

Media Coverage and Social Changes: Examining Valence of Portrayal of the LGBT Community from 2000 to 2014 in Two U.S. Magazines

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Abstract: According to agenda setting theory, the content of mass media often tightly correlates with its audiences, which significantly reflects and affects the public opinions concerning certain group and its members. This study intends to reveal how American magazines portrayed the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community over a comparatively long period of time, with the purpose of highlighting the role that media played in the formation of general public opinions towards the LGBT community, and further examining the association between media coverage and social changes. Therefore, the current study content analyzed 162 articles concerning this community from two of American best-selling magazines, *TIME* and *People*, during the time period of 2000-2014. The results indicate a strong shift of media coverage in valence, which to some extent matches the social trends and political movements happened during this time period. Implications, potential limitations, and future directions are also included.

Keywords: Magazine, media coverage, LGBT, content analysis, agenda setting, 2000-2014.

1. Introduction

Almost two decades ago, in 1997, one of the most successful talk show hosts today, Ellen DeGeneres first came out as a lesbian in one episode of the situation comedy, *Ellen*, starring by herself. The disclosure of her sexual orientation aroused dramatic public feedbacks and discussions, and sparked intense news interests from highly recognized printed media to small tabloids. In June 2015, the American Supreme Court has ruled by a 5-to-4 vote that Constitution guarantees a right to same-sex marriage. Likewise, news stories concerning this historical victory for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community once again walked into the spotlight, catching audiences' full attention, and occupying all the headlines of news media. Taking another example of Caitlyn Jenner, formerly known as Bruce Jenner, the transgendered story about this Olympic champion had broken social media, and preempted the primetime news reports of major networks. Through decades, the news stories from vanity celebrities' coming-out to serious social right movements for the whole community continually attract public attention and arouse large discussions.

Apart from the garrulous and sensational features of entertainment journalism, the process of promoting LGBT rights, in effects, has gone through ups and downs in the last two decades, and the federal laws and states policies in favor of the LGBT community or not have been reformed and resurrected several times. During these "battles", mass media have always been

active and keen on these issues. Only in California, the passing of Proposition 8 (California Secretary of State, 2008), that restricted the definition of marriage to only heterosexual couples and eliminated the same-sex couples' rights to marry, has evoked fierce feedbacks from both proponents and opponents. More importantly, newspapers opened up columns discussing it, major national networks were served as platforms for opening debates, and as its own home state, a major part of Hollywood stood up to advocate marriage equality loud and clear. No matter whether various media tycoons picked the side or not, there is no doubt that the reality and media's own editorial policies have mutually highlighted the importance of LGBT issues, and prioritized this marginalized and stigmatized community on the social agenda.

With news medias' vast amount of coverage, the certain aspect of editorial systems was revealed. Often time mass media has to shape its content according to its audiences and advertising clients, which consequently confines and identifies media's reporting perspective and position (McCombs & Shaw, 1977). It is thus reasonable to speculate that when it comes to the disclosure of one celebrity's sexual orientation, entertainment-orientated media may write in a soft or even gossip tone that contrasts to the serious or critical base of news-orientated media. Obviously, to look into how different types of media portrayals of the LGBT community could be valuable.

In addition, the exact role that media played in de-stigmatizing and un-marginalizing minority group, nevertheless, is still unknown and debating. On one hand, the argument is not unheard that the increasing amount of coverage about LGBT issues and amplified presentations of diverse sexual identities on media have largely empowered this community, which results in framing this community differently and shifting its traditional image within the public (Laura & Olson, 1998). On the other hand, scholars argue that mass media just merely reflect the mainstream of public opinions (Croteau & Hoynes, 2014).

In short, it is clear that public's attention and opinions concerning the LGBT community could be tightly correlated with mass media coverage, through a time when states and federal laws and policies have gone through constant changes. Therefore, it is this study that intends to reveal how news coverage in magazines shifted through last fifteen years, and examine the relationship between the valence of news coverage and time.

Based on the aforementioned rationale, this study used content analysis to investigate to which extent mass printed media (magazines) has had a more positive valence of portrayal of the LGBT community, and if there is a correlation between its depictions and social changes taking place through the examined time period.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Minority and Media Representation

It's of utmost importance to examine how mass media frame one minor social group, and what sort of opinions the media hold towards members of this marginalized community since most of the time mass media have an effect in shaping the general public views upon that group. With the increasing media representations of the LGBT members, many research claims that it is beneficial for both sexual minority and majority members.

For many young LGBT individuals often search for resources with which to educate themselves about their burgeoning sexuality. Media does play a role in teaching individuals about sexuality and sexual behavior (Hetsroni, 2007), so analyzing exactly what young LGBT individuals might be learning about themselves from the media has myriad merits. In terms of sexual majority, for instance, Bond and Compton (2015) found that individuals who watched media programs with gay or lesbian characters were then more likely to endorse same-sex marriage. Other research has shown that heterosexual men are especially influenced by portrayals of homosexuality in media (Calzo & Ward, 2009).

Certainly, current images of the LGBT community on mass media are severely less stigmatized than those decades ago (GLAAD, 2011). Beginning from the widely heralded and discussed coming-out episode of the situation comedy, *Ellen* starring by Ellen DeGeneres, networks and production companies have been actively including objective, serious, and diverse LGBT characters within their programs, such as *Queer as Folk* aired on Showtime, HBO series *Six Feet Under*, and ABC's hit show *Modern Family*. Similarly, within the film industry, Hollywood has not only embraced works about sexual orientation minorities, but also featured them in award-acclaimed motion pictures like *Boys Don't Cry*, *Brokeback Mountain*, and *Milk*.

Apart from the LGBT characters appearing on the screens, news coverage of gays and lesbians on printed media has experienced changes over decades. In the 1980s, the AIDS epidemic pushed news media to address issues related to the gay community more directly; and debates around same-sex marriage and LGBT individuals serving in the military have been on the front-pages in the twenty-first century as well (Croteau & Hoynes, 2014). Though conservative and rural communities have often lagged behind on these issues compared with cosmopolitan metropolitans, there is no doubt on the increasing coverage primarily concerning the LGBT community have been constantly appearing on major nationally subscribed media.

For this study, to clarify the reason underlying the increasing representations of this minority group on mass media is crucial. According to Fejes and Petrich (1993), changes in mass media representations and depictions of sexual minority individuals did not occur spontaneously with the social changes. According to their thesis, the shift was not brought by enlightened social attitudes or social liberations. Rather, the LGBT activism in confronting and challenging negative stereotypes played a decisive role in the change (Fejes & Petrich, 1993).

A more empowered LGBT community itself partially resulted in these changes. Based on Nardi's (1997) observations, there is an increase in the production of media content by gays and lesbians themselves, for instance, film festivals focusing on the LGBT community regularly held in many major cities, gay newspapers and magazines increasingly attract mainstream advertisers, and gay public access television.

The function of social right movements, in fact, is not just evident within sexual orientation minority group. Women's organization and civil rights groups, as well as organizations endorsing the LGBT rights like Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), are significant social factors as a form of collective social agency, influencing the media industry to change the landscape of its content. Thus, it is essential to rule out the possibility that the shift of media industry may directly result from the increasing positive social attitudes, which lays a solid foundation to address the following research question and hypotheses.

2.2. Agenda Setting

As one prominent theory in mass communication, agenda setting chiefly claims that mass media is more effective in prioritizing which societal agenda public should look into rather than shaping how public looks into it (Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Through various empirical studies and meta-analysis, substantial evidence has been provided to justify this core thesis. The contention, however, still exists.

Some scholars argue that the frame established after a long-term exposure to content solely from mass media confines the public's interpretations and attitudes towards the social world, and as a result cultivate rigid stereotypes and social attitudes (Goffman, 1974). Others, however, support that mass media merely reflect the social trends, and have no intention to frame certain social issues, and does not have the strong influences in shaping social attitudes. Given the dissension in the causality of the correlation and actual validation of media effects, this study attempts to examine the media coverage of the LGBT community during time. Since then, it is the fundamental priority to find out to what extent printed media—magazines in this case—focuses on this community. The following research question is thus proposed:

RQ: To what extent did U.S. print media (magazines) focus on the LGBT issues during these time periods (i.e., 2000 to 2014)? And how did it change?

Although it is unclear whether mass media is the exact reason for different public opinions (mostly negative attitudes in the beginning) towards the LGBT community, some research does notice that mass media inclined to question the legitimacy of groups whose goal differ from mainstream norms (McLeod, 1995; Shoemaker, 1984). Additionally, the ideology incorporated within the media is likely to emphasize on the legitimacy of the state, establish de-legitimization of challenges to social order, and express frustration and discontent towards nonconformists (McQuail, 1984; Gitlin, 1980). It is thus possible for mass media to affect the general public views towards one certain social group with deviance from the mainstream, yet the actual causal relationship is not supported by valid evidence.

Since then it is beyond the intention of this study to clarify on the contention of agenda setting studies upon its effectiveness in shaping public attitudes. But it is quite clear that the trend of how social attitudes towards the LGBT community shifted, in this study, might be correlated with the increasing media coverages and representations. Though current attitudes have strongly been inclined to higher level of acceptance towards the LGBT community on a national level, which was obviously not always the case.

Often, the most progressive portion of a society is assumed to be its younger generation (Anderson & Fetner, 2008). Socially conservative attitudes, such as a negative opinion towards the LGBT community, are mostly found in older groups and religious groups (Anderson & Fetner, 2008). While some research has shown that the acceptance of homosexuality has grown in such a widespread manner that it cannot be attributed to demographic characteristics alone (Loftus, 2001), generational differences are not to be discounted entirely. In fact, in a study of generational cohorts and attitudes concerning sexuality, Anderson and Fetner (2008) found that earlier cohorts had less sympathetic attitudes towards the LGBT community than older

generations, though this effect was more apparent in Canadian citizens than the United States.

In the United States, though, attitudes have significantly changed since the early 1990s in terms of how the general population views the LGBT community and its rights. For instance, prior to 1990, most US citizens were generally opposed to the LGBT community. However, in the intervening time, acceptance has increased, and not just in the halls of universities and schools as these issues are gaining more support and visibility (Kozloski, 2010).

Since then it is reasonable to claim that the general public attitudes concerning this community have been conspicuously in changing, which may be correlated with—even possibly result from, though that is not the intention of this study—the valence of portrayals and depictions of LGBT individuals and the community on print magazines. Besides, the different type of magazines could present its content with various perspectives, tones, and styles in the purpose of pandering to its subscribers, readers and advertisers. Based on these, the following hypotheses are anticipated:

H1: Later magazine articles contain more positively valenced portrayal of the LGBT community than articles in earlier issues.

H2: Articles in the entertainment-oriented magazines contain more positively valenced portrayal of the LGBT community than news-oriented magazines.

Therefore, this study examines the effects of time on the valence of portrayal of the LGBT community in both entertainment-oriented and news-oriented magazines. Particularly, through analysis of the valence of the articles, the goal is to address if there exists a shift in the portrayal throughout the different time periods. Finally, print media will be examined rather than television portrayals, because much of the existing research analyzes portrayals of the LGBT characters on the screen rather than news or entertainment articles about the community as a whole.

3. Method

To test these hypotheses, this study coded and analyzed news content focusing on the LGBT community in two best-selling news and entertainment magazines in the United States, *TIME* and *People*, during the time period of 2000-2014. The unit of the analysis was the article in the magazine.

3.1. Sample

In order to capture the entire coverage of this topic, all articles focused on the LGBT issues appearing in *TIME* magazine and *People* magazine during the time period (i.e., 2000-2014) will be identified. Using library databases such as ProQuest and LexisNexis along with the archives on the magazines' websites, articles were compiled using search terms such as “homosexual*,” “gay,” “lesbian,” “transgender”, etc.

During selection, both purposive sampling and random sampling methods were carried

out. At first, articles published in the fifteen-year period (2000-2014) were purposively divided into three-time period groups (2000-2004, 2005-2009 and 2010-2014), due to the fact that time period was one important variable for this study. In each time period group, up to 55 articles were randomly selected, then coded, and analyzed.

3.2. Coding Procedures

In accordance with the research question and hypotheses, the codebook included three major variables: time period, the type of magazine (news-orientated and entertainment-orientated), and media coverage (focus and valence). Based on above theoretical framework, each variable is operationalized as follows:

3.2.1. Time Period

The time period is a variable that reflects the general social environment for homosexuality issues and LGBT rights and indicates how magazines as a social agent tackle current social issues. The fifteen-year period (2000-2014) was divided into three groups, each five-year period a group to itself. These time periods were divided evenly in terms of years they each contain, and more importantly, due to certain national issues and/or social changes profoundly concerning the LGBT community that took place respectively within different time periods.

During the first period, 2000-2004, United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of the petitioners, Lawrence and Garner, in the Lawrence versus Texas court case (*Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003). Namely, the court ruled that homosexual men could not be arrested for engaging in consensual homosexual intercourse, which set a landmark for advocating gay rights in the beginning of 2000s.

The second period, 2005-2009, was grouped around due to the controversy surrounding California Proposition 8 (California Secretary of State, 2008). Essentially, in 2008 California's Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples could marry, but a ballot was introduced by voters that put those marriages on hold, effectively outlawing same-sex marriage (McCray, 2015). Later, Proposition 8 was ruled unconstitutional and those couples were allowed to legally get married. This represents an important mediating period, during which social rights concerning sexual minority group was heatedly debated.

At last period of time, in the *United States v. Windsor* (2013), the Supreme Court declared section 3 of The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) unconstitutional. Besides, during 2010-2014, increasing amount of news coverage and national debate about same-sex marriage were widely broadcasted across the nation, which raised as one state-by-state issue to become eventually ruled legal federally throughout the country by the Supreme Court in mid-2015 (McCray, 2015).

3.2.2. News and Entertainment Magazines

The type of magazine could play an important role in the article's portrayal of the LGBT community as well. As indicated in H2, news-oriented and entertainment-oriented magazine

would be another major focus. Thus, the two top-selling news-oriented and entertainment-oriented magazines, *TIME* and *People* were chosen and coded for analysis (Lulofs, 2014). *TIME* magazine is one of world's largest circulated weekly news magazines, which enjoys over 3 million readers in the U.S. The magazine sets its goal on hard-news journalism with high quality and dignity to inform and delight their readers, and illuminate the world. In contrast, *People* magazine claims its focus on celebrity and human-interest stories, and has one of the largest American audiences and highest advertising revenues in U.S. Its yearly special issue on "Sexiest Man Alive", featuring one Hollywood male celebrity, often draws broad attention, and makes it one of the most influential entertainment publications.

3.2.3. Media Coverage

To examine the general feature of the media coverage, each article that related to or mentioned the LGBT community or its members was coded as a single unit. The coding procedure for media coverage has two steps. First, one unit was coded if it focused on the LGBT community or not. The articles that did not focus on these issues were those that mainly discussed something outside the LGBT community, or the main topic of discussion was merely an experience as the member of this community, but not as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Next, coders coded the valence of the article as either positive or not positive which was adopted from Ban and Adams (1997). To be specific, if the article does not focus on these issues, then the coding protocol for valence:

Positively valenced articles are those that contain uplifting and inspirational stories. They support the representative of the community. Positively valenced articles are also written from the point of view of LGBT supporters.

Not positively valenced articles are unsupportive of community representatives or those that are written from the point of view of LGBT opponents. Or articles are those that contain a balance of sources, remain objective, or presents mostly facts.

If the article does focus on these issues, then the coding protocol for valence was:

Positively valenced articles are those that contain portrayals of the LGBT community as one that deserves equal rights, one that supports the LGBT advocacy groups, one that is a diverse group, one that leads a normal lifestyle, shows visible members. Positively valenced articles will also be sympathetic to the community as a whole. Articles that are sympathetic towards individuals alone are not to be coded as positive.

Not positively valenced articles are those that contain portrayals of the LGBT community as one that is essentialized, a deviant lifestyle, one that should be boycotted or fundamentally changed. Articles that make assumptions and lack of objective data would also count. Articles that are unsympathetic to both individuals and the community are to be coded negatively as well. Or articles contain both supportive and unsupportive sources. In addition, neutral articles do not explicitly endorse the LGBT groups or individuals. Neutral articles are also those that spend most of their space on

the narrative of an individual rather than the LGBT community as a whole.

Two graduate students and two undergraduate students from an American Midwestern university performed the coding. In total, 162 articles on *TIME* and *People* during the time period of 2001-2014 have been selected as samples for coding and analysis. The coders met for a final check of intercoder reliability after their completion of assigned coding. Together, they worked on 60 articles evenly from these two magazines in three time periods, and disagreement was resolved based on consensus.

The level of intercoder reliability was calculated with Krippendorff's Alpha (Krippendorff, 2007). For coding, if stories focused or not on LGBT issues, the agreement in Krippendorff's alpha reached .75, and for coding articles' valence as positive or not positive, coders' agreement reached .70. Though the alpha level is not ideal, due to the subjective nature of certain variable in the coding process, it is still of value to test the hypotheses and explore these tentative conclusions.

4. Results

With the data collected through the coding process, statistical analyses were used to test the two hypotheses proposed above, and the following results were revealed.

For H1, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the valence of *TIME* and *People* magazines' content concerning the LGBT community among three time periods. The independent variable, time period, included three groups: 2000-2004 ($M = 0.36$, $SD = 0.48$, $n = 53$), 2005-2009 ($M = 0.33$, $SD = 0.48$, $n = 54$), 2010-2014 ($M = 0.58$, $SD = 0.50$, $n = 52$).

One way univariate analysis was conducted to test the differences between the means, $F(2, 156) = 3.99$, $p < .05$, indicating support for Hypothesis 1. Thus, there is a significant difference in the valence of magazines' articles concerning the LGBT community based on time period. However, the actual difference in the mean scores between groups was quite small based on Cohen's (1988) conventions for interpreting effect size.

Then, post hoc comparisons to evaluate pairwise differences among group means were conducted with the use of Tukey HSD test since equal variances were tenable. Tests revealed a significant pairwise difference between the articles published from 2005 to 2009 and from 2010 to 2014, $p < .05$. Considering the mean of these two groups, the valence of articles published later was more positively rated than articles published in the second-time period. However, articles published during 2001-2004 do not significantly differ from the other two groups, $p > .05$. Therefore, H1 was partially supported.

For H2, a one-way ANOVA was carried out to test the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the valence of articles concerning the LGBT issues based on the focus of magazine, news-orientated or entertainment-orientated magazine. The two subgroups for the independent variables are *TIME* magazine ($M = 0.41$, $SD = 0.49$, $n = 79$) and *People* magazine ($M = 0.44$, $SD = 0.50$, $n = 80$). Although the assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested and found tenable using Levene's Test, $F(1, 157) = .66$, $p = .42$, the results of ANOVA was not significant, $F(1, 157) = .17$, $p = .68$. Thus, the H2 was rejected.

For the research question, the data collected from the sample showed that there were forty-four *TIME* magazine articles ($n = 79$) and forty *People* magazine articles ($n = 79$) focusing on the LGBT issues. In all, 53% articles in the sample focused on this community. On the other hand, it turned out articles among three time periods relatively evenly separated in focusing or not focusing on minority sexual group. In details, 58% samples in 2001-2004 period, 43% samples in 2005-2009 period, and 58% samples in 2010-2014 samples were centered on the LGBT topics.

5. Discussion

In examining and interpreting the results of the data analysis, several items were of interest, namely, the partial support for the first hypothesis and the lack of support for the second hypothesis. These all could lead to valuable and insightful implications and meaningful discussions around the over-arching research question.

5.1. Valence and Time

When exploring the partial support for the first hypothesis, there was no significant difference between the first and second or first and third time period. However, the significant difference between the second and third time periods (i.e., 2005-2009 and 2010-2014), in terms of valence, seems to suggest there was a cultural and societal shift of depiction about the LGBT community within these magazines during the last decade of the sample. This shift seemingly corresponds with several different national events concerning the LGBT community that occurred during this decade.

First, from 2010 to the present, the national debate over marriage equality has gained widespread and constant attention before the Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality in the summer of 2015. From favoring the ballot, California Proposition 8 (California Secretary of State, 2008), to rule it unconstitutional in 2013, the reformation of social images and public opinions upon marriage equality serves as strong evidence that matches up with the result of the first hypothesis.

Besides, other policies and laws favoring the LGBT rights, such as the right for same-sex couples to adopt in several states, and “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” (Bumiller, 2011), were also passed during this time period. Furthermore, the international movement for diversity and equality of sexual minority group has been flourishing during past five years with most western countries approving same-sex marriage (“The Freedom to Marry Internationally,” 2015). Clearly, the considerable shift in magazines’ coverage on the LGBT community during the last decade has a solid social background, and may tightly correlate with the reformation of public opinions and social reconstruction.

Since then, one implication from the findings is once again the well-known contention centering on agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Essentially, it is still unclear that what the exact role of news content playing in reshaping public stereotypical opinions upon issues concerning marriage equality and/or diversity and inclusiveness of the sexual minority group. Besides, it is of utmost importance to explore which agency, public or mass media, yield

main effects on setting up the agenda.

Another worthy question is how public images of the LGBT community have been differently depicted and reformed on the basis of mass media coverage. Although there are not enough validated data in these samples to resolve these questions, the limited support for the first hypothesis shed a few lights. The non-existing significant differences in terms of content valence between the first and second time period (i.e., 2000-2004 and 2005-2009) imply that the media cooperation has taken one consistent editorial perspective and position towards these issues. The major shift just took place in the last decade, considering the fact that social movements for LGBT rights could have commenced longer ago than that, which shows that mass media may take a more conservative pace or maintain an objective perspective. Hypothetically, it is later that mass media becomes subject to the public or the bigger social picture.

5.2. News Coverage in Magazine

The data analysis did not offer justification for the second hypothesis, but there are a couple possible explanations for this. In the process choosing the media to analyze, the only consideration was its readership, subscription and whether the magazine focused on entertainment news or traditional serious news, but which companies owned the publications were not considered. As it turns out, both *TIME* and *People Magazine* are owned by Time, Inc during the time period of 2000-2015 (these two magazines have been sold to Meredith Corporation in 2017). It is possible that corporate policies at the level of the publication corporation may affect the editorial guidelines that news reporters, writers, and editors followed at the magazine level. This could also explain the fact that we found no significant difference in the amount of focus each magazine put on the issues of the LGBT community. Both magazines had a similar number of articles that focused on this community and its related social issues. Overall, of the 159 articles from the sample that were coded, only 84 completely focused on this community. Often time those blurry descriptions or superficially mentioning marriage equality or issues concerning the sexual minority group may be explained by the feature of this community as a marginalized group. Again, the ownership of the magazines could be the cause of these similarities.

Another assumption for indifferences between entertainment-orientated and news-orientated magazines could be that news coverage concerning the LGBT community in terms of valence is cohesive among various types of audiences through three time periods. There is no doubt that each magazine has its specific readers that are designed for its advertising sales. Therefore, lack of a clear distinction between different magazines suggests that most of the readers were receiving similar messages. More essentially, this possibility, to a larger extent, could indirectly support the previous argument that the shifting magazines content in depicting marriage equality is correlated with the reformation of social structure, which could yield profound effects on the public opinions.

6. Future Research and Limitations

This content analysis was conducted under scientific research procedures and the collected data exhibited effective and reliable results, some limitations, however, did exist based on the whole

picture of the research.

The primary limitation of this study was the lower-than-ideal degree of intercoder reliability. Due to time constraints and the relatively subjective nature of valence of portrayal, intercoder reliability for articles' focus and valence is around .75, which is a far from the .85 desired. One reason for this probably would be that through sampling and coding, the different features of these two magazines make an article's focus become ambiguous to coders. Namely, *TIME* magazine usually has longer and intricate articles wittingly discussing this issue, but *People* magazine often merely depicts several exemplars featuring the community or LGBT individuals in a generalized way. Consequently, the ambiguity upon whether an article fully focuses on the LGBT community or not renders the previously designed and standardized coding protocol insufficient. Future projects could examine the codebook and find ways, through literature and discussion, to improve and clarify the codes in order to find one single codebook adapted to both types of magazines.

Another limitation was the aforementioned fact that both magazines chosen for data collection were owned by the same publication corporation. It's hard to say for certain that this may have influenced the results of the data, but it cannot be entirely ignored. Thus, a modified project might very well examine multiple sources of information from different publication corporations, and reveal certain interesting and worthy results.

The final limitation is that the study fails to take the relationship between public perceptions and media content into account, which of course requires more delicate designed experiments or longitudinal quantitative and qualitative research. Despite these limitations, the research design and conduction are all on the basis of solid scientific research procedures, which lead this study to reliable results and several valuable discoveries.

Overall, given the pre-discussed conclusions and limitations, this study does provide a stepping-stone for future research. While taking public opinions into account, the future study should attempt to reveal the role of media playing in forming individual's perceptions concerning the LGBT community. In this approach, scholars could refine the agenda setting theory and offer more validated justifications for the media effects on audience's stereotypical opinions and attitudes towards a marginalized group.

Future research, for instance, could focus on several self-identified LGBT celebrities covered in a variety of articles. Studies could analyze how the print media has categorized and depicted the narrative of these individuals and whether there is any relationship between the valence of those articles and audience perceptions of the celebrities. Besides, as mentioned earlier, the upcoming projects could examine print media owned by different publication corporations, comparing these different companies and the resulting focus and valence of their articles. Additionally, later project could investigate the focus and valence of magazines that is specifically catered toward the LGBT community such as *Out*, and try to reveal how the specialized magazine incorporates into the own identity formation as a member of the sexual minority community.

In addition, future research could enhance the research design, such as codebook design and the unit of analysis. Since the current study only coded each article as positively valenced and non-positively valenced, future studies could examine a wider range of categories in measuring valence across all units of analysis, and develop specific codebook with ordinal measurement

of positive, neutral, and negative (e.g., Likert scale). For this study, the unit of analysis was the article. In future, the unit of analysis could be smaller, such as paragraphs, and specific media frames could be studied as well based on framing theory. Also, because of mere examination for the one corner of the U.S. society in this study, future research could look into other media forms, such as movies or television programs portraying LGBT individuals, or major networks news reporting featuring the LGBT community. It is also worthy to look into media coverage of the LGBT community before 2000, and audiences' perceptions of the media content.

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