

# Stonewalled

## Establishment Media's Silence on the Trump Administration's Crusade against LGBTQ People

April Anderson and Andy Lee Roth

### INTRODUCTION: THE ROLLBACK

In July 2016, at the Republican National Convention, Donald Trump reminded his audience of the recent mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, and he boasted, “As your president, I will do everything in my power to protect our L.G.B.T.Q. citizens.”<sup>1</sup> Make no mistake, Donald Trump and his administration are no allies of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer community.

At the convention, the GOP advanced what the president of the Log Cabin Republicans called “the most anti-LGBT Platform in the Party’s 162-year history”<sup>2</sup>—including a commitment to overturning marriage equality, with endorsements of conversion therapy and the First Amendment Defense Act—and they made Trump their party’s nominee. Days before the convention, Trump had selected Mike Pence as his running mate. As governor of Indiana, Pence had responded to the state’s legalization of same-sex marriage by signing into law a “religious freedom” bill that many interpreted as sanctioning discrimination against LGBTQ people, just one example of Pence’s consistent record of anti-LGBTQ positions.<sup>3</sup>

As president, Donald Trump has acted to undo protections, policies, and progress that LGBTQ Americans, their allies, and the Obama administration had fought to establish or strengthen. By naming staunch anti-LGBTQ advocates to key cabinet positions, appointing a pair of conservative anti-LGBTQ Supreme Court jus-

tices, stacking circuit courts with judges who consistently rule against LGBTQ rights, creating a secretive Religious Liberty Task Force, reinterpreting Title VII's definition of sex discrimination, and weakening the Affordable Care Act, which provided healthcare coverage to many LGBTQ individuals and their families for the first time, the Trump administration has been dismantling LGBTQ Americans' legal protections and social safety nets, potentially relegating members of the LGBTQ community to the status of second-class citizens.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs documented 52 anti-LGBTQ homicides in 2017, which they noted is "the highest number of anti-LGBTQ homicides in our 20-year history of tracking this information," and "an 86% increase in single incident reports from 2016."<sup>5</sup> As hate crimes rise, the Department of Justice has taken steps to remove questions from the National Crime Victimization Survey—which provides crucial data on criminal victimization of LGBTQ people—as part of a larger effort to erase LGBTQ people from federal statistics.<sup>6</sup> In addition, many critics have noted that Trump's silence on state-sponsored homophobia and transphobia in other nations—including Brazil, Brunei, and Russia, where the situation in Chechnya is especially atrocious—puts LGBTQ people around the world "at grave risk."<sup>7</sup> The Trump administration's February 2019 announcement that it intended to develop a global campaign to decriminalize homosexuality in dozens of nations around the world has been met with skepticism from the LGBTQ community in the United States.<sup>8</sup>

While the establishment press has focused on sensational stories—such as the allegedly staged attack against actor and singer Jussie Smollett—news coverage has tended to mute, marginalize, or censor the Trump administration's steady rollback of LGBTQ protections and rights.

Our interest in examining news coverage of LGBTQ issues during the Trump era originated with the feeling that the nation's most prominent news organizations were failing to report the full scope of the Trump administration's negative impacts on members of the LGBTQ community. So we began to conduct a detailed content analysis of four major establishment newspapers and a variety of independent news publications, to answer three fundamental questions about contemporary news coverage of LGBTQ issues:

1. Whom do journalists treat as authorized sources of newsworthy information and opinion?
2. What arguments are made in support of, or opposition to, LGBTQ inclusion and equality?
3. What topics receive prominent coverage, and which ones remain marginal or excluded?

The first question addresses what sociologist William Gamson has analyzed as *media standing*.<sup>9</sup> For Gamson, media standing refers to the status of individuals and organizations whom journalists quote directly as authorized sources of newsworthy information and opinion. Media standing, he elaborates, is “not the same as being covered or mentioned in the news”; instead, it involves being treated as an agent, rather than as an object discussed by others, and is therefore “a measure of achieved cultural power.”<sup>10</sup> Which groups of people achieve media standing for news coverage of LGBTQ issues?

Our second question—about the arguments made for and against LGBTQ rights—links to the extensive research literature on news *framing*. News stories do not simply focus public attention on specific events or issues (which scholars have described as *agenda setting*); they also provide interpretive frameworks that influence how people make sense of those events and issues. News frames define problems, identify causes, convey moral judgments, and promote remedies.<sup>11</sup> In this chapter, we examine how advocates of LGBTQ rights and their opponents deploy competing frames for making sense of a variety of issues, including, for example, state and municipal nondiscrimination laws and ordinances.

Examining which issues receive prominent coverage, and which remain marginal or excluded, connects our findings to research on news *filters*. As Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky described in *Manufacturing Consent*, news reported by corporate outlets is subject to filters that “fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place.”<sup>12</sup> Stories, topics, and perspectives that do not serve corporate interests face bias and, potentially, censorship. In addition to analyzing the stories and topics covered in our data set, we also seek to assess which, if any, relevant issues the news outlets in our study excluded from coverage.

To provide context for our data and findings, we first consider prior research on LGBTQ news coverage.

## LGBTQ NEWS COVERAGE

News coverage of LGBTQ people and issues has progressed dramatically in the past 90 years. Before World War II, gays and lesbians were “unmentionable” in US newspapers and magazines, according to Edward Alwood’s history, *Straight News*.<sup>13</sup> During the war, military psychiatrists defined homosexuality as a mental disorder; as a result, Alwood wrote, news accounts of homosexuals during the war years typically framed them as “unfit for military service.”<sup>14</sup> In the 1940s and 1950s, news coverage was infused with homophobia, “invariably” concluding that homosexuality was “a growing social problem.”<sup>15</sup> Into the 1960s, newspapers seldom mentioned homosexuals in any other context than bar raids and arrests.<sup>16</sup> *The New York Times*’s first coverage of the June 1969 Stonewall riots consisted of six paragraphs, run on page 33, with no byline.<sup>17</sup> A second article, “buried on page twenty-two” of a subsequent issue, concluded the *Times*’s coverage of Stonewall.<sup>18</sup>

Even as LGBTQ people and issues became more prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, homophobia remained entrenched at the nation’s most prominent newspapers. In 1974, the *Los Angeles Times* used the term *fag* in a front-page headline, while well into the 1980s the *New York Times*’s executive editor, A.M. “Abe” Rosenthal, was known for his “personal and professional antagonism toward homosexuals.”<sup>19</sup>

Although Alwood’s history of gays, lesbians, and the news media concluded that, by 1996, “gays and lesbians appear in the news almost routinely,” he also noted that “the widespread antigay attitude in news coverage has been rooted in structural bias of the media,” including especially news professionals’ tendencies to “favor the established power base and defend the status quo.”<sup>20</sup>

That status quo had shifted considerably by September 2002, when the *New York Times* began to publish reports of same-sex commitment ceremonies in its Sunday Styles section.<sup>21</sup> Sociologist James Joseph Dean wrote that this change by the nation’s most prestigious newspaper contributed to “a post-closeted culture of open lesbian and gay couples” and the “social integration and cultural normalization

of gay couples as equal to their straight counterparts.”<sup>22</sup> More generally, as Sarah Kate Ellis wrote in her introduction to the 2016 edition of the *GLAAD Media Reference Guide*, “Media coverage of LGBTQ people has become increasingly multi-dimensional, reflecting both the diversity of the community and the growing visibility of LGBTQ people’s families and relationships.”<sup>23</sup>

Surprisingly few recent studies have researched the important role that news plays in presenting and shaping public representations of LGBTQ people and issues. Before 2015, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees same-sex couples the right to marry, most contemporary research into LGBTQ news coverage focused on marriage equality.<sup>24</sup> Although other scholars have critically examined how a focus on “mainstream” LGBTQ issues—such as same-sex marriage and military service—has “silenced queer voices,”<sup>25</sup> or how news coverage represents transgender identities,<sup>26</sup> research on how news frames LGBTQ issues has often been narrow in focus and has largely failed to distinguish between sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>27</sup>

## DATA AND METHODS

We analyzed coverage of LGBTQ issues in four major establishment newspapers—the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*—as well as stories from the *Advocate*, the oldest and largest LGBTQ publication in the United States, and coverage published by independent newsweeklies, such as the *Eugene Weekly* and the *Colorado Springs Independent*.<sup>28</sup> Using two ProQuest databases—US Newsstream and Alt-Press Watch—we collected every relevant news article from January 2016 through November 2018. This 35-month period spanned the run-up to the 2016 presidential elections through the 2018 midterm elections.

Our search string included the terms *Trump*, *LGBT*, *LGBTQ*, *gay*, *lesbian*, *homosexual*, *bisexual*, and *transgender*, as well as variants on these terms (e.g., *LGBTQI*, *gays*, *homosexuality*).<sup>29</sup> Our data collection focused on news articles. We excluded editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor. Thus defined, our search produced a data set of 152 relevant news articles.<sup>30</sup>

The unit of analysis for exploration of *media standing* (that is, who is quoted as a newsworthy source) was the individual direct quotation. Our data set included 1,056 direct quotations. For each direct quotation, we coded news outlet, date of publication, location of the quote in the article, how the quoted source was identified, and the quote's position on LGBTQ rights.

Our coding for sources' identities included their occupation or official status, gender, and sexual orientation.<sup>31</sup> We coded sources' gender and sexual orientation as they were identified in the news articles themselves. We address the significance of this point in more detail in our findings. In the case of direct quotations that took a clear position either in support of LGBTQ rights or in opposition to them, we coded their position. Not every quotation in our data set involved a source taking a position on LGBTQ rights, much less a clear position. For this reason, the figures we report on position, below, are smaller than those reported for our other coding categories.

To ensure that our coding was reliable, we undertook three preliminary rounds of coding in which each of us coded the same sets of articles. After each round we compared coding decisions, discussing instances where our interpretations differed and determining increasingly specific criteria for how to accurately code challenging cases. Ultimately we achieved an intercoder reliability rate of 93.0 percent, which is especially strong given the challenges of coding for position.

## **MEDIA STANDING**

Whom do journalists treat as authorized sources of newsworthy information and opinion on LGBTQ issues? As summarized in Table 1, government officials are by far the most frequently quoted category of sources, accounting for 46.8 percent of the direct quotations in our data, followed by representatives of civil liberties organizations (19.7 percent), and sources from legal (6.8 percent) and educational (6.5 percent) fields.

**TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF QUOTATIONS BY SOURCE TYPE**

Source Type Quotations	Total	(%)
Government	494	(46.8)
Civil Liberties	208	(19.7)
Legal	72	(6.8)
Education	69	(6.5)
Religious	56	(5.3)
Activist (unaffiliated)	28	(2.7)
Family/Parent	25	(2.4)
Business	17	(1.6)
Other*	87	(8.2)
TOTAL	1,056	(100)

\*The *Other* category includes a frequently-quoted RAND study, medical professionals, ordinary citizens, and quotations attributed to other news organizations.

Within the *government* category, the president was quoted 101 times (9.6 percent of the total number of quotations on LGBTQ issues in our data)—more often, that is, than any other group except for representatives of civil liberties organizations.<sup>32</sup> Federal government officials—including the attorney general and representatives from the departments of Justice, Education, and Housing and Urban Development—were quoted 100 times (9.5 percent), nearly as often as the president. State government officials, including legislators, were quoted more often (8.4 percent, n=89) than members of Congress (5.2 percent, n=55). Military officials, including, for example, the Secretary of Defense and Department of Defense spokespeople, accounted for 6.2 percent (n=65) of the quotations in our data.

Representatives of civil liberties organizations frequently achieved media standing, accounting for nearly 20 percent of the quoted sources in our data. The majority of those quotations (14.9 percent, n=157) originated with groups focused specifically on LGBTQ rights, including, for example, Human Rights Campaign, Lambda Legal, and the National Center for Transgender Equality. A smaller number of these quotations (4.8 percent, n=51) represented civil liberties organizations whose mission includes but is not specifically focused on LGBTQ issues, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU),

the Southern Poverty Law Center, and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. As prior research has shown, in establishment news coverage, civil liberties organizations such as the ACLU often constitute the primary alternative to official governmental perspectives.<sup>33</sup>

The *legal* category (6.8 percent) counted quotations attributed to judges (including Supreme Court justices), attorneys, and the texts of court decisions. Sources categorized as *education* (6.5 percent) included teachers, university faculty and administrators, students, school board members, and the texts of school policies. Religious leaders and organizations—including, for example, the Family Research Council, the Alliance Defending Freedom, and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention—accounted for 5.3 percent of the quotations. Tony Perkins, the president of the Family Research Council, was quoted at least thirteen times in our data.

Much less frequently, news stories in our data directly quoted activists unaffiliated with any specific organization (2.7 percent), parents and family members of LGBTQ people (2.4 percent), and representatives of businesses (1.6 percent). The sources we coded as *other*, a residual category, include a frequently-quoted RAND study, medical professionals, ordinary citizens, and quotations attributed to other news organizations.

Our findings on the distribution of sources—and especially the prevalence of government officials as favored sources—are consistent with prior research in two ways. First, an extensive and growing body of research has established that journalists favor sources with official accreditation or status.<sup>34</sup> Second, as Herbert J. Gans observed in a pioneering study of news production, when determining story importance, journalists and editors orient to rank in governmental and other hierarchies, with the president at those hierarchies' pinnacle.<sup>35</sup> Our findings corroborate these well-established patterns.

Notably, however, we find the journalistic preference for government officials is considerably stronger among corporate news outlets than among independent news outlets. Whereas the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Wall Street Journal* quoted government officials 49.8 percent of the time (n=458), the *Advocate*



and independent newsweeklies in our data quoted them just 26.3 percent of the time (n=36). Though establishment and independent media quoted civil liberties groups with comparable frequency (19.2 percent and 22.6 percent, respectively), establishment news outlets were much less likely than independent news organizations to grant media standing to unaffiliated activists (1.6 percent for establishment outlets versus 9.5 percent for independent outlets). Similarly, establishment outlets were also far less likely than their independent counterparts to treat the views of family members of LGBTQ people—including spouses, parents, and children—as newsworthy (1.4 percent for establishment outlets versus 8.8 percent for independent outlets). In summary, although the corporate news outlets in our data adhere firmly to the well-established pattern of favoring official, and especially governmental, sources, the independent news outlets we studied were much more likely to give authoritative voice to unofficial sources, including family members of LGBTQ people and activists who were not affiliated with any specific organization.

### Sources' Reported Sexual Orientations

Given our news stories' focus on LGBTQ issues, we wanted to know how often journalists quoted LGBTQ people as newsworthy sources, but the news stories in our data set rarely identified quoted sources in terms of their sexual orientation. Table 2 summarizes our findings.

**TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF QUOTES BY SOURCES' REPORTED SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Source Type Quotations	Total	(%)
Not Specified	867	(91.9)
Gay	49	(5.2)
Lesbian	17	(1.8)
Bisexual	5	(0.5)
Heterosexual/Straight	5	(0.5)
TOTAL	943*	(99.9)**

\*Total number of quotations is less than in Table 1 due to exclusion of official documents and reports, for which sexual orientation does not apply.

\*\*Rounding error accounts for the 99.9 percent total.

In our data, at least 7.5 percent of the quoted sources identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.<sup>36</sup> Although the actual numbers of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in the United States are difficult to determine, these figures are higher than recent estimates of the nation's adult population indicate.<sup>37</sup> This finding could be interpreted as evidence that journalists are making good faith efforts to represent “the diversity of opinion and experience within the LGBTQ community,” as the *GLAAD Media Reference Guide* has recommended.<sup>38</sup> Bisexual sources count as a noteworthy exception, however. Whereas the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)'s Williams Institute found that 1.8 percent of adults in the United States identify as bisexual, members of this group are barely included as quoted sources in our news data.<sup>39</sup>

When we distinguish between corporate and independent news outlets, though, the data on sexual orientation tell a slightly different story. While establishment outlets are more likely to quote sources identified as gay (5.6 percent for corporate, 2.5 percent for independent), independent news outlets are considerably more likely to quote sources identified as lesbian (5.0 percent for independent versus 1.3 percent for corporate) or as bisexual (2.5 percent for independent versus 0.6 percent for corporate).

### **Sources' Reported Gender Identities**

In addition to tracking whether and how often news articles identified quoted sources' sexual orientations, we wanted to identify the frequency with which news articles identified these sources in terms of their gender identities. As summarized in Table 3, a significant majority of the sources quoted in our data were identified as men (65.1 percent). Sources identified as women account for slightly more than one quarter of the sources quoted (26.4 percent). Nearly 6 percent of the direct quotations in our data were attributed to sources identified as either transgender women (4.0 percent) or transgender men (1.9 percent).

**TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF QUOTES BY SOURCES' REPORTED GENDER**

Source Type Quotations	Total	(%)
Cisgender Men	614	(65.1)
Cisgender Women	249	(26.4)
Transgender Women	38	(4.0)
Transgender Men	18	(1.9)
Cannot Determine*	24	(2.5)
TOTAL	943**	(99.9)***

\**Cannot Determine* includes sources for whom neither their name nor any description of them, including pronouns, clearly conveyed their gender identity.

\*\*Total number of quotations is less than in Table 1 due to exclusion of official documents and reports, for which gender does not apply.

\*\*\*Rounding error accounts for the 99.9 percent total.

The representation of women's voices, though low, is still significantly higher than the results reported in prior research on media standing. For example, in their 1994 study of television news programs, *By Invitation Only*, David Croteau and William Hoynes found that women accounted for just 10.3 percent of the guests on ABC's *Nightline* and 13.1 percent of the guests on PBS's *NewsHour*.<sup>40</sup>

Though Croteau and Hoynes found little difference between ABC's and PBS's gender representations in their study, we find more significant differences between the establishment news outlets and independent news outlets in our data. Notably, women are more likely to be treated as newsworthy sources by independent news outlets (34.5 percent) than by corporate outlets (25.2 percent).

No prior studies that we could find have assessed how frequently transgender people achieve media standing as quoted sources. This is an important topic for future research on news coverage of LGBTQ issues. The frequency of transgender voices in our data (5.9 percent) is nearly ten times greater than a 2016 estimate, by UCLA's Williams Institute, of the percentage of transgender adults in the United States (0.6 percent).<sup>41</sup> However, we also find that independent news outlets are far more likely than their corporate counterparts to grant media standing to transgender men and women. Transgender women accounted for 10.1 percent of the

quoted sources in independent news articles, and 3.2 percent of the quoted sources in corporate news articles; similarly, transgender men accounted for 7.6 percent of the quoted sources in independent news articles, and 1.1 percent of the quoted sources in corporate news articles.

To summarize, our findings of whom journalists treat as newsworthy in news coverage of LGBTQ issues reflects both news professionals' long-standing preference for sources with official status—including, especially, government officials—and enduring imbalances in the representation of male and female voices. That noted, insofar as they held official positions of one kind or another, members of the lesbian, gay, and transgender communities were directly quoted with sufficient frequency to be understood, in Gamson's terms, as "serious players" and "individuals or groups who have enough political power to make a potential difference in what happens."<sup>42</sup> This may seem like a modest outcome, given that the news stories we examined focus specifically on LGBTQ issues, but, as Gamson indicates, achieving media standing is a "measure of achieved cultural power," and, as the *GLAAD Media Reference Guide* states, "inclusive news media coverage" plays "an important role in expanding public awareness and understanding of LGBTQ people."<sup>43</sup>

With a detailed understanding of whom journalists currently treat as newsworthy, we turn next to consider the positions articulated by those sources.

## **ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST LGBTQ RIGHTS**

The majority of quoted sources that took a clear position articulated support for LGBTQ rights, inclusion, and equality (62.1 percent). This pattern holds for both corporate news outlets (61.1 percent) and independent news outlets (68.9 percent), as summarized in Table 4:

**TABLE 4. POSITION ON LGBTQ RIGHTS**

	Total QUOTES (%)	Corporate News QUOTES (%)	Independent News QUOTES (%)
PRO	372 (62.1)	321 (61.1)	51 (68.9)
CON	227 (37.9)	204 (38.9)	23 (31.1)
TOTAL*	599 (100)	525 (100)	74 (100)

\*Table 4 does not include every quotation in the data because a number of quotes did not address LGBTQ rights at all and other quotes articulated neutral positions on LGBTQ rights.

A closer examination of the *pro* and *con* positions articulated by quoted sources reveals additional patterns within each category. The examples that we present below represent some of the major themes found in the data we examined.

### **Pro Arguments**

*Pro* arguments, advocating for LGBTQ rights and inclusion, typically invoked the principle of *equality*, as can be seen in (1) and (2):

(1) *Washington Post*, February 12, 2017 [On the Trump administration’s proposal to challenge a policy, enacted by President Obama, authorizing students to use bathrooms that match their gender identities.]

“This is a callous attack on hundreds of thousands of students who simply want to be their true selves and be treated with dignity while they work to get an education, just like every other student,” Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, said in a statement. “Transgender students thrive when treated equally, but too often, they are not.”<sup>44</sup>

(2) *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 2018

“We’re seeing proposals around the country that would make it harder for trans people to go to work, go to school,

participate in public life, or even do things as simple as go to the store or go to a restaurant with their family,” said Jay Wu, communications manager at the National Center for Transgender Equality. “If laws like this pass, they can send a message to transgender people and their families that they are not as worthy as their peers and that they don’t deserve to have the same rights as everyone else.”<sup>45</sup>

In (1), Mara Keisling asserts that “[t]ransgender students thrive when treated equally.” Equal treatment affords these students “dignity” and allows them to be their “true selves.” In contrast, the Trump administration’s proposal is “a callous attack.” Similarly, in (2), Jay Wu emphasizes how proposals—including, for example, the law passed by North Carolina in early 2016 that barred transgender people from using restrooms that aligned with their gender identity—not only make it more difficult for transgender people to “participate in public life,” but also diminish transgender peoples’ worth and rights.

In the following example, the quoted source, ACLU lawyer Joshua Block, explicitly invokes “civil rights protections” to express opposition to the Trump administration’s proposal to define gender as a biological fact determined at birth. That government proposal is characterized in the same *Washington Post* article as a “fresh and direct aim at transgender rights.”

**(3) *Washington Post*, October 24, 2018**

“What this would do is exclude transgender people from all the civil rights protections that everyone else takes for granted,” said Joshua Block, a senior staff attorney with the ACLU’s LGBT project. Eventually, he said, the matter is likely to be resolved by the Supreme Court.<sup>46</sup>

Block characterizes the proposal to define gender in terms of biology, as determined at birth, as discriminatory (“What this would do is exclude transgender people from . . .”) at a fundamental level (“ . . . all the civil rights protections . . .”) and, therefore, unthinkable (“ . . . that everyone else takes for granted”).

A number of *pro* arguments extend the principle of equality, exemplified in (1–3), by linking LGBTQ inclusion to the history of civil rights in the United States, as in (4) and (5).

(4) *New York Times*, August 30, 2017 [From a letter to President Trump, signed by 140 House Democrats, opposing his proposed ban of transgender people from military service.]

In 1948, when President Truman moved to racially integrate the military, voices were raised in protest. They were raised again in 2010, when Congress at last repealed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” At every turn, those voices have been proven wrong.<sup>47</sup>

(5) *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 2018

“I would say what we’re seeing with transgender people is history repeating itself,” said Seth Galanter, senior director at the National Center for Youth Law. “We saw the same thing 60 years ago with integrating black and white kids together. We saw it 40 years ago integrating kids with disabilities into public schools, and now we’re seeing it with transgender people,” he said.<sup>48</sup>

In (4), opposition to transgender people serving in the military is linked with previous opposition to the inclusion of people of color (“In 1948 . . .”) and of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals (“ . . . when Congress at last repealed ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.’”) in the military. “At every turn,” the congressional representatives assert, “those voices have been proven wrong.” In (5), Seth Galanter proposes that integration of transgender people in public schools is “history repeating itself.” In (5), the quoted source invokes past civil rights history as a frame that legitimizes the inclusion of transgender people; in (4), by contrast, the source invokes more recent decisions (the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”) to discredit the exclusion of transgender people.

Another type of *pro*-LGBTQ argument—seen frequently in coverage about the proposed ban of transgender people from military

service—frames LGBTQ Americans in terms of *citizenship* and, specifically, loyalty, as evident in (6) and (7).

**(6) *New York Times*, August 24, 2017**

“As transgender service members, we are and have always been soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen first,” said Blake Dremann, the president of Sparta, an L.G.B.T. military group with 500 active-duty members. “We serve our country honorably, in good faith.”<sup>49</sup>

Transgender members of the military “serve our country honorably, in good faith,” Dremann asserts. They have done so, he contends, by putting their military service “first,” before their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In (7), the quoted source, Aaron Belkin, comments on Donald Trump’s proposed ban on transgender military recruits as a reflection of the president’s “ideological goals.”

**(7) *Wall Street Journal*, March 24, 2018**

“There is no evidence to support a policy that bars from military service patriotic Americans who are medically fit and able to deploy,” [Belkin] said. “Our troops and our nation deserve better.”<sup>50</sup>

In this example, Belkin characterizes transgender service members as “patriotic Americans,” and he invokes the principle of equality: The criteria of medical fitness and readiness to deploy should apply equally to all recruits and service members.

In (7), the quoted source also contests the grounds for a policy that would exclude transgender people (“There is no evidence to support a policy that bars . . .”). In the data we examined, *pro* arguments frequently framed efforts to diminish the rights of LGBTQ people as based on ideology rather than evidence. For example, after President Trump received widespread criticism for his proposed ban of transgender people from military service, he announced in March 2018



that he might allow transgender troops currently in the military to remain, though they would be required to serve according to their gender at birth. *The New York Times* quoted Joshua Block, an ACLU staff lawyer, as saying, “What the White House has released tonight is transphobia masquerading as policy.”<sup>51</sup> Similarly, in October 2017, the *Wall Street Journal* quoted Jennifer Levi, a lawyer who had represented plaintiffs in a case challenging Trump’s proposed transgender military ban, on the court’s decision to temporarily block that ban, which Levi described as “hugely important.” Levi said, “The court seemed to see completely through the smokescreen the government tried to create and determined that there’s no military justification for excluding transgender people from serving.”<sup>52</sup> In both instances, quoted sources characterize the Trump administration’s proposed policies as disingenuous (a “smokescreen”) and prejudicial (“transphobia masquerading as policy”).

### **Con Arguments**

We also found recurrent themes in the positions articulated by sources opposed to LGBTQ equality. These *con* arguments often invoked economics, government overreach and coercion, or religious freedom.

In announcing his proposed ban on transgender people serving in the military, Donald Trump mobilized an economic argument to justify his position, as displayed in (8).

#### **(8) *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2017**

“Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.”<sup>53</sup>

In addition to “disruption,” Trump’s widely quoted tweet also identified “tremendous medical costs” as a reason to exclude transgender people from military service. Notably, in their coverage of Trump’s announcement, the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, and *Wall Street Journal* all cited cost estimates from a 2016 study, commissioned by the

Pentagon and conducted by the RAND Corporation, which found, in the words of the *Los Angeles Times* report, that medical costs associated with transgender troops were “negligible—between \$2.4 million and \$8.4 million a year, or about 0.1% of Pentagon healthcare spending.”<sup>54</sup> Each time these newspapers cited Trump’s economic argument, they also countered it with the findings from the RAND study.

More often, *con* arguments invoked *government overreach* and coercion, as can be seen in the following examples. Both (9) and (10) are drawn from an article about reactions to President Obama’s directive on the use of school bathrooms and locker rooms by transgender students.

**(9) *New York Times*, May 14, 2016**

Despite the federal directive and a civil rights complaint by the American Civil Liberties Union, the school district in Marion County, Fla., said it would not change its bathroom policy. “It’s just an overreaching federal government that didn’t follow the rules,” said Nancy Stacy, a board member. “They’re just bullying everybody.”<sup>55</sup>

**(10) *New York Times*, May 14, 2016**

The policy drew a swift backlash from conservative politicians, groups and parents. In Texas, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick appealed to local school boards and superintendents not to abide by the directive, noting that there were just a few weeks left in the school year and time over the summer to fight the policy with legislation or legal action. “We will not be blackmailed,” he said.<sup>56</sup>

The school board member quoted in (9) portrays the Obama administration’s directive as “overreaching,” against “the rules,” and “bullying.” In (10), the Texas lieutenant governor characterizes it as blackmail. These arguments invoke longstanding disputes in US political history over the balance of states’ rights and federal political powers by invoking federal “overreach,” “bullying,” and “blackmail.”

The theme of rights is also asserted on behalf of religious beliefs in a number of *con* arguments, as can be seen in (11), from an article on efforts by conservative legal groups to shift debate over marriage equality to speech rights. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported, Christian small-business owners, including bakers, florists, and videographers who provide services for weddings, argued that laws protecting sexual minorities from discrimination violated their free exercise of religion by forcing them to serve same-sex weddings.

(11) *Wall Street Journal*, June 17, 2017

“We’re telling marriage stories, not merely documenting the ceremonies,” Mr. Larsen, co-owner of Telescope Media Group, said. “We want to tell stories about marriage that are consistent with the Bible, which shaped our beliefs. Currently, we can’t do that in the state of Minnesota.”<sup>57</sup>

The quoted source, Carl Larsen, co-owner of a Minnesota film production company, describes the state’s nondiscrimination laws—violation of which can be punished by up to 90 days in jail—as at odds with a Christian conception of marriage, and thus a violation of his religious freedom.

Notably, the most frequently quoted source with an official religious affiliation, the president of the Family Research Council, Tony Perkins, seldom speaks in overtly religious terms.<sup>58</sup> Instead, Perkins employs secular language—for example, to describe a “victory” on behalf of the rights of parents and their children—as displayed in the following pair of examples:

(12) *Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2017

Socially conservative groups, who had rallied against the Obama administration’s interpretation, praised the [Trump administration’s] change. “The Trump administration’s reversal of this mandate on schools is a victory for parents, children, and privacy,” said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council.<sup>59</sup>

(13) *New York Times*, February 23, 2017

“The federal government has absolutely no right to strip parents and local schools of their rights to provide a safe learning environment for children,” said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council.<sup>60</sup>

In (12), Perkins’s description of the Trump directive as “a victory for parents, children, and privacy” implicitly erases transgender school children and their parents. Similarly, in (13), Perkins’s statement effectively nullifies transgender students and their parents, even as it invokes widely cherished ideals (parents’ and schools’ rights to provide a “safe learning environment”). In instances such as these, the Family Resource Council’s stated vision of “a prevailing culture in which all human life is valued, families flourish, and religious liberty thrives”<sup>61</sup> appears to privilege a concealed evangelical Christian conception of selective liberty over “all human life” and flourishing families.

Other *con* arguments are less subtle. For example, an April 2017 *New York Times* article reported on Trump’s nomination of Mark E. Green, a Tennessee state senator and former Army flight surgeon, to serve as secretary of the Army. The article noted that previously, as a Tennessee state legislator, Green “made a number of controversial assertions about L.G.B.T. rights,” including at a 2016 appearance before a Tea Party audience in Chattanooga.

(14) *New York Times*, April 8, 2017

During that same appearance, Mr. Green was asked what military rank and file thought about “the social revolutions being imposed upon them by this government.” He responded that “if you poll the psychiatrists, they’re going to tell you that transgender is a disease.”<sup>62</sup>

Green overtly calls transgender identity a “disease,” and he makes a spurious appeal to authority by attributing the position to “the psychiatrists.” After the full extent of Green’s prejudicial statements

against gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals became more widely known, he withdrew his nomination in May 2017.<sup>63</sup>

For the most part, the establishment newspapers in our study refrained from quoting virulently homophobic or transphobic statements. By contrast, the *Advocate*, an LGBTQ magazine, consistently published direct quotations articulating homophobic or transphobic positions in candid, vitriolic language. For example, in its August/September 2016 issue, the *Advocate* quoted Roy Moore, then–chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court and future Senate candidate:

**(15) *The Advocate*, August/September 2016**

Moore happily used his position to subvert marriage equality, illegally ordering state judges to continue denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples. (Moore had previously described homosexual intimacy as “a crime against nature, an inherent evil, and an act so heinous that it defies one’s abilities to describe it.”)<sup>64</sup>

*The Advocate* noted that Moore had been suspended from the court for his refusal to comply with federal law on marriage equality. But it also noted that, in a March 2016 ruling, Moore had written that the Supreme Court’s “redefinition” of marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges* created “an unnatural form of marriage.” According to Moore’s 94-page opinion, “the ultimate goal” of “the homosexual movement” is “to drive the nation into a wasteland of sexual anarchy that consumes all moral values.”<sup>65</sup>

*The Advocate*’s 50th anniversary issue, published in 2017, included a feature, “The Biggest Homophobes,” that documented “some of the most odious homophobes from *Advocate* history,” including the “anti-LGBT media mogul” James Dobson of Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council’s Tony Perkins, and then–attorney general Jeff Sessions.<sup>66</sup> Coverage of this sort helps to explain one of our more surprising findings: *The Advocate* published a balance of *pro* and *con* quotations. In fact, unlike the corporate news outlets included in our study, the *Advocate* published slightly more *con* quotations (55.9 percent) than *pro* quotations (44.1 percent). It may be that the *Advocate*

most powerfully fulfills its duty as a voice for LGBTQ people, and its role as an alternative to the establishment press, not only by giving voice to members of the LGBTQ community but also by documenting some of the more virulent statements made by public figures opposed to equal rights and inclusion for LGBTQ people. We return to consider this point in more detail in the chapter's conclusion.

## NEWS THEMES

### What was Covered

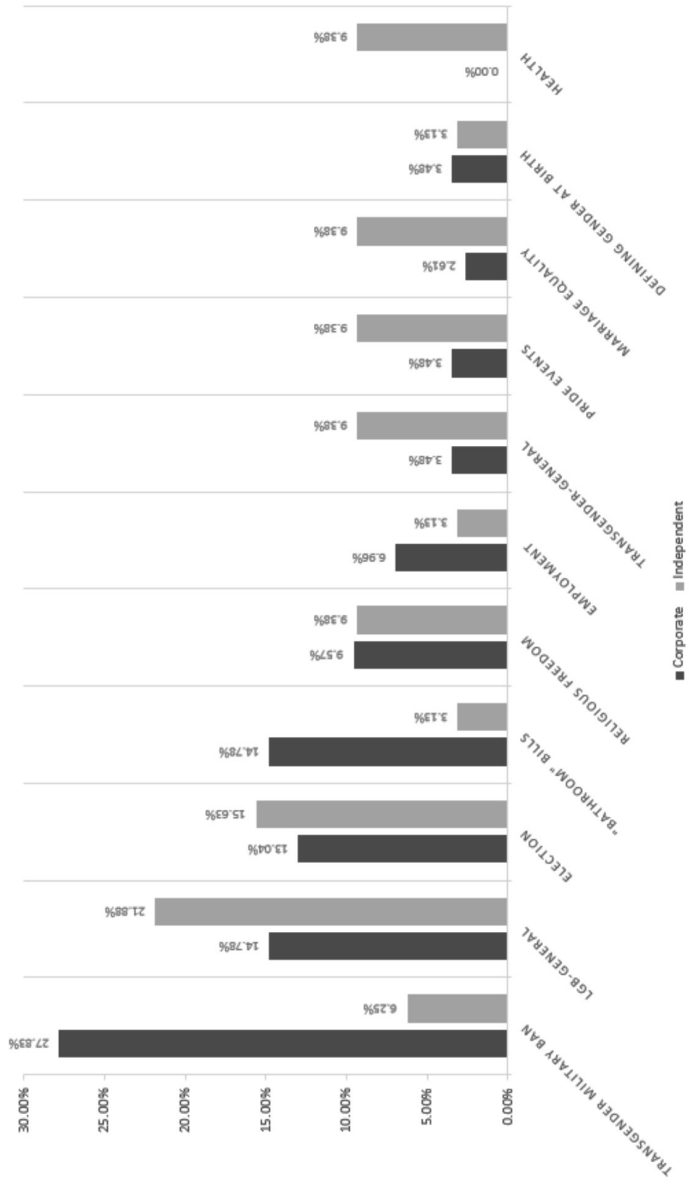
We also analyzed the story topics that the establishment and independent press covered as newsworthy. Figure 1 shows that, of the articles that featured quotes on LGBTQ issues, corporate coverage focused on the transgender military ban (27.8 percent of their total reporting on LGBTQ issues), nondiscrimination laws and ordinances frequently characterized as “bathroom bills” (14.8 percent), and LGB rights in general (14.8 percent). Combined, these themes comprised more than 57 percent of the LGBTQ topics covered by establishment media articles in our data set.

In comparison, the independent media covered a much broader scope of topics related to LGB rights in general (21.9 percent), religious freedoms (9.4 percent), and the election (15.6 percent). Independent news outlets also picked up on topics that the establishment media entirely failed to report—for example, LGBTQ healthcare issues (9.4 percent).

The most striking difference in coverage between the establishment and independent media was the number of articles published related to the transgender military ban and “bathroom bills.” When combined, the establishment media's reporting on the transgender military ban and “bathroom bills” accounted for 42.6 percent of their coverage of LGBTQ issues. In comparison, the independent media reported substantially less on those two issues, which, combined, comprised less than 10 percent of their news coverage of LGBTQ issues.

At a time when the media landscape is in momentous flux, epitomized by budget cuts and layoffs for news reporting and a host of

**FIGURE 1. THEMES IN CORPORATE AND INDEPENDENT NEWS COVERAGE, JANUARY 2016–NOVEMBER 2018**



online developments, LGBTQ media are particularly vulnerable.<sup>67</sup> As major outlets such as the Huffington Post and BuzzFeed continue to reduce their funding for reporting on LGBTQ issues, it is imperative that establishment newspapers with the widest scope of influence provide the public with accurate and comprehensive coverage.

The spotlight that establishment newspapers focused on the transgender military ban and so-called “bathroom bills” left a host of other noteworthy news stories in the dark. This type of reporting provides the public with a narrow understanding of the much-wider range of issues on which Trump administration policies directly or indirectly impact the lives of LGBTQ people and their communities.

### **What was *Not* Covered**

On January 29, 2019, the actor and singer Jussie Smollett reported to Chicago police that he was the victim of a hate crime. Smollett, who is black and identifies as gay, alleged that he was brutally assaulted in downtown Chicago by two individuals who yelled racist and homophobic slurs at him, beat him, doused him with chemicals, and left him with a rope wrapped around his neck. Initially, local police acknowledged they were treating the incident as a “possible hate crime,” but in a strange turn of events, the perpetrators agreed to cooperate with investigators and implicated Smollett, saying he orchestrated what they described as a faked incident.<sup>68</sup>

The Smollett story saturated headlines, in the United States and abroad. This coverage was often sensational in tone, spurring some critics to voice concerns that the case might diminish the public’s understanding of how frequently hate crimes target the LGBTQ community and the extent to which such crimes are typically underreported, and that hoaxes might lead to fewer people reporting actual hate crimes.<sup>69</sup> As the *New York Times* reported in February 2019, according to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, between 2016 and 2018 fewer than 50 of an estimated 21,000 hate crime cases were found to be false.<sup>70</sup>

While the establishment press provided nonstop coverage of Smollett’s original allegations and subsequent arrest, other crucial



stories with connections to the LGBTQ community went almost entirely unreported. To document this disparity in coverage, we used ProQuest's US Newsstream database to search for news coverage of the following topics:

- ▶ the creation of the Religious Liberty Task Force—established on July 30, 2018 by then-attorney general Jeff Sessions—which aims to establish religious faith as a justification for the implementation of broad legal exemptions that would allow discrimination against the LGBTQ community;<sup>71</sup>
- ▶ the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)'s announcement of the formation of a new Conscience and Religious Freedom Division, which would permit healthcare providers to decline to provide care for patients, based on religious and/or philosophical reasons;<sup>72</sup>
- ▶ the removal of LGBTQ protections from the trilateral United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (the USMCA);<sup>73</sup> and
- ▶ efforts to pass the federal Equality Act, which would provide broad non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people, ensuring equal access to employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service.<sup>74</sup>

Using ProQuest's US Newsstream database, we identified, in the period between January 29, 2019 and April 15, 2019, seven news articles in the print editions of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Los Angeles Times* that covered the Equality Act; and no articles at all on the Religious Liberty Task Force, the removal of LGBTQ protections from the USMCA, or HHS's new Division of Conscience and Religious Freedom. In contrast, during the same time period, at least 90 stories in the print editions of those four newspapers covered Smollett's alleged attack.

While the press reported extensively on the sensational story of Smollett's assault, the subsequent revelations that he had faked the attack, and debate over the meaning of all this for actual hate crimes motivated by racism or homophobia, news coverage that was at best sporadic diminished the significance of policies and legislation—

such as efforts to pass the federal Equality Act and the removal of LGBTQ protections from the trilateral United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement—with the potential for much broader impacts on the LGBTQ community.

## CONCLUSIONS

Writing in 1996, Edward Alwood, in his study *Straight News*, observed that “news media rarely focus on the leaders of the gay and lesbian rights organizations.”<sup>75</sup> In 2019, we find that news coverage has changed in important ways. Today, journalists from both corporate and independent news outlets consistently treat spokespersons for the leading LGBTQ organizations as newsworthy sources of information and opinion. People who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual account for more than 7 percent of the quoted sources in our data; and transgender women and men represent nearly 6 percent of the sources deemed sufficiently newsworthy to be directly quoted. Compared with Alwood’s assessment, our findings indicate progress in the inclusivity of LGBTQ news coverage. This reflects positively on contemporary journalists and news organizations.

Not all of our findings are equally encouraging. Although news coverage may have become more inclusive, journalists continue to strive for objectivity by providing spuriously “balanced” coverage.<sup>76</sup> A commitment to “balance” entails special risks in coverage of LGBTQ issues: As Alwood noted in *Straight News*, reporters “write about the rights and dignities of gays as controversial topics that require ‘balance,’ giving antigay fanatics a platform from which to propound their bigotry under the guise of providing ‘the other side.’”<sup>77</sup> The news coverage we examined suggests a continuation of this tendency, but we note a shift in coverage that makes the bigotry Alwood identified in the 1990s more subtle now. As we have noted, with the exception of the *Advocate*, the news outlets we examined seldom publish virulently homophobic or transphobic statements. On the surface, this appears to counter Alwood’s conclusion, and to fulfill GLAAD’s recommendation that journalists take care to “distinguish between opposing viewpoints on LGBTQ issues and the defamatory rhetoric that fuels prejudice and discrimination.”<sup>78</sup>

Based on our data, we find that news representations of opposing viewpoints can avoid defamatory rhetoric but nonetheless indirectly promote prejudice and discrimination. Consider, for example, one of the most frequently quoted sources in our data, Tony Perkins, the president of the Family Research Council. Establishment newspapers, including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*, regularly treat Perkins as an authorized source of information and opinion on LGBTQ issues. In the news coverage we analyzed, journalists quoting Perkins failed to note that, in 2010, the Southern Poverty Law Center listed his organization as an anti-gay hate group;<sup>79</sup> or that GLAAD identifies Perkins prominently in its Commentator Accountability Project, which tracks “the commentators who are most often asked to opine on issues like marriage equality or non-discrimination protections” even though their views “represent nothing but extreme animus towards the entire LGBTQ community.”<sup>80</sup>

Instead, the articles that quoted Perkins portrayed him as a fair partisan, engaged in legitimate debate. This representation is possible because journalists quoted Perkins’s relatively mild statements (as depicted in examples (12) and (13), above) without making public his more virulent claims, which have been thoroughly documented by GLAAD’s Commentator Accountability Project.<sup>81</sup> News stories that omit expressions of extreme prejudice serve to normalize opposition to LGBTQ protections and equality, and thus to aid the agendas of prejudiced individuals and organizations such as Tony Perkins and the Family Research Council.

What, then, should responsible journalists do? On the one hand, they do not want to promote prejudice or discrimination by providing bully pulpits for homophobic or transphobic voices. On the other hand, defamatory comments and virulent opinions may sometimes be newsworthy—not as “balance,” but rather as accurate representations of the animus that underlies many of the more “reasonable” positions expressed in opposition to equal rights and protections for LGBTQ people.

There is no simple answer to this dilemma, but the question of how to cover extreme homophobic and transphobic viewpoints is one that every journalist, editor, and publisher ought to be confronting. As

stakeholders with an interest in the content and quality of the news, members of the public should also be more aware of how reporters' professional judgments regarding who and what to quote shape the content of the news available to us and, consequently, frame public debate on those issues.

Nowhere is the question of news judgment clearer than in reporters and editors' choices of which events to pursue as news. In this study, we identify significant shortcomings at two levels of analysis in the scope of news coverage of LGBTQ issues.

First, in our comparison of corporate and independent news coverage, we found significant differences in focus. During the time frame we examined, corporate news recurrently highlighted two controversial topics, the nondiscrimination laws and ordinances frequently characterized as "bathroom bills" and Trump's proposed transgender military ban. In our data, coverage of these two topics accounted for more than 40 percent of the LGBTQ news stories published by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*. By contrast, the *Advocate* and independent newsweeklies provided more frequent coverage of a broader range of topics that affect the LGBTQ community—including, for example, concerted efforts by the Trump administration and Republicans in Congress to repeal or undermine the 2010 Affordable Care Act, which had dramatically increased the number of insured LGB people.<sup>82</sup> Just as independent news organizations authorize a more diverse and inclusive range of people as newsworthy, they also cover a broader spectrum of topics. Members of the public seeking fair, accurate, and inclusive coverage of issues affecting LGBTQ communities are better served by independent news organizations than by those organizations' corporate counterparts.

A second shortcoming in the scope of LGBTQ news coverage is the tendency among both corporate and independent news organizations to render important issues all but invisible. A motivated news consumer can undoubtedly find informative reporting about the establishment of the Religious Liberty Task Force, the removal of LGBTQ protections from the trilateral United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement, or the potential of the Equality Act to provide LGBTQ people with protections from discrimination in employment, housing, edu-

cation, and other key services and spaces. Nonetheless, even relatively well-informed members of the public are unlikely to come across news stories on these topics unless they actively search for them. Insofar as news coverage sets an agenda for what the public considers important, these blind spots in news coverage are consequential.

Skeptics might counter that this is merely the same problem facing all kinds of important stories in this era of digital news inflation. However, as multiple studies document increased prejudice—and violence—against LGBTQ people in the United States, and as global human rights organizations expose and oppose barbaric state-sanctioned policies and practices affecting LGBTQ people in numerous countries, including Brazil, Brunei, and Russia, the stakes could not be higher: News coverage that marginalizes crucial LGBTQ issues, in combination with the Trump administration's discriminatory policies, poses grave dangers for members of LGBTQ communities, in the United States and abroad.

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APRIL ANDERSON is a member and advocate of the LGBTQI+ community and works as a Research and Instruction Librarian at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota. They earned their master's degree in library and information science from the School of Information at San José State University, where they were first introduced to Project Censored while taking a course on information secrecy.

ANDY LEE ROTH, PHD, is a sociologist and serves as Project Censored's associate director. His articles and research have appeared in *YES! Magazine*, scholarly journals including *Media, Culture & Society* and the *International Journal of Press/Politics*, and previous volumes of the *Censored* yearbook.

## Notes

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7. Chad Griffin, "The Trump Administration's Silence on LGBTQ Rights is Unconscionable," *Washington Post*, April 10, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/04/10/trump-administrations-silence-lgbtq-rights-is-unconscionable/>. Griffin is president of the Human Rights Campaign.
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13. Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians, and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 19.
14. *Ibid.*, 20.
15. *Ibid.*, 56.
16. *Ibid.*, 62.
17. *Ibid.*, 84. Alwood summarized the report: "In sterile language it described the clash in terms of problems faced by the police. It mentioned nothing about the recent rash of arrests at gay bars or the history of police harassment."
18. *Ibid.*, 86; see also p. 314.
19. *Ibid.*, 316, 166. Rosenthal's homophobia affected news reporters and story coverage at the *Times* until Max Frankel took over as the *Times's* executive editor in 1986.

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28. In addition to the *Eugene Weekly* and the *Colorado Springs Independent*, the independent newsweeklies included in our study were *Creative Loafing Charlotte* (Charlotte, North Carolina), *Isthmus* (Madison, Wisconsin), *Mountain Xpress* (Asheville, North Carolina), *Salt Lake City Weekly* (Salt Lake City, Utah), and *Gambit* (New Orleans, Louisiana).
29. To capture as many relevant articles as possible, we included the term *homosexual* in our search string, even though the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and Associated Press restrict usage of the term, and the *GLAAD Media Reference Guide* identifies it as an "outdated term considered derogatory and offensive to many lesbian and gay people." See *GLAAD Media Reference Guide*, 6, 7.
30. Our data set includes 56 articles from the *New York Times*, 28 from the *Washington Post*, 21 from the *Wall Street Journal*, 20 articles from assorted independent newsweeklies, 14 from the *Advocate*, and 13 from the *Los Angeles Times*.
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32. The most repeated quotations in our data set came from the president's declaration—via Twitter on July 26, 2017—that he intended to ban transgender people from military service. News

outlets not only reported Trump's three tweets directly after he sent them, they also repeatedly quoted these tweets in subsequent news coverage. For critical discussion of the president's use of Twitter, see Matt Thompson, "How to Spark Panic and Confusion in Three Tweets," *The Atlantic*, January 13, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/01/donald-trump-tweets-transgender-military-service-ban/579655/>; and Nolan Higdon and Mickey Huff, *United States of Distraction: Media Manipulation in Post-Truth America (and what we can do about it)* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2019), 84–86.

33. Andy Lee Roth, "Framing Al-Awlaki: How Government Officials and Corporate Media Legitimized a Targeted Killing," in *Censored 2013: Dispatches from the Media Revolution*, eds. Mickey Huff and Andy Lee Roth with Project Censored (New York: Seven Stories, 2012) 345–73, 354–55, <https://www.projectcensored.org/framing-al-awlaki-how-government-officials-and-corporate-media-%e2%80%a8legitimized-a-targeted-killing/>.
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35. Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time, 25th Anniversary Edition* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004 [New York: Random House, 1979]), 147–48. In addition to governmental rank, Gans noted other hierarchies based on "power, wealth, or prestige"; see also Croteau and Hoynes, *By Invitation Only*, 177–79.
36. To avoid misunderstanding, the figures reported here demonstrate how often journalists proactively described or identified quoted sources in terms of their sexual orientation. Because we were interested in how *news reports* identified quoted sources, we did not rely on any external sources when determining how to code this category. For this reason, the number of sources who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual is likely greater than reported in Table 2.
37. A 2011 report from UCLA's Williams Institute estimated that 3.5 percent of adults in the United States identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. See Gary J. Gates, "How Many People are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender?" Williams Institute (University of California, Los Angeles School of Law), April 2011, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gates-How-Many-People-LGBT-Apr-2011.pdf>. A more recent survey, published by Gallup in 2018, estimated that in 2017 4.5 percent of American adults identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Unfortunately, this report does not distinguish sexual orientation from gender identity. See Frank Newport, "In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%," Gallup, May 22, 2018, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx>.
38. *GLAAD Media Reference Guide*, 4.
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40. Croteau and Hoynes, *By Invitation Only*, 75–9, 111–13. Our study focuses on print news and theirs focused on TV news; and their study was conducted in 1994. On gender diversity in news, see also Gans, *Deciding What's News*, 175.
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42. Recall that Gamson defines media standing as a more active and thus more powerful status than merely being "covered or mentioned" in the news. Gamson, "Media and Social Movements," 9471.



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# **CENSORED 2020**

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

The Top Censored Stories and Media Analysis of 2018–19

**Andy Lee Roth** and **Mickey Huff**  
with **Project Censored**

Foreword by  
**Sharyl Attkisson**

Cartoons by  
**Khalil Bendib**



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