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**Article Title:** Coverage of the Gay Games from 1980-2012 in U.S. Newspapers: An Analysis of Newspaper Article Framing

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## **Abstract**

Many members of the LGBT community have viewed the Gay Games as an opportunity to challenge dominant ideologies concerning sexuality and sport participation. Members of the mass media, however, play a potentially important role in how the event is perceived by the general public. Therefore, the primary purpose of the current study was to examine how the Gay Games have been framed in newspaper coverage. A total of 646 articles published in the United States covering the eight Gay Games events held during the 32-year period of 1980 to 2012 were analyzed in terms of three aspects of framing: (1) the types of issues highlighted, (2) the sources of information cited, and (3) the manner in which either episodic or thematic narratives were employed. The results of the current study revealed that issues of identity and optimism were most commonly highlighted, LGBT participants were most frequently cited as sources of information, and thematic framing was most commonly employed in newspaper coverage of the Gay Games.

Sport, which in itself can have a powerful impact on beliefs and values, has become inextricably bound with the mass media, a powerful institution in its own right, as sporting content is increasingly covered and delivered by the media on a global scale (Nicholson, 2007). The relationship between sport and the mass media is symbiotic (Delaney & Madigan, 2009), as media outlets provide publicity to sport while trying to maximize their own influence and profitability. Given the strength of this relationship, sport can play a particularly powerful role in shaping cultural ideologies and values (Beck & Bosshart, 2003; Boyle & Haynes, 2009; Raney & Bryant, 2006; Rowe, McKay, & Miller, 1998). While members of dominant groups may seek to use sport as a tool to serve the interests of power, members of historically-marginalized groups have often used sport for such purposes as empowerment and as a means of challenging dominant ideologies. The Gay Games, which have become perhaps the world’s largest participatory lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) sporting, cultural, and human rights event (Symons, 2010), serve as one notable example.

The Gay Games were founded by Dr. Tom Waddell, who had been an Olympic athlete himself, under the original title of the “Gay Olympic Games.” However, after filing suit in federal court, the U.S. Olympic Committee secured an injunction to prevent use of the term “Olympic” (*S.F. Arts & Athletics, Inc. v. USOC*, 1987), necessitating a name change to “Gay Games” shortly before the inaugural event in 1982. Because Waddell hoped the event would challenge dominant ideologies by dispelling stereotypes about gay people being unskilled in sport, he was troubled by the name change, which he felt might trivialize the competition (Markwell & Rowe, 2003). While not all participants may share Waddell’s vision, and there certainly continues to be debate about the proper purpose of the event, it is clear that for many

individuals involved with the Gay Games, the event has ideological meaning that goes beyond sporting competition.

In conjunction with the growth of LGBT social movements, media coverage of LGBT individuals and issues has increased substantially in recent decades, and sport is no exception (Li & Liu, 2010). However, the ways in which an event such as the Gay Games might impact public perceptions can depend upon how the event and its participants are portrayed in mass media coverage (Shah, Kwak, Schmierbach, & Zubric, 2004). Thus, given the potential of the Gay Games to challenge dominant ideologies, combined with the possible influence of mass media, the purpose of the current study was to examine how the Gay Games have been framed in newspaper coverage during the last three decades.

### **The Gay Games**

Despite the legal challenges concerning the event’s name, Gay Games I still took place as scheduled in 1982, attracting more than 1,300 athletes from 12 countries (“Gay Games I,” n.d.). Since that initial event in San Francisco, the Gay Games have been held every four years and have experienced substantial growth. Most recently, Gay Games VIII was held in Cologne, Germany, in 2010, attracting approximately 9,500 participants from more than 70 countries (“Gay Games VIII,” n.d.).

Given the growth and stature of the Gay Games, it is not surprising that the event has drawn the attention of scholars. Of note to the current study, one area examined in previous research has been the meaning and purpose of the event. Consistent with Waddell’s vision of the Gay Games having political significance, many participants and others associated with the event have seen it as being rich with social meaning. At the individual level, many participants have reported that outcomes related to social and personal development were more important than

competitive success (Krane & Romont, 1997). Participants have also read the games as providing an opportunity for resistance by producing queer spaces that may help to destabilize norms and trespass on sporting territory that is typically assumed to be heterosexual (Waite, 2003). The individual benefits derived by Gay Games participants may also translate to action beyond the event, as many have reported being more likely to work towards social change through education and political channels following their participation (Krane, Barber, & McClung, 2002).

However, the specific political meaning of the games has been a subject of contestation. For example, there has been debate amongst those involved with the event about the extent to which the Gay Games act as a reformist initiative that may help normalize homosexuality through sport participation, or as a subversive endeavor that may disturb the link between sport and heterosexuality more generally (Rowe, Markwell, & Stevenson, 2006). Markwell and Rowe (2003) have suggested that the Gay Games have tended to place more emphasis on performing in accordance with mainstream conceptions of sport, as opposed to subverting the ideologies and practices of sport itself. In a similar vein, Lenskyj (2002) has pointed to a contrast between the radical goal of the Gay Games serving as an inclusive site of LGBT empowerment with the more liberal goal of staging a revenue-minded, international sporting spectacle modeled after the Olympic Games. In fact, conflicts regarding the proper purpose of the event led to a split between the Gay Games and a competing event named the Outgames, which first took place in 2006 in Montreal. Whereas individuals involved with the Federation of Gay Games hoped to emphasize the event as part of a social movement with political meaning, organizers in Montreal, which had originally been awarded the 2006 Gay Games before having them taken away in the disagreement, placed more focus on promoting the event primarily as a social gathering and gay

travel destination (Washington & McKay, 2011). Such a conflict highlights the ways in which the event’s purpose and significance have been contested throughout the Gay Games’ history. However, while it is important to consider these internal debates as well as the perspectives of participants involved with the Gay Games, the ways in which the event might impact members of the general public, and hence challenge dominant ideologies regarding sexuality and sport, can depend substantially on the ways in which the event is portrayed by members of the media.

However, despite the potentially influential role of the mass media, little research has focused specifically on media coverage of the Gay Games. One exception is a study in the context of the Australian media, wherein Stevenson, Rowe, and Markwell (2005) found that a mainstream media outlet most commonly emphasized economic impacts in its coverage of the 2002 Gay Games in Sydney, while a gay and lesbian publication focused more on the community identity and sexual rights advocacy aspects of the event. However, that analysis was limited to two newspapers in Australia. The current study seeks a broader sample of newspapers in the United States. As was previously mentioned, examining how media outlets have covered the Gay Games is an important key to understanding the ways in which the event may be perceived by members of the general public. To guide our analysis of newspaper coverage, we used the concept of framing, which is discussed in the following section.

### **Mass Media Framing**

A substantial body of mass media research has utilized the concept of *framing*, demonstrating that mass media play an important role in influencing people’s beliefs and values by presenting stories in a particular way (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Specifically, mass media frames are “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse” (Gitlin, 1980,

p. 7). Framing theory involves a focus on the packages that members of the mass media use to characterize a particular issue. These packages encompass arguments, information, symbols, metaphors, and images (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). Through framing strategies, media members often seek to turn complex issues into topics that are more easily intelligible for a mass audience. In making decisions about what elements of a story to highlight or omit, mass media entities have important power to influence how audience members interpret and react to events and issues (Entman, 2007; Iyengar, 1991; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009; de Vreese, 2005). Ultimately, by selecting how to frame the stories that are presented to the public, mass media may play a key role in structuring and defining reality as well as the interpretation and evaluation of issues and events (de Vreese, 2005; Kang, Gearhart, & Bae, 2010; Papacharissi & Fatima Oliveira, 2008).

Newspapers were chosen as the medium for examination in the current study because they remain one of the primary media for sports coverage and are perceived to have a high level of credibility compared to television or online sites (Armstrong, 2009; Kioussis, 2001). In addition, newspapers as a data source for content analysis have been widely used to study social movements and collective actions (Earl, Martin, McCarthy, & Soule, 2004). Specifically, the current study conducted a content analysis of articles about the Gay Games from U.S. newspapers published between August 1980 and August 2012. The objectives of the current study were to examine three dimensions of framing – (1) the types of issues highlighted, (2) the sources of information cited, and (3) the ways in which either episodic or thematic narratives were used, as well as how episodic/thematic framing was related to the types of issues covered and types of sources cited in newspaper articles. The remaining sections of this literature review introduce the three aspects of framing on which the current study focused.

## ***Issue Framing***

When covering any topic, mass media members make choices about which specific aspects of a story are highlighted and which are ignored. These choices about selectively representing and emphasizing certain issues, while disregarding others, are one of the notable ways in which media producers influence how a topic is framed (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Binder, 1993). With respect to framing of LGBT topics, Nardi (1997) demonstrated that mass media have typically tended to exclude issues of homosexuality due to negative public attitudes, but have gradually increased coverage over time and have presented LGBT issues in a less discriminatory way. Further demonstrating the relevance of framing in portrayals of LGBT issues, Ragusa (2005) found that content in the *New York Times* advertising business news framed LGBT topics by promoting an image of gay affluence, creating “shock value,” and commodifying gay social identity. Such decisions by mass media members about highlighting only certain issues, and in turn providing limited portrayals of LGBT individuals to the public, are important because of their potential to impact public perceptions and opinions (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). With specific respect to the Gay Games, Stevenson, Rowe, and Markwell (2005) found that a mainstream newspaper primarily highlighted economic issues in its coverage of the event, while a gay and lesbian paper placed more focus on issues of community identity and sexual rights advocacy. Such issue framing tendencies may work to ensure that most members of the public are only exposed to a very limited view of the Gay Games, which leads to our first research question:

RQ1: What types of issues have been highlighted in newspaper coverage of the Gay Games?



### ***Framing and Sources of Information Cited***

To improve the perceived credibility of their reporting, journalists often include comments and information in their stories from sources that are viewed as trustworthy. The sources from which a reporter solicits information is another key aspect that influences how a story is framed. By establishing credibility through the use of sources perceived as reliable, members of the mass media may enhance their ability to influence audiences' perceptions through the use of framing (Durham, 2007; Kang, Gearhart, & Bae, 2010). Given their relationship with the framing of a story and its potential persuasiveness, it is important to examine the types of sources that are cited in mass media reports about LGBT issues.

Because the sources of information cited in news reports of the Gay Games had not been previously categorized in research, the current study drew upon research from the broader context of LGBT issues. Specifically, news reporting on LGBT topics has often relied upon information from such sources as legal experts (e.g., Cain, 1993; Herman, 1994; Rivera, 1987), physicians (e.g., Blake, Ledsky, Lehman, Goodenow, Sawyer, & Hack, 2001; Gonsiorek, 1988; Meyer, 2003), religious figures (e.g., Buchanan, Dzelme, Harris, & Hecker, 2010; Schuck & Liddle, 2001), and social scientists with expertise in the areas of diversity, social identity, and social change (e.g., Cox & Gallois, 1996; Hetrick & Martin, 1987; Morrow, 2003; Plummer, 1995). In addition to such “professional” sources, the actual voices of LGBT participants and others closely related to the event provide an important perspective about the Gay Games. If the actual voices of LGBT individuals describing real experiences and perceptions of the Gay Games are overlooked by the media, such asymmetrical news coverage representing only professional sources' perspectives and opinions may impact the way in which the event is

framed. The importance of news sources in framing provides the context for our second research question:

RQ2: What types of sources have been cited in newspaper coverage of the Gay Games?

### ***Episodic and Thematic Framing***

Mass media frames can be categorized as either “episodic” or “thematic” in nature (Iyengar, 1991). Specifically, episodic framing of a story focuses attention on the individual nature of the event or issue. In contrast, thematic framing emphasizes information that contextualizes an issue or problem in the broader milieu of general developments, social trends, and other conditions that contribute to problems (Smith, McCarthy, McPhail, & Augustyn, 2001). Further, while episodic framing is more emotionally and personally employed on particular issues, thematic framing is more persuasive on a broader context (Gross, 2008). Similarly, episodic coverage leads to individualistic attributions while thematic coverage engenders societal attributions (Iyengar, 1991). For example, individual responsibility may be fostered through the presentation of personal stories about issues as detached from the broader context, whereas societal responsibility may be emphasized through a focus on how issues are influenced by governmental policy or the actions of those in positions of authority (Kang et al., 2010) Therefore, episodic and thematic framing involve ways of depicting a particular issue or event that make it understandable and accessible to the news audiences (Gross, 2008). In turn, the mass media can have substantial influence on how people understand the causes, sources, and, potentially, the solutions to a particular issue (Kang et al., 2010).

Therefore, while episodic framing of the Gay Games may include stories of an emotional nature that highlight issues at the individual level, thematic news stories would emphasize a

positive or negative socially influential atmosphere or ideological movement related to the event.

Examples of episodic framing of the Gay Games would include personal stories of LGBT athletes, their relationship with family and friends, or their lifestyles. Examples of thematic framing might include political issues, religious aspects of gay identity, LGBT rights, LGBT social movements, or cultural aspects of the LGBT community.

Notable for the current study, Li & Liu (2010) examined fairness and balance in the coverage of marriage equality in newspapers and found that, overall, coverage of the issue was fair and balanced, and stories framed as thematic were more likely to be fair and balanced than stories framed as episodic. Sinkhorn (2011) also determined newspapers to be fair when reporting on LGBT issues based on both episodic and thematic framing. Thus, the potentially differential impact of episodic and thematic framing on mass media audiences provides the framework for our third research question:

RQ3: How have the Gay Games been framed, either episodically or thematically, in newspaper coverage?

Further, it is relevant to explore the interlinked nature of episodic/thematic framing, the sources of information cited, and the types of issues covered in stories about the Gay Games, as reporters may solicit information from certain sources regarding certain issues in order to frame their stories in particular ways (Kang et al., 2010). Investigating such relationships may tell us what issues and sources better explain individual (episodic) and social (thematic) aspects of the Gay Games and LGBT athletes. In turn, the results may provide insight regarding what issues and sources would facilitate social solutions for the issues of the Gay Games and LGBT athletes. Hence, our final two research questions are posed:

RQ4: How is episodic/thematic framing related to the types of issues discussed in newspaper coverage of the Gay Games?

RQ5: How is episodic/thematic framing related to the types of sources cited in newspaper coverage of the Gay Games?

## **Method**

### ***Sampling Procedure***

Using the LexisNexis Academic database, the investigators collected articles about the Gay Games published between August 28, 1980 and August 6, 2012 in U.S. newspapers. These dates were selected because they encompassed two years prior to the first Gay Games (held August 28-September 2, 1982) and two years after the most recent Gay Games (held July 31-August 6, 2010). After limiting the LexisNexis search utility parameters to U.S. newspapers, the search terms “Gay Games” and “Gay Olympic Games” retrieved a total of 1,320 articles from 106 newspapers (i.e., *New York Times* [n=183]; *Chicago Sun-Times* [n=181]; *San Francisco Chronicle* [n=108]; *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* [n=75]; *Chicago Daily Herald* [n=59]; *Washington Post* [n=51]; *USA Today* [n=46]; and others [n=617]). After careful screening and discarding of articles unrelated to the Gay Games and redundant newspaper articles, the sampling process produced a total of 858 newspaper articles at the first stage. The investigators then categorized the articles according to the particular Gay Games on which they focused (e.g., the 1980 Gay Games, the 1984 Gay Games, etc.), excluding articles that did not pertain to a specific edition of the Gay Games, which left a total of 646 articles for final analysis.

### ***Coding Categories***

Keeping in mind the categories presented in previous research as a guide, the current study developed the issue categories relevant for Gay Games newspaper coverage using a constant comparative method employed in qualitative analysis. A constant comparative method is a procedure useful for interpreting and organizing empirical data according to categories or themes (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). In this analysis, issue categories become explicit as incidents are coded into as many categories as possible until they become theoretically saturated. As categories emerge, they are reviewed by continually returning to the data to assess similarities and differences between and within categories. Of course, a given newspaper article may involve more than one issue category. For example, a story may mention social issues related to the Gay Games, while also covering a family story of an LGBT individual. Hence, all issues covered in a given article were counted as themes for analysis.

This study employed newspaper articles as the unit of analysis for the news content categories including issues, sources, and episodic/thematic frames. First, the number of articles devoted to each particular Gay Games event was counted. Issues, sources, and frames were coded as 1 for presence and 0 for absence. Second, the investigators coded all issues that appeared in newspaper articles to identify the types of issues rather than coding one dominant issue. In addition, this study developed additional issue categories that emerged during the coding.

Issue categories about the Gay Games encompassed (1) factual information about the event (e.g., schedules, results, athlete performance, or history); (2) competition (e.g., medal counts for each nation or rivalries among the athletes); (3) sexuality (e.g., stories about athletes' sexual behavior and lives); (4) optimism (e.g., societal acceptance, educational roles, or positive

images of the Gay Games and LGBT athletes); (5) skepticism (e.g., shunning or derision of the event and/or athletes); (6) tangible business aspects (e.g., infrastructure development, LGBT marketing or sponsorship opportunities); (7) intangible business aspects (e.g., host city’s image or publicity); (8) health issues (e.g., AIDS, HIV, or other diseases); (9) identity (e.g., LGBT athletes’ experiences related to sexual identity and/or orientation); (10) religion (e.g., religious leaders or organizations); (11) legal issues (e.g., marriage equality, political issues, or legal status); and (12) other issues, such as crimes related to LGBT individuals.

Third, regarding the types of sources cited, a source was counted only when a writer included comments from a specific person who was interviewed for the story. If the same source appeared multiple times in the coverage, it was coded as one source. Source categories consisted of (1) legal experts; (2) scholars who study issues of the Gay Games and LGBT athletes; (3) celebrities; (4) members of the LGBT community, including event participants; (5) supporters, such as representatives of the Gay Games, athletes, foundations, and others who are not LGBT individuals; (6) politicians; (7) religious figures, such as pastors or priests; (8) coaches of LGBT athletes or teams; (9) sportswriters; and (10) others, including medical doctors, event administrators, event volunteers, sponsorship representatives, local residents of host cities, and protesters.

Lastly, for the episodic/thematic frame variable, newspaper articles primarily emphasizing individual issues of the Gay Games and LGBT athletes (e.g., personal stories of athletes) and covering the Gay Games and LGBT athletes with a focus on individual incidents were coded as having an episodic frame. Coverage primarily focusing on broader social, legal, or political issues related to the Gay Games and LGBT athletes was coded as having a thematic frame. When the coders judged that an article had included both episodic and thematic aspects in

an equal amount, it was coded as both. Finally, when the coders determined that a newspaper article did not employ either episodic or thematic framing, it was coded as not identified.

### ***Data Analysis***

For intercoder reliability, two authors of this study coded the newspaper articles respectively for a seven-week period from December 5, 2012 to January 20, 2013 to compare and correct coding discrepancies between them and reach a satisfactory coding agreement. Achieving intercoder reliability in content analysis begins with defining the categories and subcategories that are relevant to the purpose of study (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). Intercoder reliability was checked using Cohen’s Kappa, which is used for categorical data. After the first round of coding, the coders discussed any unacceptable discrepancies regarding categories and reached consensus on those items by clarifying their operational definitions (Kang et al., 2010).

The coders randomly chose 100 cases from the 646 newspaper articles to determine intercoder reliability for issues, sources, and episodic/thematic frames. As a result of the process, the intercoder reliabilities were .86 for the issue categories, .87 for the source categories, and .89 for the episodic/thematic framing. Because reliability exceeding .85 indicates a sufficiently acceptable level of intercoder reliability (Crano & Brewer, 2002), the data used for analysis in the current study were deemed to be reliable.

For main analysis, Chi-squares tests and Cramer’s V correlations for categorical variables were incorporated to test research questions.

## **Results**

An initial overview of how the quantity of coverage of the Gay Games in U.S. newspapers has changed over time is displayed in Figure 1 and Table 1. Notably, the number of

articles published was greatest for the 1994 and 2006 Gay Games, as articles appearing during these two events accounted for more than 76.7 percent of all stories during the 32 years examined in the current study. Additionally, as Table 1 shows, the greatest number of stories about the Gay Games was published in the *New York Times*, followed by the *Chicago Sun Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Chicago Daily Herald*, and *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

RQ1 addressed the types of issues covered in newspaper articles about the Gay Games. A total of 1280 issues were identified (see Table 2 for complete data). Overall, newspapers have most consistently highlighted issues of identity (27.3%) and optimism (20.4%) in their coverage of the Gay Games during the last three decades.

The following excerpt represents coverage that highlights the issue of identity:

When Laura Moore was growing up, she dreamed of being an Olympic figure skater. . . . Moore realized she was gay at an early age, but by the time she was 30 she found herself married and living in the suburbs, desperately ill with a stress-related disease and hating everything about her life. So, 12 years ago, she left her husband, moved to New York City and signed up for an ice skating class. In the 1994 Gay Games in New York, she initiated a figure skating meet -- overcoming skepticism from organizers that the event would not flourish during the summer games -- and became part of the first lesbian pairs team to compete. She and her partner won the gold medal. . . . Participation in gay and lesbian sports has increased steadily, both in New York and worldwide. (*New York Times*, June 25, 2000, “Gay Game; Competition and Camaraderie for Gay Athletes”)

The following excerpt, meanwhile, represents coverage that highlights the issue of optimism:

The fourth Gay Games are set to begin in New York Saturday, with 105 members of Team Minnesota poised to participate in 31 different sports, from ice hockey to billiards, from figure skating to aerobics. The Gay Games



are about athletes “being out,” feeling safe, taking pride in who they are . . . even if that great American institution we know as “sports” never has accepted gay and lesbian athletes. . . . The Gay Games seek to be inclusive, to allow for athletes who aren't world-class, although some college-level athletes do compete. Waddell always said that the event was open to straight athletes as well. . . . "The Gay Games are sort of a Utopia world. I don't have to explain who I am. I'm an athlete. I'm a lesbian. I'm whole." (*Star Tribune*, June 16, 1994, “Gay Athletes Striving for Openness, Competition”)

RQ2 focused on the types of sources cited in newspaper coverage of the Gay Games. Table 3 indicates that a total of 1,375 sources were identified. On the whole, members of the LGBT community (n = 390; 28.4%) were the most cited sources, followed by supporters (n = 294; 21.4%), sports writers (n = 203; 14.8%), and politicians (n = 124; 9.0%). It appears that newspaper reporters have attempted to capture personal stories of LGBT individuals themselves and interviewed politicians or celebrities as well as other supporters for social acceptance and recognition as a sub-group in our society. The following excerpt provides an example of how members of the LGBT community have been cited in coverage of the Gay Games:

Howie Mandel, 50, a successful Tampa businesswoman, is competing in singles tennis and mixed doubles with fellow Tampa resident Jimmy Baumgartner. . . . “First of all, society is not inclusive, and it's not where it should be,” she said. “At the games, you can be who you are without getting any flak” . . . . For Baumgartner, competing is thrilling, but seeing some of the athletes who had to deal with homophobia is inspiring. “They are great role models,” Baumgartner said. “Unless you felt oppression on a daily basis, you can't understand the importance of something like this.” (*Tampa Tribune*, July 15, 2006, “Just Competing in Gay Games is Major Victory for Some”)

RQ3 questioned how U.S. newspapers episodically or thematically framed their coverage of the Gay Games. Figure 2 shows that the proportion of articles using thematic framing was significantly greater than those using episodic framing. An example of thematic framing is demonstrated in the following excerpt which discusses the Gay Games in relation to a broader political issue – the policy of denying HIV-positive individuals from receiving a visa to enter the U.S.

A Justice Department waiver of an immigration law to allow HIV-positive foreign nationals to participate in the upcoming Gay Games.... Rep. Lamar Smith says.... An estimated 10,000 to 15,000 athletes and spectators from more than 40 countries are expected to attend the Gay Games June 18-25. Also planned for that week in New York are the 16th annual International Lesbian and Gay Association world conference and Stonewall 25, a celebration of the 25th anniversary of an uprising at the Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village gay bar.... U.S. policy is to deny a visa to anyone with a “communicable disease of public health significance,” according to INS regulations. That measure was broadened by Congress in May to bar HIV-positive immigrants (*Washington Times*, March 31, 1994, “Congressman Hits Gay Games Immigration Waiver”)

An instance of episodic framing, meanwhile, is shown in the following excerpt. The article from which this excerpt came was coded as episodic because, rather than framing the discrimination against LGBT individuals in sport as a broader social issue, it highlights how one individual struggled to overcome obstacles through personal determination.

In November, Ross Hayduk is heading to Sydney, Australia, for the 2002 Gay Games.... Hayduk is one of 14,000 athletes (450 participants are from the Bay Area) competing in this year's games.... When Hayduk moved to the Bay Area two years ago, he was not athletic. As a kid, he was never encouraged to excel in sports. “I did not feel like I fit in,” he says, “so I did

not participate in sports. I felt on the fringe socially. My life was out of balance early on. I would overeat, and that resulted in a poor physical condition.” Hayduk heard about the games and Team San Francisco and thought joining would be a good opportunity to meet people. In December of 2000 he ventured to the team's quarterly meeting and nominated himself for the board. “I went from being an athletic zero to a board member,” Hayduk says. “I had to get out there and sample what there was out there,” he says. “Push past your fear, push past the intimidation and push past the discomfort and you come out on the other side. You never know what you can accomplish until you try.” (*Contra Costa Times*, September 3, 2002, “Everyday Athlete Ross Hayduk Gay Sports Help Unleash This Inner Athlete)

RQ4 concerned the relationship between episodic/thematic framing and the types of issues covered in stories about the Gay Games. Table 4 shows that episodic framing was highly correlated with the topics of optimism, identity, tangible business, and competition, while thematic framing was highly associated with the topics of identity, optimism, facts, and legal issues. However, neither frame was correlated with the topics of sexuality, skepticism, or religion.

RQ5 addressed the relationship between episodic/thematic framing and the types of sources cited in stories about the Gay Games. Table 5 indicates that both episodic and thematic frames were related with the source categories of supporter, researcher, politician, and legal expert. Additionally, the episodic frame was related with members of the LGBT community, sports writers, and coaches. However, neither episodic nor thematic framing was related to the sources of celebrities or religious figures.

## Discussion

The current study analyzed newspaper coverage of the Gay Games, focusing on the types of issues covered, sources cited, episodic/thematic narratives used, and interactions among these categories. The results yielded insight regarding how news media have characterized the Gay Games, which is meaningful in understanding how media consumers are likely to perceive the event (D'Angelo, 2002).

The results of the current study indicated that the 1994 and 2006 Gay Games were the most heavily-covered by U.S. newspapers. Notably, these were years in which the Gay Games took place in major U.S. media markets. Specifically, the 1994 Gay Games were held in New York, a city in which four of seven largest newspapers by total circulation are published (Lulofs, 2012), making it perhaps unsurprising that this was the time period in which the greatest number of articles about the Gay Games appeared. Additionally, the *New York Times*, which is the third largest U.S. newspaper by circulation, was the outlet in which the most articles about the Gay Games were published ( $n = 90$ , 29.4%), supporting the suggestion that media entities may have been particularly interested in the event when it has been held locally. For the 2006 Gay Games, which received the second greatest amount of coverage, the event was held in Chicago, a market which contains the ninth largest (i.e., *Chicago Sun-Times*) and 10th largest (i.e., *Chicago Tribune*) newspapers by total circulation (Lulofs, 2012). Again, newspapers appeared to be particularly interested in covering the event when it was held locally, as the most articles about the Gay Games during the period appeared in the *Chicago Sun-Times* ( $n = 69$ , 36.3%), followed by the *Chicago Daily Herald* ( $n = 30$ , 15.8%). For the 1998, 2002, and 2010 Gay Games, meanwhile, there was substantially less coverage in American newspapers. Notably, each of these three events was held outside of the U.S. The finding that U.S. newspapers appear to have

shown particular interest in covering the Gay Games when it has taken place within the country may suggest that the 2014 Gay Games, to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, will receive a greater amount of coverage than the 2010 event, which was held in Cologne, Germany. However, Cleveland is a substantially smaller media market than New York or Chicago, with its largest paper, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, raking 22nd in total circulation (Lulofs, 2012), which suggests that the event may not receive the same level of coverage as it did in 1994 or 2006.

Regarding the topical focus of newspaper articles about the Gay Games, the results of the current study revealed that coverage focused most commonly on issues of optimism and identity. Notably, since the 1990 Gay Games, issues of optimism have consistently been among the top three topics on which coverage has focused. Such a focus can be seen as consistent with broader societal trends toward increasingly positive views of gays and lesbians in the past two decades, represented, for example, by the growing acceptance of marriage equality found in public opinion polls (Harms, 2011). Based on framing theory, mass media can have a great impact on the ways in which people develop certain attitudes toward events and issues (Entman, 2007; Iyengar, 1991; de Vreese, 2005) depending on the manner in which these issues are depicted (Kang et al., 2010; Papacharissi & Fatima Oliveira, 2008). The fact that identity and optimism were the most often presented frames in newspaper coverage of the Gay Games in the last three decades is consistent with the idea that newspapers may play a meaningful role in influencing people's social acceptance of LGBT individuals. Of course, the ways in which media outlets cover a topic such as the Gay Games may also be a reaction to increasingly positive views of gays and lesbians in the broader society. Thus, the ways in which media outlets have covered the Gay Games may best be viewed as simultaneously having an impact on and being impacted by broader public attitudes regarding LGBT issues.

In terms of sources cited in coverage, members of the LGBT community were most frequently interviewed (n = 390 for 28.4%), followed by supporters (n = 294 for 21.4%) and sport writers (n = 203 for 14.8%). It is perhaps unsurprising that members of the LGBT community, most of whom were participating in the event, were the most commonly quoted sources of information in coverage of the Gay Games. Similar to how reporters often seek interviews with athletes when covering other sporting events, it may seem logical for members of the media to seek quotes from sport participants when covering the Gay Games. As previously noted, however, general coverage of LGBT issues has often favored “professional” sources over the voices of LGBT individuals themselves. Further, given that the Gay Games are a sporting event, the fact that participants were cited in 28.4 percent of articles about the event may actually seem rather low, given the frequency with which athletes are quoted in general sports news reports. Regardless, while the inclusion of LGBT voices in coverage of the Gay Games may seem encouraging to LGBT rights advocates, it is certainly unclear if these voices would be as widely represented in more general discussions of social issues in the mainstream media. Of those sources categorized as “others” (n=85; 6.2%), although some protesters were cited as expressing negative views regarding the Gay Games and LGBT participants, a majority of “others” sources, such as physicians, event administrators, and sponsorship representatives, provided positive comments of the events including optimistic views, comments about the positive business impact, and general acceptance of LGBT identity.

Thematic framing was utilized significantly more often than episodic framing in coverage of the Gay Games. As discussed, LGBT social group identity and optimistic images of the event were the most frequently presented topics in coverage of the Gay Games. Therefore, the results were not surprising. In terms of the relationships between thematic/episodic framing and

issue/source type, the results of the current study are consistent with previous findings (Iyengar, 1991) that thematic framing is considered to be more related to highlighting the social influence of certain issues or events than episodic framing, which focuses more on people as individual actors. Higher Cramer's V correlations between thematic framing and supporters and politicians were found than between episodic framing and supporters and politicians, whereas members of the LGBT community as a source were not correlated with thematic framing, which included political issues, religious aspects of gay identity, gay rights legal issues, social campaigns for gay rights, and cultural aspects of LGBT groups. However, the results revealed that both thematic and episodic frames were highly associated with identity and optimism. It may be possible that both episodic and thematic framing were utilized to impact social acceptance and present positive images of LGBT issues.

Overall, findings of the current study coherently and collectively supported framing theory, which suggests that mass media play an important role in influencing people's beliefs and values (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). In other words, the analysis of newspaper coverage for the period of 1980-2012 underscores the newspapers' potential latent impact on fostering public acceptance toward gays and lesbians in the United States by primarily reporting issues of identity and optimism, stories of LGBT participants and supporters, and utilizing thematic framing most frequently. While the Gay Games are certainly just one element in the much broader context of LGBT social movements, the ways in which the event has been most frequently portrayed in newspaper reports seem to be conducive of Waddell's vision of challenging stereotypes about gay people and sport participation (Markwell & Rowe, 2003) as well as the reformist goal of normalizing homosexuality through sport participation. Understanding the nature of such

coverage is important for all those who hope the Gay Games might have political impact beyond the sporting competition itself.

The current study contributes to the fields of sport management and sport media in several ways. First, this research attempted to broaden our understanding of how mass media, particularly newspaper articles, have framed the Gay Games throughout the history of the event by analyzing the coverage based on different dimensions of media framing (i.e., issues, sources, and episodic/thematic framing). As a result, other sport management and media research may utilize these dimensions of framing as a conceptual framework to explore how a range of issues in sport are portrayed in mass media coverage. Further, as many sport management scholars (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Costa, 2005, Frisby, 2005) have stressed a need to examine what makes the sport industry unique, establish conceptual theories of sport management research, and consider underrepresented populations in sport, the current study also could provide a useful conceptual basis for further progression in these areas.

### ***Limitations and Future Directions for Media Framing Research in Sport Management***

While the current analysis of issues, sources, and episodic/thematic framing in newspaper articles was an empirical approach to examining coverage of the Gay Games, the findings of this study are not broadly generalizable due to its limitations. Thus, there is significant room for such an approach to be expanded in the field of sport management, and several possibilities for future research are detailed below.

First, future studies might analyze a variety of media including TV news, magazines, and online media in order to amplify the level of overall understanding of the relationship between media framing and the Gay Games. This is important, because different generations of people may consume different types of media (Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006; Dutta-Bergman, 2004). For



example, some people may watch TV news instead of reading print media, whereas some people may read online news rather than watching TV news. A comparative study of newspaper readers and other media audiences would offer useful information about how different generations of people interpret the media coverage and express their opinions about the Gay Games.

Secondly, future research might compare coverage between newspapers to investigate the extent to which different newspaper publishers might frame issues in different ways. For instance, some newspapers' coverage may be more inclusive to focus on the impacts and rights of the Gay Games and its participants regarding social, political, and/or economic aspects, whereas some newspapers might be motivated to report stories about individual Gay Games participants.

Lastly, because the current analysis is limited to select newspaper articles in the United States, all of which are published in the English language, future studies could include newspapers from other parts of the world as well as newspapers in other languages in order to enhance our understanding of how the Gay Games are portrayed in different cultural contexts. Despite these limitations, the current study provides the most extensive analysis of media coverage of the Gay Games to date, which may serve as an impetus for further analysis of the mediated nature of the Gay Games as well as a foundation for future work using the concept of media framing in the field of sport management.

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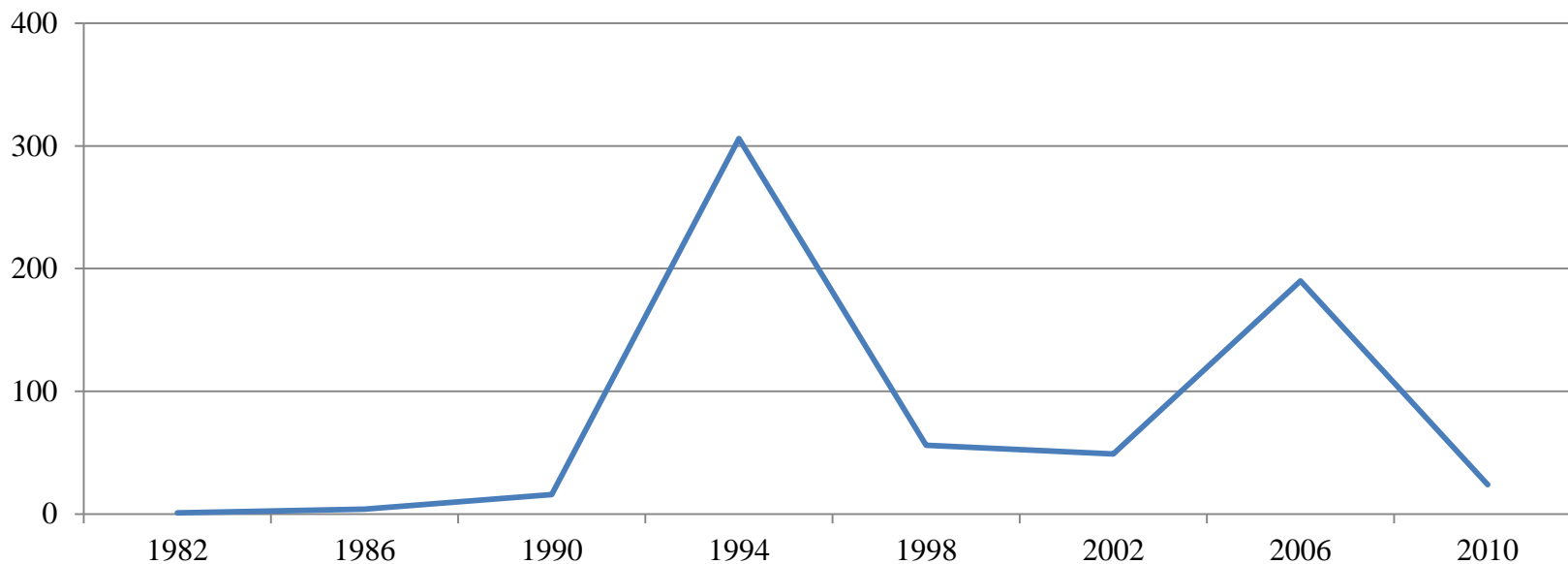
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“Coverage of the Gay Games from 1980-2012 in U.S. Newspapers: An Analysis of Newspaper Article Framing”  
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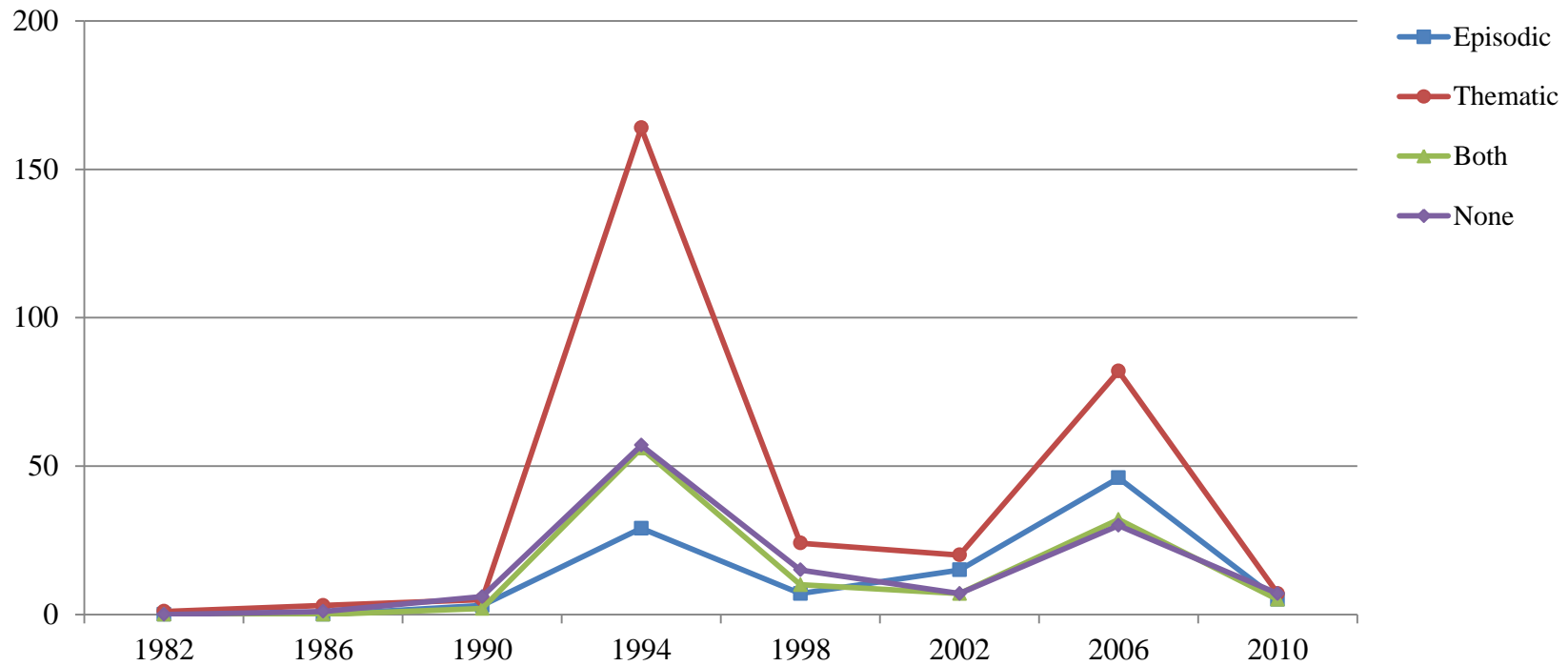
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**Figure 1** Number of newspaper articles covering each Gay Games (N=646).



Note: Time: 1982 (n=1, 0.15%); 1986 (n=4, 0.62%); 1990 (n=16, 2.48%); 1994 (n=306, 47.37%); 1998 (n=56, 8.67%); 2002 (n=49, 7.59%); 2006 (n=190, 29.41%); and 2010 (n=24, 3.72%)

**Figure 2** Episodic/thematic framing of newspaper articles covering each Gay Games (N=646).



Note: Episodic: 1982 (n=0, 0%); 1986 (n=0, 0%); 1990 (n=3, 18.8%); 1994 (n=29, 9.5%); 1998 (n=7, 12.5%); 2002 (n=15, 30.6%); 2006 (n=46, 24.2%); and 2010 (n=5, 20.8%). Thematic: 1982 (n=1, 100%); 1986 (n=3, 75.0%); 1990 (n=5, 31.3%); 1994 (n=164, 53.6%); 1998 (n=24, 42.9%); 2002 (n=20, 40.8%); 2006 (n=82, 43.2%); and 2010 (n=7, 29.2%). Episodic ( $\chi^2 [df=7] = 28.575, p < .001$ ). Thematic ( $\chi^2 [df=7] = 14.603, p < .05$ ). Episodic vs. Thematic ( $\chi^2 [df=1] = 112.841, p < .001$ ).

**Table 1** Number of articles from specific newspapers focusing on each Gay Games

Newspaper	Years								Total (%)
	1982 (%)	1986 (%)	1990 (%)	1994 (%)	1998 (%)	2002 (%)	2006 (%)	2010 (%)	
NYT	1 (100)	2(50.0)	5 (31.3)	90 (29.4)	6 (10.7)	2 (4.1)	3 (1.6)	0	109 (16.9)
CST	0	0	0	12 (3.9)	2 (3.6)	0	69 (36.3)	2 (8.3)	85 (13.2)
SFC	0	0	4 (25.0)	17 (5.6)	5 (8.9)	10 (20.4)	19 (10.0)	2 (8.3)	57 (8.8)
CDH	0	0	0	0	0	2 (4.1)	30 (15.8)	1 (4.2)	33 (5.1)
AJC	0	0	0	16 (5.2)	3 (5.4)	13 (26.5)	0	0	32 (5.0)
WP	0	2 (50.0)	5 (31.3)	18 (5.9)	1 (1.8)	0	4 (2.1)	0	30 (4.6)
USA	0	0	1 (6.3)	25 (8.2)	3 (5.4)	0	1 (.5)	0	30 (4.6)
Others	0	0	1 (6.3)	128 (41.8)	36 (64.3)	22 (44.9)	64 (33.7)	19 (79.2)	270 (41.8)
Total	1	4	16	306	56	49	190	24	646

Note: NYT = New York Times; CST = Chicago Sun-Times; SFC = San Francisco Chronicle; CDH = Chicago Daily Herald; AJC = Atlanta Journal-Constitution; WP = Washington Post; and USA = USA Today.

NYT ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 73.569, p < .001$ )  
 CST ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 110.826, p < .001$ )  
 SFC ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 16.648, p < .05$ )  
 CDH ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 62.141, p < .001$ )  
 AJC ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 57.760, p < .001$ )  
 WP ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 50.177, p < .001$ )  
 USA ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 18.901, p < .001$ )  
 Others ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 24.827, p < .001$ )

**Table 2** Gay Games newspaper articles by issue categories

Issue Category	Years								Total (%)
	1982 (%)	1986 (%)	1990 (%)	1994 (%)	1998 (%)	2002 (%)	2006 (%)	2010 (%)	
Facts <sup>b</sup>	1 (33.3)	1 (9.1)	8 (27.6)	62 (10.7)	18 (15.9)	8 (8.1)	39 (9.8)	11 (21.2)	148 (11.6)
Competition	0	0	0	10 (1.7)	3 (2.7)	4 (4.0)	12 (3.0)	2 (3.8)	31 (2.4)
Sexuality	0	0	0	17 (2.9)	8 (7.1)	6 (6.1)	14 (3.5)	1 (1.9)	46 (3.6)
Optimism <sup>c</sup>	0	1 (9.1)	6 (20.7)	100 (17.3)	22 (19.5)	22 (22.2)	100 (25.3)	10 (19.2)	261 (20.4)
Skepticism <sup>d</sup>	0	2 (18.2)	2 (6.9)	18 (3.1)	6 (5.3)	8 (8.1)	25 (6.3)	0	61 (4.8)
Business (Tangible)	0	0	2 (6.9)	42 (7.3)	11 (9.7)	10 (10.1)	42 (10.6)	5 (9.6)	112 (8.8)
Business (Intangible)	0	0	1 (3.4)	12 (2.1)	2 (1.8)	5 (5.1)	21 (5.3)	2 (3.8)	43 (3.4)
Health <sup>e</sup>	0	2 (18.2)	3 (10.3)	84 (14.6)	10 (8.8)	3 (3.0)	16 (4.0)	3 (5.8)	121 (9.5)
Identity <sup>f</sup>	1 (33.3)	3 (27.3)	7 (24.1)	197 (34.1)	31 (27.4)	21 (21.2)	80 (20.2)	9 (17.3)	349 (27.3)
Religion	0	0	0	8 (1.4)	0	2 (2.0)	2 (0.5)	0	12 (0.9)
Legal <sup>g</sup>	1 (33.3)	2 (18.2)	0	26 (4.5)	2 (1.8)	6 (6.1)	16 (4.0)	3 (5.8)	56 (4.4)
Others <sup>h</sup>	0	0	0	1 (0.2)	0	4 (4.0)	29 (7.3)	6 (11.5)	40 (3.1)
Total <sup>a</sup>	3	11	29	577	113	99	396	52	1280

b ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 22.896$   $p < .01$ )

c ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 20.964$   $p < .01$ )

d ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 20.900$   $p < .01$ )

e ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 37.110$   $p < .001$ )

f ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 31.455$   $p < .001$ )

g ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 23.785$   $p < .01$ )

h ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 64.905$   $p < .001$ )

**Table 3** Gay Games newspaper articles by type of sources cited

Source Type	Years								Total (%)
	1982 (%)	1986 (%)	1990 (%)	1994 (%)	1998 (%)	2002 (%)	2006 (%)	2010 (%)	
Legal expert <sup>b</sup>	1 (16.7)	3 (21.4)	0	22 (3.2)	2 (1.6)	4 (3.9)	7 (1.9)	1 (2.1)	40 (2.9)
Scholar	0	0	2 (6.1)	43 (6.3)	13 (10.2)	12 (11.7)	41(12.2)	2 (4.3)	113 (8.2)
Celebrity	1 (16.7)	1 (7.1)	1 (3.0)	50 (7.4)	4 (3.1)	6 (5.8)	29 (7.9)	6 (12.8)	98 (7.1)
LGBT <sup>c</sup>	1 (16.7)	3 (21.4)	9 (27.3)	211 (31.1)	37 (29.1)	28 (27.2)	89 (24.3)	12 (25.5)	390 (28.4)
Supporter	1 (16.7)	2 (14.3)	7 (21.2)	133 (19.6)	30 (23.6)	24 (23.3)	88 (24.0)	9 (19.1)	294 (21.4)
Politician <sup>d</sup>	1 (16.7)	3 (21.4)	2 (6.1)	54 (8.0)	7 (5.5)	6 (5.8)	43 (12.7)	8 (17.0)	124 (9.0)
Religious figure	0	0	0	9 (1.3)	2 (1.6)	2 (1.9)	1 (0.3)	0	14 (1.0)
Coach	0	0	0	6 (0.9)	0	1 (1.0)	6 (1.6)	1(2.1)	14 (1.0)
Sportswriter <sup>e</sup>	1 (16.7)	2 (14.3)	10 (30.3)	113 (16.3)	26 (20.5)	13 (12.6)	33 (9.0)	5 (10.6)	203 (14.8)
Other	0	0	2 (6.1)	38 (5.6)	6 (4.7)	7 (6.8)	29 (7.9)	3 (6.4)	85 (6.2)
Total	6	14	33	679	127	103	366	47	1375

b ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 50.432$  p < .001)

c ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 27.140$  p < .001)

d ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 20.860$  p < .01)

e ( $\chi^2 [df = 7] = 39.358$  p < .001)

**Table 4** Cramer’s V correlations between episodic/thematic framing and issue categories

Issue Category	Frame			
	Episodic	Thematic	Both	None
Facts	.090 <sup>a</sup>	.237 <sup>c</sup>	.162 <sup>c</sup>	.542 <sup>c</sup>
Competition	.196 <sup>c</sup>	.155 <sup>c</sup>	.065	.076
Sexuality	.041	.046	.143 <sup>c</sup>	.119 <sup>b</sup>
Optimism	.407 <sup>c</sup>	.295 <sup>c</sup>	.356 <sup>c</sup>	.351 <sup>c</sup>
Skepticism	.016	.041	.146 <sup>c</sup>	.103 <sup>c</sup>
Business (Tangible)	.202 <sup>c</sup>	.172 <sup>c</sup>	.005	.024
Business (Intangible)	.118 <sup>b</sup>	.145 <sup>c</sup>	.043	.114 <sup>b</sup>
Health	.147 <sup>c</sup>	.109 <sup>b</sup>	.210 <sup>c</sup>	.203 <sup>c</sup>
Identity	.284 <sup>c</sup>	.353 <sup>c</sup>	.308 <sup>c</sup>	.478 <sup>c</sup>
Religion	.030	.016	.119 <sup>b</sup>	.067
Legal	.136 <sup>c</sup>	.226 <sup>c</sup>	.010	.149 <sup>c</sup>
Others	.061	.167 <sup>c</sup>	.084 <sup>a</sup>	.237 <sup>c</sup>

Note: <sup>a</sup>  $p < .05$ ; <sup>b</sup>  $p < .01$ ; and <sup>c</sup>  $p < .001$

**Table 5** Cramer’s V correlations between episodic/thematic framing and type of source

Source Type	Frame			
	Episodic	Thematic	Both	None
Legal Expert	.096 <sup>a</sup>	.181 <sup>c</sup>	.016	.125 <sup>b</sup>
Researcher	.181 <sup>c</sup>	.183 <sup>c</sup>	.015	.078 <sup>a</sup>
Celebrity	.048	.021	.125 <sup>b</sup>	.139 <sup>c</sup>
LGBT	.185 <sup>c</sup>	.008	.246 <sup>c</sup>	.421 <sup>c</sup>
Supporter	.226 <sup>c</sup>	.285 <sup>c</sup>	.206 <sup>c</sup>	.348 <sup>c</sup>
Politician	.151 <sup>c</sup>	.254 <sup>c</sup>	.005	.186 <sup>c</sup>
Religionist	.037	.035	.156 <sup>c</sup>	.072
Coach	.136 <sup>b</sup>	.013	.040	.072
Sports writers	.181 <sup>b</sup>	.075	.116 <sup>b</sup>	.377 <sup>c</sup>
Others	.109 <sup>b</sup>	.021	.124 <sup>b</sup>	.010

Note: <sup>a</sup>  $p < .05$ ; <sup>b</sup>  $p < .01$ ; and <sup>c</sup>  $p < .001$