

## **The New York Times and the U.S. Presidential Election 2012: Framing Same-Sex Marriage**

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### **Abstract**

Same-sex marriage is receiving further attention because the U.S. President Barack Obama has endorsed such marital partnership throughout his previous 2012 electoral campaign. Pragmatic nature of the media to set the agenda of the state causes same-sex marriage issue to receive immense news coverage by many America's news media ever since it becomes part of the Democratic Party electoral campaign, predominantly by the acclaimed "liberal" and "pro-gay" newspaper, The New York Times. The newspaper is deemed passionate to crusade gay issues, to encourage movement for liberalism, and attempts to exhibit same-sex marriage issue to appear salient within a particular timeframe by exploiting specific news framing, agenda-setting, and media bias therefore some critics perceive journalism is about to get sacrificed on the altar of

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advocacy for same-sex marriage. Hence, this study attempts to identify news frame employed by the newspaper in related issue, to determine the association of agenda-setting with same-sex marriage news coverage, and strives to ascertain affiliation of news coverage in relation to gay topics with efforts to propel movement for liberalism in the realms of American politics and society. This study uses two research methods: (1) qualitative media content analysis based on protocol provided by David L. Altheide and Christopher J. Schneider (2013) and (2) thematic analysis to scrutinize news framing thus the following results are anticipated to be obtained: (1) same-sex marriage issue indicates the usage of either “Support for Gay Rights” or “Support for Marriage Equality” as the most significant news frame and (2) The New York Times overtly promotes movement for liberalism. Eventually, findings and discussion of this study may provide better understanding pertaining to news framing and agenda-setting in the profession of journalism, homosexuals and the Spiral of Silence Theory, as well as to comprehend media role to set a specific agenda within a particular state’s political and societal settings.

**Keywords:** *Agenda-Setting, Liberalism, News Framing, Same-Sex Marriage, Spiral of Silence*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Homosexuality is not contemporary, as a matter of fact, homosexuality has been stigmatized since the beginning of most early civilizations of human race, as early as the depiction of the resentment of Abrahamic faith's deity towards the people of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah and the lewdness of the people of Lot on account of homosexuality are exclusively told in all Abrahamic traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam [1]. The media have played an important role in portraying and framing gay topics in diverse perspectives therefore homosexuality is evident on the media, especially on America's media no matter traditional or non-traditional—social media and the Internet. America's news media, nonetheless, also conspicuously play a role in presenting gay topics in news reports, as a result, homosexuality issues get positive feedback and acceptance within American society that believes social justice, liberty of thought, and freedom of expression must be positioned as the utmost obligation that an individual should be given space and right to practice and control. Media encourage and enforce the public to believe in what they have presented, some may perceive it as a propaganda effort. In addition, homosexuality gets acceptance in politics—politicians begin to openly discuss, oppose, or advocate homosexuality and at certain circumstances, gay issues are used to win the hearts and minds of the people in order to triumph in elections. Some American media are viewed to use gay topics transparently in order to increase ratings, to propel greater readership, and to gratify gay community—presumed as “media's homosexual agenda”.

When discussing freedom of expression, social justice, and liberty of thought, they are simultaneously interrelated to what critics believe as the quest for liberalism. A British political scientist Harold J. Laski has elucidated in his book *The Rise of European Liberalism* [2] that liberalism is interpreted as a sense of idealism and romanticism, which tended to be revolutionary, anarchistic, and subjective. Laski moreover had defined liberalism as less of a trend expression, to compare to displeasure and nature. Liberalism entails the enthusiasm for liberty, the hunt for such enthusiasm may be persuasive thus requires control to be tolerant yet doubtful about tendency and belief

that an individual holds to be dangerous, and that is the most unusual quality of a human being. In conjunction with what Harold J. Laski has defined, this study understands “liberalism” as the passion for individualism, equality, and socialism democracy thereby an individual emphasizes the desire for impersonal control of political and social in the temperament of law. Additionally, an individual requires a grant of active liberty and freedom in order to facilitate his or her aptitudes to find absolute freedom of expression and to receive new thoughts without inflexible response. Since the United States of America (U.S.) is currently encountering modern American liberalism idea that requires social justice causes, from the civil rights for homosexuals, abortion rights to voting rights for African-American community, as part of the movement for liberalism and social progressivism, it is crystal clear that social and political settings in the U.S. are perfectly illustrates the terminology and advocacy for liberalism.

On the contrary, numerous portrayals of homosexuality entail stereotype and intolerance against homosexuals. Different perspectives, views, and depiction of homosexuality in the media conflicts with each other, which has created debates and public interest that float around the world about homosexuals, that is explicitly can be observed in political and sociological discourses. Hence, portrayal of homosexuality in the media sends conscious and unconscious, that is intentional and unintentional codes and information to the mass audience that witnesses such portrayals thus it shapes public opinion and how public visualize and view homosexuals, then simultaneously alters perception and acceptance toward homosexuals through the media’s continual propagation of pro-gay content. In addition, media possess a role in deciding in composing stories, news, and coverage, at the same time deciding what kind of news should be reported, gives more attention and importance, and what the society wants to know and their interests. These news procedurals occupy agenda-setting, media bias, and framing.

The powerful, sophisticated psychological techniques that the homosexual movement has used to manipulate the public in the media comprises of three components—desensitization, jamming, and conversion [3]. The authors use a tactical device throughout the work, referring to religious dissenters and other critics of homosexual behavior as “bigots”. Their language is

purposefully crude to enhance that idea. Much like the “Big Lie” Theory developed in the 1920s and 1930s by the Nazis, the constant repetition of this eventually has the desired psychological effect on masses of people. In their work, titled *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s* (1989), desensitization means a campaign to desensitize straights to gays and gayness, inundate them in a continuous flood of gay-related advertising, presented in the least offensive fashion possible. In simple words, if straights cannot shut off the shower, they may at least eventually get used to being wet.

Secondly, [3] elucidate on jamming—it involves the insertion into the engine of a pre-existing, incompatible emotional response, gridlocking its mechanism as thoroughly as though one had sprinkled fine sand into the workings of an old-fashioned pocket watch. Jamming, as an approach, is more active and aggressive than desensitization, by the same token, it is also more enjoyable and heartening. The trick is to get the bigot into a position of feeling a conflicting twinge of shame, along with his reward, whenever his homo-hatred surfaces, so that his reward will be diluted or spoiled. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, all making use of repeated exposure to pictorial images or verbal statements that are incompatible with his self-image as a well-liked person, one who fits in with the rest of the crowd.

And finally, the conversion trick. Desensitization aims at lowering the intensity of anti-gay emotional reactions to a level approximating sheer indifference and jamming attempts to blockade or counteract the rewarding “pride in prejudice” by attaching to homo-hatred a pre-existing, and punishing, sense of shame in being a bigot, and a beater and murderer. Both desensitization and jamming, though extremely useful, are mere preludes to the highest, though necessarily very long-range goal, which is conversion—convert the average American’s emotions, mind, and will, through a planned psychological attack, in the form of propaganda fed to the nation via the media. The gays mean “subverting” the mechanism of prejudice to their own ends, using the very processes that made America hate the gays to turn their hatred into warm regard, whether they like it or not. It is not enough that anti-gay bigots should become confused about the gays, or even indifferent to them, they are safest, in the long run, if they can actually make them like

gays. Conversion aims at just this [3]. However, Kirk and Madsen's work is merely based on their belief—radical changes in the minds of Americans about homosexuality in the last two decades is not an accident, a form of propaganda effort, and psychological strategy executed via the media in order to realize a society that tolerates gay community in the future.

Hidden agenda possibly exist, particularly related to the issue of same-sex marriage through media content and message. Content of the news media that relates to homosexuality is mainly being influenced by news reports of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* as prominent daily publications and later being followed by most of the media in the U.S. [4]. Concurrently, homosexuality becomes so contemporary in America's media, yet homosexuality is heavily manifested in motion pictures, from Academy Award for Adapted Screenplay winner *Brokeback Mountain* and *Philadelphia* which Tom Hanks receives Academy Award for Best Actor for his outstanding role as a homosexual attorney suffering AIDS, to *Mysterious Skin*, *Transamerica*, *Milk*, *A Home at the End of the World*, *Liberace: Behind the Candelabra*, and the Oscars 2014/86th Academy Awards has witnessed Jared Leto receiving an Oscar for his role as a transgender in *Dallas Buyers Club*. Undeniably, a number of media that oppose the practice of homosexuality through news reports are considered bigot, orthodox, and conservative. For this reason, agenda-setting, media bias, and framing are argued persistently being used by America's news media to present same-sex marriage more salient or important than other issues, mainly because to evade aforesaid condemnations.

This study aims to scrutinize news frames used by *The New York Times* to present same-sex marriage during 2012 U.S. Presidential Election. *The New York Times* reflects its cosmopolitan and urban base with the motto All the News That's Fit to Print/Click (web version). However, this "cosmopolitan and urban base" notion has developed skepticism that the newspaper is criticized to overly enthusiastic in practicing liberal bias and advocating homosexuality in news reports, particularly in political and social issue contexts. As a result, *The New York Times* shapes a worldview among its journalists and editors—they share reasonably similar judgment about social change and political progressivism and this development leads the newspaper to the extent that

gay marriage is over-adored, poorly managed, and worshipped by everyone within the organization [5]. [6] quoted statements from retired editor of *The New York Times* Bill Keller during a dialog regarding journalism and its impacts on social issues.

*The New York Times* is liberal in the judgment, sense, or logic that the publication is open-minded. *The New York Times* also reflects an urban perspective and to a certain extent, tolerant. The newspaper has wedding page which includes gay marriage—and it did feature gay marriage even before law of gay marriage was passed in New York—this includes gay union or partnership. To label *The New York Times* as liberal, it directs to the sense of the word, socially liberal.

We're liberal in the sense that liberal arts schools are liberal. We are an urban newspaper. We write about evolution as a fact. We don't give equal time to Creationism.

The newspaper is acclaimed enthusiastically supporting same-sex marriage, advocates liberty for homosexuals in various perspectives, and endorses gay marriage movements especially during 2012 U.S Presidential Election therefore the tendency to insert homosexuality element into news reports is conspicuously blatant [7]. While *The New York Times* is recognized as an influential newspaper since its inception in 1851 and has won numerous Pulitzer Prizes, the newspaper is also seen as a trendsetter (and to a certain extent, *The New York Times* creates “Bandwagon Effect”) in the profession of journalism, particularly in news coverage regarding social issues. Its website is America's most popular news site, receiving more than 30 million unique visitors per month [8].

In relation to preceding exposition, pro-gay news coverage has become so contemporary and homosexuality gets absolute support from mainstream society and government, especially in the U.S. The number of nations that legalize gay union is escalating [9]. The issue of same-sex marriage has obtained further consideration (greater than the past two decades) in the U.S. and it is evidently revealed during several weeks of pre-presidential election and post-presidential election, that are between October and November 2012 when President Barack Obama endorses same-sex marriage and exploits the issue in his electoral campaign manifesto thus several alleged pro-Obama newspapers namely *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* grab this

opportunity to promote marriage equality for homosexuals and to frame same-sex marriage news into several aspects, all in the name of demonstrating full support towards the President and his electoral campaign [10]. As a result, *The New York Times* presents evidences to prove that the newspaper is promoting liberalism and this enables the newspaper to exhibit its pro-choice, racially sensitive, feminist-friendly, gay-friendly, and secular stances [11]. In addition, *The New York Times*' former public editor Arthur Brisbane confesses in his last column in August 2012 that the newspaper is pro-gay and practicing liberal bias [7] Furthermore, [12] states that *The New York Times* declares its Sunday Styles section would commence to cover and publish stories of the commitment of same-sex ceremony in August 2002, besides heterosexual weddings declarations. Many American media pursue this trend that is instigated by *The New York Times*.

Meanwhile, many American media are projected to follow the trend and take a supportive stance rather than to go up against it. The trend of giving homosexuals full marriage rights and providing media coverage for the issue has gained an unstoppable momentum. This rapid shift cultivates an ultramodern idea that gay marriage and civil, traditional marriage are relevant to be considered identical or indistinguishable. Stability and intimacy are comparable to be served, neither homosexuals nor heterosexuals. Concurrently, both homosexual and heterosexual would require equivalent duties, rights, and responsibility in diverse areas of law and regulation pertaining to family life. The gender of the spouse is the only dissimilarity, but this dissimilarity is irrelevant because what matters most are the union and its essential components [13]. Agenda-setting, media bias, and news framing are persistently employed by the press in order to present one particular issue such as same-sex marriage to be more salient than other political and social issues [14]. In the United States, political and social issues namely tax hike, HIV/AIDS, lavish expenditure on military by the government, and interfaith dispute are relatively ignored due to advocacy for homosexuality and to give space for same-sex marriage news.

America's news media such as *The New York Times*, nonetheless, is seen to be not even to stand on the traditional or conventional point of view on marriage which is to unite a man and a woman or a religiously-accepted heterosexual partnership. In addition, it is considered intolerance to present

resistance for gay marriage in news reports because such marriage is viewed as an issue that needs to be taken into consideration, based on the notion that gay rights is a manifestation of liberty for all homosexuals [15]. Continual dissemination of news reports regarding homosexuality is argued as a form of media liberal bias towards homosexuals and also possibly points to how same-sex marriage is a media fixation and how press stimulated change for President Barack Obama and his presidential electoral campaign [16]. On the other hand, 21st Century is probably the ideal century to present media frenzy over gay marriage. Based on aforementioned claims and assertions, this study provides three research objectives that are stipulated to present evidence and to prove preceding statements made by various American media practitioners and communication scholars. They are (1) to identify news frame of same-sex marriage in *The New York Times* during 2012 U.S. Presidential Election, (2) to determine association of agenda-setting with same-sex marriage news reports published in *The New York Times*, and (3) to ascertain relationship between liberalism and news coverage of same-sex marriage.

### *1.1. Study Design: An Overview*

This study is conducted by utilizing qualitative media research design and a phenomenological approach that is descriptive. Two research methods are used in order to yield an array of news frames: (1) qualitative media content analysis based on protocol provided by [17] from *Altheide Research Team Protocol for Studying News Reports about Fear in Qualitative Media Analysis*, and (2) thematic analysis. Research philosophy for this study is interpretivism (socially constructed, may change, and subjective)—findings, discussions, and analyses are reliant on the understanding and interpretation of a researcher who conducts a study within societal context. This study's epistemology focuses on the subjective meaning and social phenomena—media effects research, specifically in journalism. This study elucidates the usage of journalism to propel movement of liberalism and agenda-setting to tolerate homosexuality. This study provides an analysis pertaining to agenda-setting and news framing as its core objective as well as providing additional discussion in relation to ever-changing public opinion regarding homosexuality and the Spiral of Silence Theory.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

The bias practiced by the media is a rich scope in communication research and it has been examined or studied in numerous different methods and to a certain extent that is high and great. There are many studies have been dedicated to identify bias instances, especially in the states that practice absolute freedom of the press, for example, the United States of America. When media bias is discussed, it relates to the utilization of Agenda-Setting Theory by the media, specifically in the perspectives of political and social issues. The press is undoubtedly successful in disseminating information to the public as well as telling readers what to think about. [18] agrees with this statement because of the signature study that guides many media bias researches since its inception, which is McCombs and Shaw's 1968 pioneering Chapel Hill study.

*The Agenda-Setting Function of Media*, published in 1972 [19] presents observed and experimental proof that in numerous methods rebutted the work of Lazarsfeld and Hovland in the decade of 40s, 50s, and 60s which present partial media effects model. Derived from the Lazarsfeld and Hovland's belief that the contact between public and politicians is through mediated settings, McCombs and Shaw examine media role in the political progression by conducting a survey in 100 Chapel Hill, North Carolina's residents who are relatively indecisive before the 1968 United States Presidential Election between three candidates. They are Richard Nixon, George Wallace, and Hubert Humphrey [19]. In addition, the study conducted by McCombs and Shaw shows a close to perfection correlation of  $+0.967$  between the issues that public thought and judged the most important and the issues that is constructed to be the most salient by the media in nine unique media outlets in Chapel Hill, North Carolina [19]. Since the publication of McCombs' and Shaw's groundbreaking research on specific media effect towards the public, it has provided a supreme groundwork and incomparable foundation for both qualitative and quantitative researches on the media bias pertaining to certain political or social issues, which is pertinent across an array of fields related to the media, especially the mass media which includes television, newspaper, radio as well as the up-and-coming communication technology through the Internet.

Furthermore, Agenda-Setting Theory has created an initiation in many studies to be conducted for the purpose of studying media bias and its impact to the readers. For example, the research conducted by [14] that is considerably one of the first most imperative researches to utilize Agenda-Setting Theory to study politics. These two Danish researchers present a study regarding political campaigning in Denmark and the process of election, in which Danish election generally occurs in shorter period of time, to compare to American election, that is conducted in just one or two weeks therefore it demonstrates an appropriate situation or setting to study the role of the media in the process of politics. [14] compare some issues that are propagated in Danish media and ballot process that is conducted during the election which has estimated and measured the interest of the public towards several political issues in Denmark. Based on the Siune and Borre's study in 1975 [14], they state that issues that are kept salient are on the rise and such issues are taxes and economy which is parallel to the propagation and promotion in the mass media. It leads to the stagnation or decline of other issues that perhaps should be taken into consideration namely culture, education, social problems, and environmental concerns. Therefore, it proves that Danish media practiced media bias (during that time), in which they neglect culture, education, social problem, and environmental concern issues in mass media, relatively. Furthermore, [14] study serves to strengthen the Agenda-Setting Theory in term of validity and in fact, by 2006, there are more 400 published articles in scholarly journals that apply Agenda-Setting Theory [20]. On the other hand, this literature review also presents previous literatures regarding types of agenda-setting, explaining definition of bias, and presents the concept of Priming and Framing that are closely related to and considered as an extension of Agenda-Setting Theory.

### *2.1. Types of Agenda-Setting*

[21] subdivide Agenda-Setting Theory into three components. They are: (1) media agenda-setting, (2) policy agenda-setting, and (3) public agenda-setting. They suggest that media agenda-setting is reliant on the news agenda that is disseminated by the media. Secondly, policy agenda-setting is the reaction or response of public and media's collective agendas. Thirdly, they

suggest that public agenda-setting is reliant on public agenda's topic. Media agenda-setting provides a final impact on policy due to the one and only interaction—that is between policymakers and public—through agenda-setting, for instance to scrutinize news reports and letters to the editor. This final result of media agenda-setting is suggested by [22]. Tan and Weaver suggest evidence that support the credibility of arguments from McCombs and Shaw that media agenda-setting may affect policy, through a longitudinal research conducted. According to the study conducted by Tan and Weaver, these scholars study issues that are considered the most important and salient in the media, public, and the Congress from 1946 to 2004 that is *The Agenda-Setting Effects among the Media, the Public, and Congress from 1946-2004*, published in *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. Derived from this study, Tan and Weaver scrutinize information from three distinct bases—The New York Times, Gallup's Most Important Problems series of polls, and Congressional hearings. Some results from the study are shown as follows:

There were mixed findings pertaining to media's ability to set agenda of the Congress and the public. In general, media effects are restricted to certain exact issue. Media can influence both public and the Congress within two years on international issue, that is parallel to earlier study. However, mass media merely can influence the public in term of government operations issue, but this issue cannot affect the Congress and the results of such influence to the public can only be seen after four years, which means the influence cannot be measured within short-term period.

Regardless of definitions discussed may fluctuate or vary from several scholars, agenda-setting types depend on what the public perceive as salient issues and if any reasonable influences are forced to exist.

## *2.2. Definition of Bias*

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### *2.3. Theory of Framing*

The theory of framing is considered an extension to Agenda-Setting Theory therefore it can be directed straight to the theory in terms of its attributes. There are many studies related to framing accordingly numerous scholars who have conducted studies that apply Agenda-Setting Theory as theoretical groundwork in the field of communication and media effect study which Agenda-Setting Theory is used in conjunction with framing. The reason why many researchers and scholars decide to use Agenda-Setting Theory and framing together is simply because of an underlying fact that many scholars deem framing to be identical to agenda-setting. Indeed, there are many communication scholars who believe framing is an addition to agenda-setting.

[24] define media frame as vital systemizing idea for content of the news that provides a perspective and suggests which issue to be propagated or told to the readers by utilizing emphasis, selection, elaboration, and exclusion during the process to provide news coverage of a particular issue or event. However, [25] have different idea regarding agenda-setting and framing. These two scholars believe agenda-setting and framing are two separate concepts significantly based on two reasons: (1) agenda-setting, framing,

and salience of media content are related to the ability of readers or public to recall a particular issue and (2) framing concerns about the control of an issue that is perceived and thought by the readers.

Despite many disagreements among scholars pertaining to the relationship between agenda-setting and framing, [26] considers framing as the second-level of agenda-setting. He explains that the distinction between framing and agenda-setting is the limitation of some attributes that is selection of limited number of thematically concerned attributes for inclusion of the media agenda when a specific object or matter is discussed by the public through propagation of issue and event from mediated settings such as mass media—television, radio, and newspapers. Albeit the credits are always dedicated to the sociologist Erving Goffman [27], the study of framing and the analysis of the concept are interdisciplinary in research and its scope [28]. The main difference between both agenda-setting and framing is that framing is limited or fails to illustrate certain attributes towards different issues, while agenda-setting only presents a particular issue as a whole and partially or entirely ignores other issues in the public sphere.

[29] elucidates that time is the most important factor to consider when discussing news framing. He states that frequency of a word, concept, metaphor, or term is not the key idea of framing but rather emphasizes on how a word, concept, metaphor, or term is consistently framed by the media over time. This leads to another emphasis that consistency on framing is the essential part, to compare to volume of coverage or its pushiness over time. He conducts six case studies to illustrate framing that is found in media content research and findings of his studies suggest that identical frame is utilized for editorial coverage and objective news coverage for politics. In addition, he states that a problem may occur because it is unspecified and many newspapers claim a separation of editorial page and newsroom. Framing can be categorized under decision-making bias but framing also can be displayed in two different biases at the same time: (1) content bias and (2) decision-making bias. Biased content that appears when facts are not neutrally presented is a situation to illustrate framing. Framing also is used in decision-making bias when framing eradicates an issue or event from its context, for instance, former President Bill Clinton's speech when the media eradicated some facts and told the audience the opposite. [27] states that framing could

mislead uninformed public because ignorant public is a product of distorted news coverage they receive.

#### *2.4. Dramatic Support for Same-Sex Marriage*

Gay marriage marks a spectacular and remarkable change in terms of public's attitude, which mainstream Americans believe homosexuals should be given equal rights to wed as what heterosexuals enjoy. According to a poll conducted by [30], 58% of Americans believe gay partnership should be legalized. Similar poll is conducted in 2004 towards registered voters and the result is only 32% of the respondents believe homosexuals should be given rights to wed. The 2013 poll concludes that strong supporters of gay marriage outnumber strong opponents with 11 points higher. It provides a preliminary conclusion that President Barack Obama's endorsement of same-sex marriage leads to dramatic change in public's attitude towards homosexuals pertaining to gay partnership or same-sex marriage. The 2013 poll, moreover, concludes that the results extend the evidence in rapid transformation of American's attitude towards gay community and in terms of political front, 72% of Democrats favor same-sex marriage compared to only 34% of the Republicans who favor it. The poll was conducted by using telephone survey method on March 7 until March 10, 2013 towards random national respondent or sample of 1,001 adults. The divisions of partisan are 33%-25%-35%, Democrats-Republicans-Independents. This study, however, is able to draw a preliminary conclusion based on the *Langer Research Associates of New York Poll* regarding American's acceptance of same-sex marriage [30]. The recent social change and attitude change are based on a pattern that most Americans possess a tendency to follow, and that set of narrative verbs are (1) tolerate, (2) normalize, (3) condone, (4) enforce, and (5) promote. In fact, this set of narrative verbs does not only illustrate the attitude change towards same-sex marriage in the U.S. but also in Canada. Most Canadians believe that homosexuals should be given rights to wed and as a result, Canada has approved to legalize same-sex marriage since 2005.

### *2.5. Homosexual News Coverage over Time in the U.S.*

News media mainly ignore the issue of homosexuality in the United States until the 1940s [31, 32]. [32] states that during the decades of 1940s and 1950s, the press commonly report homosexuality issue as a social crisis. In addition, [32] also explains that the Kinsey report on male sexuality that is published in 1948 is the first subject of homosexuality that draws the press successfully, based on the 356 news reports about homosexuals (gays and lesbians), published in Newsweek and Time within 50 years, from 1947 to 1997. During this period, approximately 60% of the news reports that portray homosexuals as an undeviating threat to U.S. military strength, U.S. government's security, and the safety of common Americans. The news media begin to discuss openly regarding homosexuality issue by the 1960s though the discussion is mainly about crime and brief items that deride masculine women and effeminate men [33, 34]. One cover story is published in 1963, in which it is the first cover story to favor same-sex marriage and to treat same-sex marriage as a topic of winning permissible and official recognition. Let's Push Homophile Marriage, nonetheless, it does not affect the American society towards a positive concentration to same-sex marriage but rather crafting general debates between penalty and compassion of gay community [35]. Many articles were still greatly about the danger of homosexuality even though throughout 1940s and 1950s, numerous news reports provide increasing visibility for gay community are published [32].

The New York City's Stonewall Rebellion in June 1969, during the subsequent decade, sets fire to the contemporary chapter of the movement of homosexual liberation thus the circulation and number of homosexual press detonate [36]. Thus, gay rights are only adequately conferred by the media during early 1970s. The 1970s also has presented a series of political actions related to gay rights that are organized by homosexuals and it has formed criticism against gay-rights movements in the U.S., predominantly among fundamentalist Christians [31, 32]. In addition, the 1970s has presented to the global community that the media are discovering aspects of the emergent culture of homosexuals. Such change presents a genre that is considered less political. The media during this decade are investigating various topics of homosexuality, ranging from the community's sensibility in literature,

art, music, entertainment to religion, drag queens, gay cabana, personal appearance, separatism of dike or masculine women, lesbian mothers, leather men, and sex [36]. The decade of 1980s, nevertheless, presents a confrontation between homosexuals and the most dreadful disease in the world that is HIV/AIDS, which had killed gay men at an unimaginable speed. Hence, HIV/AIDS turns out to be the prevalent homosexual news reports from the media. The notion of immoral homosexual lifestyle emerges and later, the community is depicted as perilous by the press [37, 38]. During the decade of 1990s, issues regarding same-sex marriage obtain a little more concentration from the press, predominantly because of HIV/AIDS and the immeasurable debate over the prohibition on homosexuals to participate in military force to be abolished. Issues regarding mounting visibility of homosexuals and their movement for equal rights are persistently exposed by the press. Visibility of homosexuals later cultivated emerging media that represent the community in the United States, for instance, *The Out* magazine that is a lifestyle magazine based in New York with nationwide distribution. The magazine leads a new chapter of pro-gay publications because of its fashionable trend and design to attract major contemporary advertisers. *The Out* magazine has featured on *The New York Times*' front page all due to most of the news covered are devalued in favor of fashion and entertainment stories [36].

Since the last two decades (from late 1990s to first several years of the 2000s), American press is mostly crusading the issue of homosexuality as a threat to children's development and endangering family values. Same-sex marriage begins to obtain concentration again rather than to discuss homosexuality in general thus gay partnership legitimacy dictates within same-sex marriage context and incessantly being covered by press, to compare to previous decades. [12] states that *The New York Times* declared the Sunday Styles section would commence to cover and publish stories of the commitment of same-sex ceremony in August 2002, besides heterosexual weddings declarations. Many of America's news media follow this trend, as it is instigated by *The New York Times*. According to [12], the trend of reporting same-sex commitment is not only limited to national presses but also to regional ones, for example *Seattle Times* and *Houston Chronicle*. These two newspapers cover spectacular huge number of news reports regarding homosexual's everyday life, particularly from the time when same-

sex couples are given the same rights to wed as heterosexual couples enjoyed by Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in November 2003

### 3.0 Methodology

This study employs qualitative media research design. This study comprises of two research methods to garner findings and to analyze collected data. They are (1) qualitative media content analysis based on protocol provided by [17] to understand and analyze data therefore insightful analysis regarding agenda-setting, news framing, and advocacy for liberalism in the contexts of gay topics and homosexuality can be achieved and (2) thematic analysis to yield an array of news frames available within selected timeframe. Thematic analysis is an approach to systematically analyzing collected data through content analysis. In qualitative data strategy, thematic analysis is the simplest form, which means the researcher reviews data, take notes, and sort out or classify the gathered data into categories or themes. It is a form of data analysis strategy that assists a researcher to conduct analysis from a wide array of data towards constructed themes [39]. Study process is illustrated as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

This study uses thematic analysis to generate categorization of news frames for the content analysis of *The New York Times*' web version news reports that are related to same-sex marriage within a specific timeframe. Similarities in terms of theme pertaining to same-sex marriage news reports that are related to and published during 2012 U.S. Presidential Election period are analyzed and sorted out into coding sheet that is constructed based on

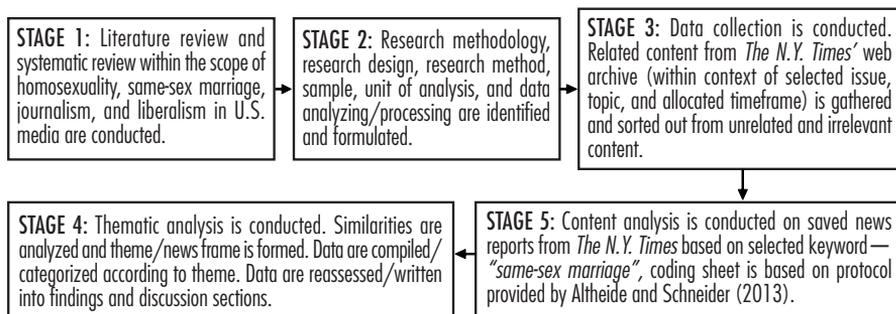


Figure 1: Study Process

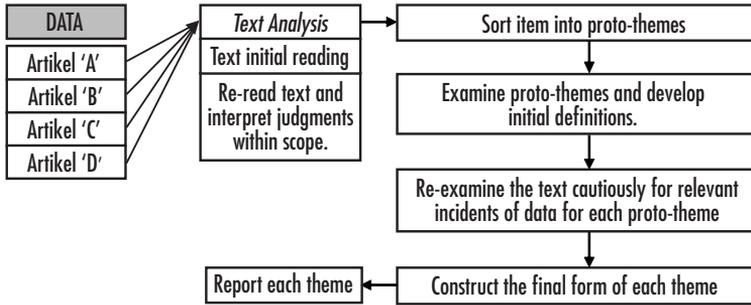


Figure 2: Thematic Analysis Process

the protocol provided by [17]—from *Altheide Research Team Protocol for Studying News Reports about Fear in Qualitative Media Analysis*, and then the reports are processed before being written into findings, discussion, and conclusion sections. *The New York Times*' news reports regarding same-sex marriage during 2012 U.S. Presidential Election are collected according to selected timeframe of three weeks (from October 25, 2012 until November 16, 2012). Simultaneously, coding sheet is developed according to protocol provided by Altheide and Schneider to code and analyze data during content analysis process. News reports regarding same-sex marriage are collected from *The New York Times*' online news site. Only articles from *Politics* and *Opinion* sections are selected to be studied and analyzed. Samples of table intended for thematic analysis and content analysis, which are specifically designed for this particular study are provided as per below. However, minor alteration has been made from the same tables that Altheide and Schneider use, derived from [17]. However, there is no previous study to support the use of content analysis protocols by [17], particularly in the study of mass media and social policy (in relation to public opinion, election campaign, same-sex marriage to pass law, and some other gay issues—discrimination at workplace/ education and religious institution, HIV/AIDS, and homosexual stereotypes) because both researchers focus on mass media, psychological impact of War on Terror, the 9/11 event, and Islamophobia in their 2013 work which this study has replicated its method.

**TABLE 1**

Coding Sheet Protocol Table

No.	Item	Details
1.	Publication Title	<i>The New York Times</i>
2.	Title/Headline	<i>In Maine and Maryland, Victories at the Ballot Box for Same-Sex Marriage</i>
3.	Date	<i>November 7, 2012</i>
4.	Section	<i>Politics</i>
5.	Author	<i>Erik Eckholm</i>
6.	Source	<i><a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/07/us/politics/same-sex-marriage-voting-election.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/07/us/politics/same-sex-marriage-voting-election.html</a></i>
7.	Topic	<i>Same-sex marriage manages to pass law through ballot box in Maine and Maryland. Voters in Maine and Maryland choose to legalize same-sex marriage as a projection of equality for all. Maine and Maryland are the first states that legalize same-sex marriage through ballot box or votes. Americans are previously contemplating to allow same-sex marriage to pass law in Maine and Maryland through ballot box but change their minds. A triumph for Obama.</i>
8.	Theme	<i>Support for Marriage Equality.</i>
9.	Texts Related to Theme	<i>“We have made history for marriage equality by winning our first victory at the ballot box”, said Chad Griffin, the president of the Human Rights Campaign, which raised millions of dollars for the races in the four states. (Para. 4), “Matt McTighe... “A lot of families in Maine just became more stable and secure.” (Para. 5), “For many weeks, reflecting their more than threefold advantage in fund-raising nationwide, advocates of same-sex marriage have unleashed advertisements of their own in which community members say that gay and lesbian friends deserve the same chance to love and marry that others enjoy.” (Para. 15)</i>
10.	Miscellaneous	-
11.	Summary	<i>Theme: Support for Marriage Equality, the presence of agenda-setting to advocate same-sex marriage is apparent.</i>

*Note:* This table (coding sheet) is designed to code data from each news report, based on protocol provided by Altheide and Schneider (2013).

**TABLE 2**

Coding Sheet for News Frame Categorization

No.	Date	Headline	Theme 1: Support for Civil Liberty	Theme 2: Support for Religious Liberty	Theme 3: Support for Gay Rights	Theme 4: Support for Marriage Equality
1.	Oct. 30, 2012	Supporters of Same-Sex Marriage See No Room for Victories	/			/
2.	Nov. 5, 2012	Fate of Maryland Same-Sex Marriage Ballot Measure is Uncertain	/			/
3.	Nov. 7, 2012	In Maine and Maryland, Victories at the Ballot Box for Same-Sex Marriage				/
4.	Nov. 9, 2012	Christian Right Failed to Sway Voters on Issues		/		
5.	Nov. 15, 2012	Gay Vote Seen as Crucial in Obama's Victory			/	
6.	Nov. 15, 2012	Gay Vote Proved a Boon for Obama			/	

#### 4.0 Findings of the Study

This study garners 19 news reports or articles that discuss same-sex marriage according to selected timeframe. Seven news reports are from Politics section and 12 are from *Opinion* section. Those garnered and studied news reports are listed as follows:

1. *The Morning After*, October 25, 2012, *Opinion*.
2. *For New York State Senate*, October 26, 2012, *Opinion*.
3. *Sunday Dialogue: Rethinking Marriage*, October 27, 2012, *Opinion*.

4. *Supporters of Same-Sex Marriage See No Room for Victories*, October 30, 2012, Politics.
5. *The Black Vote for Gay Marriage*, November 1, 2012, Opinion.
6. *The End of 'Marriage'*, November 4, 2012, Opinion.
7. *Fate of Maryland Same-Sex Marriage Ballot Measure is Uncertain*, November 5, 2012, Politics.
8. *Lessons in Fearmongering*, November 5, 2012, Opinion.
9. *The Spirit of America*, November 5, 2012, Opinion.
10. *President Obama's Success*, November 6, 2012, Opinion.
11. *In Maine and Maryland, Victories at the Ballot Box for Same-Sex Marriage*, November 7, 2012, Politics.
12. *Big Leap for Marriage Equality*, November 7, 2012, Opinion.
13. *Maine and Maryland Say "We Do"*, November 7, 2012, Opinion.
14. *Can Republicans Adapt?*, November 7, 2012, Opinion.
15. *The Real, Real America*, November 7, 2012, Opinion.
16. *Christian Right Failed to Sway Voters on Issues*, November 9, 2012, Politics.
17. *Push Expands for Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage*, November 12, 2012, Politics.
18. *Gay Vote Seen as Crucial in Obama's Victory*, November 15, 2012, Politics.
19. *Gay Vote Proved a Boon for Obama*, November 15, 2012, Politics.

**TABLE 3**

Number of Garnered News Reports from Both Politics and Opinion Sections, According to Theme/News Frame

No.	Theme/News Frame	Number of News Reports
1.	<i>Support for Civil Liberty</i>	5
2.	<i>Support for Religious Liberty</i>	1
3.	<i>Support for Gay Rights</i>	9
4.	<i>Support for Marriage Equality</i>	8

*Note:* There are two news frames or themes coexist for several news reports therefore

the total number of news reports as tabulated above (23 news reports) does not coincide with the total number of garnered news reports from content analysis (19 news reports).

Based on the content analysis and thematic analysis conducted, two significant news frames of same-sex marriage during 2012 U.S. Presidential Election are obtained. They are (1) “Support for Gay Rights” and (2) “Support for Marriage Equality”. These news frames are, as this study stipulated, parallel to persistent propagation of same-sex marriage issue to pass law in Maine and Maryland through ballot box during the election, as well as the endorsement of same-sex marriage by President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party. Most of the collected and analyzed news reports have emphasized on the triumph of Democratic Party to retain its winning during the election and Obama being elected as the president for the second term. This emphasis consciously relates to the winning factors for both Obama and his Democratic Party—persistent endorsement of same-sex marriage and advocacy of liberty for all Americans. Because Obama has repealed Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy imposed on homosexuals serving in the military forces in 2011, the Americans are expecting the president to pursue efforts to legalize marijuana for recreational use and rights for women to perform abortion. The New York Times, on the other hand, can be understood to employ liberal perspective in all collected news reports because the newspaper believes same-sex marriage may pass law (on the date of related news reports are published) in Maine and Maryland as well as many other social-related policies.

The core objective of this study is to scrutinize news framing of same-sex marriage by The New York Times, agenda-setting has played an important role in giving space for same-sex marriage news to appear in the newspaper thereby neglecting many other issues ranging from lavish expenditure on military by the government, tax hike, national security, post-9/11 effects, War on Terror, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and terrorism. This study provides evidence that same-sex marriage appears salient in terms of media content. At least one article is published per day in favor of endorsement for same-sex marriage (and any other gay topics). The agenda is transparent. Most of the news reports suggest that same-sex marriage is a manifestation of liberty for all human

beings and gay rights are identical to human rights, which means to recognize gay rights, it would end what the world calls “bigotry towards homosexuals” and equality for all Americans regardless of their gender identity and sexual preference. This preliminary study concludes that The New York Times plays a role in setting an agenda to sway Americans to accept homosexuals just the way they are and the agenda is parallel to the electoral campaign manifesto by both candidates (it predominantly shows greater tilt towards Barack Obama rather than Mitt Romney) therefore this study attests [19] and [14] studies pertaining to media agenda-setting during election process. Propagation of homosexual agenda in America’s media is fairly evident through this study, so does to prove the alleged “homosexual agenda”. Present-day era presents gay topics in the perspective of equality for marriage and gay rights and history has repeated itself. Although the push for equality for homosexuals to wed their partners is unoriginal and not bizarre in the U.S., recent surge to legalize same-sex marriage has shown a tremendous advocacy from the government and American society, as the society no longer considers same-sex marriage as an unusual conjugal, marital union that smears the sanctity of religion and perceived as uncommon sexual practice.

## **5.0 Discussion**

### *5.1. Framing Same-Sex Marriage*

Derived from the findings of the study, it is interesting to note that The New York Times has verified to promote and to advocate same-sex marriage through its news reports. Based on qualitative media content analysis conducted, news framing is used by The New York Times in order to present news regarding same-sex marriage during 2012 United States Presidential Election in positive angle. The most significant news frames are “Support for Gay Rights” and “Support for Marriage Equality”. These two news frames are parallel to the electoral campaign manifesto by Barack Obama and the Democratic Party, and simultaneously set the agenda for the nation due to their persistent endorsement for social policies namely legalization of same-sex marriage, legalization of marijuana for recreational use, rights for women to perform abortion, and many more.

The abovementioned policies are relentlessly opposed by a number of supporters and electoral candidates of the Republican Party thus provided evidence that The New York Times is a liberal publication or news media when it comes to political and social issue discourses within a timeframe of three weeks, from October 25, 2012 to November 16, 2012. This study, moreover, validated the allegation by former editor and columnist of The New York Times Arthur Brisbane, in which he has mentioned that the newspaper is pro-gay and liberal, according to [7]. Besides that, findings of this study has also validated the statement by former editor of The New York Times Bill Keller who states that the newspaper is indeed liberal when it comes to social issue and discourse, socially liberal [6].

Within three weeks of timeframe, this study is able to understand that continuous support for gay rights and support for marriage equality are among important factors that lead to the victory of the Democratic Party during the election. The party takes an unusual risk to support the American population that is the gays in order to sway voters and it was workable thereby The New York Times grabbed this opportunity as a platform to express its liberal views regarding same-sex marriage and gay rights, all in the name of press freedom. All of the analyzed news reports cited The New York Times is confident that same-sex marriage law can be amended through the ballot box in the states of Maryland and Maine thus illustrating an emerging development in American society that gay marriage is perceived normal and will be commonly accepted by the public, including heterosexual Americans.

Derived from the past researches and surveys in literature review, most American presses can be considered to possess huge tendency to adapt Framing Theory in deciding which angle and perspective should the issue be reported. Generally, American presses are more likely to frame a particular issue to incite attention thus this approach sensationalizes it. It leads to the supposition that The New York Times possesses a tendency to employ “Yellow Journalism”, in which the newspaper sensationalizes the issue of same-sex marriage by crusading homosexuality topics in order to achieve definite goals—to attain attention of homosexuals on behalf of its “cosmopolitan and urban base” focus and to increase ratings and to obtain greater readership. Presented news frames are affecting same-sex marriage issue to appear salient, compared to other

social and political issues namely tax hike, government's overspending on military, post-9/11 effects, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), interfaith disputes, deadly epidemic, or even terrorism. On the other hand, The New York Times probably attempts to exhibit the use of "Muckraker" in modern-world journalism which means journalists possess an obligation to write news to enable advocacy for change and reform, in this case, The New York Times' journalists attempt to advocate gay issues for a change and reform in the U.S.

As a result, this study believes that news framing of same-sex marriage issue has shaped liberal thoughts among Americans and formed liberal American society, consequently homosexuality has been normalized and tolerated within public sphere. Related policies regarding homosexuality such as *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* (DADT) or the prohibition imposed on homosexuals to exhibit their sexual preferences to other military personnel (and other military personnel are also prohibited to ask and solicit homosexuals regarding their sexual preferences) has been reassessed and repealed by the U.S. Department of Defense as well as the intensifying support for same-sex marriage. Impact of framing in news reports is only a small proportion of overall impact of agenda-setting of same-sex marriage issue by the media because framing is only considered as an extension to agenda-setting by certain scholars namely [24] and [26] who explained that news framing is the second-level of agenda-setting.

## *5.2. Same-Sex Marriage and Agenda-Setting*

This particular study attempts to determine relationship between agenda-setting and same-sex marriage news reports during 2012 United States Presidential Election within the specific timeframe selected in this study. This study is unable to provide solid evidence that the issue of same-sex marriage is kept salient by America's news media from the perspective of the public because it can only be measured through quantitative research method to obtain opinion from the public such as survey research similar to McCombs and Shaw's study of agenda-setting regarding media role in political progression during the presidential election, which is their signature 1972 Chapel Hill

study [19] and Siune and Borre's 1975 [14] study regarding agenda-setting in Danish media and political campaign during the election process in Denmark. To gather data pertaining to opinion from the public and to prove its relationship with salience require survey research, for instance, questionnaire and opinion poll to measure the impact of a propagated specific issue within the hearts and minds of an individual, concurrently providing supporting details to describe and discuss the effectiveness of media persuasion approach and propaganda techniques by the media and policymakers.

In contrast, this study provides preliminary evidence that same-sex marriage issue is salient in the perspective of media coverage, derived from the number of "same-sex marriage" term that is repetitively used and presented in The New York Times' web archive and news frames, as an added basis. Findings of this study indicate that "Support for Gay Rights" and "Support for Marriage Equality" news frames are the most significant ones and are blatantly used by the newspaper therefore they lead to a proposition that the issue of same-sex marriage is salient enough or placed as important by The New York Times in term of media content, particularly in Politics and Opinion sections. The web archive additionally provides this study with results of 206 in Politics section and 60 in Opinion section pertaining to "same-sex marriage" keyword search thereby these results relatively indicate that the term "same-sex marriage" is used repetitively and signifies the issue of same-sex marriage is positioned as important by the newspaper, simultaneously this study attests gay issues are adored and worshipped by journalists and editors of The New York Times and the newspaper attempts to show signs of media fixation towards gay topics [16]. This study also garners 19 related news reports within the timeframe of three weeks (21 days) therefore it can be concluded that same-sex marriage news reports are consistently published, based on the calculation of one news report per day within the timeframe. The term "same-sex marriage" is consistently used by The New York Time, consequently it correlates with the suggestion by [29] that consistency of the word, term, or idea over time is the crucial part to consider execution of media framing.

Nevertheless, this study simultaneously connects to Agenda-Setting Theory because of the other study's objective and aim that is to identify news frames employed by The New York Times pertaining to the issue of same-sex marriage

within selected specific timeframe. When a study is intended to determine the presence of bias and news frame in media coverage, it is automatically related to agenda-setting, as described by [23]. Furthermore, [26] suggests that framing is the second-level of agenda-setting, besides [24], state that media framing is an extension of agenda-setting. [23], again, suggests Agenda-Setting Theory is flexible and that flexibility enables researchers to conduct any researches pertaining to the impacts of a particular issue to influence the public through mediated settings such as television, radio, and the Internet therefore findings and discussion of this study provide fundamental understanding, description, and analysis that The New York Times has an apparent agenda to normalize and express its tolerance towards same-sex marriage through news reports and attempts to sway the public to accept homosexuals just the way they are, regardless their sexual preferences and irregular sexual activities.

By studying news framing, this study has garnered an important outcome of the analysis that The New York Times is practicing decision-making bias within the specific timeframe. Decision-making bias concerns about enthusiasm, mindset, and motivation of the journalists and editors of a particular media to present and propagate an issue as more salient or important than others. [23] suggests that decision-making bias could provide another term that is conscious bias as a result of the concern of the enthusiasm of a producer or editor to make decision of what issues should be and will be presented to the society. Based on Entman's explanation, this study is able to describe news frames used by The New York Times for news coverage of same-sex marriage demonstrates the exploitation of decision-making bias because such bias concerns about enthusiasm and motivation of journalists and editors to present issue in news reports thus sufficiently elucidate "Support for Gay Rights" and "Support for Marriage Equality" news frames as part of the enthusiasm and motivation of the journalists and editors of The New York Times has employed, at the same time reveals the newspaper's liberal views regarding existing and emerging social issues in the U.S., specifically homosexuality and same-sex marriage. This point may sound plausible or vulnerable to be objected. Furthermore, the enthusiasm and motivation of The New York Times' journalists and editors to present

same-sex marriage topics are directly connected to the newspaper's effort to exhibit media fixation or fascination towards gay issues and topics pertaining to homosexuality in its news coverage.

Same-sex marriage can be classified as media agenda-setting through the practice of media bias towards the issue and gay community. [21] divide agenda-setting into three components. They are political agenda-setting, public agenda-setting, and media agenda-setting, in which this study has provided evidence that media agenda-setting is used by The New York Times in order to enable same-sex marriage and gay rights issues to appear important in the publication's content therefore attempts to persuade the public to accept homosexuality as normal practice and gay marriage is similar to traditional marriage between a man and a woman through mediated settings. This study provides explanation about interpretation of media agenda-setting by [21] which media agenda-setting is reliant on the news agenda disseminated or propagated by the media. Besides that, media agenda-setting provides a final impact on policy due to the one and only interaction that is the interaction between policymakers and the public through media channels—news reports and letter to editors. This final result of media agenda-setting was suggested by [22]. This study somehow provides the groundwork to analyze media agenda-setting used by America's media that concerns about reassessment of policy regarding same-sex marriage.

However, this study finds that same-sex marriage can also be related to policy agenda-setting because [21] suggest that policy agenda-setting is the response of the public and media's collective agenda. There are several articles that reported American society believes homosexuals should be rewarded a confirmation to wed their same-sex partners and the public sees homosexuality is normal or can be tolerated. Current media, on the other hand, provide relentless portrayals of homosexuality that are often pictured as nonviolent and possess positive perspectives. Rising positive public opinion regarding same-sex marriage plus media positive portrayals of homosexuality urge policymakers to reassess and repeal existing ban, prohibition, or regulations pertaining to homosexuality. This study relates this idea to the repeal of prohibition of homosexuals to serve in military force through Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy in which the upsurge positive public opinion and positive portrayals

of homosexuality by the media had led the U.S. government to loosen up the strict policy on banning homosexuals to exhibit their sexual preferences in the armed forces. *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* policy ends on September 11, 2011 and it is one of the U.S. government's policies selected to get repealed and endorsed by President Barack Obama, as an effort to gratify American gay community and the liberals. In addition, the repeal of the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* has received positive feedback from several religious organizations in the U.S. because they claim that the policy withdrawal would make the military force appears more inclusive.

### *5.3. Media, Social Issues, and Liberalism*

The term "liberalism" itself has an array of interpretations, primarily due to time and condition of a particular society. Liberalism or liberty of thought can be traced back in early civilizations as early as several centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ and during the splendor of ancient Greek and Roman empires, in which it is coincidentally paralleled to the modern world ideology of liberalism. This study's introductory part has elucidated that the term "liberal" simply directed to the ideology of liberalism. However, the term "liberalism" may vary from numerous scholars because of the reality of the term that is different interpretation represents different time or era, nevertheless, this study chooses to use Harold J. Laski's interpretation of liberalism because it represents current social context and event.

In addition, this study is related to the changing and emerging trend in American society to tolerate gay marriage and accept it just the way it is. Social justice is placed at the utmost level. Media in the United States are assisting the movement for liberalism to become larger and affect the public as a whole. Political and social discourses that tend to involve liberal perspectives are often associated with the propagation and encouragement for same-sex marriage to pass law through mediated settings such as television, radio, and the Internet. Hence, journalists and editors possess a palpable obligation to be liberal pertaining to political and sociological issues in their news reports. [40] stated in *What Liberal Media: the Truth about Bias and the News* that most of the journalists in the United States are liberal in reporting social issues, however it contradicts economic issues, in which he concluded that journalists are rather

conservative. [40] also mentioned that Americans, especially those who reside in New York and Washington, are liberals and possess similar point of views regarding political and social issues. They are absolutely pro-gay marriage, they support abortion, they are pro-environment, they support firearms control in the U.S., and they support reformation of campaign finance—those who live in New York and Washington are presumed in this study to be the die-hard fans of same-sex marriage to pass the law.

Generally, liberalism discusses in this study reflected an individual's liberty, freedom, and social justice. To discuss liberalism means to relate it with liberty. This is what many Americans are seeking for, at least at this moment. To legalize same-sex marriage, marijuana for recreational use to pass law, and permission to perform abortion are several examples that illustrate the rise of the movement of liberalism, which means freedom for an individual or group of people that share similar views to do whatever they want and wish, without limitation and regulation imposed by the government and religious tradition. In the subsection of literature review, this study has explained the pragmatic nature of distribution of ideology in society that simultaneously explained why liberals are dominating the news rooms. Liberal political views in arts and Hollywood should be credited for the premise of liberal ideology is dominant within a society and the profession of journalism thereby suggesting that liberal society shapes liberal journalists and concurrently causing liberal bias to occur during the process of news coverage on certain issues, particularly political and social issues.

Liberalism, on the other hand, could be directly associated with public opinion. The U.S. has provided proof that movement for liberalism may change public opinion regarding certain social and political issues. Homosexuality has become so contemporary in the state thus leading to the changing public opinion against it. A few decades before, the practice of homosexuality was extremely opposed by many Americans and policymakers, regardless of their partisanship in political view—Democratic, Republican, or Independent but gay topics are now blatantly selected by American news media. Yet, media have played a major role in altering public opinion regarding same-sex marriage and homosexuality, in general.

#### *5.4. Same-Sex Marriage: Breaking the Spiral of Silence*

By discussing public opinion, political and social issues simultaneously, this study has found one appealing relationship between same-sex marriage issue and changes of public opinion. Public opinion contributes to the presence of Spiral of Silence Theory in terms of same-sex marriage issue and societal settings, that the theory is coined by German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. Spiral of Silence Theory explains the process of public opinion growth. In *Theories of Human Communication* by [41], Noelle-Neumann interprets spiral of silence as the increasing pressure people feel to conceal their views when they think they are in the minority. The Spiral of Silence Theory justifies the emerging opinion regarding same-sex marriage when homosexuals (as the minority in the U.S.) feel the pressure to seal their views regarding marriage equality and gay rights because of their fear of isolation. Nonetheless, the issue of same-sex marriage is deemed as a matter of time for homosexuals to break the spiral of silence within a definite period of time in future because media possess and contribute to the power to break the spiral of silence through propagation of endorsement for same-sex marriage. Homosexuals have experienced the fear of isolation throughout many decades of the modern world.

Since the last two decades (from late 1990s to first several years of the 2000s), American news media were mostly crusading the issue of homosexuality as a threat to children's development and it endangered family values. Same-sex marriage began to obtain concentration again rather than to discuss homosexuality in general thus gay partnership legitimacy dictates within same-sex marriage context and incessantly covered by the press, to compare to previous decades. And in the 1990s, some homosexuals break the spiral of silence because of the "fear of isolation" factor is no longer applicable since Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court passes the law of same-sex marriage. In this day and age, spiral of silence remains shattered because of continual endorsement for gay rights and marriage equality, in conjunction with positive media coverage and portrayals regarding same-sex marriage. To understand the theory of spiral of silence better, it can be summarized as follows:

Most people are able to estimate (although not always correctly) what majority opinion is on most issues, or whether a particular opinion on an issue is gaining or losing ground. Those who see their own views as becoming more widely accepted tend to voice these views in public, and with increasing confidence. Those whose opinions seem to be losing ground are reluctant to speak out. The silence of the 'losers', in turn, increases the confidence of the other side. Finally, only a hard core is willing to defend the minority opinion in public.

The Spiral of Silence Theory is a theory postulating that people will voice opinions they think the majority hold and be silent on voicing minority opinions, opinions to which the majority would object. Before voicing opinions, people estimate the likelihood of positive and negative response. Opinions that are likely to get a positive response are voiced and opinions that are likely to get a negative response go unspoken.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the demand for gay rights, for equality, for an end to harassment, for an end to job discrimination, and a lot more, was definitely a minority opinion and so the voice remained relatively silent, save for a few brave souls like Harvey Milk or spirited gay activist John Paul Hudson. Majority opinion was that being gay was a psychological disorder, a sin, and much worse. And this majority opinion grew, at least for a time. Gradually, however, more and more people (though still in the minority) spoke out. And, they spoke out loudly enough and continued to speak out even to the point of being heard and responded to by the Supreme Court.

One need not believe in what Noelle-Neumann called a "quasi-statistical" sixth sense to see her point. The conformity of crowd behavior has been observed almost as long as there have been crowds and for most people, the smaller and weaker one feels one's own position to be, the harder it is to maintain it. Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence Theory does not treat only the increasing dominance of opinion that already commands a majority, but can also account for any opinion that is "gaining ground". But how does an opinion gain ground, if it begins as the minority view? On this she has less to say. But others who have studied the mass media effects to the public can assist to elucidate this situation. Communication scholar [29], for instance writes of the rhetorical phenomenon known as "framing".

Framing is a process whereby communicators, consciously or unconsciously, act to construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be

interpreted by others in a particular manner. Frames operate in four key ways: they define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. Frames are often found within a narrative account of an issue or event, and are generally the central organizing idea.

There can be little doubt that the dominant institutions in the America's news media—the leading newspapers, magazines, and television network news divisions—have been at work for years in framing the question of same-sex marriage in ways that advantage its advocates. In the dominant conservative media “frame”, for instance, it is always the opponents (and never the supporters) of same-sex marriage who are described as employing the controversy as a “wedge issue”, the implicit moral judgment being that those who push such controversies to the forefront are being divisive and working to destroy the harmony of the American community by pitting neighbor against neighbor. The advocates of same-sex marriage are never described in similarly loaded language, although the radicalism of the proposition that men can marry men and women can marry women is self-evident in the U.S.

The danger for traditional marriage's defenders, then, is that media framing of an issue can, over time, push many Americans into a spiral of silence, in which they will first experience the effect of publicly suppressing their opinion that there is “something wrong” with same-sex marriage, then prevaricate even with strangers surveying them on the phone, and finally acquiesce, however reluctantly, in a *fait accompli* foisted on them as a “constitutional right” by activist judges. On the marriage issue, there will no doubt always be a sizable “hardcore” of defenders of conjugal marriage, particularly though not exclusively among the most orthodox religious believers. But there is a “soft middle” in American public opinion on this question, comprised of those who oppose same-sex marriage but fear that their views are losing ground and are hopelessly retrograde in a changing world. In contrast, happened across the Atlantic Ocean from the United States, Paris Anti-Gay Riot/Protest in 2013 is deemed in this study as a form of spiral of silence occurrence and later has formed “Threshold Model” as proposed by Granovetter and Schelling in 1971 who suggest that individuals' behavior depends on the number of other individuals already engaging in that behavior. Rioters and protesters are mostly conservative heterosexuals to oppose the idea of to legalize same-sex

marriage in France, initiated by French socialist President François Hollande who is eager to place same-sex partnership as not just ‘partnership’ or ‘union’ in France but rather possesses similar status of marriage. There are some unspecified allegations that heterosexuals in France are being bullied just to gratify homosexual needs and to propel liberal thoughts among French people. Most of the news reported that opponents of same-sex marriage provoke the population of Paris to respond against advocacy of same-sex marriage although France has its own civil solidarity agreement, Pacte Civil de Solidarité (PACS) since 1999 therefore it is interesting to note that current development of legalizing same-sex marriage in France demonstrates a little—if not as great as it is anticipated—spiral of silence among Parisians in the context of gay issues. Based on the aforementioned explanation provided by [29] which media play a role to frame issue and news therefore stimulate advocacy for same-sex marriage through mass media, this study garnered a captivating findings that spiral of silence is interrelated to news framing, apart from the role of media framing as an extension and second-level of agenda-setting.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

Media set the agenda for the nation and at the same time, journalism is going to get sacrificed on the altar of the advocacy for same-sex marriage. Therefore, this study attempts to discover the relationship of The New York Times’ same-sex marriage news reports during 2012 United States with agenda-setting and news framing. Most of the discussed literatures present lack of evidences on how framing is utilized by the American press from 1940s to 2000s in terms of same-sex marriage issue. Related and relevant past studies cited are mostly present evidences on the investigation of the rising news coverage of the homosexual community for the past six decades. Many past studies focus solely on the direct media effect in news reports regarding homosexuality and its endorsement or advocacy by the press towards the multicultural society of the United States of America. However, there are also numerous literatures that discussed Agenda-Setting Theory and its utilization by the press thus this study finds that they are adequate to comprehend the usage of agenda-setting and framing, practiced by American press, specifically The New York Times.

Findings of this study suggest that The New York Times is indeed enthusiastic to promote same-sex marriage through its news reports. Based on qualitative media content analysis conducted, news frames are used by The New York Times in order to present news regarding same-sex marriage during 2012 United States Presidential Election. They are “Support for Gay Rights” and “Support for Marriage Equality”. These two news frames are the most significant and are paralleled to the electoral campaign manifesto by President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party as a whole, concurrently set the agenda for the nation, due to their persistent endorsement for several other socially-related changes of policy and issues besides same-sex marriage to pass the law. The newspaper also can be proved to employ liberal perspective in social issues because the entire collected news data provided evidence that The New York Times is positive towards the law of same-sex marriage to pass in reported states. Christian conservatives namely Mitt Romney, Republican Party’s candidates, and supporters of the Republican Party are viewed as a “threat” for same-sex marriage to pass law in several states namely Maine and Maryland through ballot measure and are persistently referred as “opponents of same-sex marriage” rather than to say simply “opposition” or “electoral opponent” during 2012 U.S. Presidential Election.

Based on [14], they state that issues that keep salient are parallel with media’s constant propagation during a Danish general election in 1970s. This idea and conclusion by [14] leads this study to discover that same-sex marriage is also being kept salient by The New York Times because it is paralleled with the Democratic Party’s elusive agenda during the 2012 United States Presidential Election that is to bolster gay rights in order to sway gay voters. There is also a tendency or trend to publish positive heterosexual’s opinions and positive survey results regarding same-sex marriage and gay rights. The agenda is simple and transparent. It is all about gay rights is human rights. By supporting gay rights, it means to end bigotry, to commence liberty, and to inaugurate equality for all Americans. This study concludes that it has achieved its objectives to identify and to relate news frames and agenda-setting in propagating the ideology of liberalism. Same-sex marriage can be described as one of the essential issues that need to be concentrated on due to its influence to change public opinion through agenda-setting by the media

and policymakers. This study provides a descriptive analysis of news frame and agenda-setting of same-sex marriage news reports during 2012 United States Presidential election that are stipulated to draw possible impacts of social and political issues such as homosexuality to ever-changing public opinion in the U.S. Public opinion concomitantly contributes to the breaking of spiral of silence among homosexuals because they are the minority in the United States.

### *6.1. Limitation*

Various limitations are endured throughout the whole study. First of all, this study has to subscribe to the global edition of The New York Times, wherein it contributes to the distinction between print version and web version of the newspaper besides the distinction between global edition and New York or United States edition. This study presumes that such distinctions are present in terms of content, publish date, and placement in section between print and web version. Besides that, this study itself indicates a weakness in term of neutrality and the uncertainty that clear patterns may not emerge, in which qualitative media content analysis probably may not be as neutral as it claims to be because data must be selected, recorded, and described accurately as well as because of the philosophy of the research itself that is interpretivism, which the researcher's interpretation guides and crafts this whole study. Theories used in this study—Framing and Agenda-Setting—may be argued too much because a particular study only needs to use one theory, nevertheless, this study has to use both because Framing and Agenda-Setting are interconnected thus to neglect one of these two theories seems improper and inadequate to provide satisfactory findings and discussion of the issue.

In some instances, this study attempts to quantify certain attributes of the news reports and content of The New York Times' web archive therefore it moderately describes the quality of relationship between news frame and agenda-setting with encouragement for liberalism, shaping public opinion, and measure salience of the issue. Findings of this study are strictly about the selected media and at certain circumstances, it cannot generalize the whole journalism practice and media industry in the U.S. because media are basically

partisan and possess their own unique standpoints regarding a particular issue. In addition, qualitative media content analysis acts to describe, rather than to enlighten the elements of the study which it does not clarify thoroughly the meaning and interpretation for the findings of the study. Partisanship of the media could be one of the limitations this study has endured because news media usually possess their own opinion regarding homosexuality and gay topics to be presented to the public based on one's political view (usually producers and editors) therefore this study presumes The New York Times is indeed, unmistakably advocating gay marriage—but it is not credible enough to generalize the whole America's media industry is advocating homosexuality, unless comparative media and “Bandwagon Effect” studies are conducted to provide greater information and results.

## *6.2. Recommendation*

This study recommends that findings of the study can be improved by using triangulation or mixed method that comprises qualitative and quantitative research methods. To examine salience of the issue and agenda-setting in the perspective of public requires survey research in order to gather data and later will be processed to understand and to evaluate with the existing findings regarding salience of the issue in the context of content of a specific media. Through the combination of two methods, it would yield solid yet practical evidence to enlighten salience of one particular issue, similarly to the past researches by McCombs and Shaw (1972) [19] and Siune and Borre (1975) [14]. The method of triangulation also may garner additional information to support the clarification and rationalization of media agenda-setting because it involves two dimensions for the study—media and the public thus providing better understanding to illustrate relationships between same-sex marriage with movement for liberalism, ever-changing public opinion, and Spiral of Silence Theory. In terms of studying framing of the news, comparative study also can be conducted to identify similarities and distinctions of one particular issue is framed by a number of media therefore it is anticipated to provide researchers with two or more version of news framing from two different news media. Furthermore, further research also can be attempted to measure public behavior,

as a form of media impact study pertaining to homosexuality and homosexual agenda in America's media through Social Learning Theory suggested by a prominent psychologist Albert Bandura as the theoretical groundwork and "Threshold Model" that individuals' behavior depends on the number of other individuals already engaging in that behavior, developed by Granovetter and Schelling in 1971. Additionally, a study of semantics could be conducted to understand thoroughly the meaning of homosexuality-related words or concepts, as well as to examine the usage distinction of homosexuality-related words or concepts in an array of media through a comparative study.

Theoretically, there are similarities between second-level agenda-setting and framing, even if they are not identical processes. Both are more concerned with how issues or other objects (people, groups, organizations, countries, and etc.) are depicted in the media than with which issues or objects which are more or less prominently reported. Both focus on the most salient or prominent aspects or themes or descriptions of the objects of interest. Both are concerned with ways of thinking rather than objects of thinking. But framing does seem to include a broader range of cognitive processes—such as moral evaluations, causal reasoning, appeals to principles, and recommendations for treatment of problems—than does second-level agenda-setting (the salience of attributes of an object). Framing studies have far outstripped both agenda-setting and priming studies in popularity during the past decade, but framing seems to be the least well-defined of the three, conceptually or operationally. Future studies should make renewed efforts to define frames and framing more clearly, and to clarify the similarities and differences and explore the relationships between framing and agenda-setting, and in another extension that is between framing and priming. A number of the articles in *Journal of Communication* are beginning to do this, which is a promising sign of things to come.

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