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Danielle Tucker

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The status of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) struggle for equality in Michigan since 2004

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THE STATUS OF THE GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER
(LGBT) STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY IN MICHIGAN SINCE 2004

By

Danielle Tucker

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Honors Advisor (Print Name and have signed)

Department Head (Print Name and have signed)

Honors Director (Print Name and have signed)

Michigan, like most other states, has a plethora of groups that fight for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender rights. Many of these groups have been forced to go on the defensive after Michigan passed a state constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. Michigan groups fought hard against the amendment, however, the amendment passed with 58% of the vote. Although, it was the second closest race of the eleven that passed that year, this knowledge was cold comfort to LGBT people across the state. Many of whom felt betrayed by their fellow citizens in voting for what many LGBT groups are now calling the “anti-marriage” amendment.

Since that time groups, have primarily been concerned with damage control, trying to limit the interpretation of the amendment to only banning gay marriage and civil unions, instead of also taking away domestic partnership benefits from state employees. Other groups have shifted their focus to local battles, trying to add gender identity and sexual orientation to their school districts anti – discrimination policies, or they’ve tried to lobby Lansing to pass anti-bullying legislation that specifically names LGBT students as a protected class. Still other groups have shifted their focus away from activism entirely, choosing instead to focus on support rather than on activism.

One of the problems with studying the Gay Rights Movement is there is no central organization. There is no Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X figure for the LGBT community rally around, and no one to decide what is important and set the agenda. Instead the gay rights movement is propelled forward by small groups working on particular issues, sometimes forming coalitions, but also working in opposition to each other at times. Groups like the Human Rights Campaign, Triangle Foundation, and Lambda Legal have their own agendas and their own perceptions of the problems that are

most important to face and their agenda and perceptions may not match those of other groups.

I will be specifically examining the status of the Gay Rights Movement in Michigan. I will look at how the Constitutional Amendment that banned gay marriage, and possibly same-sex domestic partnership benefits from state institutions, affected local grassroots organizations and well as the political climate under which the amendment passed. I will also look at what LGBT groups in Michigan are focusing on now that the road to gay marriage in Michigan, which until now was a major goal for many of these groups, is effectively blocked. Finally, I will study what issues are important to the LGBT community in Michigan and whether or not these organizations are moving in a way that is consistent with their wants and needs.

Proposal 2

In 2004, citizen groups such as the American Family Association helped the “Marriage Protection Amendment” get on the ballot. It was a citizen initiated referendum that ostensibly sought to define marriage as between a man and a woman. In reality however the vague wording of the amendment caused fear within the gay community that the amendment would be used, not only to ban gay marriage, but also to revoke domestic partnership benefits for state employees for same-sex couples.

The amendment read;

“To secure and preserve the benefits of marriage for our society and for future generations of children, the union of one man and one woman in marriage shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage or similar union for any purpose.”

The Michigan amendment was framed in such a way that it would've been very difficult to defeat. According to UC Berkeley Professor George Lakoff conservatives are masters at framing issues in a way that dictates the terms of debate. He stated in an interview with Newscenter reporter Bonnie Powell in 2003 that conservatives have spent decades building infrastructure and defining and framing their ideals in a way that makes them as appealing as possible to voters. He states that almost every possible issue has been framed from the conservative perspective, even and especially gay marriage. He points to surveys that show that Americans are against gay marriage and discrimination against gays at the same time. He attributes this inconsistency to the fact that Americans are opposed to gay sex, and the conservatives have spent millions of dollars framing the debate in a way to equate approval of gay marriage with approval of gay sex. He suggests that instead of arguing on conservative terms, meaning defending gay marriage and thus gay sex, that liberals should reframe the debate in a way that would make it impossible for voters to oppose it. He states that the argument should be “freedom to marry” or “the right to marry” because it would be harder for voters to disagree that everyone should have the freedom to marry who they choose. (Powell, 2003)

Unfortunately, the opponents of the proposal in Michigan failed to change the terms of the debate during the 2004 election. The proposal was sold in a way to make it very hard for voters to resist. Calling it the “Defense of Marriage Amendment” implies that marriage is being attacked in some way, and is in need of rescue. Framing it this way immediately demonizes those who don't want to protect this traditional institution, and riles up those who respect this institution and believe it to be under attack. Additionally, the language of the amendment itself even mentions preserving marriage “for our

children.” This language implies that marriage is something that not only needs to be kept safe for ourselves but for children. A very compelling argument, and one that gay rights advocates did not successfully negate in the public perception.

The marriage amendment in Michigan was one of eleven that passed in 2004. This surge of state constitutional amendments seeking to define marriage as only between a man and a woman was a response to the recent judicial gains of many gay rights groups in securing the freedom to marry or to form other unions. In 1999 the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that the State constitution guaranteed same sex couples the same rights as heterosexual couples and ordered the legislature to find a way to make sure that they had those rights. In order to satisfy their state constitutional requirements, Governor Howard Dean signed the Civil Union Bill into effect in November 2000. The backlash from Vermont was immediate with Nebraska approving a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage the same year.

Seeking the same result found in Vermont, seven same sex couples filed suit for the right to marry in Massachusetts (*Goodridge et. al v. Department of Public Health.*) Meanwhile, stating the need to protect marriage from “activist” judges Nevada followed Nebraska’s lead and banned same-sex marriage by Constitutional Amendment. In 2003 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the state constitution guarantees equal marriage for same sex couples, and reaffirmed this ruling in February of 2004 – stating explicitly that the must be allowed to marry, civil unions will not do.

After Massachusetts the gay rights movement and anti-gay movements erupted into a flurry of activity. San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom began issuing same sex marriage licenses in February of 2004, followed shortly after by County Clerks in

Sandoval New Mexico, who managed to issue 26 marriage certificates before they were stopped. In New Paltz, New York Mayor Jason West began officiating same sex marriages, and in Multnomah County, Oregon they began issuing marriage licenses to same sex couples. (Gay Marriage Timeline, 2008)

Anti-gay activists began gearing up as well. Citing the need to protect Michigan citizens against “activists judges” who would overturn Michigan’s law banning gay marriages, a group called Citizens for the Protection of Marriage began circulating a petition to get Proposal 02-04 on the ballot. (Cain, 2004) Director of CPM, Marlene Elwell, who helped organize efforts to put the proposal on the ballots, said that it was the recent legalization of gay marriage in Massachusetts and Canada that galvanized her and her group into action. “When we saw that happening, we knew we had to go forward this year... we couldn’t wait any longer.”

Jennifer Granholm, the Governor of Michigan in 2004, joined LGBT groups in opposing the amendment, saying that the language was too ambiguous and that it could be construed in such a way that domestic partnership benefits could not be offered by state employers. Supporters of the Amendment, on the other hand argued that the proposal was necessary to ensure that the traditional definition of marriage was protected against judges and law makers. Furthermore, they argued that the Proposal was only about marriage, not about benefits. Elwell was quoted in the Detroit News as saying “This has nothing to do with taking benefits away. This is about marriage between a man and a woman.”

Many opponents of the Proposal argued that the Amendment was being used more to bring out conservative voters on election day than any real fear that gay marriage

will ever be legal in Michigan. They pointed to the fact that it the Constitutional Amendments were in battleground states, and accused the Republican Party of “drumming up” ways to get the religious right to the polls as a campaign strategy to ensure President Bush’s reelection. It was called an “attempt to bring out the reactionary votes.” By Julius Zomper, spokesman for Coalition for a Fair Michigan, a coalition group formed to fight the amendment. (Michigan among nine states deciding gay marriage, 2004)

Gay Marriage has long been a wedge issue in the democratic party. Wedge issues are issues that create a “wedge” in the support of a party, it divides the supporters. Since the 1960s African Americans have provided a stable base for democratic support, however, they tend to be conservative on the issue of gay marriage. In 2004, there was a surge in some areas of African American ministers speaking out against gay marriage, and hinting that they will not support candidates that support it. (Abdo, 2004) In fact, Bush received 6% more votes from African American Protestants than he did in the 2000 election. (“Religion and the Presidential Vote”, 2004) Religious leaders all over the country seized on the issue of gay marriage as a way of rallying their base to raise funds for the religious right. (Kaplan, 2004) Clearly, this was an attempt to ensure that anti-gay politicians were elected or re-elected in the upcoming election. Particularly, President George Bush, who openly opposed gay marriage with his support of the Federal Marriage Amendment earlier that year.

On November 2, 2004, President Bush won reelection and voters voted to pass the Michigan Marriage Amendment, along with 9 other states whose citizens voted on similar amendments in 2004. Although it is unclear whether President Bush owes his

election to the backlash of opposition against gay marriage, statistics from the Pew Research Center show that his reelection owed much to the support of religious voters. He showed a 10% increase in votes from white evangelical Protestants, a 4% increase in votes from white non-Hispanic Catholics, 6% increase from both African American Protestant and Jewish voters, and a 5% increase from all Catholics as compared to the 2000 election. (“Religion and the Presidential Vote,” 2004) It is likely that many of these intensely religious voters either came to the polls in order to vote in favor of anti-gay marriage amendments, or to support a candidate who is opposed to gay marriage.

After the amendment passed it became clear that supporters of the amendment had no intention of allowing same sex domestic partner benefits, despite reports to the press that “nothing in this amendment... will erase anything in the books.” Gary Glenn of the American Family Association, was reported saying before the election, “the proposal will not affect benefits offered to people living together or in same-sex relationships.” At the time the Amendment passed in Michigan two cities, three public school districts, and 10 state universities offered domestic partnership benefits and many of these to same-sex domestic partners. (Kaplan and Moss, 2004) Gary Glenn was quoted in the Lansing State Journal as saying, “Benefits only to homosexuals are a formal recognition of a homosexual relationship as equal or similar to marriage, and the voters have said they don't want that.” In the same article, published just two days after the election, the American Family Association revealed their intention to review the policies of all state employers to make sure they were not offering same-sex domestic partnership benefits. (Range, 2004)

Proposal 2’s Effects on Local Grassroots Organizations

One group that worked against the amendment from the beginning is Parents, Families, Friends, of Lesbians and Gays – more commonly known by its acronym PFLAG. According to their web site this group boasts more than 2 million members and supporters and more than 500 affiliates making it the largest chaptered LGBT group in the United States. It works through a combination of support for families and friends who are trying to cope with their gay loved ones and grassroots activism.

The PFLAG website has a quote by Margaret Mead which shows the spirit and ideal of PFLAG and their affiliates, “Never doubt that a small group of thought committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” According to them their main mission is keeping families together.

I had a chance to interview the co-President of the Jackson chapter of PFLAG, Ms. Hampton. According to her, ever since the passage of Proposal 2 their group has focused more and more on support than on activism. She stated that during the campaign to block Proposal 2 members got very active, forming coalitions with other groups, passing out flyers at polls, and talking to everyone they knew. Despite their best efforts the amendment was passed. This caused many of these activists to, in her words “go home to their quiet lives and sulk.”

Before Proposal 2, this group worked to put a face on the issue, to make people remember when they were discussing gay and lesbian rights that they were talking about real people. They participated in many community events, and even though the Ms. Hampton said that the advocacy work has always ebbed and flowed, she admitted that it has tapered off quite a bit since 2004, when Proposal 2 passed. She also ascribed the tapering off to the recession in Michigan, many of the more active members of the group

have moved away, and since many younger people are not staying in Michigan the group has moved noticeably away from activism to focus mainly on support. This is a direct contrast to what PFLAG is doing nationwide. According to Ms. Hampton it is moving in a more activist direction at the same time that the Jackson Chapter is moving away from it. (Hampton, 2008)

When asked whether or not other organizations had the same reaction, Hampton said that Proposal 2's main effect was that the coalition that gathered together to fight it, referring to Coalition for a Fair Michigan, broke apart, and now the smaller groups that formed it are working on their individual projects, instead of working together the way they had to defeat Proposal 2. She said that many of the activists she knew, from her own and other organizations, are demoralized and do not want to get involved in any further activism.

What LGBT groups are focusing on now

Those state-wide LGBT organizations that continue to pursue activism seem to be focused on two major priorities, fighting for the limited interpretation of Proposal 2 and improving life for LGBT teens. Recently a large number of LGBT groups held a lobbying day in Lansing, in order to put pressure on Representatives to pass House Bill 5616, known as "Matt's Safe School Law." Matt was an eighth grader who forty days after an incident where he was bullied and hazed, took his own life. His parents believe that he killed himself because they were to report the incident to the police the next day. ("About Matt," 2006) This bill seeks to define bullying, establish procedures of investigation and reporting, proscribe consequences, and require all schools to have anti-bullying policies

– adopted with representation from parents, school employees, volunteers, pupils, school administrators, and the community.

LGBT groups are supporting this bill because it lists both sexual orientation and gender identity in its list of distinguishing characteristics upon which bullying is based. It states, very explicitly, that if a student is being harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity that it constitutes bullying and that if a teacher or school administrator ignores such bullying they can be held liable. (Michigan, 2006)

The need for anti-bullying legislation is clear. A nationwide survey by the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network in 2003 found that, out of the 887 self identified members of the LGBT community in high school who answered the survey, 18.8% reported hearing homophobic remarks from faculty or staff, 91.1% reported that faculty or staff were present at least some of the time when other students were making homophobic remarks, and 41% of those said the faculty or staff never intervened. The faculty and staff of public high schools are employees of the state, yet they fail to intervene 37.4% of the time when they hear homophobic remarks, and 47.8% of the time when they hear negative remarks regarding gender expression. On the other hand faculty and staff members intervene 89.1% of the time when they hear racist remarks and 84.6% of the time when they hear sexist remarks.

In addition to the acquiescence of the faculty or staff to homophobic remarks and harassment, LGBT high school students also face physical violence because of their gender expression or sexual orientation. 64% of students who answered the survey said they felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation, 24% were physically harassed, 17% reported at least one incident of physical assault. 39.1% felt unsafe because of their

gender expression, with 15% reporting physical harassment and 11.4% reporting at least once instance of physical assault because of their gender expression. (Kosciw, 2004)

Unfortunately, Michigan is not the exception to this nationwide trend. In 2005, GLSEN released the results of a study conducted by Harris Interactive where 199 Michigan students were surveyed as part of a national study of secondary school students and teachers. They found that 35% of students thought that bullying, name calling, and harassment was a somewhat or serious problem in their schools. 67% were harassed because they were, or perceived to be, gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and 60% were harassed because of their gender expression. 90% heard homophobic remarks such as “That’s so gay” and an astonishing 82% reported hearing the offensive term “faggot” in schools. According to the survey teachers failed to intervene 27% of the time when they heard a homophobic remark and 25% of the time for sexist remarks.

Even more disturbing 67% of the students who’d experienced harassment or assault did not report it to a teacher, 26% of those because they believed they either wouldn’t care or believe them, or because they believed it would only serve to make the situation worse. What this study means is that Michigan LGBT students are being harassed, or even assaulted in schools and that they do not believe they can turn to their school administrators to help. (“From Teasing to Torment,” 2005)

This is especially troubling because, whereas PFLAG is an organization of parents who have chosen to accept their gay children and fight for them, many parents do not. For these youth who face harassment at home school may be the only place they can turn to in order to feel safe. And school administrators may be the last line of defense before a LGBT teenager ends up dropping out of school, or becoming homeless like so

many other teenagers. In fact, LGBT youth face a greater likelihood of having abusive home lives and ending up homeless. It is estimated that 20% of the homeless youth on the streets are members of the LGBT community, a disproportionate amount considering that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender individuals make up only 3-5% of the population within the LGBT community. (Urbina, 2007) This disproportionate number of LGBT youth is linked to harassment at schools and harassment at home by a Brighton University Study conducted in 2006. (Cull et al, 2006) Many LGBT teenagers face abusive parents, or are kicked out of their parents' homes after "coming out."

Matt's Safe Schools Law would ensure that every school will have an investigative practice into bullying, and that every school in Michigan would take bullying seriously. This would be a step in the right direction to protect LGBT students from their fellow classmates. Additionally, when LGBT youth see school administrators taking instances of bullying seriously they are more likely to turn to them when they face harassment and discrimination both at home and a school.

In response to the blatant homophobia and discrimination faced by many LGBT youth, Gay Straight Alliances have sprung up in schools all over the nation. This group, commonly called simply the GSA, is a group that focuses on support for gay students and advocacy work to end discrimination in schools. Many GSAs are registered and coordinated with the help of GLSEN, the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network. The need for organizations like GSA is clear, by building tolerance they can help stop the violence and discrimination against LGBT students which all too often leads to LGBT youth dropping out of school, having lower GPAs, or not having the same college aspirations that their heterosexual peers might have. (GLSEN 2005...)

Oftentimes these groups face discrimination and even violence, particularly during their formation. I had a chance to interview a social worker from Jackson High School who helped a GSA get started in 2000. The group was proposed by two students who approached the Dr. Mejer after they spotted a “Celebrate Diversity” bumper sticker on his door. After the students told Dr. Mejer of their wish to form a student organization that would focus on the needs of gay students, and open up dialogue about gay issues with the rest of the student body, Dr. Mejer investigated and found that they could start a GSA. They had virtually no administrative issues with starting the organization; the student government gave the approval without any hesitation. However, once word got out that a GSA was forming it raised a storm of controversy with both parents and students.

According to Dr. Mejer, Ira Combs, of the Greater Bible Way Temple is a minister in Jackson who believed the GSA would “promote homosexuality” and that it should not be allowed in school. He began actively working against its formation, holding press conference in front of the school denouncing the “homosexual agenda.” He recruited a State Senator who threatened to sue the school if the GSA was allowed to continue. This suit could’ve never been pursued due to the Federal Equal Access Act which states that if any student organizations are allowed then the school cannot discriminate against organizations formed by and for gay students. However, the threat of a suit was enough for it to be brought before the school board. The controversy was finally settled, after numerous editorials in the local newspaper both denouncing and praising the formation of the organization when the school board announced that the club was not going to be banned.

Since that time the GSA has been quite active at Jackson High School. Every year, along with most other GSAs in the country, they hold a Day of Silence on April 25. Every student participating refuses to speak for the entire day as a protest in solidarity with people all over the world who are forced to stay silent about their homosexuality for fear of negative reprisals. Equating tolerance of the Day of Silence by school administrators with telling “kids to ‘embrace who they are,’ pick up that crack pipe and give it a stiff toke” (referring to the high prevalence of AIDS within the gay community) the American Family Association and the Concerned Women of America is trying to undermine the DOS by encouraging students to stay home from school that day to protest the school’s tolerance for the Day of Silence. (Barber, 2008) A staff person at the Jackson High was found distributing information to students and encouraging them to talk to their parents about not attending school on the Day of Silence.

Despite the controversy of its formation and the active opposition it sometimes faces, the GSA at Jackson High School continues to work towards teaching tolerance in Jackson High. Recently a member of the GSA spoke to the school board encouraging them to support three amendments which would add sexual orientation to the Jackson Public Schools anti-discrimination policy. (See Appendix A) This would include anti-discrimination, not just against students, but in the school districts hiring practices as well. Initially they tried to include gender identity, but the school board refused to consider it. In Dr. Mejer’s opinion it is because a gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientation is still more widely accepted than transgender. Although the school board has temporarily tabled the amendments to the district’s code Dr. Mejer has been assured that it will pass.

In addition to this work, the GSA, like similar organizations around the country has worked tirelessly to inform students about LGBT issues. This includes bringing in speakers to speak on the subject, and a recent mural which encouraged the public to sign a pledge to oppose bullying and discrimination. They are one of hundreds of GSAs, PFLAGs, and other grassroots organizations working in Michigan to inform citizens of issues facing the LGBT community, and as Ms. Hampton put it “put a face on the discrimination.”

Dr. Mejer believes that the presence of the Gay Straight Alliance in Jackson High School has helped increase tolerance and understanding of gay students. If Matt’s Safe Schools Law were to pass and be implemented by schools, LGBT groups believe that life for LGBT youth in schools would dramatically improve. They are optimistic that sympathetic administrators who report incidences of bullying and harassment, which are then treated seriously by the district, and the tolerance and understanding of classmates because of the work by groups like GSAs will give Michigan LGBT youth a place to turn when facing harassment at home, so the likelihood of them ending up homeless will decrease. (Mejer, 2008)

This optimism is supported by GLSEN’s 2005 National School Climate Survey. In their survey, which seeks to document the experiences of LGBT students, they found that LGBT youth in schools that had supportive staff had fewer reports of missing days of school, greater sense of safety, and that a greater percentage of LGBT youth planning on attending secondary education. They also found that in schools with a GSA, students felt safer and that they belonged at their school – a powerful motivator to continue their education. One challenge that many groups, such as the American Family Association,

has made is that it is unnecessary for Matt's Law to have enumerated groups that need to be protected from bullies. However, studies do not back up their assertion. According to GLSEN, 9 states have comprehensive bullying laws that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, 3 of those also enumerate gender identity. GLSEN found that in these schools LGBT youth reported lower incidences of hearing homophobic remarks and verbal harassment, as well as higher rates of intervention from faculty and staff, in schools that had the sort of comprehensive bullying and harassment policies that Matt's Safe Schools Law would require. However, in states that do not have these enumerated categories LGBT youth reported rates that were as high as states with no anti-bullying laws at all. (GLSEN's 2005)

National Pride at Work v. Granholm.

The other project that most major LGBT groups are focusing on is National Pride at Work v. Granholm, a Michigan court case which is seeking to ensure that the Constitutional Amendment is not interpreted in such a way as to keep federal institutions from offering same- sex domestic partners employee benefits, essentially to set the precedent that it only applies to marriage and civil unions, not to employment. NPW argues that domestic partnership benefits are a contractual relationship unrelated to marriage, but Michael Cox who is representing Governor Granholm, who has come out strongly opposed to both the amendment and the interpretation of it to include employee benefits, argues that it is the relationship that federal companies rely on when granting domestic partnership benefits and that the amendment clearly indicates that a same sex relationship cannot be treated the same as a marriage. (:”ACLU of Michigan,” 2006)

On September 27, 2005 district court judge Joyce Draganchuck agreed with NPW, issuing a summary judgment in favor of the plaintiff. Cox immediately appealed the decision to a three panel appeals court, who voted unanimously in favor of the defendants. NPW responded by appealing to the Michigan Supreme Court, who heard oral arguments on November 6th, however they have not yet released an opinion.

This case is important to the future of gay rights in Michigan, and it will reveal the extent backlash is from the push for gay marriage, which resulted in the amendment in the first place – even though Michigan already had a law against it. If the Supreme Court rules against NPW they have indicated on their website that they will consider, in conjunction with other groups, going to the Federal Supreme Court to challenge the Constitutionality of the amendment.

However, after the amendments passed there was a general consensus in the community that it was important to proceed cautiously. In a 2004 New York Times article Mathew Coles, the director of the American Civil Liberties Union, is reported to have stated that it was important that they proceed slowly in challenging the state constitutional amendments, in fear of the negative backlash whether they win or lose in court. There is a fear that pushing for gay marriage in court could bring back the Federal Marriage Amendment, which sought to define marriage as between a man and a woman in the Federal Constitution, which would cancel out the right to marry in states like Massachusetts. (Liptak, 2004)

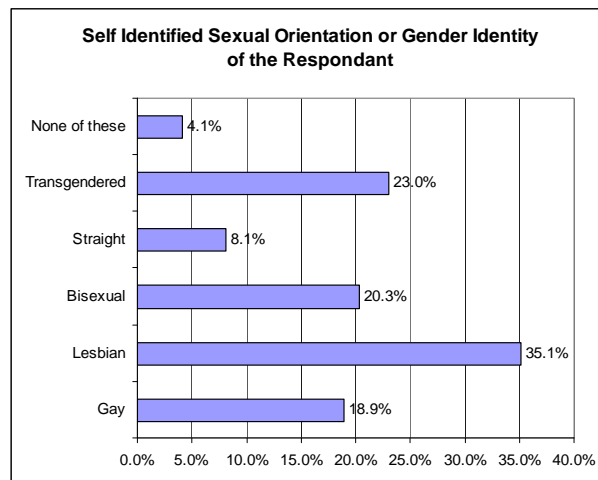
The ruling in this case will affect the status of same-sex domestic partnership benefits for public employees all over the state. At the time the amendment passed 19 state organizations offered domestic partner benefits; including 3 public school districts,

and 10 state universities. (Kaplan, Moss, 2004) Of these, one city, Kalamazoo has already dropped same-sex domestic partnership benefits after the ruling of the Court of Appeals, the others say they will wait for the final court ruling. (Kalamazoo..., 2007)

What issues are important to the LGBT community in Michigan?

In an attempt to discover what issues are important to the LGBT community in Michigan, and how important these issues are comparatively, I designed a survey which asked the respondent to rank common goals of LGBT organizations and to indicate how important the principle of these goals were. (See Appendix A) I distributed the survey online, through a website called Survey Monkey, which hosted the survey and collected responses. Additionally, I emailed the link to the survey to several local LGBT group organizers to distribute to their groups, as well as to the MichiganLGBT yahoo mailing list.

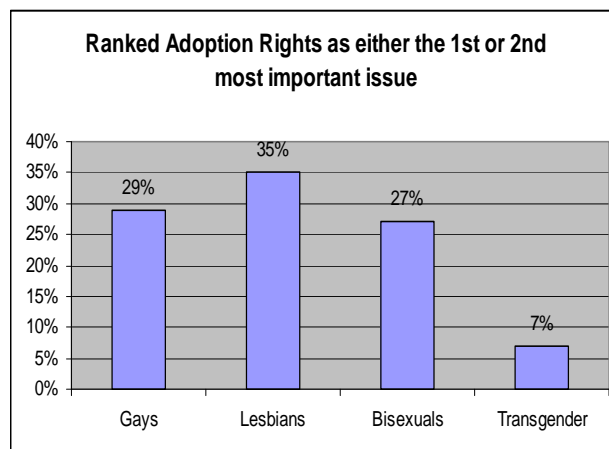
The respondents were asked to identify their gender identity or sexual orientation. It is important to note that the survey allowed respondents to give more than one answer because many self identify to more than one of these categories.



For example, many transgender individuals also identify as straight and one respondent even identified as both a lesbian and as bisexual. The largest percentage of respondents self identified as lesbian, with the smallest percent either identifying as straight or none of the above.

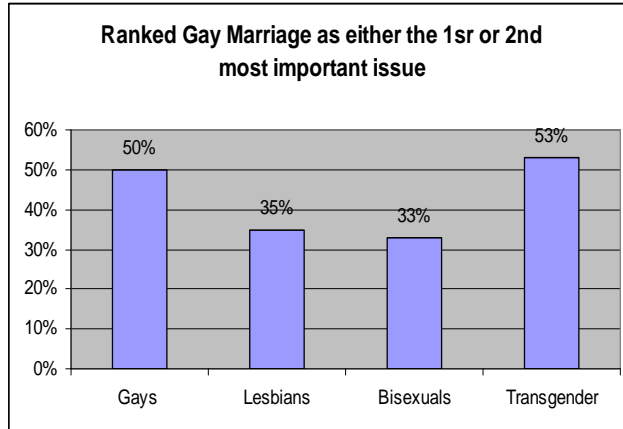
In order to discover how the members of these different self identified categories ranked the issues that are commonly discussed when looking at issues of gay rights and that receive attention from gay rights organizations, the survey asked respondents to rank gay marriage, nondiscrimination in employment, nondiscrimination in housing, and adoption rights according to which are the most and least important. Respondents were asked to rank the four issues 1 – 4 with 1 being the highest and 4 being the lowest. If an issue is ranked at a one or a two than it can be construed that that issue is more important to the respondent than one ranked a 3 or a 4.

Overall adoption rights received the ranking as least important. Only 29% of gays, 35% of Lesbians, 27% of Bisexuals, and 7% of Transgender individuals ranked it as either the first or second most important issue.



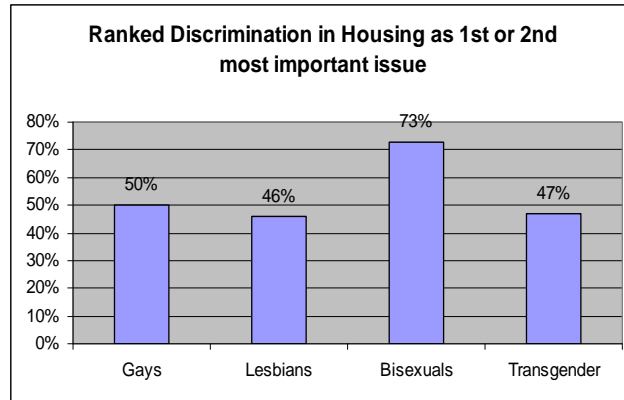
However, when asked to simply rate the principle of the goals as either very important, somewhat important, unimportant, or somewhat unimportant both gays and lesbians answered somewhat or very important 100% of the time, bisexuals 93.3% of the time and transgender individuals 82% of the time. Clearly this is still considered an important issue, but when ranked next to other issues it typically gets a lower ranking. This could be because the scope of impact is smaller for the LGBT community, it as it only affects couples who wish to have children.

The second lowest ranked issue was gay marriage. However, gay and transgender individuals were more likely to rank gay marriage as having a higher importance than Lesbians or Bisexuals. Both gay and transgender individuals ranked gay marriage as



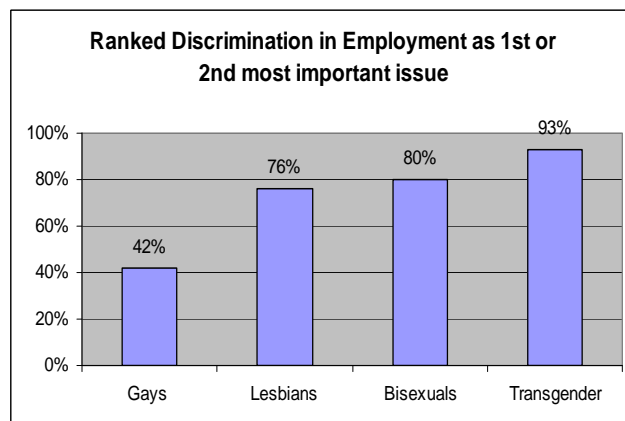
either the first or second most important issue 50% of the time, whereas Lesbians and Bisexuals only ranked it first or second 35% and 37% of the time respectively. However, it was indicated in some of the comments on the survey that a few respondents ranked gay marriage lower than they would've ranked civil unions, so it is possible that it is the traditional definition of marriage that is not considered as important, rather than a lack of interest in having same-sex unions legalized in a way comparable with heterosexual marriages. When asked to rate gay marriage independent of any other goals, only respondents who self identified as gay rated it somewhat or very important 100% of the time. The rest of the time it was rated somewhat or very important by lesbians only 76.9% of the time 86.7% of the time by bisexuals, and 75% of the time by transgender individuals.

When asked to rank discrimination in housing, bisexuals were the only group to rank it a one or a two over 70% of the time. Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender individuals seemed to find it to be a



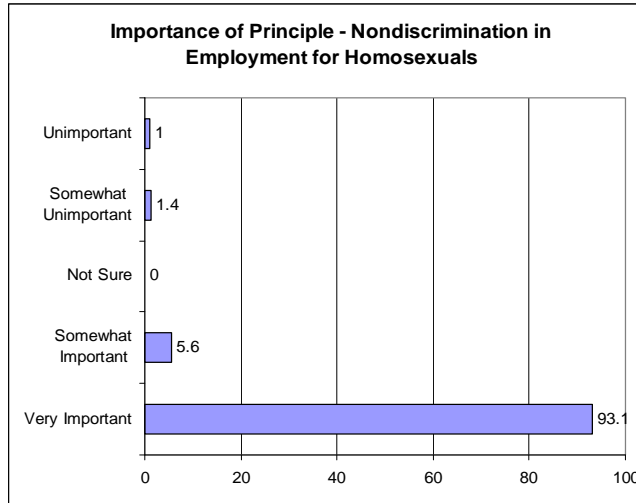
less important issue than others, with Gays ranking it a one or a two 50% of the time, Lesbians 46% and Transgender individuals 74% of the time. When asked to rank the issues separately of any other goals, however, Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals rated it as somewhat or very important 100% of the time, and Transgender individuals rated it as somewhat or very important 82.2% of the time.

Discrimination in employment is the category that was ranked the first or the second most important most often. Lesbians, Bisexuals, and Transgender individuals all ranked it as the first or second most important

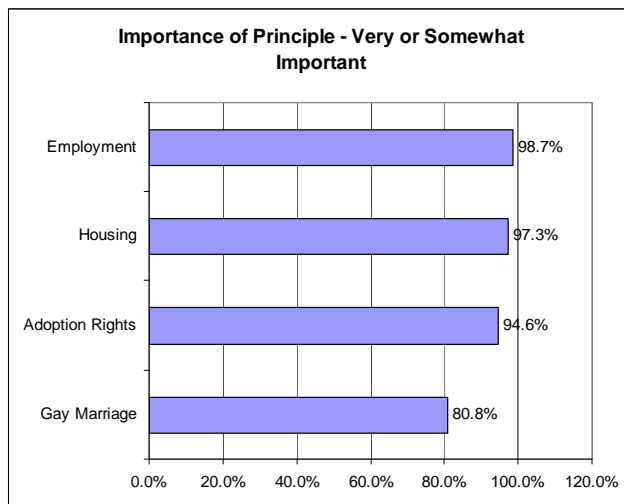


issue. When asked to rate it independently of any other goals Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals, all rated it as somewhat or very important 100% of the time, and Transgender individuals rated it 94.1% of the time. This received the highest ranking by far, both when asked to rank it comparatively, or simply rate its importance. In fact it had one of the lowest

rates of being ranked unimportant, overall. Only 1% of respondents ranked it unimportant and 1.4% ranked it somewhat unimportant overall. It also had the highest rate of being ranked very or somewhat important by all respondents.



When surveying all respondents nondiscrimination in employment and housing were both more likely to be ranked as very or somewhat important and gay marriage was less likely with only 80.8%, compared to employment's 96.7% and housing's 97.3%.



What this study shows is that issues such as employment and housing, and seem to be more important to the LGBT community in Michigan than family related issues such as gay marriage and adoption rights. This is significant, because it was backlash from the pursuit of gay marriage which cost state employees in same sex relationships their equal status with heterosexuals under their employment benefits. Thus relegating them to second class status on the job. Additionally, Michigan currently has not law protecting LGBT individuals from being discriminated in private workplaces, only

public. (“Your Rights..” 2008)

When asked if there were any issues which are not being addressed by the gay rights movement that should be addressed, respondents had a variety of comments. (see Appendix C) However, the most prevalent were transgender issues and identity issue within the LGBT community itself. Other issues mentioned were ageing within the LGBT community, concerns for LGBT youth and teenagers, and ensuring that certain legal rights such as the right to see loved ones in the hospital and the right to inherit your partner’s property were also mentioned frequently.

It is not surprising that transgender issues and identity issues were the most frequently commented on aspects. Although the gay rights movement has a long history of including transgender issues in their work, some groups also have a history of being willing to compromise on gender identity protections in order to gain protections for sexual orientation.

In 2007, legislation was before Congress to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the workplace. The bill was called the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. Initially it included gender identity, as well as sexual orientation, however the gender identity portion of the bill was dropped because members of the House of Representative did not feel it could pass with gender identity included. Many gay rights groups protested the move, urging members to write to their congress members to protest failing to protect transgender individuals, however Human Rights Campaign, a prominent gay rights advocacy group continued to support the bill. (Herszenhorn, 2007) The bill passed and is awaiting vote in the Senate. Although HRC later recanted its position regarding ENDA and began urging members to pressure their Congress

members to include gender identity, one commenter to the survey still called it a “betrayal” and asserts that the “T” in LGBT is “silent.”

LGBT groups suffered a disappointment in 2004, many of them continue to work towards improving the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals all over the state. It is unclear how many activist groups have closed up shop and given up on activist work. Groups like PFLAG and GSA continue to provide support, however, PFLAGs in Michigan have stopped many of their activism projects. LGBT activist groups are cautiously moving ahead with the legal process to limit the amount of damage done by the constitutional amendment, however, a negative Court of Appeals demonstration has made it very likely that gay public employees who currently enjoy same-sex domestic partner benefits will lose those benefits in short time.

Gay rights groups in Michigan continue to make small incremental gains in local as local school boards all over the state approve anti-discrimination legislation, and as the state legislature considers anti-bullying legislation that will improve the lives of thousands of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender teenagers. These groups, with their focus on employment, are addressing what 93% of survey respondents ranked as the 1st or 2nd most important issue today.

Unfortunately, groups like American Family Association and Concerned Women for America continue to actively work against equality for LGBT citizens by attempting to undermine demonstrations, stop anti-bullying legislation, and add discrimination into the state constitution. These groups have a lot of influence and can mobilize a lot of support with religious voters in the state. If the LGBT movement is going to be successful they need to find a way to negate the influence of these groups. These groups

have a lot of religious influence, which also allows them to raise a lot of money. The Catholic Church contributed more than 1 million of the 1.55 million raised by the Citizens for the Protection of Marriage during for the campaign for Proposal 2. (Cain, 2004) LGBT groups need to find a way to compete with the sort of money or religious influence if they are going to be successful in securing equal rights for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender individuals all over the state.

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Appendix A: Goals of the Gay Rights Movement in Michigan

1. How old are you?

- How old are you? 18 - 24
- 25 - 39
- 40 - 60
- 60 -

2. How do you identify your sexual orientation or gender identity?

- How do you identify your sexual orientation or gender identity? 1. Gay
- 2. Lesbian
- 3. Bisexual
- 4. Straight
- 5. Transgendered
- 6. None of the above

3. How involved are you in activism for the gay rights movement?

- How involved are you in activism for the gay rights movement? 1. Very involved
- 2. Somewhat involved
- 3. not sure
- 4. somewhat uninvolved
- 5. uninvolved

4. How involved are in activism for any other social or political issues

- How involved are in activism for any other social or political issues 1. Very involved
- 2. Somewhat involved
- 3. Not sure
- 4. Somewhat uninvolved
- 5. Uninvolved

5. How important is the principle of gay marriage?

- How important is the principle of gay marriage? 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat important
- 3. Not sure
- 4. Somewhat unimportant
- 5. Unimportant

6. How important is the principle of adoption rights for gay couples?

How important is the principle of adoption rights for gay couples? 1. Very Important

2. Somewhat important

3. Not sure

4. Somewhat unimportant

5. Unimportant

7. How important is the principle of equality in housing for homosexuals?

How important is the principle of equality in housing for homosexuals? 1. Very Important

2. Somewhat important

3. Not sure

4. Somewhat unimportant

5. Unimportant

8. How important is the principle of nondiscrimination in employment for homosexuals

How important is the principle of nondiscrimination in employment for homosexuals 1. Very Important

2. Somewhat important

3. not sure

4. Somewhat unimportant

5. Unimportant

9. Please rank these issues 1 – 4 based on the importance of the principle, 1 being the most important, 4 being the least

Please rank these issues 1 – 4 based on the importance of the principle, 1 being the most important, 4 being the least

Gay Marriage	
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Adoption Rights for Gay Couples	
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Nondiscrimination in housing	
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Nondiscrimination in Employment	
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10. Are there any issues facing the gay community that you believe the gay rights movement is not addressing sufficiently? Please explain.

Appendix B: Survey Responses, Date and Time of Responses

1.Police Harrassment, entrapment, and indifference in regards to to lbgt community. Tue, 4/15/08 5:26 PM

2.The exclusion of Transgender people form the Gay community Tue, 4/15/08 10:22 AM

3.The exclusion of Transgender people form the Gay community

4.Transgender: Employment discrimination protection,Hate crimes,Bullying in schools,Housing discrimination & Trans health care issues Mon, 4/14/08 11:13 AM

5.Freedom to attend any church without judgement from the clergy. Mon, 4/14/08 10:33 AM

6.At my age and that I am retired and free from debt with good pensions and a paid for home, only as being transgendered and in harmony with other like persons have I any goals beyond having my insurance pay a good deal on my surgery. I pay through the gills for my medicare supplement.That only I am discriminated by medicare irritates me. I would hope a more favorable environment evolves from Democratic party win in November. Mon, 4/14/08 9:39 AM

7.More action should be taken to educate the general public as to what being transgender means. People seem to automatically link transgender and gay which is not true. Move to make GLBT more understood and accepted. Mon, 4/14/08 6:57 AM

8.The rigidity of the definition of the TS, as well as the unavailability of proper treatment for at least some of the TS community. There should also be a "men's liberation movement," advocating such things as men wearing dresses and skirts, wearing makeup, and stuff like that. Sun, 4/13/08 6:27 PM

9.No Sun, 4/13/08 1:34 PM

10.There seems to me to be discrimination within the LBGT community. Not only in gender identity and sexual orientation but also racial and misconceived 'class' perceptions. I have found that one (meaning groups as well) cannot begin to eradicate discrimination until it is understood and controlled within oneself (LGBT inclusive). Sun, 4/13/08 11:26 AM

11.Transgender inclusion. Class issues. Racism. Sexism. Sun, 4/13/08 11:20 AM

12.People seem to forget about the T in GLBT, you included. I am not gay, but I am transgender. All your questions centered around homosexual issues, except for the one that asked if I'm trans. Transgender people face their own set of issues. It's not the same as sexual orientation, but we do have some similar problems and would do well to join

forces, but clearly (as evidenced by the backstabbing we received from the HRC) we are not really a part of the GLBT "community." The T just seems to be some additional letter that doesn't really mean anything to anyone whose not trans. I am strongly in favor of gay marriage, but I am strongly in favor of all human rights, and that has nothing to do with my being trans. The questions you have asked pertain more specifically to the GLB community. Thanks for perpetuation the notion of a "silent T" in GLBT. Sun, 4/13/08 11:05 AM

13.Discrimination by police and courts, racism, sexism, classism, divisions amongst lgbt folks, ageism, ableism Sun, 4/13/08 10:28 AM

14.aging, don't ask, don't tell. The right to form a GSA, the right to take your date to the prom, Sun, 4/13/08 8:06 AM

15.Aging. Senior Citizens who are GLBT Sat, 4/12/08 1:33 PM

16.Full inclusion within the community of all members of the community. Too much self imposed segregation occurs. Sat, 4/12/08 1:16 PM

17.There is too much focus on gay marriage and not enough on the major issues facing queer/trans teens and young adults (suicide, homelessness and lack of support networks, in particular, as well as drug addiction and queer-friendly safer sex education). Also, the "gay" rights movement hasn't done nearly enough to ally itself with the trans movement or with anti-racist and anti-poverty movements. Mon, 4/7/08 12:08 AM

18.I think it is important for the LGBT community to address issues of spirituality and religion. This is a very personal aspect of many people's lives, and there are inaccurate assumptions that the LGBT community has no desire to involve themselves in religion, or that religion has no place for them. There are many who struggle with the nature of their sexual identity against the supposed incompatibility of religions. Significant progress needs to be made in this area so that everyone can feel appreciated. Sun, 4/6/08 1:46 PM

19.no, the issues are pretty much tied in together and address on the individual basis quite well. Sat, 4/5/08 5:44 PM

20.Rights of trans gendered people. Sat, 4/5/08 11:42 AM

21.Enobling a non-militant model of being a gay activist. Internal educational narrative that promote maturity and wholeness as individuals. As a community, to move beyond sexualized, demonstrative identities or defining communities by fetish. Fri, 4/4/08 9:49 AM

22.Freedom to choose your: beneficiaries, medical powers, legal powers, insurance issues, pension issues, currently open discussion about the presidential candidates, foreign marriages being treated like real marriages in the U.S., bullying in schools, open and free college campus.... Fri, 4/4/08 9:31 AM

- 23.**racism and able-ism with in the gay community, issues acing LGBT elderly such as being ostracized by nursing homes. Fri, 4/4/08 12:10 AM
- 24.**You need to expand your definition of "adoption rights" to include "foster parenting rights" Thu, 4/3/08 9:19 PM
- 25.**transgender rights Thu, 4/3/08 8:48 PM
- 26.**The property rights of marriage should not be lost or confused with religious issues. The gay community needs to clearly separate out the social/religious emotion from the property issues. Thu, 4/3/08 7:22 PM
- 27.**Violence against Gays and Lesbians (Hate Crimes) LGBT teen suicide. Insurance issues. Lesbian Obesity and Health issues Survivor/Inheritance rights. Assisted living and Nursing Homes for Gays and Lesbians * A comment- I want some legal union, but NOT marriage which historically emerged from women being the property of men. Thu, 4/3/08 5:15 PM
- 28.**There is a distinction I would make between civil unions and gay marriage hence those numbers are lower on your survey than if you said civil union. Education in schools to help diminish prejudice and stereotypes is something I would like to see more activism on. Activism often is about what is OUTSIDE the community (in this instance the LGBT community). I believe our community needs activists on the inside that help us define ourselves our relationships, and our common values. Without some common values within our community, issue of child raising and civil unions/marriage are set up to fail. Finally, let's not forget about the right to serve in the military openly. Thu, 4/3/08 4:40 PM
- 29.**I don't think that the 1-4 scale is an effective way of comparing these important discriminatory subjects. But I tried my best, I suppose. Thu, 4/3/08 4:15 PM
- 30.**Biphobia Thu, 4/3/08 3:44 PM
- 31.**Rather than pushing the whole concept of gay marriage, I would like the focus to be more on the same benefits (financial and legal) for same sex couples as for heterosexual couples. I'm not a big fan of calling it "marriage". Thu, 4/3/08 3:34 PM
- 32.**acting as allies to others and working to eliminate discrimination against other groups, both in the LGBT community and not. Thu, 4/3/08 3:32 PM
- 33.**Cultural change (as opposed to purely legal changes). A meant-to-be-helpful comment: many people will not respond positively to your use of the word "homosexual." Good luck with your study. Thu, 4/3/08 3:30 PM
- 34.**Long term care Thu, 4/3/08 3:30 PM

35.Same sex benefits (medical/life/401k) Thu, 4/3/08 3:30 PM

36.Health care and health insurance Thu, 4/3/08 3:25 PM

37.The needs of the aging/elderly lgbt community Thu, 4/3/08 3:15 PM

38.Discrimination against our transgendered brothers and sisters. Wed, 4/2/08 5:20 PM