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“Social” Movements: A Trend Analysis of the
Role of Social Media on
Social Movements

Courtney Nelson Stubbs

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Pamela Brubaker, Chair
Christopher Wilson
Kenneth Plowman

School of Communications
Brigham Young University

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ABSTRACT

“Social” Movements: A Trend Analysis of the Role of Social Media on Social Movements

Courtney Nelson Stubbs
School of Communications, BYU
Master of Arts

The gay rights movement has been very active on social media throughout the years. Using a trend analysis this study aimed to answer how social media is being used during a social movement, how a social movement evolves on social media, and how social media is being used by organizations to create change in social movements. Overall, the findings revealed 11 different ways social media is being used during a social movement, which shows how important social media is in helping a social movement gain traction and create the desired impact.

Keywords: social media, gay rights, social movement, public relations

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Introduction

The term “social movement” has taken on new meaning as efforts for social justice, rights and freedoms, and current issues go viral on social media platforms. Social movements are the most prevalent example of social change taking place today. These social movements take place due to the presence of existing social problems. Social problems are defined as “a social condition that a segment of society views as harmful to members of society and is in need of remedy” (Mooney et al., 2022, p. 11). Social problems can be any size, can start either offline or online, or happen online and offline simultaneously, and can range from impacting a few individuals to millions of people. From higher levels of decision-making within the government to what is more widely discussed through public policy, social movements can be spurred by issues within policies and a desire to create change. Whether it be petitioning to amend laws and policies or creating awareness and raising funds, the goal of social movements has become focused on shifting social norms. Social movements bring about change on three levels, “(1) to alter power relations between challengers, authorities, and third parties, (2) to force policy change, and (3) to produce broad systemic changes, both at the structural (institutional) and cultural level” (Giugni et al., 1998, p. xiv)

Both worldwide and individually, non-profit organizations, corporations, and local communities are beginning to recognize the need for change on a social level (Bies et al., 2007; Golden-Biddle & Dutton, 2012; Pares et al., 2107). There are hundreds of social media accounts dedicated solely to spreading awareness and creating change, as many individual voices come together to take a stand. Social change can be defined as the way social and cultural norms, behaviors, institutions, and human relations and interactions transform society. According to Ganz (2008) there are 5 practices involved in successful social movements - relationship

building, developing a narrative, strategizing, action, and structures - that can be used by passionate actors to help “translate values into actions” (Ganz, 2008).

It can take years for social change to happen, and some changes only made possible by the social movement circulating on social media. Recent social issues that have sparked awareness and dialogue on social media include interest in mental health, gender inequalities, feminist movements, body positivity, accessibility, and environmental sustainability (Staggenborg, 2016). And within those areas mentioned above, are specific groups who are actively taking a stand on social media platforms to incite change, from adult females normalizing breastfeeding, individuals in support of the Iran Women’s Movement, and companies actively promoting black and Hispanic owned companies and products to combat the racial discrimination that exists within today’s society.

This research aims to understand how social media influences social movements that make them impactful and the factors that make it likely to create social change, as well as the role individuals and organizations play in helping a social movement evolve. Using the gay rights movement for the focus of this case study will be able to examine how social media is being used during a social movement and how its use evolves over time along with the social movement.

The larger implication of this study aims to provide a framework that can be used for identifying the impact of social media on a social movement being able to influence change. This framework will be able to help facilitate more effective advocacy and activism campaigns, issue virality through social media, individual engagement, and produce effective solutions. It will also provide professionals within the communication field, companies, individuals, and organizations wanting to be involved with social change an opportunity to examine their efforts on social

media by providing them with a framework for how to initiate, engage with, and ultimately progress social movements by increasing participation, and thus create the desired impact.

Literature Review

To examine how social media movements can bring about noticeable social change, five major topics need to be discussed. These topics include social movements, the role of social media in facilitating issues--including social media advocacy and activism and user engagement--public relations involvement in social change, issue life cycle, and lastly, the measurement and evaluation of communication effectiveness.

Social Movement

A social movement can be defined as an organized effort by a group of individuals or organizations to achieve a common goal, typically that of social or political change. Social and political movements are and have been central to life (Downing, 2008). Such social and political movements play an important role in society. Movements can help facilitate an increase in awareness of issues by spreading information (Strauss Swanson & Szymanski, 2020). Social movements are an outcome of “contentious collective action” (Giugni, 1998) that brings individuals with similar beliefs and motivations together as part of the process of inciting change. A collective identity is important for individual participation in social movements, whereas active and passive participation is determined by who the movement is for and who shows support (Sveningsson et al., 2022). The social movement theory examines who gets involved, and the why and how of their involvement. It theorizes that people drive or join social movements due to feeling deprived of something or inequality in relation to others. In the case of the gay rights social movement, the LGBT community was driven to mobilize a movement because they were deprived of rights they felt they deserved.

Over the years, social movements have taken many different forms. A common term to describe social movements is grassroots. The term grassroots is typically used when describing a

social movement that involves individuals in a specific geographic location using collective action to bring about social change, referred to as bottom-up efforts. Even though the issue may be national or international, the efforts of a grassroots movement take place locally, and start at the bottom of the issue taking place. An example of a grassroots movement before social media was the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom of August 1963, led by the famous Martin Luther King Jr. Alternatively, a social movement that begins with policy to create impact at a larger scale is known as top-down. There are also instances of combining bottom-up and top-down efforts, such as grassroots and organizations joining together to implement change locally, nationally, or internationally. Although there may be differences among social movements in the past and recent years, there are some commonalities that help each social movement gain traction.

Successful movements involve a plethora of variables that are used to incite change. To motivate participation, organizations can create change by building a collaborative network, using leaders advantageously, expanding the original network by bringing together other groups and organizations, and using storytelling and social media to connect with people (Nardini et al., 2021). Other strategies for a movement's success include using social mediators, or “influential key actors,” to incorporate grassroots activism with social media use and using hashtags of different causes together (Isa & Himelboim, 2018). Social movements may not be dependent on social media, but it does help increase the social movement presence. Leaders and participants are equally important to the cause of social movements. And, of course, resources, funds, events--whether they include peaceful protests, riots, and other demonstrations--and policy changes are important to keep social movements moving forward.

Some movements catch attention by being fun, as was the case for The Ice Bucket Challenge for ALS. The Ice Bucket Challenge involved pouring a bucket of ice water over one's head and challenging others to do the same. If those challenged did not act in 24 hours they had to donate \$100 to an ALS nonprofit. One way social movements gain influence is due to the number of people that resonate with the issue, such as the #MeToo movement that supported sexual violence survivors, or the #BlackLivesMatter which called attention to the racism, discrimination, inequality, and violent acts committed against black people. However, there are also smaller scale social movements that make an impact, but do not gain popularity.

Social Media Role in Issues

Digital technology has changed the way social movements gain traction and where they begin, but there remain some similarities to the traditional social movements that took place before social media which involved riots, marches, and protests (Isa & Himelboim, 2018). What has changed is the role of technology and social media platforms in the flow of information and conversations happening online. Social networking sites have made it possible for anybody with a phone to be able to take part in current issues and movements. Social movements involving technology can also provide a place for individuals without a voice to be involved and feel empowered (Strauss et al., 2020).

Social media is no longer being used just for connecting with others, with which a relationship has already existed, or as a platform for sharing information and posting updates. Now there are platforms used to connect with hundreds if not thousands of people that share the same perspectives and opinions, take stances on current issues troubling our world, and engage as a larger community. New technology offers a way for advocacy and activist groups to form and gain political opportunities (Napoli, 2016). Digital media provides a way for individuals to

interact and engage with an organization and other members, making it a collective action (Bimber et al., 2012). Social media sites, such as Facebook allow for interaction between users to create a sense of community, while making “activists into active participants” and “increases people’s motivation to engage within the group online and offline” (Papa, 2017). By building an online community of virtual peers, social media can evoke individuals to take action during social movements, due in part to the social norm theory (Parthasarathi & Kumari, 2021). The social norm theory states that behavior is influenced by what is the norm, or accepted. Social movements are individuals challenging these norms. The example studied by Parthasarathi and Kumari (2021) was the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, which was successful due to meeting all the attributes of an “online social norm campaign” and was able to build a large system of online peers around the world.

Social media has also provided a platform for normalizing taboo topics by attempting to make them more socially acceptable. In a study on the relationship between media and the anti-plastic movement, Borg (2022) found that social media exposure leads to perceptions regarding the benefits of plastic avoidance instead of avoidance due to social norms. Therefore, more messages on social media could motivate others to change their behavior and use less plastic (Borg, 2022). Social influence is another variable that determines whether behaviors become socially accepted or not. This social influence can be seen in interactions with small peer groups or on a larger scale with influencers on social media, as was the case during Covid-19 and the acceptance of new societal health norms (Pöyry et al., 2022). Social influence on social media can also drive corporate social responsibility initiatives by activating norm influences of peers (Fernández et al., 2022). This is due to the social media performance indicators of the number of shares and likes that influence individuals to promote messages with a high number of each

(Hartmann et al., 2021). Individuals are more likely to click on and share messages that have been liked by their peers and have a high number of views. This applies to messages supporting a social movement. By utilizing the social norm theory and current research findings on social norms, strategic communication using messaging, proper channels, and reaching the right people at the right time may aid in the virality of social issues and acceptance through social norms.

Social movements are more than the channels used to communicate about them. However, social movements on social media can gain a much broader and larger audience than social movements not on social media (Mundt et al., 2018). Social media are channels that can be used to reach a broader audience. There are many ways in which issues and initiatives can spread on social media. A few of those ways include going viral, being shared, liked, or reposted, diffusion, as well as the influence of algorithms (Hartmann et al., 2021; Rane & Salem, 2012). Communication patterns and content posted differ among different participating roles of users on Twitter during social movements. Celebrities are typically more influential and contribute more than organizations, politicians, and some activists or journalists, thus they typically receive more retweets (Brunker et al., 2020). Online communication, such as tweets or Instagram posts, involves different ways of communicating a message. Some tweets contain calls to action, testimonies, or outrage. However, the main point is that they contain a message of hope for change that can be achieved. Although the motives for sharing content during a social movement can range from self-serving to drawing attention, each key actor has a role to play in furthering the movement, whether they are responsible for the starting or maintaining of the social movement (Mirbabaie et al., 2021).

User Engagement

Social media provides users with a variety of different content that contains issues and varying perspectives. Media users' actions and behaviors online can help to inform and shape opinions (Johansson & Scaramuzzino, 2019). This opinion formation along with algorithms on social media sites results in polarized echo chambers, which can lead to disinformation and confusion (Rhodes, 2022). There are a countless number of varying reasons why individuals use social media, a few include sharing information, making connections, developing interests, and being entertained. Another reason for social media use is to view news. Similar to traditional news, the use of social media promotes learning about different topics, current issues, and political information (Feezell & Ortiz, 2021). Oeldorf-Hirsch (2018) found that social media users are just as likely to interact with news content, such as like, comment, or reshare, and “cognitively engage” whether they were actively seeking the news out or not. However, this incidental exposure, although it may not lead to being correctly informed on political issues, may help alter perceptions regarding politics (Feezell & Ortiz, 2021). Individuals seeking information on social media to be informed, also participate more in politics (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2014). In a study about political discussions on social media, Chen and Lin (2021) found when users are faced with disagreement about a political issue on social media they are likely to feel uncertain about their position on the issue and more hesitant to participate in the discussion (Chen & Lin, 2021).

When it comes to social movements, individual involvement on social media can range from learning about issues, choosing which issues and people to support, participating in conversation, being a part of the collective action, and showing support whether by liking,

sharing, resharing, or commenting (Liu, 2015). There are limited studies on the correlation between civic and political participation and active social engagement on social media.

The impact social media can bring to social issues is not without negative influence. Although social media has empowered social movements that challenge stereotypes and discrimination, they can lack representation (Chiluwa, 2022). Social media platforms are commercial environments with the intention of making a profit which results in digital activist content being overshadowed (Hutchinson, 2021). Social media can also make it easy for participants to confuse civic and political engagement with online participation by hitting the “like” button (Papa, 2017). This behavior or act of support on social media requires little to no effort and has been defined as “slacktivism.” The Pew Research Center (2020) conducted a study on how Americans view the effectiveness of social media as a tool for political and social activism as well as change and engagement. They found that 76% of Americans say that “social media make people think they are making a difference when they really aren’t” and that these platforms distract from important issues (Auxier & McClain, 2020).

Activism and Advocacy

In some ways, social media is restrictive of what users can do to engage with issues and other individuals. One specific way is through activism and advocacy efforts. Social activism can be defined as “a process whereby collective actors are brought together by shared experiences and values to put their concerns on the public agenda as a way of forcing political structures into engagement” (Sorce & Dumitrica, 2022, p.158). Social movements aim to bring about social change through collective action. This collective action usually involves social activists. Digital activism, or online activism, is a collective action taking place online with political opponents (Sorce & Dumitrica, 2022), it changes over time and can bring with it the positive or negative

views of activism (Ghobadi & Clegg, 2015). Online social movements can help activists to feel they are part of a bigger movement instead of individuals (Linville et al., 2021). In the example of body activism, fat activism, and body positivity; body positivity is perceived as the least demanding form of activism, while at the same time having decreased potential for political change (Sveningsson et al., 2022). Hashtags are used as a call to action (Choi & McKeever, 2022). Hashtag activism, or hashtag feminism as seen with the #MeToo movement is an interactive process that has both strengths and weaknesses with strategies for navigating the weaknesses. The activists involved in the #MeToo movement used the platform as a place to share personal stories to speak out against sexual violence. While so doing, some vulnerabilities of the movement were exposed, such as retraumatization of victims, backlash, exclusion of victims, as well as the assumption that hashtags alone could end sexual violence. However, in response, these network activists can take actions that make hashtags a meaningful movement for feminist values (Clark-Parsons, 2021).

Whereas media activism is typically about making institutional changes (Carroll & Hackett, 2006), advocacy is geared toward supporting a cause. However, advocacy and activism are sometimes used synonymously or together in current research. Digital media advocacy efforts, also called social activism, can increase engagement among social media users as well as non-profit organizations (Seeling et al., 2019). Non-profit organizations do this through their communication processes on media platforms by sharing messages that can be re-shared by supporters, giving users more control, and ultimately building a larger community (Seeling et al., 2019). Guo and Saxton (2013) proposed a three-stage pyramid model of advocacy on social media. Their model of “reaching out to people, keeping the flame alive, and stepping up to

action” is used to understand NPOs’ communication with stakeholders to create change (Guo & Saxton, 2013).

Overall, social media should be used in conjunction with efforts offline to mobilize social movements. Although social movements on social media can fade out just as quickly as they were introduced on social platforms, often leaving individuals uncertain of the results, the benefits of using social media greatly outweigh the potential consequences and unintended impacts as social media messages can reach numerous users (Mundt et al., 2018). Napoli said: “Public interest media advocacy and activism not only has emerged from a number of other social movements; it also may enhance all social movements’ abilities to gain greater traction with citizens and policy makers via creating changes in the media system” (Napoli, 2016, p. 411). Offline and online efforts during social movements are vital to the success of a social movement since online discussions are often prompted by events that take place offline (Varol et al., 2014).

Social media users should be wary about their involvement in social movements on social media and whether those actions are making a difference. What has been termed slacktivism, is a combination of the words “slacker” and “activism” to describe the idea that social media can distract from the goals of activism and make people feel as though they are making a difference (Glenn, 2015; Auxier & McClain, 2020). Different types of social movements that come across digital media require different types of action. However, slacktivism, or activism on social media has led to social media users feeling like they are doing something by liking, sharing, or resharing social movement messages. Engagement, empowerment, and social stake are important factors that can mean the difference between individuals using social media as a lazy way to

involve themselves with a social movement and using it to actively participate (Smith et al., 2019).

The increase in technology has not only made it possible for more individual participation during social movements, but it has also made issues more noticeable.

Public Relations

Public relations professionals are tasked with having relationships with the media, the community, all the individuals involved in a business, as well as government entities (Luttrell, 2014). Digital media plays an important role in managing these relationships between stakeholders and organizations (Tong, 2022).

The definition of public relations has changed countless times throughout the years to fit its purpose, time, and location. Due to its sometimes negative connotation, some have taken to renaming the practice to have a more positive meaning, such as “strategic communication”, “corporate communication”, or “communication management” (Valentini, 2021). The Public Relations Society of America incorporates “anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might have an impact, for good or ill, on the operations and plans of the organization” (Public Relations Society of America, 2022) as part of its definition of public relations.

Similar to other media jobs like journalists, public relations practitioners play important roles in the spread of communication during social movements. Public relations plays an important role in advocacy on social media through campaigns and messages. It is also actively involved in the agenda-building process that takes place and is thus able to affect the public, private, and media agendas by making it the interest of policymakers (Badham, 2019; Curtin, 1999). Message framing, choosing what to say and how to say it, can lead to greater public

engagement and social media advocacy efforts (Choi & McKeever, 2022). Through communication on social media, public relations aids in the contribution to democracy (Auger, 2013). Public relations is essential to inspire collective action by communicating the issue to the public (Anderson, 2016). Public relations campaigns are an integral part of social action. Through strategic communications, public relations can educate, inspire action, and motivate attitudinal changes as part of social change (Capozzi & Spector, 2016).

Even in the business sector consumers and the public expect corporations to take a stand on socio-political issues (DiRusso et al., 2022), known as corporate social advocacy. Public relations efforts like corporate social responsibility can be social advocacy if working for the good of the community (Valenitini, 2021). This also allows organizations to proactively engage the public and identify common priorities on issues of public policy and within society. Companies need to take a stand on issues that are relevant to their audiences. Authentic corporate social advocacy initiatives can engage the public and as a result, create meaningful change within society. In addition, corporate social responsibility, the ideas that companies should take an active role in the community and social issues, can have a positive influence on reputation (Çağın Bektaş, 2018). Reputation, like influence, trust, commitment, satisfaction, or transparency are results that fall into the impact category and are often intangible. Therefore, corporate social impact has begun to be incorporated to measure the effects that come from corporate social advocacy and responsibility campaigns.

Alternatively, and as seen in social movements, organizations whose sole purpose is to create impact, organize in some way or form to further their goals. These organizations may consist of grassroots, advocacy, or activism groups with the intention of creating change through social movements and campaigns. Although these nonprofit advocacy and activism organizations

are not large corporations, public relations still plays an important role. Public relations is important for fundraising, stakeholder relations, and communication activities of the organization (Dyer et al., 2002). Although communication strategies may look different, as organizations employ low-cost methods to meet their needs, the intended outcome of motivating change is the same.

PESO

Digital technology has changed the progression of social movements in society and on social media by public relations practitioners being able to use all the different sources of media, commonly described by using the acronym PESO. PESO has altered the communication pathways of organizations, corporations, and government entities (Macnamara et al., 2016). P stands for paid media, which includes sponsored posts and ads that can target specific demographics. The E in PESO refers to earned media or any editorial and non-editorial forms of advertising in which publicity is spread through the efforts and actions of others sharing the content. S is for shared media and involves real-time participation and involvement between content creators and their communities. Finally, the O in PESO is owned media and is how a content creator curates and publishes the controllable aspects of their brand and cause. By using paid, earned, shared, and owned media communication channels, across digital and traditional platforms, social movements have the opportunity to effectively reach and engage individuals (Slowikowski et al., 2021).

Issue Life Cycle

An issue's life cycle refers to the phases that take place from when an issue emerges and poses a risk to when its relevance declines in the public setting. Max Meng (1992) discusses the five stages of the issue life cycle. Although his paper specifically references the issues that may

face organizations, there is relevance to how it can be applied to social issues. Stage One is when a situation has the potential to become an issue that will require attention. The general public may not necessarily be aware that these issues exist, but experts are more likely to be aware of them. Stakeholders begin advancing the issue by bringing it to the public in Stage Two. Combined with media coverage which begins during this stage and helps to push the issue forward, the result is an increase in the issue's intensity. In Stage Three, the issue's full impact on the organization is recognized, and the public and key actors begin to place pressure on the government and agencies to enact policies that will help change the organization's behaviors. In Stage Four, the issue has become a crisis issue, and with limited options, the organization must now accept the issue and set a policy to change its behavior as a response. Once an organization accepts the issue and takes the necessary steps to change its behavior, the issue becomes a norm within both the organization and society which is Stage Five, the dormant stage. Although the issue might be dormant, the issue is not permanently resolved. Meng notes that not all issues will force an organization to take action through policy, and alternatively, some organizations will take action before the issue forces their hand. It is important to understand that issues do not always develop upon a linear progression. Mahon and Waddock (1992) suggest that the integrated systems issue model might be better suited to showing the simultaneous development of issues from the perspective of public policymakers, pressure groups, and the organization, and how each group responds to an issue (Mahon & Waddock, 1992).

Recognizing the phase in which the issue is, and the role of the media and other key actors, can help professionals control the transition from each stage (Femers et al., 2000). Issues management has primarily been studied in relation to corporations and companies to defend against the swells of public opinion. In the nonprofit and grassroots arenas, the issue life cycle

refers to the pattern that social issues tend to follow – emergence, development, and resolution (Chowdhury et al., 2021). Throughout an issue’s life cycle, grassroots organizations use legitimacy strategies to help gain support for their issue and organization. These strategies also change depending on the phase in the cycle and as the situation evolves (Chowdhury et al., 2021). However, their communication strategies during the issue life cycle have not been identified.

Although not entirely relevant today due to mass news media, Anthony Downs’s article “Up and down with ecology – the “issue-attention cycle”” (1972) discusses the five stages of public interest when it comes to domestic issues or crises. The first stage is known as the pre-problem stage which is the state in which most of the public is unaware the problem exists. The second stage known as the alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm stage involves an event or events that brings the problem to the center of the public’s attention and the following optimism of being able to solve the problem. The third stage includes realizing the cost of significant progress as well as the sacrifice of some of the population to make change happen. The fourth stage, the gradual decline of intense public interest, takes place as the public becomes discouraged by how costly, difficult, and time-consuming it is to solve the problem. The final stage, known as the post-problem stage, happens as an issue jumps back and forth between little to no interest and peaking random public interest. His article, however, does not discuss when policy or government responds to the issue.

The prevalence of social movements on social media and the gaps in the literature surrounding the intersection between social media and social movements led to the research questions in this study. In order to understand the role of social media during a social movement, three questions were asked. First, how is social media being used during a social movement, like

the gay rights movement? Second, how does the issue of gay rights evolve on social media? And third, how are organizations employing public relation tactics on social media to create change in social movements?

Research Questions

RQ1: How is social media being used during the gay rights social movement?

A. What is happening in the world and what is being shown on social media?

RQ2: How did the issue surrounding gay rights evolve on social media?

RQ3: How is an organization using social media as a form of public relations to create change in social movements?

Method

To explore the research question of how social media is being used during the gay rights social movement to influence social change and how the social movement evolved on social media, a qualitative trend analysis of the social movement on social media was conducted. A trend analysis was chosen as the methodology for RQ1 and RQ2, while a case study was carried out to answer RQ3. A trend analysis was chosen for RQ1 and RQ2 in order to understand the trends involved in a social movement that has a presence on social media. A case study was used to answer RQ3 due to the multiple factors involved to gain an understanding of a social movement on social media from an organization's perspective, including an interview of the Free Mom Hugs organization, examining their owned and earned media, as well as a trend analysis of their socials - Facebook and Instagram.

The social movement chosen for research study was the gay rights movement. Although a movement focusing on policy change for increasing the equality and rights of the LGBTQ+ population, it is also a social movement that has aimed to change the general perception and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ population. The gay rights social movement existed before the presence of social media. In the late 1960s, the gay liberation movement was a social and political movement encouraging men and women to counter societal shame of their sexual attraction with gay pride and action. Over the years, the gay rights movement has fought endlessly with the government and individuals who do not agree with or believe in same-sex attraction. The gay rights movement impacts anyone who is or knows someone that is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. A poll done in 2021, found that 7.1% of US adults and about 21% of those born between 1997 and 2003 identify as LGBT (Jones, 2022). The number of adults identifying as LGBT has doubled since 2012 (Jones, 2022). This data shows that this

marginalized group is increasing and more people are speaking up about the lack of equality in rights. Marginalization typically takes place as the needs of a group of people that are treated as “other” in society are ignored and opportunities awarded to members of society are not available to this group (Pratt & Fowler, 2022). Marginalized groups are those that are excluded due to language, physical ability, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and age (Pratt & Fowler, 2022). Those advocating for the gay rights movement have made huge strides over time with legislation and clear changes in demanding rights and fair treatment for LGBTQ+ individuals and continue to do so every day through fighting for policy changes and increased acceptance for all. A clear example of the change that has taken place is the Pew Research poll on the public opinion of same-sex marriage. From 2004 to 2019, the public opinion of those who favor same-sex marriage has increased, while those who oppose it have decreased (see Figure 1).

The gay rights movement was chosen as the social movement for this study based on the following selection criteria. First, it is a social movement with an abundance of available and accessible data since it has been a social movement since the 1960s. Second, although it started in the 1960s, the gay rights social movement is still a social movement that is active and current. Third, the social movement was chosen according to the social issues it focuses on by increasing equality and rights for the LGBTQ+ community. Fourth, the gay rights social movement has a large presence on social media, especially during the time parameter chosen for this study, it was actively posted about and engaged with by social media users. Lastly, it is a social movement that has had a large impact in realized changes within policies and society that impact the LGBTQ+ community, such as bathroom equality, same-sex marriage, and discrimination in the workplace. It continues to have traction in making strides working towards improving the lives of the LGBTQ+ community. The social movement was chosen according to these criteria to

provide access to relevant information and deeper insights regarding a social movement on social media.

Once the social movement was determined, a brief search was carried out online to ascertain the data that would be available and how it would help form conclusions to the research questions.

Trend Analysis

To answer RQ1: how is social media being used during the gay rights social movement, and RQ2: how did the issue surrounding gay rights evolve on social media, shared media was collected and analyzed using CrowdTangle, a social monitoring platform that pulls social media posts using specific keywords during specific time periods. CrowdTangle can pull posts from Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, and Twitter. Along with providing actual messages from social media, CrowdTangle provides insights as to how many comments, shares, and likes each post received and which posts received the most interactions for the time period. The variables impacting social movements on social media were analyzed. These variables included audience interactions, such as likes, comments, and shares, as well as spikes in social media interactions.

This trend analysis analyzed the trends and evolution of the gay rights movement on social media during June 2015, October 2018, and June 2020. The October 2018 and June 2020 time periods were chosen for analysis due to having a significantly larger number of interactions when looking at CrowdTangle data from 2015 to 2020 (see Figure 2). June 2015 was chosen because of the significant event, the Obergefell case which was decided June 26 and required states to recognize and license same-sex marriages, legalizing same-sex marriage. These three time periods were important for analyzing how social media played a role in the gay rights social movement and what occurred online during these times.

For each time period and platform analyzed, CrowdTangle was used to filter posts using Boolean logic specific to the gay rights social movement: “gay rights” or “#gayrights.” These keywords were chosen for this analysis because they are the main words used when posting about the gay rights movement and accompanying events. The data included any posts that had been shared on Instagram or Facebook regarding the gay rights social movement during certain time periods. Instagram and Facebook filters on CrowdTangle were the only platforms that had data in the periods analyzed. On Instagram, the filter settings were set to see posts in English. On Facebook, the filters included seeing posts in English and account types to include Facebook pages, verified profiles, and public groups.

Collecting and analyzing the timeline of multiple time periods during a social movement and comparing them to each other helped determine how a social movement evolved on social media and whether it followed a similar or different pattern. The social data for the social movement was collected and analyzed according to the timeline, volume, evolution of conversation, sentiment, key players, and types of messages and communication. This allowed for a comparison of the differences and similarities between the time periods. The social data helped identify who should be interviewed for this case study by tracking the accounts and individuals that become vocal on social media during a social movement, when and how they get involved, and the types of messages used, as well as if they were among top interactions during the time period examined. By going through the posts for each spike and analyzing them to determine common themes, this trend analysis helped to find the trends or ways in which social media was being used in a social movement.

Case Study

A case study was carried out to explore RQ3, how social media is being used to create change in social movements. As part of the case study, an organization that focuses on the LGBTQIA+ community was interviewed, the organization's earned and owned media analyzed, and a trend analysis of the organization's shared media on Facebook and Instagram. The organization chosen for the case study was Free Mom Hugs, which started June 20, 2015, at the Oklahoma City Pride Festival with a homemade button that read "Free Mom Hugs" and is now a nonprofit organization with chapters in all 50 states. Founder Sara Cunningham's story began when her son came out as gay and she wrestled with the news. She fell in love with the LGBTQIA+ community and turned simple acts of love into a non-profit organization. Her website bio states, "Sara's passion is to change the perspective of the outside world towards this beautiful part of our community so that we as a society, not only learn to affirm, but more importantly, celebrate"(Free Mom Hugs, 2023). By narrowing in on one organization, the study allowed for an in-depth analysis into the organization, the interview, and trend analysis of its social media strategy through social channels to determine how it has used social media as a form of public relations to help move the gay rights movement forward and create lasting change.

The benefits of using multiple sources can be achieved by following four principles: triangulation, organization, chain of evidence, and using caution when analyzing social media data (Yin, 2018, p. 126-137). The first principle Yin discusses is using multiple sources of evidence to triangulate the results since no one source is more advantageous than another, but can be used together to build a conclusion. Triangulation can also help decrease bias from each of the sources. Second, investigators conducting research should develop a study database to

organize and cite specific documents collected for later reports and replicability. Third, a chain of evidence should be followed to show the steps taken from research questions to reaching conclusions. Lastly, proceed with caution when collecting and using data from social media sources. As Yin says, a good study contains more than one source and should “rely on as many sources as possible” (Yin, 2018, p. 113). None of the sources of evidence used in this study proved to be more beneficial than the others. Instead, each source of evidence supported the other to obtain the most complete and accurate picture.

Data from the sources of evidence were collected and organized to prepare for analysis, and a chain of evidence was maintained. Following the collection and organization of the sources of evidence, the data was analyzed.

The interview guide was created based on the acquisition of information from CrowdTangle, and aimed to ask questions that would provide more detail for what was or was not seen on social media. A human subject review was obtained for the interview, and was determined the interview participant would remain anonymous. The interview was conducted and recorded over Zoom and then transcribed using the software, Otter.ai. The interview lasted 50 minutes. At the beginning of the interview, a brief description of the study and consent form were shared, followed by a guarantee that names would remain anonymous if chosen and verbal consent from the interviewee. The interview was used as a source of evidence to determine how an organization uses social media communication strategies during a social movement, and how they notice the influence of their efforts. The social media manager for Free Mom Hugs was the individual interviewed for this study

The interview was used to build a story and understand how, when, and why individuals and social activists on social media are using social media to impact a social movement and

influence the narrative, i.e. from following an issue, posting about it, resharing messages, and encouraging activities to support the issue, if they take any actions offline, what they define as success, and how they know they have been successful in creating impact.

After setting up the interview with Free Mom Hugs, the owned, earned, and shared media for the organization were examined.

The earned media collected consisted of any news written about the organization that is working to influence the social movement. News written about the organization and social movement were found on the organizations' websites, through Google search, as well as posts shared on social media.

Owned media explored as part of this study looked at the owned media of the organization and how it is dedicated to the issue. By looking at the Free Mom Hugs website for press releases, blog posts, and impact, as well as social media accounts for campaign messages and stories, owned media was analyzed.

Using CrowdTangle to look at the social trends for the organization, the keywords “Free Mom Hugs” were used. To choose what time period was going to be analyzed, the date range plugged into CrowdTangle extended from September 30, 2016 to August 30, 2023 for both Instagram and Facebook (see Figure 59 and Figure 60). The three different time periods chosen for analysis included August 2018, June 2019, and June 2022. These time periods were chosen for the spikes and top interaction content.

Data from the multiple sources of evidence, CrowdTangle, the interview with the organization, owned and earned media were collected to develop a convergence of evidence, a process of triangulation, which made it more likely to address the research questions and reach a

more convincing and detailed conclusion regarding the interaction between social movements, more specifically the gay rights movement, and social media.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Method

The strengths of looking at multiple sources of evidence allowed for an in-depth analysis that was used to reach a conclusion about the research questions. The use of a single source of evidence would not have been able to achieve the same depth or findings. Each source of evidence presented itself with both strengths and weaknesses.

The strengths of using earned media as one of the sources of evidence included learning more about the variables impacting a social movement and how the news impacts the narrative on social media. The weaknesses that existed by using earned media included finding biased articles and not finding enough news specific to the social movement or organization.

Although finding shared data on the social movement was relatively easy, the weakness of using this as a source of evidence is with the amount of data and the ability to properly analyze the meaning, while setting appropriate parameters that do not limit or change the study.

Owned media as a source of evidence presents a few strengths. One of which is the ability to learn more about the social movement if the organization is established enough to have a website and social media accounts. However, encountering biased or inaccurate information is a potential weakness.

Lastly, interviews are insightful and offer information directly related to the case study topic. Although interviews can provide deeper insight, they are not without bias. In an interview, bias can arise due to the questions asked, and the responses of the interviewees, including answering in a way that they believe the interviewers want to hear.

Although using multiple sources of evidence in this study advanced the study in more ways than using one source of evidence, some potential problems of triangulation and the use of more than one source could have been problematic. These problems could have included the burden of time spent by the researcher collecting and analyzing the data. Another problem of studying three sources of evidence could have been the potential to incorrectly use the data collection and analysis techniques.

Overall, analyzing earned and shared media, as well as interviews as the sources of evidence in this case were used together to complement each other and decrease the likeliness of bias from each source.

Results

Research Question 1

Using CrowdTangle to collect and analyze data during the three different time periods to explore answers to RQ1, how social media is being used during the gay rights movement, resulted in finding 11 different types of ways social media was being used in the movement (see Table 1). The 11 ways are: celebrations; celebrities, influencers, internet personalities; national days; dedicated months; news story headline; news outlet, magazine, or source; historic figure; company; gay rights account or organization; other important figures such as political or religious figures; other. These 11 trends were then grouped into six different groups with commonalities. The groups included celebrations, people, news, gay rights accounts or organizations, companies, and others.

The celebration group includes the celebrations that typically took place after a supreme court ruling and included the mass amounts of accounts and individuals that took to social media to celebrate the wins, national days, and dedicated months. National days involved any spikes

and interactions that took place on a nationally recognized day such as National Coming Out Day or other holidays. Dedicated months included Pride Month and LGBTQ history month since the months involved in the trend analysis were the months of June and October which are Pride Month and LGBTQ History Month, respectively.

The people group includes the categories of celebrities, influencers, internet personalities; historical figures; and figures other than celebrities such as political, religious, or TV figures. These were posts shared by celebrities, influencers, or internet personalities, as well as other political, religious, or TV figures. The historic figures category included any posts made about a historic figure.

The news group included the news story headlines and news sources categories. News story headlines included any posts that were made with a news story headline but were not specifically shared by a news account. News sources involved any posts that were shared by news magazines or outlets.

Gay rights account or organization was grouped on their own due to having motivations other than those categories listed here. They typically shared uplifting posts about the LGBTQ+ community, as well as some overlap with dedicated months and national days, celebrations, and pride content.

The company was grouped into its own category as well. They included any post made by a company, business, or brand affiliation. There was sometimes overlap between companies and dedicated months which could be seen as trend jacking.

Lastly, the other category was not grouped because it included any post that was shared on social media that did not fit into the other categories listed above. This typically included posts that used the hashtag #gayrights but were not specifically about gay rights or pride.

There was some overlap between the categories, as some companies would post about Pride Month, or use influencers to post about Pride Month. Other overlaps included gay rights accounts posting about Pride Month, or news posts about a historical figure, among others.

Research Question 2

To explore how the issues surrounding the gay rights movement evolved on social media, three different time periods were explored. Over the years the discussion involving the gay rights social movement has evolved as the movement shifted focus from gay rights to include all LGBTQ+ rights. In each of the three time periods analyzed--June 2015, October 2018, and June 2020--different stories were told, and strategies were emphasized; however, the overarching theme was #LoveisLove. Within each time period, spikes included any dates that interactions increased and were used to determine what was taking place on social media and why.

June 2015

The year 2015 was an important year for the gay rights movement with the legalization of same-sex marriage. From June 1 to June 30, there was one significant spike and five miniature spikes on Instagram, and one large spike, and six other spikes on Facebook. Spikes in interactions on Instagram during June 2015 (see Figure 3)(see Table 2) were a result of individuals turning to social media to post about Pride Month and celebrate the Supreme Court case that legalized same-sex marriage in the United States. A photo series by Time Magazine (see Figure 4) received top interactions on June 4, internet personality Aisha Thalia (see Figure 5) received top interactions on June 6 for her post in support of gay rights, and Levi Jean company posted about gay rights and received top interactions on June 8 (see Figure 6). On Facebook (see Figure 8)(see Table 3), Pride Month kicked off with 57.9k [thousand] interactions, followed by a spike due to a post by American Christian Franklin Graham on sexual purity on

June 3 (see Figure 9). On June 7, a post by IFLScience (see Figure 10) highlighting the historical figure Alan Turing received top interactions. Similarly to Instagram, the Supreme Court ruling received a huge after-party celebration on Facebook with 1.73m (million) interactions (see Figure 12). Lastly, June 29 saw the final uptick in interactions for the month with 303.6k interactions on posts with headlines about having a difference in beliefs (see Figure 13).

In June 2015, social media was used to celebrate the U.S. Supreme Court decision to legalize gay marriage. From June 1, 2015 to June 30, 2015, on Instagram, there were more than 606.2k total interactions and there were 1,236 posts. Top interactions during this month included these accounts; @mauochmann, @vickypattison, @aishathalia, @pelayodiaz, Time, CNN, United Nations, Rolling Stone, and The Photo Society (see Figure 7). With it being Pride Month, many accounts were posting about support for gay rights. The month began with 3.5k interactions. Then, on June 4, Time magazine posted a series of photos showing individuals captioned “The struggles of LGBT people around the world (@Time, 2015).” Four of the photos received between 4.9k and 7.4k likes. The posts included personal stories about LGBT people around the world.

June 17 saw the lowest interaction rate with 1.7k interactions, while June 26 received the highest spike in June of 2015 with 397.4k interactions. The US Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage on June 26. Sharing in the victory that had just taken place, celebrities, news accounts, activist and gay rights-specific accounts, athletes, other countries, and companies joined in the celebrations by posting rainbow content. The social media content was a big after-party celebrating a marginalized group that had fought hard for basic rights. The hashtag and overwhelming sentiment that day was #lovewins. Some of the companies that made posts during this time included Levis (see Figure 6) and Adidas. Levis had also posted earlier in the month on

June 8 with 18.3k interactions that day. There were memes made celebrating the United States and President Obama. However, the gay rights movement fight was not completely won. Posts were made encouraging users to keep pushing for more legalization and more love and acceptance towards the gay community.

Similarly to Instagram, not all accounts and posts on Facebook were made in celebration of the victory. Numerous posts were made questioning the parental rights of same-sex couples. The differences on Facebook during this time included a slightly different story in terms of content and accounts that received top interactions during June 2015. Different from Instagram, the Facebook top interaction accounts were IFLScience, LGBTQNation, Franklin Graham, Washington Post, Citi (see Figure 11), Breitbart, Mat Walsh, Seth MacFarlane, and Seventeen. On June 7, IFLScience posted an image about Alan Turing with a caption that read “Please stand against discrimination” that received 238 interactions out of the 276.9k interactions that day. The interacting accounts on Facebook were mostly organizations, groups, and news accounts. Some interactions took place on political accounts but were less than in the future. On June 26, 1.73m interactions occurred as part of the after-party celebrating the US Supreme Court decision to legalize same-sex marriage. Mauricio Ochmann was one of the top interactions for both Facebook and Instagram for his post celebrating the Supreme Court ruling, but he received more interactions on Instagram than on Facebook. The posts that were made about differences of beliefs on June 29 included Christian businesses facing discrimination if they do not provide services for same-sex marriages. The other side of June 29 posts about differences of beliefs included a quote by Elton John on what the gay rights movement is all about (see Figure 13). Overall, the month of June 2015 received 4.1m interactions, and had 12,518 posts from Facebook users, totaling more than Instagram.

The significance of the way social media was used in June 2015 shows that the gay rights movement was still new to social media and received most interactions to celebrate the Supreme Court victory. It also shows that most people on Instagram interact with posts by news sources, internet personalities, or companies, but even then, interactions were lower in comparison to interactions after the Supreme Court ruling. The social data shows that Facebook was more interacted with by users, probably due to Facebook being a more widely used social media platform at the time (see Figure 14).

October 2018

Multiple reasons made the year 2018 significant, one of which was the United States elections. On both Facebook and Instagram, October 2018 received an increase in interactions than in June 2015. From October 1 to October 31 there was one spike that overpowered the other nine spikes on Instagram and six spikes on Facebook. On Instagram (see Figures 15a and 15b)(see Tables 4a and 4b), upticks included the start of LGBTQ History Month, a post by Taylor Swift, reposts of Taylor Swift's post, National Coming Out Day, a post by @lgbt_history, a company post by Olimpia Zagnoli (@olimpiazagnoli, 2018) tagging Barilla pasta, and a post about Matthew Shepard from The Washington Post. On Facebook (see Figure 27)(see Table 5), significant spikes in interactions included a post by Occupy Democrats (see Figure 28), posts about Matthew Shepard, including his being laid to rest, headlines about gay cake, and headlines about Donald Trump.

An unexpected spike occurred on Instagram in October 2018. The uptick in interactions, 2.22m, on social media on October 7, 2018, was due to celebrity country and pop singer turned political advocate Taylor Swift (see Figure 18). On October 7, 2018, the singer made a post encouraging voter turnout for the upcoming November midterm elections while calling out

representatives and pleading for equality for all. She called out Marsha Blackburn, while explicitly stating her support for Jim Cooper and Phil Bredesen. In past interviews and posts, Taylor Swift remarked she had not shared her voting tendencies due to not wanting to sway her audience or followers, but considering recent events, she decided it needed to be done to invoke real change. Thus, the triggering event for her post included the upcoming voting period and events in her personal life that led her to share her thoughts on social media with her followers. Her post spurred countless reposts and interactions and received 2.19m likes. In the 24 hours after her post, there were more than 65,000 voter registrations (Snapes, 2018). These voters could have been rushing to register before the deadline, but it is likely that Taylor Swift's post played a role in encouraging voter registration. Possibly because of her outward support and call to action, Jim Cooper won with 67.8%, and although Marsha Blackburn won, she won by a 10.8% margin, which was the closest senate race since 2006 (Tennessee Election Results). However, Taylor Swift's post was not without criticism. She received backlash from Donald Trump and others, with statements that her singing career was over (Durkin, 2018). Her career has not ended.

Although there were only 547 posts on Instagram in October 2018, there were more than 2.5m interactions, mostly because of the post shared by Taylor Swift. This shows the impact that one celebrity or person with influence can make. Her post was reposted and shared by other celebrities, which aided in the amplification of the top. However, even though her post touched on her belief in the fight for LGBTQ rights and how inappropriate it is to discriminate, or hate based on gender or sexual orientation, her post could have taken away from other valuable voices during October, which is celebrated as LGBTQ+ history month and includes National Coming Out Day. On October 11, there were 67.9k interactions as part of National Coming Out Day and

LGBTQ+ History Month (see Figure 20). Top interactions for the month included Taylor Swift, Sara Bareilles--a Taylor Swift repost and celebrity (see Figure 20), Huffington Post (see Figure 17), Olimpia Zagnoli (see Figure 25), Washington Post (see Figure 26), and @lgbt_history (see Figure 23). The Huffington Post on October 2, 2018, shared news of Romania's ruling gay couples having the same rights as any other person. Interactions on October 22 included posts about historical figure Marsha Johnson shared by @lgbt_history, which was highly active during the month and received many total interactions. Also on October 22, @sateenmusic encouraged followers to engage in activism efforts for the gay rights movement. Olimpia Zagnoli shared about Barilla pasta company's improved ethics around the LGBTQ+ community. However, the posts by @wokerabbit (see Figure 21), which was a screenshot of someone else's post, and @noonoouri (see Figure 22) included hashtags for gay rights but did not contain images or content that explicitly represented the gay rights movement.

Facebook and Instagram shared a few similarities in October 2018. Those similarities included posts about Matthew Shepard. However, in the same month, Facebook saw a slightly different variety of posts and content than Instagram. Top interaction posts shared on Facebook during October were shared by MoveOn, Ben Shapiro, GLAAD, and Occupy Democrats. Content included news, news of LGBT laws around the world, and voting in the midterms. Posts on October 10 captured 47.2k interactions with headlines of a gay cake story, a case that was fought and won by a bakery that refused to make a wedding cake for a gay couple, with posts by Ben Shapiro, news sources, and sentiment of "a win for freedom" (see Figure 29). National Coming Out Day was less posted about on Facebook, with posts such as "'I'm gay' two simple words but it doesn't mean it's easy" and "Love is for everyone", but more posts were about Matthew Shepard shared by all types of accounts (see Figures 30 and 31). News accounts were

among those that did post about National Coming Out Day. On October 16, headlines about Trump's administration saying employers can fire people for being gay (see Figure 32) resulted in a spike with 63.1k interactions. On October 26 (see Figure 33) posts received 87.9k interactions regarding stories, headlines, posts, and shares about Matthew Shepard, a gay American student attending the University of Wyoming who was beaten and tortured on the night of October 7, 1998. He was left to die, dying on October 12, 1998 from his injuries, and was finally being laid to rest 20 years later. There was one Taylor Swift repost by Carole King on October 8 on Facebook that received top interactions.

The significance of what took place on Instagram in October 2018 shows the influence celebrities have on the direction of a social movement. Another significance includes the difference in how Instagram and Facebook were used during the month. On Instagram, three of the spikes during 2018 used social media to tell followers a story and ended with a call to action. On Facebook, the top interactions were more news sources, including gay rights specific news accounts, that were only sharing news. Although Facebook had higher overall interactions across the month, Instagram surpassed Facebook interactions with the post by Taylor Swift (see Figure 34).

June 2020

The year 2020 was a one of turmoil, celebration, and advocacy and activism efforts on and off social media, especially during June, which is also Pride Month. Between June 1 to June 30, there were eight spikes on Instagram with one significant drop, and five spikes on Facebook. On Instagram (see Figure 35)(see Table 6), Pride Month began with 920.2k interactions, causing a spike. Posts by celebrities received more interactions, which resulted in more spikes. Another celebration after the Supreme Court ruling, posts about Pride, posts shared by news sources and

magazines, posts on the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, posts by The New York Times and National Geographic, as well as a few last-minute efforts for companies to use Pride Month to boost their brand image. Facebook (see Figure 50)(see Table 7) saw fewer spikes, caused by the start of Pride Month. The next spike was not seen until the celebration taking place after the Supreme Court ruling on June 15, followed by more celebratory posts, a headline about how Oprah is a Christian and supports gay rights, and finally more posts about pride to conclude the month.

From June 1, 2020, to June 30, 2020, there were more than 10.1m total interactions on Instagram, with 3,241 posts made using the keywords gay rights or #gayrights. Posts and content shared during this month highlighted gay black pride rights activists and organizations including Marshall Johnson, Bayard Rustin, and Sylvia Rivera, while celebrating gay pride during Pride Month worldwide. The hashtag #HappyPride was frequently used, as was #pridemonth and #loveislove. The narrative of June 2020 included giving power to the people by amplifying black voices, including black trans lives matter with statements such as “no pride without black lives,” and reflecting on the history of Pride Month, which is celebrated in honor of the anniversary of the Stonewall riots that took place June 28, 1969 as members of the gay community protested in response to a police raid. Some posts during this month aimed to educate others on the reason behind Pride Month, that it means more than rainbow and glitter parades, to reflect on how far the movement has come since the first Pride Month in 1969, which was a riot. The top interactions of this month included Leslie Jordan with 2.28m video views (see Figure 37), 432.9k likes, and 16k comments on a video he posted on June 3 where he danced in front of the camera celebrating Pride. Emma Watson received 785.4k likes and 1.2k comments on a photo she posted on June 4 (see Figure 38). Other top interactions included National Geographic, BBC News (see

Figure 42), Vogue (see Figure 36), Feminist (see Figure 39), Elton John (see Figure 41), and LGBT (see Figure 44). More clips and videos were being used on Instagram than in previous years, likely due to advancements in social media technology allowing video clips to be uploaded and shared. Pride Month started June 1 with 920.2k interactions and dropped to 176.5k on June 2, which was likely due to Black Out Tuesday, and those supporting the gay community and Pride Month wanting to amplify the voice of Black Lives Matter. This conclusion comes because interactions increased to 723.8k and 918.4k on June 3 and June 4 respectively, with the posts by Leslie Jordan and Emma Watson. Another uptick of 1.9m interactions on June 15, 2020, occurred when the US Supreme Court ruled that civil rights protect all LGBT employees in the workplace as individuals and organizations took to social media to celebrate another victory for the LGBTQ+ community. From June 27 to June 29, interactions increased from 373.1k to 400.6k as National Geographic, The New York Times, LGBTQ, the New Orleans Saints, Careof, Ikea, and Governor Murphy were among the top interactions during that time. This conceivably could be a final effort by companies and individuals to use Pride Month as a marketing strategy and CSA (corporate social advocacy) tactics to appeal to customers. However, the posts shared by National Geographic throughout the month were stories about life as a black member of the LGBTQ+ community. On June 27, there were posts by companies. Bumble was among the companies that posted on the 27 and used brand affiliation through influencer Jessie Paegle. Teva was another company that posted June 27 about Global Pride Day (see Figure 47). On June 28 some companies, including the New Orleans Saints, posted about the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, while others posted about Pride in general (see Figure 48). Posts on June 29 included one from The New York Times about a Pride march in Taiwan, general posts about Pride Month from Rocky Mountain National Park, Yale, and others, and the final post by

National Geographic in its series exhibiting black individuals in the LGBTQ+ community (see Figure 49).

On Facebook, during June of 2020 (see Figure 50) top interactions included The New York Times, Bernie Sanders, NPR, CNN, BBC News, Robert Reich, Dan Ratner, The Washington Post, BuzzFeed, and Elton John. These interactions show a stark difference from the Instagram top interactions. This difference could be because of the different generational uses for each platform. The similar spike as on Instagram occurred on June 15 with 2.95m of them (see Figure 52). On June 16, posts showed a different narrative as American Christian Franklin Graham voiced outrage over the Supreme Court ruling (see Figure 53). And as the account Freeda En posted on June 19 about why Oprah supports gays as a Christian (see Figure 54). The Freeda En post received comments for and against supporting gay marriage. The last spike on Facebook in June 2020 was on June 28 with posts about the anniversary of the Stonewall riots (see Figure 55). Interactions for June 2020 totaled over 4.0m and 13,718 posts on Facebook.

Instagram interactions were overall consistently higher than Facebook throughout June 2020, besides June 15 when Facebook surpassed Instagram interactions in celebration of the Supreme Court ruling (see Figure 56). In comparison to June 2015, social media was used significantly more in 2020, with more interactions, more posts, and more Pride posts consistently throughout the month on both Instagram and Facebook (see Figure 57 and Figure 58). More recognition of the Stonewall riots occurred than in 2015, as well as more companies and public figures posting about Pride Month and gay rights. Facebook was considerably more news-heavy during June 2020, with some similar accounts and content to Instagram. This shows that platforms like Facebook and Instagram are being used more and more for strategy purposes as gay rights becomes a more openly talked about and accepted topic.

Research Question 3

To understand how an organization is using social media as a form of public relations to create change in the gay rights movement, CrowdTangle was used by examining social data between 2018 and 2023 to determine what time periods received the most interactions. Upon initial analysis of this extended time period, top interactions included posts from Jamie Lee Curtis, CNN coverage of the post that Sara Cunningham made about being a stand-in mom at same-sex weddings, Jen Hatmaker at Austin Pride, among many others with Good News @tanksgoodnews, LGBTQ+ @lgbtq, Feminist @feminist, and Love What Matters: Good News @lovewhatmatters. These top posts were consistent with information received from the interview with the Free Mom Hugs social media manager.

Although the organization's strategy may not have produced any viral content with top interactions during the time periods analyzed earlier in this study--June 2015, October 2018, and June 2020--its continuous posting throughout the months and years has led to being tagged by well-known advocacy and celebrity accounts in helping to spread love and hug. These include a retweet by Ashton Kutcher, a shared video from George Takei about Free Mom Hugs, an Instagram live opening by Tan France of a Free Mom Hugs care package, and attendance at Austin Pride by author Jen Hatmaker with a Free Mom Hugs sign (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023).

The findings in the organization's trend analysis confirmed similar trends and ways social media is being used in social movements. This confirmed that celebrities have a significant impact in making movements and posts viral, the role that news plays in spreading information, the opportunity companies have to partner with the gay rights movement or trend jack to increase their companies reputation, and overall how important and effective social media is in helping to

spread a social movement. The time periods that were chosen for the Free Mom Hugs trend analysis included August 2018, June 2019, and June 2022. August 2018 was chosen since it was the largest spike on Facebook, while also being a large spike on Instagram. June 2019 and June 2022 were chosen for the content that had received top interactions and to explore more.

Organizations Trend Analysis

August 2018. On Instagram in 2018 with the keywords “Free Mom Hugs” there were 80,520 interactions with 25 posts. On August 12, author Jen Hatmaker accounted for 64.3k of those interactions when she posted about the Austin Pride Parade that her church went to, offering hugs of all kinds: dad hugs, mom hugs, pastor hugs, and granny hugs. She thanked Sara Cunningham, founder of the Free Mom Hugs organization for the inspiration. She remarked how desperate those at the Pride Parade were for hugs since they had felt outcast by their families. The following day, Love What Matters reshared her post. Other content from the month included posts by the Free Mom Hugs organization about their organization and tour, as well as pictures and uplifting quotes.

The information on Facebook was similar. The post made by Jen Hatmaker about giving away free hugs at the Austin Pride Parade resulted in 138.9k interactions out of the 141,451 for the month, with only 37 posts. Her post was reshared by 20 other accounts including Free Mom Hugs and others. The other posts were made by Free Mom Hugs highlighting their Free Mom Hugs tour and organization, and other people becoming involved in the Free Mom Hug expansion.

In August 2018, with the help of author and television personality Jen Hatmaker, Free Mom Hugs continued to become a larger movement in the world of social media and beyond

through well-known accounts highlighting the actions of Jen Hatmaker and other individuals giving out free hugs.

June 2019. In June 2019 social media began to show that the Free Mom Hugs organization and the act of a simple hug the organization encouraged was being embraced by many. In the previous spike analyzed, Free Mom Hugs was responsible for most of the posts. However, on Instagram in June 2019, there were 81,841 interactions and 39 posts: Free Mom Hugs accounted for five of the posts. Posts were made celebrating free mom hugs being distributed at pride parades during Pride Month and the honor of giving hugs to those who need them.

Facebook was the same narrative. People posting, sharing, celebrating giving and receiving hugs during Pride Month, except significantly more than was shared on Instagram. There were 199,067 interactions and 772 posts. Top interactions included Mary Katherine Backstrom, Love What Matters, Scary Mommy, New York Post Lifestyle, Frank Somerville, CNN, and Jamie Lee Curtis. On June 10, Mary Katherine Backstrom and Love What Matters reshared Howie Dittman's post about having attended the Pittsburgh Pride Parade and giving out hundreds of hugs at the event. Over the next few days, other accounts would go on to reshare the same story. Another common theme included Free Mom Hugs and others sharing about the power of the hug because everyone needs a hug to make them feel better. Many of the Free Mom Hugs chapter accounts were active during this time as well, from Utah, Ohio, California, Texas, Oklahoma, Washington, Michigan, and more. On June 9, Jamie Lee Curtis posted a rainbow and how it made her think of the LGBTQ+ community. However, her post did not receive as many interactions as other posts, which could have been due to being posted on Facebook.

Data from June 2019 showed the growth the Free Mom Hugs experienced over the years by gaining the attention of social media and news media that made their movement go even more viral. This growth was exhibited by Free Mom Hugs having a presence at Pride parades across the country through their state chapters, volunteers, and individuals wanting to share free hugs. As the interview revealed, the Free Mom Hugs chapter accounts played a large role in what was seen on Facebook during this time.

June 2022. In June 2022, Instagram had 140,377 interactions and 133 posts, more than the previous two years. Pride Month started with 12.1k interactions from brand partnerships with Free Mom Hugs. The shoe company Hush Puppies introduced a new Pride sneaker that would give 100% of the proceeds to Free Mom Hugs. Vera Bradley released bags with Pride daisies in support and celebration of the LGBTQIA+ community. On June 5, there were 61k interactions as Lilly Singh shared why she loves Pride because it is a “celebration and fight for freedom, acceptance, and love, and where everyone can be their best self” (@lilly, June 5, 2022). She also shared how she saw people holding “Free Mom Hugs” signs, and would say, “I’m so proud of you and you are loved” as they hugged strangers (@lilly, June 5, 2022). On June 12, @lgbtq posted “Free mom hugs at @lapride” which received 44.2k interactions @lgbtq, June 12, 2022). On June 9, Free Mom Hugs posted that a volunteer saw JoJo Siwa at the Weho Pride Parade which received 1.7k interactions. Lots of other posts included Free Mom Hugs showing off their presence at Pride Parades.

Facebook had 46,169 interactions and 647 posts during June 2022. Instagram had similar content during this time period. However, on its Facebook account, Free Mom Hugs posted more about the hats and shoes from Hush Puppies, which bring “hug-like comfort (Hush Puppies

USA, June 2, 2022).” Other content and hashtags used this month included quotes like “you matter”, “hugs matter”, “don’t hide your pride”, and “love wins.”

Content on social media during June 2022 was largely impacted by influencers, internet personalities, and brand affiliations. The two companies, Hush Puppies and Vera Bradley, partnered with Free Mom Hugs to give proceeds from their Pride merchandise to the Free Mom Hugs organization to help in their efforts to support the LGBTQ+ community. Receiving recognition from internet personality, Lilly Singh, and gay rights specific news account LGBTQ @lgbtq, Free Mom Hugs could go on to gain more virality, receive more followers, and make an even larger contribution to the space.

Other spikes not analyzed in this trend analysis of Free Mom Hugs social media, include June 2023 with another post made by Jamie Lee Curtis supporting the LGBTQ+ community and the Free Mom Hugs organization, which supports how active Jamie Lee Curtis is in taking a stand and how it helps the Free Mom Hugs organization receive more virality.

Social

Although CrowdTangle does not have data available for other social media platforms, the Free Mom Hugs organization uses multiple social media sites to amplify its message. It has 3.2k followers on Instagram, 106k followers on Facebook, 357 subscribers on YouTube, and 6,226 followers on X (previously known as Twitter).

YouTube. Its YouTube platform includes video shorts about Pride parades around the country, clips from podcasts, care packages, and press. Videos include informational shorter than two minute videos with Sara Cunningham about a variety of different topics, including Giving Tuesday, merchandise, power of a hug, voting, and suicide awareness, among other topics.

Videos also include its most recent Love Revolution conference, and Free Mom Hugs tours. It currently has 140 videos on its YouTube account.

X. Free Mom Hugs uses its X account to spread news about upcoming events in the LGBTQ+ community, news that impacts the LGBTQ+ community, and Free Mom Hugs events and information. CrowdTangle does not have access to X data, so a brief overview of the information available on its account was performed. Its content seems to be a mix of information available on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Earned

As mentioned in the interview with the project coordinator and social media manager at Free Mom Hugs, most of its earned media has come from a post going viral. The New York Times, Guardian, CNN, People, CBS Mornings, Forbes, Today, Upworthy, and other local Oklahoma news stations either interviewed the organization or wrote stories on the organization. Other news includes interviews on podcasts, the Business Journal, as well as several gay pride news sources.

When Sara Cunningham posted a public service announcement in July 2017 that she would attend same-sex weddings as a stand-in mom (see Figure 61), she secured the attention of numerous news outlets, demonstrating the name earned media. People magazine was one of those, publishing an article on December 4, 2018, about Sara Cunningham and the responses she had received from her post (Adams, 2018). Other news stations included CNN that published an article titled “When parents of same-sex refuse to attend their wedding, this mom steps in” (Willingham, 2019) highlighting Sara Cunninghams’ post of being a stand-in mom at same-sex weddings. CNN’s post on Instagram about this article received 86.4k interactions on January 6, 2019 (see Figure 62).

Sara Cunningham's post (see Figure 61) also helped to gain the attention of other news organizations that subsequently released articles about her decision and impact. On Facebook during January, other organizations covered the story, including the Today Show, and The Advocate, among others. Most of the earned media that Free Mom Hugs received was due to viral posts from Sara Cunningham or the Free Mom Hugs organization made out of frustration with the lack of love and support that LGBTQ+ children receive from parents.

Then, in May 2021, The New York Times featured a Q&A with Free Mom Hugs founder, Sara Cunningham. Topics included how she came to accept her gay son, the origin of the idea for the organization, when was the first wedding she officiated, how it evolved from an idea to an organization, her favorite Free Mom Hugs story, her biggest regret, how Free Mom Hugs was vital during Covid-19, words of support she would give to parents who do not support their LGBTQ+ children, and how people can help (Block, 2021). Sara Cunningham was also featured in another New York Times article that highlighted the positive influence mothers and mother figures have in honor of the upcoming Mother's Day (Alexander, 2021).

Owned

The Free Mom Hugs website includes all the information about the nonprofit organization. It includes information about the organization, the team, its mission, and goals, as well as resources to find a chapter, articles, books, movies, and other organizations supporting its mission. The website includes a tab for its first national conference that was held September 7-9 2023 in Oklahoma. The website has its social media linked on the page for easy access, as well as an @info email that it uses. It currently reaches followers through Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. Lastly, the website has all its media which includes its news and blog posts regarding the organization as well as current events that impact the LGBTQIA+

community. The homepage includes a photo slideshow exhibiting individuals and cars arrayed in Free Mom Hugs merchandise and rainbow items. Scrolling past the photos it has three main bubbles color coordinated green, pink, and blue. The green bubble says “learn”, with a link that takes visitors to the “what we do” page. The pink bubble says “connect” with a link that says “find a chapter” to easily help site visitors join the movement in their state. The blue bubble says, “be proud” and a link to shop Free Mom Hugs merchandise.

Interview

The organization’s goals for posting on social media have evolved over the years from sharing love and acceptance to sharing educational content. When posting first began for Free Mom Hugs there was a social media high after the Obergefell case that was won with the help of President Obama. Then, in November 2016, the content focused on the simple human act of a hug that could make individuals, families, and the LGBTQ+ community feel less concerned about who was elected president and the powerlessness that came as a result. The idea of a hug to show love and support helped the organization gain traction. In 2018, the founder, Sara Cunningham made a post that she had become an ordained minister to officiate same-sex marriages. Her post, originating from frustration that parents would refuse to attend their child’s wedding because of unacceptance and a difference of beliefs, sparked countless reactions of individuals asking to adopt that action in their home state. The individual interviewed from The Free Mom Hugs organization, the project coordinator and social media manager, recounted that this post was the point that Free Mom Hugs started getting the attention of news outlets and celebrities, and interaction on its social media started to increase.

Like any fruitful social media strategy, the Free Mom Hugs organization has experienced shifts throughout the years. Early on their goals included showing people that the LGBTQ

community should be celebrated. They would post anything occurring within the organization with volunteers in other states. Their community loved the posts because they were a simple reminder of how all people should act and celebrate (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023). Eventually, the mission statement of the organization evolved to “We empower the world to celebrate the LGBTQ community through visibility, education, and conversation”(Free Mom Hugs, October 2, 2023). With the new mission statement, social media started to shift as the organization built chapters in each state and social media accounts for each chapter. They also began promoting what was happening across the country. As they began this next step in its mission, their visibility increased, and they were able to use social media as an educational platform. They have touched on what it means to be affirming parents, the needs of the LGBTQ community, and the importance of pronouns. They still stick to their root concept of a hug and unconditional love, and the expectation of parents to love their children regardless of their sexual orientation. This type of content has helped them achieve virality.

Gaining the attention of celebrities through Free Mom Hugs posts has been the impetus of the organization’s ability to gain and keep virality. Through hashtags and “the magic of social media” (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023) they have gained the attention of Jamie Lee Curtis in 2018, who is an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. The organization has also been fortunate to reach other celebrities. These include Ashton Kutcher, George Takei, Tan France, and Jen Hatmaker. Ashton Kutcher retweeted one of the organization's tweets. George Takei shared a video about Free Mom Hugs. Tan France did an Instagram live opening of one of the organization’s care packages that started during COVID. And author Jen Hatmaker, went to Austin Pride Parade with a Free Mom Hugs sign and posted about it. Although the organization had no intention of gaining the attention of these celebrities, the social media manager said,

“That is the beauty of social media (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023).” The organization focuses on making quality posts and hopes it does the right thing. The manager remarked it makes a measurable difference when influencers can influence and “their followers become your followers (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023).”

The organization’s social media strategy relies on analytics to identify when and what to post to reach its target audience. However, the organization's social media manager also knows that some people do not interact on social media and content and times of posting must also be mindful of this group that is absent on analytics. The analytics that Free Mom Hugs uses to measure its social media strategy shows that it receives the most interactions on Sunday at 2 p.m. since people are home and “have maybe heard something over the pulpit and they are trying to find a resource to help them figure out this conflict (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023).” Since Sundays are the most popular times, and the social media manager does not work on the weekends, the manager schedules something that will be uplifting without causing too much controversy since there will not be anyone to monitor the comments and conversations that may take an unwanted turn. However, the social media manager has found through analytics that Tuesdays through Thursdays are the best days to post. They “post every day, typically two to three times a day (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023).” They will post memes and information in the afternoons because they know the LGBTQ youth and community tend to be more active on those days and times. They will post the Trevor hotline and suicide awareness at 10 p.m. when youth are looking and paying attention. They post an affirming mom hugging someone at Pride Parade in the evenings to appeal to volunteers and those in need of support. On Tuesdays, the organization promotes T-shirt Tuesday to not only fundraise but also encourage allying with the LGBTQ community. By sharing a mix of educational information, current

events happening all over the country and sharing pictures from the different chapter events, they also ensure to post about other social justice issues that take place, such as George Floyd in 2020; intending to cause people to realize the involvement of race in activism and participation, and how these issues are all connected to love.

The organization defines success as “spreading the movement”, and doing anything that helps them to do that. The social media manager said, “Social media is a kind of sport and brain game to play and gamble a little bit when posting.” This is especially true when it comes to the algorithm. Some days the social media manager feels they have posted an influential meme or post and only 12 people like it. The social media manager said this aspect is difficult because the change is due to the algorithm not the post and they have to relearn the algorithm again. Of course, those involved appreciate posts that have 1,000 people liking and sharing them, which demonstrates more engagement, but “the deeper meaning is that it is spreading the movement. People are doing their part as allies and welcoming judgment by sharing something a little controversial (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023).” Social media managers seek to engage on other pages since they are proud of what other people are doing, and the added engagement brings more visibility to the organization. Increases in interactions are typically seen when photos are posted about one of its programs, including Pride Rides or care packages, and people feel excited. When influencers or celebrities post or reshare any of its content it receives a marked increase.

Free Mom Hugs’ involvement online and offline in the gay rights movement, although indirectly, has improved the tension in the LGBTQ community. Those involved have seen the change and impact of its involvement through comments on social media, people they meet, the expansion of Free Mom Hugs, and the increased acceptance for the LGBTQ+ community. The

social media manager shared the most obvious example of this during the interview. In preparation for its national conference on September 7-9, 2023, the organization anticipated scenarios of protests, riots, bomb threats, and hate speech, none of which took place. The social media manager attributes the success to the impact of the hug and how far people have come to understand what it means to have unconditional love and that every child deserves to be celebrated.

The organization's goals offline have been to continue the conversation, whether at schools, churches, companies, and conferences, and of course, give out free hugs to help move the movement forward. The social media manager says the chapters are their "boots on the ground" (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023) taking care of back-to-school events, speaking at gay-straight alliance events, and speaking to corporations' diversity and inclusion groups. In March 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Free Mom Hugs had to be creative in sharing virtual hugs while everyone was quarantined. Volunteers and organization members implemented Pride Rides in which they would decorate cars and drive through a university or gay district, and spread joy as they honked, cheered, and played music. They also created and shipped care packages, which was their way of delivering a hug without being physically there.

Free Mom Hugs leaders lets followers and volunteers know the progress and impact that is being made through its website, social media, and emails. Managers send newsletters and update the website blog to keep everyone motivated, especially during political seasons when people reduce their time on social media, and the organization needs a way to stay in contact. It is also evident in the content that followers are kept up to date on current events and more importantly, wins taking place in the LGBTQ community through its social media accounts.

Free Mom Hugs uses each social media platforms differently and to its advantage to help disseminate its message. “Facebook is grandmas and Instagram is a place where you get a lot of engagement,” (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023). The social media manager says “Facebook is the organization’s everything”. Anything posted always ends up on Facebook, whereas Instagram is the photo album with the feel-good stuff. The organization uses LinkTree for some information, but without links available on Instagram, she says sharing an article is different. When it comes to Twitter, the organization has backed away to see what is going to happen. In the past, it had been a place for more news articles, press coverage, and resharing of content from partner organizations, since she believes that there is no sense in having competition in loving gay children. TikTok has been beneficial for it, but it would be hard to manage if all of the chapters were to have their own TikTok account.

Although it started on Facebook, when it started to become “toxic,” (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023) Free Mom Hugs had to find other ways to communicate. The organization cannot get rid of Facebook since there are still older people that use it. Overall, the organization tries to be the good news amidst all the “yuck (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023).”

Free Mom Hugs also notices the many trends that take place on social media and integrates them using the trends in its social media strategy. In 2020, it was quick to jump on the Instagram Lives bandwagon because it provided a great opportunity to keep the conversation going. Even now the founder will jump on occasionally and create videos of snail mail sent to its P.O. box. Sometimes trends are a surprise and turn out to work without much effort.

Some ups and downs come around with certain holidays, including Pride Month. Those months there are many activities and events that it is difficult to keep up with all the pictures that

the chapter leaders send. It also has increased content to share around National Coming Out Day, when the organization selects 50 people at random to receive a care package. November includes the last significant holiday of the year with Transgender Day of Remembrance at which informational videos for self-care are sent to children that go home to non-affirming families around Christmas time. However, November through February is a slower time for the organization when members work on policies, procedures, and grant writing.

The organization leaders have found that the most difficult part of using social media to help further the conversation and the movement is finding a balance between allowing freedom of speech and stopping the bullies and scoffers in the comments before it triggers or traumatizes someone. They want to keep their page a safe place, while also allowing for conversations to be created. They have found it a delicate balance to know when to involve themselves and delete a comment and block a user; however, leaders do not instantly want to take those actions unless they see that it is going down an unwanted path. They try to make light of a situation when someone has been unkind in the comments. They also feel it is important “to ruffle a few feathers” and know when and how to be strategic with those things, whether it’s extra monitoring or turning off the comments (anonymous, personal interview, September 26, 2023).

Free Mom Hugs leaders have seen the gay rights social movement evolve on social media from the beginning when they experienced disbelief and compassion for people needing stand-in moms at weddings, or homeless LGBTQ children who had been kicked out of their homes. Then as years went on with more political attacks against the LGBTQ community, their focus has been on correcting misinformation, training advocates and allies, and reminding the LGBTQ community that Free Mom Hugs is there for them and they are not alone. Social media helps them do that. The organization leaders also feel an obligation to share information with others

when they learn something new or come to understand a group of people better. As is the case now with transgender issues, healthcare, and other rights.

The variables Free Mom Hugs have noticed that impact the effectiveness of social media in helping to create the desired impact of the organization include their state chapters, public events, influencers, celebrities, posts that receive earned media, and hashtags. They attribute the development of the state chapters for helping the movement flourish. Each chapter having its own social media pages but also sharing from the national page, has helped create engagement for them through shares and likes, and the power of an influencer and celebrity cannot be denied. The organization's engagement skyrockets when an influencer or celebrity praises Free Mom Hugs on their social pages. Engagement also increases when the founder, Sara Cunningham, attends a celebratory event with Human Rights Campaign or GLAAD or speaks publicly about the organization and movement. Lastly, the use of hashtags is a necessary and important variable when using social media. The social media manager likes to make a statement with the flow of hashtags, for example, #freemomhugs #celebrates #lgbtq #asyouare #hugsmatter #youmatter #lovewins #equalityforall.

Free Mom Hugs managers measure its impact through the comments and stories that are told on its social media, experiences they have had, and people they meet. They relish in social media, the people they have been able to reach through the organization's social media accounts, the good they can insert into the world, and its spread. Free Mom Hugs believes that social media is a way to see the good in humanity if harnessed the right way, and all it comes down to is hugs and spreading love.

The social media manager is passionate about the Free Mom Hugs organization and all that it aims to do to spread hope, support trans children, educate, ally with a Free Mom Hugs

shirt, and post on social media knowing that despite how many people see it, somebody needed it, and it means the world to them. The mission is simple: Parents need to love their children, and a simple hug can change the world.

Discussion

As this research indicates, social media plays an important role in spreading social movements, specifically in the ways that it is used. The 11 different ways in which this study found that social media was used during the time periods analyzed for the gay rights movement demonstrates the different ways in which social media is being used, how each is received differently, and how all play a role in helping to bring awareness to the issue: celebrations, celebrity/influencers/internet personalities, National Days, dedicated months, news story headlines, news sources, historic figures and events, company/brand affiliation, gay rights accounts/gay rights organizations, other figures, and other. Besides the 11 different ways people post on social media, there are also other ways social media has been used during the gay rights movement, not included in the social data, including the use of Facebook cover photo filters and banners to support gay pride with a rainbow or the pride flag. The use of hashtags is another way social media is being used, as well as the themes of the content shared. However, by sharing posts that have nothing to do with gay rights but using the #gayrights in order to trick the algorithm and receive more views, individuals can divert attention away from actual gay rights content meant to build and move the movement forward.

The use of Instagram and Facebook in the gay rights movement has evolved over the years. However, over time some characteristics have remained. The most frequently used hashtags included #loveislove, #lovewins, and #HappyPride. On Facebook and Instagram,

multiple news sources were included among the top interactions in the total interactions filter on CrowdTangle for their posts on gay rights.

The stories between Instagram and Facebook during the three analyzed time periods told different stories in terms of content and interaction, with Facebook focusing on news and exchange of opinions, and Instagram focusing on individual stories and uplifting content and images. These posts shared on Instagram supporting or advocating for the gay rights movement included quotes, pictures with rainbow colors, and posts depicting same-sex couples. They also included stories of real individuals fighting for rights and policies to change the narrative, normalize same-sex attraction, and show the importance of changing societal norms.

Social media can also be used to like, share, or comment on posts, all interactions that help to spread content related to the gay rights movement. However, as more and more interactions take place on social media, especially during periods similar to Covid-19, where in-person activity was discontinued and social media was so heavily relied upon, it is increasingly important that users do not become complacent with advocacy efforts online and become slacktivists by relying on social media to do the heavy lifting of the movement.

The fight for gay rights on social media has also evolved from only gay rights to advocating for the whole LGBTQ+ community, which includes trans rights. As more and more individuals joined social media and resonated with or took interest in the movement and began sharing content supporting gay rights, the gay rights presence increased, and there was more attention being brought to the need for change. From 2015 to 2018 to 2020 user interaction on Instagram went from 606,241 to 2,642,007 to 10,118,606; posts went from 1,236 to 547 to 3,241 (see Figure 57). From 2015 to 2018 to 2020 user interaction on Facebook went from 4,120,461 to 535,858 to 4,047,175; posts went from 12,518 to 3,630 to 13,718 (see Figure 58).

Interactions on Instagram increased over the years, probably due to an increase in users joining the social media platform, while Facebook interactions seemed to decrease slightly. Besides the post made by Taylor Swift in October 2018 on Instagram which caused an increase in interactions, fewer posts and interactions were made in October 2018 on Facebook and fewer posts were made on Instagram, most likely due to LGBTQ+ History Month not having as much traction as Pride Month does. However, the months set aside specifically for Pride Month and LGBTQ+ History Month provide a way for gay rights supporters, activists, and advocates to rally together for a short period of time, focus all energy and efforts on the gay rights movement, and improve the lives of those in the LGBTQ+ community, on social media and through events.

The evolution of social media has also changed the way individuals advocate for the gay rights movement on social media. What initially started with pictures, quotes, news stories, and educational posts, now includes reels and videos, and, in later years, to show more pictures of individuals and less commentary as seen on Facebook in earlier years. Facebook also gives the appearance to be a different, harsher narrative, due to the layout of the app with captions on top and photos and videos below which is opposite of Instagram, allowing the photo to take more focus of the audience.

The Free Mom Hugs organization strategically plans and shares content on social media that will continue to help create change in the gay rights social movement. Free Mom Hugs and organizations like it are great examples of what it means to take action offline and online to influence change in a social movement. Not only do organization social media managers post and like content, but they also actively engage with other accounts and carry out major projects offline that helps move the movement forward in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights. Free Mom Hugs can make an even larger impact when one of its posts catches the eyes of celebrities or

influencers and news outlets. More importantly, is how consistently the organization posts on social media to share goodness, information, and love regardless of what month or day it is.

The gay rights movement has accomplished much over the years, as it has evolved to fight for the rights and acceptance of all those in the LGBTQ+ community. The work is not done. There continues to be some hate, criticism, and shame directed towards the LGBTQ community; however, it has decreased. This change is reflected in what the social media manager for Free Mom Hugs said during the interview, how they did not see any protests or receive any threats at their 2023 conference, and how people are becoming more accepting. The poll carried out by Pew Research shows a similar progression, in that same-sex marriage now has the backing of a majority of US adults (Borelli, 2022). From 2004 to 2019 there was a complete switch between adults opposing same-sex marriage and those in favor of allowing same-sex couples to legally marry (see Figure 1).

There were many unexpected results of this study. First, the spikes on the data graph are just one or two posts that have received many interactions. Instead of indicating what days received more posts using the keyword, which sometimes it did, more frequently the spikes were due to one or two posts receiving a majority of the engagement, which increased the overall interactions for the day. Second, celebrity involvement is a valuable way to get audience interaction and headway for a movement. The trend analysis for the gay rights movement and Free Mom Hugs showed that celebrities receive more interactions for their posts, which causes spikes and can then lead to earned media and increased visibility. Third, besides celebrities, news sources had some of the top interaction posts on both Facebook and Instagram, possibly because social media is where many individuals receive their news. Fourth, the narrative between platforms differs with Facebook focusing on news and Instagram focusing on personal stories,

and how user interaction changes over time depending on the month, the day, the year, and current events taking place. And lastly, content being shared on social media is driven by events taking place in the real world, not the other way around with social media driving social change. Social change takes place and then people use social media to respond, talk about the change, and jump on trends.

Social media is extremely important in the diffusion of ideas and issues, especially with the increasing presence and influence of influencers. Similarly to companies posting about gay rights on their social media pages to increase brand reputation through corporate social advocacy (CSA) efforts, some influencers and celebrities do the same. However, over the years, and depending on the issue, it appears that influencers, celebrities, and other figures have taken a quieter approach to posting on their social media accounts regarding advocacy efforts. However, their influence on their community and followers shows how vital they are to the effectiveness of social media and the transmission of messages.

Many social movements on social media come and go. This is mostly due to an event that causes an issue to rise to the forefront of peoples' minds and they take to social media in an attempt to make a change, or it occurs in a month that is dedicated to the social movement, making it easier for individuals to put all their efforts into supporting the issue for that one month (Downs, 1972). This could also be the reason celebrations drop off so suddenly. If individuals are going to post about the gay rights movement, they are more likely to do so the day of an event versus a few days after.

In the issues management life cycle, the public takes action during crisis communication, especially when something happens, and individuals take to social media to raise their voices (Sandman, 2013). Unless something takes place that brings issues related to the gay rights

movement to the attention of the public, it would appear that the gay rights movement is no longer in an issue management life cycle of early, emerging, current, crisis, or dormant stages. It has reached the point that organizations use the gay rights movement, and the months associated with it (Pride Month and LGBTQ History Month) to their advantage in brand reputation. Overall, the gay rights movement received more attention during those months but seems to be at the forefront of everyone's minds.

It appears that the main catalyst of social media content during the gay rights movement had to do with public opinion and persuasion (Wilcox, 2014)(see Figure 63). As seen in this study and the gay rights movement as a whole, individuals engage because they have an interest in the issue. A current event takes place regarding the issue which helps individuals with the formation of opinions. Then, as public discussion takes place on social media, those who articulate the issue well and have a following and influence on social media can further shape individual's opinions on the issue, ultimately helping to form public opinion. Opinion leaders in this study included celebrities, companies, news sources, and accounts specific to the issues of gay rights.

Events and opinion leaders are important factors in the formation of public opinion and the resolutions that come from those opinions (Wilcox, 2014). Events help bring the issue to the attention of the public, along with the help of media coverage. And because of their persuasive abilities, opinion leaders play a role in public opinion. These opinion leaders can be seen as credible, interested in the issue, and the ability to influence.

Limitations

As with any research study, some limitations present themselves. In this research study looking at the role of social media in furthering the goals of a social movement, the limitations

include delimitation, and not being able to examine every social movement. It is possible that the findings in this research would not be applicable across different social movements and issues. Another limitation includes the flawed nature of social monitoring software and the possibility of not seeing every post about the social movement being studied, as well as slightly different results that populate with each search, regardless of using the same filter and keywords. Lastly, the findings learned in this study only show a small portion of what is going on during a social movement. The data does not show how algorithms, hashtags, or interactions play a role in what happens on social media.

Future Research

Future research could examine why people join a social movement on social media, and what makes them more likely to join and share content related to the social movement. It could also include a more exhaustive analysis into the celebrity/influencer motivations and influence on social media in regard to a social movement, and how social interactions help to move messages on social media.

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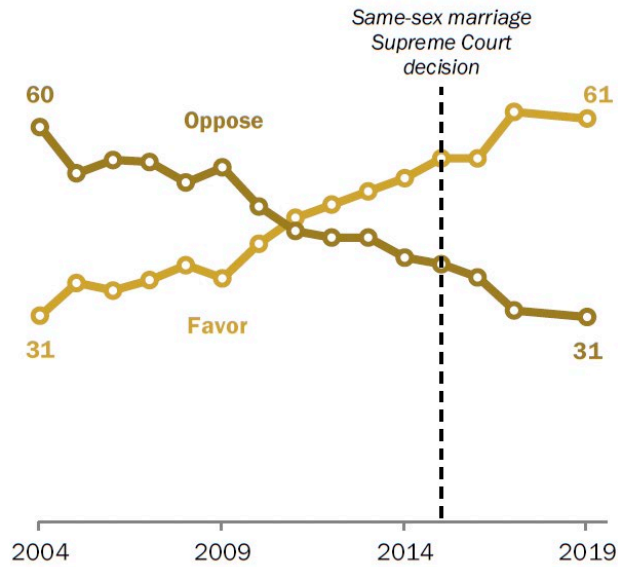
Appendix

Figure 1

Pew Research Public Opinion of Same-Sex Marriage

Public remains supportive of same-sex marriage; wide partisan gap persists

% who ___ allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally



% who favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally

Figure 2

Crowdtangle Data Used to Determine Time Periods for Trend Analysis

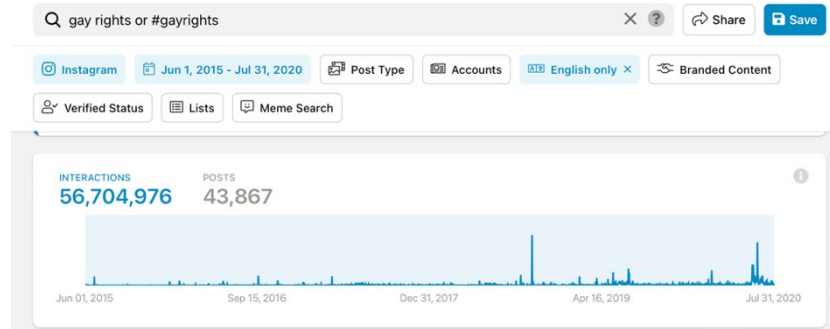


Table 1*11 Ways in Which Social Media is Used During Social Movements*

| Legend | Description of Spikes |
|--------|---|
| A1 | Celebration (Supreme Court Ruling) |
| B2 | Celebrity/Influencer/Internet Personality |
| C1 | National Day (ex: Holiday, National Coming Out Day) |
| D1 | Month (Pride Month or LGBTQ History Month) |
| E3 | News Story Headline |
| F3 | News Source |
| G2 | Historic Figure |
| H5 | Company/Brand Affiliation |
| I4 | Gay Rights Account/Gay Rights Organization |
| J2 | Other Figure (political, religious, TV) |
| K6 | Other |

Note: 1-6 refer to groupings. 1: Celebrations. 2: People. 3: News. 4: Gay Rights Account. 5: Company. 6: Other.

Figure 3*Instagram Spikes of June 2015***Table 2***Details of Instagram Spikes in June 2015*

| Instagram | Date | #Interactions | Event | Total Interactions = 606,241 Posts = 1,236 |
|-----------|---------|---------------|--|---|
| 2015 | | | | |
| 1 | June 1 | 3.5k | Start of Pride Month | |
| 2 | June 4 | 27.2k | Time Magazine photo series | |
| 3 | June 6 | 14.3k | Internet personality Aisha Thalia post | |
| 4 | June 8 | 18.3k | Levi's jean co post about Pride | |
| 5 | June 26 | 388.4k | Celebration after Supreme Court Ruling | |
| 6 | June 27 | 40.7k | Celebration Continues | |

Figure 4

Time Magazine Photo Series on June 4, 2015

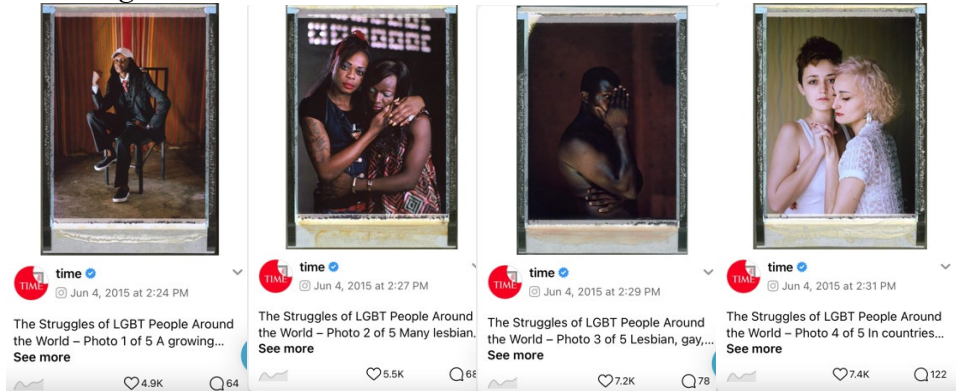


Figure 5

Aisha Thalia Post on June 6, 2015



Figure 6

Levis Jean Post on June 8, 2015



Figure 7*Top Interaction Posts Celebrating Supreme Court Ruling June 26, 2015***Figure 8***Facebook Spikes of June 2015***Table 3***Details of Facebook Spikes in June 2015*

| Instagram | Date | #Interactions | Event | Total Interactions = 4,120,461 | Posts = 12,518 |
|-----------|---------|---------------|--|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | June 1 | 57.9k | Start of Pride Month | | |
| 2 | June 3 | 150.1k | Post by Franklin Graham | | |
| 3 | June 7 | 276.3k | Post by IFLScience | | |
| 4 | June 8 | 133.3k | Post by Citi | | |
| 5 | June 26 | 1.73m | Celebration after Supreme Court ruling | | |
| 6 | June 27 | 342.6k | Celebration continues | | |
| 7 | June 28 | 303.6k | Stories about difference of beliefs | | |

Figure 9

Post by Franklin Graham June 3, 2015



Figure 10

Post by IFLScience on June 7, 2015



Figure 11

Post by Citi on June 8, 2015

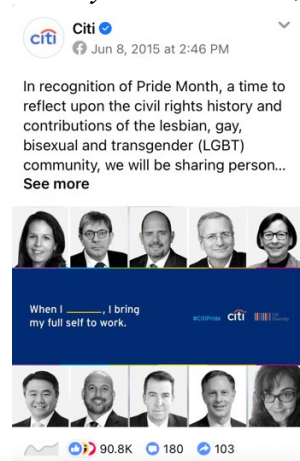



Figure 12

Posts Celebrating Supreme Court Ruling


NENE LEAKES Jun 26, 2015 at 12:19 PM
Yesssss for the Gay Rights today!
#lovewins



George Takei Jun 25, 2015 at 9:01 PM
I got a lump in my throat watching this. We truly do stand on the edge of a great moment in history. Will I even be able to sleep tonight, awaiting the decision by the Supreme Court tomorrow?

HuffPost Jun 26, 2015 at 2:00 PM
From this day forward, there is no more gay marriage and straight marriage — in America, it's just marriage now. #MarriageEquality

Mauricio Ochmann Jun 26, 2015 at 8:55 PM
"You don't have to be gay to support gay rights just like you don't have to be an animal to support animal rights" - banksy #LoveWins



Try To Watch This Marriage Equality Video Without That
THE-DAILY.BUZZ

12 Most Important Lines From the Historic Gay Marriage
ROLLINGSTONE.COM

24.2K 1.1K 2.8K
18.1K 984 1.8K
11.8K 516 679
16.8K 257 572

Figure 13

Posts on June 29, 2015 about Differences of Beliefs

Scary Mommy Jun 29, 2015 at 2:00 PM
"My fiancé and I support traditional marriage between a man and a woman and don't want our money going to places that support otherwise." Good luck with that.

Photographer Loses Client For Supporting Gay Marriage,
SCARYMOMMY.COM

Ken Ham Jun 29, 2015 at 3:00 AM
Can Christians Judge Gay "Marriage"? I must admit I have been amazed (and saddened) by the number of Christians who claim that because we call gay "marriage" a sin, we are being...

See more

Fox News Jun 29, 2015 at 8:30 PM
"Already, Christian businesses are facing discrimination if they don't want to participate in wedding ceremonies that violate their sincerely held beliefs." — Gov. Bobby Jindal

Jindal: 'The Left Wants Our First Amendment Rights'
INSIDER.FOXNEWS.COM

Variety Jun 29, 2015 at 10:27 AM
"The goal of the gay-rights movement is less about walking down the aisle, and more about walking down the street — with dignity, with pride, and without fear of harassment or discrimination," Elton John writes.

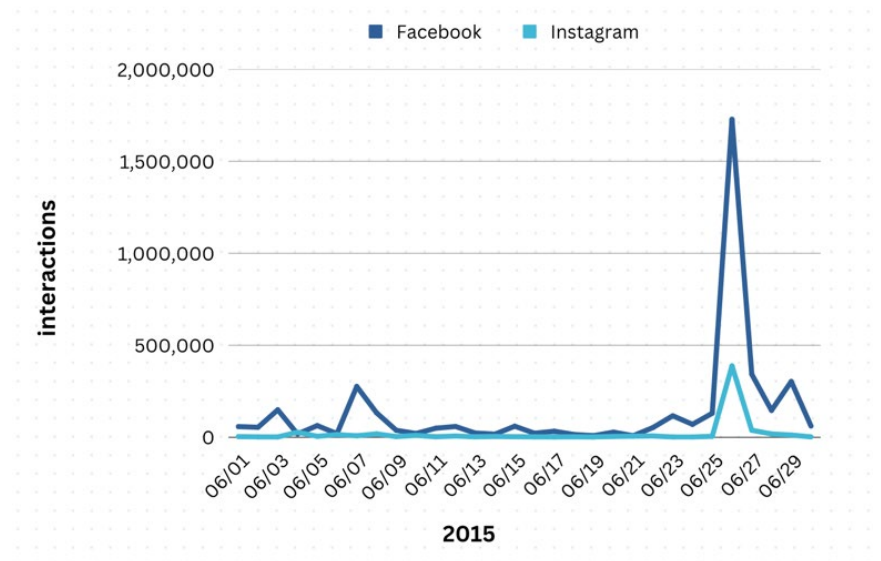
See less

Elton John: Equality is 'More Than Marriage; It's About Dignity and
VARIETY.COM

9.9K 1.1K 1.6K
16.5K 3.1K 10.6K
14.6K 3.1K 2.3K
17.9K 588 1.8K

Figure 14

Comparison of Interactions Between Instagram and Facebook June 2015

**Figure 15a**

Instagram Spikes of October 1-7, 2018

**Table 4a**

Details of Instagram Spike October 1-7, 2018

| Instagram | Date | #Interactions | Event | Total Interactions = 2,642,007 | Posts = 547 |
|-----------|-----------|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 2018 | | | | | |
| 1 | October 1 | 13.7k | Start of LGBTQ+ History Month | | |
| 2 | October 2 | 31.9k | Huffpost about Romania headline | | |
| 3 | October 7 | 2.22m | Taylor Swift post | | |

Figure 15b

Instagram Spikes of October 9-31, 2018

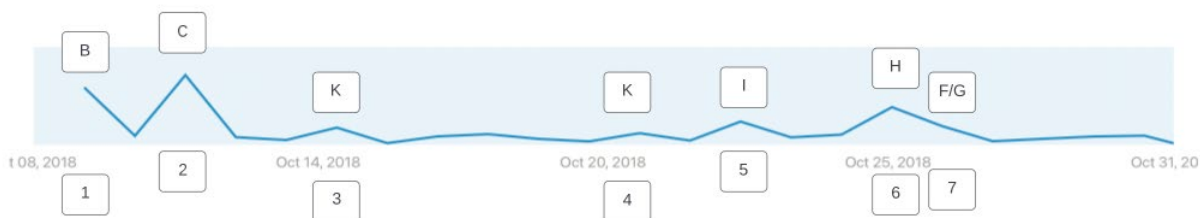


Table 4b

Details of Instagram Spikes October 9-31, 2018

| Instagram | Date | #Interactions | Event | Total Interactions = 329,702 Posts = 426 |
|-----------|------------|---------------|--|--|
| 2018 | | | | |
| 1 | October 9 | 55.7k | Reposts of Taylor Swift’s post | |
| 2 | October 11 | 67.9k | National Coming Out Day | |
| 3 | October 14 | 16.8k | Post by @wokerabbit | |
| 4 | October 20 | 11.4k | Post by @noonoori | |
| 5 | October 22 | 22.7k | Posts by @Sateenmusic and @lgbt_history | |
| 6 | October 25 | 36.7k | Olimpiaznoli post @barilla about improved ethics | |
| 7 | October 26 | 18.1k | Washington Post about Matthew Shepard | |

Figure 16

Start of LGBT History Month



Figure 17

Top Headlines on October 2, 2018

The image shows two social media posts side-by-side. The left post is from Huffpost, dated Oct 2, 2018 at 6:45 AM. The headline reads "Romania's Top Court Rules LGBTQ Couples Should Have Legal Protections". The text below says "A step in the right direction. Romania's top court has ruled that gay couples should have the same family rights as heterosexuals, a judgment that comes before a national referendum seeking to ban same-sex marriage. The Constitutional Court ruled that same-sex couples had the same rights to a private and family life as heterosexuals and should 'benefit from.... legal and juridical recognition of their rights and obligations.'" It has 1.32x engagement, 15.7K likes, and 210 comments.

The right post is from Nextshark, dated Oct 2, 2018 at 7:53 PM. The headline reads "Kindergarten Teacher in China Sues Former School After Getting Fired for Being Gay". It features a photo of a classroom with tables and chairs. The text says "A former kindergarten teacher is suing the school he worked at after he was...". It has -2.03x engagement, 8.1K likes, and 91 comments.

Figure 18

Taylor Swifts Post on October 7, 2018

The image shows a screenshot of Taylor Swift's Instagram post from October 7, 2018. The post includes a photo of Taylor Swift sitting on a bed and a long text caption. The caption discusses her political views and her decision to vote in the state of Tennessee during the upcoming midterm elections on November 6th. She expresses her concerns about systemic racism and her support for candidates like Phil Bredesen and Jim Cooper. The post has a date of October 7, 2018.

that any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender is WRONG. I believe that the systemic racism we still see in this country towards people of color is terrifying, sickening and prevalent. I cannot vote for someone who will not be willing to fight for dignity for ALL Americans, no matter their skin color, gender or who they love. Running for Senate in the state of Tennessee is a woman named Marsha Blackburn. As much as I have in the past and would like to continue voting for women in office, I cannot support Marsha Blackburn. Her voting record in Congress appalls and terrifies me. She voted against equal pay for women. She voted against the Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, which attempts to protect women from domestic violence, stalking, and date rape. She believes businesses have a right to refuse service to gay couples. She also believes they should not have the right to marry. These are not MY Tennessee values. I will be voting for Phil Bredesen for Senate and Jim Cooper for House of Representatives. Please, please educate yourself on the candidates running in your state and vote based on who most closely represents your values. For a lot of us, we may never

October 7, 2018

Figure 19

One of the Many Reposts of Taylor Swifts Post

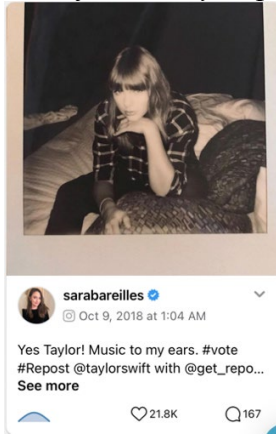


Figure 20

@lgbt_history post on National Coming Out Day



Figure 21

Post by @wokerabbit on October 14, 2018



Figure 22

Post by @noonoouri on October 20, 2018

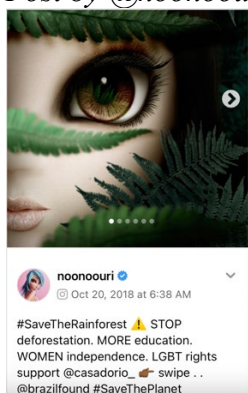


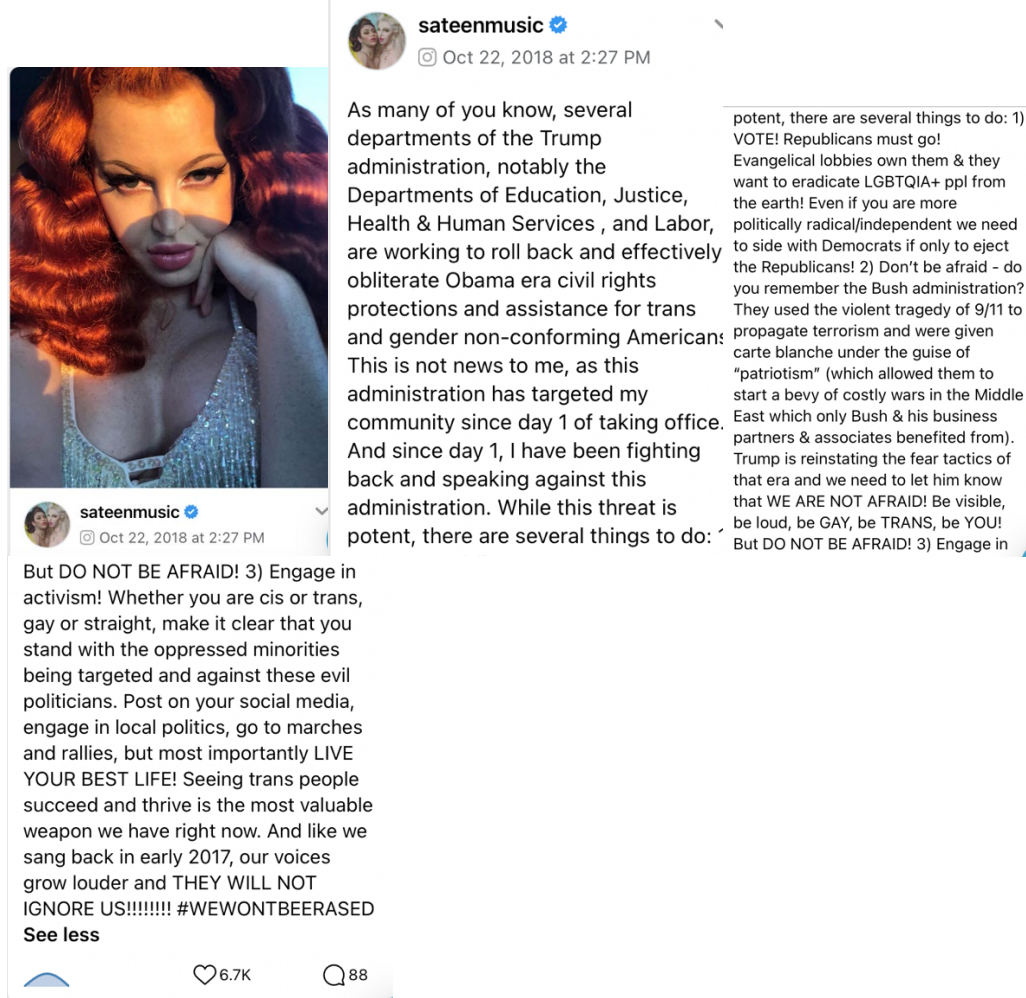
Figure 23

Post by @lgbt_history on October 22, 2018



Figure 24

Post by @sateenmusic on October 22, 2018



sateenmusic ✓
Oct 22, 2018 at 2:27 PM

As many of you know, several departments of the Trump administration, notably the Departments of Education, Justice, Health & Human Services, and Labor, are working to roll back and effectively obliterate Obama era civil rights protections and assistance for trans and gender non-conforming Americans. This is not news to me, as this administration has targeted my community since day 1 of taking office. And since day 1, I have been fighting back and speaking against this administration. While this threat is potent, there are several things to do:

potent, there are several things to do: 1) VOTE! Republicans must go! Evangelical lobbies own them & they want to eradicate LGBTQIA+ ppl from the earth! Even if you are more politically radical/independent we need to side with Democrats if only to eject the Republicans! 2) Don't be afraid - do you remember the Bush administration? They used the violent tragedy of 9/11 to propagate terrorism and were given carte blanche under the guise of "patriotism" (which allowed them to start a bevy of costly wars in the Middle East which only Bush & his business partners & associates benefited from). Trump is reinstating the fear tactics of that era and we need to let him know that WE ARE NOT AFRAID! Be visible, be loud, be GAY, be TRANS, be YOU! But DO NOT BE AFRAID! 3) Engage in

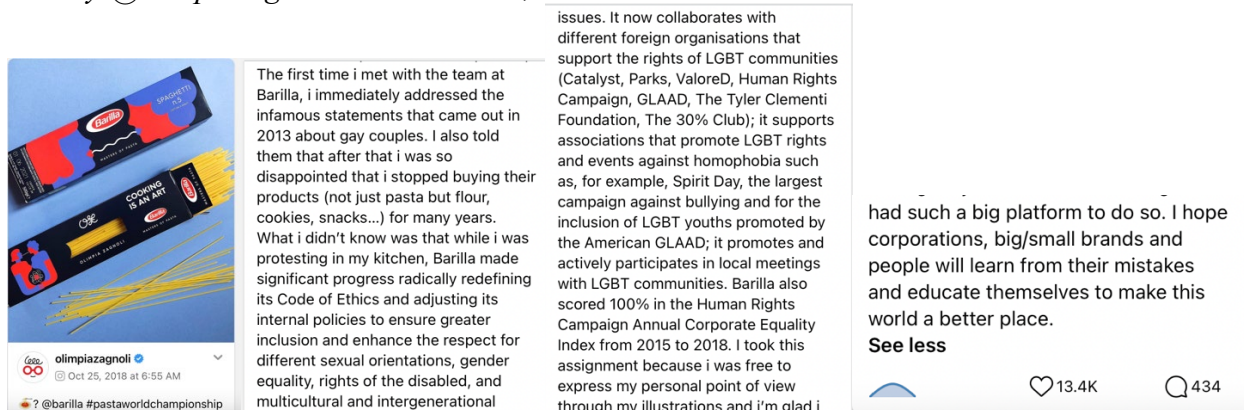
But DO NOT BE AFRAID! 3) Engage in activism! Whether you are cis or trans, gay or straight, make it clear that you stand with the oppressed minorities being targeted and against these evil politicians. Post on your social media, engage in local politics, go to marches and rallies, but most importantly LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE! Seeing trans people succeed and thrive is the most valuable weapon we have right now. And like we sang back in early 2017, our voices grow louder and THEY WILL NOT IGNORE US!!!!!! #WEWONTBEERASED

See less

6.7K 88

Figure 25

Post by @olimpiazagnoli on October 25, 2018



olimpiazagnoli ✓
Oct 25, 2018 at 6:55 AM

The first time i met with the team at Barilla, i immediately addressed the infamous statements that came out in 2013 about gay couples. I also told them that after that i was so disappointed that i stopped buying their products (not just pasta but flour, cookies, snacks...) for many years. What i didn't know was that while i was protesting in my kitchen, Barilla made significant progress radically redefining its Code of Ethics and adjusting its internal policies to ensure greater inclusion and enhance the respect for different sexual orientations, gender equality, rights of the disabled, and multicultural and intergenerational issues. It now collaborates with different foreign organisations that support the rights of LGBT communities (Catalyst, Parks, ValoreD, Human Rights Campaign, GLAAD, The Tyler Clementi Foundation, The 30% Club); it supports associations that promote LGBT rights and events against homophobia such as, for example, Spirit Day, the largest campaign against bullying and for the inclusion of LGBT youths promoted by the American GLAAD; it promotes and actively participates in local meetings with LGBT communities. Barilla also scored 100% in the Human Rights Campaign Annual Corporate Equality Index from 2015 to 2018. I took this assignment because i was free to express my personal point of view through my illustrations and i'm glad i had such a big platform to do so. I hope corporations, big/small brands and people will learn from their mistakes and educate themselves to make this world a better place.

See less

13.4K 434

Figure 26

Post by Washington Post on October 26, 2018

**Figure 27**

Facebook Spikes of October 2018

**Table 5**

Details of Facebook Spikes of October 2018

| Facebook | Date | #Interactions | Event | Total Interactions = 535,858 Posts = 3,630 |
|----------|------------|---------------|--|--|
| 2018 | | | | |
| 1 | October 1 | 8.3k | Start of LGBTQ+ History Month | |
| 2 | October 5 | 42.2k | Post by Occupy Democrats | |
| 3 | October 10 | 47.2k | Gay Cake Headlines | |
| 4 | October 11 | 49.1k | Matthew Shepard, National Coming Out Day | |
| 5 | October 15 | 63.1k | Trump admin headline | |
| 6 | October 26 | 87.9k | Matthew Shepard laid to rest | |

Figure 28

Post by Occupy Democrats

Occupy Democrats Oct 5, 2018 at 6:42 PM

"NEVER forget how HAPPY Republicans are today that they are about to destroy reproductive rights, gay rights, and voting rights..." Graphic and quote by Nicole Hickman James

Figure 29

Gay Cake Posts on October 10, 2018

Ben Shapiro Oct 10, 2018 at 1:30 PM

Whoa.

BRITAIN: Christian Bakers Win Supreme Court Appeal Over
DAILYWIRES.COM

21.7K 599 1.0K

CNN Oct 10, 2018 at 6:30 AM

A gay rights activist requested a cake featuring Sesame Street characters Bert and Ernie with the words "Support Gay Marriage." But the bakery owners in Northern Ireland said the message...
See more

Christian bakery owners in UK win appeal in 'gay cake'
EDITION.CNN.COM

2.4K 1.9K 192

Figure 30

October 11 Posts about Matthew Shepard

Washington Post Oct 11, 2018 at 9:00 AM

Shepard's family didn't bury his remains after he was beaten and left to die, out of concern that the site would be desecrated.

Matthew Shepard, whose 1998 murder became a symbol for
WASHINGTONPOST.COM

3.5K 112 839

Matthew Shepard Foun... Oct 11, 2018 at 11:44 AM

We are relieved and pleased to know that Matt's final resting place will be among other American heroes and dignitaries. It's exactly where he belongs.

Matthew Shepard, whose 1998 murder became a symbol for
WASHINGTONPOST.COM

2.6K 89 929

MoveOn Oct 11, 2018 at 1:00 PM

Matthew Shepard, one of the most known victims of an anti-gay hate crime and symbol of the LGBT rights movement, will have his ashes interred at the Washington National Cathedral...
See more

Matthew Shepard, whose 1998 murder became a symbol for
WASHINGTONPOST.COM

3.1K 77 508

GLAAD Oct 11, 2018 at 12:02 PM

Matthew Shepard will be interred at Washington National Cathedral, 20 years after his murder "It's reassuring to know he now will rest in a sacred spot where folks can come to reflect on...
See more

Matthew Shepard will be interred at Washington National
TWITTER.COM

4.5K 129 1.0K

Figure 31

National Coming Out Day Posts on October 11, 2018



Figure 32

Trump Administration Headlines on October 15, 2018

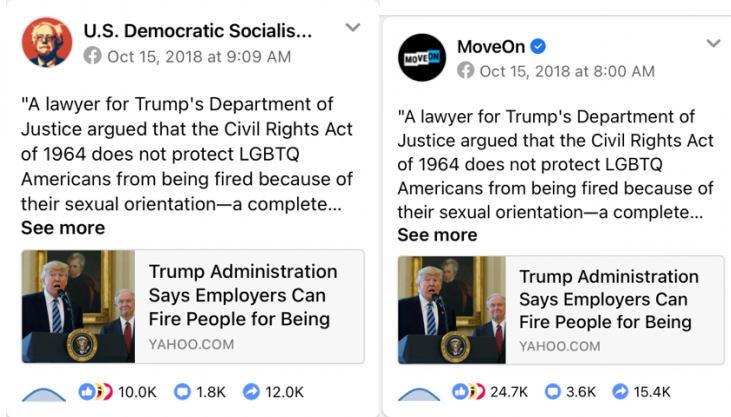


Figure 33

Posts about Matthew Shepard on October 26, 2018



Figure 34

Comparison of Interactions Between Instagram and Facebook October 2018

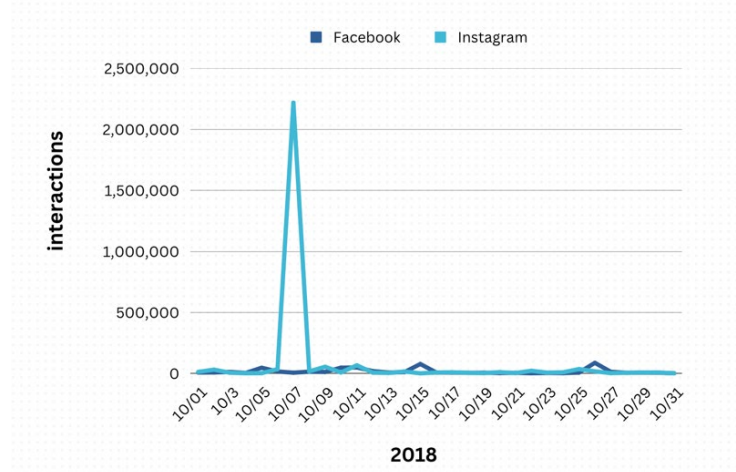


Figure 35

Instagram Spikes of June 2020



Table 6

Details of Instagram Spikes of June 2020

| Instagram | Date | #Interactions | Event | Total Interactions = 10,118,606 Posts = 3,241 |
|-----------|---------|---------------|---|---|
| 1 | June 1 | 920.2k | Start of Pride Month | |
| 2 | June 2 | 176.5k | Black Out Tuesday | |
| 3 | June 3 | 723.8k | Leslie Jordan video post | |
| 4 | June 4 | 918.4k | Emma Watson post on equal rights | |
| 5 | June 8 | 433.7k | a few posts celebrating Pride | |
| 6 | June 15 | 1.9m | Celebration after Supreme Court Ruling | |
| 7 | June 16 | 454k | More celebrations and post by Natgeo | |
| 8 | June 24 | 328.1k | Natgeo and NYTimes posts | |
| 9 | June 27 | 382.0k | Bumble sponsored post and Global Pride Day | |
| 10 | June 28 | 425.9k | Anniversary of Stonewall Riots | |
| 11 | June 29 | 400.6k | NYTimes post about Pride in Taipei, Natgeo post | |

Figure 36

Start of Pride Month



Figure 37

Post by Leslie Jordan on June 3, 2020



Figure 38

Post by Emma Watson on June 4, 2020



emmawatson  

 Jun 4, 2020 at 5:21 PM

Self-education is an essential part of any anti-racist journey, and reading ha...
See more

 785.4K  1.2K

Figure 39

Post about Pride, Marsha Johnson, and Black Lives



feminist 

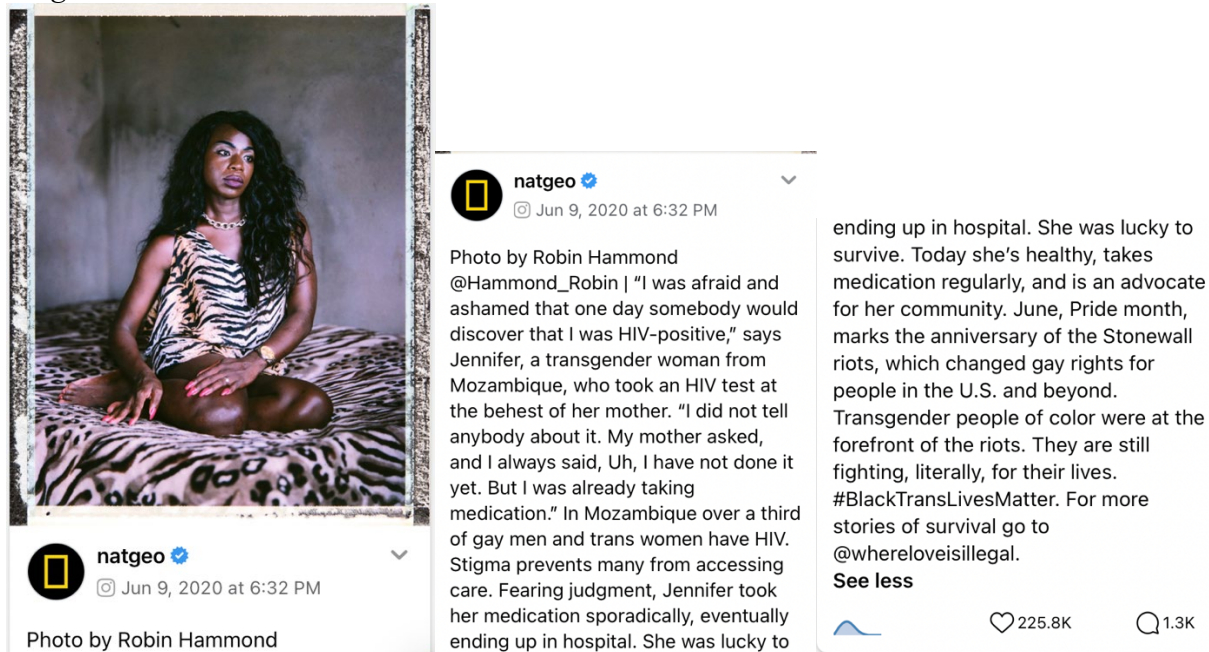
 Jun 5, 2020 at 1:12 PM

"What is Pride and why there's no Pride without black lives: Let's take a step...
See more

 143.1K  488

Figure 40

Natgeo Post on June 9, 2020



The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post from the account 'natgeo'. On the left is a photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned dress, sitting on a bed with a leopard-print blanket. To the right of the photo is a text overlay that reads: "Photo by Robin Hammond @Hammond_Robin | 'I was afraid and ashamed that one day somebody would discover that I was HIV-positive,'" says Jennifer, a transgender woman from Mozambique, who took an HIV test at the behest of her mother. 'I did not tell anybody about it. My mother asked, and I always said, Uh, I have not done it yet. But I was already taking medication.'" In Mozambique over a third of gay men and trans women have HIV. Stigma prevents many from accessing care. Fearing judgment, Jennifer took her medication sporadically, eventually ending up in hospital. She was lucky to ending up in hospital. She was lucky to survive. Today she's healthy, takes medication regularly, and is an advocate for her community. June, Pride month, marks the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, which changed gay rights for people in the U.S. and beyond. Transgender people of color were at the forefront of the riots. They are still fighting, literally, for their lives. #BlackTransLivesMatter. For more stories of survival go to @whereloveisillegal. See less". Below the text are icons for likes (225.8K) and comments (1.3K).

Figure 41

Post by Elton John on June 14, 2020



The image shows a screenshot of an Instagram post from the account 'eltonjohn'. On the left is a graphic with the text "TRANS EQUALITY NOW" in large, bold, blue and white letters on a black background. To the right of the graphic is a text overlay that reads: "devoted much of our lives to bringing about an end to the AIDS epidemic. Stripping trans-Americans of their health care protections will undoubtedly affect this community's safe access to HIV care. The commitment of the HIV community and governments around the world to access in HIV prevention, testing and treatment, is the only way to end AIDS. We must not go backwards and lose the valuable ground we have gained in this winnable fight. The Elton John AIDS Foundation remains devoted to the most vulnerable communities disproportionately affected by HIV - often drug users, sex workers, the gay and trans communities. To truly end the epidemic, we must continue to ensure that no one gets left behind. We will not stop fighting for a more inclusive, kinder and loving world. We strongly believe in our hearts that this is only way to end AIDS. Elton John and David Furnish @ejaf #LovesTheCure See less". Below the text are icons for likes (83.3K) and comments (1.0K).

Figure 42

Top Interaction Posts Celebrating Supreme Court Ruling June 15, 2020



Figure 43

Post by Natgeo on June 16, 2020



Figure 44

Top Interaction Posts

lgbt

@ Jun 17, 2020 at 5:35 PM

It is imperative that LGBTQ+ people start thinking, acting, and listening...
See more

140.2K 2.1K

Figure 45

Natgeo Post on June 24, 2020

natgeo

@ Jun 24, 2020 at 6:33 PM

Photo by Robin Hammond @Hammond_Robin | "Becoming transgender was a little rocky for me," says Serenity, a transgender woman from rural Louisiana. "Coming from a small town where that was not common, and also my parents being pastors, was hard at first. It was a struggle, but as I grew older I had to stand my ground and let them I know I'm not changing, this is me, accept it or not." For a transgender person of color it can take real courage just to be yourself. In 2019, the year this picture was taken, 26 transgender women were murdered in the U.S., the majority were trans women of color. June is Pride month—a time to celebrate LGBTQI+ communities around the world. It marks the anniversary of the Stonewall riots of 1969, which changed "gay rights" for people in the U.S. and beyond. Transgender people of color were at the forefront of the riots. They are still fighting, literally for their lives. #BlackTransLivesMatter. For more stories of survival go to @whereloveisillegal

See less

157.8K 1.5K

Figure 46

NYTimes Post on June 24, 2020



nytimes  

 Jun 24, 2020 at 8:03 P

It's a wonderful time to be Leslie Jordan. The sitcom...
See more

 92.3K  886

Figure 47

Company Posts on June 27, 2020



jessiepage  

 Jun 27, 2020 at 5:40 PM

I like this really cute girl hehe 🌈
 🤔 Guess these photos are kinda....gay.

 114.9K  1.0K

In fact, we both found each other on @bumble! We both are passionate about BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color) in the LGBTQ+ community. Guess what?? We love @bumble, they're donating up to \$5,000 to a select few LGBTQ+ organizations that are centered around supporting BIPOC! You can check out my stories to learn how to nominate your favorite BIPOC donation groups. Tell me in the comments, what are your favorite grassroots organizations that benefit LGBTQ+ organizations and are centered around BIPOC! One of my favorites is SNaPCO. It's Black, Trans-led, and protects the rights of Black Trans people in Atlanta. ❤️🧡💛💚💙
 #lgbt #pride #lgbtq #bisexual #pridemonth #bumblepartner #gay #rainbow
See less



teva  

 Jun 27, 2020 at 8:58 AM

🌈 Happy Global Pride Day! 🌈
 Though Pride parades are cancelled...
See more

 6.9K  89

Figure 48

Company Posts on June 28, 2020



Figure 49

Posts on June 29, 2020

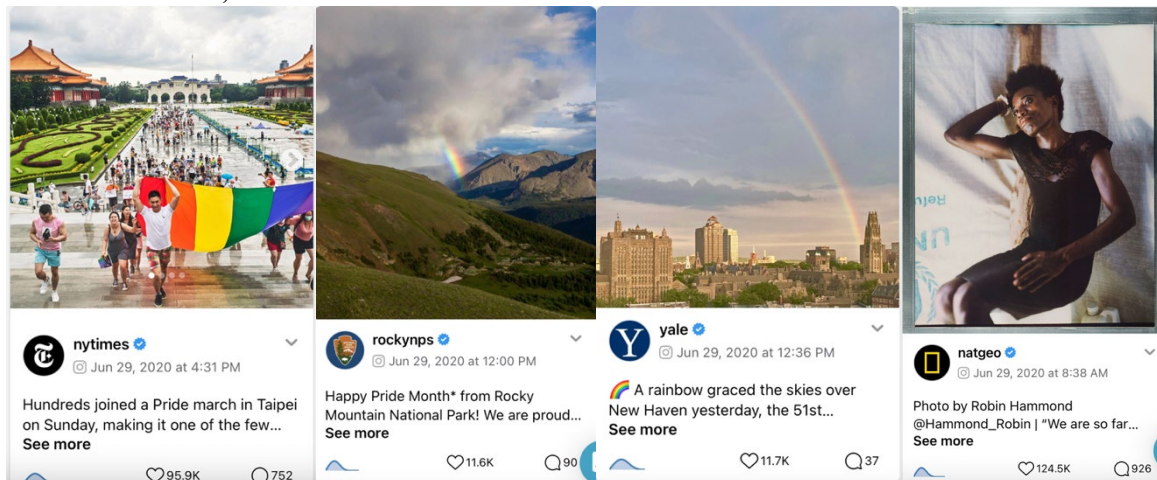


Figure 50

Facebook Spikes of June 2020



Table 7

Details of Facebook Spikes of June 2020

| Facebook | Date | #Interactions | Event | Total Interactions = 4,047,175 Posts = 13,718 |
|----------|---------|---------------|---|---|
| 2020 | | | | |
| 1 | June 1 | 93.2k | Start of Pride Month | |
| 2 | June 15 | 2.95m | Celebration and coverage of Supreme Court Ruling | |
| 3 | June 16 | 114.7k | Celebration continues with criticism and concern | |
| 4 | June 19 | 75.3k | Headline about Oprah | |
| 5 | June 28 | 82.0k | Posts about Pride and Stonewall Riots anniversary | |

Figure 51

Posts to Start Pride Month 2020



Figure 52

Top Interaction Posts Celebrating Supreme Court Ruling June 15, 2020

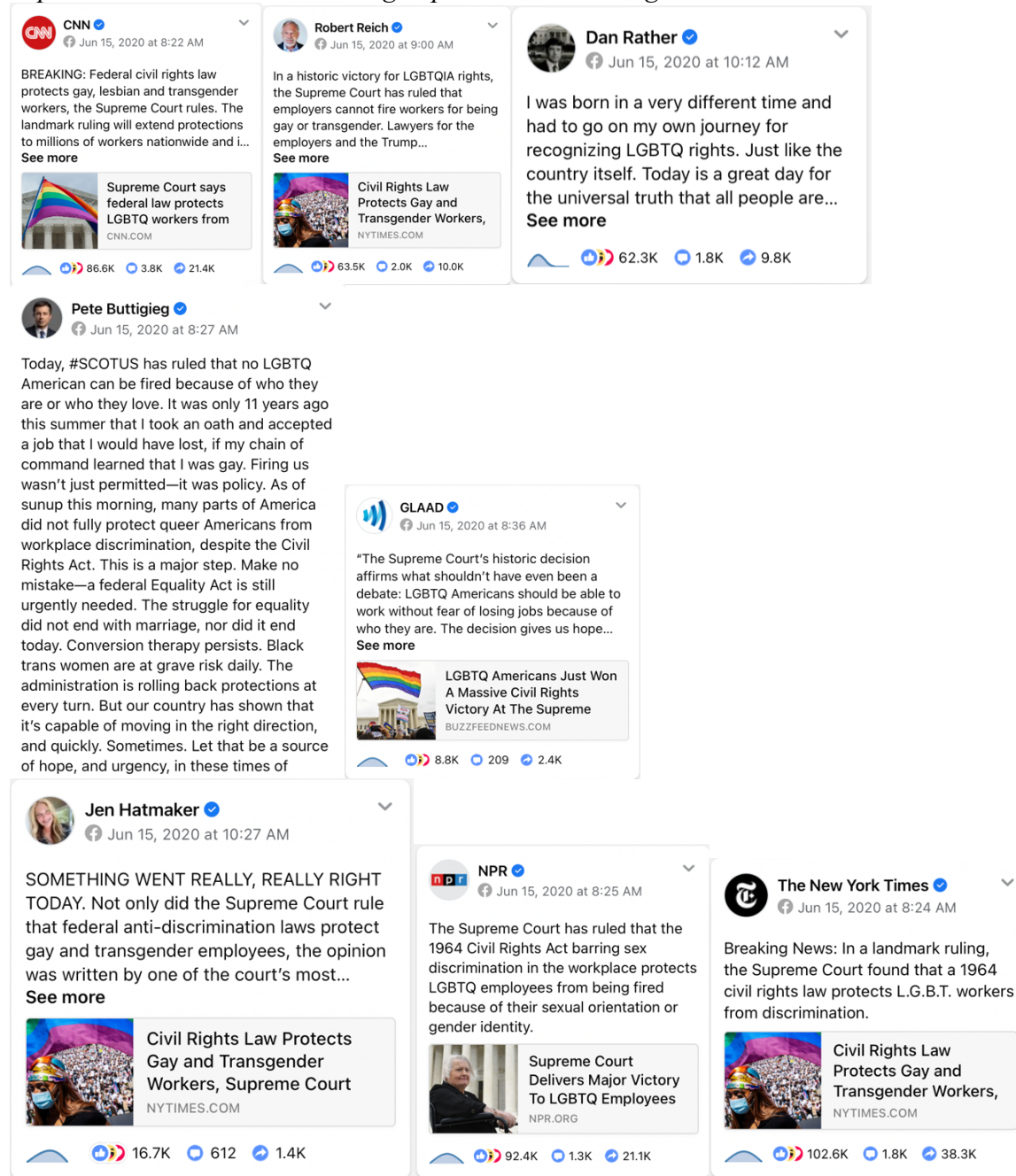


Figure 53

Posts on June 16, 2020 Criticizing Supreme Court Ruling

The New York Times
Jun 16, 2020 at 9:35 AM
Conservative Christian groups say Monday's U.S. Supreme Court ruling protecting the rights of gay and transgender workers could lead to years of lawsuits against religious organizations, many of which refuse to...
See more
Conservative Christians See 'Seismic Implications' in Supreme Court Ruling
NYTIMES.COM
6.2K 2.3K 716

The Hill
Jun 16, 2020 at 3:15 PM
Evangelical leader Franklin Graham sounded off this week on the Supreme Court's recent ruling that gay and transgender people are protected against employment discrimination under existing civil rights laws and said he...
See more
Evangelist Franklin Graham sounds off on SCOTUS ruling over LGBTQ worker
THEHILL.COM
5.2K 3.1K 821

Being Liberal
Jun 16, 2020 at 8:47 AM
(S) Franklin Graham is steaming mad that the Supreme Court sees LGBT people as human.
Franklin Graham on SCOTUS' LGBT rights ruling: Christians 'should'
DEADSTATE.ORG
10.0K 7.0K 2.6K

Figure 54

Post about Oprah Winfrey on June 19, 2020

Freeda En
June 19, 2020
Follow
Overview Comments
"The god I serve doesn't care whether you're tall or short, or whether you were born Black or Asian or gay" — Oprah Winfrey
All comments
Tessy Nwaeze
There is nothing like a different point of view in christianity , the Word of God is the Word of God , never change , nothing less anyother addition to it , is call transgression , and that's what leading humanity to k.o today
Not seeing as God sees bu... See more
Like Reply 3y
Laura Kielhorn
And that's whv I'm Atheist: To me everything
Write a comment...
Like Comment Share
43K · 5.5K comments · 1.9M views

Figure 55

Posts about the Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots on June 28, 2020

Governor Phil Murphy
Jun 28, 2020 at 7:49 AM
51 years after #Stonewall, we honor the bravery of those who launched the LGBTQ+ rights movement, and celebrate our LGBTQ+ brothers, sisters, & gender non-conforming individuals. Gay rights are human rights...
See more
4.8K 1.1K 548

New Orleans Saints
Jun 28, 2020 at 8:13 PM
The Mercedes-Benz Superdome and Smoothie King Center are in #Pride colors! Today marks the 51st anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, which served as a catalyst for the gay rights movement.
5.2K 275 546

David Begnaud
Jun 28, 2020 at 7:48 PM
Tonight: The Puerto Rico's Governor mansion @fortalezapr lit up in rainbows colors to celebrate gay #Pride (the English translation is from Instagram, not the Governor's office) Recently, the Governor signed a new civil...
See more
wandaazquez
6.2K 1.1K 548

Figure 56

Comparison of User Interactions On Instagram and Facebook June 2020

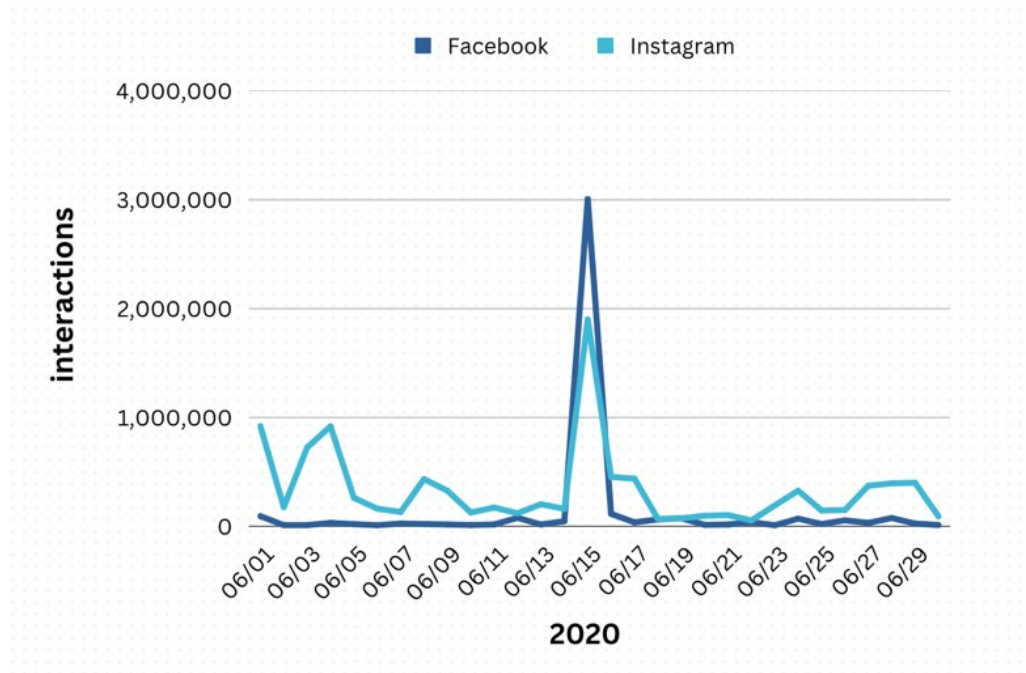


Figure 57

User Interaction on Instagram in June 2015 and June 2020

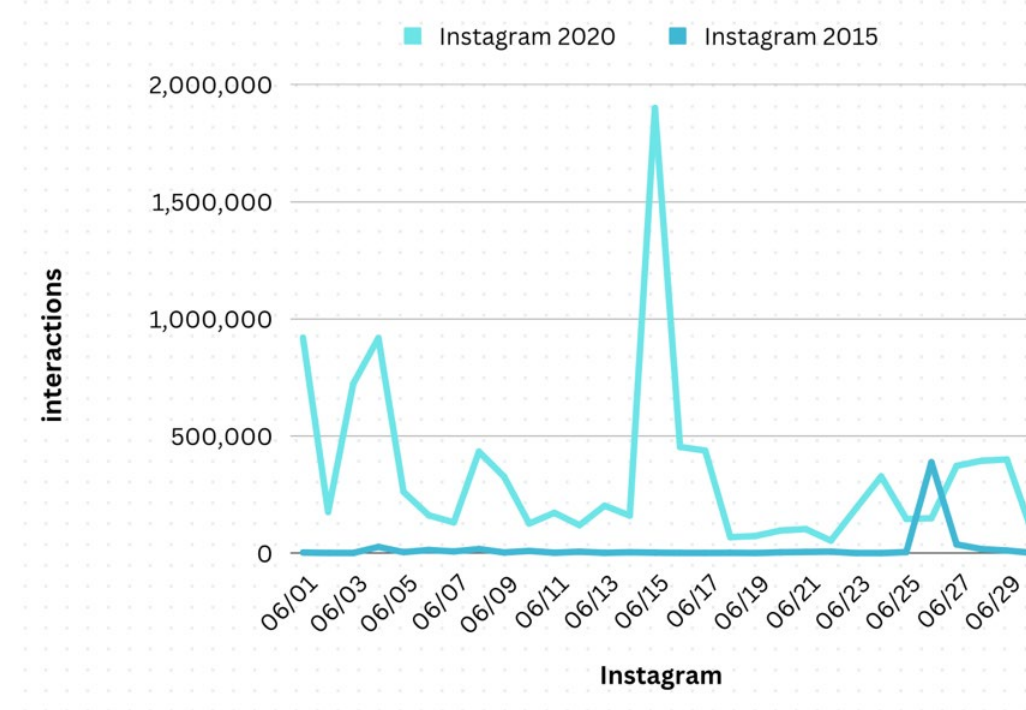


Figure 58

User Interaction on Facebook in June 2015 and June 2020

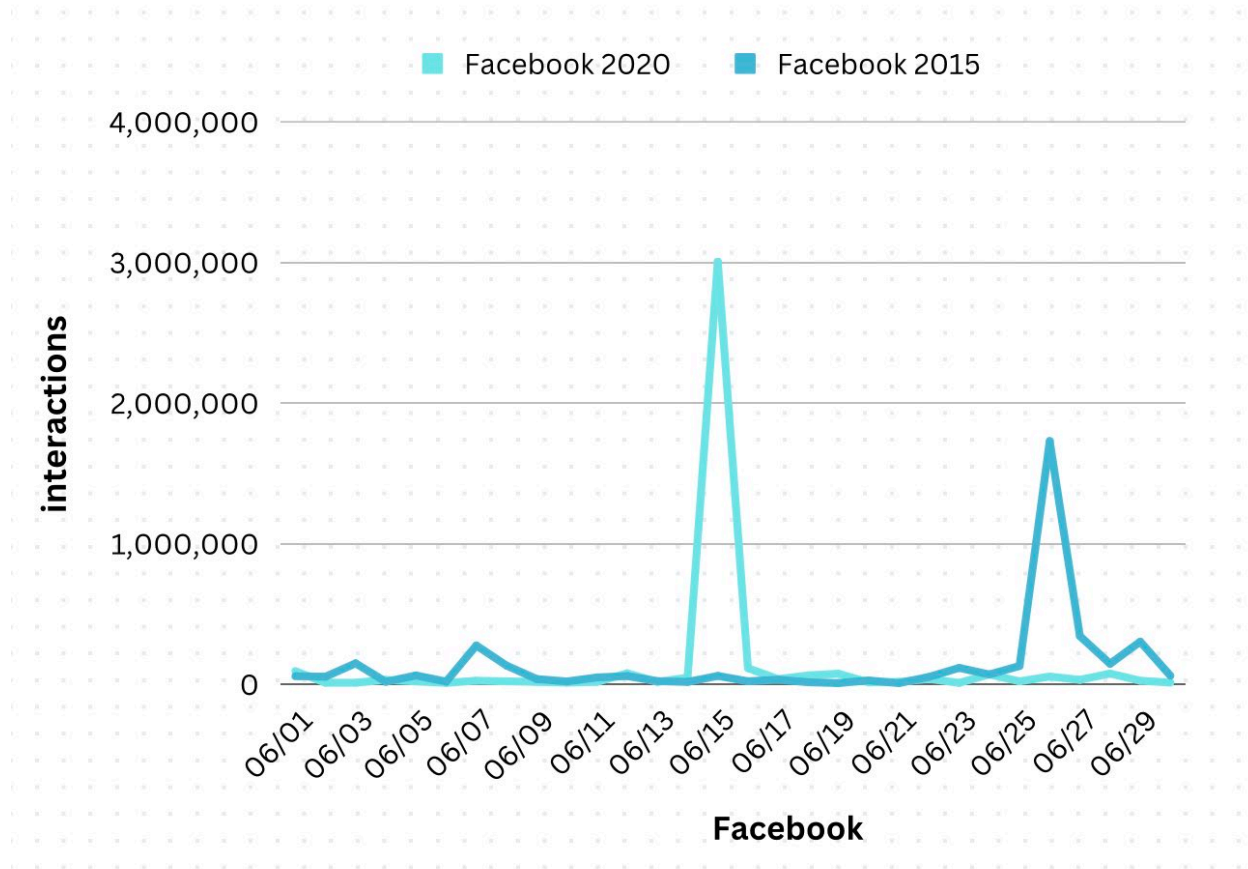


Figure 59

Instagram Crowdtangle Data to Determine Free Mom Hug Trend Analysis

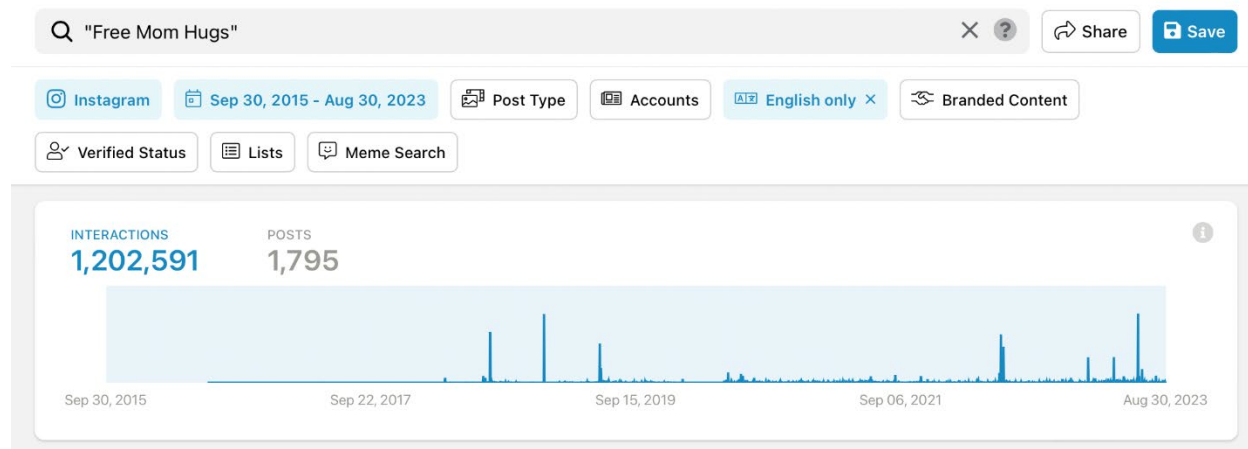


Figure 60

Facebook Crowdtangle Data for Facebook to Determine Free Mom Hug Trend Analysis

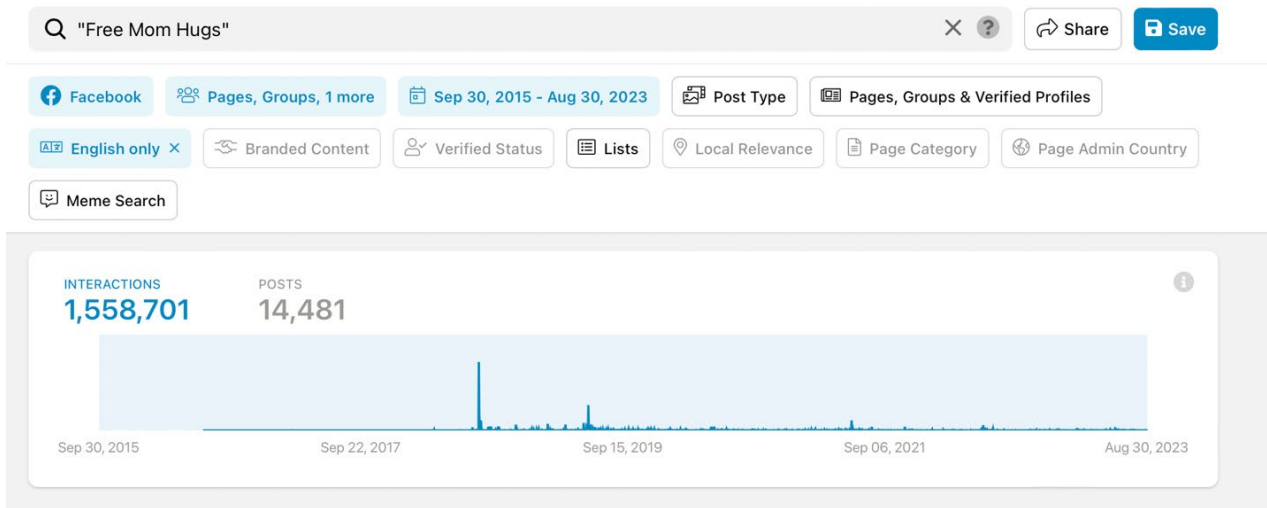


Figure 61

Sara Cunningham PSA Facebook Post



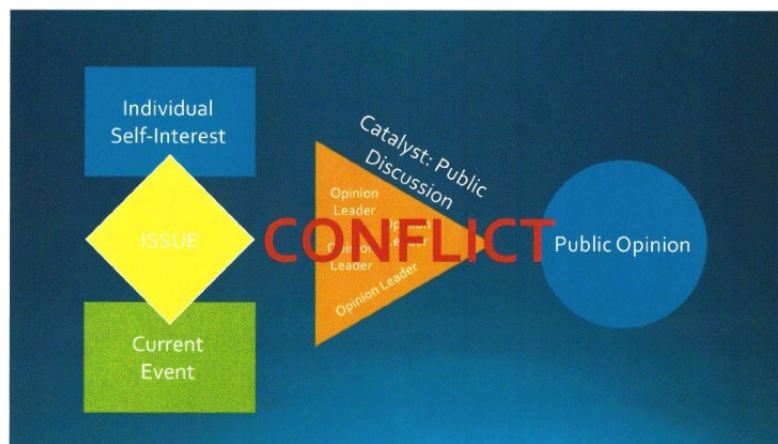
Figure 62

CNN Instagram Post Highlighting Sara Cunningham's PSA



Figure 63

Model Depicting Wilcox's Public Opinion and Persuasion



Wilcox, D. L., Reber, B. H., Cameron, G. T. (2014). Public Opinion and Persuasion. In *Public relations: Strategies and tactics* (11th ed., pp. 221-224). Pearson.