Framing Same-Sex Partnership Legislation in States with Prevalent Religious Attitudes: A Comparative Analysis of the Campaign Against Homophobia in Poland and Arcigay in Italy

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Introduction

In Italy and Poland, LGBT+ issues have emerged as a contentious political topic in the twenty-first century, sparking debates about rights, the role of the government, and social policy. In this paper, I examine the political framing strategies of the Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH), a pro-LGBT+ Polish organization, in the five years before the introduction and subsequent rejection of three same-sex union bills before the Polish Sejm in 2013, and Arcigay, Italy’s largest pro-LGBT+ organization, in the five years before the introduction and passage of the 2016 Civil Unions Bill. Analyzing the organizations’ framing strategy elucidates the mechanisms used by the KPH and Arcigay to catalyze public support for same-sex partnerships while simultaneously combating the rhetoric of opponents.

Research Question

Comparing the Campaign Against Homophobia in Poland and Arcigay in Italy, how do pro-LGBT+ civil society actors in states with prevalent religious values use political frames in campaigns supporting same-sex union legislation?

Hypotheses

H1: The Human Interest frame is most likely to appear.

Political frame research demonstrates the ability of Human Interest frames—frames that attach a specific face to an issue or reference tangible examples—to exert high levels of persuasion on a target audience (Ghoshal 2009). By utilizing the audience’s emotions, these frames create a personal resonance that heightens their appeal. Because Human Interest frames have been established as an
effective mechanism of persuasion, I expect that in both Italy and Poland, Human Interest frames will be most likely to appear. The organizations could use this frame to support same-sex partnership legislation by publicizing the stories and experiences of people who would be personally affected. Especially in Italy, a country with a high degree of tolerance, I expect Human Interest frames to be a cornerstone of the political frames utilized during my period of analysis.

**H2: The Morality, Religion, and Ethics frame is least likely to appear.**

Italy and Poland are heavily religious states. Large majorities of the population self-identify as Catholic, and for many citizens, religion is closely tied to national identity. In addition, the Church is a powerful social and political actor, and has been a staunch opponent of measures designed to advance LGBT+ equality. In fact, opposition to LGBT+ rights has often been galvanized along religious lines. Because oppositional rhetoric has historically been tinged with both explicit and implicit religious messaging, I expect the Morality, Religion, and Ethics frame to be the least frequent frame that I identify in my analysis. The hegemonic grip of the Church on questions of morality makes it likely that Arcigay and the KPH will steer their messaging towards the realm of secular frames.

**H3: The KPH will leverage European Values and Principles Frames more frequently than Arcigay.**

With its disentanglement from the Soviet Union and the formation of the Third Polish Republic in 1989, Poland has a short history as an autonomous state. Poland joined the European Union in 2004. In contrast, since the formation of the Republic of Italy after World War II, Italy has maintained a long claim to autonomy. Additionally, Italy was among the first countries to join the European Union, becoming a member in 1958. Because Italy has been a participant in the European Union and an established state for a longer period of time, I expect that frames leveraging European
Values and Principles will be more resonant in Poland than in Italy. The longevity of Italy as a state could mean that citizens are less likely to view themselves as “Europeans” and more likely to self-identify as “Italians.” Poland’s recent accession to the European Union could make European identity particularly salient for Polish citizens. Consequently, I expect that the European Values and Principles frame will be deployed more frequently by the KPH than by Arcigay.
Background

A. Religiosity in Poland and Italy

Both Poland and Italy are heavily religious countries with high levels of religious affiliation. Nearly 90% of the Polish population adheres to Roman Catholicism, the second highest proportion of Catholic citizens in a European country (Sawe). 45% of Poles attend church weekly, and 82% of respondents expressed agreement with the statement, “I am proud to be Catholic.” (“Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central Europe” 2017). The overwhelming dominance of Catholicism in Poland can be traced to the destruction of Polish Jews during the Holocaust of World War II and the post-war expulsion of ethnic Germans. Under the Soviet Union, the Church crystallized its political and institutional legitimacy through its resistance to Communist rule. The Catholic Church of Poland maintains a high level of legitimacy, and today, the Church wields considerable influence in Polish life, including the realm of politics. In fact, 75% of Poles believe that religious leaders have at least some influence in politics (“Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central Europe” 2017).

Catholicism is Italy’s dominant religion--while 83.3% of the population identifies as “Christian,” 97.48% of Italian “Christians” are Catholics (81.2% of the total population) (Wormald). the Catholic Church operates as a vehicle for national identity. The Church’s historical entanglement with the Italian nation and the presence of the Vatican has, for many Italians, tied the Church into the fabric of national identity. Religion and traditional ideas of sexuality and gender are powerful social dynamics at play within Italian society. The legitimacy and authority of the Italian Catholic Church is augmented by its huge number of congregants, and the high density of Italian Catholics
has concrete political implications. 64% of Christian Italians believe that government policies should support religious values and beliefs. Italians report high levels of religious engagement. While the median rate of Western European citizens who regularly attend church is just 22%, 43% of Italians report attending a religious service either weekly or monthly (“Attitudes of Christians in Western Europe” 96). 58% of Italians classify religion as very or somewhat important to their lives, and 74% of Italians exhibit moderate or high levels of religious commitment (the Western European average is just 53%) (“Attitudes of Christians in Western Europe” 97; “Attitudes of Christians in Western Europe” 103).

B. LGBT+ Rights in Poland

In Poland, the 1932 Penal Code officially decriminalized same-sex sexual activity and set the age of consent at 15 (Krieger 2001). Same-sex prostitution was legalized in 1969, and the official categorization of homosexuality as a disease was reversed in 1991 (Krieger 2001). However, Polish society remains deeply conservative on LGBT+ issues. Article 18 of the Polish Constitution specifically limits marriage to opposite-sex couples, creating a concrete legal obstacle to equality, “Marriage, being a union of a man and a woman, as well as the family, motherhood and parenthood, shall be placed under the protection and care of the Republic of Poland” (“Poland’s Constitution of 1997”). Although legislation formalizing same-sex partnerships has been introduced before the legislature intermittently since 2003, the bills have failed to garner support, and same-sex couples remain legally unrecognized in Poland. Polish society has conservative views on same-sex partnerships, with a majority of Poles expressing opposition to the legal recognition of partnerships (“Attitudes Towards the Homosexuals”).
However, young and urban Poles have become more accepting of LGBT+ rights. Capitalizing on increasing tolerance LGBT+ actors have moved into spaces within the Polish political system. In 2011, Anna Grodzka was the third transgender person in the world to be elected to a national legislature (“Which Country Just Elected The Only Trans Parliament Member In The World?”). Robert Biedroń, an LGBT+ activist, became the first openly gay MP in Polish history. Additionally, politicians dissatisfied with the existing party apparatus founded a left-wing political party in 2010, Your Movement, that emphasizes LGBT+ equality as a cornerstone of its platform.

The Campaign Against Homophobia was founded in 2001 amid widespread homophobia (Misja i Wizja, Dokumenty). The organization aims to raise awareness for the existence and struggles of LGBT+ Poles, and educate the broader populace on the difficulties facing same-sex couples. While the KPH’s earliest efforts focused on combating hate speech, starting in 2008, the organization commenced an ardent push for the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships. I have focused my research on a key legislative moment: the introduction and subsequent rejection of three same-sex partnership bills in 2013. I have selected this particular iteration of same-sex partnership
legislation for a number of reasons. First, the KPH was an active participant in the formulation and presentation of the partnership bills. Second, the KPH’s archive of articles and publications includes all information published during the relevant time period. Third, the recency of the partnership legislation means that I will be able to compare Poland to Italy, and extract insights that remain relevant.

C. LGBT+ Rights in Italy

The Italian Penal Code of 1890 legalized same-sex sexual activity in Italy. Although the fascist Mussolini regime persecuted LGBT+ Italians, homosexual conduct has remained legal under national law (Krieger 2001). Under Article 3 of the 1947 Italian Constitution, “All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the country” (“Italy's Constitution of 1947 with Amendments through 2012”). In 1982, Italy became the third country to legally allow citizens to change their gender, and since 2003, discrimination based on sexual orientation has been outlawed. Italy does not recognize same-sex marriage, and same-sex unions have been a controversial political topic (Carroll 2017). The Constitutional Court in a landmark 2010 case ruled that same-sex couples were a "legitimate social formation, similar to and deserving homogeneous treatment as marriage” (Peterson 2018). Same-sex unions were ultimately legalized in the
2016 Civil Unions bill. Italians have expressed consistent support for LGBT+ rights with a majority of society favoring legal recognition of same-sex partnerships. (“Political Atlas 54”).

Founded in 1985, Arcigay is Italy’s largest gay rights group, and serves as an umbrella organization overseeing 114 local chapters across 48 Italian provinces (“Who We Are”). While Arcigay was originally established to combat hate speech and hate crimes, the organization’s focus has shifted to the realm of policy. Today, the group aims to achieve, “equal status and equal opportunities among all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, and aims to reinforce a full, free and happy life for gay people.” Since the 1990s, Arcigay has been on the frontlines of the fight for same-sex partnership legislation. Starting in February 1996, Arcigay began avidly pursuing the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships, collecting over 90,000 signature from Italians in favor of “unioni civili” (“Who We Are”). That same year, a draft law concerning the registration of same-sex partnerships, crafted by Arcigay, was presented to the Italian Chamber of Deputies, but was rejected. From organizing rallies and parades to increase LGBT+ visibility, to directly lobbying politicians and officials, the organizations has consistently pushed for the legal recognition of LGBT+ citizens. In 2016, the Italian Parliament approved the Civil Unions Bills, granting same-sex couples the ability to
formalize their relationships. I have chosen to focus on this event for three reasons. First, the archives of Arcigay include all materials published during my period of analysis. Second, this legislative moment is temporally close to my Polish case study, allowing me to more accurately compare the actions of the organizations and draw meaningful insights from my results. Third, the passage of the Civil Unions Bill is, at the time of this research, the most important legislative moment concerning same-sex partnerships in Italy.
Literature Review

Political scientists have analyzed the mechanisms of contestation and mobilization used by pro-LGBT+ actors in European states. Civil society actors in particular have garnered substantial attention. However, scholars have employed divergent modes of analysis to interpret and contextualize pro-LGBT+ political mobilization.

The impact of domestic political context on LGBT+ mobilization is well understood by scholars in political science. Using Germany and Poland as case studies, Ayoub posits transnational cooperation as the determinant factor for LGBT+ mobilization. The multi-level structure of the European Union creates opportunities for mobilization, allowing actors across member states to communicate and collaborate in their pursuit of specific political goals (Ayoub 2013). Holzhacker’s study of LGBT+ civil society actors (CSAs) in Eastern and Western Europe focuses on the political environment encountered by CSAs in their fight for equality. The political context shapes the model of interaction pursued by pro-LGBT+ actors, allowing them to tailor their strategic advocacy to the social conditions of their domestic political arena. Holzhacker identifies three models of interaction: morality politics, in which issues are framed and contested around beliefs of morality and religion; incremental change, in which policy change is pursued via discreet elite lobbying; and high-profile politics, a form of interaction involving external strategies designed to increase an actor’s public visibility (Holzhacker 2012).

However, scholars have focused relatively little research on the mechanisms of political framing used by actors when discussing and contesting LGBT+ issues. The limited application of political frame theory to the realm of LGBT+ topics has primarily focused on the role of print and
broadcast media in framing contentious policies, including same-sex marriage, civil unions, and adoption rights for LGBT+ couples. Engel, assessing the precipitous decline in public support for the decriminalization of homosexual sex following the Supreme Court’s ruling in Lawrence v. Texas, found that media discussion of LGBT+ issues had the capacity to shift public opinion. Pre-Lawrence, the majority of Americans supported decriminalizing same-sex relations, but after the Court’s decision, media focused on “the implications of Lawrence, in particular on whether the ruling could compel publicly recognized or state-sanctioned same-sex marriage” (Engel 2013). Essentially, by framing the decriminalization of homosexual sex to the implementation of other LGBT+ rights, media frames, “created a negative spillover effect, fostering a decline in support of a range of otherwise distinguishable rights claims wholly separable from marriage recognition” (Engel 2013).

The issues to which LGBT+ rights are linked, even if only in the public imagination, can influence public support for LGBT+ issues. Likewise, Hull’s analysis of the framing of same-sex marriage in Hawaii analyzes media accounts of pro-same-sex marriage activities in tandem with published letters written to the newspaper editors to assess the deployment of political frames. In particular, Hull’s research revolves around the deployment of civil rights frames and the competing discourse surrounding whether same-sex marriage constituted a “right.” Supporters increasingly framed same-sex marriage as a right and emphasized the value of tolerance (Hull 2001). Opponents, however, rejected rights-based appeals, and by conceptualizing the issue “as one of protecting marriage rather than denying civil rights, they provided voters with a positive reason to vote for the amendment” (Hull 2001).

Importantly, scholars assessing political frames used for LGBT+ mobilization have often restricted their analysis to the use of frames within specific categories. Kuhar’s study of same-sex
partnership policy and the usage of the Europeanization frame yields valuable insights into the mechanics of frame analysis. Kuhar’s research coded laws or bills, governmental reports or action plans, parliamentary debates, and civil society texts to assess the invocation of frames that situate same-sex partnership policy within the broader context of Europeanization, “the process of downloading EU regulations and institutional structures to the domestic level” (Kuhar 2012). Kuhar found that the use of Europeanization frames increased relative to public opinion on homosexuality. The more homonegative a country, the more likely actors were to use discourse surrounding Europeanization in their public discussion and framing of same-sex partnerships. To argue for the implementation of same-sex partnership legislation, actors invoked the “‘European way of organising issues’... as an ideal the countries should strive towards” (Kuhar 2012). Kuhar’s research shows that parties in favor of same-sex partnerships frequently use the Europeanization frame “as some form of pressure for EU member states to organize same-sex partnership policies (and other intimate citizenship issues) in accordance with EU standards or trends” (Kuhar 2012).

While Kuhar’s research is informative and effectively elucidates actors’ framing strategies, his study fails to link frame usage to a coherent, unified entity. Kuhar extracts insights from four sources--laws or bills, governmental reports or action plans, parliamentary debates, and civil society texts--and extends his findings to the overarching realm of public discourse. While helpful, Kuhar’s study leaves gaps in analysis and fails to capture the specific mechanics of frame usage. Further, Kuhar’s frame categories proliferate under the general umbrella of “Europeanization,” and his analysis does not encompass frames that fail to invoke Europe. A more careful examination is needed to understand and study how frames are used by a specific actor in pursuit of a unified goal.
Likewise, Ho and Rolfe’s study of same-sex partner immigration policy in Israel, Australia, and the US assesses the usage of frames within a particular genre. Ho and Rolfe found that, in Israel and Australia, LGBT+ activists relied heavily on the civil rights frame to argue for “fairness, equality, and the importance of family to the general public” (Ho & Rolfe 2011). Although the civil rights frame has been resonant in Israel and Australia, oppositional framing by religious conservatives in the United States has limited the civil rights frame’s effectiveness.

Because researchers have focused their attention to frames used in media depictions and discourse, the usage of frames by specific political actors has largely escaped analysis. Assessing the frames espoused by a wide variety of political forces, while interesting, offers no insight into the particularities of an entity’s framing strategy. Further, existing research has failed to analyze the development of political frames over time—scholarly attention has largely focused on “snapshots” of frames during short bursts of political activity. Understanding why and how frames were used requires an examination of frame deployment during a given time period. Finally, the bulk of existing frame literature has assessed frames within a given category (i.e. “Europeanization” frames or the civil rights frame). Narrow assessments of framing strategies can offer insight into frame deployment within a specific category, but run the risk of ignoring the usage of other frame genres.

This thesis aims to bridge the gaps in the existing literature by assessing the deployment of frames by a specific political entity during a critical period of time, the five years before a crucial legislative event involving same-sex union legislation. Further, my analysis uses multiple framing categories, allowing me to more completely assess the discursive strategies employed by the organizations. This broader scope of analysis approaches the entities’ political framing strategies from a holistic
perspective, allowing me to capture broader discursive trends instead of narrowing my examination to an isolated category.
**Theory**

Scholars, recognizing the ability of political actors to construct, describe, and interpret a particular issue, have utilized the study of political frames to scrutinize how topics are contested in the arena of public opinion. Political framing theory draws on social constructivism to explain how placing an issue within a field of meaning can be a powerful political tool. Political framing theory argues that, by emphasizing or downplaying certain aspects of an issue, actors can guide public perception and interpretation (Johnston and Noakes 2005). As such, a frame creates an “interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses” a particular, often contentious topic by “selectively punctuating or encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one’s present or past environment” (Johnston and Noakes 2005).

Crucially, political frames operate not by directly contesting or targeting an individual’s opinion, but by “passively altering accessibility of different considerations” relevant to the issue (Druckman 2001). It is the importance attached to beliefs, rather than the beliefs themselves, that are altered through the usage of varying frames. Political frames, thus, tie a particular issue to existing beliefs and attitudes, allowing an audience to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” events (Goffman 1974). By reducing complex issues into easily digestible bytes that emphasize a salient dimension of a topic, frames resonate with an audience to influence the public’s opinions and considerations. Importantly, frames “construct and define the issue for their audience and suggest what should be done about it” (Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997). Frames also influence citizens’ attribution of causation or responsibility for a specific problem by “call[ing] attention to the
grievance, nam[ing] it as unjust and intolerable, ... and suggest[ing] how to best ameliorate the situation” (Johnston and Noakes 2005).

By offering divergent frames, actors hope to influence public opinion in the direction of their policy preferences. However, frames are not rigid and immutable--because political topics and the discursive repertoires that resonate with a particular audience are in flux, political frames have a limited time frame of effectiveness. Mutz and Reeves found framing effects from their studies to last between ten days and three weeks (Mutz and Reeves 2005). Thus, as frames are altered or drop out of the public discourse surrounding an issue, they lose their persuasive capacity. If a particular frame disappears or declines in public usage, subjects must “relearn’ the frames and issues” and link the particular frame to the relevant political consideration.

In order to determine the political framing strategies of same-sex partnership legislation embraced by a pro-LGBT+ organization in Poland and Italy, I conducted an analysis of the organizations’ publications during a five-year period. The study of political frames inevitably incurs subjectivity, but scholars in the social sciences have developed methods of analysis for extracting meaningful insights from qualitative data. In this paper, I use Qualitative Discourse Analysis (QDA) to examine the framing strategies of the KPH and Arcigay in the five years before a key legislative moment. In Italy, I examine the years before the successful passage of the 2016 Civil Unions Bill, and in Poland, I assess the period before the failure of 3 same-sex partnership bills before the Polish Sejm in 2013. QDA examines the use of language in particular social contexts to identify common patterns in actors’ discourse. Discourse, language naturally used for communication within a particular setting, is structured according to the syntax people employ when participating in different domains of social life (Jørgensen and Phillips 3). QDA is particularly helpful for assessing the usage
of political frames as it “can provide insight into the linguistic means by which frames are created” (Tannen 4). By identifying frames through the language employed in the articles, letters, press releases, and information published during a given period, I analyze the way the entities’ constructed and contested same-sex partnerships.
Methodology

A. Sampling

The population of this study consists of documents published by the KPH and Arcigay pertaining to same-sex partnerships. The sample period for the literature analyzed from the KPH is from January 1st, 2008 to December 31st, 2013. The sample period for the articles analyzed from Arcigay is from January 1st, 2011 to December 31st, 2016.

To collect material for analysis, I consulted the archived websites of each organization and searched for documents containing the words “partner”, “partnership”, “same-sex partnership” that were published during the specified period of analysis. I imported these documents in their entirety to the MAXQDA program and subdivided the documents by year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign Against Homophobia</th>
<th>Arcigay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
<td><strong># of documents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$n = 4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$n = 28$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$n = 27$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$n = 30$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$n = 8$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$n = 6$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Frame Categories

To ensure consistency in my coding, I created a code book in order to determine whether a frame fell into a particular category.

i. Quality of Life

First, I coded for frames that referenced the quality of life of same-sex couples. These frames focus on the problems of daily life faced by LGBT+ couples, and depicted partnership legislation as a mechanism to facilitate the livelihood of LGBT+ citizens. In addition, these frames identify resources and privileges that were denied to same-sex couples in the absence of partnership legislation. The overarching persuasive mechanism of this frame operates by identifying concrete issues directly affecting LGBT+ citizens’ quality of life and diagnosing partnership legislation as the way to aid same-sex couples in the struggle for survival.

ii. Situating Same-Sex Unions in the Context of Social Relationships

Second, I coded frames that situated same-sex unions in the context of social relationships. Positioning LGBT+ relationships within the realm of familiar social structures normalizes same-sex couples and demonstrates the compatibility of LGBT+ citizens with the existing constellation of social organization. This frame aims to demonstrate the social integration of LGBT+ citizens by showing that same-sex couples are neither isolated nor anathema to accepted social structures.

iii. Human Interest and Specific Examples of Love and Commitment

I identified frames that leveraged human interest and specific examples of love and commitment. By attaching a human face to the organization’s broader push for same-sex
partnership legislation, this frame personalizes the need for legal protection and ties same-sex partnership legislation to the plight of real citizens.

iv. Fairness and Equality

I looked for frames that invoked appeals to fairness and equality. Specifically, I coded frames emphasizing the similarities between gay and straight couples, frames referencing the need for legal equality, and frames invoking the need for social equality. Fairness and equality frames center on the disparate treatment of LGBT+ couples and leveraged broad conceptions of fairness as a key mechanism of persuasion. These frames highlight a discrepancy between an “ideal” world, in which citizens enjoy equal legal and social standing, and the current state of society.

v. Rights

I also looked for rights-based frames. I differentiated between civil rights (rights couched in LGBT+ people's identity as citizens of a particular nation) and human rights (fundamental rights available to all humans, regardless of nationality). These frames identify same-sex partnership legislation as a vital step to extending currently inaccessible rights to same-sex couples.

vi. Modernization and Social Progress

I tabulated frames that focused on modernization, social change, and progress. These frames cast same-sex union legislation as a step necessary for the country to achieve modernity or become a more progressive society.

vii. European Values

I coded for frames that situated the country within the context of European values. By arguing that European countries and citizens share common values, these frames exhorted the country to “catch up” to other European states by implementing same-sex partnership legislation.
Finally, I looked for frames invoking religion, morality, or ethics to prescribe an ethical or moral duty to treat LGBT+ citizens equally and enact partnership legislation.
Results

A. Arcigay

For each year of my analysis, I calculated the usage of the frame categories as a percentage of total frames. The below graph depicts the average usage of all frame types.

I found that, between 2011-2016, Arcigay increased its usage of three frames while lowering the deployment of the remaining five categories.

The strongest uptick in frame usage was observed in Fairness and Equality frames. The regression line for this frame category has a $\beta$ coefficient of 2.461 and an $r$-squared value of 0.2883.

For Modernization frames, I calculated a linear regression line with a $\beta$ coefficient of 1.142 and an
The final frame category which exhibited an increase in usage was the Social Relationships frame which has a $\beta$ coefficient of 1.294 and an $r$-squared value of 0.2108.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>$\beta$ coefficient</th>
<th>R-squared value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>-0.1777</td>
<td>0.02583</td>
<td>0.7610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situating same-sex unions in the context of social relationships</td>
<td>1.294</td>
<td>0.2108</td>
<td>0.3598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human interest and specific examples of love/commitment</td>
<td>-1.234</td>
<td>0.9081</td>
<td>0.0033*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness and equality</td>
<td>2.461</td>
<td>0.2883</td>
<td>0.2720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>-1.726</td>
<td>0.4998</td>
<td>0.1162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernization and social change/progress</td>
<td>1.142</td>
<td>0.5906</td>
<td>0.0742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European values/principles</td>
<td>-1.085</td>
<td>0.4996</td>
<td>0.1163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality/religion/ethics</td>
<td>-0.5646</td>
<td>0.3675</td>
<td>0.2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arcigay decreased its usage of the remaining framing categories. The most consistent observed decline occurred among Human Interest frames. The linear regression line had a $\beta$ coefficient of -1.234 and this relationship was the only statistically significant observation in my framing analysis. I then calculated the average usage of each framing category and ordered the frames by frequency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Fairness and equality</th>
<th>Rights</th>
<th>Social relationships</th>
<th>Modernization</th>
<th>European values</th>
<th>Quality of life</th>
<th>Human interest</th>
<th>Morality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average % of</td>
<td>24.01</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>19.76</td>
<td>9.86</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For Arcigay, my findings do not support Hypothesis 1. I found that the Human Interest frame was the second-to-least used frame. Instead, the most frequently used frames were Fairness and Equality frames and Rights frames. For every year except 2011 and 2016, Fairness and Equality frames were a plurality of the frames coded in my analysis.

My findings, however, do support Hypothesis 2. The Morality, Religion, and Ethics frame was indeed the least common frame identified. While further discussion is warranted, I believe that this trend can be linked to the institutional legitimacy and power of the Catholic Church and the religious messaging embedded in anti-LGBT+ rhetoric.

B. Campaign Against Homophobia

The below graph depicts the usage of each frame type during my period of analysis.
While the frequency of frame usage fluctuated by year, I identified trends in my data. Of the eight framing categories, only three increased during my period of analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>β coefficient</th>
<th>R-squared value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>5.041</td>
<td>0.9153</td>
<td>0.0028*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situating same-sex unions in the context of social relationships</td>
<td>-2.147</td>
<td>0.3822</td>
<td>0.1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human interest and specific examples of love/commitment</td>
<td>-2.000</td>
<td>0.3473</td>
<td>0.2183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness and equality</td>
<td>-2.105</td>
<td>0.2840</td>
<td>0.2763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>1.520</td>
<td>0.1839</td>
<td>0.3962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernization and social change/progress</td>
<td>1.152</td>
<td>0.5953</td>
<td>0.0723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European values/principles</td>
<td>-1.179</td>
<td>0.3559</td>
<td>0.2113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality/religion/ethics</td>
<td>-0.2737</td>
<td>0.03138</td>
<td>0.7371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Quality of Life frame exhibited the strongest increase of any framing category. The linear regression line has a β coefficient of 5.04057 and an r-squared value of 0.9153. The second framing category that exhibited an upward trend in usage was the Modernization and Social Progress frame. However, the regression β coefficient had a value of 1.152 and an r-squared value of 0.5953. The final category with an upward trend was the Rights frame. The linear regression line has a β coefficient of 1.520 and an r-squared value of 0.1839.
Of the frames with a downward trend in usage, the strongest decrease was exhibited by the Social Relationships frame. The regression line has a $\beta$ coefficient of -2.147 and an $r$-squared value of 0.3822.

To investigate my hypotheses, I calculated the average usage of each frame category during my period of analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fairness and equality</th>
<th>Quality of life</th>
<th>Social relationships</th>
<th>Rights</th>
<th>European values</th>
<th>Human interest</th>
<th>Modernization</th>
<th>Morality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average % of total frames</td>
<td>31.45</td>
<td>16.06</td>
<td>14.72</td>
<td>12.57</td>
<td>10.69</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the KPH, the results of my analysis did not support Hypothesis 1. The Human Interest frame consistently declined over time, and in 2009 and 2012, it was the least used of all framing categories. In Poland, I found that the most frequently used frames were Fairness and Equality frames. However, while these frames constituted a plurality of frames identified in each year, I found that their frequency declined between 2008-2012 and increased sharply between 2012 and 2013.

In regards to Hypothesis 2, I found that the Morality, Religion, and Ethics frame was, on average, the least frequently used frame. As discussed in further detail in my analysis, I believe that the low usage of the Morality, Religion, and Ethics frame can be traced to Poland’s deeply conservative, Christian society in addition to the weaponization of religion against same-sex partnerships by the Church.
My results support Hypothesis 3. While the European Values frame had a frequency of just 6.39% in Italy, I found that these frames were used more frequently in Poland at 10.69%. In both countries, however, I found that the usage of the European Values frame declined over time.

C. Comparison

My results yielded interesting insights into the divergent framing strategies of Arcigay and the KPH. In both countries, the usage of Morality, Religion, and Ethics frames, European Values frames, and Human Interest frame decreased, while the deployment of Modernization frames increased.

However, the usage of the other frame categories differed. I found that Quality of Life frames declined in Italy, but increased rapidly in Poland. While the KPH decreased its usage of Social Relationship frames, Arcigay deployed them more frequently. In Italy, the strongest increase in frame usage was among Fairness and Equality frames, but in Poland, these frames consistently fell in usage. Finally, while Rights frames increased in Poland, they fell by almost the same rate in Italy. Understanding these divergent framing strategies necessitates a critical discussion of the context surrounding the same-sex partnership legislation and the obstacles facing the KPH and Arcigay.
Discussion

A. Existing Laws Regulating LGBT+ Issues

An examination of the existing structure of laws and regulations related to LGBT+ issues is crucial to understanding how political institutions constrained and guided the strategic decisions of the KPH and Arcigay.

In an interview with Magdalena Świder, a KPH activist, I inquired about the legal and social issues impeding LGBT+ progress in Poland. Świder noted that many Poles view the LGBT+ community as a corrupt byproduct of globalization and decaying moral values. LGBT+ citizen are steeped in an aura of “foreignness” and suspicion and viewed as anathema to Polish citizenship and the Polish nation. LGBT+ citizens are seen as socially isolated and seditious, and the discourse leveraged by opponents of LGBT+ rights positions Polish society and LGBT+ citizens in a dichotomous relationship (Świder). To combat the anti-Polish sentiment surrounding LGBT issues, the KPH has embraced strategies that “normalize” LGBT+ citizens by tying them into the Polish national community. Shifting discourse away from language of exclusion and isolation aims to change public opinion towards LGBT+ rights by emphasizing citizens’ dual identities as LGBT+ and Polish, and challenging the delegation of heterosexuality as the only sexuality compatible with Polish citizenship (Świder).

In addition, the Polish Constitution explicitly defines marriage as the union between a man and a woman. In its support for same-sex union legislation, the KPH was forced to contend with the distinction between gay and straight couples demarcated in Poland’s legal framework. In addition, the lack of laws regulating or acknowledging the existence of same-sex couples could have
influenced the strategies adopted by the KPH. Given the legal barriers to same-sex unions and the absence of existing legal protections, I found that the KPH emphasized the vulnerability of LGBT+ Poles in the absence of same-sex legislation by leveraging Quality of Life frames to highlight the impact of legislation on same-sex couples’ access to basic resources and protections. In particular, I found that the KPH focused on the practical, everyday considerations, such as the need “to regulate the legal situation of our relationships... social rights, inheritance, information about the unconscious in the hospital, decisions about treatment - matters of great importance in life, but also simple, simple facilities in offices and everyday life” (“Another picket at the Sejm on Wednesday”).

Especially in the years between 2010 and 2013, the KPH shifted its discourse to focus on the challenges facing same-sex couples in the absence of legislation protecting and regulating their relationships. The central theme of the KPH’s Quality of Life frames was simple, LGBT+ citizens are denied basic protections simply because of their sexual orientation. KPH tied same-sex union legislation to the need to facilitate the Quality of Life of LGBT+ Poles by providing equitable access to welfare and housing subsidies, social services, healthcare, and access to medical information.

In addition, while I observed an overall decline in the KPH’s usage of Fairness and Equality frames, I found that two subset of this frame category, Legal Equality (from 2010-2013) and Sameness of/Mutual Benefit to Gay and Straight Couples (between 2009-2013), increased.
I believe that this shift in discourse represents a conscious decision on behalf of the KPH to heighten the persuasive appeal of its framing of same-sex partnerships. Grounding the struggle for LGBT+ rights in language emphasizing legal and political equality and emphasizing the sameness of same- and opposite-sex couples served three purposes. First, the frames situated LGBT+ citizens and the struggle for equality specifically within Poland, shifting conversation away from the globalizing discourse commonly used by opponents of same-sex partnerships to separate LGBT+ Poles from their identity as Polish citizens. Second, the KPH’s appeals focused on concrete, easily-identifiable situations in which LGBT+ citizens were denied equality. The KPH’s frames were not couched in abstract, erudite language. Instead, the KPH often used Quality of Life frames in conjunction with Legal Equality frames to highlight the legal barriers impeding equality. Sameness frames emphasized the life experiences shared by heterosexual and homosexual couples. Regardless of sexual orientation, all Polish citizens could appreciate the importance of access to medical care, welfare, and social services. This frame aimed to unite heterosexual and homosexual Poles through their shared struggle for survival. Emphasizing the need for same-sex partnership legislation in order
to formalize legal access to medical treatment, social services, and resources depicted legislation as a way to grant LGBT+ citizens the basic equality already enjoyed by heterosexual Poles. Third, Fairness and Equality frames carry an implicit policy prescription. Emphasizing the lack of legal protections within Poland designated the Polish government as the proper vehicle of authority to rectify the current state of inequality. This is significant for two reasons. First, situating the struggle for LGBT+ equality within a domestic context reifies the fight for same-sex union legislation as a Polish problem with a Polish solution, tying LGBT+ and heterosexual citizens together under the shared framework of Polish citizenship. Second, using the legal and political equality frame posits the Polish government, as opposed to an international body like the United Nations, as the proper actor to initiate change. Recognizing the authority of the Polish government legitimizes the KPH as a Polish organization working within, not against, the framework of Polish national identity.

While in Poland, the most common framing categories were Fairness and Equality frames and Quality of Life frames, I found that, in Italy, the Arcigay relied heavily on Fairness and Equality frames and Rights frames. Instead of focusing on everyday considerations, such as medical care and social services, the Arcigay frequently made abstract appeals to civil and human rights. This phenomenon could have been shaped by Italian law. An Equality Clause within the Constitution guarantees Italian citizens the right to equal treatment. The presence of Constitutional equality in addition to legal holdings affirming the legitimacy of same-sex couples could have influenced Arcigay’s framing decisions. While Polish activists navigated barriers to legal equality by emphasizing the everyday struggles of LGBT+ people, Arcigay appears to have highlighted the need to treat LGBT+ Italians equally before the law and respect their rights. Indeed, I found that, within the subcategories of Fairness and Equality frames, Legal Equality frames were the only frame type that
consistently increased. Because of Italy’s Constitutional equality, Italian citizens have experience with institutionalized legal equality. This could have amplified the salience of Fairness and Equality frames and Rights frames, making Arcigay more comfortable using these frames to support same-sex partnership legislation. When compared to Poland, the heightened usage of these frame categories in Italy could represent the Arcigay’s desire to depict same-sex partnership legislation as complementary to existing law, and as necessary to grant LGBT+ couples the rights to which they are entitled.

![Subcategories of Fairness and Equality Frames](image)

**B. Presence of Elections**

I additionally assessed whether national elections were held during my period of analysis. While vying for election, political parties, depending on their platform and ideology, may increase homophobic or pro-LGBT+ rhetoric in order to appeal to their constituency and catalyze political mobilization around controversial issues. This, in turn, could have impact the frames wielded by the organizations. In Poland, parliamentary elections were held in 2011. Conservative ideology dominates Polish politics, and the largest parties in 2011, the Civil Platform (PO) and Law and
Justice (PiS), supported the preservation of the “traditional” family and opposed same-sex unions. Your Movement (RS), a left-wing party that supported same-sex marriage and partnerships, became a salient political force during this election. The Civic Platform won a plurality (39.2%) of votes and 207 Sejm seats, the PiS gleaned 29.9% of the vote share and 157 seats, and the RS garnered 10% of ballots and 40 deputies in the Sejm (“Poland: 2011 Elections”).

To understand the potential impacts of the parliamentary elections, I assessed whether the framing strategies of the KPH discernibly changed in 2011. During the election, I found that the KPH disseminated campaign materials supporting RS while publishing responses to the homophobic rhetoric of other political leaders. I noted two interesting results. First, although the usage of frames Situating Same-Sex Couples in the Context of Social Relationships consistently declined between 2008-2010, there was an uptick in this frame usage in 2011. When I looked into data trends within the subcategories of this frame, I found specifically that the KPH increasingly showcased LGBT+ Poles as parents and child-rearers, and depicted same-sex couples as a family. Increasingly framing same-sex couples in the context of long-accepted social formations such as the parent-child relationship or a family could represent a conscious effort by the KPH to catalyze public support for pro-LGBT+ parties during a period of electoral competition.

Concomitantly, I found a steep drop in the invocation of Morality, Religion, and Ethics frames in 2011. This could reflect the rhetoric of right-wing parties. In Poland, conservative politicians have historical linkages to the Catholic Church and often use religiously-tinged messaging to shore up their legitimacy. Indeed, during 2011, the KPH published several letters rebutting statements made by right-wing politicians that referenced the “natural family” and the immorality of
homosexuality. The drop in Morality frames could indicate the desire of the KPH to steer the discourse surrounding LGBT+ issues away from the domain of religion and ethicality.

Italian Parliamentary elections were held in 2013 to determine the 630 members of the Chamber of Deputies and the 315 members of the Senate of the Republic. Italy Common Good, the center-left alliance, captured 345 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 123 seats in the Senate (“Italy: 2013 Elections”). The center-right coalition won 125 Chamber of Deputies seats and 117 Senate seats. The anti-establishment Five Star Movement won 109 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 54 seats in the Senate. In 2013, discussions over same-sex unions and partnerships occupied a prominent position in the parties’ political rhetoric.

I found several notable changes in the dynamics of Aricgay’s framing strategy that coincided with the parliamentary election. First, while I observed a consistent decline in the usage of Human Interest frames between 2011 and 2016, I found that in 2013, Aricgay’s deployment of these frames spiked. Upon revisiting the articles published by the organization during this period, I found that Arcigay increasingly disseminated publications containing the stories of LGBT+ citizens impacted by the absence of same-sex partnerships. A notable example is an article discussing a same-sex couple who, although they had been together for years, were unable to formalize their relationship or secure legal recognition.

I also observed an increase in the European Values frames. This could reflect broader trends in political rhetoric that contextualized Italy against the backdrop of Europe. In 2013, discussions of LGBT+ rights were no longer taboo, as most European countries legally institutionalized same-sex relationships, and the issue was openly debated in “legislatures of many states, including the US, France and even the UK” (Ozzano 2015). In Italy, center-left politicians in particular “pointed to the
examples of other Western countries and to the standards suggested by the EU institutions, to maintain that Italy had to become a member of ‘the civilized nations’ and that ‘the Italian Middle Ages’ had to end” (Ozzano 2015). The main frame proposed by the supporters of same-sex unions was therefore the need to overcome Italy’s backwardness regarding same-sex couples. Those opposing same-sex partnerships had to explain why Italy should not approve a law already enacted in many European countries. In response, center-right parties shifted their language from the domestic realm of policy towards broader European governance, framing same-sex unions as an “issue in relation to freedom of the individual from state control and the desire of the European institutions to bring about an allegedly relativist and secular harmonisation of the member states’ legislation” (Ozzano 2015). The political messaging of the parties during this period could have impacted Arcigay’s framing decisions, and the uptick in European Values frames could reflect left-wing rhetoric highlighting the comparative backwardness of Italy in terms of LGBT+ rights or right-wing frames that depicted same-sex partnerships as an encroachment on Italian autonomy.

Concurrently, I observed a drop in Morality, Religion, and Ethics frames and a rise in Modernization frames. The decline in Morality frames could reflect broader trends in political rhetoric. In the 2006 parliamentary elections, center-right parties articulated their opposition to same-sex unions by casting “the issue in terms of protection of the traditional family/culture and defence of the Constitution” (Ozzano 2015). However, in the 2013 elections, “they more and more frequently relied on merely legal arguments, based on the idea of the family as a ‘natural association based on marriage’” (Ozzano 2015). In addition, the shift away from Morality frames and towards Modernization frames could reflect Arcigay’s strategy to circumvent moral messaging. I found that, during this period, articles published by the Arcigay increasingly called on Italy to conform to
modern governance by disentangling religion and politics. By using Modernization frames to combat moral messaging, the Arcigay steered its discourse away from the realm of morality, allowing it to side-step a direct confrontation with religion. Thus, the declining incidence of Morality frames elucidates two possible dynamics in Arcigay’s framing strategy: a shift in frames to accommodate the changing messages of the political actors vying for election, and movement away from religious rhetoric towards the less polarizing language of modernization.

C. Public Opinion Towards International Institutions

Another factor that could have impacted the framing strategies of the KPH and Arcigay is public opinion towards international institutions, in particular, the European Union and the United Nations. To assess public opinion concerning the European Union, I consulted the Eurobarometer. First, I assessed trust in the European Union by analyzing responses to the question “I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or not to trust it: the European Union” (“Trust in institutions: The European Union”).

I compared the percentage of Poles answering “Tend not to trust” to the KPH’s use of Europeanization frames. As more Poles began to express distrust towards the European Union, it is expected that the KPH would decrease its usage of frames referencing European values. Indeed, I found a correlation of $r = -0.4958$, meaning that, as more people expressed distrust towards the European Union, the KPH decreased its usage of Europeanization frames.
Using the same methods, I assessed the relationship between Italian public opinion and Arcigay’s usage of European Values frames. Again, I found a negative correlation with $r = -0.4429$.

In both Italy and Poland, it appears that public opinion, as measured by trust in the European Union, impacted the usage of Europeanization frames. I extended my analysis to assess whether public opinion towards the European Union impacts the usage of rights-based frames. In my analysis of both organizations, I coded the invocation of civil rights and human rights separately. Civil rights focus on rights enjoyed and guaranteed to citizens of a particular country, while human rights emphasize rights and privileges available to all human beings, regardless of nationality. Given
that the organizations' usage of European Values frames appeared to respond to public opinion towards the European Union, I wanted to see whether this phenomenon extended to rights frames. It is expected that, as more citizens express distrust towards the European Union and the United Nations, two supranational conglomerates that emphasize human rights as a fundamental component of their agenda, the KPH and Arcigay’s usage of human rights frames would decline.

For the KPH, I started by comparing public distrust towards the European Union with the usage of human rights frames, operationalized as the percentage of human rights frames of the total frames used in a given year. I found a very weak positive relationship at $r = 0.0797$.

For Arcigay, I compared public distrust towards the European Union with the invocation of human rights frames, and found a negative correlation at $r = -0.5899$. 

![Graph showing the relationship between % distrust EU and % HR frames for KPH and Arcigay.](image-url)
I then turned to the question of whether trust in the United Nations impacted the KPH and Arcigay’s invocation of human rights frames. Using the question “For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or not to trust it: the United Nations,” I observed trends in public opinion towards the UN (“Trust in institutions: The United Nations). I observed the KPH’s usage of human rights frames in the context of the public’s distrust in the UN, and found a weak positive relationship at $r = 0.1252$.

When I compared public opinion to Arcigay’s usage of human rights frames, I found a negative correlation at $r = -0.2443$. 
It appears that the political framing strategies of the KPH and Arcigay were responsive to public opinion towards the European Union. For both organizations, I observed a decrease in the usage of European Values frames corresponding to increasing public distrust in the EU. For Arcigay, I also observed a decrease in the usage of Human Rights frames as the populace expressed less trust in both the EU and the UN. This dynamic squares with the Arcigay’s goal of raising public support for LGBT+ issues, in particular same-sex unions. As the public expressed less distrust in the EU and the UN, the organization shifted its framing strategy away from these institutions in order to accommodate public perception. For the KPH, while I observed a correlation between public opinion in the EU and the European Values frame, I found a very weak relationship between distrust in the EU and the usage of human rights frames. Surprisingly, I observed a weak but positive relationship between the usage of Human Rights frames and public opinion in the UN. It appears that, as the Polish population expressed more distrust in the UN, the KPH increased its usage of Human Rights frames.
D. Rhetoric of Religious Opponents

An analysis of the divergent framing dynamics of the KPH and Arcigay necessitates a careful analysis of the rhetoric espoused by the Catholic Church, a key opponent to same-sex partnerships.

The Polish Roman Catholic Church has been repeatedly listed as one of the major sources of discriminatory attitudes and opinions toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) people (Mikulak 2017). The Church actively supported the Independent Trade Union Solidarity, and through its actions, “constituted the opposition to the communist regime, perceived as foreign and therefore lacking legitimacy” (Ramet & Borowick 2017). After Solidarity’s dissolution and the imposition of martial law, the Church gained legitimacy as a champion of Polish nationality. In the wake of the fall of the Communist bloc, the Church enjoyed newfound space in which to spread its message and advance its agenda. The Church capitalized on the opportunities of the post-Communist sociocultural milieu, and “new forms of evangelisation and different religious models began to crystallise” (Ramet & Borowick 2017). Instead of remaining an open space for a variety of political and social convictions, the Church sharpened its moral and social messaging. Consequently, the Church pursued policies designed to realign “various dimensions of social and cultural life in line with Christian values,... [including] presence in the mass media, links to right-wing political parties, the episcopate’s guidance for voters in the European Union (EU) accession referendum, strong support for the inclusion of a reference to God in the preamble to the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, support for pro-life movements and opposition to IVF...” (Ramet & Borowick 2017). After Poland’s accession to the European Union (EU), the Roman Catholic Church in Poland began to actively engage in debates about policy and morality,
positioning itself explicitly against LGBT equality. Consequently, many scholars consider 2004 to be the turning point in Polish LGBT politics, “a moment of radicalization brought about by an intensification of public homophobia where gays and lesbians served as the scapegoats for anxieties related to joining the EU” (Mikulak 2017).

The political and social importance of the Church remains high in Poland, and the mainstream Catholic Church maintains strong opposition to LGBT equality. It is not uncommon for Catholic priests, organizations, and the press, “to speak out against LGBT persons, demonize them, and openly deny them rights” (Mikulak 2017). Moreover, any actions undertaken by the LGBT community to further the cause of equality or to counteract discrimination are decried as “homosexual propaganda” aimed at destroying the Catholic family, society, and life itself. The Church is also actively involved in fighting the imagined spread of “gender ideology,” which it views as a threat to the God-given nature of the gender binary and traditional gender roles (Graff 2014). In the pastoral letter on the Sunday of the Holy Family of 2013, the hierarchs state, “homosexual activity is profoundly disordered” and that “it is impossible to socially counterbalance marriage being a communion of a man and a woman with a homosexual relationship” (Ramet & Borowick 2017). In other public statements, some bishops express opinions that homosexual people “are promoting the gender ideology and relationships of two people of the same sex, they want to change the definition of marriage and correct God” (Ramet & Borowick 2017). The Church presents itself as the defender of Catholic values and as a guardian of universal norms that should be respected in the name of the entire society. By emphasizing its historical role in constructing national identity as well as stressing the dominance of Catholicism in Poland, the Church perceives itself as holding a legitimate right to intervene in political matters, because Poles and Poland are Catholic.
I found that Morality, Religion, and Ethics frames were the least used of any framing category by the KPH. Given that Poland is heavily Catholic, the KPH’s strategy possibly reflects a shift in messaging away from the religious messaging heavily used by right-wing politicians and the Church. The decreasing usage of Morality frames could also represent a conscious attempt to avoid alienating Poland’s large Catholic population. Instead of designating the Catholic Church or Catholicism as anathema to LGBT+ equality, the KPH shifted its frames to focus on modernization and social change. By positioning LGBT+ rights as a “modern” phenomenon, the KPH chastised Poland’s aberration from the “progressive” path of social development. The organization invoked “modernity” to situate the legal inequality experienced by same-sex couples within the context of broader trends towards tolerance and acceptance, establishing a metric for identifying and understanding Poland’s backwardness on LGBT+ issues. In addition, the KPH approached religion through the analytical lens of a “modern” nation, arguing that modern governance necessitated a separation between religion and politics. Instead of condemning religious doctrine, the KPH asserted that religion and religious institutions needed to be distanced from processes of political decision-making. Even devout Catholics could recognize the value of divorcing religious sentiment from the realm of politics. By arguing that religious belief should be kept separate from policymaking, the KPH positioned support for LGBT+ rights and religious ideology as compatible rather than contradictory belief systems.

It appears that, instead of focusing on abstract ideas of morality and religion, the KPH used Quality of Life frames to depict the livelihood of LGBT+ Poles in the absence of partnership legislation. This could represent a way of circumventing religious rhetoric. Using Quality of Life frames would force opponents of same-sex partnerships to take a position denying same-sex couples
basic resources necessary for life. Forced to negotiate with a deeply conservative society, the strong increase observed in Quality of Life frames could indicate the KPH’s desire to focus the debate on tangible resources needed by LGBT+ Poles to live healthy, safe lives.

In Italy, the Italian Catholic Church has been a key opponent of LGBT+ rights, including same-sex partnership legislation. The historical role of the Italian Catholic Church contextualizes the participation of the Church in Italy politics. During the Second World War, the Italian Catholic Church never formally allied with Mussolini’s fascist government. Although criticized for its inaction, the Church, compared to other European religious institutions, received relatively mild castigation after the war for its role in propagating an oppressive regime, allowing the Church to retain much of its legitimacy and power (Moscati 2010). Italy became a republic by popular referendum in 1946, and the Church’s historical roots and unity allowed it to remain a point of stability in the midst of the country’s political transition. The Italian Constitution of 1946 even incorporated the 1929 Lateran Pacts, giving the Church financial privileges and tax exemptions (Moscati 2010). Unlike other European religious institutions, the Italian Catholic Church has not allied itself exclusively with right-wing and conservative political elements; rather, the Church has acknowledged, supported, interacted with, and exercised “its power and influence on all kinds of governments” (Moscati 2010). The function of the Church “has been recognized by the exponents of almost all political parties,” and even today, political actors acknowledge the institutional power of the Church and strive “to maintain good relationships and to mediate with the Vatican” (Moscati 2010).

The Catholic Church has consistently maintained that “LGBT+ people and their families pose a threat to the cultural institution of the family, which is considered the foundation of public
morality” (Lingiardi et al. 2015). Although LGBT+ activists in Italy had long criticized the government for the lack of legal protections for LGBT+ citizens, the push for the legislation of same-sex unions began in earnest in 2007 with the introduction of a bill codifying and regulating same-sex unions. The Catholic Church responded with a fervent campaign emphasizing the need to retain the “traditional family.” Not only did the Church mobilize its congregants to protest the pending legislation, religious officials directly lobbied members of parliament to reject the bill (Knill and Preidel 2014). In addition to pointing to Biblical passages condemning homosexuality, religious officials leveraged the Church’s historical legitimacy, arguing that the centuries-old tradition of “one man and one woman” was and continues to be the proper social structure in which to form a family and raise children (Scammel 2016). Linking LGBT+ rights as anathema to “Christian” and “family” values remained the foundation of Church discourse on issues of sexuality.

In my period of analysis, the Church and religious officials mobilized opposition to same-sex unions. In 2013, both the Pope (in his 21 December speech on the subject) and conservative columnists such as Ernesto Galli della Loggia made statements opposing same-sex unions (Galli della Loggia 2012; Pope Benedict XVI 2012). The Church’s newspapers, such as L’Avvenire, also highlighted the massive demonstrations against the new law on same-sex marriages instigated by France’s Prime Minister, François Hollande, to “try to demonstrate that a wide range of social strata – and even many LGBT people – opposed the law” (Ozzano 2015). The Church was the “main non-political actor able to influence the debate,” and swayed “the positions of several actors: first of all the UDC and more broadly the centrists on both the centre-right and the centre-left” (Ozzano 2015). The Catholic Church framed same-sex unions “in terms of the common good (also in relation to the education of the younger generations) and in terms of state/church boundaries”
(Ozzano 2015). The crux of the Church’s argument aimed to define same-sex union legislation as “an imposition of organised minorities – or even of an international conspiracy aiming at destroying the traditional society to impose the ‘gender’ philosophy – while the real majority of common citizens as well as social groups were allegedly against it” (Ozzano 2015). In 2016, when the Civil Unions Bill was introduced before the Italian Parliament, the Church again mobilized in opposition. Pope Francis publicly stated, “There cannot be confusion between the family wanted by God and every other type of union” (Scammel 2016). Other influential Church officials urged the Italian Parliament to reject the bill, including Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, head of the Italian Bishops’ Conference, who argued, “Children have the right to grow up with a mother and a father. The family is an anthropological fact, not an ideological one” (Scammel 2016). The Church additionally endorsed “Family Day,” a mass rally in Rome against the legalization of same-sex unions. Although the 2016 Civil Unions Bill passed, the Church maintained its voice of opposition to proposals for the legalization of gay marriage and the extension of adoption rights to LGBT+ couples.

Faced with the institutionalized power and vast resources of the Italian Catholic Church and the linkage of religious beliefs with LGBT+ prejudices, pro-LGBT+ actors embraced strategies designed to maximize public support for LGBT+ issues while combating the rhetoric of opponents. In particular, I found that Arcigay increased its usage of Social Relationship frames. Within this frame genre, I coded instances in which Arcigay tied LGBT+ couples to (1) their identities as parents and child rearers, (2) their relationships with friends, and (3) their status as a “family.”
Arcigay consistently depicted same-sex couples as a “family” unit and, in the later years of my analysis, increasingly emphasized the parental identity of LGBT+ citizens. Arcigay’s discursive shift highlighted the everyday struggles of same-sex couples, making the need for same-sex union legislation a relatable, understandable issue for Italians. Framing LGBT+ relationships as “families” tied same-sex couples into the familial social structure widely viewed by Italians as a crucial component of social stability. Invoking basic necessities and access to resources made the inequality faced by LGBT+ “families” and parents a problem that everyone, including heterosexual citizens, could comprehend. In addition, Arcigay’s increasing emphasis on the parental status of LGBT+ couples coincided with rhetoric espoused by opponents of same-sex unions asserting that the only proper social structure in which to raise children is a relationship between a man and a woman. By showcasing LGBT+ couples as responsible parents dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of their children, Arcigay combatted discourse that posited the “traditional family” as the only healthy environment in which to raise children.

During this period, I additionally found that Arcigay shied away from language specifically criticizing the Catholic Church or religious belief. Like the KPH, this strategy could reflect a desire to appeal to religious Italians. Because the Church is interwoven into Italian identity, directly attacking the Church for its opposition to LGBT+ rights could alienate Italy’s vast Catholic
population. As same-sex partnerships emerged as a political issue in the 2013 elections, the Catholic Church often espoused its support for conservative parties and utilized religious language to oppose LGBT+ rights. Again, I believe that shift away from the language of morality towards the language of modernization represents a conscious effort to avoid alienating the religious elements of the Italian population. Especially in Italy, where the Catholic Church is a powerful force bolstered with institutional legitimacy and historical legacy, pro-LGBT+ activists possess little moral authority when paired against the Church.
Conclusion

In this paper, I analyzed the political framing strategies of pro-LGBT+ organizations in Poland and Italy. I focused my analysis on how the organizations framed same-sex partnerships in the five years before a key legislative event. In Poland, I scrutinized the framing dynamics of the KPH before the introduction and subsequent rejection of five partnership bills in 2013. In Italy, I coded the frames wielded by Arcigay in the five years before the passage of the 2016 Civil Unions Act. In both countries, the usage of Morality, Religion, and Ethics frames, European Values frames, and Human Interest frame decreased while the deployment of Modernization frames increased. However, the framing strategies also exhibited marked divergence. I found that Quality of Life frames declined in Italy, but increased rapidly in Poland. While the KPH decreased its usage of Social Relationship frames, Arcigay deployed them more frequently. In Italy, the strongest increase in frame usage was among Fairness and Equality frames, but in Poland, these frames consistently fell in usage. Finally, while Rights frames increased in Poland, they fell by almost the same rate in Italy. To contextualize these divergent framing strategies, I discussed the existing state of LGBT+ rights in each country, the presence of elections, and public opinion towards international institutions. I found that the political context in which the KPH and Arcigay operated was hugely influential on the organizations’ framing decisions. The existing state of LGBT+ rights shaped the arena in which the actors contested the validity of same-sex partnerships. In addition, the presence of elections during my period of analysis allowed me to assess changes in the deployment of frame categories. I found that, during the period of elections, the KPH and Arcigay shifted their framing strategies to coincide with oppositional rhetoric and the messaging of political actors. In addition, public opinion
towards the European Union and the United Nations coincided with the deployment of the European Values frames. Finally, the opposition rhetoric leveled by the Catholic Church contextualizes and explains the specific mechanisms embraced by the organizations in their fight for equality.
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