MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN GEORGIA: COMPARING THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE ACTIVISM

by

ARIALLE KAYE CRABTREE

(Under the Direction of Patricia Richards)

ABSTRACT

Numerous scholars have sought to explain the use of the internet in social movements. Little research, however, has evaluated emotion in internet activism. This thesis explains the role of emotion in online and offline activism within the Georgia marriage equality movement. Focusing on participants’ experiences of emotion and emotional management, I identify emotions unique to both types of activism. I show how emotional management differs in online and offline activism based on feeling rules established by social movement organizations and members of the movement. Finally, I argue that despite the difference in online and offline participation, common underlying emotions exist within both types of activism. These findings illustrate the role emotions play in sustaining and constraining online and offline activism, and moves beyond viewing the internet as simply a tool for participation.

INDEX WORDS: Social Movements; Internet Activism; Emotions; Emotional Management; Marriage Equality; Cyborgs
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ARIALLE KAYE CRABTREE
BA, North Carolina State University, 2012
BS, North Carolina State University, 2012

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ARIALLE KAYE CRABTREE

Major Professor: Patricia Richards
Committee: Pablo Lapegna
             Dawn Robinson

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>METHODS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MARRIAGE EQUALITY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AND EMOTION</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>EXPERIENCE OF EMOTION IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE ACTIVISM</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SHARED EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EMOTIONS IN OFFLINE ACTIVISM</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EMOTIONS IN ONLINE ACTIVISM</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MANAGEMENT OF EMOTION IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE ACTIVISM</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MANAGEMENT OF EMOTIONS OFFLINE</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MANAGEMENT OF EMOTIONS ONLINE</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTION IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE ACTIVISM</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Sentiment of GA LGBTorg tweets ................................................................. 69
CHAPTER 1
THE ROLE OF EMOTION IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The goal of the U.S. marriage equality movement was to legalize same-sex marriage. Many southern states, like Georgia, instituted constitutional bans against same-sex marriage. In light of this strong opposition, winning the right to marry became a priority for national and statewide LGBT advocacy organizations. While some members of the LGBT rights movement approved of marriage equality as the primary goal of the movement, others feared that this issue represented an attempt to normalize queer experiences. The internet was a space for members of the marriage equality movement to address these internal tensions. Negative emotions, considered inappropriate at offline events such as Pride, could be expressed on Facebook or Twitter. Participants’ experiences of emotion influenced their perceptions about both types of activism and shaped their future participation. Emotion was more than a tool to inspire activism in the marriage equality movement. Rather, it played a vital role in shaping and constraining online and offline activism.

Manuel Castells (2012:6) argues, “Networked social movements of the digital age represent a new species of social movements.” However, this argument has been widely debated within the study of social movements. Despite a growing body of research exploring the use of the internet in social movements, scholars have not come to a consensus on the significance of internet-based activism (Earl 2006; Earl et al. 2010; Nakamura and Chow-White 2012; Papacharissi 2002; Shirky 2011; Tilly 2004; Vicari 2014). According to Earl et al. (2010), there are three primary explanations for internet activism and its application within the study of social
movements. First, the internet represents a major change within social movements and requires development of new social movement theories (Van Laer and Van Aelst 2010). Second, the internet has not changed the processes involved in social movement formation; therefore, online participation can be explained using pre-existing social movement theories (Tilly 2004). Third, the internet represents a change in the scale, or degree, of social movements (Earl et al. 2010). In other words, the internet is a new resource that reduces the cost of mobilization, but does not change the process of activism (Earl et al. 2010; Nielsen 2013). Most of the current research on internet activism has adopted this third explanation; however, few studies have examined the role of emotion in online activism (Castells 2012; Gerbaudo 2012). To suggest that the internet has not changed the process of activism without examining the role of emotion in the virtual sphere ignores the agency of online activists. Eve Shapiro (2010) views online and offline worlds as “mutually constitutive and inexorably woven together.” She notes that both spaces contribute to the formation of embodied identities. Emotions are part of participants’ embodied experience. As such, before adopting any of the existing explanations for internet activism, the role of emotion in online activism must be considered.

In his study of various Arab Spring movements, the Occupy movement, and ‘indignados’ protests, Castells (2012) examines the role of emotion in networked social movements. He describes the transformation of individual emotion into collective action, facilitated through internet-based communication technologies. Despite Castell’s claim that networked movements represent a “new species,” his explanation of internet-based communication seems to suggest a difference in scale rather than significant change in the character of movements. Scale related explanations view internet-based technologies as an efficient system through which offline participants can communicate their grievances and unite with others in collective action (Castells
This explanation of the role of emotion in online activism fails to address the participants’ embodied experience of technology and prompts several questions. How does the structural and cultural configuration of online spaces shape participants’ experiences of emotion? Specifically, how do activists’ experiences of emotion in online activism compare to their experiences of emotion in offline activism? This thesis seeks to address these questions by exploring the role of emotion in the marriage equality movement.

Through evaluation of micro- and macro-level processes of emotional formation and management in this movement, I extend beyond scale related explanations of the role of emotion in online activism. Rather, I seek to incorporate feminist scholarship that draws attention to the embodied experiences of technology (Haraway 1991), as well as theories from sociology of emotion and social movement studies. My research acknowledges the agency of participants engaged in online activism and seeks to incorporate their voices into the existing literature.

How do participants’ experiences of emotion differ in online and offline activism? What specific emotions do participants’ associate with each type of activism? How does online participation shape participants’ experience of emotion? How does offline participation shape participants’ experience of emotion? These research questions are designed to compare how participants experience the same movement when utilizing different styles of participation, online versus offline. Exploring these research questions will add to understandings of emotions and internet activism in social movements.

In order to compare the role of emotion in online and offline activism, it is first necessary to conceptualize a few terms related to emotion. Feminist scholars have emphasized the importance of accurately representing and conceptualizing emotion in affect studies. Naomi Greyser (2012:85) states, “Affect has posed a problem for feminist studies, given the history of
femininity’s over association with emotions as well as the history of psychoanalysis’s complex entanglements with both sexism and feminism.” While this is not a study about sexual or gender identity, gender and sexual identities are related to participants’ involvement in the marriage equality movement. Therefore, it is imperative to follow Greyser’s advice and carefully conceptualize the concepts of emotion and affect in order to avoid further essentialism. In this study, I use the term affect to describe strong positive and negative as well as active and powerful assessments of beliefs, behaviors and objects (Heise 1979). I discuss feelings as psychological and physical experiences linked to emotion (Thoits 1989). I discuss emotion as a cultural and structural construct, although I do not conceptualize culture and structure as mutually exclusive (Thoits 1989). Rather, I adopt Polletta’s (2004) perspective of cultural and political (or social) structures as inextricably linked. Calhoun (2001) argues that to incorporate emotions into sociological research, it is important to look beyond individual or “autonomously psychological” explanations. Instead, the focus of research should be on the social formation, processes, and management of emotions surrounding participation. In order to avoid overly structural or psychological explanations of emotion, I develop a theoretical framework based on sociology of emotion, social movement theories, and feminist studies.

The terms internet activism and cyborg also merit definition. Manuel Castells (2004) described the internet as an alternate “digital” public sphere where individuals can interact and organize political action. Throughout this thesis, I will use the term digital sphere or online space to describe the setting in which internet activism takes place. Online activism includes traditional forms of activism, such as petitions that are facilitated through the internet (Van Laer and Van Aelst 2010). It also includes social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, designed to promote and organize political action (Van Laer and Van Aelst 2010). I will use the
terms *internet activism* and *online activism* interchangeably to describe all forms of activism that take place in the digital sphere.

I use Haraway’s concept of the cyborg to describe the impact of online activism on social movement actors. Haraway (1991) proposes the metaphor of a *cyborg*, a combination of organic and mechanical life, in order to re-evaluate feminist perspectives regarding technology. This metaphor serves as a useful conceptual and visual tool for linking the digital and public spheres. Haraway’s (1991) cyborg model avoids essentializing notions of technology and rigid positivist categories, and instead recognizes the interaction between technology and human bodies. Strict categories that separate organic life from mechanical deny subjectivity to the mechanical life. This is exemplified in previous research on internet activism that focuses exclusively on the internet as a resource for participation but ignores the impact of this resource on participants’ experiences of activism (Castells 2012; Earl et al. 2010; Gerbaudo 2012; Nielsen 2013). In other words, they explore the mechanical life of internet activism but ignore the organic life of online participants. Furthermore, without acknowledging the existence of activists in the digital and public spheres, scholars fail to recognize activists’ agency. As a result, activists are only seen as “active” when operating in the public sphere. This study seeks to move beyond the strictly mechanical views of internet activism and explore the agency of activists in online spaces. Through this exploration, I hope to further Haraway’s cyborg metaphor by contemplating the possibility of cyborg activists.

This research examines activism around marriage equality within the southeastern United States, with a specific focus on the state of Georgia. During the period of this research, the political climate in Georgia made marriage equality a particularly salient issue. By 2014, all of the states in the southeast had passed constitutional amendments, which, to varying degrees,
banned same-sex marriage. In February 2014, an organization called Freedom to Marry launched a $1 million campaign to raise support for marriage equality in the South. This campaign was launched in Atlanta, Georgia at a press conference attended by Atlanta’s Mayor Kasim Reed, Freedom to Marry founder and president Evan Wolfson, and Jeff Graham, Executive Director of Georgia Equality (the state organization working in favor of marriage equality) (Polaski 2014). Lastly, in April 2014, Lambda Legal filed a federal lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in order to overturn Georgia’s same-sex marriage ban (Lambda Legal 2014). Together, these events sparked a sense of urgency and increased activism around the issue of marriage equality in Georgia, creating an optimal environment in which to conduct this research.

In the following sections, I describe the methods and epistemological choices that directed this study and situate my research within the relevant literature from social movements, sociology of emotions, and feminist studies.

METHODS

This study compares the role of emotion in online and offline activism within the Georgia marriage equality movement. Following Michael Burawoy’s (1991) extended case method, I seek to “reconstruct” existing theories regarding emotion and online activism in order to explain the unique role of emotion among marriage equality activists. Burawoy (1991:281) explains the benefits of the extended case method:

In constructing a social situation as unique, the extended case method pays attention to its complexity, its depth, its thickness. Causality then becomes multiplex, involving an ‘individual’ connectedness of elements, tying the social situation to its context of determination.
This approach is well suited for the task of examining the complexity and “depth” of emotion within online and offline activism. Through exploring micro experiences of emotion in the marriage equality movement, I explain the macro implications of emotion in social movements, especially those that combine offline and online activism.

For this study, I conducted in-depth interviews, participant observation, and content analysis of online social media posts. In order to recruit respondents, I emailed recruitment messages to multiple Georgia based lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) advocacy organizations and posted to related social media websites. I also used snowball sampling, whereby respondents and key informants connected me with additional movement members who they believed would be interested in participating in the study. Altogether, I interviewed 18 activists within the marriage equality movement, all over the age of eighteen. These individuals were selected based on their self-identification as participants in the marriage equality movement and had varying levels of involvement within the movement. Originally, I planned to select interview participants who were engaged in either online activism or offline activism; however, I soon learned that most participants were engaged in both types of activism. Only two participants in the study said they did not use any form of online activism, aside from email. Through these interactions and volunteering at movement related events, I was able to establish legitimacy among key informants within the movement.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews ranged from forty minutes to an hour-and-a-half. Interviews took place in my office, coffee shops, participants’ homes or offices, and in a park. Participants included seven men and nine women, including two self-identified transgender participants, with ages ranging from 18 to 74. The age range among participants was important and an intentional part of selection. Online activism and the internet are often associated with the
millennial cohort. I wanted to ensure that the emotions observed in online activism applied to a variety of participants. The eighteen participants include six gay men, six lesbian women, two bisexual woman, two allies and two queer individuals. Respondents were well educated and had high incomes, with the possible exception of two students. Although the majority of my respondents self-identified as white, two identified as Filipino and two as African American. I chose semi-structured interviews because I was interested in participants’ experiences of emotion and emotional management within the marriage equality movement. I sought to examine the role of emotion as conveyed by activists themselves. However, I must note my own position and subjectivity played a role in the construction of this research and presentation of participants’ experiences.

My position as a white researcher at a prominent university granted me access to certain sites and imbued me with a degree of power. Without confronting assumptions and issues of power, the relationship between participants and researchers can be damaged (McCorkel and Myers 2003). I attempted to address this power discrepancy in two ways. First, I engaged in reflexivity throughout the research process. Although I cannot guarantee that I was able to recognize every false assumption, I believe that this process of reflexivity helped me to address the major methodological challenges and epistemological assumptions of this study. Second, I sought to address issue of power and privilege by recognizing participants as producers of knowledge. Harding (1987) notes that feminist epistemologies should go beyond simply “adding women;” rather, feminist researchers must recognize subjects as producers of knowledge. Throughout my study and data collection, I relied heavily upon my participants to share their experiences and knowledge about the movement. My choice to conduct in-depth interviews is a reflection of this epistemological position. The voices of internet activists have been largely
omitted from much of social movement studies. Additionally, as my study progressed I found that recognizing my participants as producers of knowledge led me to correct some initial false assumptions.

I compared interview responses to participant observations and content analysis in order to explain variations and discrepancies in participants’ accounts of activism. Participant observations included attending three Pride events in Georgia, two rallies related to marriage equality, and several social events facilitated through local and state-wide LGBT advocacy organizations. I collected these observations over the course of six months, from May 2014 through October 2014. I also conducted content analysis of Facebook and Twitter posts related to the Georgia marriage equality movement, including the Facebook page of a statewide campaign created to mobilize marriage equality activists. All online content in this study was in the public domain. I collected this data through several web-based searches and specific selection. I accessed Twitter data through a search of all public tweets that contained the words GA [and] marriage [or] Georgia [and] marriage posted between January and August 2014. Finally, I conducted content analysis of all online, publicly accessible, material related to events I attended during my participant observation. This data was collected through searches of Facebook event pages and Twitter searches based on event key words such as, Atlanta [and] Pride: 2014.

Originally, online content was analyzed using a sentiment analysis program called SentiStrength (Thelwall et al. 2010). This software program uses short text entries, Facebook posts and tweets, in order to determine the positive and negative sentiments within the text. Both positive and negative sentiments are based on a 0-5 scale, 0 rating signals neutral words. Below is an example of this initial analysis:
The sentiment analysis shows that this tweet is associated with positive sentiment (2) and negative sentiment (-1), but does not provide additional information. As such, this method was insufficient in providing a full analysis of the data. Ken Plummer (2013) classifies this type of analysis as “zombie research,” analysis of qualitative data through a quantitative lens. In order to avoid engaging in “zombie research,” I added thematic coding to my analysis of online content. I coded all data by hand and did not use any other coding software. The decision to include thematic coding, in addition to sentiment analysis, resulted in a much richer analysis of the text. Furthermore, I used thematic coding to analyze fieldnotes from my participant observation. I compared these codes in order to assess the commonalities and differences in online and offline activism.

These methods were chosen in order to gain a full perspective of the marriage equality movement in Georgia as it relates to both online and offline activism. Interviews allow for a deeper understanding of participants’ experiences; furthermore, they allow the formation of connections between the researcher and participants (Esterberg 2002). Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed participants to communicate their experiences and emotions in their own words and helped me avoid assumptions. This was especially important given that previous research has focused on researchers’ assessments of national social movement organization (SMO) websites (Earl 2006; Earl et al. 2013). This research has been important in mapping the landscape of internet activism, but has not acknowledged the subjectivity of the people within this landscape. Even Castells’ (2012) analysis of emotions and internet activism relied primarily on direct observations and content analysis. Given that my study aims to explore
participants’ experiences and understandings of emotion and emotional management, I felt it was imperative to hear from the participants themselves about these emotions.

Participant observation and content analysis were necessary in order to understand the public and digital spheres in which marriage equality activists were operating. Emerson et al. (1995) note that field research allows researchers to gain knowledge about the social environment in which participants exist through immersion. My field observations and content analysis were an attempt to gain such a perspective of the online and offline settings of activism. I then compared my direct observations with participants’ narratives. This allowed me to confront discrepancies and identify points of interest for further inquiry. For instance, in one of my interviews a participant mentioned the frustration and isolation associated with black queer identity.¹ Later, during a Pride festival, I observed a protest for “Black Queer Lives Matter.” The resonance of this participant’s narrative in the field reinforced the importance of this issue for the LGBT rights movement. Additionally, comparing thematic codes generated from these different methods helps to illustrate how macro-social and cultural processes informed micro-experiences of emotion. All three of these methods were necessary to address my research questions and each provided a unique angle on the findings.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND EMOTION

To contextualize my research questions it is necessary to understand the current research on emotions in social movements and internet activism. In this literature review, I will discuss three areas of research relevant to this study: LGBT rights and the marriage equality movement, emotions in social movements and the role of the internet in social movements.

¹ Interviewed on December 3, 2014 in Georgia.
LGBT Rights and the Marriage Equality Movement

In May 2014, Oregon became the eighteenth state to legalize same-sex marriage (Freedom to Marry 2015). By mid-October 2014, same-sex marriage was legal in thirty-one states. This rapid evolution within the movement created an environment of excitement throughout the country. Georgia was no exception. On April 22, 2014, Lambda Legal filed suit against the state of Georgia on behalf of seven plaintiffs over the state’s marriage ban. This suit served as the catalyst for activism and conversation in the following months. In the six months of this research, state-level advocacy organizations such as Georgia Equality worked to recruit voters, mobilize the support of Georgia lawyers and clergy, and petition against Georgia’s attorney general. Such actions were promoted online and offline. The urgency and anticipation among participants created an ideal setting for understanding the role of emotion in online and offline activism.

While the discourse over marriage equality shifted from a discussion of “gay marriage” to more inclusive terms of “same-sex marriage” and “marriage equality” in mainstream media, the movement received internal criticism from members who grew increasingly concerned that marriage equality was simply an embrace of heteronormativity (Kimport 2013). These tensions are important for researchers to acknowledge and explore in studies of the marriage equality movement, especially when evaluating the role of emotion.

In her study of the 2004 San Francisco same-sex mass weddings, Kimport (2013) found that recently married participants gave conflicting accounts of marriage. While many participants framed same-sex marriage as a form of resistance against heteronormative values, they also expressed a desire to obtain privileges associated with marriage. Furthermore, social movement campaigns for marriage equality often framed same-sex marriage through individual-level
meanings of love and commitment, emphasizing that same-sex marriage is the same as different-sex marriage (Kimport 2013). Publicizing images of same-sex weddings and families, leaders of the marriage equality movement sought to produce a cultural shift in attitudes about gay marriage. She argues that such narratives ignore the continued dominance of heteronormative culture. Kimport (2013:11) notes that this emphasis on sameness has resulted in opposing views of same-sex marriage among lesbian and gay couples:

Given that marriage is an institution that perpetuates heterosexual privilege, they are asking whether same-sex marriage will contest or reify heteronormativity, leading, on the one hand, to the undoing of heteronormativity, and on the other, to its further entrenchment.

This fear of reifying heteronormativity by promoting the institution of same-sex marriages emerged in many of my interviews. Similar to the married couples in Kimport’s study, these activists chose to advocate for marriage equality despite skepticism and deep feelings of distrust. This tension is one demonstration of the importance of investigating activists’ experiences of emotion in social movements. The marriage equality movement serves as an excellent example of activists’ struggle to embrace and manage conflicting emotions associated with political participation.

The marriage equality movement has been portrayed as part of the larger lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights movement. The strategies evoked by the LGBT community are unique in that the targets are often non-political actors and institutions (Bruce 2013). Moreover, their tactics deal with cultural tensions and identity (Bruce 2013; Gamson 1989; Rupp and Taylor 2003). For example, an ethnography of LGBT Pride parades in a southeastern city found that activists sought to challenge notions of invisibility and hostility
through celebrating identity and community in the public sphere (Bruce 2013). Similarly, the marriage equality movement sought to gain visibility and recognition through legalized same-sex marriage (Kimport 2013). The marriage equality movement shared a number of features with this overall LGBT rights movement including non-political targets and a focus on cultural and identity tensions.

While this study focuses on activism related to marriage equality, I include some information from the overall LGBT rights movement. I do not mean to imply marriage equality is synonymous with the LGBT rights movement. However, I am suggesting that marriage equality was a key issue in many LGBT rights discourses. This link was evident as some events from my participant observation, as well as interviewees’ descriptions of activism, conflated participation in the marriage equality movement with participation in the over-arching LGBT rights movement. Furthermore, despite the internal debates around the issue, the participants, targets, strategies and goals of both movements often overlapped making it difficult to distinguish between the movement for marriage equality and the broader LGBT rights movement.

Social Media, Internet and Social Movements

Changes in the structure of internet-based communication have allowed many individuals to utilize the internet as a resource for daily tasks and interactions. Since the emergence of Web 2.0, social movements and activists have begun to utilize the internet as a tool for political participation (Birdsall 2007; Castells 2004). Web 2.0 is a trend in internet technology and web-based software that shifts control of online content from creators to users, emphasizes social network formation, and focuses on micro-content (Birdsall 2007). This term was originally used
to describe the influx of new technologies and tools that allowed users to control web content. It has since come to represent a new perspective among internet users that emphasizes the internet as a space for open communication. Birdsall (2007) has described Web 2.0 as “a continuing manifestation of a social movement arising out of the interaction between technological developments in communication and the expansion of communication rights, in particular, a basic human right to communicate for everyone.” This new online frontier allowed social movement participants to control and organize movements online (Earl et al. 2010). Given this new level of user-based control, one question that now emerges is how participants use these tools to manage emotions in online activism.

Melucci (1996) observes that social movements, especially within the new technological era, create their own “codes” as a way of challenging existing dialogues and powerful social forces. The hashtag symbol, formerly known as the “pound sign,” has become a marker for multiple movements. #BlackLivesMatter, #LoveIsLove, and #JeSuisCharlie represent a few of the most recent political topics to go viral. In order to understand these “codes” it is necessary to analyze how new technologies such as social media influence the emotions of participants.

Younger generations have increasingly shown interests in new forms of political engagement through social networks and cultural activism, instead of relying on traditional methods such as voting or formalized social movement organizations (Brough and Shresthova 2011). Participants’ growing interest in online activism is not simply a convenient form of small-scale mobilization. Rather, this transition may represent a potentially powerful mode of political participation.

The emergence of social media has led to an array of research that approaches the use of social media in social movements from different methodological and theoretical perspectives.
Critics of social media as a tool for activism suggest that the familiarity of social media makes online activism a “mundane” activity; furthermore, this tool can exclude marginalized groups who are unfamiliar with the technology (Nielsen 2013). In stark contrast to such criticisms, other scholars have demonstrated the benefits of social media. Social media acts as a tool to disseminate information in cheap and effective ways, allows for the formation of new networks, and works to organize internal structures of social movement organizations (Earl et al. 2013; Shirky 2008; Tremayne 2014). Despite disagreement on the usefulness of social media as a tool for mobilization, there is a general consensus that social media and the internet are a common feature of contemporary social movements. Scholars have primarily focused on identifying the tactics used in online activism and accessing the strength of online networks (Costanza-Chock 2012; Earl 2006; Earl et al. 2013; Tremayne 2014; Vicari 2014). These studies have made significant contributions to understanding how social media operates within the context of social movements. I seek to build upon this body of literature by examining the emotions associated with different types of participation.

A few studies have looked at the role of emotions in online activism (Castells 2012; Gerbaudo 2012). Paolo Gerbaudo (2012) conducted qualitative analysis of social media in the Arab Spring protests, *indignados* movements, and the U.S. Occupy movement. His findings suggest that social media mobilized public protests through channeling feelings of anger and outrage into mobilization. Gerbaudo (2012) and Castells (2012) noted that social media sites were able to maintain protests through continual communication between activists and by igniting the interests of sympathizers. These commonalities were found in both the Arab spring and *indignados* movements; however, the Occupy movement differed in important aspects. Gerbaudo (2012) argues the Occupy movement first established cohesion and identity on the
ground by facilitating communication and emotional language on social media sites. The findings from this study show the importance of emotion as a tool for mobilization and also that each of the movements were deeply bound to social media from the outset. Furthermore, Gerbaudo dichotomizes the discussion of participants’ emotions into the categories of online and offline activism. He notes that this is a limitation of his study, specifically in the Egyptian uprising, because many activists did not have internet access and mobilized through alternative forms of communication (Gerbaudo 2012). In light of the limited research on emotion and internet activism, it is necessary for more studies to continue to explore the role of emotions in online and offline participants.

*Emotions and Social Movements*

The study of emotions in sociology has developed under two main approaches. One explores the development of emotion cultures and processes of emotional management, while the other seeks to explain how social structures shape experiences of emotion (Robinson et al. 2008). Studies of emotion and social movements demonstrate the prominence of these theoretical traditions. For example, Verta Taylor (1995) explores how mothers with post-partum syndrome use emotional deviance as a reframing tool to motivate activism. Elizabeth Perry (2002) focuses on emotion work in a study of the Communist Revolution in China. These studies illustrate the importance of emotion as a motivating force within movements. Other approaches, such as studies of frame alignment, demonstrate the link between social structure and emotional experiences in activism (Groves 1995; Heise and Smith-Lovin 1981; Hercus 1999; Jasper 1998). Structural approaches have emphasized social relations, power, and status, all of which influence
emotion (Kemper 2001). Given the scarcity of research on emotion and internet activism, studies of emotion and offline activism serve as the theoretical base for this research.

Emotions were a prominent theme in early theory about social movements and collective behavior. Theorists such as Herbert Blumer and Neil Smelser viewed collective behavior as an emotional response to social strain (McAdam 1999). Emotions, in this view, were irrational and impulsive. Still, they motivated individuals to engage in collective behavior. In the early 1970s, resource mobilization theory and political process theory emerged in reaction to this classic model (McAdam 1999). Resource mobilization theory emphasizes the consistency of social strain and the variance in resources among social movement organizations as an explanatory factor. Political process theory explains the success of social movements in relation to political opportunities and the structure of social movement organizations, with some cursory attention to “cognitive liberation,” a concept that has remained under-defined (McAdam 1999). These theories reoriented social movement studies to focus on the importance of structural factors in explaining movement emergence, sustenance and decline, and to understand participation in movements as rational behavior. However, in their efforts to divert from the earlier focus on dysfunction and strain, scholars denied any role for emotion in social movements.

By the late 1990s, scholars began to criticize the lack of attention to emotion in social movement studies (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Jasper 1998). Since then, a considerable amount of research has been dedicated to the study of emotion in social movements (Castells 2012; Ferree and Merrill 2004; Gould 2004). As such, scholars have revised the call for attention to emotion in social movement research and identified new areas for improvement. In an essay summarizing the history of emotion in social movement research, Ellen Granberg (2008:314) concludes by identifying the major unanswered questions within the field:
What factors differentiate emotion that evokes social action from that which suppresses it? Under what conditions is emotion transmuted and redirected towards social rather than individual transformation? How does the context in which emotions are experienced influence whether or not they lead to organized social change?

While this study cannot provide all of the answers, these questions represent some of the gaps in the social movement literature that this research seeks to explore.

In my discussion of experiences of emotion (Chapter 2), I use Jasper’s (1998) conceptualization of affect and reactive emotions in social movements. Primary affect is associated with long-term or more permanent feelings (Jasper 1998). Reactive emotions are temporary responses to symbols, interactions, and events. Jasper argues that reactive emotions are reactions to external contexts, such as an event or release of new information, but are also based upon primary affect. This helps explain why participants experience different emotions when exposed to the same information. Yet, social context remains an important component in the development of emotions. Jasper (1998) emphasizes the importance of identifying the social setting in which emotions are formed and maintained. The following example illustrates the difference between primary affect and reactive emotion in a given setting. Gould’s (2009) study of the ACT UP movement in the 1980s focuses on the shifting character of emotions. She observed public funerals at which grieving activists became outraged, leading them to further activism. The meaning activists associated with their marginalized sexual identities can be said to represent a primary affect. The outrage she observed at these public events is an example of reactive emotion. Distinguishing between primary affect and reactive emotion is a useful
conceptual tool as it allows me to illustrate the differences between different types and functions of emotion.

While differentiating between primary affect and reactive emotions is an important distinction, this should not be seen as a return to a collective behavior approach. Social movement scholars emphasize the importance of avoiding the framing of emotion as an irrational response to external stimuli. In a key article, Ferree and Merrill (2004) criticized the turn away from emotion in social movements research. They note that cognition has been understood as unemotional thought or ideas that lead to action. Emotion, in contrast, has been treated as either irrational behavior or as inconsequential to movement development and sustenance. Ferree and Merrill argue that this focus on “cold” cognition over “hot” passionate processes in social movements is largely due to a gendered understanding of emotions, whereby the “cognitive” (coded masculine) is thought to be more important than the “emotional” (coded feminine). The outcome, they suggest, is an overly rationalized interpretation of social movements. Ferree and Merrill emphasize that this framing separates ideas and action from motivation, much to the detriment of our analyses. In addition, this dichotomy ignores the cognitive processes involved in the formation of emotion. Jasper (1998:421) argues, “Even the most fleeting emotions are firmly rooted in moral and cognitive beliefs that are relatively stable and predictable.” Understanding emotions as cognitive processes supports further exploration of the role of emotion in online activism. Rather than viewing social media “likes” and “comments” as irrational passionate responses to developments in the marriage equality movement, I explain these actions as rational behaviors that influence future activism.

Research on collective identity in movements exemplifies scholars’ preference for cognition over emotion. Collective identity is a process by which group identity and individual
identification with a group is constructed and maintained (Snow and McAdam 2000). Collective identity formation is linked to solidarity among members and, it has been argued, is achieved through the use of collective action frames (Benford and Snow 2000). Collective action frames are constructed meanings and beliefs that are used to unite movement members and inspire political participation (Benford and Snow 2000). This explanation links collective identity formation to a rational and strategic framing of meanings and beliefs. This framing is based around movement goals rather than participants’ emotions (Benford and Snow 2000).

However, Jasper (1998) notes the importance of recognizing emotion as part of building and developing collective identity in social movements. Involvement in a social movement allows participants to negotiate deviant emotions linked to their identity (Taylor 1995). “Protest becomes a way of saying something about oneself and one’s morals, and of finding joy and pride in them” (Jasper 1998:415). In addition, Jasper claims the positive emotions linked to collective identity may inspire political participation regardless of movement success or failures. This suggests that understanding the role of emotion in social movements requires an exploration of collective identity as well.

As mentioned earlier in the discussion of Haraway’s (1991) cyborg, technology is an embodied experience. This means that the collective identities participants form in offline activism are carried into the virtual sphere. Furthermore, activists may construct or develop collective identities while participating in online activism. By considering the vital role of emotion in collective identity formation, this study seeks to expand social movement scholarship. Studies of emotion in sociology have led scholars to research new sites of emotional experience and management. Using the concepts and theories discussed above, I will address the role of
emotion within the marriage equality movement. In the process, I hope to avoid the essentialist pitfalls previously described.

CONCLUSION

The role of emotion in social movements has been the subject of contention and debate. Prior to 1970, collective behavior scholars argued that irrational and spontaneous emotions drove individuals to protest as a result of social strain. Resource mobilization theory and political process theory developed in reaction to this tradition. From 1970 to the late 1990s, social movement scholars focused on structural causes for and organizational aspects of social movements (McAdams 1999). These studies were then criticized for erasing the role of emotion in social movements (Ferree and Merrill 2004). Since the 1990s, scholars have returned to examining the role of emotion in social movements. Scholars have sought to evaluate emotional deviance as a motivator for social action (Taylor 1995), explain how emotions such as anger can act as a force for mobilization (Gould 2004), and emphasize the importance of solidarity for social movement members (Summers-Effler 2005). This field of study has clearly advanced since Ferree and Merrill’s (2004) critique of the privileging of “hot” passionate processes over “cold” cognition.

The advent of social media and internet activism presents a new context for the study of emotion and social movements. Scholars such as Gerbaudo (2012) and Castells (2012) have evaluated modern movements and shown the capacity of emotion to help organize online participants. However, these studies have yet to compare the role of emotion in online and offline activism. According to Haraway (1991) technology has become an embodied part of individuals lives, so much so that to ignore the significance of technology is to deny subjectivity.
Accepting this cyborg model helps illustrate the importance of examining and comparing the role of emotion in both spaces of activism. In this thesis, I use theories of social movements, sociology of emotion and Haraway’s concept of the cyborg in order to understand the role of emotion among marriage equality participants.

I argue that understanding the role of emotion in this movement requires embracing a rational perspective of emotions, as well as evaluating the cultural context in which they form. How do participants’ experiences of emotion differ between online and offline activism? In Chapter Two, I define the emotions participants associate with each type of activism. I describe primary affect as shared between online and offline activism. Additionally, I show how participants’ experiences of emotion shape their perceptions about each form of activism. In Chapter Three, I explain how participants manage the unique emotions identified in Chapter Two. Finally, in Chapter Four, I conclude by framing my findings in the on-going discussions about emotion in social movement and theories related to internet activism.
CHAPTER 2

EXPERIENCE OF EMOTION IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE ACTIVISM

On October 23, 2014, more than 100 people gathered outside of the Atlanta City Hall building to demand Sam Olens, the Attorney General of Georgia, drop his defense of the ban on same-sex marriage. As Jeff Graham, Executive Director of Georgia Equality, took the stand the crowd of protestors along the sidewalk cheered with excitement and enthusiastically waved signs in the air. During his speech Jeff Graham acknowledged other Southern states and attorney generals that have dropped their defenses of bans on same-sex marriage, he proclaimed “Georgia cannot afford to be the last state to legalize same-sex marriage.” Upon hearing these words members of the crowd clapped loudly and shouted cheers. A short woman to the left of me stood passionately waving a large rainbow flag with a small peace symbol in the middle. She sprang into action at his words and shouted enthusiastically along with the rest of the cheering crowd.²

Three months before this event, Georgia Equality posted an action alert to their Facebook account encouraging people to sign an online petition. The post read, “Sign the petition to Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens. Share and encourage others to do the same!” The post included a link to the organizational website where members could add their names to the petition. Three days after this post, 3,080 petitions were delivered by Georgia Equality to Sam Olens office. A photo of these petitions was posted online. This photo received 150 likes, 19 shares and 4 comments.

These protest actions have a few thing in common: both involved protesting the actions of Attorney General Sam Olens, both involved members of the marriage equality movement in Georgia, and both were organized by Georgia Equality. It could be argued that the defining difference between them is that one represents offline activism, while the other can be defined as online activism. How do these experiences differ from one another? Did online participants experience the same emotion as those engaged in offline activism? The role of emotions is key

² Rally for Marriage in Atlanta, Georgia. Fieldnotes: October 23, 2014.
as this research seeks to explain how marriage equality activists’ experiences of online activism relate to experiences of offline activism.

In an effort to understand the use of social media and technology in social movements, scholars have focused on defining online activism according to: typology (Earl et al 2010), cost of participation (Anduiza et al. 2009), or by establishing scale related change (Tarrow 1998). However, these studies have distinguished between online and offline activism by observing and identifying specific methods of participation, for example distinguishing between online petitions versus an offline petitions. As such, these studies have focused on political structures and ignored cultural context related to online activism. However, structure and culture are not mutually exclusive terms. Polletta (2004) argues that social movement scholars should examine the cultural dimensions in political structures. She demonstrates the benefits of this approach by illustrating how ideological innovation, such as bisexual and transgender individuals’ strategic use of rights narratives to gain recognition, cannot be separated from culturally significant meanings (Polletta 2004). Furthermore, Polletta (2004) notes that social movement scholars should focus on the conditions under which structure and culture emerge, rather than continually reifying the distinction between structure and culture. Therefore, in order to understand marriage equality activists’ experience of emotion, it is necessary to first explore the context in which these emotions develop.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I briefly discuss the emotions shared between online and offline activism. Second, I address emotions linked to offline activism. Third, I examine emotions developed during online activism. By identifying the distinctive emotions associated with online and offline activism, this study explains how contexts contributes to participants experiences of emotion. This chapter focuses on understanding how
participants’ experiences of emotion are shaped by the context in which activism occurs, specifically examining the influence of culture and structure in both types of activism. The empirical contribution of this chapter is expanding the current literature on internet activism to explain the influence of culture on participants’ experiences of emotion in the digital sphere. Furthermore, this research seeks to show how understanding online activism is important to comprehending the role of emotions in social movements.

**SHAREDM EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES**

Jasper (1998) distinguishes temporary reactive emotions inspired by context and events, from primary affect. As noted in Chapter One, Jasper (1998) defines *primary affect* as a set of permanent emotions, or underlying affects, associated with loyalty and identity. In my interviews, participants discussed positive and negative primary affect in relation to their activism within the marriage equality movement. These findings align with previous studies that examine how emotions inspire political participation. For example, Taylor (1995) suggests that participants within feminist movements activated “deviant” emotions linked to motherhood in order to inspire activism. This is similar to narratives of marriage equality activists, who attribute their participation to emotions related to their sexuality. The following section illustrates the negative and positive primary affects associated with online and offline activism. I show that these primary affects are linked to participants’ identity and serve as motivation for involvement within the marriage equality movement.

Members of the marriage equality movement experience a range of positive and negative emotions associated with their participation. Most of the marriage equality participants I interviewed associated positive emotions with their activism. Within online and offline activism
members reported feelings of “joy,” “pride,” “satisfaction,” “excitement,” “hope,” “passion,” “happiness,” and “inspiration.” Mac, a student and intern at a large LGBT advocacy organization, described the experience of participating in the marriage equality movement as follows:

It’s amazing. I didn’t really think I would like this work this much. I mean I definitely have my moments of like ... where you’re a little bit down especially when you get some bad news about a specific case like with this transwoman recently [a transwoman in the community was attacked on a bus]. But I think overall, it makes me feel empowered. It makes me feel like I’m really making a difference. It makes me have a stronger sense of community. It makes me...it makes me look through my own biases and my own privileges and look at the other people in our community that have different struggles. And like, I may not be able to understand personally but I can at least be respectful of those struggles and their stories and lived experiences. While they may be different than mine, they can still help me grow. And vice versa, I hope I can help them grow.3

Mac’s sense of personal growth, empowerment, and sense of community are not tied to a specific form of activism. These feelings are linked to the overall experience of involvement within the marriage equality movement. Moreover, this statement illustrates an underlying affect that serves to inspire loyalty and build identity. Mac defines himself as an activist based on this primary affect, rather than defining himself based on his method of participation. Other participants gave similar descriptions of their experiences within the movement, linking their activism to their emotional state rather than online or offline participation.

Primary affect, both positive and negative, serve as motivation for activism. Participants described a need to be “on the right side of history.” When asked about his motivation for participating in this movement, Pete replied, “It makes me feel like…it’s cliché at this point, but like I’m on the right side of history. It makes me feel like I'm doing the right thing.” This desire to be on the “right side of history” persisted among most of the participants in this study, even

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3 Interviewed on July 3, 2014 in Georgia.
those whose personal goals did not align with those of the movement. Jasper (1998) argues that “there would be no social movements if we did not have emotional responses to developments near and far.”

Participants’ emotional responses to bans on same-sex marriage inspired both online and offline activism. In April 2014, a Facebook site from a statewide marriage equality advocacy organization, posted a picture of two of the plaintiffs from the Lambda Legal lawsuit with the statement, “Let’s hear it for (Plaintiff 1) and (Plaintiff 2)!" This post received 373 likes and 80 shares, as well as comments such as:

User1: Would love to see the State accept our marriage. We were married in (excluded for anonymity). My husband lost his job in a mass upper mgmt liquidation of experienced mgmt with years of service. Which is another story. So for the first time in 40 years he is unemployed…The company I work for refuses to allow me to add my spouse to my insurance because the state of GA doesn't recognize our marriage so they don't have to either. It's time for Change!

User2: Lets do this!!!!

User 3: More People Need to Stand Up in Ga.!!!!

User 4: It is time for change!

User 5: (User 1) is right! It is time for change! I am not LGBTQ but with all of you 100% who want CHANGE! I am a grief counselor & I have seen too many LGBTQ widows & widowers go through pain that could be prevented with a legal document of marriage recognized in GA. This IS NEEDED!4

These likes, shares, and comments reflect emotional responses to news from the Lambda Legal lawsuit. These participants’ responded to this event online, but those responses are clearly linked to lived experiences of discrimination and frustration. The Facebook post may have enabled these activists to post and worked to generate certain emotional responses to this specific post.

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4 Content Analysis: April 2014
However, participants’ narratives reflect underlying positive and negative affect that contributed to their engagement in this instance of online activism.

While almost all of the participants I interviewed associated positive emotions with their activism, many also reported negative emotions associated with their involvement. Feelings of fear, despair, and anger, occurred during both online and offline activism. These negative emotions motivated members of the marriage equality movement to act. For example, Hope associated her activism with positive and negative emotions:

In my activism work I feel very purposeful. I think the disheartening experiences, the experiences with discrimination, the experience that create anger those are the motivation. Sadness and heartbreak those are the driving forces of doing this work for me…These moments when you realize there is injustice…in general is heartbreaking. To do this work is mending some of that. I don’t feel like I could say it’s something that makes me happy. I think it’s really hard work…I think it can be very stressful.5

Hope associated feelings of sadness and heartbreak with discrimination, citing these feelings as motivation for her activism. Hope’s statement shows the importance of recognizing negative primary affect as a motivating factor for activism and as part of the embodied experience of participation.6 These feelings of anger, sadness, and heartbreak persisted beyond one instance of online or offline activism, they became embodied within the participant. Hope acknowledges this citing her activism as “hard work” and “stressful.” Other participants shared these emotions. They acknowledged a personal cost associated with activism, yet this served as motivation for further activism. Hope’s identity as an activist and loyalty to the movement were shaped by this negative primary affect, as much as by positive primary affect.

5 Interviewed on October 22, 2014 in Georgia.
6 The embodiment of emotion in online and offline activism will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.
In this section, I argue primary affect is shared between online and offline activism. I show that primary affect links participants to activist identities and works to establish loyalty within the movement. Participants within the marriage equality movement described their activism in relation to emotions, rather than specific types of activism. No one I interviewed described himself, herself, or themselves as an “internet activist,” yet media and social movement scholars have often used this term to describe individuals engaged in online activism. As Haraway (1991) suggests, using rigid categories separates mechanical life from organic life, thereby denying subjectivity and causing blind spots in our analyses. The influence of primary affect in online and offline activism shows the importance of evaluating both types of activism in tandem. By identifying emotions shared between online and offline activism, I acknowledge the full subjectivity of participants and gain deeper understanding of the role of emotion in social movements.

In the next section, I examine participants’ experiences of emotion in offline activism. I identify the unique emotions participants associate with this form of activism. Furthermore, I will show that the context in which these emotions occur influences how participants perceive and evaluate their experiences of activism. This should not suggest that emotions experienced in offline activism are confined to this space. Rather, specific emotions are cultivated in offline sites. These emotions then work to shape activists’ perceptions of offline activism, even influencing future participation.

**EMOTIONS IN OFFLINE ACTIVISM**

Despite shared emotions associated with primary affect, participants within the marriage equality movement distinguish between their offline and online activism. Most of the participants I
interviewed expressed a preference for offline activism, compared to online activism. I suggest that this preference for offline activism among participants is due in part to the positive emotions associated with this form of political participation. In this section, I describe how emotion and collective identity enter into participants’ explanations of offline activism. I argue that offline participation yields strong reactive emotions, allows for the formation of collective identity amongst participants and is often associated with a sense of authenticity and recognition. Furthermore, I suggest that these unique features amplify participants’ experiences of positive emotion while participating in offline activism. Together these illustrate participants’ experiences of emotion in offline activism.

Reactive Emotions

Participants’ descriptions of activism, online and offline, are largely based on what Jasper (1998: 405) calls reactive emotions. Jasper (1998:405) argued, “In all stages [of protest activities], there are both preexisting affects and short term emotional responses to events, discoveries, and decisions.” He identifies these “short term emotional responses” as reactive emotions. As described in Chapter One, reactive emotions form at the site of participation. As a result these emotions are easily shaped by environment and context (Jasper 1998). Thus, marriage equality activists’ acknowledgement of unique emotions associated with offline activism make sense, not just because the protest action itself is distinct, but because the environment in which the protest action occurs plays a role in the formation of reactive emotions.

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7 Preexisting affects amongst the members of this study will be discussed in the following chapter.
Some of the people I interviewed associated certain offline protest actions with specific reactive emotions. For instance, several described fundraisers and gala dinners as “boring,” whereas the reactive emotion “pride,” was associated with nearly all protest actions. Hope, an activist and member of several LGBT rights groups, described reactive emotions she experienced in offline activism as such:

It can certainly be thrilling. Specific to things like marches it can feel very empowering. An [LGBT rights group] convening can be very rejuvenating. You just need that moment to reconnect, re-energize when you’ve been drained by the movement and the work. And then there are moments, so if there is an end goal of marriage equality somewhere...like in that film that we saw the New Black and they achieve it- that is just tremendous joy! It can be really heartwarming and hopeful when you see that...When you see things like that happening, but also happening on a smaller scale. We’ve been able to have two drag shows here at the local bar. And the first show we had for that venue it was their second highest grossing night...It was packed out like I’ve never seen it before. That in my mind is definitely a victory! Clearly there is a community here that needs somewhere and someplace. There’s also a community that wants to support LGBT people, they also need outlets. When you can have a simple event like that- that's also a very joyful experience.⁸

Throughout her account, and within similar narratives, is an implicit connection between offline protest action and positive reactive emotions. During interviews participants suggested that positive reactive emotions such as “accomplishment,” “excitement,” “happiness,” “pride,” and “community” occurred as a result of offline political participation.⁹ Pride events, marches, and other protest actions related to marriage equality (or the larger LGBT rights movement) often resemble parties as much as political actions. Participants describe these events as if they were a holiday celebration, waiting all year for those few weeks in October when they can celebrate

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⁸ Interviewed on 22 October, 2014 in Georgia.
⁹ Participants also acknowledged negative reactive emotions associated with some offline protest events, these will be discussed more in Chapter 4.
Activists enter these environments and respond to the excitement and fanfare with positive reactive emotions. For example, at the 2014 Pride Festival in Atlanta, a crowd flocked down a large hill towards the main stage, where a local band was performing. This movement of a small group of parade watchers would soon spark a rise in reactive emotions throughout the entire front of the park. The official Pride parade had just ended, people started to pack up and walk towards the stage. However, as more parade goers approached the top of the hill, the noise of the crowd grew. Suddenly people were cheering and waving flags as they ran towards the distant sound of bass coming from the big stage area. Soon Pride attendees moved across the small field towards the main stage. People jumped and shouted. The crowd was now louder than it had been during the official pride parade. This small moment from Atlanta Pride reveals how quickly reactive emotions can build and spread during offline activism, especially at an event like Pride. These positive reactive emotions, in addition to collective action and feelings of authenticity help explain participants’ preference for offline political participation.

In addition to positive reactive emotions, several individuals within this study described their experiences during offline activism as “life changing” or “one of the best moments” in their lives. For example, in 2009, Adam, a professor of history and member of the marriage equality movement for over ten years, attended the National Equality March in Washington, D.C. with his husband. Sitting across from me in his office, he smiled and excitedly recounted his experience at this event:

That 2009 march was probably one of the greatest experiences that I’ve ever done! There was such an energy that day! It was…I mean everybody was happy to be there. We knew some of the circumstances were sad and tough, but we were all

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10 Atlanta Pride held in Atlanta, GA. Fieldnotes: October 15, 2014. Note: Festivals in other states take place in June to commemorate the Stonewall protest. Atlanta and other cities in Georgia hold their Pride festivals in October.

11 Atlanta Pride held in Atlanta, GA. Fieldnotes: October 15, 2014
there. We were all standing up for something really important and that march was mixed (reference to the diversity of LGBT people in attendance). Actually there was a great moment at that march, everyone’s queuing up to start walking, we’re all in the main square in D.C. We’re all standing there and we’re just waiting, and you know there (are) thousands of people in the square and it’s kind of a cloudy day forecast. All of the sudden the clouds part and a rainbow is right there! Directly over the entire crowd! So everybody just stops and starts screaming at that point and about 15 minutes later is when the march starts. So it's really just seeing, whether your religious or not, I think a lot of people who were there probably had some religious-spirituality thought of that as a sign. It has always kind of been a big thing that on that day a rainbow showed up right before the march started! And then we went and started marching. So we knew! You kind of felt like you were in the right. Some sort of greater connection to doing something that was good. But yeah that was just an incredibly neat experience!  

Others in the movement shared similar stories of offline activism and the emotions they inspired.

These offline reactive emotions were unique in that while the experiences were based on temporary emotional responses, participants identify these moments when recalling their experiences at Pride years later. During my interview with Adam, I asked what accomplishment he is most proud of, he said:

You know I was really happy we went to that march! However thousand many people there, I was glad it was the two of us [Adam and his husband]. You know we just made two more extra people there. Granted doing polling work is probably more important. But I’m glad we were there. I’m glad I got to experience that! That was really a great great moment! I don’t know if that was the watershed or the turning point, but at least for me that’s when it felt like everything started to change 2009 Columbus Day. But I can also say, and if I don’t say this my husband will kill me, getting married too.  

Adam identifies the experience at this march and his marriage as two of his greatest accomplishments within the movement. Throughout this story, and others, recollections of strong reactive emotions are linked to specific times, places, and events. Even more, the atmosphere at these offline protest actions was so influential that the reactive emotions they inspired are in

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12 Interviewed on October 22, 2014 in Georgia.
13 Interviewed on October 22, 2014 in Georgia.
many cases now part of ongoing narratives. Adam explained his participation at the 2009 National Equality March as a “watershed” moment or “turning point,” yet this change was not inspired by movement goals or any particular success. Marriage equality was not achieved on Columbus Day 2009. So why is this event so special to him? I suggest that the attachment Adam, and other participants, feels towards events and offline activism is associated with the presence of positive reactive emotions. This, added to preexistent primary affect among participants, and resulted in “life changing” memories at offline events.

These stories emerged in interviews when participants described their preference for offline activism. Participants’ explanations for this preference were based on positive reactive emotions at events, rather than goal achievement or success. While they did not associate such “life changing” moments with further political participation, this does not imply that they ceased to attend offline events. In fact, most participants continued their involvement in online and offline participation; even so, they did not cite such events as inspiration for future participation. However, these activists did note that these moments made them feel like part of the movement’s history. Participation in such events served to connect activists to the movement and helped build collective identity. Therefore, while participants did not directly associate future activism with previous participation at offline events, the formation of collective identity may have contributed to their future activism.

In this section, I have shown the strength and prominence of reactive emotions developed during offline activism. Furthermore, I suggest that the bulk of reactive emotions experienced during offline political participation are considered positive. In the following section, I show that offline activism allows for the development of collective identity amongst participants. Collective identity then works to boost reactive emotions, aiding in the development of strong
reactive emotions, and ultimately contributing to participants’ preference for offline activism and investment in the marriage equality movement.

**Collective Identity**

Researchers have long recognized social movements’ ability to produce and develop collective identity among movement participants (Melucci 1989). McAdam (2004) notes the power of collective identity to serve as a motivating force in social movements. He argues that rational actor model serves to explain how organizations and elites use collective action frames in order to inspire political participation. This rationalist interpretation serves to reify the dichotomization of cognition as rational and emotion as irrational (Ferree and Merrill 2004). In order to understand collective identity as a motivating force in social movements it is necessary to examine the emotional and cognitive processes involved in identity formation.

Jasper (1998) identified collective identity as more than a “cognitive boundary,” suggesting that it has an emotional component as well. Jasper (1998:415) notes, “Defining oneself through the help of a collective label entails an affective as well as cognitive mapping of the social world.” Despite some internal tension between marriage equality supporters and the overall LGBT rights movement (Bruce 2013), participants in this study maintain a strong sense of collective identity. Collective identity works to cultivate positive emotions among group members; these emotions can make the experience of activism enjoyable regardless of the outcome of specific protest actions (Jasper 1998). In this section, I suggest offline activism built and nourished collective identities.

As mentioned in the previous section, marriage equality participants develop identities during online and offline activism through primary affect; however, their sense of solidarity is
heightened during offline political participation. Most of the marriage equality participants I interviewed associated their offline participation with positive emotions. The participants’ narratives often revealed that the physical presence of other activists helped to amplify the reactive emotions they experienced during events. For example, Hope describes the importance of interacting with other activists:

Another main reason I do this inspiring movement, or why I do this work…My mother moved to Georgia and there was a PFLAG there. People would drive two to three hours to come to those monthly meetings because there were no outlets. There was this cute couple that would come, Ryan and Steven. They lived in a super small town. They also were at the march in Washington in 2008. Steven was probably in his 70s at that time and carried a sign that said, “Marriage Equality in My Lifetime- Better Hurry.” Unfortunately he passed a couple years ago, so…Encountering the people who are willing to put their lives on the line not for themselves, but for people around them has been a really beautiful experience…Going to those spaces, LGBT conferences and Pride events, it’s interesting. It’s a completely affirming space and everybody…I’ve found in queer communities that means affirming everybody who goes. You know somehow, it’s such a unique experience and it’s weird that- that is a unique experience. That we all just can’t be accepted and affirmed wherever we go. Finding those spaces and having that free interaction with people. Yeah some of the best times in my life have been in those spaces!14

Hope’s narrative illustrates the importance of community in her experience of offline activism. She references other activists as inspiring and associates events with affirmation and acceptance. Furthermore, she describes how emotions spread throughout the group.

My observations at Pride events aligned with Hope’s account. Attendees of the festival flocked toward the park in large numbers. Some displayed signs that read, “God loves everyone,” “I support my daughter and her partner” and “I have been blessed with two gay children.” Other signs displayed equal signs and Trans Pride messages. About 100 marchers participated in the Trans march. As they marched, one individual with a mega phone started

14 Interviewed on October 22, 2014 in Georgia.
Transphobia has got to go!” Other messages included, “Trans rights! Human rights!” and “Trans!Pride!” I saw a few people watching the marchers from the sidewalk, some joined in the march as the procession continued down the road. Friends already engaged in the march called upon others to join the group. As the march passed, people on the street would wave flags, shout “Happy Pride!” and cheer. March participants carried drums and flags, some danced to music being played over handheld radios or cellphones. As they marched along the route, many people introduced themselves to one another and began to talk about the upcoming Pride festivities. Energy and excitement swept through the crowd building as the group walked downtown. At the end of the march, everyone began to shout and hug one another slowly exiting the street until only a few participants were left standing on the side of the road.\footnote{Trans March at Atlanta Pride, Atlanta Georgia. Fieldnotes: October 10, 2015}

This description of offline activism illustrates the powerful emotions associated with collective identity. As Jasper (1998) suggests, emotions formed as part of collective identity are linked to other participants, as much as they are linked to the protest action itself. The “Trans March” is an example of emotions associated with collective identity. The celebration at the end of the march represents excitement and satisfaction over the completion of the task. This celebration was also a display of solidarity. Collective identity is an emotional process, the hugs and high fives between participants are shared external representations of internal emotions. Participants credit this physical co-presence with formation and enhancement of collective identity.

Similar to narratives about reactive emotions, participants claim emotions associated with collective identity are greater during offline participation than online. I argue that this sense of
collective identity contributes to the preference for offline activism amongst participants. The following interview excerpts demonstrate participants’ association of offline activism with collective identity. When asked if she had a preference between online activism and offline events, Hope replied “Certainly the events. It’s nice to have that network where you can pick up a phone and call, or email somebody, but getting together with people will always be preferred!”

In the following conversation, Jay makes a similar claim:

A: Do you feel the emotions you describe (earlier) differ when you’re at events, compared to participating online?

Jay: Yes I would say that. When I am with other people, as anyone would I think, the emotional contagion that happens is much easier to happen in person, than online. I think being with a group of people who are excited or upset, you definitely pick that up and everyone kind of feeds off each other. So I think that definitely happens…Yeah the classic cheer of, what do we want? Equal Rights! When do we want it? Now! People cheering, I mean it’s a classic church leader style and there’s a response. That happens in protest. People speak with one voice for what they want! And know what to say! There’s a feeling of solidarity as part of that, solidarity as well as community. You feel like you’re part of a group. And your interest align with their interest. And you’re all there together. And yeah I do think that is lacking on online stuff…But when you are with a big group of people then you are suddenly aware of the group effect and the group identity is much more apparent to you.¹⁶

Jay specifically references collective identity as a key component of his emotional experience during offline activism. Furthermore, he asserts that while online interactions may be helpful in facilitating networks, these virtual encounters do not produce a feeling of solidarity. Other participants report similar emotions when describing online interactions related to activism. Their stories indicate that collective identity as generated through face-to-face interactions with others often involves positive experiences of emotion and feelings of solidarity, leading to a preference for offline activism.

¹⁶ Interviewed on September 26, 2014 in Georgia.
Acknowledgement and Recognition

The sections above show that participants associate offline activism with feelings of accomplishment, as well as a greater sense of collective identity. These factors influence how participants perceive their personal identity and willingness to invest time and energy in activism. Marriage equality supporters involved in this study recognized their offline activism as “accomplishments” and “satisfying,” many claiming that offline activism feels “more real” than online activism. This does not discredit the importance of online activism; rather such statements emphasize the participants’ preference for offline activism.

In the following conversation, Ted compares his experiences with offline activism to his experiences with online activism:

A: Do you have a preference, personally which do you enjoy more events or online?

Ted: I think I get more, and this is gonna sound bad, but I get more out of events. Yeah! I feel like I’m doing something when I help at an event. Or when I’m in this play. Or when I donate money. Like I feel more.

A: Do you enjoy online activism as well?

Ted: When I experience it yes. But when I logically work through it like right now, I prefer the events… I think that's what it is, recognition for activism. Getting a little gold star as opposed to just quietly doing it as part of your life.17

Ted associates offline political participation with recognition and acknowledgment. He notes that he “feel(s) more” at events and links this to “recognition for activism.” The chance to be seen while engaged in activism gives him “a little gold star.” Many of the other activists I interviewed similarly described feelings of satisfaction and recognition associated with offline activism. For example, Mac, described the benefits he associates with offline activism as follows:

17 Interviewed on September 9, 2014 in Georgia.
A big portion of it for me is just the growth that it’s allowed me to have. But, there is always that overwhelming feeling of accomplishment when you’ve had a successful event that helped raise more money than it’s ever raised before, so that’s a perk. Cause that’s what we did at [a recent fundraiser], so that was nice...But more than that would be the growth that I’ve had, the ability to meet other members of my community and see the beauty that they have. Learn from them. You can’t trade that for anything really…that’s um, that’s been very endearing!18

Mac identified an “overwhelming feeling of accomplishment” as one of the benefits of engaging in activism. These feelings of accomplishment and recognition are reactive emotions experienced in offline participation. So while primary affect may motivate participants to become involved in social movements, recognition and accomplishment are rewards offered to participants for their continued involvement. Participants’ narratives link these feelings of success and recognition to offline activism. Mac and Ted indicate that the physical presence of other activists at these events added to their personal sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Offline events facilitated these feelings through such measures as MCs telling the crowd to give themselves a round of applause for supporting Pride.19 In addition, LGBT advocacy groups publically appointed movement members to specific positions in the movement (committee chair, vice president, etc.).20 These actions serve as recognition for political participation and help to generate a sense of accomplishment among offline activists.

In sum, participants within the marriage equality movement associated offline activism with strong and positive reactive emotions, the enhancement of collective identity, and a sense of recognition. These features resulted in a preference among activists for offline participation. This preference persisted despite the fact that most participants engaged in far more online activism.

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18 Interviewed on July 3, 2014 in Georgia.
19 Augusta Pride in Augusta, Georgia. Fieldnotes: June 28, 2014.
20 First Annual Meeting for local LGBT advocacy organization in Athens, GA. Fieldnotes: September 11, 2014.
have suggested that this preference for offline activism extends beyond movement outcomes or potential success; this preference is associated with perceived emotional benefits.

I discussed in the previous section how primary affect served as a motivation for participants to engage in collective action. I argued the emotions related to primary affect persisted despite method of political participation. In this section, I have shown that participants nonetheless preferred offline activism, because of the positive and strong emotions it generated. They described these events as inspiring, life changing, and authentic. Participants associated offline activism with feelings of solidarity and community. Feelings of acknowledgement and recognition also contributed to participants’ preference for offline events. However, this preference was not associated with future political participation. Participants who did not continually engage in further offline activism, still expressed a strong desire to become more involved or lamented the fact they did not have more time to engage in this type of activism. This explanation for the role of emotion in social movements extends beyond previous research that viewed emotion as a catalyst for activism (Castells 2012; Gerbaudo 2012). I argue that emotion and action are mutually reinforcing. Participants’ experiences of emotion were essential in forming their preferences for offline activism. Similarly, participation in offline activism led to the development of specific emotions in this context. In the next section, I will continue to support this argument by examining participants’ experiences of emotion in online activism.

EMOTIONS IN ONLINE ACTIVISM

In this section, I identify specific emotions associated with online activism. I show that the internet provides a space for the formation and development of reactive emotions. I argue that the digital sphere of the marriage equality movement allowed for the formation of extended
networks among participants and served to reaffirm activists’ collective identity. Furthermore, I show that guilt and isolation were uniquely associated with online activism.

*Reactive Emotions*

In order to understand the role of emotion during online activism within the marriage equality movement, it is necessary to first identify emotions directly associated with this form of activism. As mentioned earlier, Jasper (1998:405) identifies reactive emotions as “short term emotional responses to events, discoveries, and decisions.” Once again, the environment in which these emotions form is critical to understanding their development. The internet is a unique landscape in which participants will develop reactive emotions, both privately and publicly at the same time. How does this hybrid-virtual landscape influence the development of emotions amongst participants?

Unlike the reactive emotions associated with offline activism, participants’ reactive emotions during online activism were highly varied, representing both positive and negative emotions. This variance of reactive emotion occurs, not only among participants, but within participants as well. In my interviews, participants would often describe negative reactive emotions associated with online activism, but offer counter-examples a few moments later. For instance, Adam, who has been involved in online and offline activism for the last decade, offers the following description of his online activism:

I’d say you feel a little differently because you don’t get that interpersonal connection. You can’t see people’s faces as easily, you can’t read their emotions, and then they also don’t know your there too. They may see that there’s a number there, or a person there but they don’t know me. They don’t know I’m necessarily involved. I think that’s the kind of disappointing thing. I kind of want to be in the middle of it, but I know sometimes I can’t. And so the fact you have to do stuff online means you’re not as in the middle of it, as you’d like to be…online is easier, it’s definitely easier! But at the same time you don’t know if the message
is getting out as well as you want to. And just getting it to these people I know...Is it just reverberating around to the people who agree with me? So that’s the point where I worry about doing things online. Like is the message, is my voice getting out there as much? There’s a few things I did do, like email legislator kind of thing, basically back when that kind of connected but not connected to marriage equality- back when that religious consciousness bill that they tried to pass through GA. I made sure I emailed legislators and I got a couple responses back from that. So that was kind of good. So I felt like I accomplished something there, but usually I don’t know if I’m accomplishing anything online. It’s always the part that worries me when I’m doing this, I want to feel accomplished. And personal participation usually you feel like you’re doing a little bit more. Or at the very least you feel like your there supporting the people doing work.  

Comparing this statement to his earlier description of positive reactive emotions during the 2009 National Equality March in Washington D.C., illustrates the uncertainty Adam feels in relation to his online activism. When describing his participation in the National Equality March, Adam noted that he felt “greater connection” and knew he was “in the right.” His description of online activism stands in stark contrast to his account of offline activism noting, “you don’t get that interpersonal connection” and “I don’t know if I’m accomplishing anything online.”

Based on this description of online activism, one would assume Adam experiences negative reactive emotions in online activism or perhaps apathy at best. However, this assumption is challenged by Adam’s description of his reaction to news about the success of marriage equality in Maine:

I did get a little emotional about…like legitimately emotional about when Maine got marriage equality. I had a mentor who lived in Maine. He was an older man and died several years ago. And when Maine got equality it made me think of him. I know he would have been happy that this is happened. Probably looking down somewhere this is his home state. I wrote a long post after that. I didn’t name names and stuff like that, but I was just sitting there and reflecting on my good friend from Maine who’s no longer with us. I know he’s really proud of this moment kind of thing. I immediately, I actually have a couple of feeds open most days waiting for this stuff to happen and usually I flip on and post out here’s another one, here’s another one. Actually the last two weeks in some respects I’m less emotional because it just keeps happening so much and I feel like I’m

21 Interviewed on October 22, 2014 in Georgia.
clicking too often on things. People are probably sick of this because it’s literally like two to three things a day… It's like this is great!22

Adam’s statement exhibits strong positive reactive emotions following a major announcement within the marriage equality movement. He followed this reactive emotion by engaging in further online activism. Many of the other activists I interviewed told similar stories of emotional reactions to news on social media that prompted further online activism. However Adam’s story of motivation and reactive emotion, almost immediately followed his earlier statement about feeling a lack of accomplishment during his online participation.

I argue that this variance in reactive emotion in online activism may be associated with participants’ primary affect. Adam’s reaction to marriage equality in Maine was facilitated through social media; however, the reactive emotions he experienced were linked to his mentor. That relationship was tied to underlying affect activated by the news on Facebook. This should not imply that primary affect does not influence offline reactive emotions. Rather, the celebratory and positive atmosphere of offline activism invoked positive primary affect among participants such as pride. Participants engaged in online activism encountered a wider variety of information and interactions related to marriage equality. This provided more opportunities for positive and negative experiences of emotion.23 Despite this variance in reactive emotions, participants’ experiences of emotion in online activism reveal unique characteristics associated with this type of activism.

22 Interviewed on October 22, 2014 in Georgia.
23 The discussion of feeling rules and emotional management in Chapter 3 supports this argument.
Extended Network and Abeyance

Another feature of emotion within online activism is the prominence of an extended network of activists. By engaging with this network, marriage equality participants developed a level of collective identity during online and offline activism. One feature of collective identity within online activism is the extensive network provided by the World Wide Web. Even when activists cannot be physically connected to the movement, this resource allowed them to maintain a link to the LGBT community at-large. Mac acknowledges the presence of this extended online network in his description of the benefits associated with online activism:

I really like the online activism, because I feel like it connects you to people you might not necessarily see at events. Especially if were talking like the high dollar fundraisers. Those people don’t really realize that’s only a select small group of our community. And there are such significant numbers of LGBT individuals that live pretty much hand to mouth. Week to week. Paycheck to paycheck. Their struggling for resources, so I feel like you don’t always hear your entire community at events. Like a yearly gala…I enjoy the online version of it because it connects you to people who, like I said, probably don't go to the yearly galas that are $100-$200 a ticket. It also helps to expand your voice and your communications to people outside your region. I know I started following a lot more people nationally, that I’ve never even met in real life. Who work for other LGBT organizations and are doing great things for those organizations. I think each one has its own set of perks.24

Mac’s interactions with other activists, through the internet, allowed him to form connections with individuals outside his regional network. Furthermore, he identified this extended network as more representative of the diversity within the movement. In order to understand the function of this extended network in online activism, we must also evaluate how this network influenced participants’ experiences of emotion.

Interviews illustrated the importance of this extended network for maintaining ties during periods of abeyance. Taylor (1989) described “abeyance structures” within social movements,

24 Interviewed on July 3, 2014.
this structure represents periods of mass support and decline within a movement. Jasper (1998) suggests that these periods of abeyance are associated with periods of emotional growth and decline. The narratives of marriage equality activists support Jasper’s finding of emotional growth and decline. Furthermore, participants describe online activism as a way to maintain identity and an emotional connection with the movement during these transition periods.

While Taylor’s (1989) description of abeyance centers upon growth and decline over the life course of a social movement, marriage equality activists describe the same process in accounts of their personal activism. Online activism and this extended network help participants maintain activist identity and emotional commitment to the movement during periods of decline. In the following statement, Jay describes the different levels of involvement within the marriage equality movement:

If you think of it like a pyramid at the top, there’s the part of the pyramid, you got the more involved and engaged they are. So at the top there’s those leaders and uber activist who are very much engaged and involved in the campaign. Then, there’s more the participant level and folks who may occasionally go to a meeting or go to an event or something of the equivalent. And then, there’s the spectators who aren’t really involved with any organization specifically but they kind of keep an eye on things, Facebook stuff like that. And then, there are those people who are completely off the radar who don’t give it any thought or mind. And I think there just needs to be more spectators and participants. I think that kind of rest a bit on the activist and leaders not just to recruit people to also be activist, but to recruit people to at the very least sign-up for our list-serve. Keep up with the news. Go vote. If you vote, try to vote for someone who’s going to be applauding or supporting this issue but go vote. And find various ways to engage more people into the conversation or show them how to have that conversation with other people in their lives. So...I think the grassroots element of it, it doesn't feel like it's there much. And I think partly cause individual people don't really feel much of a role. And again, that doesn't necessarily have to be going to a protest or something like that it can be something as simple as retweeting or something on Facebook.25

25 Interviewed on September 26, 2014 in Georgia.
In this statement, he links participants who have moved to “spectator” or “supporter” roles to online activism. Other activists’ accounts of periods of decline in their activism follow the same structure Jay describes. These activists used online participation to maintain connection with the movement, events, news and people. They were able to maintain a level of emotional commitment and involvement, even when they were not engaging in offline activism. Simple replies to Facebook events demonstrate this effort to maintain connection and involvement in the movement. The following statement was posted to Facebook by a statewide LGBT organization; it served as an update to online users about recent and future activities:

“Had a busy weekend with #Columbus event and #GSASummit14 and we're keeping that momentum going this week! Our #LGBT Lobby day is tomorrow partnering with ACLU of Georgia to talk to legislators about issues most important to transgender and gay community. This is your chance to talk directly to decision makers and push support for workplace protections, healthcare access, and many other issues. We will provide training and we'll work as a team so don't be shy! Come on down and help us push for the change we want to see in our home state!”

Participants responded to this post with statements such as:

User 1: all my Blessings to you
User 2: Sending you good vibes from Southeast Georgia.
User 3: Thank you! Keep up the good work.
User 4: Wish I could be there!!

This simple exchange represents the type of “supporter” involvement Jay described in his interview. By commenting on this post, participants were able to interact with the movement outside of the event. Moreover, there comments reflect a level of engagement with the community and movement as a whole. They offer “blessings” and “good vibes.” These participants’ experience an emotional reaction to this post. While perhaps not as dramatic as emotional experiences at offline events, these experiences’ of emotion are real. As such, they must be acknowledge as part of the embodied experience of activism.
Despite the level of connection and supporter roles offered through online activism, participants also describe negative emotions associated with their online participation. Specifically, participants described feelings of guilt and isolation associated with online activism. These emotions serve as a counter-example to the feelings of acknowledgment and recognition associated with offline participation.

**Guilt and Isolation**

In contrast to the internet as a site for participants to maintain connection, online activism seemed to facilitate guilt and isolation among many participants in this study. The lack of personal recognition associated with this type of participation and the variance of reactive emotions culminated into negative emotions of guilt and, in extreme examples, shame.

David is in his mid-20s. As we sit in my office he begins to recall stories of activism from his years as an undergrad. David notes that since graduating his involvement in offline activism has significantly dropped, but he maintains a connection to the movement through online activism. David described feeling of guilt with this change in involvement and a desire to renew his involvement offline:

A: Do you have a preference between events you’ve attended in person and online activities?

DAVID: I like the in-person thing just because to me it just makes everything more real. And I, personally I need that. I think the presence of real life events online really helps. Bringing the online part of it into the real world is the most important part! And probably the hardest to get people to do. I think I like the in-person events more though...I feel like there’s a lot of discrepancy between how many people are sharing something and saying there going and how many people show up, at least in my own experiences. Helping with local events here and through the university, through the community and there just seems like there’s always a big swell of support for something, at least in my own experiences online and then the real world part of that seems a little less. People seem a little less excited about it.
A: Do you have an idea why that might be?

DAVID: I think it’s easier to do stuff online. I think it’s less risky. I think it’s less of an inconvenient. I’m guilty of that myself. And I mean that people are busy so... Yeah I don’t hold it against people, but I think it is a problem.26

This conversation reveals that for David online activism is less meaningful than participating in offline activism. He acknowledges a desire to move from support of events online to the “real” world. While other activist may not view the online community quite as ineffective as David perceives it, these feelings of guilt persist amongst other members of the marriage equality movement. Stacey is a graduate student and heavily involved in online activism. She shared David’s feelings of guilt:

A: Do you have a preference between online activism and events?

STACEY: You know I would say events. I feel a certain amount of guilt that I'm not more of a real activist. And I feel like anybody can type their name into an online petition but it’s completely different to go out there and have your face present, your body. To me that makes more of a statement than your name on some online petition. Not that that’s not great. People do that. But yeah. I think events are more powerful.27

Stacey’s statement reveals that despite the feelings of pride and joy that she previously associated with her activism, she feels a level of guilt that she is not “more of a real activist.” Other activists gave similar accounts of their online activism, calling themselves “activish” or a “background member.” However when asked if they considered themselves part of the movement all said yes. Therefore, while online activism may be associated with a sense of guilt and isolation at times, it still served as a tool for establishing collective identity.

26 Interviewed on August 5, 2014 in Georgia.
27 Interviewed on August 14, 2014 in Georgia.
The notion of bodily presence at protest events still maintains a deep meaning for participants. Stacey’s comment demonstrates this: “It's completely different to go out there and have your face present, your body.” For participants like Stacey, offline events will always be “more real.” However, I have shown in this section that participants’ experiences of emotion were not limited to events at which they were physically present. Participants acknowledged feelings of guilt and isolation associated with online activism as well as a variety of other positive and negative reactive emotions. Nevertheless, the extended network of internet activism allowed marriage equality participants to maintain a sense of collective identity during periods of personal abeyance. This section demonstrates the unique experiences of emotion associated with online activism. Moving beyond the internet as simply a tool for participation, my interviews illustrate how emotions associated with online activism work to connect participants with the marriage equality movement, despite feelings of guilt and isolation.

CONCLUSION

I introduced this chapter with a discussion of the importance of examining the context in which participants experience emotion. In this study, online and offline activism within the marriage equality movement represent the contexts of interest. Throughout this chapter, I have shown that both sites of activism are associated with unique emotions that help promote or sustain individuals’ involvement in the movement. These experiences of emotion influence how participants engage in activism and what type of activism they prefer.

I also discussed shared emotions related to online and offline activism. Positive and negative primary affect were motivating factors in participants’ decisions to become involved with the movement. These long-term underlying emotions framed participants’ identity
narratives. They used these primary affects when discussing their loyalty and commitment to the movement. These narratives and frameworks persisted despite variation in type of activism. Participants never described themselves as internet activists or clicktivists. Nor did they describe their activism as exclusively offline. Rather they defined themselves through these primary affects.

The persistence of these primary affects supports Haraway’s (1991) cyborg metaphor. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Haraway (1991) argues that the embodiment of technology has occurred to such a degree that humans have become cyborgs, a combination of machine and organism. Applying this metaphor to the marriage equality movement, I show that primary affect is developed and expressed in online and offline activism. Examples from social media demonstrate how participants used the internet to communicate pre-existing emotions. Other activists then supported these emotions. My interviews showed that participants had physical and psychological reactions to these online exchanges, associating their activism with stress, depression, joy, pride or fear. Such examples illustrate how shared primary affect is embodied within participants themselves rather than within the context of activism.

As participants recalled the motivations and underlying emotions associated with activism they did not distinguish based on type of activism, rather they discussed primary affect as part of their lived experiences of activism. These emotions were not confined to the physical or virtual sphere, rather they were expressed and developed simultaneously in both spaces. I argue that understanding the modern-day cyborg activist requires recognizing the persistence of primary affects in both sites of activism, as well as linking affect to participants themselves.

Extending beyond primary affect as an explanation for participation and cyborg activism, I show that primary affect influences participants’ reactive emotions. Emotions are invoked by
forces in the field of participation, but without primary affect these emotions could not be activated (Jasper 1998). By acknowledging the persistence of primary affect, I was able to show how specific emotions in online and offline activism influenced these underlying emotions. For instance, a participant’s primary affect of pride or loyalty may prompt them to participate online during periods of personal abeyance. However, the reactive emotions of guilt associated with online activism could deter them from participating and eventually modify the emotions once associated with primary affect. Primary affect and reactive emotions work together to influence participant’s experience of emotion. However, while primary affects were generated based on participants’ beliefs and personal identities, reactive emotions were determined based on the context in which activism occurred.

Offline activism was associated with strong positive reactive emotions, formation of collective identity, and feelings of acknowledgement and recognition. These experiences of positive emotion resulted in a preference for offline activism among participants. I showed online activism was associated with a range of positive and negative reactive emotions. Participants described feelings of guilt associated with this form of activism. However, they also acknowledged that online activism allowed them to maintain connections and collective identity in periods of personal abeyance.

My findings extend upon the previous literature on emotions in internet activism. Previous studies focused on the internet as a resource to cultivate emotion online and inspire action offline (Castells 2012; Gerbaudo 2012). In other words, they examined the primary affect inspiring mobilization in both settings. These accounts describe the origins of emotions, but they ignore the continued interaction between activism and emotion. Marriage equality participants noted that emotional rewards, such as acknowledgement and recognition, inspired them to
further participation in offline activism. In contrast, online activism served to connect members of the movement and formulate collective identity, despite feelings of guilt. Through examining these micro-level instances of emotions, we can better understand the macro-level processes that contribute to their formation. This chapter was dedicated to exploring these micro-displays of emotion. The next chapter focuses on the macro-level rules and techniques that help shape and govern the emotions discussed in this chapter.
CHAPTER 3
MANAGEMENT OF EMOTION IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE ACTIVISM

In this chapter, I explore emotional management in the marriage equality movement. I begin by providing a brief review of literature related to emotional management. Situating my study within an existing body of research, I evaluate the process of emotional management in offline and online activism. Finally, I explain how examining this process adds to understandings of social movements, and internet activism in particular.

Too often emotion and cognition have been portrayed as opposite ends of a spectrum. Ferree and Merrill (2004) noted that scholars’ gender framing of social movements results in a dichotomized interpretation of emotion as irrational and cognition as rational behavior. This dichotomization leads to a false understanding of the role emotions play in social movements. Emotions are better understood when evaluated as part of the cognitive and social process of mobilization. Jasper (1998) argues that movement leaders use emotion to recruit and maintain membership. Movements strategically emphasize “moral emotions,” emotions related to values, norms and beliefs, in order to gain support from movement participants and outsiders (Morris 2004). The emphasis on emotion as a tool in social movements illustrates the rationality and manageability of emotion.

Hochschild (1979) linked emotion to “feeling rules.” These rules influence which emotions are invoked, how they are expressed, and under what circumstances they emerge. *Feeling rules* are socially constructed, shared, and linked to specific situations and settings (Hochschild 1979). In the previous chapter, I identified emotions related to online and offline
activism. I now seek to identify the “feeling rules” associated with both types of activism by discussing the management of emotion in the marriage equality movement. Furthermore, I examine how social movement organizations and individual activists work to establish feeling rules in both settings. On an individual level, emotional management occurs when individuals’ emotions do not align with “feeling rules.” Individuals employ strategies, seek assistance from friends, or hide displays of emotion in order to shift their emotion towards appropriate feelings (Erickson and Ritter 2001; Lively 2008; Stearns and Stearns 1989). Hochschild (1979) refers to this process as emotion work. Accessing the process of emotional management in online and offline activism within the marriage equality movement requires an exploration of feeling rules, management strategies, and emotional cultures.

*Emotion cultures* develop in situations or environments with shared beliefs about feelings and multiple feeling rules (Thoits 1989). Thoits (1989:323) states, “Mapping the ‘cultural universe of beliefs’ about feelings is an important task not only because these beliefs influence individuals’ experiences and behaviors, but because they reveal certain macro-level tensions as well.” In part, this study represents a response to Thoits’ call to “map” the “cultural universe of beliefs.” As mentioned earlier, few studies have examined emotion in relation to internet activism. As such, online activism represents a relatively uncharted territory for evaluating the cultural universe of emotion in social movements.

Hochschild (1979) advocates adopting an emotion-management perspective in order to examine the impact of culture, social structure, and interactions in experiences of emotion. As discussed in Chapter 2, Polletta (2004) emphasizes the importance of recognizes structures are

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28 Also, called emotional labor when discussed in reference to workplace or occupation (Hochschild 1979).
formed through culture (and that culture has structural elements). As such, she notes that social movement scholars must focus on the context in which activism takes place. While my study is concerned with the emotional culture of online and offline activism in the marriage equality movement, these questions are not exclusively cultural. The influence of social movement organizations, resources, physical layout of events and website design helped to structure participants’ activism within the marriage equality movement. Adopting Polletta’s perspective I focus on the context in which activism occurs, exploring how online and offline spaces influence the process of emotional management.

In the following sections, I argue that management of emotion in this movement takes place within distinct social structures and emotional cultures. These cultural and social structures are unique to the digital and public sphere. I identify the individuals, groups and organizations involved in establishing feeling rules in each of these settings. Furthermore, I show how participants engage in different methods of emotion work in order to manage emotions associated with their activism.

**MANAGEMENT OF EMOTIONS OFFLINE**

In the previous chapter, I identified distinct emotions that marriage equality participants associated with offline activism. Social movement organizations (SMOs) and movement leaders played a central role in constructing the feeling rules under which participants experienced the emotions described in Chapter 2. I will identify the techniques and strategies utilized by SMOs and movement leadership to establish feeling rules. I will show how participants manage emotions in relation to these rules and emotional cultures. I will argue that these feeling rules
direct participants towards positive feelings associated with movement insiders and negative emotions associated with outsiders.

*Feeling Rules and Emotional Culture*

Social movement organizations were the primary organizers of the national marriage equality movement and larger LGBT rights movement. Human Rights Campaign, Lambda Legal, and Freedom to Marry represented some of the most visible and prominent organizations in the struggle for marriage equality (Kimport 2013). Formal social movement organizations, they often had paid staff, offices, organizational structure and rules for membership (Staggenborg 1988). The marriage equality movement in Georgia strongly resembled the national movement. The same national organizations appeared as leaders of the movement in Georgia, and other state-level SMOs such as Georgia Equality maintained characteristics of formal organizations. Some local organizations were informal and organized from a grassroots level. Nevertheless, national and state-level social movement organizations organized and controlled most of the events in this study.

As organizers of events and other instances of offline political participation, SMOs and their leaders played a critical role in defining the physical space of offline activism. By designing the physical layout of events, social movement organizations influence participants’ interactions and movement at sites of offline activism. For example, Augusta Pride Festival is the second-largest Pride celebration in Southeast Georgia. The Augusta Pride Committee organized and hosted this event. Augusta Pride Committee is a non-profit organization comprised of volunteers. In 2014, state-level SMOs, regional LGBT friendly businesses and a few major

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29 Augusta Pride Website (http://www.prideaugusta.org/about.html).
corporations, such as Sunglass Hut and T-Mobile, sponsored the Augusta Pride Festival. Pride festivities were located in the middle of a large square outdoor commons in downtown Augusta. The perimeter of the commons was surrounded by tents with tables, most of which belonged to vendors promoting Pride paraphernalia. Some of the tables were devoted to SMOs, including GA Equality and SC Equality. Volunteers enthusiastically spoke to participants and encouraged everyone to register to vote or sign-up for listserv membership. Other organizations distributed informative pamphlets describing upcoming legislation or events related to LGBT rights. In addition to vendors and SMOs, a few local churches set up tables at the far end of the commons. These included information about the church services and banners illustrating their support for Pride and LGBT community members. At the front of the commons was a large stage. Most of the attendees congregated around this stage, as it represented the centerpiece of the festival.30

This staging and organization were consistent with my observations at other sites; at each event tents of vendors, SMOs and churches remained part of the Pride scene. At every Pride festival I attended, a large stage stood as the center of festival related activities. SMOs physically dominated these sites of offline activism. Benches, promotional fliers and banners displayed logos for HRC, Georgia Equality and Lambda Legal. The physical presence of these social movement organizations served as a reminder to participants that the organizations oversee and direct these events. They structure events controlling which organizations can enter the space, how participants move within the space and who is literally elevated (via the stage) above others. All of these structural elements work to shape participants’ experiences of offline activism, thereby shaping the context under which participants experience and manage emotions.

30 Augusta Pride in Augusta, Georgia. Fieldnotes: June 28, 2014.
Beyond structuring the space in which participants manage emotions, these organizations use position and authority to establish “feeling rules” for offline activists. Standing at the front of the stage dressed in a short silver sequin dress and large yellow-blonde wig, the Augusta Pride MC, Ms. Smith, announced to the audience that this year Augusta Pride had the largest turnout yet and that this was their five-year anniversary. She congratulated Augusta Pride and encouraged everyone to clap in celebration of the accomplishment. She added that the crowd should clap for themselves and celebrate their “support” of this event. This statement illustrated to participants that the event was associated with the Augusta Pride Committee. While participants were clearly an important part of the celebration, they were expected to follow the lead of the MC. Ms. Smith’s statement indicated Pride goers were supporters, rather than organizers. Intentionally or not, organizations and movement leaders re-emphasize their position of power within the movement at these events. In doing so, they position themselves and their appointed leaders as authority figures. In the example above, Ms. Smith was the official face and voice of Augusta Pride. She set the tone for the event and guided the crowd to follow her lead. In this way, the organizations and leaders use their position to set feeling rules at offline events.

In addition to structuring the space of offline events and establishing authority, resources play a key role in the formation of feeling rules at offline events. The large stages, entertainment acts and amplifiers were common parts of each Pride event I attended. In addition to this equipment, the most extravagant floats and displays in Pride parades were often created by social movement organizations.31 These features have become part of the Pride experience. Pride is as a celebration of identity and difference (Tarrow 1994). Yet, in exploring the feeling rules at such events it is clear that the celebratory mood associated with Pride, while perhaps sincerely felt by

31 Atlanta Pride held in Atlanta, Georgia. Fieldnotes: October 15, 2014.
participants, is also carefully crafted by SMOs and movement leaders. Floats, bands, banners and streamers act as symbols of this celebration. They are physical markers of a positive and celebratory emotional culture.

Beyond providing the resources described above, social movement organizations controlled resources at offline events. Parade attendees and supporters did not hold mega-phones or make announcements from the large stage. Those affiliated with social movement organizations dominated these spaces. For instance, a local organization hosted a public viewing of the documentary “The New Black,” a film that examines various African American communities’ responses to the issue of gay marriage. Janet, a prominent member of the local LGBT community and member of several LGBT rights organizations, walked onto the stage and introduced the film. Following the viewing, she shared her initial response to the film and invited the audience to share their reactions. As different individuals raised their hands to indicate they wished to speak, Janet would retrieve the microphone and pass it along to the new speaker. While participants were able to share their own thoughts and feelings in this scenario, Janet set the tone and led the discussion. She re-emphasized her position of authority by retrieving the microphone in-between speakers. This microphone was more than a resource; it represented authority and power to contribute to the conversation. While participants could have spoken without the microphone, all waited to be selected by Janet. As the SMO representative, Janet controlled the resources of the room using them to lead and establish feeling rules in the conversation. I saw this interaction repeated at several offline events.

Using the structure of events, physical resources, and authority, social movement organization and movement leaders set the feeling rules and establish the emotional culture of

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32 Film Festival in Georgia. Fieldnotes: September 10, 2014.
offline events. A few minutes after her announcement about Augusta Pride’s five-year anniversary, Ms. Smith welcomed the crowd to Pride. She asked how everyone was doing. The crowd responded with shouts and yells. This response was not satisfactory, so Ms. Smith exhorted the crowd to be louder. She said, “Yall can do better than that. This is Pride! Let me hear it.” The crowd shouted again, this time louder and some began to wave in excitement. Ms. Smith announced that they would be doing a repeat after me chant. When she said “everybody” they responded “love.” When she said “feeling” they responded “awesome.” Ms. Smith and the crowd continued in this exchange for a few minutes with the responses growing louder as the chant progressed. Ms. Smith seemed pleased and ended the chant by announcing the next singer.\footnote{Augusta Pride in Augusta, Georgia. Fieldnotes: June 28, 2014.} This repeat-after me exchange was common at the events I attended.

As an authority, Ms. Smith directed participants towards positive emotions. She told them to feel “awesome” and continued to encourage that emotion by exhorting the crowd to become louder, thereby establishing feeling rules and creating an emotional culture for the event. As shown in Chapter 2 and the example above, the feeling rules at offline events emphasized primarily positive emotions and an atmosphere of celebration. Participants describe the environment of these events with words such as, “contagious,” “celebration,” “exciting,” “happy,” and “fun.”\footnote{It is important to note that some participants did describe negative emotions at events, but when asked to describe emotions associated with offline activism, in general, responses were overwhelmingly positive.}
In addition to identifying the strategies that social movement organizations and movement leaders use to set feeling rules, it is also necessary to explore the methods participants use to manage emotions in relation to these feeling rules. Emotional management occurs when participants’ feelings do not align with feeling rules (Hochschild 1979). In Chapter 2, I discussed the primary affect participants related to their activism. I argued that participants associated their activism with positive and negative underlying emotions; these served as motivation for their activism. However, as shown above, the feeling rules and emotional culture of offline events seem to focus almost exclusively on positive emotions. This suggests that participants at offline events engage in some level of emotional management to transition negative feelings to appropriate positive feelings. I do not mean to imply that participants always engage in emotion work, or that their feelings are less genuine because of emotional management. Rather, I aim to identify some of the techniques and strategies activists employ in the process of emotional management at offline events.

The previous example illustrates how organizations and leaders used chants and repeat-after-me calls to establish feeling rules at offline events. Participants responded to these chants and followed the emotional cues provided by the speakers. Steph, a brunette woman in her mid-50s, has been involved in the marriage equality movement for over two decades. Sitting in her office, she described to me one of her “oddest” moments at Pride. She was standing with her girlfriend, waiting for the dyke march to start. She recalls that someone must have been late because the crowd stood waiting for something to happen. “I was a little frustrated and was about to leave.” Then a woman riding in the back of a truck with a mega-phone pulled up. The woman in the truck started chanting, “dyke and proud.” Steph and her partner started marching and
chanting. She explained that she remembers this instance so clearly because it was such a rapid transition, “One minute we were all just standing there...then we were marching and yelling. It was just contagious!” While Steph could not recall if this woman was officially affiliated with Pride, this situation is one that I saw repeated during my observations at other Pride events. Chants and repeat-after-me calls represent an effective tool for organizations as they establish a positive emotional culture. In this situation, Steph had to perform emotion work to shift her feelings of “frustration” to appropriate feelings. This explains why she recalls the instance so clearly and defines it as “odd.”

Crowds look to leaders and official organizations to provide the structure and feeling rules that facilitate reactive emotions. Steph’s example illustrates how participants’ follow the directions of leaders in order to manage their emotions. Before the arrival of the woman in the truck, Steph reported feelings of frustration, even stating she was preparing to leave, but her feelings changed due to emotional management. She engaged in emotional work to shift from frustration to excitement, as well as activating her collective identity. In the previous chapter, I illustrated how collective identity adds to participants’ experiences of emotion in offline activism (Jasper 1998). Participants associated offline activism with a sense of solidarity. In addition, they refer to collective emotions in their recollections of offline events. In the example above, Steph emphasizes the power of collective identity in emotional management, describing the behavior and excitement of the march as “contagious.”

Social movement organizations used specific tools to establish feeling rules and create an emotional culture. Similarly, participants employ strategies to facilitate emotional management at offline events. Steph allowed the repeat-after-me chants to direct her towards positive

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35 Interviewed on October 22, 2014 in Georgia.
emotions. She followed the examples set by SMO leaderships and allowed the “contagious” emotion associated with collective identity to steer her towards appropriate feelings. This example illustrates how participants engaged with SMOs and other activists in order to manage emotions at offline events.

As mentioned earlier, participants associated offline activism with positive emotions. They directed negative emotions almost exclusively, at external or opposition forces. For instance, at the 2014 Marriage Equality rally in downtown Atlanta, the speakers from Georgia Equality and a local PFLAG group spoke against Sam Olens, the attorney general of Georgia. The crowd murmured in agreement when leaders criticized Olens, booing at the mention of his defense of Georgia’s ban on same-sex marriage.\(^\text{36}\) I observed only a few instances of negative emotion displayed at offline events, yet almost all of them followed this pattern. Participants directed negative emotions at an external party, in this instance Sam Olens. As the organizers of this event, Georgia Equality selected him to be the target of discontent. The feeling rules of this event indicated that participants should display negative emotions towards Sam Olens and positive emotions toward movement members. Marriage equality participants used physical resources to show solidarity and display appropriate feelings at this event.

Just as SMOs and leaders used physical resources to establish feeling rules, participants used physical resources to conform to those rules. In this instance, many participants made signs displaying messages of support and others used Georgia Equality signs. These signs displayed messages such as: “I Am a Southerner for the Freedom to Marry,” “I Love My Gay Family,” and “Attorney General Olens Stop Defending Marriage Discrimination.” Participants would wave these signs when one of the speakers made a dramatic statement. These activists were engaging

\(^{36}\) Rally for Marriage in Atlanta, Georgia. Fieldnotes: October 23, 2014.
with physical resources in order to show conformity to the feeling rules of this event. Participants at Pride also used physical resources to engage in emotional management. Many Pride attendees dressed in costume, colored their hair, wore rainbow flags like capes, and coated their bodies with rainbow glitter. These participants transformed their physical appearance to display internal and collective emotions of excitement and pride. These physical displays illustrate to SMOs, fellow pride goers, and the participants themselves that their displayed emotions align with those deemed appropriate in this emotional culture.

Despite the positive emotions and celebratory atmosphere at these events, not all participants’ feelings align with these positive emotions. The examples above illustrate some of the emotional management techniques participants may use to realign their feelings. However, participants maintain agency and can chose to defy these feeling rules and violate the emotional culture. At Atlanta Pride, I observed one instance of negative emotion directed at internal members of the movement. In the middle of the day, following the parade, a group of young African American women marched through the Pride festival holding signs and shouting, “Black Queer Lives matter.” People quickly moved out of their way as they marched past shouting and waving their signs in the air. While a few people clapped, most pride goers stared at this protest in silence. This response was in stark contrast to cheers of “happy pride” and shouts of encouragement directed at groups that had marched in the official Pride Parade. The women engaged in the “Black Queer Lives matter” protest were clearly seen as defying the feeling rules and emotional culture of the Pride festival. Their feelings of discontent were associated with their marginalized status in the LGBTQ community. Rather than conform

37 Atlanta Pride in Atlanta, Georgia. Fieldnotes: October 15, 2015.
38 Atlanta Pride in Atlanta, Georgia. Fieldnotes: October 15, 2015.
to established feeling rules these women embraced this tension and mobilized together to display their negative emotions. This example illustrates the potential for agency and defiance; however, in my observations and interviews this was the only instance of confrontation at an offline event. This suggests that while there is potential for agency, most participants engage in emotional management in order to conform to feeling rules and the emotional culture of offline events.

In this section, I have shown that social movement organizations and leaders established feeling rules and an emotional culture at offline events. SMOs and movement leaders used the physical layout of events, authority and power, and physical resources to help establish feeling rules and create an emotional culture at offline events. This emotional culture promoted the display of positive emotions and an atmosphere of celebration. Participants directed negative emotions towards oppositional forces. These findings were consistent with existing literature on emotion in offline activism. With one exception, most participants performed emotion work to realign feelings and conform to the feeling rules. Participants in the marriage equality movement utilized repeat-after-me chants, expressions of collective identity, and physical resources as tools to facilitate emotional management.

Again, I do not mean to suggest that all experiences of emotion in offline activism were manufactured through the creation of feeling rules and emotional management. In fact, the positive emotions associated with primary affect suggest that often participants’ emotions may already align with established feeling rules. However, negative emotions associated with primary affect suggest that participants did perform emotion work in offline activism. In my interviews, for example, participants expressed discontent with social movement organizations and fear that

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39 Flam (1990) stated that positive emotions were associated with movement activities and other members, negative emotions were directed at “antagonist” forces.
marriage equality would normalize queer experiences. These sentiments represent primary affect and illustrate the persistence of negative emotions among marriage equality participants, suggesting that participants must engage in some form of emotional management in order to conform to the positive feeling rules established in offline activism. In this section, I sought to illustrate the strategies and techniques participants used to manage emotions at offline events. In the following section, I will show how feeling rules and methods of emotional management differed in online activism.

**MANAGEMENT OF EMOTIONS ONLINE**

In Chapter 2, I showed that participants’ experiences of emotion in online activism were distinctly different from their experiences of emotion in offline activism. In this section, I will extend this argument to show how the feeling rules and the emotional culture of online activism differ from that of offline activism. Moreover, I will identify the individuals and organizations that work to establish feeling rules online. Finally, I will identify methods and strategies participants use to manage emotions in online activism.

*Feeling Rules and Emotional Cultures*

Social movement organizations and leaders organized and managed sites of offline activism in the marriage equality movement. They also organized and maintained social media sites in order to facilitate political participation. Every statewide LGBT advocacy organization I encountered had a website. Most had Facebook sites and Twitter accounts as well. These websites represented a source of information, provided resources, and facilitated interaction. However, unlike offline sites organized by SMOs, these websites did not appear to set feeling
rules or create emotional cultures. On the contrary, social movement organizations’ posts and tweets displayed little emotion.

Using SentiStrength, I analyzed six months of tweets by a state-level SMO in Georgia, code name GA LGBTorg. Table 1 illustrates the average positive and negative sentiment scores for each month. In order to determine the sentiment of each text, SentiStrength assigns a positive and negative sentiment to each word in the tweet, using a 0-5 scale. The average positive and negative sentiment score determines the overall sentiment of the text.

Table 1. Sentiment of GA LGBTorg tweets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Avg. Positive Sentiments</th>
<th>Avg. Negative Sentiments</th>
<th>Total Tweets (N=487)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>-1.32</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>-1.56</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>-1.44</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>-1.28</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>-1.15</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>-1.20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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40 Scale and Analysis developed through SentiStrength. See Methods section for more details.
As indicated in the table above the organizational tweets did not use highly positive or negative emotion in their tweets. The following tweets are examples of the most common types of tweets posted by this organization:

- We are @piedmontpark for #BlackGayPride today #registering #GAvoters
- Retweet this great quote from today's exciting #Arkansas #marriage ruling!
- We have public support. Georgians are overwhelmingly supportive of nondiscrm and need more conversations to reach marriage #South4Marriage

These tweets demonstrate the contrast between feeling rules established by SMOs at events and online. At events, SMOs and movement leaders used language to invoke positive emotions amongst participants and create an emotional culture of celebration. The tweets above are informative but they do not establish positive or negative feeling rules. Based on these SMO generated tweets, the culture of this online space appears to be emotionally neutral. This may be intentional. In my observations, SMOs’ primary function online was to promote events and content. Users, on the other hand, engaged with these posts and attached emotional meaning to them through comments and likes. In the absence of SMO- established feeling rules, participants in the marriage equality movement created their own feeling rules in the digital sphere.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Web 2.0 represented a shift in the internet age. Web 2.0 introduced tools such as blogs, social media sites, podcast, and user generated websites (e.g. Wikipedia) (Birdsall 2007). These tools transitioned the control over internet content from creators to users (Birdsall 2007). In internet activism, this shift in control has allowed participants to occupy online sites of activism and create their own feeling rules. Using the structure and tools of Web 2.0, members of the marriage equality movement created their own sites of activism and established emotional cultures.
Reddit is a social networking site that serves as an online bulletin for members to post comments. It represents one of the Web 2.0 tools marriage equality activists utilized to establish feeling rules in online spaces. In the following conversation, Ted describes the emotional culture of this online space and identifies one of the feeling rules of online activism:

A: Can you describe your interactions with others in the movement?

T: Yes (laughs) I Reddit. Like I mentioned earlier, it is one of the sites that I go on and talk to people. I'm on the LGBT group. I'm on a number of different groups in which it [marriage equality] comes up and this is gonna sound bad, but I've had better and more sincere and open minded discussions with people on the Christianity board than I have on the LGBT board. Because people especially anonymously will rail against allies. Which infuriates me. The idea that we don't need allies and we don't care what straight people think. And we don't need your approval. And that just makes me both sad and angry. That someone would be just so full of hubris, maybe that's not the right word, but just the idea that I can do this myself and I don't need anybody. And if you disagree with me you're wrong and I don't want to hear your opinion at all…And if you're not gonna be part of this echo chamber than you need to get out.

A: Earlier, you referred to disagreements in your online interactions, especially around issues related to marriage equality, does that ever impact your activism?

T: So, I was banned from posting on the LGBT group on Reddit because I told someone to “cool it” on complaining and hating on allies. I was banned for tone-policing… Tone policing is when someone who is in the gay right movement is angry about something and they have every right to say things, and you try to get them to change their tone to something else. You are tone policing. You are, according to them, invalidating their anger and invalidating their feelings. Because you feel that they should only respond in this way. That's what tone policing is. I just don't understand that! I'm in the wrong because I'm telling a child that we need allies and you shouldn't use these terrible names for straight people and make things more civil? But apparently our rage is righteous. And if people can't understand us saying these hateful things about them… It's just so backwards to me. So yeah, I couldn't post for a number of months because I really just said, “Don't be that way man.”[41]

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[41] Interviewed on September 9, 2014 in Georgia.
Ted’s account illustrates the emotional culture associated with this particular site of online activism, as well as some of the feeling rules in this digital space. Whereas in offline activism marriage equality members describe positive emotions and celebration, participants’ descriptions of online activism often included negative emotions and confrontation. Ted described the Reddit group as an “echo chamber” with “complaining,” “anger,” and “righteous rage.” The emotional culture of online activism allows and encourages participants to express the negative underlying emotions associated with activism and discrimination.

In order to enable activists to express anger and discontent, organizational and user-controlled websites have adopted feeling rules that discourage censorship. Moreover, users institute sanctions to ensure that other online activists do not violate these feeling rules. By sanctioning Ted when he attempted to interfere with the free expression of another member, the LGBT Reddit group re-established the emotional culture of this site. The term “tone policing” illustrates that within the online community, members expect to be able to express their emotions and not to be censored by others. In this situation, “tone policing” is associated with a formal feeling rule. Ted was banned for a period for violating this rule. This ban represents a formal sanction against a member who did not engage in the necessary emotion work that would lead him to conform to the group’s feeling rules. Other sanctions used to enforce feeling rules in online activism include blocking members, deleting posts, and calling people out.42 In each instance that I observed, the sanctioned member had violated the online emotional culture by attempting to censor another member of the group. I observed only a few instances of official censorship in online activism. Movement members supported and advocated the censorship of

42 “Calling people out” is a term used by online users to describe the interpersonal communication between a member who has violated the censorship rules and a user who is informally warning the other member.
combative outsiders. Similar to offline activism, feeling rules on LGBT advocacy sites supported
the formation and expression of negative emotions in relation to oppositional forces.

In addition to creating feeling rules that discourage censorship, marriage equality
members created an emotional culture of encouragement and affirmation online. The example
below illustrates a Facebook discussion between participants, in response to a post by a state
level LGBT advocacy organization:

SMO: When asked whether he believed LGBT people, in general, faced
discrimination in Georgia or in the country, O’Neal was unequivocal. “I
absolutely do not, no,” said O’Neal.

User1: totally out of touch and yes discrimination is alive and well in Georgia and
our country [user 2 “likes” user1 comment]

User2: This just makes me so angry! "And why should a particular group of non-
recognized -- a group of people that do not have a basis for discrimination kind of
cases -- why should they have any more rights against that baker than me or any
other citizen in society?” Well d***, ain't I a citizen? We don't want MORE rights
we just want access to the SAME rights as everyone else in society. Recognize
our humanity or you will continue to experience the power of peaceful resistance.
[user 1 and 3 “likes” user2 comment]

User 3: Are they doing this on purpose?

User 1: They just love pretending they don't see it so the government can continue
to rob us blind! [User 2 and 3 “likes” User1 second post]

The discussion above illustrates how users associate online content with interaction and
encouragement. All three online users are upset at the news delivered in the original SMO post.
They each chose to post in the comment section after the original FB post. Posting a comment
allows users to engage in online activism. Moreover, it allows them to enter into an emotional
culture where feeling rules direct participants to respond and encourage one another. The
physical configuration of social media sites has encouraged this emotional culture. The “like”
button is a structural cue to other members that they can and should engage with other members’
posts, encouraging and affirming others’ feelings. In the example above, the users’ comments build upon one another. User 3 posts a question regarding the intention behind O’Neal’s statement. User 1 responded to this post and in doing so was able to continue to express emotion and affirm the emotions of User 3. Users created and oversaw the feeling rules in online spaces, ensuring that marriage equality members could express emotions and thoughts, be heard, and be encouraged in the digital sphere.

In my content analysis of six-months of Twitter and Facebook data, I observed many more conversations that followed this pattern. Online users consistently responded to SMO updates and posts. However, rather than engage with the SMOs, users directed their comments towards one another. In my observations, online activism resulted in relatively equal displays of positive and negative emotion. While all of these exchanges were not as encouraging as those displayed above, such dialogues illustrate that users recognize the internet as a space to voice emotion and make arguments in support of their activism. Furthermore, they show that participants expect to interact with other activists- be that a supportive or challenging interaction.

In offline activism, social movement organizations established feeling rules that encouraged positive emotion and celebration. The movement participants themselves generally establish the feeling rules associated with online activism. They encourage displays of discontent, discourage censorship, and promote affirmation among participants. The support and open emotional culture of online activism may help explain how participants manage negative emotions and why they engage with online activism.
Emotion Work and Emotional Management

Marriage equality participants engaged in online activism reported a variety of emotions associated with online participation. The informal structure of member exchanges and the open-dialogue may serve as explanations for the variance of emotion in online settings. The emotional culture of online activism, as described above, creates spaces in the marriage equality movement for activists to engage in emotion work and emotional management. While offline-feeling rules prompted activists to perform emotion work, online-feeling rules allowed participants to struggle with emotion work. In other words, online spaces represent an area where activists can go to confront deviant emotions and manage the negative emotions they encounter in their activism.

Hope was living abroad on a naval base when she began to struggle with her sexual identity. She recalls the internet as a resource for exploring her identity and later emotions associated with larger LGBT rights issues.

I think the internet was really the main resource for me and my mom. As far as trying to figure out- I just came out. What do I do? How are our lives gonna change? How are they not gonna change? Things like that. So I’ve always been really involved with PFLAG [the organization she used to find information online] and I received a scholarship from them in 2005 when I graduated high school. And so I think just- I think first and foremost being in tuned with PFLAG and also trying to find LGBT communities was important to helping me.  

Hope illustrates that the internet was a resource as she managed her own emotions around coming out, but also as she became an active participant within the movement. Other participants shared similar narratives. The internet, and more specifically online activism, allowed participants to engage with other members of the LGBT community. This was especially important as they first embraced sexual, gender and/or activist identities.

43 Interviewed on October 22, 2014 in Georgia.
Furthermore, this provided a space for negotiating negative emotions directed at the movement. Katrina Kimport (2013) notes that SMOs within the marriage equality movement have strategically attempted to link the movement to narratives of love and commitment, rather than focusing on a civil rights narrative. Furthermore, she states that some LGBT people view this narrative as a conformance to heteronormative culture. This is one of the major tensions associated with marriage equality. During my interviews this theme consistently re-emerged in participants’ descriptions of the movement. These participants expressed conflicting emotions between believing in the merits of marriage equality and distrust for the privileged position it held in the larger LGBT rights movements. David expressed a great deal of concern regarding the marriage equality movement:

I kind of feel like it's a way of normalizing and declawing queer experiences for other people. And I don't know how I feel about that... I am kind of critical of that because I don't, I feel like it’s the least threatening of any issue you could pick about queer people. Because most issues that relate to a specific group emphasize difference in a big way and I don’t think that’s necessarily a bad thing. But I think that the goal of the marriage equality movement is to normalize gay people. Being like everyone else. And there’s nothing inherently wrong about that, but I think that when we confront issues of HIV or queer youth homelessness, or you know bullying we have to confront a much different set of issues and assumptions that people make as a whole. I think that may be why I feel like that issue being used so much to emphasize gains in equality is kind of disingenuous because it’s- at the end of the day I don’t think it really effects all of queer people.⁴⁴

Online social media allowed participants to express feelings of discontent and distrust of major social movement organizations. During interviews, participants cited their online activism as a space where they could grapple with some of these issues and discuss movement related concerns with other activists. Following our interview, David told me that while he still considers himself a supporter and member of the marriage equality movement, his activism is

⁴⁴ Interviewed on August 5, 2014 in Georgia.
almost solely online at this point. However, he visited marriage equality websites in order to find LGBT organizations that were engaged in other forms of LGBT advocacy, specifically working with LGBT youth. More than engaging in emotional management, David used the resources of the internet to find an alternative movement that better aligned with his identity and true feelings. This feature of emotional management was unique to online activism. My interviews showed the internet to be a space for debate and departure from SMO-promoted “feeling rules” associated with offline participation. Furthermore, it enabled activists like David to engage in emotion work refocusing his emotion and activism towards better-suited issues.

The examples above illustrate how participants used open and affirming “feeling rules” of online activism to engage in emotion work. However, this does not suggest that the “feeling rules” of online activism worked for every participant. If we recall the example of Ted and “tone-policing,” it is clear that his feelings failed to align with the group rules. Ted engaged in the online space initially because he understood it to be an open place to discuss thoughts and feelings about the movement. However, the emotional culture of the Reddit group did not align with his personal emotions. Just like the “Black Queer Lives Matter” protest, Ted confronted this tension instead of engaging in emotional management leading to conformity. As a result, the Reddit group sanctioned him. Online activism allowed participants to form their own feeling rules and establish emotional cultures online. However, once feeling rules had been established participants were expected to follow them or endure sanctions by other group members.

**CONCLUSION**

Hochschild (1979) suggests that emotional management is highly influenced by context and situation. This is certainly true in online and offline activism in the marriage equality
movement. In this chapter, I showed how feeling rules are constructed in both types of activism and who is involved in the process of forming emotional cultures. In addition, I examined participants’ methods and strategies for emotional management, as well as the results of that management. Comparing the process of emotional management in online and offline activism reveals the different role of emotion in each setting. Offline settings utilize formal social structures such as authority and resources, as well as cultural features such as collective identity and messages of pride, to establish feeling rules. Participants either conform or defy these rules. Participants in online activism designed feeling rules to allow participants to explore negative emotions and engage in emotion work. Both environments play an important role in the formation and cultivation of emotion related to activism, but these roles are very different and involve different players. If social movement scholars seek to understand the complex role of emotion in online activism, we must acknowledge the different context of emotional management.
CHAPTER 4
THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTION IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE ACTIVISM

In this chapter, I illustrate the importance of emotion in online and offline activism and argue for the rethinking of existing social movement theories and, more specifically, a rethinking of internet activism. In the following sections, I discuss three major findings of this research that aim to expand and challenge existing social movement theories. First, activists’ discussions of affect demonstrate that experiences of activism are not confined to physical or virtual spaces. Rather, activism and the emotions associated with it should be viewed as embodied experiences. Second, by exploring micro experiences of emotion, I explain macro implications of emotion in social movements. Third, the role of emotion in online activism is relatively uncharted territory. By identifying the emotions formed and managed in online activism this study contributes to the efforts of sociologists of emotion to map the cultural context of emotion (Thoits 1989).

Cyborg Activists and Embodied Experiences

Haraway (1991) proposes the metaphor of a cyborg, a combination of organic and mechanical life, to illustrate the interaction between technology and human bodies. She suggests that in the modern technological age strict categories separate organic from mechanical life. This distinction denies the subjectivity of the mechanical life. In contrast, Haraway (1991) argues that the embodied experience of technology shapes individual conceptions of self, as well as socially constructed identities. In this section, I apply Haraway’s cyborg metaphor to participants in the marriage equality movement. Relating this discussion to my findings, I illustrate how
participants’ mechanical and organic experiences of activism worked together to shape emotion and identity.

In Chapter Two, I show that participants experienced positive and negative long-term emotions, which, following Jasper (1998), I call primary affect. Activists’ motivation to participate in the marriage equality movement was not associated with a specific Facebook post or offline event. Rather, underlying emotions and beliefs about equality shaped participants’ experiences of activism. In other words, the underlying emotions that inspired offline participation also inspired online participation. The presence of primary affect as a mobilizing feature in both sites demonstrates the importance of recognizing emotion in studies of social movements. Furthermore, the existence of emotion in online spaces confirms the importance of viewing the mechanical life as a lived experience.

Social movement scholars have emphasized that the internet is a tool for participation and deny that such technologies have had a significant effect on the processes involved in activism (Castells 2012; Earl et al. 2010; Gerbaudo 2012; Tilley 2004; Nielsen 2013). These explanations are reflective of most work in social movements studies, which has demonstrated a preference for explaining processes in terms of cognition rather than emotions. While this view of emotions has been criticized in social movement theory more recently, the advent of internet activism seems to have renewed overly cognitive explanations of online participation. Juxtaposing social movement scholars’ explanations of internet activism with Haraway’s (1991) cyborg metaphor illustrates the omission of mechanical life from studies of internet activism. Far from a tool that can be discarded at will, participants cannot remove primary affect as they enter the digital sphere, any more than they can remove their skin. Participants embody the emotions associated with primary affect.
Marriage equality activists’ experiences of emotion and participation were formed and shaped in online and offline activism. So too were their identities. Haraway (1991) notes that individuals engage with technology in order to form identity and perceptions of self. For example, Shapiro (2010) examines how individuals use “Second Life,” a virtual world that mimics the physical world, to create, challenge and reshape their identities. While there is a certain amount of fantasy in the construction of these virtual identities, they remain linked to physical human bodies. Similarly, marriage equality participants used online and offline activism to shape their identities. They marched in Pride parades, updated Facebook statuses, held signs, and changed their profile pictures to rainbows and equal signs. Regardless of the space in which these acts took place, they illustrate participants’ efforts to identify with the movement.

The cyborg metaphor serves as more than a conceptual tool in my explanation of emotion in the marriage equality movement. This discussion of online and offline activism in the marriage equality movement represents an effort to rethink existing social movement theories. Shapiro (2010:39) argues:

If biomedical and information technologies have the ability to reshape not only social structures and norms but also individual embodied identities, then any effort to understand contemporary society must consider the dynamic relationships between dominant norms and scripts, technologies, and the individual.

Shapiro’s statement emphasizes the importance of examining the relationship between the mechanical and organic world, as well as acknowledging the agency of the cyborgs who travel between them. While the findings in this research are limited to explanations of emotions within the Georgia marriage equality movement, I use examples from this movement to trouble current
theories of social movements and internet activism. Given the evidence of embodiment, emotion and identity in activists’ accounts of online and offline participation, viewing the internet as simply a resource for participation seems an inadequate explanation. I argue the concept of cyborg activists provides an opportunity for social movement scholars to move beyond previous explanations of internet activism, and begin to explore the complexity of activism in a cyborg world.

Micro Emotions and Macro Implications

In this study, I followed Burawoy’s (1991) extended case method. This method allowed me to examine micro experiences of emotions, in order to explain larger macro features of the marriage equality movement. This micro-macro perspective provided key information about the role of emotion in online and offline activism. Additionally, this extended case method and micro-level explanation adds to existing studies of internet activism by shifting the level of analysis.

Numerous social movement scholars have sought to understand the function of online activism in social movements. Such studies have focused on creating a typology of internet activism, evaluating the formation of social networks, or explaining the structure of social movement organizations’ websites (Earl 2006; Earl et al. 2013; Shirky 2008; Tremayne 2014). These studies have analyzed online activism from the meso- and macro-level. I extend this literature by exploring micro-experiences of online activism in the marriage equality movement, and linking them to macro-level implications. Furthermore, by starting at the micro-level I emphasize participants as producers of knowledge with agency.
Exploring participants’ experiences of emotion in offline activism revealed that they associated this form of activism with positive reactive emotions, as well as the formation of collective identity. Moreover, offline events were associated with acknowledgment and recognition. In contrast, reactive emotions, associated with online activism, revealed that many participants associated their online participation with feelings of guilt and isolation. Despite these negative emotions, participants still noted that online activism served as a connection to the larger movement, even in periods of personal abeyance.

Investigating activists’ experiences of emotion revealed differences based on the type of activism. This challenges existing social movement theories, which have argued that internet activism represents a scalar, rather than substantive change in social movements (Castells 2012; Earl et al. 2010; Gerbaudo 2012; Nielsen 2013). Scholars adopting a scalar explanation of internet activism argue that the internet provides new resources and lowers cost of participation, but does not change the process of activism. However, this study illustrates that for some marriage equality participants, the internet did change the process of activism. These findings indicate that further research is necessary in order to reassess the impact of internet activism on social movements.

Positive emotions, collective action, and feelings of recognition resulted in an expressed preference for offline activism. Interestingly, participants did not associate this preference with success or achievement of movement goals. Rather, they acknowledged feelings of personal accomplishment and recognition as inspiration for offline participation. In my interviews, participants described instances of uncertainty associated with online and offline activism, admitting they were unsure if their contributions would make a difference. However, when describing this uncertainty in relation to offline events participants noted that they felt like they
were doing more (whether or not it was true). Such statements imply that emotion, rather than movement success, informed participants’ preference for offline activism. However, this preference did not ensure that participants would engage in future activism. On the contrary, in many of my interviews participants expressed regret that they could not be more involved in offline activities.

Through exploring the micro experience of emotion in the marriage equality movement, I was able to observe that participants associate different emotions with online and offline activism. Furthermore, I argue that participants’ preference for offline events is linked to emotion and personal satisfaction, rather than achievement of movement goals. Both of these findings serve to challenge social movement theories that explain internet activism as a scalar change. While my study cannot be generalized to all social movements, it would appear that this subject merits further explanation at micro and macro-levels of analysis.

The Context for Emotions in Social Movements

In addition to examining participants’ micro experiences of emotion in the marriage equality movement, I explore the context of online and offline activism. In Chapter Three, I identified the organizations and individuals involved in forming feeling rules and establishing emotional cultures. In my explanation of feeling rules and emotional management, I used Polletta’s (2004) conceptualization of structure and culture. Polletta (2004) argues that culture and structure are mutually constitutive. She notes that culture is always linked to social and political structures, indicating that drawing sharp distinctions between the two processes misrepresents both.
Accepting this perspective, I discussed the context of online and offline activism as cultural. I identified the mechanisms and strategies social movement organizations and leaders used in order to control offline events and establish emotional cultures in these public spaces. However, these mechanisms of control, feeling rules, and influential actors differed in the context of online activism. Feeling rules associated with online activism promoted communication and openness between members, going so far as to sanction members when they attempted to censor or “tone police” other activists. The differences between online and offline feeling rules illustrates the continued importance of context when examining emotion in social movements.

Furthermore, I argued that activists used online spaces to negotiate and manage negative emotions associated with their activist identities. The feeling rules established in offline sites of activism directed participants to associate positive emotions with movement insiders and negative emotions with oppositional forces. These findings support the claims of sociologists of emotion that culture is essential to understanding the formation and management of emotion (Thoits 1989). Other studies of social movements have already used theories of emotion to explain movement entree, mobilization and identity (Gould 2004; Taylor 1995). However, few studies have explored the role of emotion in internet activism more thoroughly.

The specific context of this study made this an exemplary case to use the extended case model. The unique tensions associated with the marriage equality movement as well as the widespread usage of internet activism among participants made the marriage equality movement a unique landscape in which to evaluate the role of emotions. Thoits (1989) notes that sociologists of emotion are tasked with mapping the cultural context in which emotions are cultivated and maintained. My study adds to the existing literature in sociology of emotion by mapping the
context under which, Georgia’s marriage equality activists experienced emotions. Moreover, this study seeks to trouble previous theoretical explanations of internet activism and explore the implications of cyborg activists.

**Future Research**

Although same sex-marriage is now legal in the United States, the LGBT rights movements continues to strive for equality among all persons regardless of gender or sexual identification. Future research should investigate the transitions in the LGBT rights movement following the legalization of same-sex marriage. As mentioned earlier, many of the participants I interviewed expressed concerns with the heteronormativity promoted by the marriage equality movement. They worried that after the legalization of same-sex marriage, the resources and mobilization behind the larger movement would dissolve. Anecdotal evidence suggests this may be true. For instance, Freedom to Marry announced just days after the Supreme Court decision that the organization would close (Heller 2015). Will the larger-LGBT rights movement decline? Will it break into further single-issue movements? These are just a couple of the questions scholars and activists should be asking over the coming months and years.

**Summary**

The internet is increasingly part of the social landscape of social movements. Social movement theories have explained the internet as another tool of participation, or acknowledged it as a change in the scale of movements. Such explanations reflect an analytical separation of the mechanical and organic life (Haraway 1991). Furthermore, little research has investigated the role of emotion in online activism. Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to fill some of the
gaps in social movement literature on internet activism. My study reveals the process and role of emotion in online and offline activism in the marriage equality movement. I have advocated for the theoretical adoption of the cyborg activist to understand online activism, acknowledged the benefits of micro-macro explanations in social movements, and emphasized how cultural context shapes feeling rules and emotional management. By exploring and problematizing these findings, I have sought to expand and challenge social movement theories to offer new explanations for the role of emotion in online and offline activism. The internet is more than a resource for further participation in the public sphere. This online space represents a site where participants can experience and manage emotions. Through comparative analysis, these findings illustrate the role emotions play in sustaining and constraining online and offline activism.
REFERENCES


