositional movements in conversation with each other.

The remainder of this thesis seeks to answer how it is that social movement actors employ framing strategies to mobilize support and achieve policy goals by examining the oppositional sides of the national sex education debate. In the early 1960s, when contemporary sex education movements began to gain traction in American society, local volatile debates popped up across the country and national-level organizations formed (Irvine, 8; 10; 18). As the topic of these debates shifted from whether or not sex education should be offered in schools to the type of curriculum that should be used, another aspect of the debates remained the same. Local debates—fueled by a small cohort of concerned parents—were, and continue to be, regularly supported and fed by national advocacy organizations (Irvine, 54). Thus, the role of national advocacy organizations in shaping local debates cannot be ignored.

Curricular decisions are generally made at the district level, igniting intense local debates over the content of sex education programming. In the fall of 2004, in Montgomery County, MD, a new comprehensive sex education curriculum was introduced by the county board of education. The proposed curriculum sparked a very public and wrought-out debate and court process that was settled in March of 2008 (Greenwell 2008). National advocacy organizations on either side quickly became involved—following the outcomes closely, providing supportive materials, and providing legal help on both sides of the battle (CWA 2005, radio). Analyzing the Montgomery County, MD debate presents an opportunity to study how advocates in favor of the comprehensive sexuality education curriculum and those against the curriculum framed

their concerns and how such work translated into success.⁵ The case study also presents the opportunity to examine how national-level organizations on both sides of the sex education debate monitor and involve themselves in local-level battles.

Since the early 1980s, in addition to their involvement in local sex education debates, national advocacy organizations have directed their goals toward influencing federal policy. In 1982, then-President Ronald Regan signed into law the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA; Title XX of the Public Health Service Act), the first federal stream of funding for a particular brand of sexuality education, abstinence-only education (Irvine, 88).⁶ Since then other legislative measures have been passed and introduced with the support of advocacy organizations from either side of the debate. Between 2001 and 2008, the abstinence-only sex education movement was able to work with then-President Bush to introduce a third, and the largest to date, federal funding stream (a second was passed as part of welfare reform under the Clinton administration) for abstinence only-education through the Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) Program. During that same period, advocates for comprehensive sexuality education worked with legislators to introduce the first federal bill that would provide funding support for comprehensive sex education curriculum implementation. How exactly have these national-level advocacy organizations been framing the sex education debate in ways that have yielded dramatically different policy outcomes? Are these outcomes in line, or in tension, with public opinion about sex education curricula? By analyzing the work of advocacy organizations at the federal level between 2001 and 2008, the connection between frames and movement success can be further investigated.

⁵ Success is measured in terms of how well public support has been mobilized and whether or not a movement has found policy success (through curricular implementation or passed legislation).

⁶ The implications of this act are further explored in my Background section.

Both of these case studies serve to shed light on the connection between framing strategies and movement success. For the purposes of this text, movement success is defined as mobilizing public support and advancing a policy agenda (through curricular implementation or through legislative gains). I will measure public support through an analysis of nationally conducted public opinion polls and policy success through an evaluation of what curriculum was implemented in Montgomery County, MD and what legislative work has been done at the national level. While these are not immediately comparable studies in that one looks at a local level debate while the other investigates national level work, both ultimately work together to provide a glimpse into how it is that national level advocacy organizations on both sides of the sex education debate have used frames in order to advance their movement goals. In order to minimize the differences between these case studies, I have standardized my data collection and analysis process.

To look at verbal and nonverbal frames, I will use the Internet Archive to examine the content and layout of the webpages of national advocacy organizations from 2001 to 2008.⁷ Because a couple of local level organizations emerged during the Montgomery County, MD debate, I will also look at the layout and content of their webpages. Through this process I will be able to track how these organizations have treated contentious issues on their webpages by evaluating the language used to describe a particular event or idea, the placement of information on the website, the use of bold-faced font or capital letters to signify importance, and what images on the webpage depict. I will also look for the use of multimedia content—radio broadcasts and online videos to examine how particular messages are discussed (paying attention to intonation).

⁷ The Internet Archive is a non-profit organization dedicated to “building a digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artifacts in digital form,” (<http://www.archive.org/index.php>).

In order to evaluate how discursive frames are used in conversation with each other, I will look for particular trends in the language employed by each side of the sex education debate. I will look at press releases, policy reports, and research documents released by advocacy organizations between 2001 and 2008 for repeated language choices. I will look at the use of qualifiers, particularly “pro-“ and “anti-,” in order to evaluate how advocacy organizations frame their goals and identity in conversation with the opposing side (i.e. pro- versus anti-family, pro- versus anti-choice). I will also document if an intended audience is specified by the use of language (appeals to parents, policy makers, or adolescents for example). Finally, I will evaluate how particular words are used to signify information as warranting an emotion-based response.

To gain insight into public opinion regarding sex education between 2001 and 2008, I will use the internet databases iPOLL and Polling the Nations.⁸ Because the surveys and polls within these databases have been conducted by partisan and nonpartisan entities, I will be able to see whether or not standard language is used across the board or if the language reflects language used by a particular side of the sex education debate. Furthermore, the polling results will prove useful for my investigation into the work of national level advocacy organizations to impact the policy agenda at the federal level. Polling data will reveal connections or discrepancies between national public opinion and federal policy-making.

Finally, in order to gain historical perspective about the events in Montgomery County and work at the national level I will look to news articles in national newspapers (such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*). Taken together, these research methods will yield a fruitful analysis of the usage of verbal and nonverbal frames and how such usage has translated into movement success or failure.

⁸ Both iPOLL and Polling the Nations are internet databases that have vast collections of survey data collected by partisan and nonpartisan organizations.

Background

The contemporary sex education movements began in earnest in the 1960s. In 1964, an article in *Time* magazine announced that America was in the midst of a sexual revolution (Irvine, 19). Also in 1964, the first and only national advocacy organization for comprehensive sexuality education was created with the establishment of the Sexuality information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) (Irvine, 6). Dr. Mary S. Calderone founded SIECUS in order to respond to what she perceived as a serious lack of accessible, accurate information about human sexuality. While SIECUS became and remains the loudest advocate for access to information about sex, it was not the first organization to call for the implementation of a sex and sexual health education curriculum. The origins of sex education date back several decades earlier to the progressive era. From 1880 to 1920, while American industrialization was in full swing, the progressive party came to be a major political player. In response to the presence of prostitution in large and small cities alike, and the alarming and rising rates of syphilis in America, progressives called for the earliest brand of sex education in the form of social hygiene lessons in the classroom (Luker, 41). In so doing they created the lasting expectation that teaching sexual norms and deviant sexual behavior could fall within the domain of the classroom.

This expectation was seriously challenged in the late 1960s. As Janie Irvine writes in her comprehensive book about how the Christian Right mobilized successfully against sex education, “During 1968 and 1969, at least forty states were snarled in sex education controversies and approximately twenty considered or implemented legislation regulating sex education,” (35). Overwhelmingly these debates were being supported by the conservative organizations that would come to be the voices of the new Christian Right (Irvine, 35). As both

Irvine, and sociologist Kristin Luker, point out, while part of the nation embraced the messages and ideals of the sexual revolution, another cohort found the ambiguous emerging sexual trends to be disorienting at the least and a major moral breakdown at the most (Irvine, 34, 36; Luker, 8). As a result, several politically and religiously conservative organizations formed to challenge the expectation of sex education in schools and other perceived threats to moral decency.

Irvine explains that sex education was only one of several issues taken on by the emerging Christian Right. “A conservative ethos nurtured the proliferation of single-issue oppositional groups in the United States in the sixties,” (41). Sex education debates were particularly powerful, however, because early advocates successfully employed a politics of morality that resonated with broader cultural fears about depravity in American society (41). These early groups emerged at a politically significant time in which the divisions between religion and public education were being made explicit through federal politics and policies. The move of the government towards secularization, coupled with a rapid change in sexual norms and attitudes, quickly mobilized the new Christian Right. During these debates, Irvine argues, the advocacy organizations of the Christian Right identified an effective way to tackle the comprehensive sexuality education movement; “constituencies could be mobilized by strategic discourse which fostered the stigmatization of various social groups and sexual activities,” including using “languages and images of danger and shame available in the broader sexual culture and [making] them specific to debates over sex education,” (43, 49). From early on, opponents of sex education hijacked the language of the movement.

Perhaps one of the most notable aspects of the sex education debates of the past several decades is the fact that from the onset, national-level organizations supported local-level debates. Irvine argues that these national organizations created national scripts that were

repeated in local debates (10). By attaching the debate against sex education to morality language, the Christian Right effectively limited how much sex education advocates could say in support of their side. Advocates could be, and were, quickly cast “as sexually troubled, out of control, or perverted,” within the context of acceptable morality that was defined by the Christian Right (Irvine, 58). Such ideas proved particularly effective in mobilizing citizen action in the late 1960s, so much so that by the end of the decade sex education debates had occurred in local communities all over the nation. The results of such debates were mixed; some programs were dismantled, other continued and sometimes even expanded their messaging. According to Irvine, both movements ultimately found successes and failures during the 1960s, but a lasting division about sex education in American schools had been established (60-62). As conservative activists continued to look for policy success and public support in subsequent decades, their message shifted from whether or not sex education should fall in the domain of schools to what kind of messaging would provide the foundation of such programming (Irvine, 12; Luker, 30). The sex education advocated by the Christian Right quickly became known as abstinence-only education (also referred to as abstinence-only-until-marriage education). Importantly, claiming support for abstinence-only education did not diminish the Christian Right’s morality claims. Instead the movement found success arguing that “abstinence until marriage is the only acceptable choice because it is the only moral choice leaving little room for discussion or compromise on the context of sex education,” (Doan and Williams, 11). By linking abstinence to traditional marriage, the abstinence-only-until-marriage stance excluded discussions about sexual minorities who did not have access to marriage rights.

The 1970s saw the re-imaging of the Christian Right, by advocates within, as the pro-family movement. Under the pro-family umbrella fell issues such as “abortion, the Equal Rights

Amendment, pornography, sex education, and homosexuality,” (Irvine, 66). Sex education, in many ways, offered the opportunity to bundle most of their stances on these social issues and deliver them to students in schools. The pro-family movement has always been adamantly pro-life, adamantly against gay marriage, adamantly unbelieving in homosexuality as a genetic trait, and adamantly committed to abstinence. Abstinence-only education became the mechanism through which to reinstalled traditional conceptions of marriage and to prevent the societal ills of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases that could lead to abortion, or that pro-family advocates believed were caused by same-sex practices. On this range of social issues the pro-family movement regularly used the language of morality they had found to be so effective in the 1960s.

From the movements’ origins, each side used very different language to support their positions and to press for public and policy support. According to Political Scientists Alesha Doan and Jean Williams, “Opponents of abstinence-only education primarily base their arguments on public health issues and draw on scientific studies from a variety of disciplines that link comprehensive sexuality education to positive health indicators. The pro-abstinence-only coalition uses morality as the foundation for its support,” also referencing research conducted in-house (Doan and Williams, 12-13). Irvine argues that the use of morality as the foundational argument of the abstinence-only movement severely constrained what and how much comprehensive sexuality education advocates could say in favor of their movement (12). Furthermore, the abstinence-only movement and organizational support for the movement grew at a rate that far outpaced similar growth in the infrastructure of the comprehensive sexuality education movement. While the abstinence-only movement developed conservative think tanks and research institutes, the comprehensive sexuality education movement increased

its “advocacy and social service programs,” (Irvine, 70). Such discrepancies in institutional growth are reflected in the fact that:

“There are over two dozen large national organizations that oppose comprehensive sex education, such as the Eagle Forum, Focus on the Family, and Concerned Women for America... SIECUS, on the other hand, is the only single-issue, pro-comprehensive sex education national organization... Opponents of comprehensive sex education, moreover, have far greater financial resources available to them. For example, one Christian Right national organization, Focus on the Family, has an annual budget over \$110 million and broadcasts a daily radio show on fifteen hundred stations in North America. In 1999, SIECUS’s budget was not quite \$2 million.” (Irvine, 70-71)

During the 1970s, the abstinence-only movement vastly grew its political and financial resources and became a major player in national and local level politics.

Beyond the use of language couched in morality, abstinence-only advocates regularly used their messaging to exacerbate social fears. The 1970s continued to be a time of major changes in terms of societal values concerning sex. The 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in *Roe v. Wade* was perceived as posing a major threat to the traditional family by Christian Right activists. Furthermore, the increasing availability of birth control provided a second mechanism through which sexual activity could be redefined. As Luker notes about the increased access to birth control, “Between 1964 and 1975, sex became possible for millions of women in the way it always had been possible for men, as something you did when you wanted to, because you wanted to, for its own sake,” (73). While comprehensive sex education advocates hailed this increased access to information and resources as a success, the Christian Right pro-family movement saw the legalization of abortion and the availability of birth control as major threats to traditional values about the nature and purposes of sex.

In response to the legalization of abortion in the *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Christian Right, pro-family, abstinence-only coalition of organizations pushed for federal support of their morality-based agenda. In 1982, with the passage of the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA),

their goals came to fruition. Established in order to respond to rising rates of teen pregnancy across America, AFLA represented the Christian Right's "conspicuous attempt to shift the discourse on the prevention of teenage pregnancy away from contraception and instead to 'chastity' or 'morality,'" (Irvine, 90). AFLA, as Irvine points out, was a staunchly anti-abortion piece of legislation that intended to prevent teen sex through morality messaging, and encouraged pregnant teens to avoid abortion by instead carrying the fetus to term and then putting the baby up for adoption (92). Comprehensive sexuality education advocates, however, saw the passage of AFLA as state legitimization of particular sexual values (Irvine, 92).

In addition to playing into the fear produced by the erosion of traditional attitudes towards sexual activity, during the 1970s and 1980s abstinence-only advocates surreptitiously appealed to the racial fears of potential movement supporters. By the 1970s, explicit claims about racialized sexual violence were not supported in mainstream American culture. Overt racism was replaced by a more stealth form; what Sociologist Amy Ansell terms as the Christian Right's "new racism" (Irvine, 154). As Irvine explains, "The 'new racism' of the Right, now waged in four arenas of the culture wars—immigration, affirmative action, welfare, and traditional values—allows the movement to fight seemingly race-neutral battles while at the same time attempting to dismantle programs in the name of racial justice," (154). Luker points to the fact that by the late 1980s there was virtually no difference in premarital sex rates for black and white youth across the country (66).

Doan and Williams claim that the second piece of federal legislation espousing a particular brand of sex education was based in racial undertones (15). Title V of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA), the major welfare reform bill passed under the Clinton Administration in 1996, furthered the policy goals of the abstinence-only

movement by creating a federal funding stream for abstinence-only education programs. Title V is largely considered to have been a concession to the Republican-controlled Congress by a Democratic President, but it was no small piece of legislation. Title V created a \$250 million pool of money to be doled out to states for abstinence-education programming over a five-year period (Doan and Williams, 15). Attaching Title V to welfare reform legislation, however, spoke to racially motivated perceptions of American culture and potentially unfair characterizations of welfare recipients. As Doan and Williams explain,

“Black women, in particular, are socially constructed as having an ‘excessive and corrupted sexuality,’ which extends to the construction of African American teens as sexually experienced and uncontrollable. When racial stereotypes dovetail with perceptions of welfare ‘abuse’ and ‘dependency,’ it is often young black women who get defined as ‘welfare queens,’” (38).

Title V not only provided more federal monies for abstinence-only education programming, its passage as part of welfare reform also reinforced culturally perceived connections between race and sexual activity and deviancy.

In addition to federal policy work during the 1980s and 1990s, national advocacy groups also launched a number of public support campaigns. The abstinence-only movement had created over 20 curricula that were made commercially available to schools by the end of the 20th century (Irvine, 102). Furthermore, abstinence messaging popped up on conservative merchandise including, “Passion 4 Purity rings, True Love Waits pendants, Don’t be a Sucker lollipops, and Sexless in Seattle nightshirts,” (Irvine, 103). Not only did the Christian Right find policy success, but they also launched a major marketing campaign to make abstinence appealing to adolescents. At the same time, comprehensive sexuality education advocates released several reports evaluating and stressing the unproven and ineffective nature of abstinence-only curricula in delaying sexual activity (Irvine, 118). As the comprehensive sex education movement again relied on public health reports and scientific evidence to dispute

the legitimacy of abstinence-only curricula, their opponents continued to grow their resources for parents, educators, and adolescents while also finding federal policy success.

The history of the sex education movements is dominated by the work of the abstinence-only movement. Advocates for comprehensive sexuality education have called for increased access to information so that informed choices regarding sexuality and sexual activity can be made from the very beginning of the movement. The abstinence-only cohort, however, has relied on language couched in terms of morality and fear, and has thus dominated the local and national debates over sex education for the past several decades. Despite the policy success generated by the abstinence-only movement, public support for comprehensive sexuality education has remained relatively high since the 1960s. How are these tensions between public support and policy-making reflected in, and contributed to by, the framing strategies employed by the abstinence-only and comprehensive sex education movements?

National Level Advocacy

Between 2001 and 2008 federal funding allocations for abstinence-only education increased significantly. During this period, Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) introduced the Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act— which promotes funding for comprehensive sexuality education programs— in Congress on two separate occasions, but it stalled in committee both times. As advocates for abstinence-only sex education found policy success and advocates for comprehensive sexuality education did not, several polls revealing that parents overwhelmingly supported comprehensive sexuality education were released by national organizations—the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, National Public Radio, and the National Opinion Research Center among them. In order to analyze the connection between framing strategies and movement success against this seemingly contradictory backdrop, I looked at the websites of three different advocacy organizations between 2001 and 2008. Two of the organizations, the National Abstinence Clearinghouse and Concerned Women for America, are staunch advocates of abstinence-only sex education. The third organization, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS), advocates for comprehensive sexuality education.

What follows is a synthesis of polling data collected between 2001 and 2008 by various partisan and nonpartisan organizations, data from legislative histories and other congressional documents, and my analysis of the use of frames in conversation with each other on the three advocacy websites indicated above. Taken together this data provides a glimpse into the correlations and cleavages between public support, policy success, and the use of frames by advocacy organizations.

Context: Public Opinion Regarding Sex Education

According to a biannual social indicators survey conducted by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, in 2002, 2004, and 2006, nearly 90% of Americans answered that they were for "sex education in public schools" (National Opinion Research Center, iPOLL Databank). Considerable discrepancies exist in polling data conducted by other organizations, however, when survey questions delve into the specifics of abstinence-only versus comprehensive sex education.

A 2005 survey by Religion and Ethic Newsweekly, a program of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), found that 77 percent of adults surveyed stated that their views about sex education were either in line with the statement, "Abstinence from sexual intercourse is best for teens, but some teens do not abstain, so sex ed classes should provide information about condoms and other contraception," or, "Abstinence from sexual intercourse is not the most important thing. Sex ed classes should focus on teaching teens how to make responsible decisions about sex," while 18 percent of respondents believed that abstinence should be the only message delivered in sex education classrooms (Religion and Ethics Newsweekly and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, iPOLL Databank). A 2004 survey conducted by Research!America and the American Public Health Association asked a national sample of adults whether or not they thought that "the abstinence-only approach [would] prevent sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies;" 56 percent of respondents said no (Research!America and APHA, iPOLL Databank). Another 2004 survey conducted by National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government found 93 percent of parents support sex education being taught in schools (NPR

2004). The survey also found that even though discrepancies existed over the type of the curriculum,

Fifteen percent of Americans believe that schools should teach only about abstinence from sexual intercourse and should not provide information on how to obtain and use condoms and other contraception. A plurality (46 percent) believes that the most appropriate approach is one that might be called "abstinence-plus" -- that while abstinence is best, some teens do not abstain, so schools also should teach about condoms and contraception. Thirty-six percent believe that abstinence is not the most important thing, and that sex ed should focus on teaching teens how to make responsible decisions about sex (NPR 2004).

In contrast, a 2007 survey commissioned by the National Abstinence Education Association found that “when parents become aware of what abstinence education vs. comprehensive sex education actually teaches, support for abstinence programs jumps from 40% to 60%, while support for comprehensive programs drops from 50% to 30%,” (NAEA 2007). Importantly, this is the only polling data to show not only a marked increase in parental support of abstinence-only education, but also a significant decrease in support for comprehensive sexuality education from the time period, and it also happened to be a survey commissioned by a self-identified pro-abstinence education organization. Generally, however, beyond those polls carried out by advocates of abstinence-only sex education, survey data collected between 2001 and 2008 indicates that adults did not see abstinence-only curricula as the most effective messaging for adolescents. Data about public opinion reveals that Americans have supported comprehensive sexuality education, so why has policy implementation at the federal level been lopsided in favor of abstinence-only education?

Context: Federal Funding of Sex Education

Since 1982, three separate federal funding streams have been created for abstinence-only education and yet not one exists for comprehensive sexuality education. As mentioned earlier, the 1982 passage of the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) marked the first federal

Fiscal Year	Funding Allotment
2002	\$40 million
2003	\$55 million
2004	\$75 million
2005	\$103 million
2006	\$115 million
2007	\$113 million

funding allotment for a particular brand of sex education messaging. The creation of a second federal funding stream occurred as part of Title V of the **Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act**, the welfare reform act enacted into law during the Clinton administration. Title V funding “provided a five-year, \$250 million grant

for abstinence-only sex education” and was extended in 2002 (Doan and Williams, 15; 40). The funds are doled out to states if they agree to match \$3 to every \$4 provided by the federal government for programs that reflect part or all of the government-provided definition of abstinence education (Doan and Williams, 40).⁹

Both the AFLA and Title V funding amounts pale in comparison to the third funding avenue that was created in fiscal year 2001, the **Community Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) Program**. CBAE also contains the most stringent guidelines of the three funding streams regarding curriculum content by requiring that program materials address all eight

⁹ From Title V of PRWORA: “For purposes of this section, the term ‘abstinence education’ means an educational or motivational program which—

(A) Have as its exclusive purpose teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity

(B) Teach abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children

(C) Teach that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems

(D) Teach that a mutually faithful, monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of sexual activity

(E) Teach that sexual activity outside the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects

(F) Teach that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child’s parents, and society

(G) Teach young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increases vulnerability to sexual advances

(H) Teach the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.” (Doan and Williams, 39)

components of the government-provided definition of abstinence (Doan and Williams, 41). Furthermore, grant money received through CBAE does not pass through the state but rather goes straight to grantees, including community-based organizations (Doan and Williams, 41). In FY2001, CBAE allotment funds totaled \$20 million. Over the next six years the available funding through CBAE increased by near \$100 million (Doan and Williams, 42; Swindell, CQ Weekly).

While funding levels for abstinence-only education continued to grow between 2001 and 2008, no federal funding channel surfaced for comprehensive sex education curricula. In 2005, Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) introduced in the House of Representatives, with 143 cosponsors three of which were Republican, the Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act which intended to provide “grants to states for family life education, including education on abstinence and contraception, to prevent teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases,” (REAL Act (HR 2553) 2005, LexisNexis Congressional). Importantly the REAL Act would have created a substantively different list of criteria for potential grantees to meet than those stipulated under AFLA. The nine-point definition read as follows:

For purposes of this Act, a program of family life education is a program that—

- (1) is age appropriate and medically accurate;
- (2) does not teach or promote religion;
- (3) teaches that abstinence is the only sure way to avoid pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases;
- (4) stresses the value of abstinence while not ignoring those young people who have had or are having sexual intercourse;
- (5) provides information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives and barrier methods as a means to prevent pregnancy;
- (6) provides information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives and barrier methods as a means to reduce the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS;
- (7) encourages family communication about sexuality between parent and child;
- (8) teaches young people the skills to make responsible decisions about sexuality, including how to avoid unwanted verbal, physical, and sexual advances and how not to make unwanted verbal, physical, and sexual advances; and
- (9) teaches young people how alcohol and drugs can effect responsible decisionmaking (REAL Act (HR 2553) 2005, LexisNexis Congressional).

The legislation, which would have created a federal funding stream to support comprehensive sexuality education, was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce where it died (REAL Act (HR 2553) 2005, LexisNexis Congressional). Representative Lee introduced the REAL Act again in 2007, and Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) introduced it to the Senate with 15 cosponsors, but again the bill was not passed (REAL Act (HR 1653) 2008; REAL Act (S 972), LexisNexis Congressional). While comprehensive sex education advocates had not been able to work with legislators to implement a funding mechanism, as of July 2008 they were celebrating the decisions of 25 states to end their participation in receiving Title V abstinence program funding (SIECUS 2008).

As CBAE funding allocations grew steadily between 2001 and 2008, as the REAL Act met its end two separate times, and as nationally conducted surveys indicated widespread support for abstinence *and* contraception messaging in health curricula, how were advocacy organizations on both sides of the debate working to advance their movement's goals? How were CWA and AC framing their successes, failures, goals, and missions in comparison to SIECUS?

Analysis: Proactive and Reactive Framing

Between 2001 and 2008—as public support for comprehensive sexuality education hovered near 80 percent and the abstinence-only movement continued to make policy inroads—how were national advocacy organizations on each side of the sex education debate representing themselves, their constituencies, and their goals? How were organizations such as Concerned Women for America (CWA), the Abstinence Clearinghouse (AC), and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) responding to—and establishing—the

political and cultural climates of that time period? By looking at each organization's website between 2001 and 2008, I analyzed the various frames employed by each advocacy group and how those frames acted in tension or agreement with the opposition and the more general cultural and political landscapes of the time period to create meaning.¹⁰

In 2001, the AC (the organization dropped "national" in 2004) website featured a drawing of a fairly large, two-story brick building evocative of a school with a large sign in front bearing the organization's logo. Above the image its mission statement read: "To promote the appreciation for and practice of sexual abstinence (purity) until marriage through the distribution of age appropriate materials" (AC 2001, Internet Archive). By linking "sexual abstinence" with "purity," the AC was able to establish that sexual activity is impure and, ostensibly, immoral. By extension, and by referencing a major tactic of the abstinence-only movement to paint issues in strict terms of moral versus immoral and right versus wrong, advocacy organizations that fail to promote a strictly abstinence stance produce messaging that is morally defunct. Under the AC's Resource Center link is information about its ASK! (Abstinence Survival Kit), a program for community action. In describing the ASK!, the AC directly explains that the materials in it are intended to provide community-based advocates with the information they need to dismantle or stave off comprehensive sex education: "Not only will you be able to respond to arguments against abstinence-until-marriage education, you'll learn the philosophy of abstinence education versus that of comprehensive sex education" (AC 2001, Internet Archive).

¹⁰ In order to standardize the process I looked at one archived image of the CWA, AC, and SIECUS websites for each year. The archived image came from between January and March of that year and was largely determined by availability of images in the Internet Archive. As much as possible, I referenced archived pages from the same day of each year. There were no archived images of the SIECUS website for 2008.

The 2001 SIECUS website does not address the oppositional side as directly as the AC website. The SIECUS homepage contains eight different buttons, each with an image on them and the intended audience printed beneath. These buttons provide links to separate pages for the school health education clearinghouse, library and information services, parents and caregivers, teenagers, international information, the media, religious institutions, and policy makers and advocates (SIECUS 2001, Internet Archive). While the AC logo depicts a fairly modern school building, SIECUS's button for the School Health Education Clearinghouse pictured a one-room schoolhouse (SIECUS 2001, Internet Archive). Interestingly, Sociologist Kristin Luker points out in her book, *When Sex Goes to School: Warring Views on Sex—and Sex Education—Since the Sixties*, abstinence-only activists are generally motivated by their desire to return to a simpler (pre-sexual revolution) time, a time that might be better represented by the one-room school house (Luker, 10). Perhaps the AC and SIECUS both used counterintuitive representations of schools to depict their movement's relevancy in diverse environments. The comprehensive sex education message is neither deeply radical nor impure when viewed in the confines of a one-room schoolhouse. And perhaps abstinence-only education is not seen as antiquated or out-of-touch when imagined in a thoroughly modern school. AC and SIECUS then both use images to frame their identities in ways that buffer against potential or explicit critiques.

Most notable of the 2002 websites were the changes to the AC's webpage. The upper-half of the webpage featured, in addition to the AC's logo and mission statement, a large picture of a white heterosexual couple walking along the beach. The text in large bold font next to the couple read, "Safe Sex is a Deadly Game," and below that said, "Safe sex is a deadly game. Saved sex until marriage is a healthy choice," (AC 2002, Internet Archive). This image takes

one of the messages of comprehensive sexuality education—that if engaging in sexual activity, use protection and be safe—and equates it with gambling on life. Such messaging works to reinforce the argument of abstinence-only advocates that the only way to truly be safe is to fully abstain from sexual activity. By juxtaposing a serene image of a couple walking along a beach with the notion of early death, the AC website plays into fears about the spread of sexually transmitted diseases that accompanies sexual deviance. Also noteworthy about the 2002 AC website were new links including a “Teacher’s Lounge,” “Parent’s Corner,” and “Teen Café” in addition to their resources, medical information, and news and events links (AC 2002, Internet Archive). The edited link selection more closely reflected those groups targeted by the buttons on the SIECUS website. By mimicking SIECUS’s targeted groups, AC created competitive resource pages.

2003 marked the 30th Anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, a landmark that was reflected on both CWA’s and SIECUS’s websites. SIECUS’s top news story explicitly called for the 30th Anniversary of the decision to be “honored” (their language) by increasing access to abortion services (SIECUS 2003, Internet Archive). In contrast, the upper half of CWA’s website was dedicated almost exclusively to the organization’s self-identified pro-life stance. A banner ad at the top of the page featured a picture of a sleeping baby as the text next to the picture changed to eventually read, “In 1973 the Supreme Court cut the cord...On January 22 Concerned Women for America Marched for Life,” (CWA 2003, Internet Archive). Luker points out that the pro-life message is regularly folded into abstinence-only curricula by presenting the notion “that abortions can and do leave lasting emotional effects on people” (30). CWA’s website taps into these potential emotional scars through two images posted on their site—one of an ultrasound picture of a baby that was run as part of their I am an American ad

campaign, and the other of a small but intense image of a baby being aborted by a doctor (CWA 2003, Internet Archive). While the connection is not explicitly stated, the graphic images on the CWA website as well as the disconnected-too-soon message derived from the idea of “cutting the cord” foster the same sense of uneasiness and emotional strain caused by abortion that is directly spoken of in several abstinence-only curricula.

Also in 2003, a survey commissioned by the Coalition for Adolescent Sexual Health (comprised of the Christian Coalition of America, Focus on the Family, the National Abstinence Clearinghouse, and Concerned Women for America) revealed new information about levels of parental support for abstinence-only versus comprehensive sexuality education (Schemo 2003). The primary result of this survey, which was conducted by the group Zogby International, was the top story on the AC’s website. In bold, extra large font, the website declared that “Parents overwhelmingly oppose sex education, support abstinence education” (AC 2003, Internet Archive). Such prominent placement of the results on the AC’s webpage, along with the decision to use extra large and bold font, indicates that the organization saw spreading these poll results as their number one priority in achieving movement goals. By referencing parental preferences, the AC also covertly indicated that support for comprehensive sex education by school boards and districts or by lawmakers would create situations where a vast majority of parents’ wishes would be undermined by unpopular curricular decisions.

In 2004, then-President Bush addressed his sex education plans during his State of the Union Address.

To encourage right choices, we must be willing to confront the dangers young people face—even when they're difficult to talk about. Each year, about 3 million teenagers contract sexually transmitted diseases that can harm them, or kill them, or prevent them from ever becoming parents. In my budget, I propose a grassroots campaign to help inform families about these medical risks. We will double federal funding for abstinence programs, so schools can teach this fact of life: Abstinence for young people is the only certain way to avoid sexually-transmitted diseases (Bush 2004).

The AC website reported, in large, bold font, “State of the Union Address Reinforces Abstinence Message,” and flanked the news article with a reiteration of the results of the Zogby International survey, a headline reading “Sex Education Failed—Not Abstinence Education,” and the information that government spending on contraception programs exceeded spending on abstinence education programs by a 12 to 1 margin (AC 2004, Internet Archive). Much of the AC website was taken up, however, by a large advertisement inviting site visitors to sign up to attend the Abstinence Clearinghouse National Conference in Nashville, TN. The advertisement featured a large picture of a guitar and the text, “join the voices of abstinence education,” (AC 2004, Internet Archive). Bush spoke at the conference, and the AC website continued, through 2008, to promote its link to a video feed of his speech at the event.

SIECUS responded to the State of the Union promise to double federal funding for abstinence programming, as well as the results from the 2003 Zogby International survey, by altering its language. References to abstinence-only-until-marriage education programming and funding were preceded by the word “unproven.” Furthermore, the top fact sheet on the SIECUS website in 2004 was called “The Truth About Sexuality” (SIECUS 2004, Internet Archive). Such language choices reiterated SIECUS’s longstanding commitment to the dissemination of accurate information about sexuality, sexual health, and sexual rights. By referencing the “unproven” effectiveness of abstinence programming while simultaneously indicating that SIECUS resources provided “the truth,” it framed the opposition as misleading and wrong while reinforcing its commitment to the rights of people to have access to accurate information. On SIECUS’s 2005 website, it referred to abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula as “fear-based,” and one of the top headlines on their 2006 site was “How medical inaccuracies, fear and shame in federally funded abstinence-only-until-marriage programs put our youth at

risk,” both of which furthered their rhetorical work to cast the opposition’s position as one based in (potentially dangerous) misinformation (SIECUS 2005; 2006, Internet Archive). Interestingly, the top information on the SIECUS website was their announcement of the March for Women’s Lives, spurred by the organization’s commitment to reproductive rights (SIECUS 2004, Internet Archive). The march came on the heels of CWA’s 2003 March for Life indicating that the event was designed, and advertised by SIECUS, in response to the success of the March for Life.

Between 2004 and 2005 CWA’s website began to feature a significant number of scare quoted words. Scare quotes are used to bring a reader’s attention to a particular word or phrase, “[especially] with the intention of disassociating the user from the expression or from some implied connotation it carries (Oxford English Dictionary). Frequently, scare quotes are used to question the validity of a particular word or phrase. The scare quoted words on CWA’s website included “nontraditional families,” “gay marriage,” “rights” (within the context of same-sex marriage), and “protection” (in reference to condoms) (CWA 2004; 2005, Internet Archive). By placing scare quotes—which are primarily used to indicate irony or humor—around these buzzwords, CWA invited site visitors to think of these topics as ridiculous and illegitimate. By extension, organizations that espouse these ideas (equal marriage rights, condoms as offering protection, etc.) became ridiculous and illegitimate. Such work was similar to SIECUS’s use of words and phrases to paint the opposition as misleading and incorrect. While SIECUS used words to appeal to sensibility, CWA used the visual impact of scare quotes to appeal to emotions.

In 2006, CWA added a secondary rhetorical strategy to augment their use of scare quotes. Several articles on their website referred to particular “claims” being made by the

opposition (or at least those with opposing viewpoints). One article headline read, “What Your Teacher Didn’t Tell You About Abstinence,” which was followed by, “From the media to the classroom, teens today are constantly being inundated with ‘safe sex’ claims,” (CWA 2006, Internet Archive). Another headline said, “Born or Bred? Science Does Not Support the Claim that Homosexuality is Genetic,” later referring to science in scare quotes (CWA 2006, Internet Archive). A claim is considered to be an unsupported and potentially untruthful statement. By taking those beliefs that comprehensive sexuality education advocates disseminated as truths, the CWA used the word “claim” to characterize them as unsupported and wrong. Such language work could have seriously undermined SIECUS’s strategy of using similar language to question the validity of their opponent’s messaging. 2006 also saw the CWA website and SIECUS’s website advocating directly oppositional opinions regarding a current political topic for the second time. One of the top news stories on SIECUS’s website announced, “SIECUS calls for Senate to reject president Bush’s Nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court,” (SIECUS 2006, Internet Archive). The banner ad for CWA’s website read, conversely, “A+ for Alito,” (CWA 2006, Internet Archive). Their media section also has images from and a link to a CWA press conference held in support of Alito (CWA 2006, Internet Archive).

The 2007 and 2008 websites for the three organizations provided little material for new analysis. The only website to take on the introduction of the REAL Act in the House of Representatives and in the Senate in 2007 was the AC website. On their new blog forum, the AC had an article presenting the introduction of the REAL Act as an “attack” on abstinence education (AC 2007, Internet Archive). The 2008 CWA website again addressed the *Roe v. Wade* decision, calling it “the greatest constitutional blunder of our time,” (CWA 2008,

Internet Archive). CWA's attention to the Supreme Court decision was in anticipation of its 35th anniversary. While the CWA website did not feature anything explicitly dealing with the content of sex education curricula, their publicized opinions about the boundaries of marriage, the legality of abortion, and the legitimacy of homosexuality reflected the organization's aversion to and disagreement with some of the core parts of comprehensive sexuality education.

Connections and Divergences: Frames and Movement Success

The above analysis of the frames employed by three different advocacy organizations falling on different sides of the sex education debate reveals how these organizations used words and images on their websites to create and reinforce opinions about their own goals and about the opposition. Earlier I described the climate in which these frames were being activated.

Between 2001 and 2008 public opinion polls generally revealed public support for comprehensive sexuality education. At the same time, the largest federal funding stream for abstinence-only education was created in 2001 and continued to expand through 2008. How were these potentially contradictory outcomes treated by advocacy organizations during that time period? What connections can be drawn between the frames employed by these advocacy organizations and their respective movement outcomes?

The AC and CWA, while both committed to abstinence-only education programming, represent two very different types of organizations—the AC has billed itself as an organization that connects people with and through abstinence since 2005 and is singularly committed to advocating and providing resources for abstinence-only education, while CWA has taken on abstinence-only education as only one of its core issues (AC 2005, Internet Archive; CWA 2002, Internet Archive). As a result, they framed their goals and identities in different ways. Prior to the release of the results from the Zogby International survey conducted in 2003, polls

had regularly shown the American public favoring comprehensive sexuality education over abstinence-only curricula. The framing strategies of the AC shifted with the release of the data from the Zogby survey. Between 2001 and 2002 the AC website layout changed, including the addition of a number of links to specify targeted populations (teacher's lounge, parent's corner, and teen café) that more closely reflected the groups targeted by SIECUS. By reframing its targeted populations, the AC could activate support from particular, previously untapped, constituencies. The 2002 website also featured the picture and text equating adolescent sexual activity with early death. By reframing its policy aims through fear-based language, the AC created a sense of urgency to implement new abstinence-based programs, particularly with the 2001 creation of the CBAE grant.

Both 2003 and 2004 marked major gains in the abstinence-only world. The data provided by the Zogby survey helped to provide statistical support for abstinence-only programming, providing leverage against all of the statistical data claimed by comprehensive sexuality education advocates. By making the results the focal point of its 2003 website, the AC was perhaps able to frame its goals as extra legitimate. Furthermore, President Bush's 2004 State of the Union Address, which specifically called for increased funding for abstinence-only curricula, added further political clout to the work of the AC and perhaps gave the organization the upper hand. Having scientific data on its side as well as policy backing from the federal government could have easily reduced the pressure to recruit movement support because, presumably, the AC had it.

By looking at the transition in framing strategies employed by the AC between 2001 and 2004, specifically, a relationship emerges between framing strategies employed and political and social support. Between 2001 and 2002, the AC appears to have engaged in meaning-making

work that emulated framing strategies employed by the opposition, and that appealed to emotional responses that would translate into movement support. In employing similar support frames to those used by SIECUS, an organization with public (if not policy) support, the AC engaged in reactive framing. As the AC discovered it had an ally in the White House, as well as scientific data to flaunt, the organization stopped aggressively adopting other framing strategies and began to instead just advertise its indicators of public support and examples of policy success.

CWA, unlike the AC, has a policy agenda that extends beyond abstinence-only education. The organization defines, as its mission, “to protect and promote Biblical values among all citizens—first through prayer, then education, and finally by influencing our society—thereby reversing the decline in moral values in our nation,” (CWA 2009). Included in these values are preserving the traditional definition of family, protecting the “sanctity of life,” monitoring the educational system, eliminating pornography, ensuring religious liberty, and maintaining national sovereignty (CWA 2009). Much of the framing work of CWA that I analyzed had to do with preserving the family and protecting the right to life. CWA used the visual cue provided by scare quotes to undermine the legitimacy of certain claims—including scientific evidence that homosexuality is genetic, arguments in support of same-sex marriage, and documentation of the efficacy of certain contraceptive methods such as condoms. This language work helped establish the organization’s identity in direct opposition with unfriendly advocacy organizations such as SIECUS. The organization also used powerful images, including the picture of the aborted baby referenced earlier, to appeal to emotions of site visitors and potential movement supporters. CWA’s website front-page did not feature much information about sex education between 2001 and 2008, which is not to say that the organization was not

involved. In the following section I will explore CWA's role in a curriculum debate that took place in Montgomery County, Maryland. Because the focus of the CWA homepage between 2001 and 2008 was not explicitly on the sex education debate, however, I am uncomfortable labeling its national level framing strategies around the issue as either proactive or reactive.

My analysis of the SIECUS website from 2001 to 2008 yielded a valuable glimpse into the connection between movement support, policy work, and the framing strategies employed by the organization. SIECUS's mission statement, prior to 2005, was to establish itself as "a national, nonprofit organization which affirms that sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living...SIECUS develops, collects, and disseminates information, promotes comprehensive education about sexuality, and advocates the right of individuals to make responsible sexual choices," (SIECUS 2002, Internet Archive). From 2001 through 2004, the organization conceived of itself first and foremost as supporting sexuality by providing resources. As a result, its website was focused around portals that could link constituencies like teens, educators, or parents to valuable resources. Through the organization of the website, SIECUS framed its identity as an organization with information that could and should be accessed by a broad range of constituencies. Even though the CBAE program was established in 2001, the SIECUS website made no reference to federal funding of abstinence-only education programs until 2003 (SIECUS 2003, Internet Archive). Perhaps this reflects that SIECUS's policy agenda, until the mid-2000s, was concentrated less on affecting federal-level policy and more on supporting the efforts of state and local level advocates in their question for access to comprehensive sexuality education.

In 2003, however SIECUS began taking on the opposition by framing abstinence-only curricula as "unproven" in 2003 and 2004, "fear-based" in 2005, and containing "medical

inaccuracies, fear and shame” components in 2006 (SIECUS 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006, Internet Archive). Also in 2005 SIECUS revised its mission statement, now stressing the organizations role as an advocate (SIECUS 2005, Internet Archive). Around this time the data from the Zogby International survey had been released and had gained national press attention, President Bush had touted abstinence-only curricula funding in his 2004 State of the Union, and federal funding through CBAE for abstinence programming had increased significantly every year since the program had been implemented. In 2005 SIECUS supported the introduction of the Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act in the House of Representatives, only to have the bill shelved in committee.

At the same time, however, nearly every other poll conducted between 2001 and 2008 indicated overwhelming public support for comprehensive sexuality education. The 2007 (re)introduction of the REAL Act to the House and Senate again died in the hands of committees. Perhaps SIECUS adopted aggressive new framing strategies to respond to this confusing political climate. By characterizing abstinence-only curricula as fear- or shame-based, SIECUS created a new way to respond to oppositional claims that comprehensive sexuality education supported and encouraged sexual deviance and the spread of disease and accusations that the curriculum was immoral, by blatantly labeling such framing as a scare tactic. In maintaining its use of scientific and medical evidence and referencing support from major national scientific and health organizations, SIECUS was able to simultaneously frame the opposition as misinformed, inaccurate bullies while constructing its own identity as based in fact and sound research. By engaging in this work, SIECUS practiced proactive framing because the organization used a new rhetorical strategy (within the context of the movement) to shift which side of the debate was the onus of fear.

Perhaps this framing strategy also led to policy success. Beginning in 2006 states began declining funding allocations provided through Title V of PRWORA (the welfare reform act from 1996). In the summer of 2008, Ken Freking of the Associated Press reported that 22 states and the District of Columbia had declining Title V funds for abstinence program, many of them unconvinced about the effectiveness of programming that prohibits the mention of contraception (Freking 2008). The case of the AC contrasts interestingly with that of SIECUS. The AC practiced reactive framing in 2002 and found policy success and increased indication of public support in 2003 and 2004. Most polls, however, continued to reflect broader public support for sex education programming that included messaging about abstinence and contraception. And, while CBAE funding allotments continued to grow from the program's inception in 2001 to 2008, by 2008 nearly half of all states have elected to reject Title V funds for abstinence education. While this was happening, even as an abstinence-only education supported remained in the White House, the Democratic party gained control of Congress during the 2006 election cycle. Roughly at the same time, SIECUS reframed its identity by rewriting its mission statement and developed a proactive framing strategy that pulled fear away from comprehensive sexuality education and attached the term to the abstinence-only movement. So which side, abstinence-only or comprehensive sexuality education, found movement success? Perhaps looking at another example of the debate, one that played out at the local level, will help to clarify.

Montgomery County, MD

In November 2004, at the recommendation of the 27-member, citizen-comprised Family Life and Human Development Advisory Committee, the Montgomery County, Maryland Board of Education (BOE) approved a revised sex education curriculum that included new lessons about sexual orientation and condom use (Aratani May 2005; SIECUS 2004). Fearful that the new lessons promoted “homosexuality and promiscuity,” concerned parents rapidly organized against them (Montgomery Extra 2007). The curriculum quickly became entrenched in legal disputes that dragged on for years, finally resolving in spring of 2008. The lengthy conflict attracted the attention and support of national advocacy organizations and spurred the creation of parents groups on both sides of the debate. While much of the formalized debate over the proposed curriculum occurred in the courts, parents and other concerned citizens waged impressive internet campaigns—monitoring activity, garnering support, and voicing concerns.

In order to analyze how framing was employed by these parent groups, as well as by national-level advocacy organizations, the following text delves into the chronology of the debate and then looks at this timeline compared to treatment of the debate by national and local advocacy groups. Two major parent and citizen coalitions emerged out of the debate—one in favor of the new curriculum and one in opposition to it. The Teach the Facts (TF) organization was started to support the new curriculum and “to promote tolerance and fact-based education” in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) (TF 2009). Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum (CRC) formed in opposition to the new curriculum and led the fight against its implementation. By looking at their websites from 2004 to 2008 I will analyze how each

organization used particular framing strategies to advance their oppositional agendas and to garner public support.

As I mentioned earlier, however, the Montgomery County debate, while localized, drew nationwide attention and support. Because sex education is such a contentious issue at the national level as well, I will look at how national advocacy organizations such as Concerned Women for America (CWA) and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) monitored the progress and setbacks in the debate on their websites at critical junctures in the five-year time span. Other national-level organizations such as Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX), Family Leader Network, and the Liberty Counsel lent their support and resources to CRC, while Lambda Legal helped represent Metro DC Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), and the pro-curriculum perspective of TF, when the case reached the Montgomery County circuit court (Milan 2007). I will look at how these national-level organizations framed the debate and their participation in it through their websites, web publications, and multimedia content. By analyzing frames within the local and national realms, as well as across them, I will gain insight into how framing translated into movement success in Montgomery County.

Context: Historical Background, 2004-2008

The Montgomery County, Maryland Board of Education (BOE) announced in November 2004 a revised curriculum for eighth and tenth grade health classes (Ward 2004). The curriculum changed to include lessons on sexual orientation for both eighth and tenth grade classrooms. Additionally, the program included a lesson for tenth graders about the efficacy of and risks associated with condom use as well as a video produced by the county in which a young woman demonstrated how to put a condom on correctly, by modeling the action

on a cucumber (Ward 2004). Originally the program was going to be piloted in three Montgomery County high schools and middle schools in the spring of 2005 and then, pending an affirmative vote from the BOE, be implemented in all county middle and high schools in the fall of 2005. Concerned parents and community members quickly organized, however, thwarting plans for implementation by going to court with legal concerns about the curriculum and teacher training materials (Vlahos 2005).

The group, Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum (CRC), partnered with the national organization Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX) to take Montgomery County to court, “arguing that [the curriculum] depicted homosexuality as a natural and morally correct lifestyle and did not offer any contrary opinion,” (Vlahos 2005).¹¹ A U.S. District Court Judge, Alexander Williams Jr., handed down a decision in May of 2005 in favor of CRC and PFOX by putting a stay on the implementation of the curriculum. In his decision, Judge Williams found the teacher training materials for the curriculum to be a threat to the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment because they failed to present multiple viewpoints regarding homosexuality and labeled some churches as biased and anti-gay (Vlahos 2005). In response to the decision, Montgomery County Superintendent Jerry D. Weast suspended plans to pilot the program and two weeks later the school board voted to abandon the curriculum and the questionable teacher resource materials, and to instead create a new advisory board to oversee the development of a second revised curriculum (Aratani May 2005).

By the time of the school board vote, however, the case had already gained national attention. National advocacy organizations such as Concerned Women for America (CWA) and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) had followed the

¹¹ PFOX’s mission is premised on the idea that homosexuality is not innate but rather a decision (Vlahos 2005; PFOX 2009).

legal battle closely, publishing policy updates on their websites (CWA also had radio broadcasts about the debate). Several news outlets and advocacy organizations acknowledged the potential impact of the court decision on other battles around the country (CWA 2005; Schemo 2007; SIECUS 2005; Vlahos 2005; Ward 2004). Weast also recognized the importance of the case, and of the curricular revisions, when he said, following the school board decision, “Many school districts across the country are watching us closely and looking to us for leadership. This is something that’s important to our students now and in the future,” (Aratani May 2005). National attention slowed, however, as the county worked to create a new advisory committee and to establish a new curriculum for much of 2006.

While national interest waned (no articles about the Montgomery County curriculum were published in national newspapers in all of 2006), local commitment to the debate remained strong. A September 2005 article in *The Washington Post* revealed that almost 180 Montgomery County citizens had applied to be a part of the new Family Life Advisory Committee (Aratani). As per the settlement reached in the previously mentioned lawsuit, one spot on the new 15-person committee went to a CRC representative and another to a PFOX representative (two spots were also reserved for county students, and four were held for members of community organizations). Of the 180 applicants for the remaining seven spots, representatives from national advocacy organizations such as the National Organization for Women and NARAL Pro-Choice America applied, as did representatives from the parent and citizen-led local group, Teach the Facts (TF) (Aratani September 2005). The advisory committee created a new curriculum that was approved by the school board in January 2007 (Montgomery Extra 2007).

Much like the earlier curriculum, the approved program included the integration of lessons on sexual orientation and homosexuality into eighth and tenth grade health classrooms as well as a screening of a film demonstrating how to correctly put on a condom for tenth grade classrooms only (Montgomery Extra 2007). The program was tested in three Montgomery County high schools and middle schools in spring of 2007 and was recommended to the school board for adoption, with minor revisions, in all county middle and high schools starting in fall 2007 (de Vise June 2007). For the second time, the CRC and partner organizations intervened legally, submitting an appeal to the state BOE to overturn implementation of the lessons (de Vise June 2007). The appeal, however, was unsuccessful as the state BOE found no illegal content in the curriculum and felt no urge to “second guess the appropriateness” of the program (de Vise July 2007).

The CRC and allies again couched their appeal in the terms of the First Amendment by asserting that because the curriculum took a generally positive stance regarding homosexuality, and because it did not address the organizations’ belief that homosexuality is a sin, it violated students’ rights to free speech and religion expression, respectively. The opponents of the curriculum also argued that it infringed upon “the fundamental right of a parent to control the upbringing of a child,” (de Vise July 2007). The state BOE responded to these arguments by pointing out that the lessons did not stop students from maintaining their religious convictions regarding sexuality and by referencing the county’s opt-in policy for the lessons (de Vise 2007). The CRC and allies were thus unsuccessful in their continued claim of First Amendment infringement. Instead of backing down, however, they changed their argument.

The curriculum opponents took their case to a Montgomery County Circuit Court where they argued the illegality of three words in the curriculum. First, citing a stipulation in a

state law requiring curricula to be factual, the legal representation for CRC and PFOX argued that the curriculum's classification of homosexuality as innate was illegal (de Vise 2008). They also took issue with the mention of anal and oral sex in the condom lesson, arguing that it violated a state law banning materials that depict "erotic techniques of sexual intercourse," (de Vise 2008). The Circuit Court Judge, William Rowan III, decided in favor of Montgomery County, allowing the curriculum to be implemented (Greenwell 2008).

After a drawn-out legal process that spanned nearly four years, and a curriculum revision process that took over six years, the new lessons, based on a comprehensive sexuality education model, were implemented in Montgomery County public middle and high schools. Ultimately, the new programming consists of 90 minutes worth of lessons about sexual orientation in eighth and tenth grade classrooms, and an additional 45 minutes worth of instruction on condoms, which includes a brief video demonstrating how to put a condom on, in tenth grade health classes (Schemo 2007). To get to this point, however, advocates on both sides of the issue were entangled in a frequently volatile debate about the type and extent of sexuality instruction appropriate for students in Montgomery County schools. How did local advocates frame their goals and how did they translate those goals into public support and policy success? How did national organizations get involved in the conflict, and did they frame their support for particular sides in similar ways to the local organizations they supported?

Analysis: Local Organizations and Framing

The Internet Archive records are small for Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum (CRC) and Teach the Facts (TF), the two local advocacy organizations that emerged in response to the debate in Montgomery County, Maryland over the content of a revised sex education curriculum. The CRC, which grew out of parental discontent with what they perceived as pro-

homosexual messaging and excessive yet incomplete information about condoms, only has one archived page from December 23, 2004. The TF organization has considerably more records in the Internet Archive, all from 2005 through 2007. My analysis is based on my observations of two records from 2005, one from 2006, and two from 2007.¹²

The contrasts between the CRC's December 23, 2004 website and the TF website from January 3, 2005 are numerous. There are absolutely no images on the CRC website, which instead relies on text elements such as capital letters and bolded text to stress its message (CRC 2004, Internet Archive). Much of the TF website, however, is comprised of computer illustrated images. Before entering the full TF website a screen appears that reads, "Promoting tolerance and fact-based education to empower students," (TF 2004, Internet Archive). The images bordering much of the TF website reinforce this message. The left third of the website features a painting of a man's face and three hands entering from off-frame to cover his mouth and eyes, a picture of Copernicus and an illustration of his model of the universe, a parental advisory explicit content label, a document that advertises itself as "The Complete Scopes Trial Transcript," a picture of Darwin, and a small image of what appears to be two men dueling. Perpendicular to these images and stretching across the top of the website is a picture of a small school house and five apples which are obviously symbolic for their connections to health and to education (TF 2004, Internet Archive).

The TF website uses images to directly frame not only the organization's mission, but also how it sees itself as important in a historical context. Copernicus and Darwin are well known and incredibly respected scholars—men whose work was received with opposition at one

¹² All five records that I consulted for the TF website in the Internet Archive featured nearly identical information. The layout of the TF webpage never changed and only small changes occurred in the text. Because of this, citations describing the webpage reference multiple dates. From what I can tell, much of the new information on the website was limited to their "vigilance blog." Because I was not able to access CRC's blog component I did not evaluate the blog part of the webpage for either organization.

point but whose work is now generally accepted as fact (although there are religious arguments against their discoveries). The references to censorship, the parental warning and the painting of the man whose eyes and mouth are covered by the hands of others, indicate the organization's negative stance on hiding information and shielding experience. Coupling great thinkers with images of censorship indicates a fear of what could be lost by excessively limiting discussion of controversial topics. These ideas, set against the backdrop of learning indicated by the schoolhouse and apples, speak to the organizations commitment to "promoting tolerance and fact-based education to empower students."

Furthermore, because TF establishes itself firmly on the side of providing accurate and unbiased information about sexuality to students, its opposition (the CRC) becomes represented by the censorship images. The hands covering the man's mouth and eyes are perhaps the hands of the opposition. The parental advisory over Copernicus and Darwin represents the opposition halting the spread of important information. These are powerful images that work to create a strong sense of being wronged by the opposition. TF, in addition to these meaningful visual messages, uses forceful language to describe the other side in the text of the website. The organization describes the opposition as "religious extremists" who "impose" their beliefs on "our children," (TF 2005; 2006; 2007, Internet Archive). A phrase like religious extremism calls to mind evangelicals and fundamentalists; the word impose reinforces the idea of unwanted and unnecessary censorship; and preceding children with "our" creates the sense that the opposition is trying to influence children who don't belong to them, potentially playing to parental fears about outside forces corrupting their children. TF also reiterates its commitment to curriculum that is fact-based by connecting the programming it supports to the

advice and recommendations of the medical and scientific communities (TF 2005; 2006; 2007, Internet Archive).

TF, then, engages in deep meaning-making work through its framing of the opposition and of itself and its goals and commitments as an organization. The organization uses clear visual evidence of its goals, its intentions, and its identity as its major framing mechanism, including strong textual elements that reinforce its meaning-making work. Through evocative images and powerful language, TF represents the opposition as threatening to parents and to their children, as extreme to the point of being on the fringe, and as in tension with the scientific and medical worlds. At the same time, TF frames its mission and itself as committed to the best interests of students, as representing the majority, and as being both academically important and supported.

As I mentioned earlier, CRC instead relied on stylistic textual elements to create meaning. Below is the organization's mission statement as it appears on the website:

WE BELIEVE THAT it is not the domain of Montgomery County Public Schools to teach students what sexual values to hold. Teaching respect for persons with same-sex attraction is **appropriate** and **right**. But **demanding affirmation** of a homosexual orientation and behavior goes **beyond the ethic of tolerance**, and in fact **violates** the value systems of many families (CRC 2004, Internet Archive).

Following this statement CRC calls for the Montgomery County BOE to immediately repeal the new curriculum (CRC 2004, Internet Archive).¹³ The bolded words work to highlight two different sentiments—one defines the CRC and the other defines the opposition. By bolding “appropriate” and “right,” CRC establishes itself as moral as well as the boundaries of that morality. Both appropriate and right have antonyms that mark the other end of CRC's morality

¹³ Keep in mind that this is data pulled from the archived CRC page from December 23, 2004. Approximately five months after this the BOE voted to eliminate the curriculum following a ruling by a federal judge putting a stay on the program, and the decision by Superintendent Jerry D. Weast to pull the curriculum indefinitely.

spectrum. By confirming its commitment to what is appropriate, the organization establishes that those who are dedicated instead to sexual values not espoused by CRC are attached to something inappropriate. Similarly, by defining what is right, CRC gets to define what sexual values are wrong. Oppositional organizations have been framed, through CRC's emphasis on these two words, as wrongly committed to inappropriate sexual values.

The next sentence defines exactly how egregious CRC considers the commitment to alternative sexual values to be. Demanding of someone, going beyond the boundaries of ethics, and violating deeply held values are extremely evocative phrases. To demand is to require or compel, perhaps unreasonably, something of someone. Presumably, to make a demand can lead to a personal injustice, one that is defined by CRC as going beyond the ethics of tolerance. To surpass ethics is to enter the realm of the unethical, the inappropriate, and the wrong. When one enters this realm it is because they have violated someone else, perhaps someone who remains safely within the ethics of tolerance. In two sentences, CRC has created a sexual values world determined by absolutes. The organization has created for itself an identity defined by being right and morally ethical, while at the same time framing its opposition as distinctly wrong and operating outside of the sexual values morality sphere.

In other localized debates throughout the history of the contemporary sex education movements such rigid framing of organizational identities by proponents of abstinence-only education as right or wrong, moral or immoral, has severely constrained the political efficacy of comprehensive sexuality education advocates. The debate that occurred in Montgomery County, however, was not only wage over the internet but also in courtrooms. Overwhelmingly, Montgomery County parents welcomed the addition of lessons about sexual orientation and condom instruction to health classrooms. When the new curriculum was implemented in fall of

2008, “Ninety-five percent of students opted [in] for the lessons in middle school and about 97 percent in high schools,” (de Vise 2008). A small but dedicated cohort of parents and concerned citizens, however, were able to organize, forming CRC, and engage in a long legal battle with the school system over the additions to the curriculum. In its efforts, CRC gained considerable support from national-level advocacy organizations. What exactly was the role of these national organizations in providing resources and support to the local organizations? How did these national organizations frame the debate for their national audiences, and did those frame contribute to the final outcome in the conflict?

Analysis: National Organizations and Framing

Parent and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX), a national advocacy organization premised on the belief that homosexuality is a decision and not a character trait, quickly partnered with CRC to fight the curriculum through the court system. A conservative Christian legal group based in Florida, Liberty Counsel, joined the conflict by providing legal representation for CRC and PFOX (CWA 2005). Several other national opponents of comprehensive sexuality education monitored the conflict, providing reports and updates on their websites. These organizations included the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) and Concerned Women for America (CWA; the pro-family policy organization discussed earlier). CWA also hosted a series of three radio interviews about the debate between December 2004 and May 2005. Advocates of comprehensive sexuality education or opponents of some of the aforementioned organizations similarly monitored the events in Montgomery County. Lambda Legal and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS; discussed in previous section) provided updates on the conflict through their websites.

In analyzing the frames used by these national organizations to present information about the Montgomery County conflict, framing trends specific to each side emerged. As I noted about CWA previously, the use of scare quotes was a heavily employed tactic, appearing at least once in all of the documents I reviewed that were created by opponents of comprehensive sexuality education (CWA 2005; NARTH 2004; PFOX 2007). Scare quotes were used around words and phrases such as gender identity, sexual orientation, coming out, and homophobia. The use of scare quotes by opponents of comprehensive sexuality education combines the visual cue of the quotes and a potentially inflammatory word or phrase. By delineating the term by enclosing it in scare quotes, these organizations add stigma to the word and the idea it represents. Gender identity becomes something that is mocked or questioned, yet either way it becomes an illegitimate term because it is tainted by added meaning. By putting scare quotes around words that typically fall within the lexicon of comprehensive sexuality education advocates, organizations such as NARTH, PFOX, and CWA constrained the ways in which those advocates could hope to use those words.

These three organizations also presented their opposition's mission through the use of a shocking statement. A NARTH article described the Montgomery County curriculum in this way: "The materials will teach 10th graders how to put condoms on cucumbers, use flavored condoms for oral sex, and 8th graders will be taught that homosexual couples are the newest American family," (NARTH 2004). CWA's director of its Culture and Family Institute, Robert Knight, explained, "One look at the materials and it's obvious they promote homosexuality as normal and healthy," (CWA 2005). And a PFOX article explained, "The newly approved curriculum, entitled 'Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality,' promotes cross-dressers, homosexuals, transgenders, bisexuals, the intersexed, and other non-heterosexuals. It teaches

children about ‘coming out’ as gay, ‘gender identity’ for men who think they’re women and vice-versa, and ‘homophobia’ as a label for anyone who disagrees,” (PFOX 2007). All three of these statements present the curriculum as possessing a shocking component perhaps previously unknown to concerned citizens. Making a shocking statement about condom instruction, without putting it in the context of a seven-minute video about how using condoms dramatically reduces the risk of being infected with a sexually transmitted disease, works to make such instruction seem lascivious and corrupt. Similarly, PFOX’s choice to use the word “promote” instead of something more neutral like “acknowledges the existence of” casts the curriculum as having a political agenda.

While these web publications used statements intended to produce a sense of shock, CWA’s radio broadcasts about the Montgomery County debate actually referred to parts of the curriculum as “shocking” multiple times (CWA 2004; CWA 5 May 2005; CWA 31 May 2005). In the three broadcasts, either director of publications, Pamela Wong, or director of the Culture and Family Institute at CWA, Robert Knight, was interviewed about the early developments in the Montgomery County legal debate. Knight expressed that the curriculum was “shocking stuff” that “promotes homosexuality” and “forces” kids to watch a video with “a young woman instructing them on how to buy condoms, open them up, how to use them, and then she ends up putting a condom on a *huge* cucumber” (CWA 5 May 2005). He labeled the curriculum as shocking and then used inflammatory language, like kids being “forced” to watch a salacious video, to reinforce that idea. Additionally, in order to access the radio broadcasts are accessible on CWA’s website through multimedia-specific pages. The webpage includes some type of image, a description of the interview, and a place to click to listen to the audio of the radio broadcast. Two of the three broadcasts were accessed through a page featuring a picture

of a young woman wearing double braids looking at a book with her eyes wide and her mouth agape (CWA 5 May 2005; CWA 31 May 2005). CWA thus used a powerful trio of verbal and nonverbal frames—labeling the curriculum as “shocking” in text, speaking of “shocking” elements of the curriculum during radio broadcasts, and picturing a young female looking “shocked”—to reinforce the idea that Montgomery County’s proposed comprehensive sexuality education curriculum was full of inappropriate and corrupting messages and materials.

Interestingly, the national proponents of comprehensive sexuality education primarily painted the opposition and its goals as threatening as well. A SIECUS publication speaks of “fringe right wing groups from outside of the area...[converging] on this community to usurp local decision-making” (SIECUS 2007). Such strong words paint the opposition as having extreme beliefs (being on the fringe) and as threatening community governance by coming from “outside of the area” and trying to take power away. County curriculum advocates also argued that withholding information from children and adolescents could be damaging, particularly when the information being withheld was “medically accurate,” fact-based, and “common sense sexuality education” (Lambda Legal 2007; SIECUS 2007). Taken together these frames depicted curriculum opponents as trying to suppress truthful and necessary information about sexuality and health from reaching county students, the effects of which could be devastating. Taken a step further, local groups could be perceived as pawns of out-of-area extreme groups trying to embed a conservative agenda in county policies. Curriculum and comprehensive sexuality education advocates thus represented the opposition as posing a double threat—that of fringe groups taking control of county policies against parental wishes, and that of children being denied information supported by the medical community with potentially damaging consequences.

Connections and Divergences: Frames and Movement Success

The above analysis of frames used by local and national groups in the Montgomery County debate over additions to the county's sex education curriculum explores how these organizations used particular framing strategies to promote oppositional agendas and identities. While I distinguished between local and national level organizations in the preceding section, I have brought them together here to explore how the frames of friendly movements overlap and how these frames work in conversation with the opposition.

Overwhelmingly the framed used by CRC and organizations dedicated to abstinence-only education overlapped, as did the frames of TF and comprehensive sexuality education advocates. CRC framed its identity and mission as moral, ethical, and right while simultaneously representing the opposition as the antithesis of these things; as a group wrongly committed to inappropriate values concerning sex and sex instruction. At the national level, organizations such as NARTH, CWA, and PFOX represented the curriculum and its supporters through the use of shocking statements that depicted the curriculum as particularly obscene and its supporters as misinformed at the least, and on the moral and sexual fringe at the most. Taken together, the prevalence of the appeal to shock by the national organizations and CRC's representation of those committed to the curriculum as morally defunct and inappropriate, painted the opposition as possessing obscure and threatening ideas about sexuality.

The use of scare quotes by national organizations further contributed to this depiction of the opposition as being committed to the wrong ideas, and the curriculum as representing the wrong information, by delineating words associated with sexuality. By putting scare quotes around words such as homophobia, gender identity, coming out, and sexual orientation, these national organizations invited potential movement adherents to question the legitimacy of such

terms and ideas. Because the sexuality education curriculum would have involved a discussion about homosexuality and bisexuality, scare quoting words involved in that conversation served to challenge the necessity of those dialogues. By associating those ideas espoused by comprehensive sexuality education proponents with questions of legitimacy, NARTH, PFOX, and CWA added further meaning to CRC's representation of curriculum advocates as being committed to inappropriate and wrong sexual values and ideas. CRC and national organizations employed frames based in morality and appropriateness claims. Such work to equate the comprehensive sexuality education movement with sexual deviance and immorality has long been a frame used by the abstinence-only movement and, as such, is an example of a reactive frame.

TF and friendly national organizations relied on three similar framing strategies, one of which was the representation of the opposition as “extremist” or on the “fringe” (TF 2005; 2006; 2007, Internet Archive; SIECUS 2007). Such language marked the opposition not only as a serious minority, but by also linking it to the ideas of “imposing” values and “usurping” local authority the opposition seemingly became particularly dangerous (TF 2005; 2006; 2007, Internet Archive; SIECUS 2007). In depicting the opposition this way, curriculum supporters simultaneously represented their goals as distinctly in line with the majority. Both sides of the debate used language that represented the opposition as on the fringe.

A second frame employed by TF, SIECUS, and Lambda Legal referenced each organization's commitment to “medically accurate” and fact-based sexuality education (TF 2005; 2006; 2007, Internet Archive; SIECUS 2007; Lambda Legal 2007). TF specifically made a point of referencing the alignment between its goals and the recommendations of the scientific and medical communities (TF 2005; 2006; 2007, Internet Archive). While TF connected itself

to medical and scientific groups by referencing its commitment to the recommendations of these organizations, CRC took a drastically different route by referencing its commitment to particular, and internally defined, moral and ethical standards. Interestingly, both sides of the debate were engaged in identity work that simultaneously defined itself and its opposition, but because the terms of the identity were different neither was particularly attacked by the other's characterization. In other words, because TF saw itself as committed to medically accurate information, CRC's construction of TF as morally wrong did not affect TF's own identity work because it was within a different realm. The same can be said in reverse.

The final frame employed by TF and friendly national advocacy organizations was the appeal to fear. As I extensively detailed earlier, the TF website used powerful imagery and strong language to represent fears about censorship of important information and to touch on the potentially damaging effects of removing conversations about sexuality and contraception from the curriculum. Similarly, national advocates spoke to the threat of information being suppressed by the work of outside forces (SIECUS 2007). The earlier mentioned framing of the opposition as extreme and on the fringe further fed into the work of TF and other advocates to depict the opposition and its goals as threatening and something to fear. As I mentioned earlier, SIECUS was able to effectively use the fear frame to shift the locus of threat onto abstinence-only advocates at the national level. TF's references to the opponent's extremism and censorship occurred concurrently with SIECUS's framing switch and thus represent the implementation of proactive frames that sought to reflect the language of the opposition back onto itself.

Discussion

My analysis of the frames employed by comprehensive sexuality versus abstinence-only education advocates in two different debates between 2001 and 2008 has revealed a pattern in the types of frames used by each movement. At the national and local levels, abstinence-only education advocates have relied on morality and appropriateness frames to represent both their identities and their goals and to frame the opposition as promoting salacious sexual ideologies. These organizations have also used scare quotes to question the legitimacy of the values espoused by oppositional organizations. Finally, abstinence-only organizations have at times attempted to use scientific backing (a mainstay of the comprehensive sexuality education paradigm) to support their mission, although nearly all of this scientific data has been produced by affiliated think tanks and research centers. The use of morality and appropriateness frames, construction of the opposition as dedicated to sexually deviant ideals, and application of strategies intended to challenge the legitimacy of the opposition are framing strategies that have been employed by abstinence-only movement actors since the 1960s and, as such, represent reactive framing processes.

Around 2004, comprehensive sexuality education advocates began using a new framing strategy. The movement has long emphasized the need for access to fact-based and medically accurate information about sex, framing its goals as in line with the recommendations of the medical and scientific communities. Comprehensive sexuality education organizations at the national and local level, however, began to use framing strategies that evoked fear and labeled the opposition as fear mongering. SIECUS began to refer to abstinence-only curricula as “fear and shame based” (SIECUS 2006; Internet Archive). Other organizations, such as Montgomery County, MD’s Teach the Facts (TF), equated abstinence-education proponents with excessive

censorship and ideological extremism (TF 2005; 2006; 2007; Internet Archive). The comprehensive sexuality education organizations turned the opposition's frame back on itself. By specifically labeling the work of movement opponents as threatening, comprehensive sexuality education advocates engaged in proactive framing because they developed a new way of taking about the other side and of representing their own identity in relation.

Many of the framing strategies used by both movements at the local and national levels between 2001 and 2008 played into and off of each other. Movement organizations not only engaged in work to represent their own identities and goals, they simultaneously worked to frame the other side in threatening and repugnant ways. Ultimately which movement saw success during this time period? In Montgomery County, curriculum proponents eventually won when the county school board approved the lessons in 2008. Those organizations that represented the interests of the comprehensive sexuality education movement effectively framed the opposition as extreme and the opposition's goals as based in excessive censorship, while representing itself as representing majority interests. The curriculum opponents never grew into a huge parent cohort. As a result, when the legal problems with the first version of the curriculum were fixed there was not enough support within the county to keep the fight going.

At the national level it is more difficult to say conclusively which side found greater movement success. Despite one survey conducted by a coalition of self-identified pro-abstinence organizations, public support for some form of comprehensive sexuality education far outweighed support for abstinence-only programming between 2001 and 2008. At the same time, paradoxically, federal funding for abstinence-only education increased. That being said, starting in 2003 SIECUS began using a new framing strategy, one that represented the opposition as threatening. The proactive frame became a larger part of the organization's

messaging over the next couple of years. During this time, while funding allotments through the Department of Health and Human Services for community-based abstinence programs continued to increase, so did the number of states tuning down abstinence-only federal funding available through Title X of the welfare reform act. As 2008 came to a close, comprehensive sexuality education advocates saw ample evidence that support of policies favoring abstinence-only sex education was beginning to wane. In 2009, President Barack Obama reduced the funding allotment for abstinence-only programming for the first time since 2001.

Conclusion

While framing theory is a relatively new addition to social movement scholarship, it provides an essential framework for analyzing how particular meaning-making strategies are employed by social movement actors to contribute to, or detract from, movement success. Even though a substantial body of literature in which framing theory has been used to evaluate social movements exists, several criticisms and limitations of the theory have surfaced. One such critique has argued that the failure of scholars to explore non-discursive frames is a major shortcoming of the theory as it currently stands (Hull 2000, 210; McAdam 2000, 120). I have responded to this criticism by explicitly evaluating the use of both verbal and nonverbal frames by comprehensive sexuality education and abstinence-only education movement organizations. Such attention to the interplay between images, spatial organization, rhetoric, and sounds significantly contributed to the depth of my analysis of the framing strategies employed by these oppositional movements. Attention to the multiple ways in which social movements organizations represent their identities and their goals can only enrich the way in which scholars tackle and produce frame analysis.

I have argued that the “signifying work” of social movement actors should not only be evaluated through an interpretation of verbal and nonverbal frames, but also in conversation with the “signifying work” of oppositional social movements. Much of the work within framing theory has focused specifically on a particular movement, failing to evaluate it in any strong historical context. As a result, a further channel for frame analysis has been cut off. In order to understand the depth of particular frames, they cannot be studied in historically untethered ways. Instead, movement strategies should be understood in connection and in tension with frames employed by oppositional movements.

In reviewing the literature on framing theory I came to regard a distinct fault line in the scholarship. On one side were those scholars who evaluated how previously useful framing strategies had been employed, and to what degree of success, by subsequent social movements. I termed this strategy sharing a *reactive* framing process as social movement actors sought to employ frames they knew carried cultural saliency or political currency. On the other side were those scholars who instead analyzed how previously unused frames had been developed and executed by social movement organizations. These *proactive* framing processes I defined by the work of movement actors to develop frames that could become culturally and politically meaningful. Sociologist Ruth Chananie-Hill argues that a constant framing→counterframing→reframing process takes place as oppositional movements attempt to respond to, and limit, the effectiveness of the other side's framing strategies (24). Such a relationship is reflected in the use of proactive and/or reactive framing strategies by movement organizations. The fault line created by looking at social movements in isolation can be bridged by identifying the frames being used by oppositional movements and looking at the strategies in conversation with each other. I have analyzed the framing strategies of the abstinence-only and comprehensive sexuality education movements in order to find these connections between framing strategies and competing goals.

There are, of course, limitations to my work. First and foremost, my analysis is based solely on the evaluation of published work and archived records. As such, my understanding of the meaning-making work engaged in by organizations on both sides of the debate only extends so far. Interviews, or access to individuals within these organizations, would only have improved the depth of my research and my understanding of the frames. Furthermore, while sex education has been a particularly contentious topic, not all social movements are dominated by

such volatile debates. It is important to keep analyzing the relationship between oppositional movements to determine whether or not the interplay between framing strategies is a significant component of meaning-making work across the board. Finally, sex education debates have long been controlled and directed by national-level organizations. Although I analyzed the use of frames in Montgomery County, the debate there was influenced and monitored by these national organizations. It is essential to research whether or not the oppositional dynamic will play as large of a role when analyzing frames used by locally based and driven movements.

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