# THEY SAID WHAT? HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH ADVOCATES

by

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# ABSTRACT

MELISSA ELAINE STROMPOLIS. They said what? How to communicate effectively with advocates. (Under the direction of DR. RYAN P. KILMER).

With effective communication, nonprofit organizations engaged in policy and advocacy work can have a positive impact on the constituents served by the organization, on the advocates working with the organization, and on social issues in general. Effective communication is necessary not only to achieve social change but also to motivate supporters to act to effect change. Much like direct-service programs, advocacy efforts can be evaluated to demonstrate effectiveness and achievement of identified outcomes. While advocacy evaluations face a number of challenges (e.g., lack of a practical guide, difficulty identifying outcomes, and methodological issues), innovative tools and methods can be used to overcome these challenges. This study sought to examine empirically the effect that different types of advocacy communication, created by a nonprofit organization, had on (a) advocates' advocacy-related behaviors, and (b) college students' advocacy-related perceptions and intentions. The study found mixed support for three message frame theories: goal-valence, social norm, and goal setting/behavioral tracking. The largest effect was found for the goal-valence frame for advocates and the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame for college students. Implications of these findings are discussed, as are future directions. For example, additional research is needed to verify the effect of the message frame theories and to examine alternative advocacy behaviors and modes of communication.

# DEDICATION

For my family. For my Dad, who was always proud of my grades (even Cs). For my Mom, who pulled over the car and told me that if I wanted to go to college in Florida, that we would make it happen. For my sister, Jenn, who fearlessly led the way. For my brother, Kevin, who understood what it's like to be the have-nots. For my sister, Holli, who is my other half, the other pea in my pod. For my husband, who was always amazed by my work, no matter how big or how small.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Communication is a key component of change. Whether that communication comes in the form of eloquently written letters or 140-character messages sent via Twitter, it has the potential to change attitudes and behaviors. When the communication has important implications, such as advocating for social change, communicating messages effectively can be the difference between progress in addressing social issues or the lack thereof. For nonprofit organizations working for social progress with limited budgets and resources, effective communication is necessary not only to achieve social change but also to motivate supporters. An examination of what is working in the field of advocacy, however, is not straightforward. Advocacy evaluation is fundamentally different from direct-service evaluation and the nature of the work brings diverse challenges and requires additional considerations. For example, advocacy outcomes may change during a campaign and achieving specified outcomes may take many years. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine empirically the effect of different types of advocacy communication created by the nonprofit organization Children First/Communities in Schools (CF/CIS).

## 1.1 Defining Advocacy

Advocacy is a critical method for achieving social change because it has the potential to impact not only individuals and families but communities and societies (Coffman, 2009). Advocacy is defined as "a wide range of activities conducted to influence decision makers at various levels" (Morariu & Brennan, 2009, pp. 100). This

broad definition is intended to encompass all potential advocacy-related activities and goals. Advocacy activities can include coalition or network building, earned or paid media, electronic outreach/social media, grassroots organizing and mobilizing, litigation, lobbying, marches, polling, public education, presentations, public service announcements, and rallies (Coffman, 2009; Morariu & Brennan, 2009). The goal of advocacy, then, is to change social-, political-, or policy-related outcomes (Teles & Schmitt, 2011). For example, an organization may utilize social media and public service announcements to change vaccination rates (social), prevent military action (political), or enact background checks for firearms (policy). The activities, goals, and outcomes of advocacy efforts are not prescriptive, meaning that there is not a standard method or set of methods by which specific activities are employed to meet certain goals or achieve particular outcomes. Advocacy is also not a linear process; that is, advocacy does not involve a sequence of ordered steps that are completed to accomplish a specified goal. In fact, organizations may try several different tactics, simultaneously or across time, to accomplish a difficult goal. Organizations involved in advocacy-related activities, therefore, face a number of challenges in demonstrating that they are capable of effective advocacy and worth funding.

### 1.2 Advocacy Evaluation

Although advocacy evaluation is subject to the same accountability movement (i.e., increasing demands from funders to demonstrate effectiveness and achievement of outcomes; Carman, 2010) as direct-service evaluations (Reisman, Gienapp, & Stachowiak, 2007), advocacy evaluation is often elusive and has its own unique challenges (Teles & Schmitt, 2011) because of the non-linear, ever-changing nature of

advocacy. In terms of accountability, providers of direct services must be able to show the nature and/or amount of services provided (e.g., 100 people received a vaccination) and the effect of those services (e.g., rates of chicken pox decreased by 50%). Similarly, nonprofit organizations engaged in advocacy must also be able to detail the advocacy activities the organization completed and document the effects of those activities. As funders increase financial support for advocacy-related activities, they want to know which advocacy efforts are a sound use of their resources and worth supporting (Teles & Schmitt, 2011).

Although advocacy evaluation can be problematic in a number of ways, evaluators can proactively address the challenges by identifying potential barriers, such as the lack of a practical guide for conducting advocacy evaluation, different requirements by funding sources, varying perspectives on the role of evaluation, trouble identifying outcomes, and methodological issues (Reisman et al., 2007). While the field of evaluation offers a plethora of research articles, textbooks, and other resources regarding general evaluation development, approaches and methods, analysis, and reporting, there is a relative lack of practical guidance for conducting advocacy evaluation (Reisman et al., 2007). Without said resources, nonprofits and other organizations struggle to evaluate their advocacy efforts. Furthermore, funders struggle with evaluation requirements, often stipulating that the fundee limit the focus to outputs or imposing overly aggressive goals (e.g., achieving a policy change in a short period of time; Reisman et al., 2007).

Beyond varying requirements for evaluation, differences among funders add additional challenges for advocacy evaluation. For example, their diverse missions and

practices lead funders to be involved in a wide variety of advocacy activities (Reisman et al., 2007), which can take place at numerous levels (e.g., local, state, national, international) and may seek to achieve a number of different goals (e.g., raise awareness of an issue, increase voting rates, change legislation). In addition, the alignment of funder preferences with the activities and objectives of an organization's advocacy efforts may be a difficult process. Moreover, funders differ in the goals and emphases they have for the evaluation activities; some focus exclusively on outcomes, others emphasize implementation, and still others prefer to assess the connections between the implementation of advocacy activities and outcomes. Clearly a one-size-fits-all approach to advocacy evaluation will not meet the needs of all funders (Reisman et al., 2007).

Another challenge to advocacy evaluation relates to varying perspectives regarding the role(s) of evaluation in this context. For instance, many organizations engaged in advocacy efforts view evaluation as reflecting opposition to their work. In a similar vein, the leadership and staff of some organizations think their work cannot be evaluated and, in fact, believe efforts to conduct an evaluation can hamper advocacy efforts (Reisman et al., 2007). For example, in response to an initial plan, a grantor may contract to fund a social media advocacy campaign to address incarceration rates and an evaluation of the effort. During the course of the advocacy campaign, the fundee may need to change tactics (e.g., using in-person advocacy meetings), but does not because the organization does not have the capacity to evaluate the change in tactics. Evaluations of advocacy may be labeled as unsuccessful if the efforts do not include pre-specified activities or achieve pre-determined outcomes.

Determining outcomes represents another challenge to advocacy evaluation. Traditionally, projects are funded for short timeframes, usually one to three years; however, the goals or targeted outcomes of advocacy efforts often require a much longer timeframe (Reisman et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important to determine timeframes at the outset. Additionally, outcomes can be difficult to define when key contexts and stakeholders are changing. Flexibility is crucial in specifying variables and processes for advocacy evaluation, both for short-term and long-term outcomes (Reisman et al., 2007).

Finally, advocacy evaluation faces a number of methodological challenges. Some challenges in this context include making accurate attributions (i.e., supporting that observed actions or changes reflect a specific effect of an individual, organization, effort, or activity), accounting for complexity (i.e., various methods are typically employed to achieve a single goal), grantee capacity and engagement (i.e., evaluation experience and evaluation process buy-in of staff members), assessing and controlling for the role(s) of external forces (i.e., outside influences), reconciling shifting strategies and milestones (i.e., shift in tactics to reflect change in advocacy context), and managing varying and often extended timeframes (i.e., amount of time needed for social, political, or policy change; Guthrie, Louie, David, & Crystal-Foster, 2005). For example, given the longer timeframes necessary for advocacy efforts to take shape, traditional evaluation methods – as well as strategies designed to assess change over a one- or two-year period – may be unsuitable for advocacy work (Reisman et al., 2007).

That said, evaluation of advocacy is not impossible; however, innovative tools and methods need to be utilized to examine the impact and effectiveness of advocacy. The Annie E. Casey Foundation and Organizational Research Services developed a

measurement guide (Reisman et al., 2007) and identified six outcome areas at the individual, family, and community level that can be examined for changes as the result of advocacy work. The outcome areas include shifts in social norms, strengthened organizational capacity, strengthened alliances, strengthened base of support, improved policies, and changes in impact (see Table 1 for descriptions and examples). These outcomes represent both short- and long-term indicators and include a wide range of potential areas to examine. For example, targeting a strengthened base of support as an outcome could be measured by the amount of media coverage on an issue (short-term indicator) and behavioral actions to address the issue (long-term indicator). Clearly, it is important for advocacy evaluators to delineate outcomes of advocacy efforts and the indicators that will be used to determine if the outcomes were achieved (Reisman et al., 2007).

Regardless of outcome area, organizations need to first examine their internal capacity to conduct an evaluation. Organizational leadership and staff must reflect upon their ability to track the necessary data accurately and create a manageable, resource-efficient evaluation (Coffman, 2009; Wiseman, Chinman, Ebener, Hunter, Imm, & Wandersman, 2007). Assessing organizational capacity can have several positive impacts, including avoiding failure by addressing deficiencies, creating and sustaining support for the evaluation process, achieving the goals of the advocacy efforts, and ensuring clear roles and responsibilities. To assess internal capacity, organizations need to gauge the level of funding, staff, and expertise required to conduct the evaluation (Reisman et al., 2007). Thereafter, organizations need to focus on the intent of the evaluation (i.e., *Who* will use the evaluation? *How* will the evaluation be used? *What*

questions will the evaluation answer?), consider potential outcomes for evaluation, and select measures and methods for evaluation (Coffman, 2009).

Knowing who will use the evaluation and how can help guide planning to ensure that the evaluation will meet the needs of vested parties and yield products relevant to stakeholders' intended uses. For example, evaluations are typically used for strategic learning or accountability. Strategic learning evaluations capture data to inform current, on-going efforts, while accountability evaluations capture data to show vested parties that advocacy activities were completed as previously specified (Coffman, 2009). While both uses are valuable, the methods and measurement will differ based on the questions the evaluation is intended to answer. For example, an organization may collect real-time data on methods to increase voter registration and capitalize on the methods that are producing the highest number of new registrations (strategic learning). Additionally, the same organization may need to collect data on the number of new voter registrations and the number of individuals who voted in a specific campaign (accountability). The internal capacity of the organization and the intent of the evaluation will then inform the outcomes of interest and the method and measurement of those outcomes. The result will be a unique evaluation of the organization's advocacy efforts.

The current project, a partnership with the nonprofit organization Children First/Communities in Schools (CF/CIS), provides an example of the process of conducting an advocacy evaluation, including challenges to conducting the evaluation, identifying outcomes, assessing organizational resources, and outlining the intent, method, and measurement of the evaluation. In the end, the current project resulted in accomplishing an organizational-specific advocacy evaluation. The next sections

describe the history, mission, activities, values and principles, and policy directions of CF/CIS; the organization's advocacy campaigns; and the advocates of CF/CIS.

### 1.3 Advocacy Organization: Children First/Communities in Schools

Located in Asheville, North Carolina (Buncombe County), Children First/Communities in Schools (CF/CIS) was established roughly twelve years ago to better meet the needs of the local community (see below). The organization's roots date back to the mid-1970s, when Youth Services Action Group served as a collective voice for local youth; this entity later merged with Children First, a program of the United Way, in 1998. In 2003, Children First merged with Communities in Schools, a leading school dropout prevention organization that uses coordinators placed in schools to assess student needs and deliver resources. Children First and Communities in Schools merged to (a) provide services (e.g., financial assistance, mentoring, educational classes) to meet the needs of the working poor and families living in crisis in disadvantaged communities in Buncombe County; (b) facilitate community-based collaborative efforts; and (c) engage in advocacy (CF/CIS, n.d.c). This merger brought community members, organizations, volunteers, and resources into one location.

The mission of Children First is to "empower children and their families to reach their full potential through advocacy, education, and services," and the mission of Communities in Schools is to "surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life" (CF/CIS, n.d.b). Thus, the merged organization has two separate, albeit complementary, missions that led to the development of specific values and principles (see Table 2) for the new entity.

To achieve the mission of supporting and empowering children and families, CF/CIS (a) provides direct services to economically disadvantaged children, youth, and their families; and (b) engages in advocacy efforts. Services at CF/CIS include (n.d.e):

- Family Resource Center: helps families in crisis with food, clothing, financial assistance, and educational classes.
- Latino Outreach: offers literacy classes, Love and Logic parenting classes, resource referral programs, mentoring, and partnerships with other organizations.
- Learning Centers: serve at-risk elementary school children with afterschool homework help, healthy snacks, enrichment activities, and parental involvement activities.
- Project POWER/AmeriCorps Program: provides youth in Buncombe County with mentoring services and enrichment activities.

Advocacy activities at CF/CIS include efforts to raise awareness and develop solutions to problems affecting children and families (e.g., poverty, affordable child care, access to mental health services). CF/CIS staff believe that policies that are good for children and families will lead to better health, education, and safety for the entire community (CF/CIS, n.d.b). Guided by the values and principles of CF/CIS, advocacy and policy efforts fall in diverse domains, including: child poverty, education, environment, safety, juvenile justice, immigration, government and democracy, and health (see Table 3).

Based on their values, principles, and policy directions, CF/CIS leadership and staff identified the following advocacy campaigns as priorities: (a) promoting investments in early childhood education and care; (b) promoting budget reforms so North Carolina can invest in children's education, health, and safety; (c) raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18; and (d) expanding living wage jobs for county contractors (CF/CIS, n.d.a). CF/CIS staff recognize the importance of communication (via meetings,

presentations, social media, mailings, and the like) for engaging in advocacy work across all four of these campaigns.

Effective communication is especially important when partnering with individuals in the community who can become catalysts for change (i.e., those who complete behaviors that collectively result in advocacy-related change). In their efforts to reach community members, CF/CIS utilizes several modes of communication including print, email, Twitter, and Facebook. However, regardless of the specific mode of communication, the content of communication is important for building movement and facilitating actionable behaviors that create real and meaningful change.

Effective communication can result in a number of positive changes or outcomes, including increased community involvement in an issue; increased level of actions taken by vested parties; and changes in voter/civic behavior, awareness, beliefs, attitudes, values, and the perceived salience of an issue (Abroms & Maibach, 2008; Reisman et al., 2007; Wong & McMurray, 2002). Thus, investigating the qualities and characteristics of advocacy communication provides one avenue for examining a relevant advocacy outcome: strengthened base of support (Reisman et al., 2007). Notably, in the study's context, an evaluation of communication with CF/CIS advocates could not only strengthen CF/CIS's base of support but, in turn, could potentially result in changes that align with the policy directions of CF/CIS.

At present, CF/CIS employs a Director of Advocacy (herein Director) to oversee the organization's advocacy and policy activities. A critical aspect of the Director's advocacy-relevant responsibilities involves engaging members of the community in efforts that represent the values and principles of the organization. Members of the

community who are interested in the advocacy efforts of CF/CIS sign up to receive regular advocacy-related communications from the organization. By doing so, the community members are seen as advocates for CF/CIS (i.e., individuals who subscribe to receive regular advocacy-related messages from the organization).

In 2012, a total of 607 advocates received communications sent out by the Director; however, the advocates varied greatly in their actual level of involvement with CF/CIS advocacy activities. In an effort to learn more about the advocates at CF/CIS, advocates ($N$ = 77, response rate of 12.7%) were asked to respond to a survey that included items regarding demographic characteristics, usage of social media, news media consumption, prior advocacy involvement, and views on important advocacy areas (Strompolis, Borom, & Miles, 2012). Although the subset of advocates responding to the survey could not necessarily be viewed as representative of the larger group of advocates, the survey did yield information of relevance, helping CF/CIS better understand their advocates. Knowing backgrounds, interests, and preferences of intended recipients of advocacy-related messages is crucial for designing effective communication.

Most of the CF/CIS advocates who responded to the survey were white, female, held a master's or bachelor's degree, and had an annual household income between $40,000 and $80,000. They varied in age from 21 to 70 years, with about one-third between 31 and 40. All of the advocates who answered questions related to voting stated that they are registered to vote, and many reported that they vote frequently in local and national elections. Half of the advocates had been involved with CF/CIS for one to three years, and almost all advocates preferred to be contacted via email for advocacy-related communications. While half of the advocates used Facebook on a daily basis, only one-

third preferred communication via Facebook. Of note, 86% of the advocates had completed advocacy-related activities and were willing to engage in advocacy-related activities in the future (e.g., signing a petition, sending an email, writing a letter, and attending a CF/CIS event). Advocates expressed the most interest in being involved with issues related to children's poverty, education, and health (i.e., physical, mental, and behavioral) in the future. This type of information is extremely important, helping those at the organization understand ways to maintain and increase engagement of active and less-active CF/CIS advocates, respectively.

For instance, informed by these survey data, CF/CIS could tailor advocacy-related activities to meet not only the needs of the organization and community but also to include activities that advocates are likely to complete. Furthermore, CF/CIS could capitalize on policy- and advocacy-related activities that target issue areas that CF/CIS advocates view as important. Finally, the information could be used to communicate calls for advocacy-related activities using modes of communication that advocates prefer. Taken together, the information could be utilized to inform communications with advocates that are effective in achieving the goals of the organization. The information from the survey data can be used for determining the mode of communication, targeting of specific advocacy sub-groups, and/or requests for specific behaviors. Effective communication has the potential to increase the number of activities that are completed by the advocates; however, the content of the structured messages is also an essential component of effective communication. For the purposes of this study, the survey data were crucial to create messages and examine message effectiveness.

## 1.4 Message Framing: Introduction

Vast information exists regarding the way communication influences attitudes and behaviors. Just as advertisements have the potential to shape consumers' perceptions of and decisions about using products (Chang, 2007), the characteristics associated with communications with advocates could shape perceptions on social issues and influence the likelihood of behavioral action. A primary characteristic involved in investigations on the impact of communications on attitudes and behaviors is message framing. Message framing is important because it can provide the consumer with an alternative way of processing information and, ultimately, provide a signal for how the communicator feels about a given social situation (Frameworks Institute, 2002). By understanding the context in which effective communication occurs, or strategic frame analysis (Frameworks Institute, 2002), nonprofit organizations engaged in advocacy work can potentially have a positive effect on social issues via advocacy.

## 1.5 Message Framing: Background

In their classic study, Tversky and Kahneman (1981) found that individuals who are presented with a choice of options have definite preferences. While this result may seem obvious, Tversky and Kahneman (1981) highlighted that individuals have preferences among options, even when the options all have the same outcome or end result. The frame of the message produces a preference for an option among others with the same outcome.

Message framing examines how one message among two or more messages with contrasting words or phrases is preferred by individuals, even when the messages are logically equivalent (Druckman, 2001). In other words, message framing occurs when,

given a consistent outcome across multiple messages, different words or phrases within the messages demonstrate predictable preferences among the messages (LeBoeuf & Shafir, 2003). Researchers have studied message framing in many diverse contexts and conditions including consumer choices, evaluations of services and products, medical and clinical decisions, political perceptions, reactions to social problems, voting, and others (Lakoff, 2002; Levin, Schneider, & Gaeth, 1998; Schuck & de Vreese, 2009; Wong & McMurray, 2002).

### 1.6 Message Framing: Prospect Theory

Framing effects have historically been explained by a single theory, specifically, prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Levin et al., 1998). In prospect theory, Kahneman and Tversky (1979) outlined the effects of positive versus negative messages on preferences between two choices. They essentially examined the effects of valence framing, that is, the effects of messages that are created with positive or negative connotations (Levin et al., 1998). Within the broad category of valence framing are several different types, including risky choice, attribute, and goal framing. Risky choice framing involves the choice between two options: one choice is a 'sure thing' (low risk) while the other choice is all-or-nothing (high risk). Both outcomes are presented in terms of gains (positive) or losses (negative). Overall, research indicates that individuals are more likely to choose risky options when messages are negative (losses) and are more likely to choose less-risky options when messages are positive (gains). For example, in their classic study, Tversky and Kahneman (1981) presented the following scenario:

> Imagine that the U.S. is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual Asian disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease have been proposed. Assume that the exact scientific estimate of the consequences of the programs are as follows:

> If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved.
>
> If Program B is adopted, there is 1/3 probability that 600 people will be saved, and 2/3 probability that no people will be saved.
>
> Which of the two programs would you favor?

In this example, 152 individuals read the scenario and selected between the two options: Program A or Program B. Seventy-two percent selected Program A, while 28% selected Program B. The result helps demonstrate the notion that, when the choice involves gains (positive), individuals are more likely to be risk averse. In a similar, but alternative scenario, individuals did not exhibit the same preference for risk aversion. To show this effect, Tversky and Kahneman (1981) presented the following scenario:

> Imagine that the U.S. is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual Asian disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease have been proposed. Assume that the exact scientific estimate of the consequences of the programs are as follows:
>
> If Program C is adopted 400 people will die.
>
> If Program D is adopted there is 1/3 probability that no one will die, and 2/3 probability that 600 people will die.
>
> Which of the two programs would you favor?

In this example with losses (negative), the majority of individuals chose Program D (78%) while only 22% chose Program C. The conclusion based on this study and others (see Levin et al., 1998; Schurr, 1987) in this area is that, when individuals are presented with information in terms of losses (negative), they are more likely to take risks.

In contrast to risky choice framing, attribute framing does not involve the choice between two or more messages; it focuses on evaluations of independent messages (Levin et al., 1998). An evaluation can utilize a number of different formats, for

example, ratings of favorability (e.g., *Please rate how well the program has addressed barriers to employment for minority families.*) or yes/no judgments (e.g., *Should the program to address barriers to employment for minority families be funded for another year?*). The format options represent a choice between complements. In other words, an evaluation of *how well* or *how poorly* the program addresses barriers to employment for minority families provides information on both options. Essentially, a low rating on a scale that asks *how well* the program addresses barriers also provides information that the program does a *poor* job addressing barriers to employment for minority families.

Attribute framing is also a straightforward method for examining certain features of messages. Features could include the use of graphics; font size, color, or type; or parts of the message (e.g., introduction, call-to-action). One case in point is Levin and Gaeth's (1988) examination of consumer judgment, involving perceptions of ground beef. The ground beef was labeled as either 75% lean (positive) or 25% fat (negative). When asked to rate taste and level of grease, consumers found the 75% lean ground beef to taste better and have less grease. Taken together, evidence from attribute framing suggests that positive framing tends to lead to more satisfactory evaluations compared to negative framing.

Goal framing is another prominent valence message framing approach, with the objective to increase or enhance some situation or behavior. Using this strategy, the frames focus on the benefit or gain of performing the behavior (positive) or focus on the loss (negative) of not performing the behavior. Regardless of framing, however, the goal or specified behavior is the same. The ultimate question of goal framing is which frame will have the superior persuasive effect on achieving the same outcome: the one that

emphasizes gains or the one that emphasizes losses (Levin et al., 1998). For example, Meyerowitz and Chaiken (1987) examined the goal framing effect through messages presented to women regarding breast self-examinations (BSE). The women in this study received pamphlets entitled "Breast Self-Exam" that contained one of the following frames:

> By *doing* BSE now, you *can* learn what your normal, healthy breasts feel like so that you will be *better* prepared to notice any small, abnormal changes that might occur when you get older. Research shows that women who *do* BSE have an *increased* chance of finding a tumor in the early, more treatable stage of the disease (positive).
>
> By *not doing* BSE now, you *will not* learn what your normal, healthy breasts feel like so that you will be *ill* prepared to notice any small, abnormal changes that might occur when you get older. Research shows that women who *do not* BSE have a *decreased* chance of finding a tumor in the early, more treatable stage of the disease (negative).

Meyerowitz and Chaiken (1987) found that women who read the negative goal frame pamphlet reported more positive BSE attitudes, intentions, and behaviors compared to women who read the positive pamphlet.

Compared to risky choice and attribute framing, however, goal framing differs with regard to the meaning of *positive* and *negative*. In goal framing, the behavior has a positive or negative valence from the communicator's perspective. The goal framing manipulation does not change whether that behavior is positive or negative; rather, the frame influences the persuasiveness of the message. By contrast, risky choice and attribute framing present frames in which the positive frame is advantageous while the negative frame is disadvantageous (Levin et al., 1998). Generally, frames that emphasize the losses (negative) have a stronger impact on responses compared to the frame that emphasizes the gains or benefits (positive; Levin et al., 1998). Beyond these prominent

approaches, other theories with implications for message framing have emerged across diverse disciplines, including communications, political science, public health, and social and health psychology. The paragraphs that follow describe selected approaches with particular relevance to the proposed work.

### 1.7 Message Framing: Social Norms

Several classic studies in social psychology helped to illuminate some of the influences on human behavior. Asch (1951, 1956) conducted a number of studies on normative social influence (i.e., conformity), by examining the circumstances under which individuals will perform a behavior or make a judgment based on the behaviors and judgments of other individuals. Asch found that when individuals were presented with a line segment and asked which of three other line segments were the same length, individuals answered correctly almost all of the time (99%). When individuals were asked the same question, after others (intentionally) responded with the same incorrect answer, individuals were much less likely to answer the question correctly (37%). These and other studies helped to shaped what has come to be understood as social norms (see Asch 1951, 1956; Milgram, 1961, 1964, 1965; Zimbardo, Haney, Banks, & Jaffe, 1973). Social norms are defined as "the rules and standards that are understood by members of a group, and that guide and/or constrain social behavior without the force of law" (Cialdini & Trost, 1998, p. 152).

There are two types of social norms, descriptive and injunctive, that can affect an individual's behavior. Descriptive norms influence what most people are likely to do in a specific situation (i.e., the behavior), while injunctive norms impact what behaviors most people approve or disapprove of in a specific situation (Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren,

1993). For example, an individual may know that his or her medical doctor approves of eating healthy snacks (injunctive norm); however, when given the opportunity, the individual may decide to eat unhealthy snacks (descriptive norm). Although this example may help to delineate the difference between descriptive and injunctive norms, there are several factors that can impact whether descriptive or injunctive norms have an influence individually or collectively. For instance, Reno et al. (1993) conducted a series of experiments to examine the impact of descriptive and injunctive norms on littering. In one of the experiments, participants walked through environments that were either littered or not littered and witnessed a confederate walking by (control), littering, or picking up the litter. Across all of the conditions, when an anti-littering descriptive or injunctive norm was made salient, littering rates decreased relative to control conditions. Furthermore, when the norms were made salient, littering rates also decreased from pro-littering descriptive norm environments. In another experiment (Reno et al., 1993), injunctive norms impacted the rate at which participants littered in multiple environments. Participants who witnessed a confederate picking up litter littered less in both the parking lot where the confederate was located and a separate walkway. This experiment highlights an important potential for social norms: witnessing an injunctive norm in one environment can carry over to another environment. Finally, in a third experiment, the transsituation effect (i.e., normative influence that transcends environments) of injunctive norms was found to be successful in reducing littering compared to control conditions in different settings. In this final experiment, participants were leaving a library and returning to their cars in a parking lot that was adjacent to the library. The participants walked through the library and the parking lot, which were

either littered or not littered, and witnessed a confederate walking by (control), littering, or picking up the litter. The researchers found that while the descriptive norm and control conditions elicited similar littering rates for the transsituation condition (e.g., walking through the library to a littered parking lot in which a confederate picked up litter), the injunctive norm was effective at reducing littering rates compared to the control condition for the transsituational condition.

These findings have led to many studies on norms to identify the circumstances under which descriptive and injunctive norms have the greatest influence on behavior. These studies have documented the power of descriptive and injunctive norms in affecting a variety of behaviors including littering, reusing towels, smoking, drinking, and intimate partner violence (Borsari & Carey, 2003; Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008; Lee & Paek, 2013; Reno et al., 1993; Sorenson & Taylor, 2005). Of particular relevance to the current study, researchers have examined the impact of social norms in the civic arena.

In 2004, a political organization, Women's Voices Women Vote, mailed out roughly one million flyers aimed at increasing voting rates by single women. The Women's Voices Women Vote mailer contained only one relevant fact to voter turnout: "4 years ago, 22 million single women did not vote." Women's Voices Women Vote is not the only organization to cite that many people do not vote and, in fact, many organizations use this fact in their attempts to motivate individuals to vote (Gerber & Rogers, 2009). However, prior research on social norms indicates that the power for some social norms lies in the notion that individuals are motivated to behave in ways that are consistent with other people's behaviors. Although intending to increase voting rates,

highlighting the fact that most people do not vote may actually increase the likelihood that some individuals do not vote. Thus, this method of attempting to mobilize voters may actually have the opposite effect.

To examine the impact of voter turnout-based messaging empirically, Gerber and Rogers (2009) contacted potential voters in New Jersey (primary election) and California (general election) and exposed them to one of two messages: high or low voter turnout. In California the voter turnout messages stated (a similar script was developed for potential voters in New Jersey):

> (*high voter turnout*) We would like to encourage you to vote. More and more California citizens are voting. In the last federal election the vast majority of eligible California citizens voted. It was the highest election turnout ever. More than 12.5 million Californians voted in that election. That was an increase of over 3 Million from the previous statewide election. In the last primary election fully 71% of registered California citizens voted. In fact, more California citizens voted in the last primary election than in the previous primary election, an increase in the number of voters by about 20%. In the upcoming primary election this Tuesday it is almost certain that many millions of California citizens will vote, just as millions have in recent elections.
>
> We encourage you to join your fellow California citizens. Please get out and vote in the primary election this Tuesday!
>
> (*low voter turnout*) We would like to encourage you to vote. Voter turnout in California has been declining for decades. In fact, in the last 30 years turnout in primary elections has declined by nearly 40%. The last two primaries for Governor have been among the lowest turnout in California in modern times. In the most recent primary election for Governor, a meager 26% of eligible California citizens voted. That means that more than 15 Million California citizens did not vote in that election. In the upcoming primary election this Tuesday it is almost certain that many millions of California citizens will again fail to vote, just as millions have failed to vote in other recent elections.
>
> We encourage you to buck this trend among your fellow California citizens. Please get out and vote in the primary election this Tuesday!

Following the scripts, potential voters were asked to self-report demographic information, opinions regarding the importance and difficulty of voting (California),

expectations with respect to the closeness of the election (California), and voting intentions (California and New Jersey; each potential voter was asked one of the two voter intention questions):

> (*standard*) In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people are not able to vote because they were sick, they have important obligations, or they just don't have time. How likely do you think you are to vote in the election for New Jersey Governor this coming Tuesday: Absolutely certain to vote, Extremely likely, Very likely, Somewhat likely, Not too likely, or Not at all likely?
>
> (*probability*) Now I will ask you a question about something you might do in the future. I will ask you to say what is the PERCENT CHANCE of something happening. The percent chance must be a number from 0 – 100. Numbers like 2 or 5 percent may be "almost no chance," 20 percent or so may mean "not much of a chance," a 45 or 55 percent chance may be a "pretty even chance," 80 percent or so may mean a "very good chance," and a 95 or 98 percent chance may be "almost certain." The percent chance can also be thought of as the NUMBER OF CHANCES OUT OF 100.
>
> In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people are not able to vote because they were sick, they have important obligations, or they just don't have time. Now, what is the percent chance you will cast a vote in the election for New Jersey Governor this coming Tuesday?

Across all groups in California and New Jersey, the high voter turnout script was associated with higher intentions and probabilities to vote compared to the low voter turnout script. In New Jersey, the higher voter turnout script was significantly higher compared to the low voter turnout script on probability of voting (although the high voter turnout script was associated with high voter intentions on the standard question compared to the low voter turnout script, the difference was not statistically significant). Furthermore, the high voter turnout script was about seven percentage points more likely to yield a response of *100% likely to vote* compared to the low voter turnout script. In California, a similar pattern of results was found in which voter intentions were significantly higher for individuals who heard the high voter turnout script compared to

individuals who heard the low voter turnout script (for both the standard and probability question; Gerber & Rodgers, 2009).

Clearly, for nonprofit organizations engaged in voting advocacy, the high/low voter turnout messages have an important impact. Although the study did not follow-up with individuals to measure actual voting behavior (a significant limitation), the implication is that nonprofit organizations may want to utilize the high voter turnout message. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to measure actual advocacy-related behaviors to ascertain the association between messaging and behavior (rather than relying on intentions or beliefs). Gerber and Rodgers' finding regarding the messages' impact on individuals with various levels of past voting also has an implication for tailoring advocacy-related messages. Specifically, for individuals who were frequent voters (i.e., high involvement), there was no effect on either the high or low voter turnout message; however, for infrequent voters (i.e., low involvement), the high voter turnout message was associated with a higher intention to vote compared to the low voter turnout message. Again, although this finding was not followed-up with a measure of actual voting behavior, these results could hold relevance important for CF/CIS. A high voter turnout message could be enough to mobilize less active CF/CIS advocates.

### 1.8 Message Framing: Goal Setting and Behavioral Tracking

Two additional areas have important implications for message framing: goal setting and behavioral tracking. Goal setting refers to the establishment of specific targets, while behavioral tracking refers to the monitoring of a specific action. Information on goal setting and behavioral tracking comes from a combination of

disciplines including informatics and computing, health and social psychology, marketing and consumer research, medical sciences, and others.

### 1.9 Message Framing: Goal Setting

Setting goals has been an important strategy for achieving behavioral change. Oftentimes, goal setting is used to motivate initial calls for behavioral change as well as to sustain the desired behavior over a period of time (Abraham & Michie, 2008; Cullen, Baranowski, & Smith, 2001; Jensen, King, & Carcioppolo, 2013). Setting a goal and monitoring progress toward a goal are known to be effective in several areas, including weight loss, exercise, and dietary changes (Abraham & Michie, 2008; Cullen et al., 2001). Research has examined multiple dimensions of goal setting and their effects.

For instance, prior efforts have examined the proximity of the goal to the individual (i.e., how close/far an individual is to reaching a specified outcome). The goal-gradient hypothesis, which states that the closer an individual comes toward achieving a goal, his or her efforts increase (Hull, 1932), posits a similar behavior. Although Hull's (1932) classic study confirmed this effect with laboratory rats running toward food, it has been demonstrated in other areas including swimming, sustained grip pressure, sales competition, and earning rewards (e.g., Cheema & Bagchi, 2011; Kivetz, Urminsky, & Zheng, 2006).

An extension of the goal-gradient hypothesis is driving-toward-a-goal (DTAG). DTAG is often employed as a fund raising technique in which solicitors reference a specific goal (e.g., raising $1 million) and the progress made toward achieving that goal during a call for funding (e.g., *We only have $100,000 left…*; Jensen et al., 2013). DTAG has two basic elements: a goal message and a barometer of progress made toward

achieving the goal communicated in the message. Of interest to nonprofit organizations, one study found that, in field and laboratory experiments, DTAG garnered large donations over time (Jensen et al., 2013). Communicating a goal may be an effective strategy, in general, for achieving a specified behavioral outcome. Specifically, communicating a goal may be extremely important as the proximity toward achieving the goal decreases.

### 1.10 Message Framing: Behavioral Tracking

As digital devices continue to proliferate and many individuals rely on digital media for sustaining personal relationships, learning about current events, or communicating with a workforce or other constituency, it becomes increasingly salient to examine digital life, particularly as it may relate to message framing. Information captured from digital tracking (e.g., visits to websites, online purchases, and links shared with social networks; Singer & Duhigg, 2012) can provide important information on an individual's thoughts and behaviors. This information can then be used to create targeted and individualized messages based on a person's digital history.

Digital tracking is not a new technique, but it has received increased attention in the media given its use in the political arena (Conover, Gonçalves, Ratkiewicz, Flammini, & Menczer, 2011; Rustin-Paschal, 2011). Retailers have been using tracking to generate more relevant marketing strategies to consumers, and the retail usage has translated into targeted messages for political and advocacy efforts. For example, "Michelle Bachman's campaign rolled out an online advertising campaign exclusively for Republicans likely to caucus living within one hundred miles of the straw poll in Ames, Iowa" (Kreiss, 2012, pp.70; Smith & Schultheis, 2011). Additionally, an analysis of tweets from Twitter users

was able to accurately predict an individual's political affiliation (Conover et al., 2011). The availability of data (e.g., credit history, political donations, public records, real estate records, surveys, vehicle registrations, voting history, etc.) can provide individuals or organizations with a wealth of individual-level information including age, race, gender, location of residence, political affiliations, social organizations and memberships, behavior, and personal interests (Kreiss, 2012). In 2008, thousands of volunteers for Barack Obama gathered over 223 million pieces of information in the final two months of the campaign. All of that information is now housed in a database that is owned by the Democratic Party and can be utilized by other candidates running for office at various levels. The information has important implications for political campaigns – it was drawn on to create unique categories of individuals, namely, likely supporters, individuals who can be persuaded, and individuals who support the opposing candidate (Kreiss, 2012). Clearly, such information could be used in developing effective and targeted communications, especially for those individuals who could be persuaded to vote for a particular candidate. While many nonprofit organizations that engage in advocacy- and policy-related activities do not have the means to fund intensive digital monitoring and behavioral tracking, some tracking is still possible.

Communication tools (e.g., Constant Contact, Salsa) can be used for several purposes such as fundraising (e.g., creating custom donation forms), advocacy (e.g., designing letters to legislators), communication (e.g., generating newsletters), and organization (e.g., managing advocate contact information). Of particular relevance to this study, such communication tools can track the number of emails that are sent to recipients, the number of individuals who open the emails, and the number of individuals

who click on links (or some other behavior) within the emails. CF/CIS already uses Constant Contact and Salsa, but CF/CIS (and other nonprofit organizations) could further benefit from an empirical examination of the impact of the content of the messages. The inclusion of digital monitoring in messages may increase the validity of assessments of the messages' effectiveness by allowing tracking of desired behavioral outcomes. Constant Contact and Salsa could also be utilized to examine the impact of other message frames (i.e., goal-valence and social norms).

### 1.11 The Present Study

This study sought to examine the effect of different types of advocacy communication created by CF/CIS. Additionally, the current study's design took into consideration the evaluation challenges faced by CF/CIS, including identifying outcomes; assessing resources; and outlining the intent, method, and measurement of the evaluation. Although guidelines for conducting advocacy evaluations are limited, the measurement guide developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Organizational Research Services (Reisman et al., 2007) was used to target a *strengthened base of support* and *behavioral action* as the evaluation's central outcomes. While the evaluation was not constrained by funders or their influences (e.g., compensation was not necessary for this evaluation), the design of the evaluation was informed by CF/CIS's available resources and infrastructure to support the effort. The evaluation was designed to be achievable with only one dedicated staff member (i.e., the Director) and the agency's technological resources (i.e., Constant Contact and Salsa). Moreover, the evaluation was designed to increase the likelihood that its results would be useful for creating communications to achieve the policy directions of the organization, specifically with regards to advocacy

activities. Finally, the method and measurement of advocacy evaluation took into account prior attempts to elucidate effective communication strategies in specific contexts.

The literature regarding message framing and theories on human behavior is quite extensive; however, it is not without limitations. For instance, many of the studies on message framing did not examine advocates, regardless of the level of advocacy or agency involvement; instead, they largely relied on convenience samples (e.g., college students) or conducted their work in controlled laboratory settings. Furthermore, many studies included hypothetical situations in which the outcome of interest was an intended or likely behavior (e.g., voting intention), as opposed to assessing whether the targeted behavior actually occurred. While behaviors associated with real-time issues are challenging to capture, there is a need for studies that can incorporate current issues and actual calls for behavioral action. Collecting individual-level data for the purpose of designing targeted messaging is important, especially for organizations with limited resources. At the same time, having individual-level data to design messages and *track actual behavior* as a result of the message is even more critical.

The existing research base (both knowledge gained and limitations of previous research), the unique needs of CF/CIS, and the characteristics of CF/CIS advocates point to clear directions for examining message framing in the context of advocacy. This study examined message effectiveness, based on behavioral compliance and perceived message effectiveness, in samples of both CF/CIS advocates and college students. By including college students, this study followed similar procedures used in prior studies (enhancing comparability) and provided another context to examine effective advocacy-related messaging. The utilization of CF/CIS advocates addressed a gap in the literature by

providing information on the generalizability of message framing approaches, as well as the degree to which they related to 'real-world' behaviors.

This study examined the effectiveness of messages that were framed in the following ways: goal-valence, social norms, and goal setting/behavioral tracking. Specifically, this study investigated the following question: *To what degree were perceptions, intentions, and behaviors impacted by message framing?* To address this question, college students evaluated the perceived effectiveness of messages with goal-valence, social norm, and goal setting/behavioral tracking frames. Advocates received goal-valence, social norm, and goal setting/behavioral tracking framed messages with a call-to-action that represented a real-time issue with real-time consequences. The messages were based on issues that were rated as important to the CF/CIS advocates, contained calls-to-action based on activities that advocates were likely to complete, and were communicated via email for the CF/CIS advocates.

The predicted effects of the messages for college students and CF/CIS advocates included (see Table 4):

Hypothesis 1A: Compared to positive goal framed messages, negative goal framed messages will yield higher ratings of perceived effectiveness by college students.

Hypothesis 1B: Relative to positive goal framed messages, negative goal framed messages will produce higher behavioral compliance among CF/CIS advocates.

Hypothesis 2A: Descriptive social norm framed messages regarding the number of advocates *who took action* will produce higher college student ratings of perceived message effectiveness compared to descriptive social norm framed messages regarding the number of advocates *who did not take action.*

Hypothesis 2B: In the subsample of CF/CIS advocates with low involvement (i.e., operationalized as advocates who have not taken any behavioral action in the prior six months), descriptive social norm framed messages regarding the number of advocates *who took action* will produce higher behavioral compliance compared to descriptive social norm framed messages regarding the number of advocates *who did not take action*. In the subsample of CF/CIS advocates with high involvement (i.e., operationalized as advocates who have taken any behavioral action in the prior six months), descriptive social norm framed messages regarding the number of advocates *who took action* will not differ on rates of behavioral compliance compared to descriptive social norm framed messages regarding the number of advocates *who did not take action*.

Hypothesis 3A: Compared to unspecified framed messages, specified goal setting/behavioral tracking framed messages will produce higher ratings of perceived message effectiveness by college students.

Hypothesis 3B: Compared to unspecified framed messages, specified goal setting/behavioral tracking framed messages will produce higher behavioral compliance among CF/CIS advocates.

# CHAPTER 2: METHOD

## 2.1 Participants

College students were recruited from introductory psychology laboratory classes and approval to conduct this study was received from the university's Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects. Students in the General Psychology Lab course have a research participation requirement; however, the students were able to opt out of research participation with an alternative assignment. Students were informed of this study through the Psychology Department's online research sign-up system. Prior to participating in the study, students were informed of their rights as research participants including the study's voluntary and confidential nature. Students were also informed that they could discontinue participation at any time during the study and that the class credit for participating in the study would still be received.

The CF/CIS advocates had self-selected by signing up to receive regular advocacy-related communications from the organization. At the time of the survey (i.e., Strompolis et al., 2012), upwards of 600 advocates received such communications, but their actual involvement with the organization varied considerably. Additionally, CF/CIS did intentional advocacy outreach efforts to increase the size of their advocacy network prior to the current study.

## 2.2 Procedure

College students. After agreeing to participate, the students provided demographic information via the online research system. Next, students received one version of each of the framed messages; however, the students received these messages at one time point (thus requiring participation only once). Additionally, the students received the messages in the same order as the advocates (e.g., goal-valence, social norm, and goal setting/behavioral tracking, respectively). Although students received the exact same messages as the advocates, the students only evaluated the messages (rather than receive a real solicited call-to-action). Prior to answering the study questions, students read a script with information on CF/CIS and were instructed to make judgments of effectiveness, independent of previously read messages.

CF/CIS advocates. The Director of CF/CIS was responsible for sending the advocacy-related messages to the advocates via electronic communications using Constant Contact and Salsa. To examine the impact of message framing, advocates were not informed that their potential behavioral action would be part of a research study. More broadly, advocates were not informed of the ongoing work and its goals for the following reasons: (a) to mitigate the effect that knowing about the study could alter behavior, and (b) to examine the influence of the message frame. While advocates were not informed about the study, the messages and solicited calls-to-action were representative of the normal messaging activities of CF/CIS. The contextual information included in the messages was intentionally selected from issues that advocates endorsed as of interest to them and activities that advocates reported being willing and likely to complete in the future (Strompolis et al., 2012).

For this work, 'high-involvement' advocates were defined as individuals who completed at least one call-to-action in the previous six months (Strompolis et al., 2012). This decision was informed by the available results from those who completed the CF/CIS advocate survey. More broadly, however, CF/CIS has this information for all advocates, given their use of Constant Contact and Salsa.

Because high-involvement advocates would be more likely to respond to the solicited calls-to-action, stratification procedures were used to ensure that an equal number of high-involvement and low-involvement (i.e., advocates who have not completed any call-to-action in the previous six months) advocates would receive the variations in messages. For example, the Director ensured that an equal number of high-involvement advocates received the *positive* goal-valence message and the *negative* goal-valence message. Advocates received one version of each of the framed messages monthly over five consecutive months: advocates received one of the goal-valence framed messages in February, 2014, one of the goal setting/behavioral tracking framed messages in March and April of that year (this frame was used for two separate events in March and April), and one of the social norm framed messages in May and June. The order of the messages was not varied, as the events and related calls-to-action occurred in real-time. Additionally, each of the emails had the same subject heading stem (i.e., *Give me 5*) that is currently used by CF/CIS for advocacy-related calls-to-action. After completing the behavioral action, advocates were prompted via Constant Contact/Salsa to provide demographic information and to rate their level of involvement with CF/CIS. The prompt occurred after the advocate completed the request to sign a petition or send an email letter. The prompt explained that the information would be used to better meet

advocacy-related needs. Also, if the behavioral action involved attendance and participation at a CF/CIS event, after signing in onsite, advocates were asked by a CF/CIS staff member to complete a brief form to record selected demographic information and their self-rated involvement with CF/CIS.

2.3 Measures: Demographics

Students and advocates were asked to report their gender, ethnicity, age, occupational status, and years of school / years in school (if applicable). Advocates also rated themselves on level of involvement (1 = *no involvement*, 2 = *a little involvement*, 3 = *some involvement*, 4 = *high involvement*, and 5 = *extremely high involvement*) with CF/CIS.

2.4 Measures: Message Frame

Students and advocates received one of two messages from each of the three message framing approaches. College students were asked to rate the perceived effectiveness of the message (using a five-point scale for which 1 = *not convincing*, 2 = *a little convincing*, 3 = *somewhat convincing*, 4 = *very convincing*, and 5 = *extremely convincing*) and likelihood of completing the requested action (five-point scale for which 1 = *not likely*, 2 = *a little likely*, 3 = *somewhat likely*, 4 = *very likely*, and 5 = *extremely likely)*. Advocates were not asked to evaluate the message; rather, a behavioral outcome (i.e., signing a petition) was tracked. The messages used follow below, grouped by framing approach.

Goal-valence: positive. *Children First/Communities in Schools needs your help to improve the lives of children and families. Currently, our state uses a combination of state and federal funds to assist low-wage parents with the cost of child care – a cost that*

*can exceed the price of college tuition. Despite a waiting list of over 35,000 children for the child care subsidy program, the North Carolina Legislature and Governor McCrory did not pass a budget with additional investments for child care subsidies. Families receiving child care subsidies may choose the child care program that best meets their needs and helps to ensure that the child care is safe, high quality, and dependable. The availability of child care subsidies also increases employment, job retention, workforce productivity, and the growth of businesses. With your help we can get more children into quality care programs and keep our parents in the workforce. Congress and President Obama just passed a budget that invests more federal dollars in early education. Please sign our petition asking North Carolina legislators to follow Congress' lead by increasing state funding for the child care subsidy program!*

Goal-valence: negative. *Children First/Communities in Schools needs your help to improve the lives of children and families. Currently, our state uses a combination of state and federal funds to assist low-wage parents with the cost of child care – a cost that can exceed the price of college tuition. Despite a waiting list of over 35,000 children for the child care subsidy program, the North Carolina Legislature and Governor McCrory did not pass a budget with additional investments for child care subsidies. Families who are not receiving child care subsidies cannot choose the child care program that best meets their needs and may not be safe, high quality, or dependable. The lack of availability of child care subsidies can decrease employment, job retention, workforce productivity, and the growth of businesses. Without your help we cannot get more children into quality care programs or keep our parents in the workforce. Congress and President Obama just passed a budget that invests more federal dollars in early*

*education. Please sign our petition asking North Carolina legislators to follow Congress' lead by increasing state funding for the child care subsidy program!*

Descriptive social norm: advocates who took action. *Children First/Communities in Schools needs your help to improve the health of our community. Last year, 50 Children First/Communities in Schools advocates took action to support Medicaid expansions in our state. Although Governor McCrory and the NC Legislature blocked Medicaid expansion in North Carolina, we know that improving health outcomes for low-income parents will benefit the whole family. Additionally, if North Carolina does not expand Medicaid, fewer people will have health insurance, and state and local governments will have higher costs for uncompensated care. We encourage you to join your fellow advocates to email Governor McCrory and your legislators and ask them to reconsider their decision to block the Medicaid expansion in our state. Please send your email now!*

Descriptive social norm: advocates who did not take action. *Children First/Communities in Schools needs your help to improve the health of our community. Last year, 690 Children First/Communities in Schools advocates did not take action to support the Medicaid expansions in our state. Although Governor McCrory and the NC Legislature blocked Medicaid expansion in North Carolina, we know that improving health outcomes for low-income parents will benefit the whole family. Additionally, if North Carolina does not expand Medicaid, fewer people will have health insurance, and state and local governments will have higher costs for uncompensated care. We encourage you to buck the trend of your fellow advocates and email Governor McCrory*

*and your legislators to ask them to reconsider their decision to block the Medicaid expansion in our state. Please send your email now!*

Goal setting/behavioral tracking: specified goal and monitoring (event A). *Children First/Communities in Schools needs your help to improve the education of our children. At the* Are you Smarter than an Elementary School Student? *Event, we are trying to raise $10,000 to provide support for our after school Learning Center. The Learning Center is a safe haven afterschool program that provides academic assistance, healthy snacks, and enrichment activities for up to 60 at-risk children. The Learning Center strengthens the connections among student, school, teacher, parent, and community, a key element in helping an at-risk child succeed in school and prepare for life. We know you have attended a CF/CIS event in the past and we would love to see you at the* Are you Smarter than an Elementary School Student? *fundraiser as well!*

Goal setting/behavioral tracking: unspecified goal and monitoring (event A). *Children First/Communities in Schools needs your help to improve the education of our children. At the* Are you Smarter than an Elementary School Student? *Event, we are trying to raise money to provide support for our after school Learning Center. The Learning Center is a safe haven afterschool program that provides academic assistance, healthy snacks, and enrichment activities for up to 60 at-risk children. The Learning Center strengthens the connections among student, school, teacher, parent, and community, a key element in helping an at-risk child succeed in school and prepare for life. We would love to see you at the* Are you Smarter than an Elementary School Student? *fundraiser!*

Goal setting/behavioral tracking: specified goal and monitoring (event B). *Children First/Communities in Schools needs your help to improve the transportation system in Buncombe County. At the 2014 Child Watch Tour, we have a goal of increasing attendance to 50 individuals this year! The event will explore important transportation issues, including individuals that use the bus as their primary mode of transportation, the impact of Sundays without service, and reliance on public transportation for schooling, grocery shopping, and health-related appointments. The 2014 Child Watch Tour will help participants better understand the transportation challenges faced by many low-wage parents as they try to meet their families' basic needs. Participants will hear individual stories and discuss policy decisions that impact the public transportation system in Buncombe County. We know you have attended a Child Watch Tour in the past and we would love to see you again at the 2014 Child Watch Tour as well!*

Goal setting/behavioral tracking: unspecified goal and monitoring (event B). *Children First/Communities in Schools needs your help to improve the transportation system in Buncombe County. At the 2014 Child Watch Tour, we have a goal of increasing attendance this year! The event will explore important transportation issues, including individuals that use the bus as their primary mode of transportation, the impact of Sundays without service, and reliance on public transportation for schooling, grocery shopping, and health-related appointments. The 2014 Child Watch Tour will help participants better understand the transportation challenges faced by many low-wage parents as they try to meet their families' basic needs. Participants will hear individual*

*stories and discuss policy decisions that impact the public transportation system in Buncombe County. We would love to see you at the 2014 Child Watch Tour!*

2.5 Manipulation Checks

To ensure that the messages had their intended effects, college students were asked follow-up questions after evaluating the messages using the university's online research system. The goal framing message (H1A) manipulation check asked the students if the message was *mostly positive* or *mostly negative*. The social norm message (H2A) manipulation check asked the students if most advocates *took action* (rated as *yes*, *no*, or *don't know*). The goal setting/behavioral tracking message (H3A) manipulation check asked the students if *CF/CIS had a specified monetary goal* and if the advocate *has previously attended a CF/CIS even*t (rated as *yes*, *no*, or *don't know*). Finally, students were asked to assess the degree of likelihood of completing the specified behavior (five-point scale where 1 = *not likely*, 2 = *not very likely*, 3 = *somewhat likely*, 4 = *likely*, 5 = *very unlikely*) for each version of the framed message they receive.

To assess manipulation in the advocate sample, the number of advocates who completed the call-to-action was tracked using Constant Contact and Salsa. The effect of framing message for advocates was assessed based on the number of advocates who completed the behavioral call-to-action versus the number who did not complete the behavioral call-to-action. The number of advocates who did not open the email was also tracked.

2.6 Plan of Analysis

The primary dependent variables were the perceived effectiveness evaluations of the messages by the students (H1A, H2A, and H3A) and the behavioral actions by the

advocates (H1B, H2B, and H3B). All goal setting/behavioral tracking analyses occurred with combined event data. Initial descriptive analyses were performed to examine the demographics of the students and advocates, the randomization of students and advocates to message frame conditions, and the distribution of variables. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 19.

*Did perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action differ <u>within</u> the framing approaches for students?* Independent samples *t*-tests were used to assess if there were any statistically significant differences in ratings of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action between the *positive* goal framed message versus the *negative* goal framed message, the *action* social norm message versus the *non-action* social norm message, and the *specified* goal setting/behavioral tracking versus the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking. For all directional predictions, one-tailed independent samples *t*-tests were used.

*Did behavioral action differ <u>within</u> the framing approaches for advocates?* Only advocates who opened the email were included in this analysis. C*hi-square goodness of fit* analyses were used to assess if there were any statistically significant behavioral differences for advocates who received the *positive* goal framed message versus the *negative* goal framed message and the *specified* goal setting/behavioral tracking versus the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking; specifically, these analyses compared the number of advocates who completed the requested behavioral action to the number of advocates who do not complete the requested behavioral action within the aforementioned message framing approaches. A logistic regression was performed to examine the impact of the social norm message frame and self-reported level of

involvement on behavioral action for advocates. This analysis showed if level of involvement (coded as *high* or *low*) and message frame (coded as *specified* or *unspecified*) accounted for meaningful variance in the number of advocates who complete the requested behavioral action (coded as *yes* or *no*).

*Did perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action differ among the framing types for students?* To test the impact of messages by frame type, separate *one-way ANOVAs* were performed for perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action, respectively. Analyses assessed whether a particular message frame type elicited higher ratings of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action relative to the other message frame types. For significant omnibus tests, post hoc analyses were used to determine which frame types had significant mean differences using the Bonferroni correction (for unequal sample sizes).

*Did behavioral action differ among the framing types for advocates?* To test the impact of effectiveness of message by frame type, *chi-square tests of independence* were performed. These analyses tested for a possible main effect for frame type. That is, the analysis showed if a particular message frame type (e.g., *positive* goal-valence) was more effective compared to the other message frame types (e.g., *action* social norm, *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking) at increasing behavioral compliance for advocates. For significant omnibus tests, post hoc analyses were used to determine which frame types had significant proportional differences using standard residuals.

*To what degree were demographic variables associated with message effectiveness?* A final exploratory analysis examined potential associations among demographic variables and message frame effectiveness (i.e., perceived effectiveness,

likelihood to take action, and behavioral action); this helped to ascertain if any of the findings growing out of the study's central analyses needed to be qualified by accounting for demographic variables. ANOVAs, *chi-squares*, independent samples *t*-tests and regression analyses were performed. First, ANOVAs, *chi-squares,* and independent samples *t*-tests were used to determine if any of the demographic variables had a statistically significant relationship to message framing for continuous and dichotomous variables, respectively. This first step only included message framing approaches that had a statistically significant relationship with behavioral actions, perceived effectiveness, or likelihood to take action. Hierarchical linear and logistic regressions were then performed to determine if the effect of message framing existed above and beyond demographic influences (i.e., variables with statistically significant ANOVAs and independent samples *t*-tests were entered into the analyses) for advocates and college students separately. Statistically significant demographic variables were entered into the regression analyses first, followed by the message frame. Finally, logistic regressions were performed to determine if the effect of message framing existed above and beyond demographic influences (i.e., variables with statistically significant *chi-square* tests were entered into the analyses). Again, statistically significant demographic variables were entered into the analysis first, followed by the message frame.

# CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

## 3.1 College Students: Demographics

Three hundred fifty-nine college students participated in the study (see Table 5). Thirty-nine percent of the students were freshman (*n* = 140), 31.75% were sophomores (*n* = 114), 17.27% were juniors (*n* = 62), and 11.98% were seniors (*n* = 43). Women had a higher participation rate (58.50%, *n* = 210) compared to men. About 58% of the students were Caucasian (*n* = 207), and 20.61% were African American (*n* = 74). The remaining college students reported their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino (7.24%, *n* = 26), Asian (6.41%, *n* = 23), Mixed (5.29%, *n* = 19), and Other (2.79%, *n* = 10). The college students ranged in age from 17 to 56 years old. The majority of students were 17 to 21 years old (81.8%, *n* = 293, *M* = 20.57, *SD* = 4.16). Findings regarding interest and actions within the various advocacy areas (i.e., poverty, health, and education) had similar patterns, with most students reporting being *a little* or s*omewhat* interested in the advocacy area, and the majority answering that they had never taken an advocacy-related action (see Table 6).

## 3.2 College Students: Manipulation Checks

Manipulation checks were performed in the college student sample to examine the extent to which the message frames had their intended effects (see Table 7). More college students correctly identified the *positive* goal-valence frame message as positive (69.27%, *n* = 124) than rated the *negative* goal-valence frame message as negative

(48.33%, *n* = 87). The *non-action* social norm message had a higher number of college students who correctly identified the message as having an advocate who did not take action (81.57%, *n* = 146) compared the number of students who accurately rated the *action* social norm message (67.78%, *n* = 122) in which an advocate did take action. Finally, the majority of students correctly identified both the *specified* goal setting/behavioral tracking message (93.89%, *n* = 169) and the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking message (91.62%, *n* = 164). Overall, college students had the highest number of correctly identified messages for the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame, followed by the social norm frame and the goal-valence frame. Although a majority of college students did not correctly identify the *negative* goal-valence frame, the data from this frame were included in subsequent analyses for exploratory purposes.

3.3 College Students: Descriptive Findings and Within Frame Effects

*Did perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action differ <u>within</u> the framing approaches for students?* Compared to the goal-valence and social norm frames, more college students reported that they were *extremely* or *very convinced* in response to the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame. A similar pattern emerged when college students were asked how likely they were to take action (see Table 8). More college students rated their likelihood to take action as *extremely* or *very likely* in the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame compared to the goal-valence and social norm frames. Independent samples *t*-tests were performed to examine if statistically significant differences regarding perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action were present within the frames. As displayed in Table 9, no differences were identified within the frames. In other words, college students rated effectiveness and likelihood to take action

similarly for all of the message frame type comparisons. Thus, hypotheses H1A, H2A and H3A were not supported.

3.4 College Students: Among Frame Type Effects

*Did perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action differ <u>among</u> the framing types for students?* To test the impact of messages by frame type, separate *one-way ANOVAs* were performed for perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action (see Table 10). The analysis indicated significant differences among the message frame types for perceived effectiveness ($F = 7.98$, $df = 5,1071$, $p < .01$) and likelihood to take action ($F = 9.94$, $df = 5,1071$, $p < .01$). Post-hoc analyses showed that college students rated a higher level of perceived effectiveness for the goal-valence frames, regardless of valence (*positive M* = 3.15, *SD* = 0.83; *negative M* = 3.18, *SD* = 0.79), and for the goal setting/behavioral tracking message frames (*specified M* = 3.15, *SD* = 0.99; *unspecified M* = 3.27, *SD* = 0.95) compared to the social norm frames (*action M* = 2.81, *SD* = 0.96; *non-action M* = 2.82, *SD* = 1.07; see Table 11 for significant message frame type differences). No statistically significant differences were found between the college students' ratings of perceived effectiveness for the goal-valence and goal setting/behavioral tracking message frames.

College students reported a higher level of likelihood to take action in response to the *negative* goal-valence frame (*M* = 2.93, *SD* = 0.87) and the goal setting/behavioral tracking message frames (*specified M* = 3.02, *SD* = 1.05; *unspecified M* = 3.15, *SD* = 1.08) compared to the social norm frames (*action M* = 2.52, *SD* = 1.13; *non-action M* = 2.57, *SD* = 1.17; see Table 11). Additionally, college students who rated the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking frame were more likely to provide higher ratings of

likelihood to take action ($M$ = 3.15, $SD$ = 1.08) compared to those who rated the *positive* goal-valence frame ($M$ = 2.77, $SD$ = 1.09). The results of the goal-valence message frame types should be interpreted with caution, however, given that the manipulation was not highly successful. No other statistically significant differences were found among the frames.

3.5 College Students: Demographic Effects

*To what degree are demographic variables associated with message effectiveness?* A final analysis examined potential associations among demographic variables and message frame effectiveness. Prior to performing regression analyses to determine if demographic variables accounted for meaningful variance in message frame effectiveness, *t*-tests and *ANOVAs* were used to determine which demographic variables related to message frame effectiveness.

Age ($r$ = 0.08, $df$ = 2,1075, $p$ < .01), gender ($t$[1075] = -5.31, $p$ <.01), interest ($F$ = 17.43, $df$ = 4,1072, $p$ < .01), and message frame ($F$ = 3.46, $df$ = 4,1072, $p$ < .01) were significantly related to the measure of perceived effectiveness. Additionally, the same variables were significantly related to the measure of likelihood to take action (age $r$ = 0.09, $df$ = 2,1075, $p$ < .01; gender $t$(1075) = -5.99, $p$ <.01; interest $F$ = 32.85, $df$ = 4, 1072, $p$ < .01; message frame $F$ = 4.58, $df$ = 4, 1072, $p$ < .01). No significant relationships were found for ethnicity, year in school, or political affiliation for either measure of message effectiveness. In turn, age, gender, interest, and message frame were included in subsequent message effectiveness regression analyses.

Two hierarchical linear regressions were performed to examine the level of variance accounted for by the three demographic predictor variables, age, gender, and

interest, in students' ratings of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action, respectively (see Table 12). The three predictor variables explained a small but significant portion of the variance in perceived effectiveness, $\Delta R^2 = .07$, $F(3, 1073) = 28.23$, $p < .01$. Message frames with significant relationships to message effectiveness via prior *ANOVA* and *t*-test analyses (i.e., goal-valence and goal setting/behavioral tracking) were included in the regression analysis, entered via a next step. Message frame also accounted for a small portion of the variance in perceived effectiveness, above and beyond age, gender, and interest, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(4, 1069) = 9.50$, $p < .01$. The included demographic variables, age, gender, and interest, also accounted for small but significant portion of the variance in likelihood to take action, $\Delta R^2 = .12$, $F(3, 1073) = 50.24$, $p < .01$. As in the model for perceived effectiveness, message frame (i.e., goal-valence and goal setting/behavioral tracking) accounted for a small but significant portion of the variance in likelihood to take action, above and beyond the demographic factors, $\Delta R^2 = .04$, $F(4, 1069) = 11.74$, $p < .01$. Specifically, college students who were female or had higher levels of interest in advocacy were more likely to rate the message as effective and were more likely to take action (the standardized betas for age were not statistically significant); message frame (i.e., goal-valence and goal setting/behavioral tracking) accounted for a small portion of variance as well, above and beyond gender and interest. Again, the effect of message frame should be interpreted cautiously as the goal-valence manipulation was not strong and accounted for only a small portion of variance in message effectiveness.

In summary, college students who read the goal-valence and goal setting/behavioral tracking frames gave higher ratings of perceived effectiveness and

likelihood to take action compared to the social norm frame. More specifically, for perceived effectiveness, this relationship was found for both goal-valence and goal setting/behavioral tracking frame types. For likelihood to take action, this relationship was found for the *negative* goal-valence and the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking frame. That is, messages that highlight gains/losses or set a goal and include personal information are perceived as effective by college students; they reported high levels of likelihood to take action when messages highlighted losses or included generic goals and personal information. Additionally, college students who were women or had high interest levels in the advocacy areas also gave higher ratings of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action compared to men or those who had lower interest levels. Taken together, when sending advocacy-related messages to college students, nonprofits would benefit from utilizing the goal-valence or goal setting/behavioral tracking frames and from targeting women and individuals with high interest levels in the targeted advocacy areas.

### 3.6 Advocates: Demographics

Of the 144 advocates who took action across any of the advocacy campaigns (for a total of 186 actions), 24 provided demographic information for this study. Most of the advocates who responded to the demographic questions were women ($N$ = 20, 83.33%), and all but one of the advocates were Caucasian ($N$ = 23, 95.83%). Advocates ranged in age from 24 to 75 years old ($M$ = 45.75, $SD$ = 13.33). Just over half of the advocates rated their involvement level with CF/CIS as *somewhat involved* ($N$ = 14, 58.34%). The remaining advocates rated themselves as *highly/extremely highly involved* ($N$ = 5, 20.83%) or *not at all/a little involved* ($N$ = 5, 20.83%).

3.7 Advocates: Manipulation Checks

Manipulation checks were used to examine the extent to which the message frames had their intended effects in the advocate sample (see Table 13). Of the 1068 advocates who were emailed a goal-valence message (the number of advocates varies greatly as the organization works to increase their advocacy network, and individuals sign up and off of the CF/CIS advocacy network), 323 opened the email (29.41%). A slightly higher absolute number of advocates opened the *negative* goal-valence email (*n* = 169) compared to the *positive* (*n* = 154). Ninety-five advocates completed the requested behavioral action (sign a petition) for the goal-valence frame, with about equal incidents of action across the frame types (*positive* goal-valence = 49, *negative* goal-valence = 46). Of the 1106 advocates who were sent an email with a social norm frame message, slightly fewer opened the email (*n* = 273, 24.18%) relative to those who received the goal-valence frame. A similar number of advocates opened the email for the social norm frame types (*action* = 139, *non-action* = 134). Sixty-six advocates completed the requested behavioral action (send an email) for the social norm frame, with a roughly similar number of advocates completing the action for each frame type (*action* social norm = 30, *non-action* social norm = 36). Finally, 2164 emails were sent for the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame (for two different events), and 489 advocates opened the email (*n* = 20.70%). Of the 489, a roughly equal number of advocates opened the emails for the goal/setting behavioral tracking frame types (*specified* = 247, *unspecified* = 242). Twenty-five advocates completed the requested behavioral action (attend an event) for the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame, with about equal action taken by advocates in response to the two frame types (*specified* goal setting/behavioral tracking = 12,

*unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking = 13). Given that the emails were opened at a similar rate among and within the message frames, all of the message frames were included in subsequent analyses.

3.8 Advocates: Within Frame Effects

*Did behavioral action differ <u>within</u> the framing approaches for advocates?* C*hi-square goodness of fit* analyses were used to determine if any statistically significant behavioral action differences existed for advocates who received the *positive* goal-valence message versus the *negative* goal-valence message and the *specified* goal setting/behavioral tracking message versus the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking message. Additionally, a logistic regression was performed to examine the impact of the social norm message frame and self-reported level of involvement on behavioral action for advocates. For both of the analyses, only advocates who opened the email were included. No significant differences were found within any of the message frames; self-reported level of involvement was also not related to rates of behavioral action within the social norm frame for advocates. In other words, a similar number of advocates completed the requested behavioral action (i.e., signing a petition, sending an email, or attending an event) for each of the within message frame comparisons. Hypotheses H1B, H2B (*action* frame would elicit higher rates of behavioral action for low involved advocates compared to the *non-action* frame), and H3B were not supported.

3.9 Advocates: Among Frame Type Effects

*Did behavioral action differ <u>among</u> the framing types for advocates?* To test the impact of effectiveness of message by frame type on behavioral action, *chi-square tests of independence* were performed. Again, only advocates who opened the email were

included in the analysis. The analysis indicated that statistically significant differences existed among the message frame types, $\chi^2$ (5, $N$ = 1085) = 96.13, $p < .01$ (see Table 14). Adjusted standard residuals showed that the goal-valence frames, the *non-action* social norm frame, and the goal setting/behavioral action frames were significantly different from the expected number of behavioral actions. More specifically, analyses suggested differential rates of behavioral action response: observed behaviors for the goal setting/behavioral action frames were *lower* than expected while those for the remaining frames were *higher* than expected. For advocates, the highest rate of behavioral action resulted from the goal-valence message frames and the lowest rate of behavioral action resulted from the goal setting/behavioral action frames.

3.10 Advocates: Demographic Effects

Finally, *chi-square* and independent samples *t*-tests were performed to examine potential associations among demographic variables and rates of behavioral action. The analysis determined that none of the demographic variable had a statistically significant relationship to rates of behavioral action. The analysis likely did not show any relationships given the lack of variance within the advocate demographics. No further analyses were performed.

In summary, advocates who read the goal-valence and social norm frames were more likely to take action compared to the goal setting/behavioral action frame. The rates of behavioral action did not differ within the goal-valence or social norm frame types. That is, messages that highlighted gains/losses or others' behavior were effective tools for eliciting advocacy-related behaviors. Due to the low sample size, associations between demographic characteristics and rates of behavioral action could not be

determined. Overall, the present results indicate that, when sending advocacy-related messages to advocates, nonprofits would benefit from utilizing the goal-valence and social norm frames.

# CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

## 4.1 Research Questions

This effort examined the effect of three different message frames within the context of advocacy-related communications. The study found that message frame had a small impact on advocacy-related perceptions, intentions, and behaviors (see Table 15 for a summary). In brief overview, of the within frame analyses conducted, there were no statistically significant differences between the *positive* goal-valence versus the *negative* goal-valence frame, the *action* social norm versus the *non-action* social norm frame, or the *specified* goal setting/behavioral tracking versus the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking frame. Said differently, messages that emphasized losses or gains, other's behavior or lack thereof, or included either a set or a generic goal and personal information produced similar levels of advocacy-related perceptions, intentions, and behaviors. Results of the across frame analyses were mixed. While the goal-valence frames consistently outperformed the social norm frames, the goal setting/behavioral tracking frames outperformed the goal-valence and social norm frames in the college student sample; however, the goal setting/behavioral tracking frames were outperformed by both of the goal-valence and social norm frames in the advocate sample. Given the different methodological approaches used with the two samples, these findings indicate that the effect of message frame varies greatly. Finally, of the demographic factors examined for their potential influence on advocacy-related perceptions and behaviors,

only gender and interest (i.e., advocacy interests in child poverty, health, and education) were found to be related to behavioral perceptions and intentions in the college student sample. Although the sample size was not large enough to determine the extent to which demographic variables were associated with advocacy-related behaviors for the advocate sample, there is reason to believe that the results would be similar to those obtained with the college student sample. For example, prior research has shown that women are more likely to volunteer or engage in civic efforts (Center for American Women and Politics [CAWP], 2014; Einolf, 2011). Furthermore, the majority of respondents to a prior study of CF/CIS advocates (Strompolis et al., 2012) and the current study were women and individuals with high levels of self-rated involvement. That said, although the influence of demographic factors on advocacy-related perceptions, intentions, and behaviors may be similar for the two samples, the differences found in the study's primary analyses warrant separate discussions.

### 4.2 College Students

In the college student sample, the manipulation of message frame type had varied success rates. For the goal setting/behavioral tracking frames, almost all of the college students correctly identified the frames as *specified* (94%) or *unspecified* (92%). In comparison, in response to the social norm frames, about 82% of the college students correctly identified the *non-action* frame, and only 68% correctly identified the *action* frame. Finally, the goal-valence frames had the lowest level of manipulation, with about 70% correctly identifying the *positive* frame, and only 48% correctly identifying the *negative* frame. Furthermore, 40% of college students who read the *negative* goal-valence message incorrectly identified the message as *positive*. The lack of manipulation

success for the *negative* goal-valence raises notable questions, especially because prior research has demonstrated that a *negative* frame typically outperforms a *positive* frame (Levin et al., 1998). Despite the decision being made to include the goal-valence frame in subsequent analyses for exploratory purposes, the results involving that frame were interpreted with extreme caution.

College students' ratings of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action did not differ on within frame comparisons. Put another way, college students' ratings of message effectiveness were similar for the *positive* goal-valence compared to the *negative* goal-valence frame, the *action* social norm compared to the *non-action* social norm frame, and the *specified* goal setting/behavioral tracking compared to the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking frame. The across frame comparisons, however, did evidence meaningful differences. For perceived effectiveness, college students gave higher ratings to the goal-valence and goal setting/behavioral tracking frames compared to the social norm frames. For likelihood to take action, college students gave higher ratings to the *negative* goal-valence frame compared to the social norm frames, and they also gave higher ratings to the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking frames compared to the social norm frames and the *positive* goal-valence frame. Given that the effect of goal-valence frames had not been studied in comparison to the other message frames in the research literature reviewed for this effort, and the lack of effective manipulation in this work, further study of the influence of the goal-valence frames on message effectiveness would be needed to confirm a successful message frame effect.

The effect of message frame on advocacy-related perceptions and intentions was further examined in the college student sample to determine if the effect existed above and beyond the differences related to demographic factors. Initial analyses indicated that age, gender, and interest were significantly related to ratings of message effectiveness. Subsequent analyses demonstrated that only gender and interest accounted for a statistically significant portion of the variance in ratings of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action. Although both gender and interest accounted for a small percentage of the variance in perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action, the effect was greater for likelihood to take action (12% compared to 7%). Moreover, message frame had a small but statistically significant effect on message effectiveness, above and beyond the contribution of gender and interest. An effect of message frame was found for the goal-valence frames and the goal setting/behavioral tracking frames (the social norm frame was not included in the analysis given the non-significant findings in the primary analyses). Even though the effect of message frame was significant, message frame accounted for only a very small portion of the variance in message effectiveness (3% for perceived effectiveness and 4% for likelihood to take action), above and beyond gender and interest. Again, further research is needed to confirm the effect of the goal-valence frames given the low manipulation level. In the college student sample, however, the goal setting/behavioral tracking frames achieved a high level of manipulation. The college students were able to correctly identify the *specified* and *unspecified* frames and rated the frames higher on perceived effectiveness compared to the social norm frames and higher on likelihood to take action compared to the *positive* goal-valence frame and the social norm frames. Taken together, the goal

setting/behavioral tracking frame results provide an indication that this framing approach may be effective for eliciting advocacy-related behaviors from college students.

### 4.3 Advocates

In the advocate sample, the indirect measures of manipulation were successful. Manipulation could not be measured directly as the advocates were not aware of their participation in a research study. Additionally, manipulation was not measured directly to negate the potential influence on future advocacy-related requests that were part of the current study. Overall, the email open rates were somewhat low and ranged from about 21% to 29%; these rates could be seen as slightly higher than industry-wide email metrics of 15% to 25% (Idealware, 2008). Furthermore, the open and behavioral action rates were similar within the message frame types. The somewhat low open rate and behavioral action variability was confirmed with within frame analyses showing no differences in the rates of advocate behavioral action. This finding was consistent with the results of the within frame analyses involving the college student sample.

Contrary to the college student sample, the among frame analysis showed that the goal-valence and social norm frames outperformed the goal setting/behavioral tracking frames on rates of behavioral action. This finding is most likely due to the difference in the type of behavioral action that was asked of the advocates. For the goal-valence and social norm frames, advocates were asked to complete an electronic action that could be completed at any time and location. For the goal setting/behavioral tracking frames, on the other hand, advocates were asked to attend an in-person event at a specified time, date, and location. Requesting similar actions for each of the message frames would have increased the comparability of the analyses; however, a central element of the study

involved examinations of multiple advocacy-related behaviors, the nature and timing of which aligned with planned efforts of CF/CIS. Thus, the steps were ecologically valid; however, they reduced the comparability across frames. Nevertheless, the results of the advocate analyses indicate that the nature of the behavioral ask contributes to the rate of behavioral compliance.

Additional analyses were planned to examine the impact of demographic variables on behavioral action within the advocate sample. However, the sample of advocates who responded to the demographic questions was not only very small; it also lacked variance within the demographic responses. In other words, advocates who responded to the demographic questions were very similar (e.g., approximately 96% of advocates who responded to the demographic questions were Caucasian). Given the low sample size and lack of variability within the demographic variables, it was not possible to conduct analyses involving these characteristics. Prior research would suggest, however, that gender and interest play a role in rates of behavioral action, similar to results found in the present study's college student sample (CAWP, 2014; Einolf, 2011; Strompolis et al., 2012).

### 4.4 Message Frames

Goal-valence. While the high rate of behavioral action for the goal-valence frame compared to the social norm and goal setting/behavioral tracking frame for the advocate sample might suggest that the message frame was successful, two factors raise salient reasons for caution in drawing such a conclusion. First, the goal-valence message frame asked for the seemingly easiest and least time-intensive behavioral action. The advocates were asked to sign an online petition for the goal-valence frame, compared to writing and

sending an email and attending an event for the social norm and goal setting/behavioral tracking frames, respectively. Therefore, the high rate of behavioral action for the goal-valence frame may reflect the time and effort to sign an online petition rather than the effect of the frame itself. Second, the goal-valence frame manipulation was the least successful for the college student sample. Although prior studies have found significant effects of goal-valence framing (Levin et al., 1998; Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987), methodological differences between prior studies and the current study may explain the lack of manipulation success found in this study. For example, in an investigation of breast self-examinations in women college students, study participants were first asked to read a pamphlet on breast self-examinations and then asked to write down the arguments outlined in the pamphlet. Both the participants who read the *positive* goal-valence frame and the *negative* goal-valence frame correctly recalled the *positive* or *negative* information in the pamphlet (Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987). The actions of recalling and writing down the arguments in the pamphlets may have increased the salience of the *positive* and *negative* goal-valence frames. Although prior research indicated that *negative* frames were generally more successful (Levin et al., 1998; Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987), other studies have reported some success using *positive* frames (Andreoni, 1995; Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987; Wong & McMurray, 2002). Given the favorable outcomes found in the present study, and the fact that prior studies have found the goal-valence frame to be successful, there appears to be clear justification to examine further the message frames' impact on advocacy-related behavior and the conditions under which the *positive* or *negative* frame type produces high levels of advocacy-related behaviors. Furthermore, the goal-valence frame was successful in both the college

student and advocate samples. For nonprofits engaged in advocacy efforts, the goal-valence frame may be useful not only for eliciting advocacy-related behaviors but also as an effective communication frame for diverse audiences.

Social norm. The findings involving the social norm frame with the advocates might be viewed as somewhat successful as well, given the level of behavioral action by the advocates. However, here too, several issues warrant caution in interpretation. First, although the social norm frame in the college student sample achieved adequate manipulation, only 68% of college students correctly identified the *action* frame compared to 82% for the *non-action* frame. Second, a prior study had found level of involvement to be important for voting intentions; however, the results of the current study found that involvement did not have an effect on perceptions and intentions for college students or behavioral action for advocates (Gerber & Rodgers, 2009). Third, social norm theory identifies both descriptive and injunctive norms as important influences on behaviors (Reno et al., 1993). Studies that have examined the impact of social norms, specifically related to civic behaviors, were conducted in natural environments (i.e., Goldstein et al., 2008; Reno et al., 1993) whereas the current study was conducted in a virtual environment. Making descriptive and injunctive norms salient in a virtual environment is likely more challenging than witnessing social norms in natural environments. Furthermore, the level of *action* and *non-action* in the social norm frame may have been subject to judgments based on preconceived notions held by the college students and advocates. For example, in prior social norm studies, the levels of *action* and *non-action* were made salient in the messages by noting the *millions* of individuals who did or did not act (Gerber & Rodgers, 2009). Compared to the current

study, the social norm frame noted the *50* advocates who took action and the *690* advocates who did not take action. While CF/CIS may identify 50 advocates taking action as highly successful, the college students and advocates may have interpreted 50 advocates taking action as unsuccessful, inferring that *most advocates did not take action*. In other words, the college students' and advocates' points of reference for *most advocates taking action* could have influenced their interpretation that most advocates did *not* take action, thereby rendering the within frame manipulation nonexistent. The social norm message may have required additional context to inform the college students and advocates that 50 was a large number of advocates, given that social norm theory posits that individuals are motivated to behave in ways that are consistent with other individual's behaviors (Asch, 1951, 1956; Milgram, 1961, 1964, 1965; Zimbardo et al., 1973). On the other hand, if the number of advocates who take action requires extra context in advocacy-related messaging, the crafting of social norm framed messages may not be the most effective use of limited resources. In a similar vein, prior research has indicated that social norm messaging might be effective for motivating individuals with low levels of civic-related behavior (Gerber & Rodgers, 2009); however, the current study did not find that behavioral action within the social norm frame was related to levels of self-reported involvement by the advocates. Notwithstanding the methodological issues with this frame, the social norm frame was unexpectedly outperformed in both samples by both the goal-valence and goal setting/behavioral tracking frames. Furthermore, the goal-valence frame had a lower level of manipulation success and still received higher ratings of perceived effectiveness by college students and higher rates of behavioral action by advocates compared to the social norm frame.

The lack of success of the social norm frame in the college student sample, its association with lower rates of behavioral action compared to the goal-valence frame in the advocate sample, and the added efforts necessary to craft advocacy-related messages that make the frame salient may provide sufficient rationale for nonprofits, especially those with limited resources, to focus on other message frames to support their efforts.

Goal setting/behavioral tracking. The goal setting/behavioral tracking frame produced the least consistent results across the college student and advocate samples. In the advocate sample, the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame produced the lowest rate of behavioral action. Compared to the college student sample, the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame produced the most consistent and powerful results on perceptions of message effectiveness and likelihood to take action. The dramatic differences on rates of advocate behavioral action compared to the effectiveness ratings of college students are likely due to the fundamental difference between attending an in-person event and rating a message on effectiveness and likelihood to take action. Beyond the nature of the dependent variable, which differed significantly for advocates and college students, other methodological factors may also have contributed to the lack of within frame success for the advocate sample and prohibited further success for the college student sample. The theoretical premise of goal setting involves not only setting a goal, but also monitoring progress toward said goal (Abraham & Michie, 2008; Cullen et al., 2001). In the current study, college students and advocates received messages that contained a goal; yet, neither population received continued messaging regarding the progress toward achieving that goal. Furthermore, the premise of behavioral tracking is to produce messages that are targeted and individualized based on a person's digital history (Singer & Duhigg,

2012). While the goal setting/behavioral tracking frames contained a personal history reference (e.g., *We know you have attended a Child Watch Tour in the past…*), the message may not have contained enough personal information for the reader to perceive that he or she was being tracked and targeted. Finally, the within frame difference may not have impacted the college student sample given that the content of the goal setting/behavioral tracking message was related to education. Education, not surprisingly, received the highest advocacy-related interest ratings compared to child poverty and health for the college student sample. The college student' generally high interest in education may have overshadowed the within frame manipulation of the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame. Nonetheless, the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame was successful in the college student sample and, given the fundamental difference in the requested behavioral action for the advocate sample, additional studies are needed to explore the effect of the message frame on advocacy-related behaviors. Specifically, studies should examine the impact of messages that provide updates on progress toward achieving advocacy-related goals and various levels of behavioral tracking. An additional study might examine the extent to which goal setting/behavioral tracking is the new "social norm" for younger generations. For college students, much of their social interaction occurs online (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010), and providing individualized behaviorally-related information may be more effective at eliciting advocacy-related behaviors compared to group behaviorally-related information as presented in social norm messaging. Although the current study did not find that age was related to ratings of perceived effectiveness, increasing the salience of behavioral tracking may have shown to be effective at eliciting advocacy-related behaviors for

younger generations. As such, for nonprofit organizations that are targeting younger advocates (or specifically targeting college students), the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame may be a particularly effective communication frame.

### 4.5 Contextual Considerations

While not the central purpose of this study, this effort was designed, in part, to offer accountability insights into the advocacy work of CF/CIS. In other words, one goal was to help demonstrate to vested parties that the advocacy activities of CF/CIS were successful at achieving policy- and advocacy-related outcomes (Coffman, 2009). While the results of the current study did not show high levels of behavioral action by the advocates, they point to the need for further clarification regarding the role of several important contextual factors (i.e., the advocacy evaluation and message framing literature, the size of CF/CIS's advocacy network, and the political context in which CF/CIS operates). Those conducting an advocacy evaluation face a number of challenges (e.g., lack of a practical guide, different parameters required by funding sources, varying perspectives on the role of evaluation, and difficulty identifying outcomes) and, in the present work, the methodological challenges were the most relevant. First, those conducting advocacy evaluations struggle to make accurate attributions of efforts to policy changes (Reisman et al., 2007); that is true of this effort as well. Said differently, the current study could not make attributions of full responsibility for any policy-related changes if other individuals or organizations were making similar efforts. Moreover, given the relatively low number of advocacy behaviors tracked here, it is unlikely that CF/CIS would be able to claim meaningful responsibility for any policy changes. Second, CF/CIS would need to examine all of their advocacy efforts to determine which

activities contributed to the outcome of interest. For example, while the Director of Advocacy may engage a network of advocates to achieve a desired outcome, other CF/CIS staff might work towards the same outcome with different methods (e.g., in-person meetings with legislators, speaking to the media). The challenge would be to identify which advocacy activities had the greatest effect on the intended outcome. Third, evaluations, by necessity, reflect the capacity and engagement level of the staff. Thus, although the Director of Advocacy at CF/CIS may see value in conducting advocacy evaluations, the agency's capacity may be a barrier to conducting appropriate and informative advocacy evaluations. Although in the current study the Director of Advocacy was assisted by an external evaluator, capacity issues still existed. For instance, given the amount of time and energy needed for the Director of Advocacy's primary work demands, he was not able to send the advocacy messages at the same time and day of the week for each campaign. The day and time that the messages were sent, therefore, may have impacted the varying rates of behavioral action by the advocates. Fourth, advocacy evaluations are impacted by external, and often times unpredictable, forces. For example, the content of the goal-valence framed message was modified to reflect a change in the political context. The original message stated that *over 35,000 children were on a waiting list* (to receive a child care subsidy) and *1200 children on the list were in Buncombe County*, but the message used in this study had to remove the latter part of that statement. During the 2013 federal government shutdown, Buncombe County halted new placements for child care and provided temporary assistance to ensure that families receiving services prior to the government shutdown did not lose their subsidies. When the federal government shutdown ended, the federal funds and temporary county

funds allowed Buncombe County to serve all of the children and families on the wait list. At the time the child care message was sent to the CF/CIS advocacy network, the wait list was temporarily and technically nonexistent in Buncombe County. The temporary county funds have since ended and the wait list has now grown to over 800 children in Buncombe County. The change in content to the message (i.e., *Despite a waiting list of over 35,000 children for the child care subsidy program…*, with no specific information about Buncombe County) may have impacted the rates of behavioral action. Fifth, advocacy evaluations must be amenable to changes in tactics and strategies to achieve the intended outcome. In this case, the evaluation results of the advocacy campaign may have been more effective if CF/CIS and the external evaluator had the capacity to analyze the results in real-time. By doing so, the message frames that were producing the highest rates of the requested behavioral actions might have been used in subsequent emails rather than an equal distribution of both message frame types. Finally, advocacy evaluations need to account for the timeframe necessary to achieve policy and advocacy outcomes. Policy and advocacy outcomes tend to take multiple, long-term strategies implemented over a number of years to achieve the intended results (Guthrie et al., 2005; Reisman et al., 2007). While the results of this evaluation may not have demonstrated the level of effectiveness hoped for by the Director of Advocacy, the overall effort to achieve the policy and advocacy outcomes continues for CF/CIS.

The results of the current study also need to be viewed within the context of CF/CIS's base of support (Reisman, 2007). CF/CIS has an advocacy network in which each email message is sent to between 1,050 and 1,118 email addresses. The number of emails sent likely inflates the actual number of advocates in CF/CIS's advocacy network.

For example, individuals are able to sign-up to the advocacy network with multiple email addresses and are sent messages to all of their registered email addresses. Furthermore, in examining the number of advocates who responded to the behavioral requests for this study (95 signed a petition, 66 sent an email, and 25 attended an event) and a prior study (77 responded to a survey; Strompolis et al., 2012), the number of respondents ranged from 25 to 95. This response rate may more accurately reflect the true advocacy-related base of support (i.e., active support) of CF/CIS. In other words, it may be unreasonable to expect that more than 100 advocates would respond to any requested advocacy-related behavior. The identification of CF/CIS's true base of advocacy support is important given the levels of action needed to produce an intended result. Regardless of message frame, and depending upon the nature of the intended outcome (e.g., attendance at a rally, change to a city-level ordinance, passage of a state-level policy), CF/CIS may not have a base of advocacy support large enough to influence policy change.

Finally, the legislative and political context in which CF/CIS operates serves as another relevant factor that may influence the success (or lack thereof) of advocacy efforts. As one case in point, the objective driving the goal-valence messaging was to increase the number of families receiving childcare subsidies by increasing state funding for the program. While the North Carolina legislature did increase the amount of funding for the childcare subsidy program, they also restricted the eligibility for families. In the end, the campaign – by CF/CIS and others around the state – to increase funding for childcare subsidies was not highly successful as the value of the childcare vouchers went up, but the number of families receiving the vouchers went down. Clearly, the legislative and political context had a critical impact on the perceived success of the goal-valence

campaign. Unlike the goal-valence messaging, the purpose of the social norm messaging (expanding Medicaid in North Carolina) was not addressed in legislative sessions by the legislature. The intent of the social norm campaign was not achieved.

The goal setting/behavioral tracking campaign differed from the previous two campaigns in that state-level policy change was not the only intended outcome. One of the outcomes for both of the goal setting/behavioral tracking campaigns was to increase participation at CF/CIS events. In addition to engaging participants, the *Are You Smarter Than An Elementary School Student?* was designed to raise funds to support afterschool programs, and the *Child Watch Tour* was designed to engage advocates in policy- and advocacy-related issues and help persuade the members of city council to provide funding for public bus services on Sundays. The *Child Watch Tour* had the largest attendance to-date with 70 advocates, and city council did provide funding for public bus services on Sundays. The effort to engage advocates at the *Child Watch Tour* was successful, given the number of advocates that attended and the outcome of increased funding for public bus services. At the same time, the number of advocates who self-identified as attending the event as a result of receiving emails through the advocacy network was relatively low (19 advocates).

Overall, the results of the current study indicate that message framing did not have a large effect on advocacy-related perceptions, intentions, and behaviors. This interpretation is limited, however, by the results of the manipulation analyses. For the college students, there was a clear relationship between the effect of the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame on perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action. The manipulations for the goal-valence and social norm frames were less

successful compared to the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame and, thus, produced mixed and poor ratings of message effectiveness, respectively. Despite the message frames being equally distributed to members of CF/CIS's advocacy network, direct manipulation measures were excluded for advocates to mitigate the effect that knowing about the study might have on their behavior. The ultimate question of goal framing effects (i.e., superior effect in achieving the same outcome; Levin et al., 1998) cannot be answered when manipulations were not successful or were unknown.

### 4.6 Study Limitations

Several study limitations bear mention. First, the message frame manipulations were not particularly successful in the college student sample and likely performed similarly in the advocate sample. While the manipulation for the goal setting/behavioral tracking frame was strong in the college student sample, the remaining frames yielded moderate and low levels of manipulation success for the social norm and goal-valence frames, respectively.

While the varying message frames and types were distributed similarly among the advocate sample, the overall open rate for emails sent to advocates was somewhat low (21% to 29%). Although the open rate was slightly above industry standards (Idealware, 2008), the purpose of advocacy efforts is to achieve some policy- or advocacy-related goal. With low participation from advocates, policy and advocacy change may be unlikely.

Third, the small sample size for the advocate sample likely impacted the results of the current study. Although the sample size for the within and among message frame comparisons was adequate, a larger sample size may have been more representative of

the advocates; it would have at least yielded greater statistical power, increasing the likelihood of identifying within and among frame differences that may have been present. Furthermore, a larger sample size would have allowed for tests examining potential linkages between demographic variables and rates of behavioral action.

In a similar vein, while the goal setting/behavioral tracking sample size met the requirements for sound conduct of the statistical analyses used here, the sample size was only slightly above that threshold (i.e., equal to or greater than 10 data points). The low behavioral action rates in the advocate sample are likely due to the fundamental difference in the requested behavioral action. Therefore, the behavioral action rate comparisons among the message frames may be inappropriate.

Fifth, the current study only examined three different types of advocacy-related behaviors (i.e., sign a petition, write and send a letter, and attend an event) via a single mode of communication (i.e., email). A wider range of advocacy-related behaviors exists, including coalition or network building, grassroots organizing and mobilization, litigations, presentations, and attending rallies (Coffman, 2009; Morariu & Brennan, 2009). Although the current study used information from an advocate survey (see Strompolis et al., 2012) to request behaviors that advocates were likely to perform and communicated with the advocates via the most preferred method, the effect of message frame could profitably be examined using a wider range of advocacy-related behaviors and modes of communication. In-depth message frame studies might examine a single message frame on a range of advocacy-related behaviors with multiple modes of communication.

Finally, the alignment (or lack thereof) of CF/CIS advocacy efforts and advocates' areas of interest may have mitigated the potential impact of message frame on behavioral action. At the time of the study, CF/CIS identified investments in early childhood education and care, budget reforms, age of juvenile jurisdiction, and living wages as policy priorities (CF/CIS, n.d.a). CF/CIS advocates identified policy areas of education, child poverty, and health as areas of highest interest and, while there is clear overlap, the alignment between CF/CIS priorities and areas of interest by the advocates may need a stronger connection. For example, some advocates might have a high interest in education, but did not associate the call for increases in childcare subsidies as an educational need.

### 4.7 Contributions and Future Directions

Notwithstanding these limitations, the current study contributed knowledge to two key aspects of the advocacy evaluation and message framing research literature. First, the advocacy evaluation context included actual advocates associated with a nonprofit organization engaged in policy and advocacy activities, rather than relying solely on convenience samples. Furthermore, the study included policy- and advocacy-related situations in which the outcome of interest had real consequences for the children and families served by and involved with CF/CIS, as opposed to studies that took place in controlled laboratory settings. Moreover, the examinations of CF/CIS advocates included areas that were of interest to the advocates and behavioral actions that advocates were likely to complete. Previous studies largely focused on convenience samples, advocacy activities limited to voting, or measures of perceptions and intentions. To that end, the evaluation designed for CF/CIS included assessments of real issues, with real

consequences that advocates could potentially impact through real behavioral calls-to-action from CF/CIS advocacy communications; these qualities enhance its ecological validity and potential applicability.

Second, the current study added to the message framing literature by comparing the effectiveness of six different message frame types, using a sample of advocates and an analog approach with college students. The goal-valence, social norm, and goal setting/behavioral tracking message frame types were compared to each other on measures of perceptions, intentions, and behaviors. The research literature has focused primarily on comparisons of within frame effectiveness (i.e., *positive* goal-valence versus the *negative* goal-valence frame, the *action* social norm frame versus the *non-action* social norm frame, and the *specified* goal setting/behavioral tracking versus the *unspecified* goal setting/behavioral tracking frame) but, given the lack of significant within frame differences found in this study, identification of a particular frame approach may be more important to CF/CIS as opposed to a distinct message frame type. The Director of Advocacy at CF/CIS might use the organization's limited resources more efficiently by knowing which message frame is associated with higher levels of advocate action (e.g., goal-valence), rather than crafting specific types of message frame communications (e.g., *negative* goal-valence).

The findings suggest that message frame types may not be as important as the broader message frame itself and that the type of behavioral action requested could have a significant impact on overall action. Several areas of future research would help to provide a clearer picture of the impact of message framing on advocacy efforts. First, additional research is necessary to identify the conditions that influence when a particular

message frame is more successful at producing a requested behavior and intended outcome compared to other message frames. For example, the goal-valence frame received higher mean ratings of perceived effectiveness and higher rates of behavioral action compared to the social norm frame. While analyses also indicated that gender and interest played a role in perceived effectiveness and behavioral action, considerable variance was unaccounted for in the analyses. The message frame and the type of behavior requested may very well have an effect, but research has not yet determined the relative contribution of the message frame (versus – or in combination with – other relevant factors) in encouraging or influencing an individual to engage in advocacy behavior. To that end, it may be that the nature of the cause and the requested behavior are more powerful predictors of action. Second, examinations of the effectiveness of message frames should include multiple and diverse modes of communication. While advocates in this study reported email as their preferred communication mode, advocates also disclosed use of other social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter (Strompolis et al., 2012). CF/CIS also uses multiple social media platforms and future studies would benefit from including multiple communication modes in the research methodology. Third, future studies should examine a range of advocacy-related behaviors. The current study showed dramatic differences in advocates' rates of behavioral action for requests that could be completed online versus requests that were completed in-person. Message effectiveness may be greatly impacted by the nature of the requested advocacy-related behavior. Finally, future studies need to examine methodological approaches for increasing the salience of framing type manipulations. Studies might examine various dosage levels of message frame types (e.g., low,

moderate, and high levels of *positivity* or *behavioral tracking*) and the degree to which dosage impacts message effectiveness on requested advocacy-related behaviors.

Regardless of the particular area of focus for future research, the projects would benefit from the inclusion of advocacy and policy staff from nonprofit organizations in the evaluation and research process. Staff inputs in the evaluation and research process would inform prioritization of various components of future work. For example, a nonprofit with a strong communication team may have the greatest interest in identifying the most effective modes of communication for eliciting advocacy-related behaviors. On the other hand, a nonprofit with strong relationships to other advocacy centers might benefit most from knowing which behaviors advocates are likely and willing to complete. Well-designed participatory evaluation and research projects involving advocacy and policy staff would increase the utility of the results and the effectiveness of advocacy efforts aimed at policy change.

Lastly, changes to processes within CF/CIS might aid efforts to increase the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns. First, CF/CIS could incorporate processes to gather information on individuals in their advocacy networks (as opposed to trying to collect demographic information after a behavioral action is completed). CF/CIS might ask advocates to provide demographic information voluntarily when they sign up to the advocacy network or periodically solicit that information from advocates. Second, CF/CIS could examine the number of advocates who complete a requested behavioral action after the first email message is sent. Given that the true base of advocacy support for CF/CIS might be less than 100 advocates, the majority who are likely to complete the action might do so after the first email that is sent. If that is the case, CF/CIS could focus

on alternative modes of communication or pathways to producing the requested behavior for advocates who had not already completed the behavior, rather than send subsequent emails.

A key for CF/CIS and other social change agents then may be to examine the effect of communication within resource as well as social and political contexts. In other words, the resources needed to solicit and elicit advocacy-related behaviors may not be sufficient to achieve intended policy- and advocacy-related outcomes alone. Furthermore, the social and political climates in which change agents operate may include notable barriers to local advocacy and policy efforts. While communication is a key component of change, so are resources and social and political forces. The difference then between progress in addressing social issues or the lack thereof is multiply determined – it relates to the effectiveness of communications, sufficient levels of resources, and supportive social and political contexts.

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Table 1: Outcomes, descriptions, and examples of advocacy and policy work

| Outcome | Definition | Example(s) |
|---|---|---|
| Shift in social norms | Knowledge, attitudes, values and behaviors that compose the normative structure of culture and society. | • Changes in awareness, beliefs, attitudes, values, salience of an issue, or public behavior<br>• Increased agreement on the definition of a problem<br>• Increased alignment of campaign goal with core societal values |
| Strengthened organizational capacity | Skill set, staffing and leadership, organizational structure and systems, finances and strategic planning among non-profit organizations and formal coalitions that plan and carry out advocacy and policy work. | • Improved management of organizational capacity, strategic abilities, capacity to communicate and promote advocacy messages, or stability of organizations involved with advocacy and policy work |
| Strengthen alliances | Level of coordination, collaboration and mission alignment among community and system partners, including nontraditional alliances (e.g., bipartisan allies, unlikely allies). | • Increased number of partners supporting an issue, level of collaboration, or ability of coalitions working toward policy change to identify policy change process<br>• Improved alignment of partnership efforts<br>• Strategic alliances with important partners |
| Strengthened base of support | Grassroots, leadership and institutional support for particular policy changes. | • Increased public involvement in an issue, level of actions taken by champions of an issue, voter registration, breadth of partners supporting an issue, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | media coverage, awareness of campaign principles and messages among select groups, or visibility of the campaign message<br>• Changes in voting behavior or public will |
| Improved policies | Stages of policy change in the public policy arena (e.g., policy development, policy proposal, demonstration of support, adoption, funding and implementation.) | • Policy development, adoption, implementation, or enforcement |
| Changes in impact | Ultimate changes in social and physical lives and conditions that motivate policy change efforts. | • Improved social and physical conditions |

*Note*. Adapted from "A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy" by J. Reisman, A. Gienapp & S. Stachowiak, 2007, Prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation by Organizational Research Services. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Table 2: Children First/Communities in Schools' values and principles

| |
|---|
| Values |
| • Respect for the innate worth of all individuals |
| • Mutual responsibility and accountability |
| • Integrity, honesty, and open communication |
| • Caring and compassion |
| • Community, service, and collaboration |
| • Freedom and democratic process |
| • Opportunity and prosperity |
| • Fairness and justice |
| Principles |
| • Equity exemplified by equal opportunity to reach one's full potential |
| • Democratic process based on equality and informed citizen participation |
| • Effective, accountable government protecting freedom, security, opportunity, environment; ensuring justice; and investing in infrastructure |
| • Sustainable economy promoting equitable access to prosperity |
| • Healthy, caring, and vibrant society where basic needs are met and diverse community groups and initiatives enhance our quality of life |

*Note*. Adapted from "Values, Principles, and Policy Directions" by Children First/Communities in Schools (n.d.d).

Table 3: Children First/Communities in Schools' policy directions

| |
|---|
| **Child Poverty**: We support initiatives that reduce the incidence and negative impact of child poverty including expanding opportunities for increasing family income and ensuring that full-time employment provides livable wages for families. |
| **Education**: We support equitable access to high-quality, affordable early care and learning centers and a well-funded, innovative public education system, successfully educating all students to their full potential and engaging their families and their communities in their success. |
| **Environment**: We support policies that reduce environmental pollution that negatively impacts children's health and well-being. |
| **Safety**: We support ensuring safe places for children to live, learn, and grow regardless of their race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, class, gender, or sexual orientation. |
| **Juvenile Justice**: We support accessible, community-based prevention, intervention, and remediation for at-risk and adjudicated youth, empowering them to reach their full potential as successful members of our community. |
| **Immigration**: We support immigration policies that acknowledge many immigrants as economic and/or political refugees and create a humanitarian response to this multi-faceted issue. |
| **Government and Democracy**: We support expanding citizen participation, and developing diverse citizen leadership responsive to our values and principles, and reducing corporate influence. |
| **Health**: We support access to quality health care (physical, dental, and mental) and health education for all children regardless of income. |

*Note*. Adapted from "Values, Principles, and Policy Directions" by Children First/Communities in Schools (n.d.d).

Table 4: Advocacy evaluation framework and hypotheses

| Frame | Type | Expected Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Goal-Valence | Positive<br>Negative | Negative valence will result in more emails sent by advocates and higher levels of perceived effectiveness by college students compared to positive valence. |
| Social Norm | Action<br>Non-Action | Action social norm will result in more petitions signed by advocates with low involvement and higher levels of perceived effectiveness by college students compared to no action social norm. |
| Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | Specified<br>Unspecified | Specific behavior tracking/goal setting will result in higher event attendance by advocates and higher levels of perceived effectiveness by college students compared to non-specific behavioral tracking/goal setting. |

Table 5: College student demographics ($N$ = 359)

| Demographic | | *n* | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age (in years) | 17-21 | 293 | 81.62 |
| | 22-30 | 55 | 15.32 |
| | 31-56 | 10 | 2.79 |
| Gender | | | |
| | Women | 210 | 58.50 |
| | Men | 149 | 41.50 |
| Race/ethnicity | | | |
| | African American | 74 | 20.61 |
| | Asian | 23 | 6.41 |
| | Caucasian | 207 | 57.66 |
| | Hispanic/Latino | 26 | 7.24 |
| | Mixed | 19 | 5.29 |
| | Other | 10 | 2.79 |
| Year in school | | | |
| | Freshman | 140 | 39.00 |
| | Sophomore | 114 | 31.75 |
| | Junior | 62 | 17.27 |
| | Senior | 43 | 11.98 |

*Note*. Age was not reported by one college student.

Table 6: College student sample: Interest and prior action in advocacy ($N$ = 359)

| | | | *n* | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interest in | | | | |
| | Education | | | |
| | | Extremely/high | 141 | 39.28 |
| | | A little/some | 196 | 54.60 |
| | | None | 22 | 6.12 |
| | Health | | | |
| | | Extremely/high | 112 | 31.20 |
| | | A little/some | 228 | 63.51 |
| | | None | 19 | 5.29 |
| | Poverty | | | |
| | | Extremely/high | 118 | 32.87 |
| | | A little/some | 222 | 61.84 |
| | | None | 19 | 5.29 |
| Prior advocacy action | | | | |
| | Education | | | |
| | | Yes | 105 | 29.25 |
| | | No | 254 | 70.75 |
| | Health | | | |
| | | Yes | 82 | 22.84 |
| | | No | 277 | 77.16 |
| | Poverty | | | |
| | | Yes | 103 | 28.69 |
| | | No | 256 | 71.31 |

Table 7: College student sample: Manipulation checks

| | Correct | | Incorrect | | Don't know | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Message Frame | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % |
| Goal-Valence | | | | | | |
| Negative (*n* = 180) | 87 | 48.33 | 72 | 40.00 | 21 | 11.67 |
| Positive (*n* = 179) | 124 | 69.27 | 26 | 14.53 | 29 | 16.20 |
| Social Norm | | | | | | |
| Action (*n* = 180) | 122 | 67.78 | 22 | 12.20 | 36 | 20.00 |
| Non-Action (*n* = 179) | 146 | 81.57 | 13 | 7.26 | 20 | 11.17 |
| Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | | | | | | |
| Specified (*n* = 180) | 169 | 93.89 | 3 | 1.67 | 8 | 4.44 |
| Unspecified (*n* = 179) | 164 | 91.62 | 3 | 1.68 | 12 | 6.70 |

Table 8: College student sample: Perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action within message frames

| Message Frame | Extremely/Very Convincing *n* | Extremely/Very Convincing % | Somewhat Convincing *n* | Somewhat Convincing % | A little/Not Convincing *n* | A little/Not Convincing % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Goal-Valence | | | | | | |
| Negative (*n* = 180) | 60 | 33.33 | 94 | 52.23 | 26 | 14.44 |
| Positive (*n* = 179) | 58 | 32.40 | 89 | 49.72 | 32 | 17.88 |
| Social Norm | | | | | | |
| Action (*n* = 180) | 43 | 23.89 | 71 | 39.44 | 66 | 36.67 |
| Non-Action (*n* = 179) | 47 | 26.26 | 73 | 40.78 | 59 | 32.96 |
| Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | | | | | | |
| Specified (*n* = 180) | 68 | 37.78 | 73 | 40.56 | 39 | 21.66 |
| Unspecified (*n* = 179) | 77 | 43.02 | 70 | 39.11 | 32 | 17.87 |

| Message Frame | Extremely/Very Likely to Act *n* | Extremely/Very Likely to Act % | Somewhat Likely to Act *n* | Somewhat Likely to Act % | A little/Not Likely to Act *n* | A little/Not Likely to Act % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Goal-Valence | | | | | | |
| Negative (*n* = 180) | 44 | 24.44 | 88 | 48.89 | 48 | 26.67 |
| Positive (*n* = 179) | 44 | 24.58 | 74 | 41.34 | 61 | 34.08 |
| Social Norm | | | | | | |
| Action (*n* = 180) | 36 | 20.00 | 62 | 34.44 | 82 | 45.56 |
| Non-Action (*n* = 179) | 37 | 20.67 | 69 | 38.55 | 73 | 40.78 |
| Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | | | | | | |
| Specified (*n* = 180) | 64 | 35.56 | 65 | 36.11 | 51 | 28.33 |
| Unspecified (*n* = 179) | 71 | 39.67 | 65 | 36.31 | 43 | 24.02 |

Table 9: College student sample: Independent Samples *t*-Test of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action within message frames

| | Perceived Effectiveness | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Message Frame | *M* | *SD* | *t* |
| Goal-Valence | | | |
| Negative (*n* = 180) | 3.18 | 0.79 | |
| Positive (*n* = 179) | 3.15 | 0.83 | -0.45 |
| Social Norm | | | |
| Action (*n* = 180) | 2.81 | 0.96 | |
| Non-Action (*n* = 179) | 2.82 | 1.07 | -0.09 |
| Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | | | |
| Specified (*n* = 180) | 3.15 | 0.99 | |
| Unspecified (*n* = 179) | 3.27 | 0.95 | -1.21 |
| | Likelihood to Take Action | | |
| Message Frame | *M* | *SD* | *t* |
| Goal-Valence | | | |
| Negative (*n* = 180) | 2.93 | 0.87 | |
| Positive (*n* = 179) | 2.77 | 1.09 | -0.45 |
| Social Norm | | | |
| Action (*n* = 180) | 2.52 | 1.13 | |
| Non-Action (*n* = 179) | 2.57 | 1.17 | -0.39 |
| Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | | | |
| Specified (*n* = 180) | 3.02 | 1.05 | |
| Unspecified (*n* = 179) | 3.15 | 1.08 | -1.14 |

*Note*. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation, *t* = *t*-test.

Table 10: College student sample: Analysis of Variance of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action across message frames

| Source | *df* | *SS* | *MS* | *F* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived Effectiveness | | | | |
| Between groups | 5 | 35.01 | 7.00 | 7.98** |
| Within groups | 1071 | 939.57 | 0.88 | |
| Total | 1076 | 974.58 | | |
| Likelihood to Take Action | | | | |
| Between groups | 5 | 56.58 | 11.32 | 9.94** |
| Within groups | 1071 | 1219.30 | 1.14 | |
| Total | 1076 | 1275.88 | | |

*Note*. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$, *df* = degrees of freedom, *SS* = sums of squares, *MS* = mean square.

Table 11: College student sample: Bonferroni comparison of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action and message frames

| Message Frame | | *MD* | *SE* | Sig | 95% CI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Perceived Effectiveness | | | | | | |
| Positive Goal-Valence | Social Action | 0.33 | 0.10 | 0.01 | 0.04 | 0.62 |
| | Social Non-Action | 0.33 | 0.10 | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.62 |
| Negative Goal-Valence | Social Action | 0.37 | 0.10 | 0.00 | 0.08 | 0.66 |
| | Social Non-Action | 0.36 | 0.10 | 0.00 | 0.07 | 0.65 |
| Specified Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | Social Action | 0.34 | 0.10 | 0.01 | 0.05 | 0.63 |
| | Social Non-Action | 0.33 | 0.10 | 0.01 | 0.04 | 0.62 |
| Unspecified Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | Social Action | 0.46 | 0.10 | 0.00 | 0.17 | 0.75 |
| | Social Non-Action | 0.45 | 0.10 | 0.00 | 0.16 | 0.74 |
| Likelihood to Take Action | | | | | | |
| Negative Goal-Valence | Social Action | 0.41 | 0.11 | 0.01 | 0.07 | 0.74 |
| | Social Non-Action | 0.36 | 0.11 | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.69 |
| Specified Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | Social Action | 0.50 | 0.11 | 0.00 | 0.17 | 0.83 |
| | Social Non-Action | 0.45 | 0.11 | 0.00 | 0.12 | 0.78 |
| Unspecified Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | Positive Goal-Valence | 0.38 | 0.11 | 0.01 | 0.05 | 0.71 |
| | Social Action | 0.63 | 0.11 | 0.00 | 0.30 | 0.96 |
| | Social Non-Action | 0.58 | 0.11 | 0.00 | 0.25 | 0.91 |

*Note*. Only significant comparisons are presented. Refer to Table 9 for means and standard deviations. *MD* = mean difference, *SE* = standard error, Sig = significance level, CI = confidence interval.

Table 12: College student sample: Hierarchical Multiple Regression of age, gender, interest, message frames, and message effectiveness

| Perceived Effectiveness | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | *b* | *SE* | β | $\Delta R^2$ |
| Stage 1 | | | | 0.07** |
| Age | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.05 | |
| Gender | -0.22 | 0.06 | -0.12** | |
| Interest | 0.20 | 0.03 | 0.21** | |
| Stage 2 | | | | 0.03** |
| Positive Goal-Valence | 0.32 | 0.08 | 0.12** | |
| Negative Goal-Valence | 0.37 | 0.08 | 0.14** | |
| Specified Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | 0.32 | 0.08 | 0.12** | |
| Unspecified Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | 0.41 | 0.08 | 0.16** | |
| **Likelihood to Take Action** | | | | |
| Stage 1 | | | | 0.12** |
| Age | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.05 | |
| Gender | -0.26 | 0.06 | -0.12** | |
| Interest | 0.33 | 0.03 | 0.30** | |
| Stage 2 | | | | 0.04** |
| Positive Goal-Valence | 0.21 | 0.09 | 0.07* | |
| Negative Goal-Valence | 0.38 | 0.09 | 0.13** | |
| Specified Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | 0.45 | 0.09 | 0.15** | |
| Unspecified Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | 0.54 | 0.09 | 0.18** | |

*Note*. *b* = unstandardized beta weight, *SE* = standard error, β = standardized beta weight, $\Delta R^2$ = adjusted R square. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Table 13: Advocate sample: Manipulation checks

| | Emails Sent | | Emails Opened by Frame | | Emails Opened by Type | | Completed Action | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Message Frame | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Goal-Valence | | | 323 | 29.41% | | | | |
| Positive | 494 | 46.25% | | | 154 | 31.17% | 49 | 31.82% |
| Negative | 574 | 53.75% | | | 169 | 29.44% | 46 | 27.22% |
| Social Norm | | | 273 | 24.18% | | | | |
| Action | 590 | 53.35% | | | 139 | 23.56% | 30 | 21.58% |
| Non-Action | 516 | 46.65% | | | 134 | 25.97% | 36 | 26.87% |
| Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | | | 489 | 20.70% | | | | |
| Specified | 1050 | 48.52% | | | 247 | 23.52% | 12 | 4.86% |
| Unspecified | 1114 | 51.48% | | | 242 | 21.72% | 13 | 5.37% |

Table 14: Advocate sample: Chi-square analysis of behavioral action and message frames

| Message Frame | | Expected | Observed | Adjusted Residual |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Goal-Valence | | | | |
| | Positive | 26 | 49 | 5.2* |
| | Negative | 29 | 46 | 3.8* |
| Social Norm | | | | |
| | Action | 24 | 30 | 1.5 |
| | Non-Action | 23 | 36 | 3.2* |
| Goal Setting/Behavioral Tracking | | | | |
| | Specified | 42 | 12 | -5.8* |
| | Unspecified | 42 | 13 | -5.5* |

*Note*. $\chi^2$ (5, $N$ = 1085) = 96.13, $p < .01$. *$p < .05$.

Table 15: Advocacy evaluation summary of results

| Sample | Frame and Type | Among Frame Analyses |
|---|---|---|
| College Students | Goal-Valence: Positive and Negative | Higher ratings of perceived effectiveness compared to the social norm frame.<br>Higher ratings of likelihood to take action for the negative frame type compared to the social norm frame. |
| | Social norm: Action and Non-action | Lower ratings of perceived effectiveness compared to the goal-valence and goal setting/behavioral tracking frames.<br>Lower ratings of likelihood to take action compared to the negative goal-valence frame and unspecified goal setting/behavioral action frame. |
| | Goal setting/behavioral tracking: Specified and Non-specified | Higher ratings of perceived effectiveness compared to the social norm frame.<br>Higher ratings of likelihood to take action for the unspecified frame type compared to the positive goal-valence frame and social norm frame. |
| Advocates | Goal-Valence: Positive and Negative | Rates of behavioral action were higher than expected. |
| | Social norm: Action and Non-action | Rates of behavioral action were higher than expected. |
| | Goal setting/behavioral tracking: Specified and Non-specified | Rates of behavioral action were lower than expected. |

*Note*. No statistically significant differences were found for any of the within frame analyses involving the two samples. Analyses including demographic variables indicated that interest, gender, and message frame were associated with ratings of perceived effectiveness and likelihood to take action for the college student sample.

# APPENDIX A: COLLEGE STUDENT CONSENT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Thank you for your interest in this study! My name is Melissa Strompolis and I am a doctoral student in Health Psychology. I am conducting a study that involves research to improve the advocacy efforts of a nonprofit organization (under the supervision of Dr. Ryan Kilmer).

This study consists of an online survey, in which you may now participate. You will receive credit immediately upon completion of the survey. You must complete all sections in one sitting, as you are not allowed to resume at another time from where you left off. While you are participating, your responses will be stored in a temporary holding area as you move through the sections, but they will not be permanently saved until you complete all sections and you are given a chance to review your responses.

To improve the advocacy efforts of a nonprofit organization, I am examining different messages that will be sent via email to volunteer advocates of the organization. Participation in this study will involve reading three advocacy-related messages and rating the messages on two different items. The study will take approximately 10 minutes to finish and is completely anonymous and confidential. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study, and you will receive one credit toward your research requirement in your general psychology lab course. Only students who are enrolled in a general psychology lab course are able to participate in this study, and about 500 students are expected to participate. You are a volunteer, meaning that the decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. If you decide to be in the study, you may stop at any time. You will not be treated any differently in any way if you decide not to participate in the study or if you stop once you have started. Additionally, alternatives are available for receiving research credit through your general psychology lab course.

If you wish to discuss your rights as a participant in research studies, please contact the Research Compliance office at 704-687-1871 or if you would like more information about the study itself, please contact me (Melissa Strompolis) at mstrompo@uncc.edu or 704-281-7675.

By clicking on the link below, you are consenting to participate in this research study and will be taken directly to the study.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study! Before you complete the study, please take a moment to tell me more about yourself.

1. Enter how old you are _____
2. Select the ethnicity that best describes you
    a. Caucasian
    b. African American
    c. Hispanic/Latino/a
    d. Asian
    e. Native American
    f. Mixed
    g. Other (please specify) _____
3. Select your gender
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Other
4. What year are you in school?
    a. Freshman
    b. Sophomore
    c. Junior
    d. Senior
5. What is your political affiliation?
    a. Democratic
    b. Republican
    c. Independent
    d. Other
    e. I do not have an affiliation

# APPENDIX B: ADVOCATE DEMOGRAPHICS

Thank you for being an active advocate for Children First/Communities in Schools! In order for us to learn more about our advocates, please take a moment to tell us about yourself.

1. Age _____
2. Select the ethnicity that best describes you
    a. Caucasian
    b. African American
    c. Hispanic/Latino/a
    d. Asian
    e. Native American
    f. Mixed
    g. Other (please specify) _____
3. Select your gender
    a. Male
    b. Female
4. Select your level of involvement with Children First/Communities in Schools advocacy efforts?
    a. No involvement
    b. A little involvement
    c. Some involvement
    d. High involvement
    e. Extremely high involvement