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Strategy, Performance and Gender: An Interactionist Analysis of Young Activists within the LGBTQ Movement and the Catholic Countermovement in Italy

A Dissertation Presented

By

Anna Lavizzari

To

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Strategy, Performance and Gender: An Interactionist Analysis of Young Activists within the LGBTQ Movement and the Catholic Countermovement in Italy

Abstract

Recent social movements scholarship is gradually moving away from (over)structuralist and mechanistic frameworks, towards a more nuanced understanding of the cultural and strategic dimensions of mobilization and collective action. This has spurred a renewed interest in understanding social movements as interactive processes, where gender is viewed as essential in understanding processes of recruitment and mobilization, strategies, frames, and forms of organization. Concurrently, participation in social movements and their gendered outcomes affect the life-course patterns of individuals in multiple ways.

For these new avenues of research, one of the core issues pertains to how young men and women interact within gendered social structures, and how they reproduce or contest gender hierarchies as they protest. This thesis deploys the concept of social performance and gender performativity (that is, the process through which gendered meanings, roles, relations, and identities are continually being constructed and revised) in order to both examine the role that femininities and masculinities play in mobilization, as well as complicate our understanding of strategy in collective action. Namely, I suggest that the concept of social performance is optimally suited to make sense of non-strategic activity, and to highlight the tension between expressive and strategic action. This requires a further questioning of the continuum between strategic action and social performance: is all performance strategic, or is all strategy a performance?

The LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement provide a case for the analysis of competing cultures of protest, where “gender” is currently the object of one of the most controversial debates in the Italian public arena. Looking at key actors involved in this struggle for normative and social change, the thesis aims at exploring the contended strategies, discourses, frames and performances from an interactionist perspective.

Sexuality has become a fundamental dimension through which access to and understandings of citizenship are filtered. In this sense, heteronormative sexualities grant youth the possibility to achieve full citizenship and participation, whilst for LGBTQ youth same-sex sexualities define and constrain the range of opportunities for civic engagement and full citizenship. Nonetheless, this project is committed to the investigation of the adherence to alternative gender models on both sides of the struggle. A performance approach focuses therefore on the relationship between symbolism, cultural creativity, aesthetics and social action. It provides useful insights into the symbolism of protests and the symbolic behaviour, the variety of communicative styles and mobilizing techniques, alternative ways of making statements, claim spaces, and puts forward the conditions of the abused. It also helps to bridge the mind/body divide, and how different practices and regulations are embodied, such as in the case of gender performances and sexuality. The idea of performance also encompasses different social spaces, ranging from physical to online ones that can be used by protestors to raise awareness across boundaries.

Data have been collected through individual interviews with young activists of LGBTQ and Catholic associations and organizations. Questions required the interviewee to reflect on their life history, their experience as activists, and their perception of gender related issues within the association/organisation and more broadly in their everyday life. In addition to the actor-based analysis of individuals and their narratives, a contextual analysis of the Italian socio-economic and cultural context contributed to the understanding of the gendered practices. Participant observation has been conducted in order to gather information on the movements' communities, particularly during relevant demonstrations and protest events, meetings, and conferences. Collection of relevant visual and online data, activists' produced material, such as images, videos, flyers, and social media content has been used for documentary analysis.

Although it can be safe to affirm that the disciplines of social movement research and gender studies have witnessed an increased cross-fertilisation, the investigation of the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement in Italy through a gender lens, and particularly with respect to the on-going social struggle, has been largely, if not entirely, unexplored. Against this backdrop, the present investigation highlights the ways in which the meaning and experience of social age affects opportunities and constraints for activism, how it is shaped by social conditions and translated into different forms of expressions and participation. This research therefore highlights how cultural resources shape activists' practices, as well as on how youth engage within gendered social structures in the context of activism.

Dedication

To Cate.

For being with me, believing in me, every step of the way.

Acknowledgements

*Di poi che Dio sapeva, avanti lo crearlo,
che per un sol peccato l'uom si saria perduto.
Con tutto che poteva, volendolo, salvarlo
creandolo più forte, più forte e provveduto.*

*Di poi che Dio sapeva che si saria tradito
così da esser punito, crear non lo doveva.
Crear non ci doveva per esser giudicati,
salvati o inabissati secondo li peccati*

*da lui già preveduti, a noi già destinati.
Di poi che Dio conosce, avanti il farci nati,
se in terra sarem santi oppure scellerati
perché far recitare ad ognuno 'sta commedia*

*dicendo "Và a soggetto", che invece è già stampato!
Che sia perché a star solo nel Cielo si è annoiato?
S'è messo a far l'autore per non morir d'inedia.
Perché far recitare ad ognuno 'sta commedia?*

–Dario Fo, 'Di poi che Dio sapeva', 1964

The birth of humans, for instance. How, all of a sudden, Adam and Eve found themselves in front of God, the God who declared to love them and instead asked them: choose, what kind of life do you want? Do you want to be eternal or do you want to have an idea, a thought, and knowledge? And Eve, first, answered: I prefer to think, have ideas, and above all, doubts. I do not care if there is death after all this, if there is suffering. But there is love.

Throughout this journey there have been uncountable moments, in which I turned to the humour of Italian comedians to lighten my thoughts, to enrich my critical thinking, to laugh and feel better. Dario Fo has been one of such voices whispering joy, hope and wisdom since I was a child. I remember my parents showing me one of his most famous pieces for the first time, 'Il Mistero Buffo', recorded on an old VHS, giving me the honour and pleasure to witness his performance of 'L'Arlecchino' at Il Piccolo Teatro in Milan; I was six years old. He is one of the most brilliant, genius, subversive, ironic, paradoxical and joyful artist of all times. He passed away on the 13th of October 2016, while I was writing the final lines of this manuscript. I would therefore like to dedicate the very first lines to him, for having been one of the greatest examples of the art of social protest.

Parallel to the intellectual exercise that you are about to read, there is a long and dense story of personal and emotional experience. Three years in which the personal and intellectual growth that I experienced has been exponential, year after year, to the point of becoming, now and again, physically and emotionally unbearable. A point of apparent non-return, known within the Ph.D. community as 'The Valley of Shit', in which I found myself many

times. I am glad that I eventually managed to navigate myself out of it, although I am sure some pieces of me got lost in the effort. Gladly, as popular wisdom rightly affirms, many good things flourished from it. Above all, this experience allowed me to meditate on the way I am and I want to be in this world, as gripped with doubts as it will always be, but with the certainty of at least trying to relate my everyday knowledge with so many others, diverse people. I owe this to my friends and detractors, to strangers, but especially to all the people who throughout this path became a little less 'others', a little less 'outsiders', and much more like visitors into each other's lives.

There are many people and places I should thank for having been by my side along these years. I hope that in a way or another, all of them will feel how grateful I am. Some of them, nonetheless, I would like to personally thank through these lines. My most sincere acknowledgment goes to Élise, my supervisor, mentor, and, as we used to jokingly say with my dear friend and colleague Octavius – to whom I am more than thankful as well – 'Oracle'. My gratitude to Élise starts long before beginning the Ph.D., when I was a master student. Through her teaching and mentoring, I was able to open my eyes and my mind on countless issues, but first and foremost on gender. Not only did she teach me how to be suspicious without being paranoid, but also the passion to dig deeper and question the unquestioned, everywhere around me. Without her patience, support, and precious advice, this work would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Tom, who made me feel welcomed and gave me the opportunity to undertake this enriching experience in the very first place, as well as Amanda, who supported me with her advice and care, particularly in the last phase of the project. Thank to Laura, for polishing my thoughts and words.

I thank my parents. My mother for bringing me back in the '60s with her, every time as a young, tenacious activist in the communist party, and my father, for giving me precious advice on the darkest sides of human psychology.

Thanks to Barcelona, Firenze, and Berlin.

Last but not least, thank to all my friends and loves, particularly Gabriele and his inestimable help, Bram, my brother, for everything you know, my love Silvia, and Andrea, Carlotta, Jake, Jordi for making my life a lot easier, funnier, and better.

A.L., October 2016

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Abbreviations

CDNF – Comitato Difendiamo I Nostri Figli

FUCI – Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex

LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

LGBTQI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex

LMPTI – La Manif Pour Tous Italia

SMO – Social Movement Organisation

SM – CM – Social Movement - Countermovement

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged

Chapter 1

Strategy, Performance and Gender

1.1 Introduction

In their histories, all societies have confronted ‘fateful moments’, to borrow the term from Giddens (1991), in which decisions made in the present become especially challenging and morally, emotionally, and culturally weighted. In this situation, critical reflection, audacious choices, heightened emotions and unexpected events become powerful catalysts for social protest. These are, ultimately, moments where parties are required to make a two-fold effort in order to find cohesion between history, the world as we know it, and social change, whilst formulating a subjective response to cultural acceptance: an effort toward defining the ‘outside’, the ‘other’, the ‘external world’, while simultaneously identifying the inside, or the self. It is, in other words, the universal and constant concern about what and how we should be; in the modern day, how can we stay relevant in the world? If one had the choice and decided to merge past and future in the present, there would be no need for concern, no need for reaction, no original sin, as Christians would say. (Un)fortunately, many of us do not have this choice; we are outside in the world, we take a look around and search for systems of meaning, beliefs, resources, structures of feelings that would allow us to negotiate our position in society, in space and time, both inside and outside in a coherent, harmonious way.

Most researchers in the field agree that social movements have the potential to change or accommodate structures of power in multiple ways. Because they

mobilize and function in evolving social contexts of uneven structural conditions and unsatisfactory normative systems¹, social movements provide collective and individual actors with the possibility to consequently develop their own opportunities and structures. Scholars of social protest have demonstrated that activists not only act and have the capacity to change embodied social structures, but can also act bravely and resolutely, empowering themselves through intense socialisation processes (Fantasia 1988; Tarrow 1998; Sewell 1996; Jasper 1997; Flam and King 2005; Hess and Martin 2006; della Porta *et al.* 2006; della Porta 2014a). The change that is at the heart of much recent work, including the current analysis, is structural, but also normative, cultural and emotional, emphasising the fact that both individual and collective actors are subject to revision. For some actors, anything and everything is negotiable, anything can change except for the truth, which is singular and ‘revealed’. For others, truth is a concept that is open to perpetual change and negotiation. In both cases, keeping the truth but changing its surroundings, comes with weighty choices, motives and decisions. In terms of its understanding, deployment and consequences in the everyday life of social practices, gender – in its broadest sense – constitutes the rift *par excellence* (Jenkins 1996).

During the past decades, scholars have begun to pay attention to how gender affects social movement structures and processes and how, in turn, social movements affect gender roles and identity (Bem 1993; Adam 1995; Whittier 1995; Taylor 1999; Einwohner *et al.* 2000; Kuumba 2001; Risman 2004). Traditional gender roles, relations and structures play a crucial role in how and why individuals

¹ On the term ‘normative’, I subscribe to Butler’s meaning as ‘pertaining to the norms that govern gender’ and also to ‘ethical justification, how it is established, and what concrete consequences proceed therefrom’ (1990, xxi).

organise and participate in social struggle. Not only do they influence how and why activists engage in social change, but they also shape movements' emergence, characteristics and dynamics. In social movement theory, gender is essential in understanding processes of recruitment and mobilization, strategies and frames employed, and forms of organisation, but it also advances a series of questions about the ways in which men and women experience mobilization and undergo the individual transformation catalysed by engagement in a movement (Fillieule and Roux 2009). Most of the literature on gender and social movements has tended to focus on movements that address gender-related issues and are often based on an exclusively male or female constituency, namely women's and men's movements. The impact of gender is less obvious in social movements that are not clearly targeting or addressing gender issues. Furthermore, scholars have long been concerned with the question of mobilization and its relation to social change. The path to mobilization is not straightforward, and the relationship between grievances, oppression, injustice and contention is not a direct one. In fact, different paths to mobilization can be followed even in the absence of openness in the political opportunity structure or as a result of improving conditions.

The onset of the mobilization under analysis is part of a political and public debate that has developed around three legislative bills (draft bill Scalfarotto, 2013; Cirinnà, 2013; Fedeli, 2014) concerning public and institutional recognition of LGBTQ subjectivities in Italy. The draft bill Scalfarotto, proposes the introduction of the crime of homophobia in the penal code; the draft bill Cirinnà, the recognition of civil unions; and the draft bill Fedeli (later merged into the reform of the so-called 'Good School'), the inclusion of gender-oriented educational programs in schools. These three bills, emerging in the context of increasing secularisation of

Italian society with regard to sexual citizenship rights, constitute the *casus belli* for the reaffirmation and radicalisation of a Catholic collective identity centred on a conservative, oppositional discourse to ‘gender theory and ideology’, and the defence of the traditional and natural family. In comparison to other European countries, the debate around the recognition of same-sex unions and homosexual rights in Italy has been largely characterised by little engagement from both political parties and civil society actors (Winkler and Strazio 2011). From a legal perspective, a first bill on domestic partnerships was proposed in 2002², almost contemporary to the approval of the European Parliament’s resolution against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientations (2003), and subsequently replaced by the so-called Dico (the equivalent of PACs in other European countries) in 2007, when the left-of-centre coalition led by Romano Prodi took office.³ The two bills provided the starting point for political and legal negotiations on same-sex unions, which have been subject to countless revisions, stalemates and deadlocks, until 10 June 2015 when the Italian Chamber of Deputies passed a motion to force the current government to approve a civil unions bill. Finally, the Renzi government passed a law in June 2016. Through these phases, Italian society took the street on several occasions, either supporting or condemning the initiatives, opposing Catholics, confessional parties and Christian Democrats to LGBT groups, secularists and some strands of the political left.

Within Italian academia, the attention given by scholars to gender and queer studies is striking in its absence. Everything we know about LGBTQ movements in

² See ‘Disegno di legge sulla disciplina del patto civile di solidarietà e unione di fatto’ presented by Franco Grillini on 21 October 2002, n. 3296, XIV Legislation.

³ See ‘Disegno di legge sui diritti e i doveri delle persone stabilmente conviventi’ presented by Barbara Pollastrini and Rosy Bindi on 20 October 2007, n. 1339, XV Legislation.

Italy comes from the work of a few intellectuals and activists who conduct research in this area (see for instance, Pedote and Poidimani 2007; Cristallo 1996; Barilli 2009; Pini 2011; Marcasciano 2015). Only a select few scholars have contributed to our understanding of the mobilization mechanisms of the Italian LGBTQ movement, adopting a clear stance based on social movement theories (Dall’Orto 1988; Trappolin 2004; Trappolin *et al.* 2008; Dragone *et al.* 2008; Grillini 2008; Prearo 2015b). The majority, instead, have focused on different aspects of homosexual identities, cultures, communities, networks, and relations from sociological, psychological and medical perspectives. Although it can be argued that the disciplines of social movement research and gender studies have become increasingly cross-fertilised, investigation into the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement in Italy through a gender lens, and particularly with respect to the on-going social struggle, has remained largely, if not entirely, unexplored. This thesis proposes to deepen our understanding of gender and social movements by linking literatures on critical theory on gender and sexuality with theories on political movements and countermovements.

1.2 The Focus of this Research

Recent social movements scholarship is gradually moving away from (over)structuralist and mechanistic frameworks, towards a more nuanced understanding of the cultural and strategic dimensions of mobilization and collective action. This has spurred a renewed interest in understanding social movements as interactive processes. The recent works on strategic interactionism by Fligstein and McAdam (2015), on the one hand, and Jasper (2006; 2015) on the other constitute an important step forward in this direction. Particularly, Jasper’s framework on the

strategic dimensions of protest, elaborated first in *Getting Your Way: Strategic Dilemmas in the Real World* (2006), and then developed in his most recent publication *Players and Arenas: The Interactive Dynamics of Protest* (2015), deserves careful analysis. As Jasper questions, ‘how can we acknowledge the felt experience of participants without losing the insights of the structural school?’ (2015, 7). Retracing the progress of the social conflict under analysis requires me to identify the choice-points and trade-offs faced by players who were involved at different times. By means of the concept of dilemma, as developed in Jasper’s approach, it is possible to find linkages among the afore-mentioned aspects of social conflict while simultaneously shedding light on the contingencies protestors are confronted with in the process of negotiating their gender identities. From this perspective, I see strategic interactionism as a convincing call for the centrality of individuals’ motives, thought-processes and perceptions in the analysis of contentious politics.

This research project also contributes to the current literature on activism by refocusing attention on youth as a social and analytical category; young people do not only *happen* to be involved in activism. Youth have been central players within social struggles in Europe and around the globe, showing an increasing tendency to embrace activism as a preferred form of political socialisation and expression, as opposed to engaging themselves in institutionalised forms of politics (Kirshner 2007; Sherrod *et al.* 2010). The subjective production of youth is therefore at the heart of new forms of protest, giving rise to a youthful aesthetic in which different forms of showing collective presence spread through social performances and direct actions. Nonetheless, the question of individual participation cannot escape its relationship with the context, namely the social structures in which it is embedded. Hence it is

important to analyse the social forces defining and redefining the possibilities for activists to participate. In this sense, gender functions as a social structure at the intersection with other social hierarchies, and at the same time is performed at the individual level in ways that reproduce or contest the structure itself. Questions therefore remain as to how activists engage with and within gendered social structures and how they reproduce or contest gender hierarchy *as they protest*.

Youth proves to be a valuable social category for the analysis of gender and sexual identities negotiation. The transitional dimension – *coming-into-being* – of youth constitutes an important aspect in the formation of young people’s gender identity. A focus on the interactions between young activists at the micro level allows us to understand how social resistance impacts their awareness of gender roles and relations. In fact, social movements are themselves microcosms of the types of gender structures and processes evident in wider society; social resistance movements can therefore be considered gendered terrains of struggle and negotiation. Still, social movement outcomes are gendered on both objective and subjective levels (Van Dyke, McAdam, Wilhelm 2000). The main focus of this project is on the subjective level and takes into account the ‘gendering of consciousness’ as an outcome of social movements that impacts tensions and struggles in movements and the wider society. The aim is therefore to contribute to the on-going discussion on gender and social movements by further exploring the relationship between gender and mobilization in social protest at the level of participant interaction, with a particular focus on young activists.

Specifically, the research’s framework constitutes one of the main contributions to the existing literature, and builds upon an integrated approach combining structural and agentic perspectives. For these new avenues of research, this thesis

deploys the concepts of social performance and gender performativity – that is, the processes through which gendered meanings, roles, relations, and identities are continually being constructed and revised – within the framework of strategic interactionism in order to both examine the role that femininities and masculinities play in mobilization, and to consider how they complicate our understanding of strategy in collective action. I suggest that the concept of social performance is optimally suited to making sense of non-strategic activity, and to highlighting the tension between expressive and strategic action. This requires a further questioning of the continuum between strategic action and social performance: is all performance strategic, or is all strategy a performance? Consequently, an important issue addressed in this project is the analysis of the continuum between strategic actions, namely the tactical repertoires employed by activists, and social performance.

The selection of the topic for this project is problem driven; it is oriented towards the study of a social issue that is important for society and to me personally. Concurrently, the choice of cases was theoretically driven and based on the in-depth study of a context where multiple variables emerge. The interplay between the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement provides a case for the analysis of competing cultures of protest, where ‘gender’ is currently the object of one of the most controversial debates in the Italian public arena. By looking at key actors involved in this struggle for normative and social change, this thesis aims to explore the contended strategies, discourses, frames and performances from an interactionist perspective.

Looking at research conducted on similar movements abroad helps in defining the specificities of Italy as a political case.⁴ In particular, we can understand the ‘anti-gender’ mobilization as a revitalisation of long-standing strands of Italian social conservatism, both in terms of Church-linked networks and right-wing organisations and political actors. Yet, as it has been found in similar cases (Williamson, Skocpol, Coggin 2011), the actors involved in the mobilization present some innovative features with respect to past conservative efforts. Drawing a parallel with Skocpol’s study of Tea Party, it is possible to look at the ‘anti-gender’ campaign as a ‘new variant of conservative mobilization [...], a dynamic, loosely-knit, and not easily controlled formation of activists, funders, and media personalities that draws upon and refocuses longstanding social attitudes [...]’ which ‘helped to sharpen and refocus conservative activism in our time.’ (2011, 37). In this sense, the Cirinnà bill is seen by Catholic activists as a threat to Italian democracy, out of proportion to any actual political happening, the basis for a strong opposition to government’s intervention in social and economic life, particularly as these intend to force progressive views on gender and sexuality. To borrow again an expression from Skocpol and colleagues, the ‘anti-gender’ campaign ‘enabled conservatives to rebrand their ideology and mobilize their grassroots in new ways’ (2011, 35). Yet, as I will explore all along the thesis, dilemmas arose within the Catholic countermovement as the ‘anti-gender’ popularity started to stagnate. In particular, with respect to the extreme rhetoric and refusal to compromise, and policy differences between the movement’s elites and grassroots activists, as well as Church authorities.

⁴ In particular, Skocpol’s research on the Tea Party and Republican Conservatism (2011), which employs ethnographic methods such as fieldwork and interviews as in this study, provides some helpful insights in theorizing the Catholic countermovement as a new variant of conservative mobilization.

1.2.1 Research Questions

Building on the discussion above, the present dissertation investigates the following research question:

How do the gender identities and performances of young activists change and adapt to the context of mobilization?

In addition, my thesis looks critically at the subsequent sub-questions:

1. What role does gender play in processes of recruitment, strategies, frames, and forms of organisations?
2. How do young activists interact within gendered social structures, reproducing or contesting gender hierarchies as they protest?
3. How does activism affect individual and collective understandings of gender?

1.2.2 Limitations

Questioning issues of social relations, interactions, transformation, and conflict surrounding dominant norms and values in society has been a critical task for scholars of contemporary social theory. Contributing to knowledge in this field requires caution, particularly when mobilising existing theories, paradigms, and explanations. But, as Sedgwick argued, ‘suppose that one takes seriously the notion [...] that everyday theory qualitatively affects everyday knowledge and experience; and suppose that one doesn’t want to draw much ontological distinction between academic theory and everyday theory; and suppose that one has a lot of concern for the quality of other people’s and one’s own practices of knowing and experiencing.

In this case it would make sense – if one had the choice – not to cultivate the necessity of a systematic, self-accelerating split between what one is doing and the reasons one does it.’ (Sedgwick 2003, 144-145) The basic question becomes: how can we enable ourselves to better understand the real, the social, and the human without unavoidably falling into the trap of a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’? How can we know and relate to whatever we attempt to understand without privileging, caricaturising and reifying certain problematic aspects over others?

The present thesis does not even try to intelligibly answer these questions, but rather ‘keeps them in mind’ throughout the research experience as reminders of the need for academic caution. This being said, my research is certainly preoccupied with an understanding of the theoretical premises in which it is grounded. The attempt to mobilise multiple theories critically, trying to be aware of how I make use of them, and, how, in turn, they are using me, is motivated by a belief that there is a great deal of potential in the cross-fertilisation of different sociological disciplines. However, I am also fully aware that I run the risk of disappointing scholars and readers from different fields of study – social movements, gender, youth, and even religion – for having neglected to honour the knowledge produced by the respective literatures, for missing references to important authors, and for abstaining from exploring certain aspects with more intellectual depth and attention. From a theoretical standpoint, therefore, I might have ‘essentialised’ different research traditions in order to favour cross-fertilisation. A similar critique could be made of the thesis’ argument and analysis. However, while gambling with multiple perspectives and concepts, I tried to find a common ground that would allow me to be theoretically and methodologically eclectic but also consistent, particularly in researching the complexity of the empirical cases with equal effort. Most

importantly, driven by my best intentions, I attempted to conduct this research without committing to one movement or the other, one position or the other; however, I believe that a value-free process is delusional. By trying to reflect in the spirit of activists on both sides, and truly come to terms with their understandings and views, I hoped to achieve a balance.

There are, indeed, some aspects that deserve more attention than I could give them, which I could not approach with adequate analytical depth or empirical data. Above all, the topic of the consequences of social movements, as treated in the respective literature (Diani 1997; Giugni 1998; Tilly 1999; Bosi and Uba 2009; Giugni, Bosi and Uba 2015). Studies on social movement outcomes commonly collect data over the long-term (i.e. throughout the duration of a cycle of protest), and before and after the time frame of mobilization, as a basic requirement to effectively assess the impact of activism, at the individual, cultural, and political levels and at any points of intersection between the three. Given the time frame in which my empirical data was collected, which was very much focused on the historical present and the short-term, I was not able to conduct a proper analysis of movement outcomes. However, drawing from the literature mentioned previously, I decided to look at individual transformations in the short-term and within movements in an effort to extend the investigation of different paths of engagement while excluding a 'post-activism' or demobilization context.

A final limitation to this research lies in its potential for generalisations in the handling of variables that are strongly anchored in the specificities of the Italian context. One of the thesis' major research objectives is to provide a precise, in-depth empirical study of a context and to subsequently introduce and elicit multiple

dimensions of it, rather than defining a universal set of variables. Still, the thesis provides some key generalisations based on relevant theoretical advances.

1.3 Roadmap

The dissertation is structured into eight chapters, including the present introduction (**chapter 1**).

In **chapter 2**, the thesis introduces the reader to major concepts and definitions based on existing literature in social movement studies, gender studies and youth activism. The goal is to highlight major approaches in these literatures that support the focus of this research, by clearly setting the limits of the research's scope. It starts with explanations about the basic concepts of protest, such as social movement, protest itself, collective identity – as first developed by new social movement theories and later discussed by competing approaches, such as queer theory, and more integrative ones, such as symbolic interactionism – movement and countermovement dynamics and strategic interactionism. It continues by exploring how social movements are gendered at different levels, assessing the interplay between gender and religion as a main area of contestation in our contemporary world, raising questions about the tensions between religion and secularism in the field of sexual citizenship, and concludes by proposing an integrated approach to the study of youth, activism, and gender.

Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive overview of the methods employed in the research, including data collection strategies, processes of data handling and analysis and reflections upon ethical issues, triangulation, and positionality – particularly from a gender and queer perspective.

Chapter 4 develops a framework for a theory of action in protest and concentrates on an in-depth theoretical exploration of the ‘structure versus agency’ dilemma. By building extensively on the notion of *habitus* and *performativity*, the concepts of social performance and strategy are further expanded into an integrated approach.

Chapter 5 first introduces the cases under analysis and charts the emergence of gender as a field of contention in Italy. It then presents and analyses empirical data on the major players, mobilisation structures, organisational forms, networks, and strategies of recruitment and engagement employed by each movement and exposes the ways in which these are gendered. It ends with a comparison of competing cultures of protest using Jasper’s ‘organization’ and ‘extension’ dilemmas. The overall goal of this chapter is to answer the first sub-question of the thesis.

Chapter 6 brings the analysis forward by focusing on movement and countermovement discourses and public narratives. Through the investigation of collective action frames, it provides additional empirical data on the development of the contention at the discursive level. As in the previous chapter, it ends with a comparison of the framing strategies employed by each side, through the lens of the ‘reaching in or reaching out’ dilemma.

Chapter 7 shifts the focus of analysis to the individual level and explores the second sub-question of this research, namely, how activists protest within gendered social structures. Concretely, it provides dense empirical data based on in-depth interviews with activists, on the different understandings and meanings attached to gender, and explores alternative ways of ‘doing gender’ in both movements, including processes and strategies of identity negotiation and contestation or reproduction of gender structures.

Chapter 8 pulls all the parts together and presents a discussion of the main findings, particularly but not exclusively in light of the third sub-question, that is, the role of movements' activities in the individual transformation of activists. It concludes by offering a series of recommendations for future research.

Finally, two disclaimers are necessary for the general understanding of the thesis. The first concerns the use of the acronym LGBTQ, and its variations (LGBTI and LGBTQI). Although the majority of organisations worldwide use the label LGBT as a form of mainstream self-designation, it is important to understand that the origin of this acronym (beginning of the 1990s) and its declinations are based on the idea of inclusivity and diversity of sexuality and gender cultures. In the beginning, the attempt was directed towards the inclusion of lesbian identities, and subsequently bisexual and transgender identities, as a consequence of a general dissatisfaction with the once widespread expression 'gay community', referring to gay, male persons. The extension of the acronym to queer identities reflects the need for inclusivity of people self-defining as non-hetero and non-cisgender; more broadly, for anyone questioning his/her sexual identity. In the course of years, the term 'queer' has become the preferred designation of younger generations, not only in relation to sexual and gender identities, but also to designate a specific lifestyle, challenging sexual and gender codes. Yet, the encompassing (non)definition of 'queer' identities renders difficult to advocate in favour of 'queer rights', or even to identify specific 'queer needs'.⁵ Indeed, even though the different acronyms share the opposition to sexism as a root of oppression, a debate still exists concerning the most appropriate designation. In fact, different values, needs and rights arise

⁵ In this respect, it is interesting to note that the largest advocacy organisation for sexual and gender rights, ILGA – Lesbian and Gay Association, has officially opted for the 'LGBTI' wording.

depending on which gender/sexual identities are mobilized (this would be the case, for instance, for intersex and transsexual persons, who might have specific needs and goals based on their sexual identity, rather than orientation, as in the case of lesbians and gays). To conclude, I assume that the variety of self-identifications reflects the challenge for inclusivity and visibility confronted by the movement(s), along with the fundamental work carried out by LGBTQI organisations on issues of intersectionality. For the purpose of this thesis, I make use of the acronym LGBTQ, as being the one in which the majority of activists and organisations identify.

The second relates to translations from Italian to English: translation from Italian is mine for all relevant quotes in the manuscript, including interviews, newspaper articles, conference minutes, activists' produced materials and related documents.

Chapter 2

Exploring Gendered Factors in Social Movements

In terms of its universality and its consequences for the organisation and practice of everyday life, gender is the most significant fault line of identification in the human world.

–Richard Jenkins, Social Identity (2008, 84)

This chapter analyses important concepts and variables, together with their definitions, and explores existing theories that are used in the study of the topic at hand. The theoretical themes presented in this chapter constitute the foundation for the analysis in the next chapters. Building on the existing literature, the objective of this chapter is to introduce the contemporary understandings of the main sociological disciplines employed in this research – namely, social movement studies and gender studies – and particularly the interplay between the nexuses I am planning to explore. It critically reviews and describes the theoretical material, explaining why the research problem under study exists, and how the proposed framework tackles the research questions of this dissertation. Conceptually speaking, this dissertation draws from both theories of social movements and sociological theories of gender and sexuality. The aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of how gendered aspects intervene in mobilization dynamics.

Before getting to the heart of the conceptual discussion, the first section of this chapter constitutes a general but necessary reflection on feminist and queer interventions in the conceptualisation of the categories of gender, sex and sexuality. It follows a review of the study of social movements, and approaches to collective

identity in particular. It also analyses the main frameworks within which social movements are understood and studied in this thesis, namely strategic interactionism, and movement(s) and counter-movement(s) dynamics. The following section presents major works on collective identity with the aim of locating the current study in relation to the study of gender, sexuality, and religion, as well as providing definitions of key concepts and variables. Subsequent sections focus more closely on gendered factors in mobilization dynamics and social movement outcomes. The last sections introduce important concepts for the study of youth as a social category.

2.1 Gender, Sex, Sexuality

Critical feminist and queer theorists have been long concerned with debates regarding how we should define and understand the term ‘gender’ and its relations to the categories of ‘sex’ and ‘sexuality’. The following sections take into account the work of prominent authors in the field, particularly Butler, Sedgwick and Foucault in order to shed light on the complexity of such relationships as they reveal important insights for the interpretation of empirical data in the final chapters.

2.1.1 Gender and Sex as Contested Categories

Gender Trouble (1990) constitutes the point of departure of an open dialogue that Butler undertakes along her critical work on the political construction of gender and sex categories and the systems of regulation and power that sustain them. The manuscript presents itself as a form of critical inquiry, a genealogy of gender categories, drawing on Foucault and Nietzsche’s works, it posits that a ‘genealogy investigates the political stakes in designating as an *origin* and *cause* those identity

categories that are in fact the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple diffuse points of origin' (1990, xxxi). The institutions on which Butler centres the analysis are 'phallogocentrism' and 'compulsory heterosexuality' as regimes of power and discourse. With respect to compulsory heterosexuality, Butler contends that coherent gender norms are asymmetrically and discretely distributed according to a cultural matrix (of power) – the *heterosexual matrix* – along the opposition between feminine and masculine (p. 24). Most importantly, in such conceptualization, the political relation between gender and sex shapes and regulates the meaning of sexuality, as "the cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist' - that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not 'follow' from either sex or gender" (p. 24). Through the naturalisation of binary terms such as masculine and feminine, the stability of gender categories and the regime of heterosexuality are concealed. Anticipating some aspects of the discussion around structure and agency in chapter 4, Butler maintains that social identities that remain 'unthinkable' or 'unsayable' do not fall outside culture – as historically constructed and determined – but only outside, or at the margins, of dominant forms of cultural intelligibility (p. 105). One of the questions that Butler asks revolves precisely around the political possibilities that emerge as a consequence of a radical critique of identity categories.

At the basis of Butler's critique lays a preoccupation with feminist politics and the extent to which 'the effort to locate a common identity as the foundation for a feminist politics preclude[s] a radical inquiry into the political construction and regulation of identity itself' (1990, xxxii). Indeed, the author points to the problematic of considering 'female' and 'woman' as relational and argues for the

existence of non-normative cultural practices that would call into question the relations among gender and sex. By assuming 'women' as the stable subject of feminism, we implicitly legitimise the exclusionary nature of juridical structures that produce the grounds (the subject) for representational politics; representation, in this sense, does not only refer to issues of political visibility and legitimation, but also to the 'normative function' of a juridical language that defines women as subjects (of feminism) (p. 2). Drawing on Foucault (1976), the problem of subject constitution in feminist theory and politics thus becomes particularly relevant when the constitutive powers through which those gender subjects are produced is uncritically endorsed. A second problem arises when the term 'women' is employed as an encompassing identity, as in the case of other political and social identities, which are assumed to be exhaustive, coherent and consistent across time and space. These assumptions, Butler contends, are possible only in the context of the heterosexual matrix, and taken as the foundations of feminist politics, would only reify normative gender relations.

In the analysis, while unpacking the never-ending opposition between constructivism and essentialism in which feminism seems to be continuously trapped, the author draws the attention to the fact that neither constructionists nor essentialists have been able to critically theorised 'sex' (1990; 1993).⁶ Conceiving gender as independent from sex, in a constructivist perspective, runs the risks of emptying its very meaning by eradicating it from its relationships with sex, desire, and the body. The conceptualisation of the sex/gender binomial in feminist contexts

⁶ It is important to underline, as Guaraldo (2006) explains, that it would be mistaken to position Butler's political thought along those who refute the constructivist paradigm. Rather, Butler refutes an over-simplistic version of the social dimension of human existence. That is, as postmodern sociology would celebrate, the possibility to construct oneself identity free from normative constraints.

emerged in the 1970s through the work of Rubin. Yet, recent feminist debates have questioned the status of sex/gender differentiation by presuming that both terms overlap and should be considered as synonyms, unless we are specifically referring to the biological dimension of sex. Indeed, it remains challenging to make a clear-cut distinction between biological and cultural dimensions, the materiality of the body and its symbolic dimension.

In *Bodies that Matter* (2011 [1993]), Butler focuses her attention to the relationships between gender performativity and the materiality of the body, by looking at how the category of 'sex' intervenes within such relationship (p. xi). According to the author, "the category of 'sex' is, from the start, normative"; it is what Foucault has called a 'regulatory ideal'. In this sense, then, 'sex' not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs [...] (p. xi). Most importantly, sex is not a static (bodily) attribute to be summed up to one's identity; rather, it is one of the norms (perhaps *the* norm) by which a person becomes 'viable', within the possibility of existence (depending on the processes of assuming a sex and consequent sexed identifications through which a subject is formed).

Even more problematic is the presumption that if gender is culturally constructed, then sex is established as prior to culture. In a binary order, the categories of 'man' and 'woman' equate to the subjects of sex and gender, insofar gender mirrors sex (Butler 1990). Yet, the naturalization of these categories is culturally constructed, not only in the case of gender as it has been advocated by feminists, but also in the case of sex: 'gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender

must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established', and most importantly, "[...] gender is not to culture as sex is to nature, gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive', prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts" (1990, 10). In other words, it would be highly problematic to make a radical distinction between sex and gender in a way that argue for the natural to be invested by the social, in order to acquire value. Gender categories become therefore 'troubled' terms insofar a metaphysics of substance is implied in the formulation of gender construction – that is the assumption of an agent prior to the construction and of 'culture as destiny' (p. 11). In this theorisation, both gender and sex simply appear as a substance. But it is precisely in the incompleteness, non-unitary, non-binary, non-normative character of gender categories that gender might function as a ground of contested meanings (p. 21). This point underscores the approach through which Butler tackles the 'productive undoing of gender', that is, gender is not a fact but a norm that depends on its own repetition and as such, it can be contested in its own stability. Yet, 'undoing gender' is only possible through a continuous activity of 'becoming undone', in which we constantly perform ourselves.

Sex and gender are therefore both discursively constructed/produced gendered categories. Prior to Butler, Foucault (1976, 1984) has been involved in unmasking the regulatory practices that produce the identity concepts of sex and gender, and more specifically the system of powers – juridical, scientific, bio powers – that seek to establish, guarantee, and perpetuate a causal and linear connection between biological sex, gender identities and expressions, as well as sexual practice and desire. As we will see in the empirical chapters, such relationship of causality and its

continuity is central to Catholic activists' understanding of legitimate, meaning natural, 'human beings'. The practice of a 'substantialising view of gender' is key to the political agenda of Catholic activists, not only in the expression of a naturalistic model but also in the reification of normative gender relations. Conversely, for LGBTQ activists, the coherence between gender, sex, and desire is put into question through different dynamics of identification. Yet, as both Butler and Foucault argue, the unity and stability of these relationships happens when desire is understood as heterosexual, and sexual differentiation manifests through an opposition between genders:

The institution of compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as the binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire. (Butler 1990, 31)

Contemporary to Butler's critical work, Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) sets the foundations of later known queer studies: '[...] many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in the twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured – indeed, fractured – by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition [...].' (1990, 1). Sedgwick too was concerned with finding a way out of the conflict between constructivism and essentialism in which feminist and gay studies were concerned. According to the author, this hetero-obsession goes back to the need to build binary plots (natural / artificial, urban / provincial, discipline / terrorism, knowledge / ignorance, ...) in order to prescribe, catalog, archive pain symptoms and hints of freedom (1990, 9). As much for Sedgwick as for Butler is to understand and reveal the contradictions, incoherences and implications that such definitions perpetrate. In this sense, Sedgwick points to two major contradictions pertaining to modern sexual definitions. One contradiction

is what she refers to as ‘minoritising’ versus ‘universalising’ views (which she offers as an alternative analytical work to essentialist/constructivist views). The first implies a hetero/homosexual definition as an issue important for a homosexual minority, a relatively fixed, small and distinct group (1990, 1). The second sees the same definition as something important for everyone across the spectrum of all sexualities. A second contradiction has to be found in the same-sex object choice as a question of ‘liminality’ or ‘transitivity’ between genders, from which an ‘impulse of separatism’ might emerge within each gender (p. 2). Endorsing a deconstructive strategy as proposed by Foucault, through a historical inquiry of sexual categories and, most importantly, the particular ‘knowledges’ and corresponding ‘ignorances’ (which Sedgwick defines as ignorance of a knowledge) that produced and sustained their symmetrical, oppositional nature (p. 9). Here, the author puts into question is the ‘derivative’ character of homosexuality as dependent, subordinate, and marginal with respect to heterosexuality. Importantly for this study, Sedgwick argues that ‘[t]here is a powerful argument to be made that a primary (or *the* primary) issue in gender differentiation and gender struggle is the question of who is to have control of women’s (biologically) distinctive reproductive capability’ (1990, 28), as pointed by radical feminists’ analyses. Yet, to conclude this brief discussion on the problematisation of sex and gender categories, we shall bear in mind the major hypothesis advanced in Sedgwick’s work:

[...] the question of gender and the question of sexuality, inextricable from one another though they are in that each can be expressed only in terms of the other, are nonetheless not the same question, that in twentieth-century Western culture gender and sexuality represent two analytic axes that may productively be imagined as being distinct from one another as, say, gender and class, or class and race. [...] so every issue of gender would necessarily be embodied through the specificity of a particular sexuality, and vice versa [...]. (1990, 30-31)

As the next section analyses, to understand the symmetry and causality of this binary categorisation and the constructed character of sex, we must turn to an account of *sexuality*. Based on Foucault's genealogy, sexuality coexists with power, which has to be understood as both juridical and productive (in the sense of generative of certain effects). In the same vein, as for feminists to be gendered is to be subjected to social regulations, for Foucault, to be sexed presupposed to be subject to a matrix of power.

2.1.2 Sexuality as a Domain of Moral Experience

In the second volume of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, the author introduces a reflection on morality in the attempt to understand how sexual behaviour has come to be conceived as domain of moral experience in Western societies (1985, 24-32). While describing the elements that come to constitute a 'moral code', Foucault defines morality as '[...] a set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family (in one of its roles), educational institutions, churches, and so forth.' (1985, 25). Most importantly for the analysis presented in this study, morality refers to 'the manner in which they [individuals] comply more or less fully with a standard of conduct, the manner in which they obey or resist an interdiction or a prescription; the manner in which they respect or disregard a set of values' (1985, 25), in other words the manner in which one ought to conduct oneself as an ethical subject. Indeed, such description designates 'ethical conduct' in a broader sense, which does not necessarily belong to religious behaviour, but yet implies a strong relation to it. Similar to the argument put forward in this analysis, Foucault makes reference to the margins of variations and transgression to which individuals explicitly or implicitly

act with respect to a prescriptive system. As he rightly suggests, even in front of a rigid ‘moral code’, there are many ways of being faithful. As we will see in the analysis of empirical material, these differences depend on three major concerns: the determination of ethical substance, the mode of subjection, and the ethical work. According to the author, the first refers to ‘the way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of his moral conduct’; the second to ‘the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes as obliged to put it into practice’; the third to the work ‘that one performs on oneself, not only to bring one’s conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behaviour’ (1985, 26-27). It is therefore important to understand how, both Catholic and LGBTQ activists – though a stronger pressure is put on the former – define, monitor, and decide on themselves in the process of self-formation of one’s ethical subject.

Another crucial aspect of this process is found in the analysis of the instances of authority that sustain and implement the code. We will see how religious authorities and Catholic activists talk about sexuality, and gender, what type of discourses they deploy and what these consequently produce in terms of power and knowledge. In line with the major argument presented in the *History of Sexuality* – ‘the will to knowledge’ – which presents an alternative explanation to what the French philosopher calls the ‘repressive hypothesis’, the focus should be put on the instances of discursive production, of the production of power, of the propagation of power through the *deployment of sexuality*:

Let there be no misunderstanding: I do not claim that sex has not been prohibited or barred or masked or misapprehended since the classical age; nor do I even assert that it has suffered these things any less from that period on than before. I do not maintain that the prohibition of sex is a ruse; but it is a ruse to make prohibition into the basic and constitutive element from which one would be able to write the history of what has been said concerning sex starting from the modern epoch. All these negative elements—defenses, censorships, denials—which the repressive hypothesis groups

together in one great central mechanism destined to say no, are doubtless only component parts that have a local and tactical role to play in a transformation into discourse, a technology of power, and a will to knowledge that are far from being reducible to the former. (1976 [1990], 33-34)

Instead, what we have been observed in the past centuries of Western societies' history is a steady proliferation of discourses concerned with human sexuality, and the consequent emergence of a new power – the bio-power – focused on engendering and managing life through the regulation and normalisation of sex and sexuality:

A first survey made from this viewpoint seems to indicate that since the end of the sixteenth century, the “putting into discourse of sex,” far from undergoing a process of restriction, on the contrary has been subjected to a mechanism of increasing incitement; that the techniques of power exercised over sex have not obeyed a principle of rigorous selection, but rather one of dissemination and implantation of polymorphous sexualities; and that the will to knowledge has not come to a halt in the face of a taboo that must not be lifted, but has persisted in constituting—despite many mistakes, of course—a science of sexuality. (1976 [1990], 35)

Sexuality manifests itself as an organization of power relations, in which ‘sex’ is produced and managed to regulate and control its functions in a unified manner. The major point raised by Foucault is that a conscious and voluntary effort has been made by political, medical, religious authorities and institutions of different nature in order to talk more and more about sex, and not only to judge the legitimacy of a range of sexual behaviours, identities and desires, but most importantly that sex should be the object of scrupulous micromanagement policies and analysis – in other words, the ‘policing of sex’ in the public sphere. It is precisely through a rule of discourse erasure about sex that discourse is incited through its *secret* nature. This strategy has been key in the creation of a norm of sexual development, through the organisation of an economic and political conservative sexuality – the perverse implantation (p. 86) of legitimate sexual practices and the possible deviations to the norm.

Sexuality, according to Foucault, is intrinsically permeated by a principle of latency. This latency suggests the idea that sex is difficult to talk about, something obscure to be extrapolated from individuals' minds through confession. Yet, in order to get people to talk about their sexuality in our century, the practice of confession should be linked to a scientific practice. The deployment of power and discourses in which sexuality was defined 'by nature':

[A] domain susceptible to pathological processes, and hence one calling for therapeutic or normalizing interventions; a field of meanings to decipher; the site of processes concealed by specific mechanisms; a focus of indefinite causal relations; and an obscure speech (parole) that had to be ferreted out and listened to. (1976 [1990], 185)

We must not expect the discourses on sex to tell us, above all, what strategy they derive from, or what moral divisions they accompany, or what ideology—dominant or dominated—they represent; rather we must question them on the two levels of their tactical productivity (what reciprocal effects of power and knowledge they ensure) and their strategical integration (what conjunction and what force relationship make their utilization necessary in a given episode of the various confrontations that occur). (1976 [1990], 224-25)

Even in Foucault's analysis of sexuality, strategy is conceptualised as the framework through which power relations unfold: 'It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population.' (1976 [1990], 230). According to the author we can identify four main regulative strategies characterizing the history of sexuality (to which four respective figures emerged) and producing the subjects they come to regulate: a hysterisation of women's body (the hysterical woman), a pedagogisation of children's sex (the masturbating child), a socialisation of procreative behaviour (the Malthusian couple), and finally a psychiatrisation of perverse pleasure (the perverse adult) (pp. 232-34). These strategies brought forward several issues that continue to find a place in contemporary struggles over sexuality. The entirety of such strategies is meant to manage and regulate sexual behaviours and desires of

women, men, children, heterosexual couples and perverse adults. In other words, rather than repressing or subtracting it, bio-power works to promote and manage life through regulating sex around a norm. A key insight in Foucault's thinking has to be found in the hypothesis that power, bio-power, produces its own resistances. The possibility for resistance lay in the ability of individuals to acquire the practices of the self and the rules of the law in order to work out the game of power with as little domination as possible (1997, 298). In this sense, since resistance is complementary to power rather than opposed to it, we are not countering power, we are feeding into it. In his later writings, Foucault suggests that we resist normative power through critique, which is the idea that individuals cannot give away with power – that would be utopian – but can subvert it in little ways.

As I will outline in following sections, in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, Butler draws upon and develops Foucault's concept of subversion further. Like Foucault, who first described the normalizing power, Butler thinks gender as a transversal action which has as its purpose to re-absorb, re-call always the same code. The gender is the system through which it is legitimate to speak of masculine and feminine. This legitimacy is necessarily an exclusion. Declare valid a form of sexuality, for example, means in an implicit manner, negate another, while recognizing it as effective. Butler makes us note one aspect of the matter that often remains implicit or is neglected. Speaking of sex as something legitimate or illegitimate implements the shift from a linguistic register to another: sex has not for its aim legitimacy. Historically, however, sex has become represented in the form of sexuality and sexual satisfaction has consistently sought his lawful justification. Butler begins this political battle with an operation that she defines as

‘deconstruct the matter’. This is not to deny the materiality of the body, but admit it as layering norms that have long acted on it, recognize it as a fetish constructed by history. If gender is the historical layers of the rules on sex, it is the same gender that is appropriate for starting an operation of dismantling.

2.2 Social Movements

Broadly speaking, social movement theories can be divided into two major paradigms. On one side, classical *structural approaches* which look at macro-contextual factors, political conditions, socio-economic resources and organisational dynamics. These can be regrouped under the political opportunity structures approach, resource mobilization theory, and the political process model. On the other side, new social movement theories which have given rise to ‘grievance models’ and *cultural approaches* that focus more closely on aspects of individual consciousness and subjectivity, combining social psychological factors with framing activity, collective action, identity processes, and the role of emotions and symbolic action in protests. An exhaustive explanation of the above-mentioned approaches is beyond the scope of this study.⁷ Suffice to note that it is from cultural approaches that this thesis borrows much of its theoretical contributions. The main reason for this choice is the possibility this perspective affords to centre the analysis on cultural and symbolic processes, and to give importance to the (innovative) forms and the content

⁷ For a comprehensive review of resource mobilization theory, see J. Craig Jenkins, “Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 9 (1983), 527-553; for political opportunity models, see David S. Meyer, “Protest and Political Opportunities”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 30 (2004), 125-145; for a critical review of new social movements, see Nelson A. Pichardo, “New Social Movements: A Critical Review”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 23 (1997), 411-430; for a review of cultural approaches, and particularly the role of emotions, see James M. Jasper, “Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory Research”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 37 (2011), 285-303.

of contemporary movements. In particular, the central theme of collective identity in social protest – as first developed by new social movement theories and later discussed by competing approaches, such as queer theory, and more integrative ones, such as symbolic interactionism – constitutes a key question of this study. Yet, culture is individual and collective, creative or constraining, and more generally can be observed in many ways. In Jasper's words 'strategy usually involves efforts to transform the social world; culture attempts to understanding it' (1997, 44). More importantly for the perspective this research embraces, actions and thoughts contain both strategy and culture.

Scholars have long been concerned with the question of mobilization, namely collective action, and its relation to social change. What are the social conditions that push people to mobilise in protest and movement activities? What variables foster participation? How do people get 'fired-up'? Understandably, the path to mobilization is not always linear or clearly discernable, and the relationships between grievance, oppression, injustice and contention are not directly inferable. In fact, different paths to mobilization can be followed, even in the absence of openness in the political opportunity structure or as a result of improving conditions. In order to qualify social movements as historical phenomena, it is necessary to set boundaries on what designates a social movement. To this end, I briefly discuss some of the commonly accepted definitions in current movement scholarship. In the following pages I will therefore make extensive use of concepts from the research on collective action and social movements.

Today, the concept of social movement takes on different and complex meanings depending on the theoretical approach in which it is interpreted. *Social movement* can be the name given to empirical forms of collective action and behaviour, or it

can be employed only in reference to select typologies. One of the major problems relates to the dimensions of meaning used to refer to terms such as collective action, collective behaviour, movement, mobilization and protest. In fact, these terms capture different portions of reality and highlight various features of the same phenomenon. In any case, we must differentiate the use of these terms in relation to the object that we intend to investigate. When addressing contemporary social movements, scholars approach them as distinct social processes (Diani 1992a; 2003a; della Porta and Diani 2006). In order to underline the peculiarities of social movement analysis, we need to first define collective action – the broader framework through which social change is studied.

Following the approach suggested by Melucci (1982), I adopt the label *collective action* to designate and to delimit the flow of interactions between collective actors, institutions and movement participants. Broadly speaking, it refers to individuals sharing resources, information, and networks in pursuit of collective goals. The term *movement*, on the other hand, indicates an empirical actor, but also an analytical concept which gives us the key to interpret the internal heterogeneity of the movements under analysis. More precisely, the notion of social movements encompasses the *mechanisms* through which collective actions take place. These mechanisms can be traced to a combination of the following aspects. First, social movement actors engage in some sort of *conflictual* collective action, be that political or cultural, normative or structural, with the aim of promoting or resisting social change (della Porta and Diani 2006, 21). Conflictual collective action refers to *oppositional dynamics* between different actors, such as: interactions between movements and their countermovements, group/public resistance toward state policy (and, similarly, state responses to specific groups) or actuated tensions between other

social, political and/or economic actors. In this sense, collective action requires identifiable targets for social and political efforts.

Second, collective action has to be coordinated and negotiated among single and compound players embedded in dense *networks*. The focus on networks, as advocated by multiple analysts of the so-called ‘network society’ (Van Dijk 1991; Castells 1996 [2010]), allows to analytically distinguish between social movements and single social movement organisations (Tilly 1988). In this sense, the emphasis is put on the informal and fluid nature of movement building processes which link groups, organisations and single participants together. In particular, the underlying mechanisms of *social appropriation* (McAdam 1999; Tilly and Tarrow 2007), the integration of existing apolitical networks and groups into collective actors, and of *attribution of similarity* (Tilly and Tarrow 2007), the identification of another actor as falling within the same category as your own, are of great relevance, as I will explain, in the case of the movements under study.

Third, in order to maintain their existence beyond single protest events and campaigns, social movements must develop a *collective identity* providing participants with a framework of belonging, commitment, recognition, and common purpose (Pizzorno 1996; Touraine 1981). As I will develop further in the next section, identity work is especially important in order to guarantee long-lasting action, articulated between periods of public campaign and mobilization, and more latent phases of abeyance (Taylor 1996; Melucci 1984). Nonetheless, as Della Porta and Diani (2006, 24) rightly stress, ‘associating movements with a distinctive collective identity implies no assumptions about the homogeneity of the actors sharing that identity’. The major underlying mechanisms in identity work processes

are *boundary activation* (Bernstein 1997; Williams 2006), *identity shift* (Snow 2001), and other types of identity building, as outlined below.

Finally, and for the sake of clarity, I subscribe to the distinction proposed by Tilly and Tarrow (2007, 8) between *social movement bases* and *social movement campaigns*. The former refer to the social, cultural, and organisational backgrounds of contention and collective action. In particular, they include the networks, movement organisations, and participants, as well as the traditions, memories, and solidarities that sustain social movements' activities. These activities may take the form of a sustained campaign of claim making, or a range of public performances and public displays. A social movement campaign, therefore, is defined as a 'sustained challenge to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of concerted displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment, using such means as public meetings, demonstrations, petitions and press releases' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 114). Furthermore, a campaign encompasses several events and publicly displays the self-representation of a movement, particularly through symbolic action. Within a campaign, movements adopt different repertoires of action including all different types of performances.

A final consideration on the concept of *protest* is needed. In the analysis of contemporary social movements, protest is commonly considered as a *conventional* style of political participation, which can take an increasingly wide range of forms, both at the collective and individual levels. Public protests can involve 'traditional' forms of demonstration, ranging from confrontational style events to civil disobedience, or may be performed as the expression of cultural and symbolic challenges, such as 'the practice of specific lifestyles, the adoption of certain clothes

or haircut, the adoption of rituals’ (della Porta and Diani 2006, 28). In short, protest can no longer be confined to the ‘politics in the streets’, but has to be considered within a much wider repertoire of collective action, where it does not necessarily represent a core feature of a specific movement, but rather an option among others. With regards to the present study, protest is approached empirically in different ways, depending on the level of analysis. Particularly, the focus is put on the role of gender within various forms of protest, as certain expressions of gender and embodiment constitute a way in which to either challenge or reinforce dominant gender and sexual models.

In a recent publication on the state of the art of social movement studies in Europe (Fillieule and Accornero 2016), Bosi and Mosca review the research on social movements in Italy (pp. 269-287).⁸ The authors identify three generations of Italian social movement scholars, which broadly reflect the general lines of research in international scholarship. The first generation of scholars found its legacy in the ’68 cycle of protests, challenging traditional Marxist interpretations of collective action in terms of class struggle. The works of Melucci (1976; 1984; 1996), Alberoni (1968) and Pizzorno (1988) have been prominent for the development of social movement studies in Italy, with a focus on post-industrial society and new social movements. Recognised as the ‘grandfather’ of new social movement theory in Italy and abroad, “Melucci interpreted the changing Italian socio-political context of the

⁸ Bosi, L., and L. Mosca. ‘Internationalization with Limited Domestic Recognition: Research on Social Movements Studies in Italy’, in *Social Movement Studies in Europe*, edited by Olivier Fillieule and Guya Accornero, 269-287. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016. For details concerning trends and topics of research on social movement studies in Italy, I suggest to refer directly to the following publications: 1) Alberoni, F. *Statu nascenti: studi sui processi collettivi*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1968. 2) Della Porta, D. *Movimenti collettivi e sistema politico in Italia: 1960-1995*. Roma: Laterza, 1996. 3) Diani, M., and A. Melucci. ‘Searching for Autonomy: The Sociology of Social Movements in Italy’. *Social Science Information* 27, no. 3 (1988), 333-53. 4) Della Porta, D. and R. Biorcio. ‘Partecipazione e movimenti sociali’, in *Quarant’anni di scienza politica in Italia*, edited by G. Pasquino, M. Regalia and M. Valbruzzi, 93-106. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013.

1970s and 1980s with the decline of class struggle (post-industrial society) and the emergence of ‘new’ actors [...]” (Bosi and Mosca 2016, 270-71). The second generation of social movements studies in Italy benefitted from the work of selected scholars who played an important role in bridging international and domestic scholarships. In particular, the contributions of Della Porta and Diani, who conducted empirical research in Italy and abroad, introduced new and important topics in the Italian academia, such as political violence (della Porta 1990; 1995; 2013; Bosi and della Porta 2012), policing of protest (della Porta and Reiter 2004), democratization theory (della Porta 2004; 2009), environmental and global justice movements (Diani 1988; Farro 1991; 2006; Andretta et al. 2002; Ceri 2003; 2009; della Porta and Mosca 2003). The third generation can be identified as the first post-’68 academic production in terms of research interests and political socialisation, highly influenced by the events shaping the Italian political culture of the 1990s and beginning of 2000 – the ascent of Silvio Berlusconi, anti-G8 protests in Genoa, anti-war mobilizations, and equally important for the case under analysis, the first ‘WorldPride’ held in Rome in 2000, among others. In this context, the third generation of scholars has played a key role in the development of research on weakly resourced groups, in relation to students and precarious workers, collective action by social centres, and political consumerism (Roggero 2005; Giorgi and Piazza 2010; Zamponi 2012; Forno and Graziano 2012; Mattoni 2012; Mudu 2012), but most importantly for this study, youth and gender (Magaraggia, Vingelli *et al.* 2015; see chapter 1 and 5 of this thesis). As the present thesis confirms, ‘an interesting feature of these mobilizations is that they often merged together, with overlapping membership being a defining characteristic of activists’ (Bosi and Mosca 2016, 279). In particular, we will see how, through the concepts of identity

deployment and intersectionality, young activists combine different profiles and memberships: some youth, in fact, are at the same time activists in the student movement, focus on labour or environmental issues, and empathise with the cause of LGBTQ movements. As I will explain more in detail in chapter 5 and 6, movements' members often strategically activate these alliances. In the same vein, many social centres in Italy have created LGBTQ groups and mobilized with LGBTQ organisations, calling for the need to stand up against a plurality of 'fascisms', including sexual and gender oppression (see chapter 6).

2.2.1 Individual and Collective Identity in (Inter)Action

Social movements scholars have extensively studied collective identity in an attempt to overcome the limitations encountered in the resource mobilization and political process models. Polletta and Jasper (2001) point to four different aspects questioned by collective identity scholars, which, in simple terms, can be summarised as membership, solidarity, commitment and cohesion. Concisely put, the aim is to find out how and why collective actors come to identify themselves as members of a social movement.

My intention in this section is to critically review the use of the concept of collective identity as it is employed in the scholarship of contemporary social movements (Hunt and Benford 2004; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Snow 2001). More broadly, I make reference to the notions of *identity politics* and *identity work processes* in order to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the processes by which identity is constituted through action. It is, in fact, through the definition and interaction of three major *identity fields* that collective identities are

formed (Snow 2013). Namely, identity construction happens at the intersection of the *protagonists*’, *antagonists*’, and *audiences*’ fields (Hunt, Benford and Snow 1994).

The concept of *collective identity* is indeed an elusive one, located at different levels of analysis. Once again, Melucci has been a prominent scholar in bringing about the existence of a theoretical framework centred on collective identity. Melucci (1995) proposed to analyse collective identity as a process stemming from interactions between actors. Notably, he questioned the assumption that a movement’s collective identity has to be considered as a given. Rather, collective identity is the result of intense and repeated processes of negotiation, and understanding of shared meanings, beliefs, and practices. Along these lines, Taylor and Whittier (1992, 105) define collective identity as ‘the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences and solidarity’. Although some scholars locate the formation of collective identity at the individual level, in an ‘individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution’ (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 285), I subscribe to the position of other analysts who locate collective identity at the interactional level (Snow 2001; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Melucci 1996). Most importantly, as suggested by Jenkins (2007), a theory of identity must accommodate the individual and the collective in equal measure.

A key feature in the process of formation of collective identities involves different sorts of *boundary works*, including the above-mentioned mechanism of boundary activation, which allows participants to identify the collective self from the other, namely to identify what ‘we are’ and what ‘we are not’ (Fominaya 2010; Gamson 1995; Hunt and Benford 2004; Taylor and Whittier 1992). As Melucci (1989),

Taylor and Whittier (1992) stress, this involves a process of negotiation and definition amongst *in-group* and *out-group* actors.

In addition, the process of *identity deployment* at the collective level can be part of movements' recruitment and political strategies (Bernstein 1997), which is to say that it allows activists to emphasise either differences from or similarities to the norm, i.e. ordinary people, in order to foster or oppose social and political change, along with giving the possibility to establish differences in relation to their adversaries. Moreover, it can serve to position the actor in relation to the field of contention. Furthermore, it is shaped by the context and the field of contention in which the movement emerges, and it is expressed through cultural artefacts – such as narratives, symbols, styles, clothing, or rituals. As I will explain further in the next chapters, in concordance with the interactionist perspective, identity work plays an important role in the recruitment and commitment strategies of movement organisers. Over time, collective identities must be crafted and framed in order to mobilise members, either by creating new identities from scratch or by attaching new meanings, lines of action, and goals to existing ones. Finally, identity management involves both strategic efforts within a movement's internal structure, and tactical choices relating to the external context of the movement. Other crucial aspects of collective identity, highlighted in different works, include; its *oppositional nature* in relation to dominant culture and practices (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Gamson 1995), emotions (Jasper 1997), shared leadership, organisation, ideologies and rituals (Hirsch 1990; Hunt and Benford 2004; Klandermans 1997), symbolic resources (Juris 2005), meanings and consciousness (Melucci 1989), and context and organisational structures (Van Dyke and Cress 2006; Whittier 1995).

Despite the extensive study of collective identity processes, several questions remain unanswered. Particularly, whether collective identity precedes or follows the emergence of social movements, and what the nexuses are between individual cognitive processes of identification, feelings of belonging, commitment, and formation of collective identities. Drawing on the works cited above, I define collective identity as a:

Process of shared definition by interacting individuals in relation to a broader group or community based on perceived shared interests, meanings, and emotional, cognitive, and moral connections.

A collective identity can be (or not) therefore mobilised by a movement in the explicit pursuit of social change. Nonetheless, as the next section explores, collective identity in theory and identity politics in practice have been at the centre of much criticism from both feminist and queer theorists and activists.

2.2.2 Collective Identity and the Queer Dilemma

According to Bernstein and Taylor (2013), the term *identity politics* applies to any mobilization process and social movement engaged and organised around status-based categories such as gender, ethnicity, and sexuality, among others. This conception constitutes the foundation for the development of, what Gamson (1995) called, the ‘queer dilemma’, synthesising much criticism and opposition coming from poststructuralist, postmodernist and social constructionist approaches. Scholars from these competing perspectives argue that the status categories around which identity politics are carried out constitute a form of normative regulation in themselves, essentialising and reinforcing identity into fixed categories, and thereby

reiterating processes of inequality and confirmation of normative models of behaviour. Butler's critique of feminist politics lay the foundation for this argument, as she underlines how '[t]he mobilization of identity categories for the purposes of politicization always remain threatened by the prospect of identity becoming an instrument of the power one opposes' (1990, xxviii). However, in some movements, as in the case of the Catholic countermovement, the mobilization of essentialised identities within dominant discourses is central to the movement's strategies and goals. Still, as discussed in previous sections of this chapter, we can say that identity politics may also involve processes based on shared values, attitudes, lifestyles and worldviews, where 'identity operates as an organizing principle in relation to individual and collective experience' (della Porta and Diani 2006, 93).

The analysis of collective identities has received a great deal of attention from sociologists in the fields of queer and gender studies (Stein and Plummer 1996; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Brekhaus 2003; Gamson and Moon 2004). As anticipated in previous paragraphs, fixed identities may, at the same time, be the base for mobilization and political power, as well as a source for oppression and discrimination. Whilst sexual and gender power is enforced through binary divides, sexual and gender identities – and any other type of identity, for that matter – are neither stable, nor unified across time and space. As a consequence, it is of fundamental importance for queer theorists to favour the deconstruction of such identities and categories in order to challenge normative understandings of male and female, gay and straight. Finally, it is equally important to question areas of inquiry that would not conventionally be considered as fields of sexual and gender politics (Plummer 1995). In other words:

Queerness in its most distinctive forms shakes the ground on which gay and lesbian politics has been built, taking apart the ideas of "sexual minority" and a "gay

community”, indeed of “gay” and “lesbian” and even “man” and “woman”. It builds on central difficulties of identity-based organizing: the instability of identities both individual and collective, their made-up yet necessary character. (Gamson 1995, 390)

Questioning social movement theory’s understanding of collective identity as discussed above – namely the assumption that for a movement to emerge and accomplish collective action, a collective identity must be created and secured through identity boundary work, then strategically mobilised and deployed – one of the major arguments posed by queer theorists is precisely that identity work processes of this kind are not a necessary condition for the formation of collectives and will not be undertaken by all movements. This is not to say that the idea of fixed collective identities should be erased all together, rather, it is to acknowledge that it can play an important role, but perhaps only in the shaping of some specific movements (Gamson 1995). Therefore, whilst in particular cases the creation of stable collective identities may be a necessity for a movement’s accomplishment, as well as being a goal in itself, in other contexts, and in contrast, the destabilisation and deconstruction of such identities can be an accomplishment and a goal of a movement’s action as well.

Taking the queer dilemma into account, Gamson raises an important question that has been long overlooked by social movement analysts: ‘for whom, when, and how are stable collective identities necessary for social action and social change?’ (1995, 403). In particular, a movement’s strategy of either reinforcing or loosening stable identities might change based on the source of oppression it is facing. In some cases, institutional sources of oppression might be better challenged through the reinforcement of stable identities, such as in the case of same-sex marriage. In others, the loosening of stable identities might be more effective in attempting to challenge cultural norms and values. In a recent work, Ghaziani and colleagues

(2016) review existing research on cycles of sameness and difference in LGBTQ social movements, outlining how scholars of identity movements have been long puzzled by questions about the balance between unity and division. They argue that there is ‘compelling evidence that the sameness and difference tension among LGBTQ activists has spurred distinct protest cycles [...]’ (Ghaziani *et al.* 2016, 166). As we will see with respect to the LGBTQ movement in Italy, the necessity of coalitional unity as a prerequisite for political action is at times insistently claimed or neglected by different groups. As Butler questions, “Is ‘unity’ necessary for effective political action? Is the premature insistence on the goal of unity precisely the cause of an ever more bitter fragmentation among the ranks?” (1990, 21); indeed, this remains an open question when it comes to concrete actions, as in the case of a strategy to counter the ‘anti-gender’ campaign. In this sense, Butler insists, provisional coalitions might emerge for strategic purposes other than identity building, thus keeping contradictions intact, acknowledging and accepting fragmentation.

The question of sameness and difference is tightly linked with the political question of unity (as I have explored previously in this chapter) and *universality*. Universality can have important strategic uses when understood as an open-ended and non-substantial category, which allows for a convergence of different cultural backgrounds (Butler 1990, xviii). Similarly, Sedgwick pioneered the question of a ‘queer dilemma’ in her analysis of homo/heterosexual definitions. Here again, according to the author, alliances can be formed on the basis of minoritising or universalising understandings of gender definition and/or homo/heterosexual definition, that is, according to gender integrative or separatist models (1990, 88-90). In this view: ‘One thing that does emerge with clarity from this complex and

contradictory map of sexual and gender definition is that the possible grounds to be found there for alliance and cross-identification among various groups will also be plural' (Sedgwick 1990, 89). Following a universalising understanding of gender definition, we find instances of gender-integrative types of alliances, such as solidarity models between gay and lesbians. On the contrary, a minoritising understanding tends towards gender-separatist models built on binary gender identities, masculine or feminine (in a continuum from homo to straight sexual identities, i.e. homosociality), such as solidarity among groups of men or women independently from the object of sexual desire. Taking into account the homo/heterosexual definition, Sedgwick conceptualises an essentialist gay identity as falling under a minoritising view along a separatist axis, where identification and desire overlap. On the other hand, universality takes shape along the integrative axis, putting into question the equation between sexuality and gender. Although such models remain challenging to discern empirically, they provide powerful insights for the problematisation of the 'queer' dimension of identification in the context of coalition-building processes among LGBTQ activists.

This thesis too, addresses the contradictions and complexities of these questions in the analysis of collective identity construction processes, specific patterns of organizations, frames, strategies and tactics in reference to the empirical cases studied.

2.2.3 Religion and Collective Identity

In many contemporary societies, the separation – or, in many cases the *reconciliation* – between religion and politics, religion and modernity, religion and

democracy is increasingly questioned, particularly among younger generations. New analytical approaches have tried to propose revised understandings of such issues, like ‘multiple secularities’ (Burchardt *et al.* 2015) and ‘post-secularism’ (Habermas 2008), along with the analysis of different aspects of the individualisation of religiosity (Luckmann 1963; Beck 2010; Wilke 2013). More specific for the scope of this study, the interplay between gender and religion form a main area of contestation in our contemporary world. Both are complex and non-static phenomena (Korte 2011), raising questions about the tensions between religion and secularism in the field of sexual citizenship.

Issues of identity politics find a central place in religious movements’ internal and external controversies. In particular, the moral status of sexual and gender issues is argued over churches, religious communities, and the public sphere. These have also been labelled as morality issues, or intimate issues, which relate to individuals’ ethics. The degree of division or cohesion around these questions, for instance concerning the acceptance of homosexuality, can vary greatly depending on the arena they are being discussed in. Usually, the laity is considered more liberal in comparison to the Church hierarchy (Dillon 1999). Still, in many countries, including Italy, religious opinions and beliefs tend to lead public opinion on moral acceptance of certain social norms and behaviours. Giorgi and Ozzano (2015, 5) correctly argue that ‘political positions are not stable configurations: on the contrary, issues’ polarization led to different values’ mobilization and volatile coalitions’, and that the involvement of religion in debates is highly influential on the way in which morality and intimate issues are framed in the public sphere.

As stressed by several authors and in this thesis as well, religious ideas and affiliation are not necessarily predictive of political ideology (Williams 1997); better

put, for the majority of believers, their faith is not subject to any sort of politicisation. Rather, the promotion of religious revitalisation is part of an intense identity work process aimed at forging and interpreting religious ideas to form the basis for mobilization. At the same time, scholars have also argued that the likelihood of religion becoming a politicised subject depends on the level of religious cleavage within party politics (Engeli *et al.* 2012). In particular, Giorgi and Ozzano (2015, 12) explain that in Italy ‘the religious cleavage played an important role in structuring Italian party politics and, today, the major conservative parties still maintain strong ties with religious actors’. In this study, I trace the trajectory of the politicisation of morality issues by Catholic actors in Italy.

Taking a biographical approach, others scholars have argued that individuals often become part of a religious movement when they are experiencing specific ‘turning points’ (Munson 2008) or ‘moral shocks’ (Jasper 1997) in their lives. In such circumstances, religious beliefs not only provide guidance but also a sense of continuity through rites, symbols, physical spaces and networks. Socio-psychological perspectives have also underlined the potential for religion, and particularly a certain worldview based on religious precepts, to reduce existential anxiety (Kinnvall 2004).

Recalling the material addressed in the previous section, the implications of queer theory for the study of religion and gender constitute an important focus of analysis. Religious studies scholars began to explore the potentials of queer theory in the late 1990s, in particular in reference to the position of ‘resistance to heteronormativity’ (Schipper 2011, 70). Studying religion queerly therefore implies, according to Schipper (2011, 70), an effort on the part of scholars to engage with and disrupt heteronormative procedures, or at least to establish distance from them. Moreover,

by drawing a parallel between the main queer assumption about ‘identity without an essence’ and fixed, binary categories such as secular and religious, we are required to rethink such categories in much more nuanced terms.

In reaction to the ‘queer dilemma’ mentioned above, religious scholars point to some important criticisms. Through the accentuation of the need to free oneself from norms, practices and spaces that are viewed as normative, the ‘queer ideal’ is problematically linked to an overemphasised individualism and emancipatory agency that readily equates to resistance (Puar 2007). The risk is to remain blind to productive practices of resistance and subversion that are not necessarily inscribed into progressive narratives.

2.2.4 Movements and Counter-Movements: A Strategic Interactionist Approach

Another important contribution to the framework of this study comes from *movement and countermovement* dynamics, which refer to the interactional opposition between the originating social movement and the reacting countermovement (Dillard 2013). Movements are the actors first initiating a campaign for social change, whilst opposing movements are defined as groups mobilised around the issue of contention, responding to the movement’s claims (Bernstein 1997; Dorf and Tarrow 2014; Zald and Useem 1987). Scholars analysing movement and countermovement dynamics have focused their attention on a number of key aspects, including ideology, framing strategies, goals, tactics, and location in the social structure. Particularly, the oppositional nature of these dynamics has been identified as an important factor in movements’ emergence and processes, setting the conditions and the basis for mobilization. Moreover, interactions between movement

and countermovement play an important role in determining the tactics and strategies adopted by the respective parties. In addition, bystanders, third parties and audiences of various types may constitute competing targets for both sides. As I explore in the empirical chapters, dynamics between the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement influence the range of tactics, discourses and resources employed for mobilization in order to restrict the opponent's opportunities, expose negative aspects of their discourse and to shape public images. In this context, various types of contentious interactions take place between movements, especially within the scope of blame attribution and framing contests.

A significant number of scholars have dealt with sexual and gender politics with regards to movement and countermovement interactions, and particularly between pro-life, pro-family religious movements and LGBTQ progressive movements (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Dorf and Tarrow 2014). Several studies have already drawn attention to the influence of religious movements on the political opportunities, choice of tactics, and framing strategies adopted by lesbian and gay activists in the public debate (Bernstein 1997; Dorf and Tarrow 2014; Fetner 2008; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Weiss and Bosia 2013). As this study analyses, sexual morality is at the core of the Catholic countermovement agenda, and the agendas of religious conservative movements more broadly, which have long been engaged in countering pro-choice, pro-LGBTQ, women's and feminist movements. Once an opposing movement enters the public arena, new problems, and issues arise for social movement activists, who need to shift political venues, introduce new frames and claims, as well as manage the altered field of contention.

Before entering into the details of the strategic interactionist approach employed in this thesis, it is useful to consider some of the most important hypotheses and

findings advanced by scholars of movement and countermovement mobilization. Indeed, comparing the case under analysis with research on similar movements abroad helps defining some key elements that the present study shares with previous research in the same area, in particular with respect to theorizing interdependence within movements. In this framework, scholars have paid attention to mechanisms of diffusion within social movements (Meyer and Strang 1993; McAdam and Rucht 1993; Kenneth and Biggs 2006) relations between opposing movements (Staggenborg 1991; Kenneth 2002; Mayer and Staggenborg 2008; Banaszak and Ondercin 2016), between initiator and spin-off movements (McAdam 1995; 2013) along with spillover processes (Meyer and Whittier 1994). McAdam (2013) defines initiators those movements that give birth to a protest cycle or wave of ideologically linked movements, and spin-offs the ones that arise from the ideological and inspirational impulse of the former. Thus, the civil rights movement initiated several subsequent struggles around which spin-off movements were born, including the women's movement and the gay liberation movement; in the same vein, second and third waves of women's movement might be considered spin-offs of the original movement. At the same time, spillover processes might take place between similar movements as well as opposing movements. In this sense we assist to mechanisms of diffusion through which movements adopt and adapt to other struggle's tactics, forms of organisations, and framing strategies. Such mechanisms underlie relations of competition but also imitation between opposing movements, particularly with the adaptation of conservative movements to progressive movement's slogans, frames and repertoire of actions.

As postulated by Banaszak and Ondercin (2016), diffusion might result from processes of learning and imitation occurring between opposing movements. In their

study focusing on the oppositional dynamics between the US women's movement and its opponents, particularly around the issue of reproductive rights, the authors suggest that feminist and anti-feminist movements are closely intertwined, since 'feminist mobilization inspires the conservative movement that opposes them to mobilize, and when it does, the feminist movement mobilizes in response' (2016, 403).

Although the above-mentioned research focused on the time dependence of movement and countermovement mobilizations in the long-run, results in the short-run showed that much of the response, in terms of grievances and events, occurs simultaneously between opposing movements, implying 'a continued dynamic between movements resulting from reactions to mobilization' (2016, 386). Empirical instances of such dynamics are also presented in this study, since previous studies analysing opposing movements around reproductive rights in other countries inform the dynamics explored in the present case. In this sense, we will see how the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement in Italy may be considered spin-offs of women's, feminist movements on the one hand, and antiabortion, pro-life organizations, on the other.

The literature on social movements and organisations has followed a mostly parallel, yet progressively converging trajectory, attempting to move away from distinctive structuralist traditions. It is precisely from this divergence that strategic interactionist frameworks emerge. Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) *A Theory of Fields*, is arguably the most renowned strategic-interactionist approach to social movements and social life more generally. In their view, social life is organised around 'strategic action fields', which are

constructed mesolevel social order[s] in which actors (which can be individual or collective) are attuned to and interact with one another on the basis of shared (which is not to say consensual) understandings about the purpose of the field, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why), and the rules governing legitimate action in the field. (2012, 9)

Even more importantly, according to Fligstein and McAdam, each field has a set of incumbents and challengers, the former being ‘those actors who wield disproportionate influence within a field and whose interests and views tend to be heavily reflected in the dominant organization of the strategic action field’ (2012, 13). As this definition suggests, fields are contentious in nature, and rely on constant jockeying and bargaining for resources, which can include both material and cultural assets; actors can rely on a repertoire of strategies and tactics in order to gain access to different resources and improve their own position within a field. Moreover, fields can be held together by hierarchical or collaborative arrangements, and this specific configuration will have a decisive impact on the strategies and tactics available to different sets of actors within that given field. Although Fligstein and McAdam’s ‘fields’ provide a useful foundation for building an understanding of the emergence and actions of social movements, their framework remains particularly structural, and lacks a convincing way of making sense of the decisions that individual and collective actors make in the fields they find themselves in.

Jasper’s (2006) work offers another strategic interaction framework that helps to address this problem. By proposing the concept of ‘dilemma’, which is the choice between ‘two or more options, each with a long list of risks, costs, and potential benefits’ (2006, 1), Jasper replaces Fligstein and McAdam’s structuralism with a productive way of making sense of how actors make decisions. Moreover, reasoning through dilemmas allows us to truly get into the mind of the actors making decisions, and understand what the options for each player actually are. In their most

recent book, Jasper and Duyvendak (2015) take this reasoning one step forward, suggesting that social order can be viewed as a collection of overlapping *arenas* in which *players* act and interact strategically within and across arenas; essentially a product of individuals' strategic decisions and dilemma-solving activities, arenas allow for a more flexible and actor-sensitive understanding of social structure than Fligstein and McAdam's fields offered.

Despite their differences, the two approaches outlined above both emphasise that social life – and social movements in particular – should not be analysed according to a 'structure vs. agent' dichotomy, but rather as phenomena where the game is composed by actors who continuously reproduce it and change it through their reciprocal strategic interaction. A full strategic analysis of social movement and countermovement dynamic is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Major questions that this study attempts to address include: how do dilemmas interact among each other? Do different resolutions have an impact on how other dilemmas are resolved?

Consequently, I chose to focus on specific key dilemmas, the interaction of decisions taken on both sides, and the kind of choices made to resolve them (changes in organisational structures, alliances, practices, discourses). In particular, the aim is to examine the effects of the existence of the following dilemmas: organisation, extension, reaching in or reaching out, shifting goals. Generally speaking, the decision to focus on this specific set of dilemmas stems from the fact that it covers the most basic and frequent choices that the movements faced in the current mobilization and allows the reader to appreciate the influence and impact of one movement on the other.

This thesis proposes therefore to apply Jasper’s framework by focusing on the following main dilemmas (**Table 1**):⁹

Table 1. Main Strategic Choices

Dilemma	Description
<i>Organization</i>	The extent to which bureaucratisation affects negatively/positively movements. It includes issues of centralisation/decentralisation; formalisation; institutionalisation.
<i>Extension</i>	The extent to which expanding the mobilizing structure affects the movement’s goals and actions. It includes issues of coalition building; collective identity definition; open/restricted membership.
<i>Reaching in or Reaching out</i>	The extent to which a movement orients its tactics and appeals to internal/external audiences. It includes issues of identity deployment and boundary activation.
<i>Shifting Goals</i>	The extent to which movements adjust their original goals depending on opportunities, resistance/opposition, success or failure.

Source: Author’s elaboration.

It is important to underline that focusing on strategic interactions not only implies to look at interactions between social movement and countermovements, along with movements and other actors, but also at intra-movement interactions, that is, competition between different factions of the movement (Bosi and Davis, forthcoming).

⁹ For an explanation of the full range of dilemmas, see James Jasper. *Getting Your Way. Strategic Dilemmas in the Real World*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006.

2.3 Gendered Social Movements

Exploring the fundamental role of gendered factors – identities, roles, and relations – in social movements requires a definition of both the nature and function of these concepts. This section explains each of these important concepts and sheds light on how gender operates at various levels, namely as an individual characteristic, as a constitutive force of social and power relations, and as a social structure (Risman 2004).

For the purposes of this study, the term gender refers to the ‘social and cultural interpretations and expectations that are associated with sex yet that go beyond biological characteristics’ (Einwohner *et al.* 2000, 682). Furthermore, treating mobilization and social movement processes – or any other analytic unit – as *gendered* means that:

[...] advantages and disadvantages, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to on-going processes, conceived as gender neutral. Rather, it is an integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender. (Acker 1990, 146)

By considering gendered factors in mobilization and social movement dynamics, this study stresses the social meanings associated with conceptions of femininity and masculinity. Before going further, a premise is needed to qualify the examples and explanations used in this section. Whilst most of the theoretical references are made with respect to women and men, and to femininity and masculinity in relation to each other, this work does not in any way suggest that these are the only existing gender identities and expressions. Rather, I sustain the argument that it is necessary to overcome gender binaries and gender as a fixed category not only theoretically, but also empirically. Gender remains a fluid category in which an infinite number of

combinations of gender expressions and identities are possible. Still, women and images of femininities are often the most visible and distinctive portrayals of gender ‘models’, particularly in movements that are primarily concerned with issues of gender equity or women’s rights. Furthermore, women often constitute the case of gender even when women are present but invisible, namely when men and masculinity predominate (Acker 1990). Nonetheless, patriarchy as a social order affects both men and women, albeit often in different ways, and as such, implies at the same time the study of men and women in movements, along with social constructions of femininities and masculinities.

In addition to women, men can also be seen to be *silent* victims of patriarchy, since ‘men share very unequally in the fruits of patriarchy’ (Messner 1997, 8). The notion of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ implies that multiple masculinities exist and are arranged according to a hierarchy of masculinities in which nonhegemonic masculinities are subordinate to dominant ones (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The important assumption of this notion is that there are significant differences between masculinities themselves, namely in relations among men, and in relation to femininities as well. When analysing mobilization, therefore, one should ask how patriarchy impacts grievances and motivations for men and women involved in social protest, as well as how it affects their positioning and choices. As suggested by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), changes in gender relations may happen as a consequence of women and men’s resistance to patriarchy, but also as a reflection of the enactment of alternative masculinities and femininities.

To understand how *gender identities and relations* are negotiated requires that I clarify the nexus between gender identity and social movements. In light of what has been discussed in previous sections, the work on identity shift of Snow and

colleagues (2000), offers a useful framework for exploring gender identities in social movements. Their argument draws upon the axiom developed by Sheldon Stryker (1994), which asserts that identities can vary considerably in their relative *saliency* (how readily they are invoked in situations), and *centrality* (their subjective importance); identities are therefore ordered into a saliency hierarchy and may be either amplified, consolidated or rendered more pervasive (Snow and McAdam 2000; Stryker and Serpe 1994; Kiecolt 2000). Because of the fluid nature of gender identities – that is, the multiple ways in which each individual is able to define his or her gender identity – a person may experience (or not) changes in the saliency of his or her gender identity as a consequence of particular events, occurrences, interactions, and so forth. In the social movements arena, processes of identity amplification and identity negotiation often take place at the micro-level of a movement's mobilization, so that individual identities are changed in the process. Evidence has suggested that participation in social movements can cause changes in identity meanings and hierarchy by diminishing or extending the centrality of other identities that compete with movement participation (Kiecolt 2000). A recurrent example can be found in the cases of women who, through their involvement in movement's activities, have extended the centrality of their identity as activist, at the expense of their role in the family, as mothers or caretakers. As several studies have demonstrated, this shift in the hierarchy of identities may also happen for women who participate in social struggle who, in doing so, are led to further develop their gender identity into a feminist identity, as their gender interests have been politicised or gained saliency through their engagement in activism (Taylor 1999; Rodriguez 1994). The same, as this study demonstrates, goes for young LGBTQ and Catholic activists, whose identities and interests gain saliency and centrality through their

involvement in the respective movements. As I explain in the following section, the gender nature of movements is not a straightforward one to define; rather, gender can intervene either as an inhibitor or a catalyst of mobilization dynamics.

2.3.1 Gender and Mobilization

Referring to a ‘population of participants’ in mobilization would be profoundly misleading, since every participant’s experience differs depending on their age, class, and gender, among others, and may evolve into different forms of activism or resistance. Taking into account the specificities of mobilization in Western contexts, what role does gender play in mobilization dynamics?

As Rodriguez (1994) argues:

Gender differences are crucial in understanding why and how women and men organize and participate in urban struggle. Women and men perform different roles, have distinct needs, social responsibilities, expectations, and power, and are socialized in different ways. Gender as a social construction explains the social relations between men and women, which are dialectic and vary with class, race, culture, age, religion, and so on, and it explains their differential participation. (Rodriguez 1994, 34)

Once again, recognising that this dissertation’s conceptual focus is on the interactional and cultural analytic levels, it nonetheless adheres to the argument that social movements are gendered at every level – structural, cultural, and individual – in mostly interdependent and inseparable ways, so that the composition, strategies, outcomes, and identities are all similarly, and inescapably, gendered (Einwohner, Hollander and Olson 2000). I therefore begin the analysis by looking at how social movement theories incorporate (or ignore) gender at the macro-level, and how this then impacts conceptions at the cultural and individual levels.

As stated above, research based on investigation into political process(es) and opportunity structure(s) focuses on the interconnections of political processes, economic resources and cultural factors that can facilitate the emergence and sustainment of a movement (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996). Moreover, the political opportunity structure emphasises the role of institutionalised power relations and the importance of the degree of openness to participation within the political system. Changes in the structure of opportunities and shifts in power relations are crucial to movement success (McAdam 1992). At the macro-level, gender is embedded and institutionalised in the political, economic, and social structures, which in turn may have an impact on the ways movements emerge and are sustained (Kuumba 2001; Risman 2004). The broader level of macro-structures therefore points to different inequities, such as political power inequities, divisions of labour, and the unequal distribution of social resources. As Kuumba explains:

In most societies, women and men experience these broader structural conditions differently. Historically developed gender divisions that situate women and men at particular locations within the socioeconomic and political system, community, and family are manifested in social movement mobilization. (Kuumba 2001, 70)

As I explain further in this chapter, these differences may become particularly salient when intersecting with other variables, such as age structures. Applying a gender lens to the analysis of movements means understanding that opportunities to mobilise are also gendered, and therefore different for women and men in society, particularly as a consequence of their social position. The patriarchal nature of culture, society, politics, and so forth, opens (or more often closes) different windows of opportunities for male and female participants, generates different sites for engagement, and provides men and women with different resources and venues to act, resist, and protest. Hence, it is important to acknowledge that political opportunities are also gendered and might catalyse mobilization in different ways.

The exclusive focus on the formal political sphere and traditional elites as the only framework in which opportunities may arise is already, in itself, gender biased, as this is typically a male-dominated realm. Even more so in societies where the involvement of women in politics is either non-existent or reduced to formal appearance, it is crucial to recognise that gender ideologies and relations are institutionalised and determine the definition of political opportunities.

Social movement theory points to the importance of the organisational structures and the resources which draw participants into movement activities (McAdam 1982). Once again, these resources are embedded in the gendered nature of society, so that men and women are recruited and engaged in different ways, and subsequently use formal and informal organisational structures, such as networks, in different ways. Typically, scholarship has shown that, because of their exclusion from the public and formal institutional sphere, women are more likely to participate in informal social networking and to take action at the grass-roots, community level (Robnett 1997; Blee 1991). Men, on the contrary, tend to create and get involved through formal organisational structures, such as political parties. These organisational arrangements reflect the gendered nature of the spatial and social mobility of men and women, which frequently limit the networking possibilities for women to private spaces at the local level, whilst men are more commonly active in the public, political sphere, and across multiple physical spaces.

When analysing gender in relation to movement structures, three patterns are generally identified in the continuum of gender integration in social protest (West and Blumberg 1990; Kuumba 2001). The first pattern includes gender-independent movements, which separate genders both structurally and ideologically, for instance; women's movements concerned with women's rights, men's movements focused on

men's rights, or lesbian, gay, and trans movements which promote the recognition of rights for their respective 'groups'. In contrast, gender-integrated movements may engage both men and women, and usually mobilise around issues that are not directly related to gender equality or gender issues, such as the environmental movement. Finally, gender-parallel organisations are commonly understood as complementary sections or sub-groups that usually link women to a male-dominated movement, or LGBTQ groups to the rest of the movement.

As it is argued in this chapter, in addition to broad structural conditions and organisational dynamics, individual consciousness and subjectivity are crucial factors in movement mobilization. Differences arise among participants with regard to their awareness of social grievances, – including gender inequality – the ways in which they perceive them to be problematic, and how they seek to change or resist them. Existing gender inequalities may, therefore, be reflected in more or less reinforced ways in the grievances that participants perceive. Furthermore, in movement framing processes, common associations with traditional imagery of masculinity and femininity may be employed explicitly or implicitly to encourage mobilization. In this regard, a number of 'master frames' – including gendered symbols, identities, and imageries – have been repeatedly employed throughout the history of social movements in what Taylor calls 'gender symbolism' and 'gender dualism', that typically place emphasis on differences between male and female values (Taylor 1999, 21-22). The 'maternal' or 'mothering' frame, which is grounded in conceptions of women as mothers with an innate propensity to engage in nurturing and supportive activities and who fight for justice, and, on the other hand, its correlate frame in the masculine role of protector and breadwinner, are case in point. In the same vein, women's agency is often placed in the realm of 'reactive

warmth’, which is to say it is reactionary and motivated or expressed through emotions, whilst men are perceived as proactive and competent, i.e. as having ‘agentic competence’ (Ridgeway 2009). Hence, gender is employed through framing activity and symbolism to encourage participation and, by this virtue, reproduce gender, heteronormative stereotypes. If it can be assumed that for mobilization to happen a certain degree of coordination among participants is necessary, then some common knowledge that engenders a basis for joint action is also needed (Ridgeway 2009). This type of common knowledge is often rooted in cultural beliefs that most of us recognise and understand, and thus, ‘the male-female distinction is virtually always one of a society’s primary cultural – category systems’ (Ridgeway 2009, 148).

2.3.2 Gender and Movement Outcomes

Gendered dynamics not only interfere at different levels of mobilization, but also further complicate social movement outcomes. As traditional assumptions about masculinity and femininity, and pre-existing gender roles can be used in movement mobilization to attain different objectives, so can participants engaged in social struggle shape and renegotiate gender relations. In some cases the outcome may be greater gender equality or, at least, the development of participants’ gender consciousness, whilst in other situations gender inequality may be strengthened and traditional gender roles may become even more entrenched.

Scholars have often overlooked the study of the consequences of social movements and protest activities, instead paying greater attention to movement emergence, dynamics and features (Giugni 2008). Nonetheless, focus on social

movements' outcomes has increased steadily over the past ten years, forming a substantial body of literature and leading to advancements in the conceptual, theoretical and methodological issues associated with it. Social movements produce short-term and long-term consequences at different levels (micro, meso, macro) and have an impact on several domains of human affairs (political, cultural, biographical) as well as on other movements. Social movement outcomes, therefore, should not be reduced to a mere distinction between a movement 'success' or 'failure' as an evaluation of its capacity to survive, persist and be influential (Bosi and Uba 2009). Although this thesis takes into account the scholarship on social movement outcomes, particularly at the biographical level, it does not provide an analysis of the outcomes as they are understood and studied in the current literature.¹⁰ The main reason being that outcomes are usually studied over the long term and within different cycles of protest whilst the time frame considered for the case under analysis does not allow for a comparison of data before and after the mobilization. Still, works on social movement outcomes provide important insights on the transformative power of activism. Based on this assumption, I propose to use part of this scholarship and look at the impact of movement's activities in the short term and within the same cycle of protest. In particular, I follow Jasper's (1997, 45) suggestion that students of protest should be interested in observing individuals, 'in order to see how their biographical histories have left them with different selections of cultural meanings and strategic tastes'.

The existing literature on social movement outcomes can be divided into three major – non-exhaustive – categories according to the kind of consequences under

¹⁰ For a comprehensive review see Lorenzo Bosi, Marco Giugni and Katrin Uba. *The Consequences of Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

analysis: political, cultural, and biographical.¹¹ Additionally, it is useful to distinguish between intended and unintended outcomes as well as internal or external consequences of social movements (Giugni, Bosi and Uba 2016). In fact, gender plays a visible role in movements that are primarily concerned with gender-related issues, such as women's, men's, or LGBTQ rights. Although gender justice remains low on the list of priorities for many social movements, it continues to be an important factor in social movements' activism, even those that seem 'ungendered'. Moreover, a movement's internal dynamics are affected by gender in the same way that their external dimensions are, as explained in the following paragraphs.

The majority of available scholarship on movement outcomes has tended to focus exclusively on the political and state-centred outcomes of movement activities, leaving the analysis of cultural and biographical consequences in the background. This does not come as a surprise since many movements' efforts directly target state institutions and attempt to influence policymaking. Political consequences are defined as the causal influence of movement activities on the political environment and political processes (Giugni 1998; Amenta *et al.* 2010), and they are therefore essentially external to movements, whose actions and intended goals have been defined ahead of time, and do not include these unforeseen repercussions. This dissertation does not include an empirical analysis of the political influence of the movement(s) under study, but it nonetheless takes into account the changing political environment in which protest activities take place. In this sense, some useful insights can be found in the literature that looks at how opposing movements react to policy

¹¹ Current works cannot clearly identify the analysis of social outcomes as a separate category; they are often regrouped as a subcategory of cultural consequences. However, one may question whether this is an indication of a lack of conceptual clarity. After all, shouldn't the outcome of social movements be predominantly social?

success of one another (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Zald and Useem 1987). As outlined by Banaszak (2016, 387), scholars have advanced contradicting hypotheses concerning the effect of one movement's political success on its opponents. On the one hand, studies have shown that policy change and success may lead to greater grievances and subsequent mobilization in opposing movements. On the other hand, as a movement achieves policy success, it would tend to decrease its mobilization and scale back its activities. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the interacting analysis of movement and countermovement reactions to the passing of the legislative bills presented in this study – and the consequent policy success of one side or the other.

Individual and personal outcomes of social movements are 'effects on the life course of individuals who have participated in movement activities, effects that are at least in part due to involvement in these activities' (Giugni 2004, 489). The analytic focus is at the micro-sociological level of participants and sympathisers, and therefore excludes any other impact of the movement as a whole. Although it is not possible to clearly distinguish between intentional and unintentional outcomes, individual outcomes can be considered as mostly internal and unintended. Personal consequences can be examined when studying participants who strongly commit to movement goals and beliefs, and actively engage in its activities, i.e. activists. However, in order to avoid reducing the analysis to a small number of high-risk activists, other forms of participation, which are less contentious and more 'ordinary', can be taken into consideration as they may have a similar impact on the life course of participants. In addition to individual-level effects, and because of the importance that gender roles and relations play at the societal and cultural level, a more informative study should include broader implications for the society at large. In this regard, aggregate-level change in life-course patterns (Giugni 2004, 497)

provides insights into the role that social movement plays in social and cultural change. Overall, biographical outcomes lie at the intersection of two major strands of social research (Giugni 2016): processes of social and political socialisation and studies of the life course. As previously mentioned, however, a significant methodological problem arise in this type of research: the timing of data collection (often retrospective), which challenges scholars’ ability to single out the effects of individual participation in social activities and its durable influence on the life course. For this reason, the current research underlines different ways in which taking part in social movements does matter for individual’s attitude and behaviour, particularly through socialization processes, but abstains from making generalisation over the causal relationship between activism and the life course.

Cultural outcomes refer to the impacts of movements in their cultural (and social) environment. Again, although the contours of cultural outcomes are more difficult to discern and analyse, they usually crosscut the distinction between both internal and external, as well as intended and unintended consequences. **Table 2** below summarises the types of social movement outcomes at each level of analysis.

Table 2. Social Movements Outcomes: Types of Outcomes and Levels of Analysis

Political	<i>External</i>	<i>Intended</i>	<i>Aggregate</i>	<i>Macro</i>
Cultural	<i>External</i> <i>Internal</i>	<i>Unintended</i> <i>Intended</i>	<i>Aggregate</i>	<i>Meso</i> <i>Macro</i>
Biographical	<i>Internal</i>	<i>Unintended</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Micro</i>

Source: Author’s elaboration.

One of the major gaps in the literature on social movement outcomes has to be found in the almost inexistent attempts to understand how ‘a certain type of impact

can help to bring about another type' (Giugni 2004, 31). Only recently, social movement scholars have tried to develop a new research strategy for understanding the interrelated effects of social movement outcomes (Bosi 2016). A gender analysis of movement outcomes and effects requires questioning how participation in social resistance advances, or harms, gender interests differentially. In order to do so, it is necessary to keep in mind the divergent gendered interests, stakes, and positions in outcomes that result from social struggle. Clearly, not all interests are contradictory or incongruent for men and women; many of them are the same as they reflect basic social needs such as civic rights, access to resources, etc. (Kuumba 2001, 120). Nonetheless, Kuumba clarifies that 'differences in the stakes that particular socially positioned groups (i.e. gender, race/ethnic, class, cultural) have in the types and levels of social change that the social movement engenders do differ' (Kuumba 2001, 120; Molyneux 1985). Later in this chapter, I show that youth are one such particular socially positioned group, holding 'youth-specific' interests and needs that, at the same time, intersect with differential gender interests. Gender interests stem from divergent social positions and social responsibilities, which inevitably leads individuals to accord different degrees of importance to particular movement outcomes.

At the cultural and political levels, without adhering to dichotomous distinctions between *practical* and *strategic* gender interests (Molyneux 1985),¹² we can say that the gendered outcome continuum ranges from regressive situations – in which gender inequalities may be temporarily reduced during the process of social movement, but afterwards regress to previous standards or even worsen – to

¹² Practical gender interests can be associated with an immediate perceived need relating to gendered roles and responsibilities (mother, breadwinner), whilst strategic gender interests refer to fundamental, long-term changes in gender hierarchies and patriarchal structures.

progressive or transformative instances in which sustained improvements in gender equality or gender issues emerge in the aftermath of social movement activities (Kuumba 2001, 124-125). In this sense, the process of gender awareness can also be used to characterise a movement as a whole, namely that the outcome reflects an increased recognition of gender related issues, and, in some cases, their integration into movement objectives.

Finally, it is important to explore the connection between individual experiences of activism and the construction of one's own identity, a development process often reflected in activists' life histories and accounts. In this sense, activists echo their own life histories and experiences, cultural meanings and emotions in social movements' activities. Yet, it is also true that 'in constructing their own identity, individuals attribute coherence and meaning to the various phases of their own public and private history' (della Porta and Diani 2006, 96). This process is particularly relevant in different phases of mobilization in order to assure continuity in militancy between visible, active and latent phases (Melucci 1996).

Another important concept for the analysis of gender and activism is that of *gender consciousness*, namely the process of becoming aware of gendered power relations and the rules and roles that accompany them (Bierema 2010). On the one hand, this project argues that gender consciousness can develop as an outcome of individual engagement in social movements, i.e. as a biographical outcome. In this sense, activists become aware of the rules and roles accompanying gender relations through their participation in the movement. On the other hand, gender consciousness might be reflected at the aggregate level of movements, in manifestos that contain implicit or explicit critiques of the gendered nature of different issues, such as gender roles in education, family, or work structures (Kuumba 2001).

Underlying the awareness level, there are deep-rooted beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions about what it means to be a man or a woman, and what their respective places in society are. Gender awareness extends to different degrees; while many of us may remain gender unaware for the rest of our lives, others may be aware of gender power relations without questioning them or taking action to change them or, on the contrary, may just accommodate them (Bierema 2010). More importantly, gender consciousness implies a ‘transformative learning process that occurs individually and collectively’, that can be acquired through different life experiences and which has an impact on our thinking and beliefs, without necessarily leading to action (Bierema 2010, 9). I hope to have shown that I adhere to the argument that activism can be a ‘space’ within which to foster gender awareness at both the collective and individual levels.

2.3.3 Youth, Activism and Gender

This section examines the concept of youth as a social category and of youth activism as a social process. It advocates the relevance of youth as the subjects of this analysis and provides some observations on how youth activism intersects with the gender variable.

For the purposes of this dissertation, youth are defined as persons in transition from childhood to adulthood, a phase commonly linked to different and complex processes – emotional, economic, and social – and characterised by varying degrees of relative autonomy, mobility, experimentation, and change (Bayat 2010, 49-50). In their analysis of ‘global youth’, Nilan and Feixa refer to a wide chronological scale, which includes young people of both sexes in the age range 12 to 35 (2006, 2). In

this study, I include activists in the 18 to 30 range, which is the most representative of youth in the Italian social-economic, cultural, and political context. As I will explain more in detail in the next chapter, I follow other scholars who are less concerned with the official status but rather with the ‘social construction of identity, in young people as creative social actors, in cultural consumptions and social movements’ (Nilan and Feixa 2006, 1).

Moreover, the transitional dimension of *coming-into-being* and becoming an adult typically affects youth through significant personal and emotional changes, as well as in their identity formation (Nayak and Kehily 2007). Particularly important for this analysis is an acknowledgment that age has socially determined facets (and is therefore not strictly confined to biological age), and recognition of the role that youth play in the construction of the present, especially in matters that directly impact their lives. Indeed, the transition to adulthood involves a shift towards greater social responsibility and concern for meaning, which often clashes with youth inability to participate in ‘adult institutions’ and give input to public policy or political decision-making (Kirshner 2007, 367). Nonetheless, many of them contribute to different forms of social action and critical civic engagement in the form of activism(s).

The category of youth, therefore, transcends biological age, it implies a sociological fact that translates into youthfulness, which is a particular consciousness of being young and includes a ‘series of dispositions, ways of being, feeling, and carrying oneself’ (Bayat 2010, 49). It is important to underline that in this study, the term ‘youth’ includes at least three concepts: the fact of *being young* as explained above, *what* young people do, and *how* they are. This conceptualisation allows for the analysis of youth activism as the involvement of young men and women in

different groups and organisations, but also of youth behaviours, ways of doing, expressions, and practices, in private and public spaces. As Bayat (2010, 51) explains, “with their central preoccupation with ‘cultural production’ or lifestyles, the young may fashion new social norms, religious practices, cultural codes, and values, without needing structured organization, leadership, or ideologies”.

Theses emerging from these analyses advance the argument that the individual political identity is no longer defined by the relationship with traditional collective identifications, class or ideological, but rather develops in reference to the universe of personal experience (Bettin Lattes 2001). The political identity then becomes, flexible, open and experimental. As we will see in the next chapters, this process of individualisation of identity politics is the perspective from which reading the different trends emerging in the world of youth: the preference for ethical issues – universal (peace, international development cooperation, environmental protection, etc.) and the forms of solidarity based on small groups, the refusal of ideologies and traditional political experience, first of all political parties.

Moreover, the increasing education of young women has opened up new opportunities to question the patriarchal order. It opens new horizons for young women and men to compete on equal terms in the labour, political, and public spheres. Furthermore, significant changes in family structure and family planning – such as marrying at a more advanced age and the consequent reality of ‘being single’, the shift from large family structures to nuclear families connected through parental ties, etc. – are affecting the lives of the younger generation of men and women and may have an impact on the ways in which they organise and protest. In this regard, other sites such as schools, universities, sport and art clubs, communities,

parishes and student associations, have increasingly become the new custodians of cultural, social, and moral values.

The analysis explored in this chapter puts forward the argument that the gender nature of movements is not easily identifiable; rather, gender can intervene either as an inhibitor or a catalyst of mobilization dynamics at the individual, interactional, and structural levels. As a multilevel structure, in the words of Ridgeway, ‘the remaining difficulty, however, is to explicate how these multilevel processes affect one another, beyond simply saying that they generally but not always reinforce one another’ (Ridgeway 2009, 146). Gender is therefore more than just a detail to add to the analysis of social movements; as a primary factor in shaping social relations, it necessarily plays a crucial role in mobilization dynamics. Applying gender lenses to social movements should embrace a relational, constructivist, perspective that combines cultural meanings of masculinity and femininity, homo and hetero, in a non-binary and non-exclusionary way. This is probably one of the major fallacies in gender studies, which too often narrowly focuses on either (adult) women or men in movements. Taking youth as the central category for the analysis should help in overcoming this artifice, all the while acknowledging the differences and similarities within groups of young people.

Chapter 3

Research Approach and Methods

This chapter presents the research design and methodological choices used throughout the fieldwork that I have conducted for the cases analysed in my thesis, namely the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement in Italy.¹³ In detail, it discusses the literature relating to the chosen methodology and justifies its design based on the appropriateness of the instruments used for investigation, as well as for the larger purpose of the study. It then describes the procedures of sampling, data collection, processing and analysis. Finally, it critically highlights the limitations of the methodology used and brings up issues relating to triangulation, reflexivity and positionality, and ethics.

3.1 Research Design

The choice of a qualitative research design, along with the appropriate method(s) used to gather, construct, and analyse data, has been informed by the nature of the topic, the theoretical perspective and the research questions of this study. As outlined by Della Porta, a considerable variety of methods are used in social movement research, due to a certain degree of pragmatism in the selection of different data collection instruments (della Porta 2014). Trends in social movement research therefore stress the importance of cross-fertilisation among different disciplines,

¹³ Details concerning the movements under analysis are presented in Annex 2, whilst a description of the nature and positions of each movement and key actors and interactions will be presented in a separate chapter.

because of the complexity of the social problems under analysis and the multiple positions that exist on different social issues. From a literature perspective, the theory-topic connection proposed in this study is based on different bodies of scholarship that are increasingly interrelated, namely social movement research and gender/queer studies. In order to avoid being forced into a single epistemological perspective, methodological flexibility was a necessary condition to explore the ways in which young LGBTQ and Catholic activists experience and interpret the world around them, as well as their ability to respond to the context and the structures in which they act and interact.

In brief, the methods used for this project include; in-depth interviews with young activists from the Italian LGBTQ and Catholic movements; participant observation at meetings, conventions, organisations' sites and protest events, and the collection of mediated and non-mediated visual and cultural materials produced by activists,¹⁴ by other actors, and by myself – including media outlets such as leaflets, posters, social networking site content, newspaper articles, images and videos.

3.1.1 Methodological Pluralism

From an epistemological and ontological perspective, this thesis builds upon a theory of knowledge that is based on social constructionism¹⁵ and interpretivism,

¹⁴ For an explanation of visual data and a definition of mediated and non-mediated material, see the section on visual analysis below.

¹⁵ Social constructionism, which is not meant to be a distortion of social constructivism, is a theory of knowledge based on the preliminary works of sociologists belonging to the Chicago School along with phenomenological sociologists. The term was officially introduced by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's 'The Social Construction of Reality' (1966). It refers to the assumption that society and social reality is actively and continuously produced by human beings. This epistemological perspective is particularly insightful in the study of gender aspects of social life, since it highlights the interpretative and subjective nature of reality, rather than taken-for-granted social

which puts the subject at the core of the investigation and makes the elucidation of individual meanings and practices the primary outcome of research. In particular, it places the understanding of young activists' perceptions, practices, values and interpretations at the centre of the analysis. What methods, then, are most likely to uncover the real experiences of young LGBTQ and Catholic activists, thus answering the research question(s) raised in this project?

As presented in the last chapter, and given the numerous conceptual references which are found at the intersection of different fields of study, it follows that the research design should be based on diverse methodologies. As a rule, social science research conceives the research process as a logical progression: starting with an ontological position about what constitutes social reality, we can then derive a set of related epistemological stances that guide the choice of the appropriate methodology and methods. However, in agreement with the points raised by other scholars (della Porta 2014; Browne and Nash 2010), it is challenging to follow the research nexus' logical sequence when ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations are, instead, overlapping and mutually constituted. Nonetheless, I outline the specificities of the methodology used for the investigation in this thesis. Before I proceed, it is important to highlight that the research process must remain non-essentialist and eclectic with regards to the choice of methods (Letherby 2003). In this sense, as I will explain in the following section, 'data collection decisions have to be tempered by what is possible. Access to documents, respondents, sites

worlds. Yet, Butler makes us vigils on the limits of such model of construction whereby 'the social unilaterally acts on the natural and invests it with its parameters and its meanings' (2011 [1993], xiv), particularly in the sex/gender distinction whereby gender is the social meaning attributed to a given sex. As Butler pushes us to reflect on the notion of matter, as 'a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter' (p. xix). In this sense, construction must be understood as a temporal process in which the reiteration of norms produces sex. By a reiterative effect, sex becomes naturalized, but simultaneously exposes itself to the possibility of de-construction.

and so on has to be negotiated' (Gregorio and Davidson 2008, 40), hence implying the need to revisit the research design when unexpected obstacles arise. The following paragraphs are therefore meant to shed light on some of the most compelling epistemological, theoretical, and methodological considerations that I encountered.

3.1.2 Feminist and Queer Approaches to Methods

From a theoretical standpoint, I concur with other scholars (Browne and Nash 2010; Rooke 2009) that gender and sexual subjects and subjectivities are fluid and continuously 'becoming' through the negotiation of roles and identities. This is a leading consideration, implying the adoption of methods that allow for the investigation of the complexity and the endless facets of these 'fleeting subjects'. It questions the possibility of gathering and processing data that is only temporarily fixed and certain (Browne and Nash 2010, 1). Drawing from a conceptual framework, what methods are appropriate to question taken-for-granted meanings and power relations, such as the ones attached to gender and sexual identities? This is a difficult question that needs to be addressed through a dialogue between different bodies of scholarship and with a marked flexibility when it comes to methodological choices (Browne and Nash 2010; della Porta 2014; Reinharz 1992).

In order to query the hegemonic and normative understanding of sexual and gender relations, and to highlight the practices that transgress heteronormative sexual and gender assumptions, the researcher is not only required to reflect on those social categories but also to consider the methodological assumptions grounded in social research, such as the ones criticised by feminist and queer scholars: rigour, clarity,

objectivity and reliability of the researcher and the research process. In line with such critics, a blend of feminist, queer, and social movement methodologies constitutes the basis of my research design. As feminist and queer approaches contend, attention must be drawn not only to the methods we choose and the justifications behind them, but also to the ways we intend to practice them (Letherby 2003), and, I would argue, the impact they have on us. Hence, reflecting on the subjective experience of the researcher in the field, and the respectful, non-exploitative use of methods, are critical aspects of the overall methodology. Furthermore, 'the nature of the subject of research, previously envisioned as a unified, coherent and self-knowledgeable individual, is redrawn as contingent, multiple and unstable; constituted within historically, geographically and socially specific social relations' (Browne and Nash 2010, 4). This argument becomes fundamental in order to challenge the methodological assumption that there is a unified object of study – such as a lesbian, a woman, a man, a gay, a Catholic – to provide the basis of research. Rather, acknowledging the active and subjective role of the respondent in the research process is the first step towards developing shared and commonly constituted knowledge between researcher and respondent. Social science research methods are themselves the object of numerous debates, particularly with regards to their appropriateness. Through methodological pluralism however, the researcher can adopt a strategy of inquiry that is situated in the particular location under analysis, triangulate for sources of information and data collection, and embrace anti-normative stances towards social reality and social research. Understanding the difficulties of tackling social reality's complexities, I do not expect to resolve any contradiction or tension between different approaches to

investigation, but rather to explore a single detail of a much bigger picture. **Table 3** below presents a recapitulation of the project's research process.

Table 3. Research Process

<p>Ontology / Epistemology Subjectivism, interpretivism</p> <p>Theoretical perspective(s) Social constructionism, post structuralism, interactionism</p> <p>Methodology(ies) Social movements, feminist and queer methodologies</p> <p>Methods In-depth face to face interviews, participant observation, observation, visual, narrative, frame, thematic analysis</p>
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Source: Author's elaboration.

This work is an attempt to analyse the social in a theoretical, problem-oriented, and engaged manner, by grounding theory in empirical research. In order to do so, I decided to adopt a set of different qualitative methods. **Table 4** summarises the strategies of data collection. The choice of the proposed methods has been driven by the considerations discussed above: the willingness to put methods to the task of understanding young activists' meanings and interpretations while respecting that the negotiation of their gender roles and identities occurs in a way that is subjectivist, participatory, respectful, and guided by interpretation, contextualisation, and reflexivity. In the following section I provide a detailed description of the data collection instruments employed.

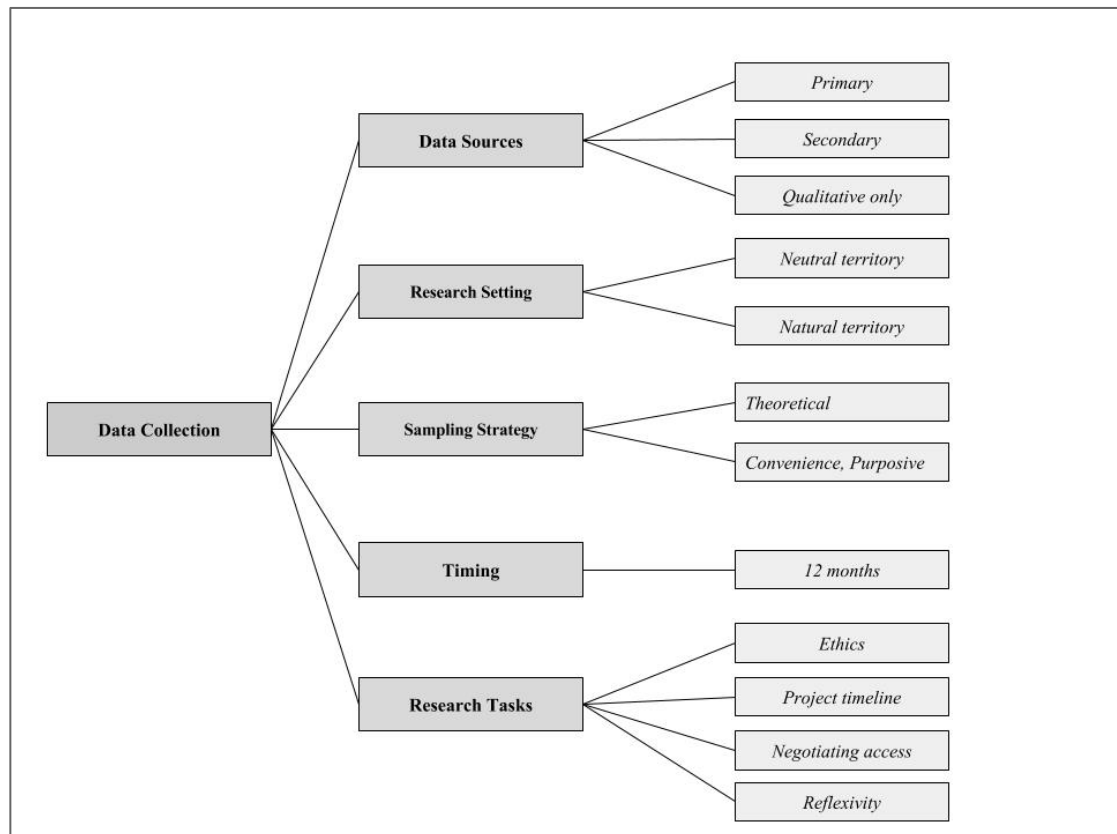
Table 4. Research Design

Sample	Data sources	Data collection Instruments	Data analysis	Timing	Setting
Theoretical, Purposive	Activists' life-histories	In-depth interviews with activists	Thematic, comparison, sorting into themes	Longitudinal Prospective	Activists' territory
Male, female, homosexual, heterosexual activists aged 18 - 30 in the LGBTQ movement	Protest events Online/offline material produced by activists: documents, posts, social media	Online/offline participant observation Manual archival of online/offline material	Linking data, narrative analysis, Frame analysis, how ideas matter		
Male, female activists aged 18 - 30 in the Catholic movement	profiles of groups and activists, websites, printed material, articles, leaflets Visual material: mediated and non-mediated pictures and images		Memoing on key topics Visual analysis		

Source: Author's elaboration.

3.2 Data Collection, Instrumentations and Analysis

This section presents the methods of data collection employed for this project. As shown in the chart below, the section also highlights some of the core issues concerning data collection strategies, as indicated in **Figure 1**.



Source: adapted from Gregorio and Davidson, 2008.

Figure 1. Data collection strategies

3.2.1 Sources, Participants, Setting

Sampling was conducted on a theoretical basis, namely via the recruitment of activists who were interesting from a conceptual standpoint. As for the timing, sampling happened at different points in time, following a prospective logic. Participants were initially selected through purposive sampling, based on the presence and availability of young activists within the organisations – including youth groups and sections – and with an awareness of the geographical outreach of the organisation, in order to control for variation across different regions. For the purpose of this study, I set the range of biographical age between 18 and 30 as a key selection criterion. On the one hand, the justification for this choice is based on ethical and practical reasons, namely to exclude under-aged persons. On the other,

this thesis follows the postulate of others scholars and aims at investigating ‘the theoretical and empirical relationships between collective transitions and individual transitions (from a standardised youth period to diverse and deregulated adulthoods)’ (Leccardi and Feixa 2011, 10). The age range chosen therefore indicates the extent to which the category of ‘youth’ has been expanded to those who are legally recognised as adults in Italy (18 years old), taking nonetheless into account the cultural and social practices in the life trajectories of young people. In order to understand the specificities of young people in Italy, it is important to consider the typology models of transitions proposed by Cavalli and Galland (1995), namely the ‘Mediterranean model’ presented in the last chapter. In addition, in Italy, IARD – one of the most important institutes on the condition of young people (Leccardi 2005) – suggests to extend the scale from 15 to 34 years old. Yet, field observations have also informed the choice to set the limit to 30 years old (rather than 34 or 35). The main reason being that, movements themselves were adopting the range 18-30 to define membership in their own youth subgroups, sections, and branches. A summary of the sample – including the units of analysis (organisations and groups, individuals, and events), along with their attribute variables (demographic information, characteristics of the organisations and groups, types of event), – can be found in **Annex 1** and **Annex 2**. With regards to recruiting strategies, I first contacted the administrators of the various organisations via a standardised text sent either by email and/or as a Facebook message to the relevant organisations’ pages and groups’ profiles.

With respect to the LGBTQ movement, being a young LGBTQ activist myself, having previous knowledge of the Italian context, and a personal network of contacts within the Italian LGBTQ community, allowed me to enlarge the sample through a

snowball effect from contact to contact. Nonetheless, my starting point for recruitment was Arcigay's national network, Italy's oldest and most influential LGBTQ organisation, and its respective committees spread across the Italian territory.¹⁶ At a later stage, I included other LGBTQ organisations or groups that were not affiliated with Arcigay, either by political or ideological choice, with the aim to create a sample including units of analysis of different sizes, geographical provenance, and range of activities (see Annex 1). It is interesting to note that the highest rate of responses was collected via Facebook messages and that subsequent exchanges over Facebook were the preferred means of communication of young activists. The majority of interviews, as well as follow-up communications, were therefore planned, organised and conducted through social networking. The immediacy of communication, often over Facebook chat, helped me to accelerate the process of recruitment. In addition, in most cases it granted me membership to groups' related 'open but closed' and 'closed restricted' Facebook groups, a precious source of further information and observation, particularly with regard to the internal organisation of the groups, meeting notes published on Facebook, assignment of tasks among groups' activists, and planning and advertising of events.

With regards to Catholic groups, I had to adapt my sampling strategy because of the challenges encountered in accessing groups, organisations, and activists. In contrast with organisations and groups within the LGBTQ movement, major Catholic organisations, such as Comunione e Liberazione, are highly hierarchical in structure, meaning that younger activists who form the basis of the organisation required a more or less explicit authorisation from the leadership to participate in the

¹⁶Note that although Arcigay informs the work of its committees at the national level, particularly through political and ideological guidelines, the degree of autonomy varies significantly across the 52 committees constituting the network.

project – either from the priest responsible for a specific group in a specific geographical area, or from the coordinator of one of the organising committees scattered across the Italian territory. It was equally difficult to make contact with some of the organisations that are more directly and politically involved in the public arena, such as La Manif Pour Tous Italia – Generazione Famiglia and the Standing Sentinels, who initially did not grant me access for interviews, arguing that all the information concerning the organisation was provided on their respective websites and that they were not willing to release interviews, participate in press conferences, television, or research projects. As it has later been explained to me during interviews, this is mainly due to the fear of instrumentalisation and misrepresentation on the part of journalists and the press. As we can read from an excerpt on the Standing Sentinels’ website:

The Sentinels do not seek visibility in the media, do not lend them to use a misleading and discriminatory language, they refuse to be manipulated and used by those who want to show a contrast between ‘homosexual’ and ‘heterosexual’. In the square, in their only form of public presence, the Standing Sentinels are questioning consciences and especially meet the people, those who want to understand, and even those that came to challenge them. Personal contact is the only true and the only way to speak to the conscience. (Sentinelle in Piedi, 2014)

Against this backdrop, I decided that an alternative and effective recruiting strategy would be to attend their meetings, conferences, and protest events. I then started to look for the above-mentioned ‘personal contact’ and met activists directly on site. Equipped with business cards and information sheets I introduced myself to several events’ organisers, who then directed me towards the leaders and staff members ‘authorised’ to share information with me. Once I disclosed my identity in person, I was given permission to explain my project and ask for prospective interviewees. The fact that the organisers could ‘see my face’, literally opened the doors to gain access. However, as I will explain in the section about reflexivity,

gaining access did not go hand in hand with gaining the trust of the organisations sampled.

With regards to groups that directly and exclusively involved Catholic youth – such as subgroups and branches of *Comunione e Liberazione* within the university environment – sampling and recruitment came far easier and was approached in a similar way as with the groups and organisations within the LGBTQ movement, mainly through Facebook messages sent to the respective groups' public profiles. In a sense, as some activists stated, it was a responsible and more reasonable choice for them to help someone belonging to the same system, i.e. a university student. To present myself as a student conducting a Ph.D. project helped to foster a common identity with candidates who granted me access.

Overall, interviewees included leaders (namely youth who were responsible for the management and coordination of one or more groups within the organisation), people who were part of the organisation's executive, volunteers, and youth who were active in one or more groups on a voluntary basis and who, for the most part, were also involved in other forms of militant activity. The regions most extensively covered were Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany in central Italy, in addition to Rome, where I have most of my personal contacts. I then decided to add the Lombardy region to the sample, as it is one of the leading regions in Northern Italy. Because of funding and time constraints, I could not include Southern regions to conduct face-to-face interviews. I nonetheless organised several Skype interviews with militants from Southern Italy. When I tried to contact various organisations in Southern Italy – and it must be noted that there is a limited presence of LGBTQ organisations, and particularly those with youth groups and sections, in the region – I received a significantly low rate of response, which resulted in the impossibility of organising

interview sessions. Nevertheless, from the research I could conduct, I gained many insights into the opinions of activists who were born and raised in Southern Italy and subsequently migrated to Northern regions, particularly in the case of LGBTQ groups. This hints at a finding in itself: as many LGBTQ activists confirmed, migrating to bigger urban centres in the North was a precondition in order to live/express their gender and sexual identity.

At this point, it is important to note an interesting observation with regards to the gender of recruited activists. In the LGBTQ movement, most of the female activists were selected from mixed groups, i.e. organisations that host and support activities for both lesbian and gay people. I therefore faced two main issues. Firstly, the number of responses from exclusively female/lesbian groups that I contacted was basically insignificant. Furthermore, within mixed LGBTQ groups, female members were either missing or present as a minority. The low rate of response to specific recruitment strategies might therefore constitute an interesting research finding in itself, highlighting some specificities of the LGBTQ community's composition, as well as the differences in numbers and availability according to gender and/or sexual orientation. The question of why it was so difficult to reach out to young female/lesbian activists, not only for me as a researcher but also for the organisations themselves, was later introduced as a theme for discussion during interviews. Activists recruited within the Catholic movement were much more balanced, with a comparatively equal rate of male and female participants. Yet, it was interesting to observe that in specific organisations or subgroups, particularly within the university subgroups, either only female or only male activists from the same group were available to participate. Moreover, and maybe not surprisingly, this trend coincided with traditional assumptions about the university faculties with which the activists

were associated. Although part of the same leading organisation, participants from subgroups representing faculties such as Educational sciences and Language Studies were exclusively female, whilst participants representing the faculties of Medicine and Pharmacy, were for the most part male.

The location of interviews coincided in every case either with the activists' natural environment or with a neutral setting, i.e. a location chosen by the interviewees themselves such as the offices of the individual organisations, a library, a bar, a university room, and so on. The choice to conduct face-to-face interviews and to travel to the original sites granted me the opportunity to make direct observations in the field, as well as to relate my role as a researcher to the context I was studying. Access to the sites was therefore obtained by giving participants the choice for the interview's location and time, which oftentimes matched with their own working environment.

With regard to movements' discourses and public narratives, the sampling unit corresponded to the public debate around gender and sexuality in Italy, within which I investigated the framing of major actors on both sides of the contention by sampling representative texts and excerpts from various sources (conferences minutes, leaflets, press releases, communiqués, brochures, interviews, field notes).

3.2.2 Conducting Interviews, Questions, Interactions

As shown in detail in **Annex 1**, I conducted a total of *37 interviews* over the period of May to November 2015. Interviews proved to be particularly effective as a method to explore individuals' understanding and interpretation of the surrounding social context, along with gendered processes and activists' practices. Indeed,

interviews are powerful tools to discover agency but also enable a researcher to understand how much structure is influencing activists' choices. Scholars from different disciplines agree that the use of interviews acknowledges the values, emotions, perceptions, ideas, meanings, and awareness of subjects by focusing on human agency. Hence, it seemed of great relevance to establish a direct and participatory conversation with young activists in order to reveal the way they understand and express complex and 'taken-for-granted' social constructs such as gender, gender identity, gender expression and gender norms, while paying attention to their own words, thoughts, and non-verbal communication.

My *interview strategy* consisted of the elaboration of an interview grid with semi-structured questions, which allowed for a considerable degree of flexibility depending on each participant's responses. Examples of my interview grids can be found in **Annex 3**; given that interviews were conducted in Italian, I provided the questions in English. Overall, I tried to have a balance between more structured questions that could provide me with topically thick information, and less structured questions, which favour the generation of new hypotheses and ideas. The interview grids used for LGBTQ and Catholic groups were slightly different with regards to two questions related to gender. Although the topic and content of the questions was the same in each grid in order to be able to keep them consistent for comparison, I rephrased two questions so as to make them more accessible to respondents. In addition to biographical data, the interview grid was organised around three thematic blocks reflecting my research questions and theoretical assumptions. These themes are mostly concordant with those developed in the data analysis.

- a) The first thematic block required the participants to reflect on their own *experience* as activists, including the *reasons* and *motivations* that brought them into the field of

activism and their experiences of it; the *roles* and *tasks* within the organisation; previous experience of activism outside the LGBTQ or Catholic realm, as well as more general comments on their *background* life experience.

- b) The second thematic chunk focused on one of the core lines of inquiry in my project and one of the most delicate and difficult to analyse, which is *gender*. Choosing the questions' wording and context was particularly challenging and required some adjustments in the interview grid depending on whether I was interviewing Catholic or LGBTQ activists. The changes were intended to facilitate respondents' understanding of the questions, as well as attempting to find comparable information from both groups. Questions required the participant to reflect on concepts such as *gender roles*, *gender consciousness*, *gender identity* and *expression* as well as the *impact* of their experience as activists on different aspects related to gender and the social context – particularly concerning issues included in the on-going debate on LGBTQ rights, gender equality, and gender education. It is important to note here that LGBTQ participants were in most cases very familiar with vocabulary and concepts linked to gender, given that gender and sexual orientation constitute the thematic area in which they were working and (consciously) acting. This represented an enormous advantage, making conversations more open, if only for the fact that participants were used to talking about such issues, or at least reflecting on them in their own life history. In some cases, participants tended to assimilate gender identity with sexual orientation, hence making evident the fluid and unstable character of activists' subjectivities, and their difficulties in thinking about the construction of gender identity as happening independently from biological sex and sexual orientation. Conversely, I encountered difficulties in the early interview stages when trying to introduce the same themes to Catholic activists, and therefore had to readjust my own approach. I tried to present the themes and questions first in broader and less direct terms, and then move to more detailed questions, taking into

account the respondent's sensitivities. Examples of questions included: Do you behave (or talk, or gesticulate, or dress,) the same way when you are here, among your fellows, as you do when you are at home with your family and friends? How does it change when you are at work? Do you find that in some contexts it is more difficult to express yourself? Has your activist experience changed the way you express your (gender) identity? Answers to these questions were particularly powerful in confirming some of my assumptions, stressing the importance of social structures – in particular *gender as a social structure* - that in some cases limited participants' agency, (or vice versa,) and the different ways in which participants' actions and gender performances either reproduced or contested the same social structure, transgressing or adhering to gendered, taken-for-granted social norms and expectations.

- c) The third thematic cluster was dedicated to multiple topics including; *values* and *meanings* attached to a range of social objects/subjects/issues; *strategic actions/tactics* adopted by individual activists and/or by the organisation; *emotions* during protests, and *generational issues*. The main goal was to uncover the meaning that participants attached to their actions, the values and rights they adhered to and projected, what their preferred and most efficient forms of action were, and the *role of social performance and culture*.

Following two trial interviews, the formulation, wording and order of questions was improved, and continued to evolve throughout the fieldwork period. In addition, as some themes or interesting aspects emerged during interviews, I added more specific questions on such themes to subsequent interviews. All interviews lasted about one hour and were audio recorded with prior consent from participants.

A significant amount of information was also collected during off-record conversations at the end of interviews, when the participants felt free to talk about

relevant issues, even those outside the scope of the interview. In these moments, I allowed myself to take a more (inter) active role and express my own views, thus animating a conversation with the aim of producing mutually constituted knowledge and meaning in addition to the data collected through participants' responses (della Porta 2014). Often, interviewees were willing to continue sharing their views and opinions longer after the end of the interview. Generally speaking, taking into consideration the differences with regards to the personal traits and ages of the interviewees, I received positive reactions and feedback from participants. The social and generational proximity with the interviewees gave me the opportunity to easily build a good rapport of understanding, sharing, and trust.

I would like to stress the importance of non-verbal communication, particularly the explicit and less explicit elements that hinted at interviewees' gender expression and performativity; namely corporality, the aesthetic, the dress code, the voice, the gestures, and mannerisms. Participants were, in fact, not only asked to reflect upon their gender expression and identity, but were also exposed by their own demeanour during the interview.

3.2.3 Participant Observation

I engaged in participant observation in order to collect first-hand data and, most importantly, to experience protest activities while being as close as possible to the groups I was studying. I decided to follow an approach that included both theory-driven and field-driven participant observation, bringing to the field some previously established theoretical ideas and hypotheses, but at the same time expecting that new ideas and data would emerge. I did not enter the field with a clearly structured

template for observation, but rather a short list of broad dimensions to pay attention to, such as groups' compositions (particularly with regards to age and gender), activists' appearance, verbal behaviour and interactions, physical behaviour and gestures, images, symbols, and performances. As part of the data collected during participant observation, I tried, whenever possible, to survey protestors during and after demonstrations and/or related events. My strategy involved identifying young volunteers and members, as well as leaders and coordinators, who were willing to answer brief questions concerning their presence and experience. Questions revolved around reasons for protesting and demonstrating, background information, previous experience of activism, and ideological positions being publicised at the protest event. Although I could not record them as full interviews, it nonetheless gave me the opportunity to gather data on the issues mentioned above in the form of field notes. Once again, this strategy followed an adjustment in my methodology because of difficulties in formally accessing activists within Catholic groups. As I learned through participation in these events, frontline Catholic groups have strict rules concerning public speaking and presence: not everyone is allowed to express his/her opinion, or to provide information to outsiders. In the case of hardliner groups such as the Standing Sentinels and La Manif Pour Tous Italia – Generazione Famiglia, specific persons were appointed to interact with the 'public' during protest events, conferences, and meetings. Before being allowed to speak to young volunteers and activists, I had to obtain permission from the coordinators. I then found myself in funny situations where young activists wanted to talk to me but was forced to hide from the leadership. In the same vein, in order to gain access to the conferences I attended in Milan and Rome, organised by La Manif Pour Tous Italia – Generazione

Famiglia, I had to sign up to the event in advance and provide details concerning my personal background.

Concretely, I participated in the events summarised in **Table 5** below, in the period between April 2015 and May 2016.

Table 5. Participant Observation

Place	Type of event	Dimensions observed	Instruments	Position
Faenza (14.04.2015) Social centre, square, street, bar	Demonstration organised by the LGBTQ association "Un Secco No" in conjunction with other LGBTQ association against the conservative movement "Le Sentinelle in Piedi"	Meeting preceding the protest, organisation of protest material, relations with police and journalists, symbolism, gender and social performance, emotions, tactics, age, meanings	Field notes Pictures Videos Online material	Participant observer
Forlì (20.05.2015) Bar	Meeting for the assignments of roles and tasks within the organisation "Un Secco No"	Group dynamics, decision-making process of the group, debates between group's factions	Memos	Participant observer
Gay Pride Bologna (28.06.2015)	Demonstration organised by "Arcigay Il Cassero" in conjunction with other LGBTQ and human rights organisations from all over the Italian territory	Symbolism, tactics, age, gender and social performance, discourses, culture, emotions, meanings	Field notes Pictures Videos Online material	Participant observer
Milano (28.09.2015) Theatre	Conference organised by "La Manif Pour Tous Italia" on "Family and Gender: an anthropological question"	Internal organisation, group's hierarchy, speech-act, discourses, public and audience, age, gender, tactics of recruitment	Audio recording Pictures Field notes	Observer in the public
Ravenna (11.10.2015) Square, street	Demonstration organised by the "Standing Sentinels" and counter-protest from several LGBTQ groups	Relations with audience and public, symbolism, gender and social performance, emotions, tactics, age, discourses, physical and symbolic arrangement	Field notes Pictures Videos Survey	Participant observer

Roma (17.10.2015) Theatre/cinema	Conference/Convention organised by "La Manif Pour Tous Italia" on family, gender, and LGBTQ rights/gender equality rights	Internal organisation, group's hierarchy, speech-act, discourses, public and audience, age, gender, tactics of recruitment	Field notes Audio recording Pictures Videos Survey	Observer in the public
Forli (15.11.2015) Square, street	Flash Mob "Want to marry me" organised by different LGBTQ groups and demonstration of the "Standing Sentinels"	Countermovement dynamics, interactions, relations with audience and public, symbolism, gender and social performance, emotions, tactics, age, discourses, physical and symbolic arrangement	Field notes Pictures Videos Survey	Participant observer
Bologna (20-22.05.2016) Community centre	Closed-door meeting on "The Anti-Gender Paranoia" organised by a working group of major LGBTQ organisations in Italy and including the participation of over 30 LGBTQ and pro-rights groups and organisations.	Internal dynamics, discussions, interactions, discourses, narratives, gender and social performances, strategic actions, choices and tactics	Field notes Pictures	Participant observer

Source: Author's elaboration.

With regards to theorisation, participant observation was employed to enhance the understanding of interactions between individuals of the same group, as well as with individuals from opponent groups (micro-perspective). In addition to collective behaviour, observations were made in relation to individuals' actions, to the concepts of social performance, gender performativity, and the symbolic dimensions of protest. In this case, particular attention was given not only to groups' gender composition, but also to the ways in which activists and their opponents were performing gender – how gender constituted both the field of contention and a social performance (**Table 6**).

Table 6. Observing Gender in the Field

Gender performativity	Dimensions
Individual	Behaviour Clothing Voice Presentation Manners Speech
Collective	Roles Interactions

Source: Author's elaboration.

The symbolic dimensions of protest include the performances of a collective identity, namely the *mise-en-forme* of a protest event. Interaction between theory and participant observation occurred also and especially in relation to the symbolic dimensions of protest. Reflecting Habermas's dramaturgical approach and Goffman's symbolic interactionism as applied in the theoretical framework, I could observe the *mise-en-scène* of images, messages, the framing of discourses, as well as the aesthetic, the tools and the tactics employed by protesters. Observations are especially powerful to reveal gaps between practices and ideologies, by observing who speak, who lead, and who is in front in a demonstration. The corporality and bodily expressions constitute key features of gendered representations in the public sphere. Following Butler's (1990 [2011]) argument, demonstrating – the most evident form of performance – is an act of 'doing' gender and, at the same time, of performing gender.

Furthermore, participant observation was employed beyond protest events to observe non-public aspects of social movements and the development of their

strategies, particularly during and after meetings, and at conventions where I had the opportunity to study internal decision-making processes.

Taking one of the events as an example, the demonstration involving LGBTQ associations in opposition to the *Sentinelle in Piedi* (Standing Sentinels) movement, I derived a great deal of insight into the symbolic dimensions of protest, as well as the acknowledgment of different, if not opposed, cultures of action.¹⁷ Below is an excerpt from my field notes during that day:

It was a rainy, windy, and chilly day, quite rare for the season and at this latitude. After being collected by two friends and activists of “Un Secco No”, we arrived in Faenza around 2.30 pm and walked to the Circolo Prometeo, a social space that the association was given to inflate coloured balloons and prepare the demonstration. When we arrived, people from the core of the association were already working. The ambiance seemed relaxed and welcoming, and since other people were drinking, I soon got a beer myself. The major task at this moment was inflating heart shaped, coloured balloons and stitching slogans on them. The work was organized among one person inflating the balloons with helium, other people tying them, other wiring them with a string attached to several slogans against homophobia. Overall, the tasks were well coordinated, with everyone cooperating. I perceived the ambiance to be warm and joyful, although tension and excitement grew gradually while approaching the demonstration. Regular checks on the “*Sentinelle in Piedi*” Facebook page were made in order to know if the group would actually demonstrate, in spite of the constant raining. Eventually, given the bad weather and lower expectations concerning people participating in the demonstration, the association decided to inflate only half of the usual amount of balloons (500/1000). During previous demonstrations organised with the same aim, activists would gather around the main city square, prior to the beginning of the Standing Sentinels protest, and distribute balloons to people passing by while explaining who they were and why they were protesting, a practice favouring community building between protester and their audience. At 17.30 we started moving under the rain toward Piazza del Popolo. [...] (Field notes, 14.04.2015)

Protest dynamics were structured around the following ‘rules of the game’. The Standing Sentinels began the demonstration, lasting one hour, while counter protesters from the LGBTQ collective gathered around them and waited until the end of the Sentinels’ vigil, when they would then applaud the Sentinels, set their balloons

¹⁷ The Standing Sentinels are a ‘newly formed catholic movement who strive to defend family values, particularly the model of the traditional family as conceived of in the catholic tradition (one father and one mother); the collective has also raised a fervent fight against the so-called ‘theory of gender’. Since 2014, the Standing Sentinels have regularly organised protests in the form of ‘veglie’ (vigils) in several Italian cities’ squares, copying the style of the French movement *Veilleurs Debout*.

free, and whistle. It is important and interesting to note here that there were precise instructions from police agents concerning the physical spaces that protesters and counter protesters were allowed to occupy. At this event, the Sentinels were granted the main square, while the counter protesters could stand at a 'secure distance' in the adjoining square. The Sentinels' vigil was structured according to practices borrowed from the French *Veilleurs Debout*: 'In strict silence, standing two meters apart from each other, reading a book as a sign of the continuing education that we all constantly need, facing in the same direction, which is that of a better future. We watch the Italian squares in front of places of power, with our numbers and silent presence, we reiterate that you cannot silence the consciences of those who have their eyes open.'¹⁸

The symbolic dimensions of protest, and the social performances underlying it, emerged through concrete and visible elements in opposition to each other. On one hand, according to LGBTQ activists, their heart-shaped coloured balloons metaphorically expressed the 'freedom of love', which 'flies free in the sky, no matter what kind of love we are speaking of' (LGBTQ protester Faenza, 18.04.2015). The colours were accompanied by whistles, distributed among protesters and the audience in order to 'break their silence', along with posters displaying disparate slogans, messages, and images. The LGBTQ groups were structureless, characterised by a certain disorder, loud voices and an emergent solidarity with the audience surrounding the square, (if only to warm each other against the rain and cold that day). On the other hand, the Standing Sentinels performed their protest while standing still under the rain in columns and rows, for one hour, reading a book in silence. Here again, the symbolic dimension is striking.

¹⁸ Translated from the Standing Sentinels official website: www.sentinelleinpiedi.it

The loud voices and whistles as opposed to the complete silence; books in place of the coloured balloons and posters; confusion and disorder faced with rigorous order and discipline. In the end, both sides were admittedly trying to convey the same message, freedom of expression, using very different if not oppositional framing strategies.

Another important aspect that emerged through the triangulation between participant observation and the interviews I conducted with young activists is related to the alternative means of action, practices, and strategies adopted by youth. Social age as a structure in fact plays an important role with regards to the choice of the instruments that young activists favour, along with the meaning attached to them. As one of the interviewees, who also participated in the protest in Faenza, claimed:

If you have a recognisable symbol that conveys what it must convey, and at the same time is simple, intuitive, it will reach more people, more easily. If you organise a protest employing a tool that is not accessible to all, for example, if you make a speech at the megaphone half the people present would refuse to do it. On the contrary, if you give each one the opportunity of carrying a symbol during the protest (balloon, whistle), which can be used independently by each individual and will allow everyone to participate, it is obvious that you boost participation and you feel part of that thing (Interview nr. 3).

Hence, the openness of access, and the fancy and playful character of certain symbols and performances that favour inclusion, give youth activists the opportunity to put the personal and individual at the centre of the contestation, by subverting and tailoring the use and the meaning of symbols to convey their own message.

3.2.4 Online and Offline Visual and Cultural Materials

The inclusion of visual and cultural material produced by activists – along with my own data recorded through videos and pictures – was meant to engage with

multi-sited, offline/online observations in order to shed light on the movement's claims, actions, performances, and symbolism. From a methodological perspective, it functions as an instrument for triangulation, adding information to the aforementioned face-to-face communication. Moreover, given the focus on young activists, it would have been problematic to eschew the analysis of digital communication and visual material from the data collected. The visual and symbolic expression of social movements plays a central role in mobilisation and contentious processes. Social movements send visual messages that do not require words, as Doerr and colleagues stress, '[social movements] use and re-interpret pre-existing imaginary to voice critique and to form a collective actor' (Doerr, Mattoni and Teune 2013, 3). In this sense, 'visual markers' are important for activists to identify with a group, define allies, and posit their position in the social struggle. More importantly, the analysis of visual artefacts is closely linked to one of the major concepts employed in the thesis' theoretical framework, namely performance. As Casquete (2006) argues, 'protest performances are still ways to gain visibility both for external viewers and for movement activists themselves'. As already outlined in the theoretical framework, the body plays a crucial role in conveying and exposing political and social messages: staging protest, performing, is key to attaining visibility with images that either recall or contest hegemonic discourses. If visuals and symbols are important in order to understand social movements' expression, and with their function as resources to attain resonance in the public discourse, it follows that the visual dimensions of the social struggle under study must be taken into consideration.

The collection of images and videos during protest events was an important instrument for gathering and producing data on activists' performances and direct

actions at the individual and collective levels. In this sense, I treat visuals as ‘framing devices’ (Noakes and Johnston 2005). In accordance with Doerr and Milman’s (2014) description of visual methods, I am interested in the visual expression of social movements’ messages, namely in the analysis of ‘how social movements communicate their messages visually and aesthetically by using images’ (p. 420), or in other words, the ‘repertoire of communication’ of the movements under study. Moreover, it provides an understanding of the strategies and tactics that activists use to sustain interactions within the broader political arena (Mattoni 2012). Finally, it shows evidence concerning potential targets, allies, participants, opponents, and the involvement of the general public. Although visual analysis is not at the centre of my research question, it is an invaluable way to triangulate sources of information with added visual dimensions, serving as a complementary support to participant observation. The selection of images presented in the results is not representative of my data set, but aims to show emblematic images as a way to tell important anecdotes, illustrate events or as an addition to the use of interview quotes.

For the sake of this research, I refer to the work of Mattoni and colleagues, and understand visuals as ‘simple formations of meanings that might evoke specific imageries through posters, pictures, photos, videos, etc.’ and to imaginations as ‘complex formations of meanings that include visuals but also mental images (frames) evoked by our own experience’ (Mattoni and Treré 2014; Doerr, Mattoni and Teune 2013). In terms of sources, I included both visuals produced by me – pictures and videos taken during participant observation – and those generated by other actors in the form of; mediated self-representation (material produced by activists, such as leaflets, Facebook pages, videos, posters); non mediated self-representation (images of demonstrations, conferences, meetings); or mediated

representation by others (mainstream media outlets produced by journalists and external media actors, like newspaper articles).

The next pages show some examples of visual material collected during online and offline participant observation.



Source: Author

Figure 2. Mediated representation by the researcher



Sources: CDFN, 2015, retrieved from: www.difendiamoinostrifigli.it (left)

Un Secco No, 2015, retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/unsecco/> (right)

Figure 3. Mediated self-representation by activists



Sources: Arcigay Milano, 2015, retrieved from www.arcigaymilano.org (left)
 Generazione Famiglia – LMPTI, 2015, retrieved from www.generazionefamiglia.it (right)

Figure 4. Non-mediated self-representation by activists



Source: Corriere Romagna, “Una piazza arcobaleno per i diritti civili e tagliatelle in risposta alle “sentinelle””, 12.10.2015, retrieved from: www.corriereromagna.it

Figure 5. Mediated representation by others

Additional cultural material collected consisted of press releases from various movements’ groups during the time-frame of the campaign under analysis, related posts and flyers published and distributed in order to disseminate specific information and to advertise the organisation of events, marches, and so on. This type of data has been used to analyse the trajectories of the movement and countermovement’s respective campaigns between 2013-2016. It also helped me to

understand claim making and recruitment strategies, as well as revealing the composition and extension of the movements' networks.

3.2.5 Data Processing and Analysis

As explained by Roulston (2014, 301), in broad terms, analysing interview data includes the phases of (1) data reduction or 'meaning condensation'; (2) data reorganisation; and (3) data interpretation and representation. In addition, there are multiple theoretical and methodological influences in analysing data ranging from hermeneutics, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry, but in most cases there is also overlap between procedures (Roulston 2014). Within the scope of this study, the processes for data handling and analysis show an overlap between grounded theory, frame analysis, and narrative approaches. I began by disaggregating and reducing the data collected by applying labels to transcripts in order to get an understanding of the main ideas, and through memo writing for extensive reflection. As for visual and cultural data, a systematic analysis of the material collected is out of the scope of this dissertation. However, principal dimensions to be analysed included (Lofland, Snow, Anderson 2006):

- Cognitive aspects or meanings, frames (ideologies, rules, self-concepts, identities)
- Emotional aspects or feelings
- Hierarchical aspects or inequalities (gender equality, social inequalities).

Once data was broken down in analytically relevant ways, the goal was to cluster together the research story to find patterns of action – particularly those characterised by similarity/difference and correspondence (happening in relation to

other activities/events) – and to facilitate the development of themes and their connections. Contextualisation then implies the identification of the links and relationships within the data. In this case, a narrative approach was helpful for representing and theorising participants’ stories.

In line with the epistemological position adopted in this research, namely interpretivism, thematic analysis has been used to sort data into thematic fields. In order to interpret information and develop themes within the theoretical framework adopted in this thesis, a blend of thematic, visual, frame, and narrative analysis have been employed to analyse the data collected. The idea of ‘discursive field’ is useful in order to conceptualise the context in which discourses, narratives, and meanings are produced by activists (Snow 2013). Moreover, it is an encompassing term that covers decisions, discussions, and issues relevant to specific events. In particular, the aforementioned cultural materials (beliefs, values, ideologies) are handled through meaning making, framing, and cultural work, making discursive fields a ‘dynamic terrain in which meaning contests occur’ (Steinberg 1999, 748). In this sense, data has been analysed in order to both unveil how gender is constituted through discourse and how certain constructions of gender have been put forward into the discursive field. Narrative and frame analysis of interview excerpts, meeting field notes, speeches, leaflets, activists’ websites, social networks, and images has been employed to answer different ‘how-possible questions’, such as; how are meanings attached to gender, the body, family, masculinity, femininity, demonstration, or symbols and what kind of gendered representations appear in the contentious, and discursive fields?

Frame analysis, considering both ‘personal action frames’, particularly in the analysis of interviews (chapter 7), and ‘collective action frames’ (chapter 6) provides

an analytical tool to grasp the discursive practices and meaning production, consumption of actors. Based on movements communiqués, press releases, brochures and slogans, I used the core framing elements of diagnosis, prognosis and motivation to deductively identify the corresponding major frames, and, at the same time, let collected data speak on its own.

In addition, narrative analysis has been employed in relation to identity construction processes, and particularly to the ways in which leaders and activists produced stories that provided boundaries for collective identities and imaginaries as a justification for action or reaction (Polletta 2006). Micro-sociological analysis of individual stories has helped provide understanding of activists' rationale for action, motivations, beliefs, values, and more broadly, paths to mobilization.

Taken together, the data analysis processes have led to the identification of core themes, which support the proposed research questions, and to the discovery of underlying story-lines to finally show patterns between findings.

3.4 Credibility: Triangulation, Positionality and Ethical Considerations

Triangulation can have different connotations, depending on the theoretical position of the researcher (Moran-Ellis *et al.* 2006). From an interpretivist perspective, triangulation can be understood as the 'combining of methods to enable researchers to explore different aspects of the same phenomenon' (Keating and Marsh 2013). In this sense, a multi-method approach, like the one I have presented in this chapter, aims at triangulating among various and complementary methods. As noted above, I believe that feminist and queer research, as well as their related epistemology and methodology, provide numerous points for critical reflexion about

the techniques used in sociological research and how research is carried out in practical and theoretical terms. Especially important in this regard is the recognition that sociological knowledge should be generated in an inclusive, participatory and legitimising way. In addition to that, feminist and queer scholars have argued in favour of the importance of rejecting power relationships typical of traditional research. In practical terms, in my own research I attempted to avoid establishing a hierarchical relationship with the participants by being as open as possible concerning my personal experience and my background, and by sharing ideas and information. These measures granted me the opportunity to build a closer, more trusting two-way rapport with participants. Nevertheless, I decided to hold back with my public persona and political positions in order to keep my role as a researcher as neutral as possible. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, my own position towards the topic of the research is problem-driven, i.e. I chose a subject that is important to the society and in which I am personally involved. I believe that value-free research is probably an illusion; yet, through reflexivity it is possible to conduct action research, namely research that is committed to social justice, while maintaining the necessary methodological transparency and scientific validity. In **Table 7** below, a four-fold concern perspective on subjectivity summarises a cluster of critical methodological issues:

Table 7. Four-fold Perspective on Subjectivity

Self	Other
<p style="text-align: center;">Subjectivity</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Values, beliefs, assumptions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Access</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Acceptance</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Role</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Behaviour</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ethics</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Permission</p>

Source: Davidson 2008, 40.

Although I never felt in a position of power while conducting interviews – actively engaging in conversations rather than passively asking questions and collecting answers – I recognise that inequalities may have arisen between participants and myself with respect to the use I was making of gender knowledge and sociological theory. Moreover, even though many opinions articulated by participants reflected my own, I cannot assume that this was a sufficient condition to create a bond between us. I acknowledge instead the richness and variety of personal experiences, including my own, and the role that these necessarily have in founding my personal beliefs and conceptions within the research process. In the same vein, I had to acknowledge that my position as a white, educated, middle-class, and young lesbian also informed aspects of my interactions with participants, and I needed to be aware of how this could impact the research process. In this sense, as King and Cronin stress (2010, 98), “Subjectivities, however, are not simply held by individuals. Rather, the way certain social attributes are valued (or devalued) is a matter of wider social and cultural norms which ‘positions’ attributes differently in networks of social power – hence the related term ‘positionality’”. Social proximity with young LGBTQ activists certainly constituted an advantage in many ways, but it also limited the possibility to remain neutral, as I am so closely involved with their cause. Engaging in fieldwork in two, essentially opposite environments forced me to reposition myself in the field – particularly with regards to the disclosure of my personal identity – but also helped me to truly experience and understand the perspective of both LGBTQ and Catholic activists. Repositioning in this case has to be understood as an attempt to provide participants with alternative social clues – not false, but different – about my personal identity, depending on who I was interacting

with. Still, while doing fieldwork I found myself caught between my role as researcher - detached and analytical - and my role as an LGBTQ activist that is intensely emotional and participative. Similarly, being confronted with Catholic activists who were, for the most part, openly making homophobic claims and explicitly condemning what would correspond to my personal lifestyle had a strong emotional impact on me. This made 'putting on the detached researcher's hat' and sticking to that role even more difficult. However, being methodologically explicit and including these opinions were necessary conditions in order to develop a scientifically valid discourse about the groups I was studying.

As far as positionality is concerned, I would like to draw attention to the reality that my own position changed while I was interviewing either LGBTQ activists or Catholics. This is to say that I was careful about the way I presented myself to participants and respondents adjusting my dress code in order to look as neutral as possible and trying to avoid giving too many cues concerning my gender identity and sexual orientation. On occasion, participants also questioned me about my own political views on the topic discussed during the interviews: while I was always be true to myself and never tried to hide my ideas and positions – for instance, I never lied about being in favour of homosexual marriage – I was equally careful in holding back details concerning my personal life. Reactions from participants to my stances ranged from curiosity, to challenge and, in very few cases, reticence and suspicion.

At the same time, my own reactions and behaviour varied greatly depending on the type of event I was attending or setting I found myself in. Particularly in the case of public events organised by Catholic groups, such as conferences and conventions, I tended to act cautiously, being especially careful not to arouse any suspicions. Being a young woman, by myself and in a setting where, typically, everyone knows

each other, through a specific social, or religious network, proved to be challenging at times. My position as an outsider was immediately clear and forced me to either introduce myself to the organising committee, or to watch from a distance during the events, attempting to catch most of what I saw and heard from the sidelines.

3.5 Limitations

A number of practical and theoretical limitations generally characterise the use of qualitative methodology; difficulties concerning the generalisation of findings, the researcher's role and the interpretation of data, issues of credibility and replication of results, time-consuming methods and complex, challenging analysis. Particularly, with regards to the methods I employed in my research, I will outline some of the practical limitations and difficulties encountered so far.

Some of the difficulties concerning sampling and recruitment were highlighted above, and to recapitulate, the most problematic was that I faced more complications in sampling and recruiting female/lesbian activists in comparison to the number of male/gay activists in the case of the LGBTQ movement. Although I intend to explore this finding further in a separate section of my thesis, I initially hypothesise that it can be attributed to the so-called 'invisibility of lesbians'; the comparatively different and less visible dynamics of aggregation and mobilization that involve lesbian/female subjects. More generally, major challenges were faced in sampling and recruiting activists in the Catholic movement, because of the nature and structure of the groups/organisations analysed, as explained above.

As for interviews, though I explained the purpose and context of interviews to prospective candidates during the recruitment process, some of the interviewees had

problems understanding why I was interviewing them, and in some cases expected a different set of questions. This resulted, in very few cases, luckily, in the interviewee talking about anything and everything in order to avoid answering the questions posed. An interesting finding, which I had first thought of as a potential limitation, emerged from the interviews; the lack of variation between participants' responses, especially when a question pertained to broader issues which were of concern to the wider community, as opposed to questions about personal opinions, such as which rights and values are important to promote. Particularly in the case of members of bigger and more structured organisations, interviewees acted, at times, as spokespersons of the organisation itself, regardless of their role within it, rather than advancing their personal point of view. Thus, I found myself struggling when trying to scratch the surface of, what seemed to be, 'ready-made' interviewee answers, which used similar words and citations in a recognisable formulation. Although I eventually managed to identify a variation, I had to take into account that some questions were doomed to obtain answers dictated by the organisation's culture, and not only by subjective experiences. This trend has been observed during interviews with both movements, though in the case of Catholic groups/organisations, the consistency and uniformity across individual answers remained higher than in the LGBTQ movement. Once again, this is a significant finding, which will be discussed in a separate chapter.

In relation to participant observation, my personal involvement in LGBTQ causes made it easier to blend in with other participants at events, but definitely made it harder to think (and act) as a critical observer. On the contrary, attending and participating in events organised by Catholic organisations implied a tremendous effort in terms of exchanges with the field itself, as well as issues concerning how to

present myself, how to introduce my role as a researcher, and the dress code I chose to adopt in order to look as neutral as possible. Last but not least, surveying activists while I was engaging in participant observation during protest events or meetings raised issues with regard to the representativeness of the sample, and context, particularly in situations where police forces were strictly keeping protesters and counter-protesters apart; sneaking from one side to the other was not always easy.

As for limitations in analysing data, one of the major challenges recognised by methodologists is the desire to make data fit with preconceived hypotheses. Given that thematic analysis is primarily an interpretative act, making a descriptive and honest account of fieldwork, including one's position in the field, is essential in order to connect observations. Hence, memoing on key topics is an essential tool to gather my own reflections on data. In other words, if thematic analysis can be understood as a tool to organise research material, memoing is a way to organise researcher's ideas. In this sense, thematic analysis and memoing are iterative practices in which themes are created, reviewed, refined, and clustered together, with memos providing my own contribution to the theoretical and methodological discussion under analysis.

An additional challenge that I faced while conducting interviews concerns 'reluctant participant', or 'failed interviews'. In these cases, data generated is topically and theoretically thin. However, I still consider that each interview provides information about something, and major efforts were subsequently made in order to adjust the interview process and practice, so as to minimise the possibility of encountering similar situations in the future.

Chapter 4

Gender, Structure, and Social Performance:

Toward a Theory of Action in Protest Movements

Every person is a crowd, characterized by multiple identities, identifications and allegiances

—Jihye Chun 2013, 923

The purpose of this chapter is to approach the issue of structure and agency. Social scientists in various disciplines have been puzzled by the persisting dilemma of where to position themselves within the spectrum of structure and agency in order to make sense of social phenomena. This is a crucial step for the development of the present research project and a challenge that must be addressed, not only from a theoretical and ontological point of view, but also because of its direct methodological implications. Theories of social movements are not exempt from the structure/agency debate and, as in many other social sciences, have the tendency to be divided between different traditions. In order to pull together ideological threads from different disciplines and present a theory of action within the context of youth activism, this chapter defends the case for an integrated approach that explores structural concerns in conjunction with individual dimensions. More importantly, it focuses on the multiple ways in which the two levels of analysis are interdependent. To this aim, I introduce the works of several scholars who have attempted to overcome structure/agency dualism, starting either from a structuralist or an agentic perspective. The majority of these accounts, from classical sociological debates to current protest studies, argue for the importance of recognising strategic (inter)actions and political socialisation within social movements as a framework for

understanding structural and agentic factors. Complementary to these claims, I advance the argument that not all action within social movements is strategic; rather, I argue that the concept of social performance is better suited to grasp non-strategic actions, as well as to highlight the tensions between expressive and strategic dimensions of action. Important issues addressed in this chapter, therefore, include the analysis of the continuum between strategic actions, (namely the tactical repertoires employed by activists), and social performance: is all performance strategic, or is all strategy a performance? Given the focus of this project, the analysis of gender dynamics under such conditions provides the basis to inform and illustrate the discussion.

The chapter is divided into three main parts. The first focuses on structural dimensions of resistance and protest. After a preliminary discussion of the origins and evolution of the debate surrounding structure and agency in protest movement theory up to the present day, I will introduce the works of Giddens, Bourdieu, and Butler. These authors provide important theoretical constructs and tools that can be applied to this research, namely Giddens's concept of the duality of structure, Bourdieu's notions of field and habitus, and Butler's reflections on human agency. Subsequently, I will consider how gender operates as a social structure and intersects with other social hierarchies. The second part of the chapter analyses agentic dimensions of activism, drawing from the work of Goffman on interactionism and dramaturgical approaches, and Habermas's informal participation, which are centred on the notion of social performance. Through a performance lens, I focus on the practice of protest and the strategic and tactical use of performance to communicate and produce oppositional discourses. I also highlight how cultural performance can produce alternative meanings by utilising images and emotions along with the range

of symbolism involved in protest events. Drawing from these observations, I explore the ways in which gender unfolds through performance by relying on Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity.

4.1 Moving Beyond the Impasse: Structure and Agency

The argument around the opposition of structure and agency has been ontologically ingrained in almost every field of the social sciences. Questions and hypotheses about which of the two perspectives holds the best explanatory power, followed by a plethora of reasons for the superiority of one's approach, lay at the foundation of modern social theory. Consequently, a growing number of social scientists agreed to reconceptualise the terms of the discussion around structuralism and constructionism, micro and macro, subjective versus objective, voluntarism and determinism, with the aim of reconciling both perspectives.

The field of social movement research is not exempt from the theoretical and paradigmatic debate encompassing structure and agency. The structural paradigms of the 1970s to 1990s – resource mobilisation, political process theory, rational choice theory, and mobilization structures – have been harshly criticised by the culturalist thinkers of the 1990s who argued that the structural approaches did not formulate a theory of action able to take into account actors' choices, emotions, and perspectives. As provocatively put by Jasper (1992, 59), 'structure is perhaps the most metaphorical concept we use in the social sciences, for social life is not constructed with walls, floors, roofs, and so on, as the root implies.' Scholars of cultural constructionism were reflecting on notions of agency, shifting the focus from the analysis of the structures of opportunity themselves to people and what they want

and the cultural elements crucial to social actors' perception of the opening of opportunities for action. Along with the concept of agency, cultural research put assumptions about meaning, emotions, practices, and interactions at the forefront, and focused on the use of several conceptual and methodological tools for tracing meaning in politics: rhetoric, discourse, narrative, text, and icon (Jasper 2007, 2010). However, both approaches have reached impasses and thus demonstrated their inadequacy to grasp current protest's dynamics, particularly if each dynamic is considered separately. On the one hand, structuralists can do little more than comment on the environmental conditions within which protests unfold. Through the analysis of predetermined analytical categories, structuralism failed to account for how people actually experience those categories (Duyvendak and Fillieule 2015). In Jasper's words,

A great deal of sociology has been devoted to showing why people have fewer choices than they think. Social facts, structures, networks, institutional norms or logics all emphasize constraints. Various kinds of habits and routines are introduced to explain the stability of interactions, most recently in the guise of the habitus, internalized set of dispositions for reacting in predictable ways even while improvising slightly within the set. (Jasper 2015, 25)

On the other hand, culturalists often fail to move beyond the individual's perspective and to link individuals to their broader context; the fields, and the structures in which they engage. However, a growing number of social movements scholars have recently attempted to reconcile theories of protest movements into an integrated, middle ground approach, particularly drawing from authors such as the ones presented in this chapter. Notably, Bourdieu's theory of fields and habitus is gaining importance in the social movements literature (Crossley 2003; Mathieu 2015; Fligstein and McAdam 2012). Jasper (2015), although still drawing from several Bourdieusean concepts, proposes a slightly different framework which could be described as a 'dispositionalist interactionist' approach to protest dynamics by

evenly focussing on the protestors and other players whom they face, as well as the social arenas in which they interact. Although Jasper contends that such an approach, centred on the strategic means of agents in interaction, is more concrete than Bourdieu's forms of capital, I argue instead that one of the main limitations of Bourdieu's theory of fields is precisely the stress put on the strategic and competitive behaviour of actors at the exclusion of non-strategic actions. Scholars of political socialisation and social movements have also contributed to the discussion by highlighting the socialisation processes by which norms and behaviours are internalised, how dispositions and attitude guide participation in social movements and, equally important, how this can in turn have socialising effects on individuals. In other words, social movements simultaneously constitute explicit and implicit socialising agents (Fillieule 2013).

4.1.2 Theories of Structuration and Iterative Identity

Among the prominent advocates of this debate, Giddens's *Constitution of Society* (Giddens 1984) represents a major attempt to formulate an approach, the "theory of structuration", which not only takes into account subjective and agentic explanations along with contextual and structural ones, but also focuses on how different variables from each side interact in a mutually constitutive way. In this sense, Giddens refers to the *duality of structure*, stressing the presence of a tension in which structural variables can function as constraints but also as enablers of social action. Structure is therefore a means for action as well as an outcome unintentionally reproduced through social practices (Giddens 1984). Through his formulation, Giddens directs our attention to the potential for social change by arguing that social structures exist, along with the possibility for individuals to ignore, replace, or reproduce them in a different way. Social structures must be understood as dimensions of social life that, because they are designated as structures, have the power of 'structuring' some other aspects of the social order (Sewell 1992). For instance, when referring to gender as a social structure, we imply that gender shapes social relations, politics, employment opportunities and so forth. In addition, individuals – as in the case of activists – engage in and with gender social structures while having the potential to modify or reproduce the structures through their practices. In this sense, the concept of duality of structure proposed by Giddens provides a particularly dynamic grounding to analyse the tension between structure and agency in the ever-changing reality of social existence, based on the idea of *structure as a process*. The structure is therefore dual insofar as it is constitutive of human action and reproduced at the same time by that action. Particularly, individuals' actions, intentions and ideas are shaped by the social and cultural institutions in which they have developed and

become socialised; simultaneously, their structurally constrained actions reproduce these institutions (Sewell 1992; Giddens 1984).

Furthermore, Giddens is careful to note the tendency among social theorists to consider individuals to be less conscious about their situations and actions than they really are. This is due to the inability of the researcher to recognise the importance of the style, context, and form of the expression of discourses concerning what social actors are able to tell apropos their own situation and knowledge. In fact, the analysis of individuals' actions is limited by the extent to which people can talk about them, if the researcher does not recognise the relevance of a *practical knowledge* that goes beyond what agents can formulate in a dialogue. In this regard, people's practices produce and reproduce a set of expectations in the form of a social, taken-for-granted consensus that can be labelled as 'normal behaviour', a 'shared framework of reality', or the 'coherence of everyday life' (Gauntlett 2002, 103). These, in turn, are constitutive of the social structures. In the same vein, this 'practical sense', the know-how of activists, is referred to by Bourdieu in the terms of 'the anticipated adjustment to the requirements of a field (...) a long dialectical process, often described as vocation, by which we make ourselves according to what is making us and we choose that by which we are chosen' (Bourdieu 1980, 111-112). Gender makes a particularly clear case for addressing the reproduction of taken-for-granted social conventions, as I explore in the rest of this chapter, and one that can be perceived as much more contentious than other unexpected behaviours or appearances (Gauntlett 2002, 103-104). For instance, gender performances that cross gender boundaries can easily be considered as a challenge to other people's expectations about how women and men should behave. In this sense, it is important to underline Butler's observation (2015) with respect to the 'right to appearance',

which she understands as a highly regulated field with respect to gender norms that does not admit or recognises everyone:

Indeed, the compulsory demand to appear in one way rather than another functions as a precondition of appearing at all. And this means that embodying the norm or norms by which one gains recognizable status is a way of ratifying and reproducing certain norms of recognition over others, and so constraining the field of the recognizable. (2015, 35)

In addition, and contemporary to Giddens's theory of structuration, Bourdieu's work on habitus, field, and capital provides a fertile ground for a synthesis of social action that transcends dualisms of structure and agency (Bourdieu 1984). Even more notably than in Giddens's case, social movement scholars have consistently relied on Bourdieu's framework as a way to overcome constructionist and structural perspectives, and synthesise different theoretical traditions. This dissertation adopts a similar model 'favouritism', given its fundamental aims of highlighting the positioning of social actors by relating them to the field in which they operate, namely the objective social space, and understanding their cultural competence and symbolic struggles through subjective habitus and capital.

The concept of *field* refers to the social spaces in which agents are positioned differently, based on the possession and distribution of *capital* (Bourdieu 1984; Husu 2013). The most obvious form of capital is commonly discernible as economic capital, which relates to money and ownership. A second 'type', cultural capital, can range from the educational qualifications to the cultural possessions of individuals, or the lifestyle and taste of an agent, whilst social capital can be seen as the accumulation of the resources necessary to maintain a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships (Bourdieu 1986; Husu 2013, 266). Echoing Giddens's constructive understanding of structure, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*

reflects how the social action, representation, and practice of agents are dependent on their structural position in the social space, or field. In his words,

As an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted, the *habitus* engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions ... the *habitus* is an endless capacity to engenders products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production. (Bourdieu 1977, 95)

Habitus can therefore be assimilated to the concept of frame in movement research, in the sense that both provide interpretative schemata that function as a scheme for understanding, perceiving and classifying the world, and as a “generative structure of practical action” (Lizardo 2004, 379).

In the same way that Giddens’s notions of structure and agency cannot be analysed and explained in isolation from one another, neither can Bourdieu’s habitus and field. The interaction between agents’ dispositions, resources, and positions shapes the dynamics of a field (Warde 2004, 12). In terms of protest movements research, this can be translated into the way different agents – activists in this specific case – acquire certain skills and dispositions that necessarily influence their ability to protest, and that are developed as a consequence of their personal trajectories, taking into account factors such as age and social background which constitute their position in the field. I further detail this link in the subsequent section through the concept of ‘biographical availability’ and ‘activist career’. Nonetheless, it is important to state at this point that, although individuals who follow different life trajectories and who have different competences could be expected to generate alternative strategic actions in the field, the link between positions and competences cannot be simply inferred since positions in society are not always distributed according to merit (Warde 2004, 14-15).

Another important contribution of Bourdieu's theory to the present thesis is found in the relational dimension of habitus and field that allows us to analyse how different movements are linked to their environment through relationships with other institutions, actors, groups, and (counter)-movements (Jasper 2015). In addition, Bourdieu admits the existence of diverse fields in terms of arenas of social struggle, which can range from the political and institutional to the cultural and intellectual, (amongst others). This is particularly relevant in the case of youth, who privilege fields of action outside the formal political and institutional domains. The relationship between field and habitus is also useful to understand how gender can operate within a certain field or how it can be constitutive of the field itself. For instance, we might come across an identity movement that calls for the recognition of gender diversity which targets the values, ideas, symbols, and meanings attached to gender for action. In this sense, gender can be understood as constitutive of the field. However, if we understand gender as a practice that results from *doxa* – the taken-for-granted, socially learned and deeply rooted beliefs that unconsciously guide the individual's actions – then we should explore the role of gendered dispositions in shaping the practices in a particular field of action (Husu 2013), and how this process in turn reproduces the gender structure. To this aim, Giddens and Bourdieu's reminder for researchers to recognise the practical knowledge that goes beyond what agents can formulate in a dialogue is particularly important.

The historical work through which Bourdieu thinks the establishment of *habitus*, is an expression of a feeling close to that with which Butler thinks the sexualisation of the body, which passes through the attribution of a gender:

In this way, Bourdieu underscores the place of the body, its gestures, its stylistics, its unconscious "knowingness" as the site for the reconstitution of a practical sense without which social reality would not be constituted as such. The practical sense is a

sense of the body, where this body is not a mere positive datum, but the repository or the incorporated side of history. (Butler 1999, 114)

The habitus as incorporated history, it is not far from the sexualised body experienced as a carrier of a gender, analysed by Butler. Just like the *habitus*, gender is structured and structuring at the same time. Its attribution is not passively experienced by the subject, but becomes the very principle of his subjectivity:

Subjection is, literally, the *making* of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which a subject is formulated or produced. Such subjection is a kind of power that not only unilaterally *acts on* a given individual as a form of domination, but also *activates* or forms the subject. (Butler 1997, 84)

Not only the principle of domination, the performative act of gender becomes the only way through which the subject thinks himself and becomes visible to others. Far from being seen as an imposition, it becomes a sort of second nature, outside of which it is impossible to think of themselves as bodies. Important for a conceptualisation of personal and political agency, different centers of power and complex cultural relations constitute the field from which agency itself is generated, not the individual identity. The fantasy of omnipotence, implicit in the desire to create one's own identity, erroneously exchanges individual autonomy, the possibility of transformation with the need to make blank slate of its bonds and of its indisputable belongings. Otherwise, gender is not a cold standardisation category, but a field of individual and collective action that can and must constantly be occupied and challenged by subjects and practices at a constructive and deconstructive time. As in the quote above, drawing from Foucault, Butler reminds us that the combination of knowledge / power is at the same time subjecting and subordinating, producing the norms through which the body gains a social existence, and at the same time, by virtue of those same rules of intelligibility, subordinates,

subdues, disciplines the body. However, Butler, unlike Foucault, believes that those norms are not once and for all, but that they live of a social existence themselves, in which they depend on a constant repetition (Guaraldo 2006). Gender norms and rules, even assuming themselves as natural, are the fruit of a constant citational practice: their validity is in their repetition. What emerges from Butler's political thought is what she calls the paradoxical dimension of the agency:

But if there is no subject who decides on its gender, and if, on the contrary, gender is part of what decides the subject, how might one formulate a project that preserves gender practices as sites of critical agency? [...] And can this repetition, this rearticulation, also constitute the occasion for critical reworking of apparently constitutive gender norms? (Butler 2011 [1993], ix)

Being socially constructed gives me the opportunity to challenge the norms that determine me, that is, through awareness of the social construction of the self, while emphasizing the pre-existence of a social world that cannot be chosen, yet makes possible the transformative will of that same world. Gender is therefore the field of action where it is possible to challenge normality, permanence.

The ways in which gender intervenes at the structural, cultural, and individual level in the context of social movement activism has been discussed in the chapter on gender and social movements. My aim here is to recall then further explore the role that gender plays as a social structure, (particularly how it intersects with other social hierarchies), and the function of gender as individual performance.

4.2 Mapping Out Structural Factors

In the literature of social and political movements, activism is the central activity in which movement's participants engage. As the word implies, activism includes a

broad range of different *actions* that can vary according to preferences, the target or targets, and the context in which they take place (Saunders 2013). A categorisation of activism has been proposed by McAdam (1986), who identifies four different types of activism according to the risks and costs involved. In his evaluations, the dimension of risk concerns actions and activities involving an anticipated degree of ‘physical, legal, social, financial’ danger, whilst the dimension of cost refers to the level of commitment in terms of resources, time, money and energies devoted to any particular form of activism. The underlying assumption is that activists hold different profiles which reflect changing dynamics of recruitment and participation, and so the nature and extent of participation can vary greatly between individuals and movements. Therefore, the factors explaining involvement in riots or illegal protest marches cannot be the same as the factors that motivate the signing of a petition for the same cause. Taking into account a number of conditions at different levels of analysis can be useful in predicting alternative patterns of participation. These conditions include structural factors, interpersonal and individual factors, and, in Bourdieu’s terms, different types of capital varying across age and gender (among others).

An alternative categorisation has divided the field of activism into two principal types, i.e. transgressive and contained activism (McAdam *et al.* 2001). Whilst contained activism can be conflated with traditional party politics, such as working for, with or being a member of a political party, transgressive activism includes the remaining forms of political activity, ranging from protest marches and demonstrations to petitions, sabotage, boycotts, performances, and so forth. The dichotomisation between contained and transgressive activism is, however, no longer useful or relevant to understand the full range of processes and actions that

participants engage in. The idea that contained and transgressive activism are distinct categories, and the related, historical associations with legitimate actions on the one hand, and ‘disruptive, disrespectful’ actions on the other, becomes irrelevant when activities labelled as transgressive have become more and more normal or common place, such as in the case of demonstrations or protests. It is more relevant to consider the tensions between the expressive and strategic rather than the contained and transgressive dimensions of activism, the former being characteristics that Ron Eyerman attributes to contemporary social movements (Eyerman 2006, 207).

When considering potential protestors, it becomes clear that the context and the life background of different participants would inevitably lead to distinct types of activism. In order to understand how this happens, sociologists of commitment and advocates of dispositionalist approaches have turned to the concepts of *biographical availability* (Beyerlein and Hipp 2006) and *activist careers* (Fillieule 2010). The biographical availability of an activist is intrinsically linked to the life-cycle changes and events that determine his or her availability to take part in contentious politics. The biographical dimension reflects personal constraints and responsibilities, typically in the sphere of marriage, family, and work, and takes into consideration an individual’s commitments to a spouse, children, other relatives, and/or to their job. In the words of McAdam, biographical availability can be defined as ‘the absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation, such as full-time employment, marriage, and family responsibilities’ (McAdam 1986, 70). The stress put on the absence of constraints has explicit structural connotations. However, one can also emphasise a more positive implication of the same process. The idea of positive biographical availability conceives of activists’ biographies as being enabling in themselves (Jasper 1997). In this sense, certain

biographical features may render activists more receptive to certain issues, or, as Jasper would suggest, certain moral shocks. These include the emotional, moral processes that lead to participation, despite biographical constraints. In fact, some personal or public events might be so emotionally and morally intense and moving that people feel compelled to join the cause, regardless of the potential personal constraints. Rather, they make themselves biographically available. As we have seen, structural constraints must be understood not only as such, but also as enablers, in relation to individuals' potential for agency. In many cases inputs from significant others, relatives, teachers, colleagues, or even priests, schoolmates, and friends, are necessary to initiate commitment. However, they are not generally sufficient to ensure durability across the life cycle. The concept of activist careers points to the past attitudes and behaviours that influence commitment at each biographical stage (Fillieule 2010).

What then are the patterns of protest for young activists? One hypothesis would be that greater levels of personal responsibilities and constraints increase the costs and risks of activism, whilst people with fewer constraints would be more likely to have resources and motivation to invest in contentious activities. In theory, young people are a low cost, comparatively risk-free group. Although empirical findings on this assumption are mixed and often contradictory to expectations, the influence of variables such as gender and age as sources of biographical availability is undeniable. Certainly, gender and age intervene to create different activist profiles and produce unequal degrees of biographical availability. Scholars have observed a curvilinear relationship between age and activism since younger and older people tend to be free of parental and employment constraints and as a result are more biographically available for activism (McAdam 1988; Beyerlein and Hipp 2009).

These authors also contend that rather than being a predictor for the beginning of involvement in activism, biographical availability is a reasonable explanation for the length and sustainment of activism over time. Nonetheless, as I stressed above, this rather deterministic argument cannot account for other important ‘biographical enablers’, particularly in the realm of emotions.

4.2.1 Gender as a Social Structure

In her informative article on “Gender as a Social Structure”, Risman (2004) sets out the theoretical basis for an integrative approach, which treats gender as a socially constructed stratification system. Although maintaining a structural angle, the argument provides a number of useful insights into the mechanisms, which relate different dimensions to each other, including structural and agentic ones. Yet again, based on Giddens’s, Bourdieu’s, and Butler’s perspectives as presented above, we cannot conceptualise gender as a social structure located solely outside the individual, as an oppositional force, as this would inevitably lead us into the dualism between structure and agency. Rather, gender functions both as a structure entrenched in every aspect of social life and as an internalised structure in the form of a ‘nonreflexive habituated action’ (Risman 2004, 433). Theories of iterative identity, such as Bourdieu’s concept of habitus or Butler’s concept of gender practice, help us illustrate this dynamic.

As Risman explains, the significance of treating gender as a social structure lies in the possibility to identify ‘when behaviour is habit (an enactment of taken for granted gendered cultural norms) and when we do gender consciously, with intent, rebellion, or even irony’ (Risman 2004, 433). This angle is particularly interesting in

the context of youth activism, in which gender, as I highlighted above, can be at the same time constitutive of a field in which it is contested and discussed, as well as a consequence of *doxa*, particularly at the interactional level as ‘men and women face different cultural expectations even when they fill the identical structural positions’ (Risman 2004, 433). It is the social agents’ habitus that determines the subjective perception of their position in a field, or as Butler underlines, ‘habitus is built on the presupposition that a field is the condition of its own possibility’ (Butler 1999, 117).

Moreover, as Bourdieu informs us, the position of agents in the field is also determined by the accumulation of social, cultural, and economic capital. Therefore, if we consider gender as a social structure, it is necessary to understand how the accumulation of capital affects the position of agents within a gendered structure. How then, for instance, does the accumulation of social, cultural, and economic capital illuminate gender differences? As I highlight in the following sections, the adherence to prescribed gender roles – gender performances – might function as a means to acquire capital in certain fields, such as that of activism, and therefore can be one possible explanation for compliance with gender norms (Holt 2008). In protest research, this sort of second socialisation can be understood through the idea of ‘moral career’ according to which the status, activities, and roles of activists within social movements are identified and fulfilled (Fillieule 2010). However, following the argument presented earlier, we must remember that agency within social movements is not necessarily strategic.

An insightful way of understanding how gender functions as a social structure in the context of activism – as it is advanced in this thesis – is to consider specific configurations in which certain gender roles can be enacted as a consequence of the intersection of gender with other social hierarchies and processes. Based on the

concept of intersectionality as developed in the feminist literature, which points to the existence of different domains of inequality and multiple axes of oppression and domination (Collins 1990), I concur that also in the context of activism, gender intersects with other variables, (particularly age, religion, class and sexuality), to bring about different configurations of analysis. For the purpose of this query, it is important to remember that intersectional analysis found its first *raison d'être* in the investigation of problems faced by activists engaged in social movement struggles, or, in other words, in the nature of contention. However, focusing on activism through an intersectionality lens does not imply that we should isolate our attention by solely concentrating on intersecting inequalities. Rather, following the above discussion on structure and agency, the production and reproduction of systems of inequality should be put into context by looking at how gender inequality, and its intersection with other hierarchies, is constructed from individuals' social practices in the context of activism, and how it is then maintained and perpetuated in the form of social structures.

Once again, a structural perspective cannot elucidate differences within identity/identities, in addition to not being helpful in locating difference outside identity or between identities. In this sense, taking the individual's perspective into consideration means that 'complexity derives from the analysis of a social location at the intersection of single dimensions of multiple categories, rather than at the intersection of the full range of dimensions of a full range of categories' (McCall 2005, 1781). In the same vein, although the intersection of broad social structures has an impact on and a role to play in constraining and enabling people's behaviour, it does not account for the everyday script of an individual's life, and particularly the heterogeneity of the social group under analysis. Finally, the idea is not to deny the

discursive and analytical importance of categories, but rather to acknowledge the ways in which they are constructed, resisted, and experienced by individuals (McCall 2005). If we think in terms of multiple configurations, we can highlight single dimensions of different categories as being more important than others – age, religion, or race for instance – and in which certain gender roles can be enacted.

4.3 Social Performance and Protest

Major approaches in the analysis of culture in social movement scholarship look at different concepts to analyse the relationship between symbolism of protest and social structures. Particularly, symbolic interactionism examines the subjective dimensions of social interactions, (such as beliefs, norms, status, and expectations), whereas dramaturgical approaches to social interaction conceptualise culture as ritual. Therefore, I first introduce the concept of social and cultural performance to then move towards an exploration of its use within the cultural perspective in social movement research and its conceptualisation by contemporary protest analysts. Furthermore, I explain the meaning of gender as performance based on Butler's work on gender performativity, and point out how it fits into the overarching framework.

4.3.1 Postmodern Participation: Dramaturgical and Symbolic Actions

Habermas, a near contemporary of Giddens and Bourdieu, started a crucial discussion concerning the concept of informal participation and deliberative democracy, based on his theory of communicative action (Habermas 1987; 1989). According to Habermas, the possibilities for political participation in a modern world are limited because of the institutionalised character of the public sphere and state policies. Moreover, gender and racial hierarchies complicate the picture by ensuring an unequally structured political system in which the communication between institutional power and citizens is forcibly biased and limited to representing the interests of a few. In order to overcome this difficulty, Habermas advances the idea of discursive participation, which may either unfold in the form of

problem-solving deliberation regulated in formal democratic institutions, or as informal opinion-formation which is disengaged from decision-making structures (Habermas 1996). In this sense, excluding politicians and other individuals who have direct access to the decision-making process, the rest of the population – including and particularly youth – can only engage outside these structures through ‘public discourses that uncover topics of relevance to all of society, interpret values, contribute to the resolution of problems, generate good reasons, and debunk bad ones’ (Habermas 1992, 452; Kulynych 1997). Within this conceptualisation, we can include social movement activities that function as a “signal”, namely the activities aimed at communicating and exposing specific issues in the public sphere that need to be processed and fixed through the political system. Furthermore, the public sphere must identify, signal, and articulate existing problems, but also thematise them in an effective and influential way, essentially through their amplification and dramatisation. In this respect, two questions that this dissertation aims to answer are how, precisely, do youth participate outside the formal structure through informal deliberation; what are the specific practices and discourses employed by young men and women to communicate problems and increase their pressure in the public sphere? Indeed, ‘informal participation originating in the public sphere is also the resource for innovative descriptions and presentations of interests, preferences, and issues’ (Kulynych 1997, 322), so that one is led to analyse how this develops for young people and across genders. However, although Habermas’s approach to participation is abstract enough to render it inclusive of the multiple strata of society, some feminist scholars have criticised it because of its failure to acknowledge the gender differences that still exist in access to both communicative and symbolic action, and the public sphere (Fraser 1990). Closer to the concept of performance,

Habermas informs us that the public sphere constitutes one sort of ‘arena’ or ‘stage’ in which social actors should metaphorically perform and present issues in innovative and catchy forms, namely through *dramaturgical action*. In the words of Kulynych ‘it requires a kind of political action that can effectively disrupt the culturally common sensical and actually provide new and compelling alternatives to disciplinary constructions of such things such as gender difference’ (Kulynych 1997, 327).

Dramaturgical perspectives in social movements focus on how activists construct and communicate grievances in a fashion that maximizes their potential impact on social change (Benford 2013). Indeed, it would be unthinkable to understand and analyse social performance without referencing Goffman’s work on the dramaturgical perspective of social life. Although much of Goffman’s legacy in social movement research is built around his later work on framing and discourse analysis at the microsociological level, his dramaturgical approach raises awareness of roles, performances, and the use of bodies by social movement participants. By employing the theatre as a metaphor for social life, Goffman examines how people present themselves in everyday interactions, actions, routines, and how people perform different characters according to the audience they meet, similar to a theatrical performance (Goffman 1959). In order to understand everyday interactions, Goffman introduces the generic concept of ‘interaction order’; the face-to-face work that individuals do during interaction which produces established routines and institutions in a cumulative way over time (Goffman 1967; 1983). Goffman’s dramaturgical approach is particularly useful to understand social and protest performances as it conceives social life as a theatre, in which specific *stages* can be identified – namely the front stage and the back stage – where multiple *actors*

play different roles and where different audiences perceive our actions. More importantly, all interactions are permeated by an intense symbolic communication, so that individual and collective actions are both political and symbolic (Alexander 2006). In this sense, Alexander continues, ‘cultural performance is the social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of their social situation’ (Alexander 2006, 32). In particular spaces, events, performances come to be associated with forms of resistance or transgression, through the use of the body, symbols and identity positions. It is clear that certain behaviours are performances. The opportunity comes when we think *as* performance. When we begin to apply the method of performance studies, it means that we take a phenomenon and we start to analyse performance-type questions, such as: what is going on? Which behaviours are displayed and according to which sequence, emphasis? How are they generated and perceived? In which circumstances are they articulated (social, political, aesthetic)?

Goffman contends that the appropriate analytical domain to understand the interaction order is microsociology. The major benefit of applying Goffman’s approach to the analysis of protest comes from the intent to understand how people construct reality through symbolic behaviours and emotions, bringing their cultural background into their actions. However, he equally argues that some features of the interaction order ‘directly bear upon the macroscopic worlds beyond the interaction in which these features are found’ (Goffman 1983, 8). In other words, echoing Bourdieu and Giddens’s argument, Goffman advocates that it is possible and necessary to move from the situated to the situational.

4.3.2 Performative Action in Protest Cultures

The notion of performance, intended as the very locus of human agency, leads us to the analysis of individual and collective agency. Using performance as an analytical lens provides a number of advantages. As several authors have argued, through cultural performance activists are able to produce, communicate, and embody alternative meanings and identities within social movements (Juris 2014; Eyerman 2006). A performance approach therefore focuses on the relationship between symbolism, cultural creativity, aesthetics and social action. It provides useful insights into the symbolism of protests and symbolic behaviour, the variety of communicative styles and mobilizing techniques, alternative ways of making statements and claiming spaces, and highlights the situation of the disenfranchised (Fuentes 2014). It also helps to bridge the mind/body divide, and allows for an exploration of how different practices and regulations are embodied, such as in the case of gender performances and sexuality. The concept of performance has a broad definition and can consequently ‘cover’ a myriad of behaviours and actions executed by different agents, ranging from those at the individual, bodily level to those performed as members of protest bodies (Fuentes 2014). Moreover, the interaction between these levels may signal resistance to or, conversely, acquiescence to gender norms. While, for instance, members of a movement perform a protest in favour of gender equality, at the individual level they might be enacting established gender norms along the male/female spectrum (Taylor 1999). In this sense, performativity can be seen as both an (alternative) identity and meaning creator, (in Butler’s terms it is constitutive of identities and bodies), and as a demonstration. As Chaloupka explains, the same word *demonstration* reveals the idea of showing something in practical terms, as an explanatory exhibition of a certain phenomenon (Chaloupka 1993). The idea of performance also encompasses different social spaces, ranging

from the physical to the digital, which can be used by protesters to raise awareness across boundaries. Nonetheless, as Juris rightfully warns us, it is important not to overstretch the concept of performance to cover too many things and thus render it meaningless (Juris 2014). There are indeed different extents to which the activities and practices of social movements are directed towards public audiences, including verbal and non-verbal messages, which can be placed on a continuum from less performative to more performative. Still, it is difficult to treat cultural performance as either a dependent or independent variable, or perhaps even as a measurable variable at all. Performances are, in the words of Johnston, ‘locations where culture is accomplished’ (Johnston 2009, 7).

In the context of activism, performances at the macro-level typically include symbolic direct actions that make a particular issue visible to a wider audience – the public, the media, the authorities and counter-movements. At the broad analytic level, movement performances can range from the non-violent occupation of urban space(s) – as practiced recently by the Occupy movements – to different forms of demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, kiss-ins, presentations, and more playful aesthetic activities, which highlight visibility and awareness. During demonstrations, the collective use of slogans and singing, and the visibility of highly symbolic artefacts, (such as flags, signs, and clothing), can reinforce a sense of belonging among participants, and dramatise certain messages (Eyerman 2006; Juris 2014). In addition, the internal dynamics of movements can also have significant performative aspects. If we apply the theatrical metaphor to a movement and its internal audiences, the debates happening in the back stage, the relations and potential conflicts between members, and narrative performances all become loci for the enactment of culture through social interactions among participants, as explained by

Goffman's symbolic interactionism (Johnston 2009; Goffman 1959). Last but not least, social performance serves not only to represent alternative accounts and articulations of how the world should be, but also to create communities of support and resistance. In its community-building sense, it can therefore invite people to participate in the game of social activism. A detailed description and understanding of performances is crucial to grasping cultural processes at work during protests.

As Eyerman (2006) explains, the concept of framing introduced by Snow and Benford (1988) which draws from Goffman's frame analysis, has had considerable influence in social movement research as it makes explicit the cognitive and narrative processes of making sense of situations, motivating participants and connecting events and single occurrences with general meanings, or ideologies. The fundamental link with performances, therefore, is created through the *mise-en-scène* of these narratives, or in other words, 'performance [...] is what gives this story life, adds drama and activates emotion ...' (Eyerman 2006, 198). These narratives function as the script for the performance, the background of representations. The *mise-en-scène* also involves a physical setting, a place and space to perform in, which can have symbolic and strategic meaning to convey specific messages and emotions. To many scholars of social movements, what I have listed above would fall into the category of tactical and strategic repertoires of actions of movement participants. Nonetheless, as I stated in my introduction, I argue that the notion of performance goes beyond acknowledging the strategic component of such actions, and embraces the idea of habitus and the adherence to non-strategic, expressive actions. We can therefore conceptualise a continuum in which taken-for-granted and internalised dispositions are played out in action in a non-strategic way, going

beyond what participants are able to formulate in discourse. This is particularly important to illustrate gender dynamics within activism.

To sum up, social movements represent themselves through public actions in public spaces. There are different actors or performers, scripts and narratives to actuate, and multiple stages and audiences. A performance lens introduces a new dimension to the analysis by drawing attention to framing, discourses aesthetics, and symbolism, and by linking the expressive to the strategic in the practice of mobilization. In the final part of this chapter, I present how I intend to condense the theories presented above into a research approach.

4.3.3 Gender as Social Performance and Performativity: Resistance and Subversion

In Butler's account of performativity, gender can be seen as a social performance that does not express or follow from any pre-existing identity; rather, the performance of gender generates the belief in this identity (Butler 1990; Jagger 2008). Concisely, the reality of gender is shaped by a ritualised repetition of conventions in the forms of sustained social performances (Butler 1990). Following the above discussion, it is important to make an explicit distinction between the notions of performativity as interpreted by Butler and of social performance as presented in the dramaturgical or theatrical model. In fact, the inseparability of the acts, the performances, and the agents is the foundation of Butler's notion of gender performativity. Therefore, in contrast to Goffman's interactionism, there is no pre-existing self behind the performance since the actor's identity is produced through the performance itself. In other words, the agent is not only the subject who constructs reality through language, acts, and performances, but is also the object of these same constitutive acts (Jagger 2008, 22). Particularly, contrary to Goffman's conception of the presentation of the self, gender cannot be expressed as a role generated by a prior self. Instead, Butler stresses that gender cannot be chosen, and that 'performativity is not radical choice and it is not voluntarism [...] Performativity has to do with repetition, very often the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms to force them to resignify. This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in.' (Butler 1992, 84) The iterability, the repetition of bodily acts constitutes the basis to understand Butler's notion of political agency, which is intrinsically and conditionally linked to the dynamics of power that sustain its own possibility (1990, xxv).

Butler therefore contends that instead of being prescribed by some kind of inner nature, gender is regulated by a compelling and binding heteronormativity (Butler 1990). In this sense, performativity is twofold insofar as it is not strictly (or not only) bounded or constrained by the existing gender order; rather, it is an enabling act through which individuals can contest and transgress gender norms at both the individual and collective levels.

In Butler's work too, the symbolic dimension is foundational of a theory of performativity (1990; 1993). The symbol for its definition realises the performative invisible force that is subtended to the visible: hides, shows and alludes to another dimension that realises the materiality of bodies on a level that is not material, but in fact, symbolic. In this step, gender is realised, both at the individual and collective levels. The symbolic violence allows you to deny a given as historical and arbitrary and state it instead as a natural, biologically given, therefore legitimate. The violence at the basis of such act draws from the misunderstanding the arbitrariness of history and society and the claiming of an act based on its intrinsic naturalness and consequent legitimacy. If the symbolic allows the establishment of gender categories in the form of repetition, it also raises the possibility for resistance.

The problem of resistance, does not involve a simple tilt or a formal change but allows thinking about the ongoing displacement of our limitations, the boundaries that determine us. Where, above all, in the thought of Butler, performativity operated by the symbolic is the premise of violence on the body, there is also the possibility to recover the means and turning it into a different act that instead of building, disrupts, breaks, calls into question and re-activates all the possibilities that history, with its progress, its choosing and reify seems to have closed once and for all. The body is not a biological and positive data, but it presents itself as always already

conditioned. Our body is not mere material, but materiality inserted and consisting of the social, not just the image that we give, but also in a personal way that we have to experience. (Butler 2011 [1993], xi-xii)

Bourdieu recognises in the body the sedimentation of ritual actions, it recognises the body in its built-in memory. It is only through the body and the agent that Bourdieu shares the same way of what Butler calls *mimetic identification*. This identification is not intended as an imitation, it does not involve the awareness of those who are implementing it; it is rather always involved in the context and conditioned by our dispositions. Bourdieu recognises in the body a cultural dimension and gives to its dispositions the historical dimension of a sedimentation capable of being for the body a second nature, or a habit that creeps deep into the possibility of knowing, experiencing and participating in the world.

We have seen that, if the *habitus* is therefore that practical intelligence that goes to make up the body from the moment it plays in the field, this also presupposes the field as a condition for the possibility of the *habitus*. The *habitus* and the field are in a formative relationship that happens as an epistemological event. Thinking about the *habitus* in those terms, allows Butler to make a key step: to topple a category from its interior, unmasking its flaws. The most important feature, according to Butler, is that the mimetic acquisition of a rule, which flows from the performative discourse, is that it is also, correspondingly, the condition of possible resistance to this rule:

... the mimetic acquisition of a norm is at once the condition by which a certain resistance to the norm is also produced; identification will not “work” to the extent that the norm is not fully incorporated or, indeed, incorporable. The resistance to the norm will be the effect of an incomplete acquisition of the norm, the resistance to mastering the practices by which that incorporation proceeds. (Butler 1999, 118)

Identifying does not mean being identical. While we incorporate a norm, it remains something not entirely comparable, and it is this discrepancy which nestles the germ of resistance to the norm. Performativity, therefore, is largely a practical provision for the constitution and reconstruction of the subject, precisely because it is able to exist without determining in advance the content of this existence. Performativity is also multiple: it is an instrument of domination and a strategy of resistance, is the way in which we can exist as something different. The symbolic violence that performativity has operated, has been to make only thinkable those categories in which t we are equal to ourselves. The mandatory identity which we were forced to look for, desire and pursue, is the work which the symbol is committed to reiterate. Yet, Butler reminds us that performativity cannot be simply equated with performance (2011 [1993], 59-60), insofar it is not self-representation intended as a theatrical performance (as it would appear in symbolic interactionism). Performativity has to do with constraint, both in the sense of forced reproduction of normative regulations and the condition through which performativity is sustained in constitution of a subject, and yet does not fully determine the subject in advance.

If Bourdieu stands as necessary at the outset to rethink the categories of subjectivity and objectivity in a non-dualistic relationship, Butler makes the same questioning of dichotomies through rethinking the body and its sexualisation. The sex, the category of sex, is not opposed to the cultural norm, it is not independent, it is always already legislation, acts as rule which produces the bodies that governs: if it is true that the social agent is not opposed to the field in which he/she lives, but it is inherently formed, the body subject cannot be thought of as an abstract entity

which is juxtaposed to the categories that define it, as if it were the raw material on which the action of the norm emboss a shape (2011 [1993], xiii).

As in Foucault, the norm for Butler is the possibility of the body condition, it produces and it makes a historical work, contingent, but strictly conditioning (2011 [1993], xviii-xix). The subject realizes his chance of staying in that world, only through the standard that defines it, defining the legitimacy or the abnormality. The sex, when it is attached to a body, becomes gender: the action of the rule of materiality, the conditioning of the data, does not exist as a mere thing, but always as taken and decoded in a given cognitive relationship of power (p. xxi). So it does not naturally belong to the body, is the result of a regulatory work that has the purpose of making legitimate that body.

Bodies that matter is an intellectual and analytical work that aims to show the contingency of categories that, only after their legitimisation and standardisation, have become the only thinkable (the regulation of identificatory practices). When Butler, in the last chapter of *Bodies that matter*, writes about the relationship between the performative act of speech and the drama of drag as a gender practice, she really wants to show the need of relocation from the categories that we are, in a sense, however, obliged to use. In drag, what we stage is the mark of gender, a mark that frees itself from the body to which it binds, which does not have with it the unique dual relationship defined as legitimate. The gender mark, in drag, looks like a disguise, as an arbitrary act, which is shown in its non-naturalness and necessity. To make explicit this 'masquerade', can become the imperative that unmasks the arbitrary and cultural control underlying the appropriation of gender. To show the

ineffectiveness of the norm, its flaw, can become the occasion and the method to re-articulate it and subvert it.

The drag makes explicit what the performativity of heterosexuality speech has kept hidden, unmasking the legitimacy of this approach, and the exhibition in its compulsive components, becoming a parody of itself. It is in the gap of the rule, in that which cannot be fully absorbed, unfulfilled, that lays the turning point. It is not a question of distancing from a system of rules, however, it is a matter of making it sway from the inside, to make still extremely dynamic the relationship between gender and sexuality (2011 [1993], 169-185).

As I mentioned before, gender performances can therefore be perceived as particularly contentious and transgressive acts, especially when they challenge other people's expectations about how women and men should behave. How, then, can we account for gender as a social performance? For the purpose of this project, drawing on both Goffman's interactionism and Butler's performativity, gender will be considered as being acted out in the form of sustained social performances, through bodily gestures, styles, and discursive means, and as symbols that are socially approved and expected based on a cultural notion of mandatory heterosexuality. In the process of performing gender, individuals produce and signify their own identity.

4.4 Toward a Theory of Action in Protest Cultures

The conclusive part of this chapter critically synthesises the conceptual and theoretical analysis of gendered social structures and social performances during protests. The aim is to present an approach that highlights the dimensions of social

action relevant to this research, namely the study of youth and gender dynamics in social movements. Particularly, drawing from the works of the authors introduced in this chapter, the ultimate goal is to contribute to the structure and agency dilemma within the framework of this project.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is one of the most relevant notions explored in the chapter and one that can constitute the pivot point between structure and agency in this theoretical approach. Indeed, the idea of habitus as a practical sense for acting which is embodied by agents, rather than as a set of conscious dispositions (HaluzadeLay 2008), helps us find a hinge between structure and agency. Moreover, according to Bourdieu, habitus must be considered conservative and long lasting in its nature, and thus somehow resistant to change. This might be particularly enlightening when exploring gender, since society is generally intransigent to change in gender practices and norms. Transposing this idea to the field of social movements allows us to understand that parallel to mainstream society, comprised of people who resist change and subscribe to *doxa* (e.g. heteronormativity), there are individuals or groups of individuals whose habitus is different and results in a different way of thinking, being and interacting. Social movements are indeed a space, place, field where these alternative ways of being can be articulated, framed and performed with the aim of challenging normalised understandings. Social movements therefore constitute a field where a process of learning and awareness building can take place, and thereby bring about a change in habitus, namely a transformation of deep-rooted habits. Although Bourdieu's theory of practice does not directly address situations of struggle, or social change as it might happen in the case of social movements, he nonetheless provides a number of points concerning a 'theory of crisis'. As aforementioned, 'in moments of crisis [...], the assumptions

and habits of everyday life are suspended, giving way to more critical and innovative forms of praxis. Critical attitudes take shape in relation to issues which increasingly matter to citizens, to the point where they will fight for them.’ (Crossley 2003, 48). Therefore, in periods of crisis, as Crossley explains, there is a transfer of issues from the doxic assumptions to the critical reflexion in the public discursive domain (Crossley 2003, 48-49). Through the co-generation of fields and habitus, we are able to link structuralists’ accounts with culturalists’ ones. Based on these considerations, I argue that social movements have the potential to create a context where a transformation of habitus takes place through the performance of an alternative model to dominant reality, involving altered ways of being, thinking, and interacting, in which the transformed habitus makes sense.

My interest is therefore to explore the ways in which social movement activities affect the habitus of youth, or citing Bourdieu, provide an opportunity for ‘an awakening of consciousness and social analysis’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 167). Further, I examine the possibility that youth involved in social movements have the potential and the intention to change gender norms and values, particularly through the development of practices that are more consistent with movement praxis.

In light of the discussion on both interactionism and the co-generation of field and habitus, I suggest that gender as a structure is not imposed on individuals from above or, for that matter, from below in a vertical fashion; rather, it is through interaction that structural constraints and the social positioning of agents become apparent. In short, it is through interaction in a horizontal sense that agents experience gendered structures, limitations and difference. At the same time, agents are able to challenge and modify gendered structures and gender norms through agency and performativity.

Now, a sound critique of Bourdieu's theory of field argues that social movements are not adequately structured, coherent, and unified to be considered a field *per se*, and that social movements are instead a fluid, changeable, and unpredictable form of public action (Mathieu 2012; Lahire 2013). Therefore, to consider social movements as a field in Bourdieu's terms would limit the analysis to social groups with the most resources, i.e. with the most capital, and the strongest position of actors in that field. Still, Bourdieu's own definition of field captures the idea of a site of struggle, albeit in the sense of struggle to acquire capital. A particularly interesting insight comes from the idea that uprising or insurgency might be a characteristic of certain fields, primarily through the new generation's rejection of former rules or criteria established by previous generations. From a generational perspective, we can assume that youth not only learn the practice of activism from older generations of activists – through specific rules and criteria – but also strive against previous generations in order to establish their own rules, criteria, and innovative actions.

I subscribed earlier to several scholars' argument that in the study of activism, it is absolutely relevant to pay attention to other spheres of individual life outside the field – using the concept of biographical availability – to fully appreciate participants' involvement. Taking into account that social movement activities cannot be considered as part of an autonomous and delimited field, it is more accurate to acknowledge that they operate at the intersection of multiple social fields (Duyvendak and Fillieule 2015, 463). Therefore,

These lifestyle correlates of activism are important because they identify a common structure running through political activity, work-life and lifestyle. Part of the force of Bourdieu's concept of habitus is its 'structural' focus. It shows how apparently quite distinct preferences and practices cluster, expressing a common 'theme' across a range of discrete domains. (Crossley 2003, 54)

This is where the concept of intersectionality becomes helpful. If we scrutinise the nature of contention, what the contention is about, then the arrangement of particular elements must be questioned and explored. We therefore want to examine specific movements as fields of struggle, while considering the broader movement sector as an overarching field that incorporates individual movements and recognises their intersection with external fields, such as the religious, political, and so forth (Crossley 2003). The notion of configurations is therefore better suited for this empirical investigation, where gender and age intersect with dimensions that are particularly relevant, such as race, sexuality, and religion, depending on the case under analysis, and where specific gender roles can be enacted. From this consideration, I concur with other scholars that activists take part into protest activities based on their biographical availability, which is at the same time dictated by the absence of constraints and by the presence of enabling features that make them more receptive of particular moral shocks. Gender functions as a constraint and as an enabler of activists' biographical availability.

Based on Habermas' theorisation of informal participation in the public sphere, as well as Goffman's interactionist approach, I analyse configurations taking place at the intersection of multiple fields in three ways. I first understand fields as concrete spaces where, following a dramaturgical approach, agents stage interactions (for instance in the street), and where social performances are taking place. Secondly, I conceive fields as symbolic spaces where, from a discursive perspective, the rhetoric and the framing of collective action unfold, particularly through the problematisation of an issue. As Habermas suggested, the problematisation of certain issues should happen through amplification and dramatisation in order to be effective and influential. This is where a performance lens provides a good framework to study

observable practices. In addition, I link this with the context of action, namely the structure of the observed interaction and the biography of individuals in order to understand the individual's system of dispositions that orients their behaviour. In relation to Bourdieu's theory, the habitus expresses the embodied-performative aspect of social structures (Crossley 2003). Throughout the chapter we have seen that performances in the context of activism may have multiple forms and involve disparate types of artefacts and collective acts. They usually combine an emotional and symbolic content, with visible and dramatic forms – in the sense that they are explored within the framework of dramaturgical approach. As mentioned before, and putting youth in the spotlight, performances may also unfold in the form of generational struggle, as a way to break away from previous generations, in a sort of struggle within the struggle. Therefore, there is a setting, a stage, and a script, performers, and audience to consider. My specific goal is to explore how young activists problematise certain issues through social performance, and how they present the 'alternative reality' that makes social change and critical reflexion possible. Particularly, what symbols they use and refer to, what physical and virtual spaces carry a particularly symbolic significance and accessibility to youth, what their practices of body are, and what symbolic manipulations of the gendered body experience they create/use. Also, I will investigate how youth problematise issues that are important to them in the discursive realm, and their linguistic adaptation as a consequence of the dialogue between habitus and field. At the same time, I explore how protests can be occasions where the performance of identity and the representation of self happen, particularly in gender terms and against the background structures. From here, I argue that not all action within social movements is strategic. Rather, social performances range on a continuum from non-

strategic to strategic actions by linking tactical elements to expressive ones in different ways. Gender performances not only reproduce existing gendered structures but can also be used to undermine gender as a social structure. Changes in gendered social structures will, in turn, have an effect on the way gender is performed at the individual and collective level. In other words, activists work with certain aspects of the structure in order to change other aspects of it, there is a subjective and strategic point to culture (Jasper 1997, 50-52):

Strategizing, in particular, is a matter of sometimes following culturally ingrained rules but at other times bending them, breaking them, playing off them to thwart expectations. As Swidler showed, strategies put culture into action. Contrary to Swidler's argument, culture also provides the goals we strategize for, the reasons we accumulate resources.¹⁹ (Jasper 1997, 52)

¹⁹ Ann Swidler, 'Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 51 (1986).

Chapter 5

Genealogy and Negotiation of Collective Identities

A religion enforced through the courts and parliaments is not sure of its own belief, since it may not be able to trust the free choice of each and everyone. A society that feels the need to seal the religion that is already of the majority with the power of the State is a society with weak religious spirit, although with an exorbitant power of the church hierarchy.

—Marzano and Urbinati, *Mission Impossible*, 2013

This chapter follows the elaboration of the theoretical framework and aims to introduce the case studies under analysis. The structure is based on the analysis of the context in which the ‘anti-gender’ mobilization developed; the actors, networks, alliances, strategies and repertoires of action of the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement. Notably, it reconstructs the combination of factors that generate such mobilizing identities. The first part examines the emergence of gender as a field of contention and the genesis of the mobilization, the ways in which both the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement developed in the public sphere, ending with an assessment of the relative movement’s positions in the ‘anti-gender’ versus ‘pro-gender’ mobilization from 2011 to 2016. Crucially, this concerns the role of Catholic institutions in bringing about the existence of ‘theory of gender’ and ‘gender ideology’ as rhetorical devices deployed in the current mobilization. The second and third parts examine the players, structures and repertoires of actions of the Catholic countermovement and LGBTQ movement involved in the public debate on gender and sexuality in Italy. It follows the analysis of the interactional dynamics between the two movements, with a particular focus on the dilemmas faced within the context of strategic interactionism. The chapter

presents findings based on evidence collected in the form of media sources, documents, activists' produced material and interviews.

5.1 Genesis of the 'Anti-Gender' Crusade and Configuration of the 'Gender'

Arena in Italy

As outlined in previous chapters, Bourdieu's concept of 'field' constitutes a major source of inspiration for the notion of *fields of contention* (Crossley 2003). Although Bourdieu's analysis provides powerful theoretical insights concerning the reproduction of social action, the concept of fields of contention shifts the focus to a concrete and empirical inquiry into the parties, relations, and interactions constituting the struggle under analysis:

Any field of contention comprises multiple sets of actors party to a given conflict (or set of connected conflicts), sets of various relations and interactions between those actors, and a culture of contention that emerges within and by way of these interactions. Fields are always in-process, changing "shape" as an effect of the dynamics of continuous contentious interaction which both drives and constitutes them. (Crossley 2013, 1)

In its political form, the production, emergence and diffusion of 'gender theory' as a discursive object, and the consequent configuration of its contentious field, is the result of an operation strategically implemented primarily by actors directly linked to the Vatican, and, more generally, to the Catholic Church. Recent works that have tried to reconstruct the genealogy of this double dynamic of contested appropriation and use of the concept of gender, agree in identifying the UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, 1994, and the UN Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995, as two key moments of affirmation within the international and institutional fields of a 'new paradigm' (McIntosh and Finkle 1995). The outcome of these two conferences was an assertion and implemented

recognition of the right of women to control their reproductive capacity and, above all, of the political necessity of seeing this right guaranteed through access to abortion, all forms of contraception and sex education.

More precisely, the Beijing Conference adopted the concept of gender to define a ‘gender-sensitive’ approach towards public policies, which was conceived to be attentive to the promotion of equal opportunities and full social and political equality between men and women (gender equality). In this sense, the English term *gender* shifted the focus towards the social and power dimensions of the relationship between women and men, and the political (in)equality and status of women. It was, ultimately, the institutionalisation of the concept of gender at the international level which was intended to break away from the anthropological perspective that sexual and gender differences are based on biological evidence, and therefore represent the natural law that in turn determines, in a normative and absolute way, the status of women and men.

The Vatican immediately reacted to this epistemological break, arguing against the commitment made to defend the right to family planning, abortion, and sexual education at the international level. In fact, according to the Vatican’s observer present at the Beijing Conference, “the term ‘gender’ is interpreted by the Holy See as founded on the biological sexual identity, male or female” and “excludes ambiguous interpretations based on the assumption that sexual identity can be adapted indefinitely to match new and different purposes”²⁰. The Vatican was insofar opposed to the use of the term gender as a concept defining the socio-political aspects of relations between the sexes, and was apprehensive as to the

²⁰ Holy See’s final statement at the Beijing Conference, by Prof. Ann Glendon, Head of the Holy See’s Delegation: <http://www.its.caltech.edu/~nmcenter/women-cp/beijing3.html>

implications it could have in society: the emancipation of women from their supposed natural destiny and mandatory role of ‘mothers’ and ‘wives’ (as a result of women’s right to see their equal status with respect to men recognised). The Vatican’s first reaction to the introduction of the term gender in the institutional field is therefore at odds with the institutionalisation of a feminist approach towards policies regarding the status of women and gender relations. Following the international recognition and diffusion of the notion of gender as an expression and an arena for public action, the principle of equal opportunities is stated, and gives credence to a growing number of positions, international and national action programs. The two UN Conferences of 1994 and 1995, therefore, marked the starting point of an intensive campaign carried out by the Vatican, the Pontifical Councils, with the support of Catholic movements, to sustain a Catholic response (Della Sudda and Avanza 2015) to a perceived attack on the fundamental values of life and family which institutional feminism inspires (Stetson and Mazur 1997; Stetson 2001).

It is important to note that in the same period, in a Europe-wide decision, sexual orientation was officially recognised as grounds for unlawful discrimination, as stated in the Amsterdam Treaty (1997), and in 2001 the Netherlands became the first European state to legalise same-sex marriage. Concern about these issues led the Pontifical Council of the Family to appeal to Catholic scholars to reflect on the meaning of the above-mentioned developments, particularly their political, social, and anthropological implications. As we will see in the following paragraphs, the strategy adopted by Church authorities clearly reflects Foucault’s deployment of sexuality and bio-power.

The publication of the *Lexicon. Ambiguous and Debatable Terms regarding Family Life and Ethical Questions* in 2003, marked a second crucial moment in the

genesis of the gender arena in Italy. This volume of more than one thousand pages on family ethics is an argumentative tool whose purpose is to define, translate, and give meaning to the terms introduced internationally, including gender, in light of the Catholic doctrine. The *Lexicon* is therefore an attempt to revise, rewrite and interpret the key concepts regulating – among other things – gender equality, women’s rights, gender violence, homophobic and transphobic discrimination, affective and sexual education, and the recognition of civil unions or same-sex marriage. As outlined in the ‘Preface to the *Lexicon*’²¹ by Cardinal López Trujillo (2002):

Many expressions are used in parliaments and world forums with concealment of their true content and meaning even for the politicians and members of parliament who use them, due to their weak background in philosophy, theology, law, anthropology, etc. This represents the greatest obstacle for a correct understanding of certain terms. The purpose of the *Lexicon* is to assist in such cases and to awaken interest in order to promote serious and objective information, and stimulate the desire for a deeper formation in this field where several sciences and critical disciplines converge. [...] There are many obscure concepts which are hard to understand because their content requires calm and patient investigation. This is of course complicated by those who refuse to accept natural law and to give law an ethical foundation. Obviously, we cannot marginalize the riches of faith that confirm and deepen what reason understands. [...] This is the case of clever formulations of ‘voluntary interruption of pregnancy’ or ‘pro-choice’, ‘discrimination’. [...] The ambiguity is especially dangerous. It elicits, at first, a reaction of sympathy: how not to be against discrimination? This seems to be an effect of the respect for human rights. But the first and spontaneous favourable reaction changes when the concrete contents are better examined. In the name of non-discrimination in parliaments, projects about Civil Partnerships are circulating, homosexual and lesbian unions too, and even with the possibility of adoption.

The *Lexicon* represents a precise strategy of *appropriation* and *reworking* of the terms introduced in the institutional language to promote egalitarian and non-discriminatory public policies, in order to provide the doctrinal tools with which to formalise and spread the Catholic Church’s position in respect to such policies. Through this operation, sexuality is deployed by means of discourses that aim to

²¹ *L’Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, 5 February 2003, pages 8-9.

regulate, manage and control sexual (gender) behaviour. The focus is on the language with the intention of denouncing its ‘ideological’ and ‘manipulative’ use:

One must note that one of the most disturbing symptoms of a weakening of morality is the confusion of terms which lead to degrading levels when they are used with cold calculation to obtain a semantic change, changing the meaning of words in a deliberately perverted way. [...] A typical example is the case of ‘free love’. Suggestive words that imply a universe of freedom when in fact, instead of freedom, a true and proper slavery prevails.

The *Lexicon* is consequently responsible for the translation of the term ‘gender’ into an ideology, whose fundamental objective would be the denial of sexual difference, and whose political consequence would be egalitarian relativism (Garbagnoli 2014). If the biological complementarity of the sexes no longer provides the basis for understanding and interpreting sexual and emotional relationships, then it becomes possible to mobilize against or in favour of recognising alternative partnerships. At the same time, the reframing of relationships between the sexes legitimises alternative subjectivities that do not respond to the complementary nature of the sexes, such as homosexuality or transsexuality, and forms of family unions equally freed from the model of compulsory heterosexuality, such as same-sex marriage. In other words, the terms ‘theory (of) gender’ or ‘ideology (of) gender’, brought about, in a single step, a secularised and de-naturalised political model of social relationships, sex and sexuality. In the Vatican’s discourse, the ‘ideology of gender’, recently reduced to the expression ‘The Gender’ by Italian ‘anti-gender’ activists and media outlets, became an inextricable tangle of feminism and homosexuality. It is safe to affirm, therefore, that the ‘ideology of gender’ and ‘theory of gender’ constitute clear illustrations of bio-politics, as distinct regimes of power and knowledge. By stating, articulating and detailing their existence and content, both ‘rhetoric devices’ acquire a powerful performative character. In this

sense, as Butler puts it (1993, 171), '[i]f the power of discourse to produce that which it names is linked with the question of performativity, then the performative is one domain in which power acts as discourse', that is a blend of statements, declarations conferring authorisation and punishment to sexual behaviour, desire, gender identities and expressions.

Staunchly and with immediacy, different players in the Catholic Church, particularly the political entrepreneurs within the Church, endorsed the Vatican's position as encapsulated in the *Lexicon*. These include a plethora of actors, with different histories, vocations, strategies and militant styles: traditionalist and well-established associations such as Opus Dei and Comunione e Liberazione, the Pontifical Councils, new religious movements embodied by the ecclesial movements, pro-life groups directly involved in government affairs, (particularly with respect to bioethical issues), among others. In addition, the Pontifical Universities (such as the Regina Apostolorum in Rome, the Pontifical Lateran University and the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family) constitute important arenas for the development of bioethical disciplines and the production of a Catholic knowledge that acts as a generator of values, meanings, worldviews, opinions, and identity.

In Italy, one of the first attempts to propose a theoretical and political translation of the Vatican's position was realised in 2007 by the association *Scienza & Vita* (Science & Life) in the series of *Notebooks Science & Life* on 'Identity and Gender'. The publication is a collection of contributions from a number of Italian and French authors, which addresses the problems posed by the concept of gender in its theoretical and ideological form, tying it to the questions of feminism and marriage, and more generally to homosexuality, which it defines as 'a drama that is not simply

the result of general homophobia, but of a struggle and an existential and psychological suffering' (2007, 92). The 'anti-gender' narrative thus develops through the spread of a Catholic knowledge and culture: a double dynamic of *translation* and *importation* of the 'anti-gender' debate born in the international arena, which David Paternotte (2015) refers to as 'anti-genderismus', and is stirred by entrepreneurs of the pro-life cause, who look to issue a response to the political emergency represented by the discussion of draft laws on same-sex marriage and civil unions in Italy and Europe.

In 2011 the *First International Conference on Gender Ideology* was organised at the University of Navarra. Beyond the physical meeting of different actors who would become prominent players in the 'anti-gender' mobilization, this event defined the boundaries of a political space yet to be filled; it is in this place that 'gender ideology' was established as a field of contention. At this meeting, groups and individuals who would establish themselves as frontline players in the Catholic countermovement – such as Comitato Difendiamo i Nostri Figli, CDFN (Committee for the Defense of Our Children); Notizie ProVita (ProLife News); and the association Generazione Famiglia (Family Generation) - La Manif Pour Tous Italia (from the homologous French association) – stressed the need to refine the elements of the 'anti-gender' discourse and backed-up this opinion by referencing 'horror stories' or high-profile cases of 'monstrosity' (such as children who were forced to wear make-up and cross-dress, children/individuals who were without a gender identity etc.), whose occurrence they attributed to the spread of 'gender ideology'. Mimicking the French mobilization 'Manif Pour Tous' (Demos for all), members of the aforementioned organisations took to the streets in 2013 to make themselves and

their claims heard, adopting the same slogans, representations, and repertoires of action as the French group (Garbagnoli 2014, 258).

As I will explain in the following sections, in this scenario, the LGBTQ movement found itself in a subordinate position, forced to react retrospectively, defining strategies and discourses according to terms set out by the opponent. Moreover, the LGBTQ movement had to take on a new ideological and political ‘pro-gender’ position to counter the ‘anti-gender’ stance, unrelated to their identity and militant repertoire, and essentially imposed upon them by their adversary. In other words, the LGBTQ movement came together to fight for an unexpected cause, which required the development of new strategies, discourses, and innovative forms of collective action to convey its claims, often in a rather ineffectively coordinated, poorly informed way.

5.1.1 LGBTQ Mobilization in the Public Sphere

The origins of the LGBTQ movement date back to the 1940s and 1950s in the United States, and were cemented by several iconic events in the following decades, the most notable of which, the Greenwich Village Stonewall riots of 1969 – a commemorated date in the history of LGBTQ movements worldwide, representing the symbolic day on which to celebrate Gay Pride. At its inception, the movement pursued two different trajectories (Valocchi 2013). On one side, a liberationist approach drove the movement to make demands for civil rights, the passing of anti-discriminatory laws and the denunciation of sexual and gender repression. On the other side, the movement developed its own collective identity as an oppressed minority, and pushed for positive recognition in the public arena. Since then, the

history of the movement has been characterised by several internal conflicts and growing fragmentation, due in part to the acknowledgment of the specificities and complexities of each subject's experience – as sexual orientation became an increasingly weak common denominator – and the meanings attributed to LGBTQ mobilizations and protests.

In Italy, the emergence and development of the LGBTQ movement is considerably different to the contexts overseas. Since its beginnings in the 1970s, the Italian LGBTQ movement's capacity to recognise and promote civil rights and institutional reforms has been extremely limited. In fact, the presence of the Vatican and the Catholic Church in the country has had a definite impact on the history of the movement, as I will show in this chapter. Today, the Italian society still exhibits higher degrees of discrimination against LGBTQI minorities than other European countries.²² Interestingly for this study, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, the biggest LGBTI organisation worldwide, recognised the 'anti-gender' campaign in Italy as one of the major obstacles to the promotion of gender and sexual diversity in 2016: "[...] Education continued to be at the centre of many debates, especially those framed by so-called 'anti-gender movements' who opposed diversity education in schools. Several cases of homophobic or transphobic hate speech by individuals with a public profile were also reported" (Europe Annual Review 2016, 93-96).

²² The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)-Europe *Rainbow Map Index* ranks European countries according to the federal/national application of legislation for the recognition of LGBTI rights in the fields of 1) Equality and non-discrimination; 2) Family; 3) Hate crime and hate speech; 4) Legal gender recognition and bodily integrity; 5) Freedom of assembly, association and expression; 6) Asylum. The fields are broken down into different criteria, to reach over 50 indicators in total. The maximum score in percentage is 100. According to the May 2016 index edition, Italy scores 29, which ranks the country 33rd out of 49 countries. To compare, UK scores 81, Belgium 82, and France 67. Malta scores the highest with 88 points. Accessed 25.07.2016: www.rainbow-europe.org

Looking at data, important changes in the acceptance of homosexuality have been recorded in research on the everyday life of gays and lesbians (Fiore 1991; Barbagli and Colombo 2001; Saraceno 2003; Trappolin 2004; Prearo 2015). However, evidence of the increased acceptance of homosexuality is often found in data from surveys of youth populations and as a result of research aimed at surveying the general attitude towards homosexual behaviour. Surveys on youth provide a means to assess how social stigma attached to homosexuality has considerably decreased over time.²³ Homosexuality remains an identity that is not widely recognised but one to which the younger generation proves more and more tolerant. This trend is corroborated by the findings of this thesis, which identifies younger generations, and particularly educated university students, (regardless of affiliations to Catholic groups, leftist organizations, or the LGBTQ community), as being generally open to homosexuality, and aware of sexual, gender issues more broadly.

Theoretically speaking, Italy's attitude towards homosexuality has been expressed as 'repressive tolerance' (Dall'Orto 1988; Nardi 1998). This concept refers to the historical absence of the criminal repression of homosexuality in the country, as well as to the Catholic Church's influence in establishing the legitimate meanings of sexuality and its role in managing deviant behaviours (Trappolin 2004). A related factor in the reconstruction of the context in which Italian homosexual groups emerged is the apparent lack of explicit social conflict around issues related to homosexuality, and particularly the difficulty in defining opponents and enemies of 'homosexual people'. The expression 'repressive tolerance' echoes closely with

²³ ISTAT Report on *Homosexual People in Italian Society*, 2011 (published 2012). Accessed 18.08.2016: http://www.istat.it/it/files/2012/05/report-omofobia_6giugno.pdf?title=Popolazione+omosessuale+nella+societ%C3%A0+-+17%2Fmag%2F2012+-+Testo+integrale.pdf

Foucault's critique of the repressive-hypothesis in *The History of Sexuality* (1976). In a similar vein, we can draw a parallel between Foucault's argument that a juridical law (prohibitive and repressive) constitutes one historical configuration of power aiming at stating what is forbidden and what is not – as in the case of homosexuality in Italy and elsewhere; simultaneously, the same law produces and generates the object it is supposed to repress. Therefore the (homo)sexual desire is at the same time produced and repressed through different configurations of power that aim at consolidating the structures by which it is perpetrated. Within this framework, heterosexuality does not persist unless homosexuality is simultaneously conceptualised. To allude to 'tolerance' in this sense is precisely to describe the mechanisms through which bio-power works in regulating sexual behaviours and desire.

Looking more closely at the history of the movement, we must recognise that medical knowledge has played a key role in generating collective mobilization (Trappolin 2004). The outrage which grew among the homosexual population in Italy, and the reactive behaviour this emotion inspired, can, in part, be attributed to developments in medical knowledge that attached a stigma to homosexuality. The first homosexual Italian group – *Fuori*, formed in Turin in 1971 – actually emerged in response to a published medical article on the most advanced therapies for the treatment of homosexuality, and their first public demonstration took place a year later in Sanremo, during the congress of the Italian Centre of Sexology and Sexual Deviances. In recent years, at least since the mid-1990s, LGBTQ mobilizations in Italy have followed a trajectory similar to those of movements in other Western countries, focussing their struggle on two major aspects: demanding anti-discrimination laws and recognition of civil rights in the private and emotional life.

In the latter case, the action of the movement has been characterised by the attention paid to issues of citizenship. These requests look more likely to be met as a result of Italy's situation within the wider European context and the growing political pressure from the European Union to reform the country's legislative system.

An additional factor that contributed to the difficulty and ambiguity in identifying a concrete, unified opponent to the LGBTQ movement was its own internal fragmentation. The heterogeneity within the movement produced multiple interpretations of the meaning of protest, which in turn produced different representations of the enemy to mobilize against. Collective identity theory has shown us that this 'disharmony' will always be a risk in situations where mobilization in the public sphere occurs without the foundations of a single, unified identity. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the phases in which the homosexual movement was most consolidated correspond to periods when a social conflict emerged in a confrontation with a recognisable, unanimously identified opponent, as in the case of the Catholic counter-mobilization analysed in this thesis. Defining the boundaries of the Italian LGBTQ movement is not a simple task, given the enormous diversity in the groups and organisations it is comprised of. In fact, groups may have a short life span and little visibility, change name and affiliations, disappear from public view and then re-emerge with a reduced number of participants. Still, the development of the 'anti-gender' mobilization constituted one of such social conflict that pushed the LGBTQ movement towards a reconfiguration of internal voices and made the identification of a common enemy possible.

In the early years of the movement, the articulation of the claim of homosexual difference took place within a cycle of protest, fuelled by the class struggle. Set in this context, feminist and homosexual groups began to question power relations and

the meanings attributed to sexuality. In the first years of its activity, *Fuori* interpreted the battle for gay liberation as a struggle against the capitalist system. The target was identified in the regulation of sexuality structures, such as family, medical knowledge and religious institutions (Trappolin 2004; Foucault 1976). In line with Sedgwick's argument concerning the hetero-obsession at the basis of 'binary plots', we find that the distinction between homosexuals and heterosexuals was (negatively) considered to be a necessary strategy for maintaining the hegemony of gender – hegemony of men over women and the overarching model of hegemonic masculinity – and legitimising the organisation of social relations of production. Proletarian protests, however, gave little importance to the issue of sexual differences. For example, homosexual groups found themselves aligned with groups involved in class struggle, despite the fact that the latter often referred to cultural gender codes marked by traditional identities. Moreover, the concept of male domination defined two different perspectives; confronting the homosexual movement on one side, and challenging the feminist movement (both lesbian and heterosexual groups or individuals), on the other. From a starting point of joint mobilization, within the movement the relationship between homosexual men and women soon became conflicting, a trait that can still be observed between homosexual mixed gender and female only groups nowadays. The lack of sensitivity demonstrated by gay activists to themes of female subordination led lesbian women to choose between creating their own specific place in the spaces available in male homosexual groups, or to move towards movement separatism – the previously mentioned 'impulse of separatism', in the words of Sedgwick (1990). In fact, we observe that both in the past and in the present, the criticism of the institutions of patriarchy – mainly the family and its function in the reproduction of gender

inequality – is a topic broached almost exclusively by lesbian groups. Nowadays, in addition to lesbian groups, female activists of the radical left, and particularly queer groups, as outlined in the next sections, endorse this critique.

5.1.2 *Christifideles Laici*: Between the Vatican Church and Lay Movements

I am the vine and you are the branches

–Jesus in John 15, 5

In Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (1988)²⁴ on 'The Dignity of the Lay Faithful in the Church as a Mystery', he defines the internal nature of the Church as mysterious, stating "Only from inside the Church's mystery of communion is the 'identity' of the lay faithful made known, and their fundamental dignity revealed. Only within the context of this dignity can their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world be defined." The exhortation continues to identify the lay faithful, citing Pius XII:

The Faithful, more precisely the lay faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church's life; for them the Church is the animating principle for human society. Therefore, they in particular, ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness *not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church*, that is to say, the community of the faithful on earth under the leadership of the Pope, the head of all, and of the Bishops in communion with him. These *are the Church* (...). (John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 1988)

Based on the Pope's exhortation, the Italian Episcopal Conference inaugurated a 'new aggregative season' (Pastoral note of the Episcopal Commission for the Lay, 1993)²⁵, whereby the community of the faithful was divided into associations, groups, and movements: the title *associations* included combinations of an organic structure that were institutionally characterised by their composition of governing bodies and membership. The name *movements* was attributed to those associative groups where the unifying element is not so much an institutional structure but rather

²⁴ Accessed 4.04.2016: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html

²⁵ http://www.chiesacattolica.it/cci_new/documenti_cci/2012-10/12-1047/Le.aggregazioni_laicali.nella.Chiesa.pdf

an adherence to some key ideas and a spirit of communion. Finally, there are *groups* of various types that correspond to those aggregations characterised by a degree of spontaneity of accession, by fluidity and more freedom of activity, self-configuration and a rather small size, which allows for greater homogeneity among members. Along with sociologists, therefore, the Catholic Church itself recognised and legitimised the existence of religious movements.

For the purpose of the analysis, it is important to point to different factors that set Italy apart from other Western countries where similar countermovements exist (Ozzano and Giorgi 2015). The most noticeable factor is the geopolitical position of the Vatican, which accords great influence to the Catholic Church, placing it with strategic proximity to Italian institutions and the public sphere. The positioning of the Church in the Italian socio-political context opens up structural opportunities and repertoires of action that appeal not only to the public opinion at large, but also to decision-makers, as a result of powerful lobbying activities. More specifically, a distinctive trait of the Italian landscape is the direct influence of the Catholic Church in the political activities of right-wing, conservative, and centre left parties; all major political parties belonging to the centre-left have historically maintained a strong basis of Christian members, preventing a real secularisation process from occurring (Ozzano and Giorgi 2015). This can be seen as the legacy of Christian Democracy (DC), a post-war Christian democratic political party that played a leading role in the first phase of the Italian Republic for 50 years, until its dissolution in 1994. For the sake of clarity, I briefly reconstruct the historical development of this dynamic.

In the post- World War II period, the Christian Democracy included both pro-Catholic right- and left-wing factions; it was the first party to have a clearly religious profile, sponsored by the Vatican, and stood in opposition to the Communist Party.

Its main function was to mediate relationships between the Vatican, the Catholic associational network, and the political system, giving it a leading role in the process of politicisation of religion (Giorgi 2015, 21). Importantly, as argued by Giorgi (2015, 21): “[t]his ‘associational nexus’ with the new party guaranteed the Pope and the clergy a strong connection to the party structure. For the party, the network was also an instrument for getting votes, as well as for socializing, with leaders moving frequently between associations and the party”. In brief, it is possible to reconstruct the dynamics between the DC and the Catholic associational world as follows (Ceccarini and Diamanti 2007): during the first Italian Republic, up until the 1960s and 1970s, the DC was considered a Church-sponsored party, based on Catholic identity and anti-communism (Giorgi 2015, 22); the party then began to be affected by internal divisions, particularly after the loss of relevance of its anti-communist role, and of its development as a State-sponsored party. After the party’s dissolution in 1994, a significant proportion of religious voters felt orphaned without a powerful Catholic party to give their support to. In this context, as a consequence of the waning of conventional political influence through a single, hegemonic party, religious issues became highly politicised by different political entrepreneurs, including Catholic movements:

[a] huge internal pluralism exploded, with the establishment of major differences that can still be recognized in contemporary Church. Among Catholic associations, political cleaves emerged more sharply and gave birth to different kinds of spiritual, social, and political engagement. (Giorgi 2015, 22)

A wide range of Catholic associations and movements emerged, introducing different types of commitment, activities, and political orientations, from volunteer work to spiritual groups, and political-religious associations from the left to the right of the political spectrum. Eventually, the Catholic Church had to shift its focus to the

public sphere, calling for politicians and citizens to support its positions, particularly in the realms of family and bioethical issues. Concretely, the call for freedom of conscience within the political arena has continuously prevented, or made particularly challenging, the passing of legislations pertaining to the Vatican's influence in the morally sensitive realms of family, sexuality, and gender equality.

Today, the Catholic Church is perceived by Italian citizens as a *legitimate player*, being active at different levels, getting spectacular attention from national and local media, setting the agenda of public and political debates, and being able to play a dynamic role through the activities of the dense network of Catholic organisations active in Italian civic society (Ozzano and Giorgi 2015, 177). It is important to stress that the Catholic Church as an institution maintains a significant influence in the orientation of public debate at large through a 'master narrative', which also functions as a line of action for both lay movements and politicians. However, taking a closer look at some indicators of the religiosity of Italians, Marzano (2013, 303) poses the question; '[i]s it really true that the Italian Catholic Church has greater resilience than other religious institutions, and that, for this reason, the pace of secularization is slower in Italy than in the other large countries of Western Europe?' Questioning the empirical validity of the 'Catholic effect', which, in the sociological literature, refers to 'findings from national and cross-national survey indicating that, *ceteris paribus*, national or local Catholic monopolies showed more religious vitality than other monopolies' (Diotallevi 2002), several authors, by means of ethnographic fieldwork, have proved that religious practitioners and church attendees represent no more than half of those declared in surveys (Castegnaro and Dalla Zuanna 2006; Enzo *et al.* 2010; Marzano 2013).

Interesting for the scope of this analysis – bearing in mind statements made earlier about youth attitudes towards homosexuality – are the attitudinal differences among age groups in the Italian population, which show the difficulties faced by the Catholic Church in reaching the younger generation. In fact, according to recent studies, one discovers that all the indicators of religiousness, including membership of the Church, have decreased by half in the space of a single generation (Segatti and Brunelli 2010). Moreover, the traditional gender gap between young females and males has tended to converge over the years, demonstrating that now young females behave in a similar way to their male counterparts, and are increasingly disengaging themselves from the Church. Less than 15% of girls born around 1990 attach great importance to religion, which is a similar percentage to the 11.6% of their male peers. All these young people, male and female, are considered less religious than their fathers, and much less religious than their mothers (Castegnaro 2012). In chapter 7 I dig deeper into these questions, to examine the role of religiousness among youth.

Therefore, the erroneous belief in the Church's excessive power, in the words of Marzano (2013), "of an extraordinary 'awakening of the sacred', of religion's resurgence in the public sphere" has to be considered as a "media effect" rather than as a "Catholic effect". On the one hand, the representative Church or the Church of the Pope, the Bishops and the ecclesial hierarchy – which is increasingly detached from its base in the Church of Catholic activists and practitioners, of the priests and the parishes – has occupied the media stage at the national level. On the other hand, and of relevance for this study, the 'life line' of Italian Catholicism has been kept alive through the numerous Catholic schools, associations, groups, cultural centres and specialised press active all over the Italian territory. In particular, the so-called

‘new religious movements’ or, adapted to the Italian context, the ecclesial movements – such as *Comunione e Liberazione* (Communion and Liberation), *Il Cammino Neocatecumenale* (The New Catechumenal Way), *Opus Dei*, *Rinnovamento nello Spirito* (Renewal in the Spirit), *Focolari* (The Focolarists)²⁶ – are the primary subjects of Catholic activism, responsible for the diffusion and expression of Christian values and Catholic morality throughout Italian society. However, contrary to what the ‘media effect’ untruthfully displays, the social force of Catholicism seems to be more superficial than substantive, insofar as there is a discrepancy between the image of ecclesial unity that the media transmits and the reality which is a much more disorganised and uncertain force (Formigoni 2011).

Taking everything into consideration, we can perhaps most accurately say that the Italian religious context is a fractured one – there are dramatic distances and differences between the situations portrayed by the media, political leaders, the episcopate and from the condition of the Italian Catholicism itself; a significant gap between the mass media exposure of the cardinal’s robes, and the strength and vitality of Catholic associations, parishes and crucially of the religious faith of the Italian people. Marzano (2013, 84) outlines that ‘added together, the members of the ecclesial movements, encouraged, supported, pampered and recognized officially as Catholics in effect, are in fact a massive fire power.’ At the macro level, the Church prompted an impressive structural move by according enormous importance and credit to lay movements. In response, these same movements vowed absolute loyalty to Rome and the Pope, functioning not only as the guardians and as strongholds of

²⁶ Although these movements now count large numbers of followers around the world, most of them were founded in Italy or later found their shelter in the Italian context.

Christianity but also as the voices in the streets and squares during demonstrations and campaigns called for by the Vatican leadership.

The strategic alliance between the Church and the Catholic movements has not only allowed for the creation of a semblance of unity and solidity in Italian Catholicism but has also guaranteed a higher degree of conservatism in every area of ecclesial life and bioethical debate, including the anthropological drift of human nature caused by ‘gender ideology’.

5.2 The Catholic Countermovement

The Catholic countermovement is formed by single and compound players of different nature, linked by multiple social, political, economic, and ideological connections, who are active in multiple contexts and arenas. It would be misleading to break down the movement on the basis of pre-established criteria rather than to demonstrate its heterogeneous nature, formed and transformed over time through complex evolving interactions. Although the involvement of the Church as a preferential political ally, or even as a driving force of the ‘anti-gender’ crusade, may seem an obvious choice, there is nothing obvious or natural in recruiting the Church as an ally or an actor in this, or any other, movement with declared political purposes (Heumann and Duyvendak 2015). In fact, despite being historically involved in the public and political spheres, as explained above, within the recent mobilization the Catholic Church has witnessed major debates and internal conflicts over the extent and nature of the political role it plays in gender and sexuality issues, particularly with regard to pro-life and pro-family values. In the following paragraphs, I propose to analyse the Catholic countermovement by taking apart the major actors mobilized

in the ‘anti-gender’ campaign in order to shed light on the platforms and the mobilization channels exploited to promote the campaign, as well as the organisation and the strategies employed to restructure the base’s associational activities for the purpose of mobilization.

5.2.1 Players, Factions, Allies

Mobilization processes guarantee a meeting point between initiators, organisers and the militant base. Without mobilization there can be no action, even in circumstances where a great deal of pressure is applied by the leadership at the top of the organisations constituting the ‘anti-gender’ militant field. Therefore, the analysis of the organisational structures and processes of mobilization is of primary importance, in particular regarding the effectiveness of communication, the mobilization channels, the influence of social networks and the perceived costs and benefits of participation. On the one hand, the initiators of a campaign must mobilize other organisers to jointly set up events and initiatives. On the other hand, the organisers must then answer a crucial question, namely: who makes up the potential militant base and how can they be reached? (Boekkooi and Klandermans 2013)

For the purpose of this study, in keeping with field observations and for the sake of thematic analysis, I propose to investigate the Catholic countermovement according to the following main players: traditionalist Catholics, political entrepreneurs of the Catholic Church, ‘anti-gender’ groups, conservative and populist right-wing political forces, and neo-fascist groups. These groups do not represent the Catholic movement as a whole, but rather a subset of players

coalescing around the specific issue of gender and LGBTQ rights. In this sense, the ‘anti-gender’ mobilization created a new field of contention for Catholic activism.

Traditional Catholics

Traditional Catholics can be defined as the backbone of the Church and include groups, associations and organisations that are traditionally active and publicly involved in the promotion of Catholic morality as expressed in the position of the Vatican. They are critically opposed to liberalism and modernity, championing and raising awareness of issues such as the role of family, right to life, religious freedom, bioethics and regulation of sexual and family policies in the public sphere, with specific reference to natural law. Among the most involved in the ‘anti-gender’ campaign we find promoters of pro-life and pro-family values, particularly: the Forum delle Famiglie (Families Forum) linked to the Movement for Life; Catholic lawyers, such as the association Giuristi per la Vita (Jurists for Life), and so-called expert knowledge engaged in different fields, from neurology to psychology, sociology and pedagogy, especially university professors linked to institutions with a Catholic tradition (for instance, the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan). In addition, among the most active and politicised organisations of the ‘anti-gender’ front there are: Association Scienza&Vita (Science&Life), Notizie ProVita (ProLife News), Azione Cattolica (Catholic Action) and Alleanza Cattolica (Catholic Alliance). These associations have direct access to the political system, either through links with members of congress (the creation of the Parliamentary

Committee for the Family²⁷ is a case in point), or as institutional partners called in as experts to discuss issues considered to be of their competence. Finally Opus Dei and Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (Italian Episcopal Conference – CEI) play an important role as economic and ideological supporters.

Ecclesial movements

This subset of players includes organisations known for their conservatism and their commitment to socially conservative policies on sexual and family issues, whose public presence is more veiled but whose role as ideological, political, and economic supporters is critical to the ‘anti-gender’ campaign. Among the most influential are Comunione e Liberazione, the Cammino Neocatecumenale, the Focolari, and the Rinnovamento nello Spirito.²⁸ The ecclesial movements play an important role in providing spaces and platforms for Catholic activism: church halls, theatres, and other associated facilities. In addition, as detailed below, they form the core of the Catholic militant base for the whole countermovement.

‘Anti-gender’ groups

This set of players includes associations and committees that have been newly formed in response to the increased social and political relevance of LGBTQ rights, and to the innovations proposed by the government in the field of education to

²⁷ The Parliamentary Committee for the Family has been created in 2015 by individual members of the Parliament and the Senate in order to publicly and jointly express their opposition to same-sex partnerships.

²⁸ Most of the ecclesial movements have features similar to the ones of cults or sects. Some of them may even have very different liturgies (for instance, Il Cammino Neocatecumenale) from the ‘official’ liturgy commanded by the Vatican. In general, they differ from traditionalist Catholics insofar the extent to which they approve or refuse the reforms of the Vatican II.

address affectivity and sexuality in schools curriculums. Within this typology we find groups such as Generazione Famiglia – La Manif pour Tous Italia, the Sentinelle in Piedi, Famiglia Domani (Tomorrow’s Family), the Comitato “Sì alla famiglia” (“Yes to Family” Committee), Comitato Difendiamo i Nostri Figli, and La Croce – Comitato “Voglio la mamma” (The Cross – “I want my mom” Committee). These groups operate mostly on the level of disclosure, communication, dissemination, and presence on the streets at events such as Family Day or the Sentinels’ vigils. They represent the ‘face’ and the entrepreneurs of the campaign.



Sources: Generazione Famiglia – LMPTI, retrieved from www.generazionefamiglia.it (left)
 CDFNF, retrieved from: www.difendiamoinostrifigli.it (right)

Figure 6. Logos of Generazione Famiglia and Comitato Difendiamo I Nostri Figli

Conservative and populist right political forces, neo-fascist groups

In particular, representatives, deputies, and councillors belonging to the government’s Popular Area parties (Unione di Centro – Nuovo Centro Destra), and the Lega Nord (Northern League). Members of these parties are particularly active in some regions of Northern Italy, including Lombardy, Veneto, Piedmont and Lazio. In addition, we can count neo-fascist groups of the radical right, such as Forza

Nuova and Casa Pound, which are closely linked to other associations listed above, in particular ProVita and Sentinelle in Piedi, in this category. They support the campaign by making platforms available, organising informative sit-ins, and by disseminating propaganda, appropriating the gender issue to renew their Catholic position, broaden their electoral/militant constituencies and boost their visibility in the media, both at local and national levels.



Source: Forza Nuova Milano, n.d.

Figure 7. Poster by *Forza Nuova* hung outside a school in Milan: “Defend your child from theoreticians of gender and homosexuality”.

5.2.2 Structure, Organisation, Networks

Before entering into a discussion of its merits, it is important to stress that mobilization can be distinguished in the main processes of *agreement* and *activation* (Boekkooi and Klandermans 2013; Granovetter 1983). Reaching consensus or agreement for mobilization is long-term work: a long time is needed, sometimes years, to convince people of the importance and legitimacy of the points of view of a movement. Activation concerns the transformation of consent into action, the existing formal and informal networks in mobilizing structures, and is a process that evolves in stages. First of all, the transformation of sympathisers, namely that part of the population who sympathises with the cause of the movement, into participants must occur. The fact that someone sympathises with the cause of a movement does not guarantee that she or he is ready or willing to participate. Later on, those who are motivated to participate must actually be persuaded and encouraged to take part in the specific activities proposed by the movement. I explore in more detail the frames used for recruiting strategies in chapter 6.

Bourdieu argues that social capital is formed by connections with other people as part of networks, namely:

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital (...). (Bourdieu 2007, 88)

Alternatively, we can approach networks as a way of operationalizing social structure in order to explain patterns of recruitment (Jasper 1997). Some social networks are particularly useful in the construction of a mobilization base, because they are constituted by activists in ‘abeyance’ (Taylor and Crossley 2013). Although

inactive, these networks are maintained; activists are immersed in their everyday lives, but they may re-emerge and be reactivated for new purposes, in a sense, ‘reformatted’ when a specific problem arises. Between protests, such groups remain ‘pending’, they do not initiate or put in place large-scale activities, but cultivate an active network and organisation that can easily be rekindled when a new campaign begins. This dynamic is exemplified in the interval of time between one Family Day and the next, as well as in the Standing Sentinels’ waves of activity for the discussion of the Scalfarotto bill first, and the Cirinnà bill subsequently.

The religious community, which includes practicing Catholics, evangelicals and evangelists, and organisations, groups and associations with different vocations, has not always had a political involvement beyond its spiritual mandate. It is precisely in the context of this new campaign, propelled from the institutional centres of the Catholic Church, that this potential pool of militancy has been actively and strategically recruited through concrete actions; dissemination of a mobilizing ideological framework, consensus production, and activation by the promoters of the Catholic countermovement. We must question which networks are mobilised (rather than others) and why, and most importantly, when and how a specific network develop for political purposes, out of protest itself. The concept of *social appropriation* refers precisely to the process of recruiting from groups and networks that already exist and have organised for some other purpose, and the subsequent transformation of their members into political actors for the cause at hand. In this sense, religious groups and organisations are politicised through recruitment strategies. Instead of taking the relationship between social conservatism and religion for granted, we must try to understand how and why certain religious realities have become favoured platforms for Catholic, and particularly ‘anti-gender’

activism. For this purpose, it is essential to analyse the strategies and relations between allies and opponents, internal and external group dynamics, networks (Bauman 2000; Castells 1996), and the transmission of cognitive cultural messages through media and discourse (Jasper and Poulsen 1995). The creation of moral panic by movements' promoters (Cohen 2011) as part of framing strategies that creates a sense of outrage among potential recruits, might lead to *self-recruitment* in cases where pre-existing networks are absent. This is particularly true in the case of parents, strangers to the movement, who have been exposed to powerful, extreme symbols and messages, namely moral shocks (as I will explain in the next chapter).

Reducing militant motivation or the formation of ultra conservative social interpretations to a matter of pure belief or religious faith would be misleading. As pointed out by Marzano, "This is [the ecclesial one] the emerging form of 'mobilized' religiosity: anti-theological, anti-intellectualist, high on emotional content, not based on conformity but on sincere adherence" (2013, 91). A shared system of values, founded on Catholic doctrinal principles, constituted the leverage for recruiting groups and individuals who, once incorporated into the movement, become active militants reinterpreting their faith in terms of pro-life, pro-family, and eventually, 'anti-gender' values. It is thus an *identity work process*. In other words, self-identification as an activist of the Catholic movement and as an active member of the 'anti-gender' campaign is clearly the result of movement's recruitment strategies that aimed to found a collective identity to serve as a symbolic resource for future mobilizations (Taylor and Crossley 2013, 27). As further outlined in the second part of the chapter, in-group-out-group dynamics (Gamson 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992) unfold in the creation of an antagonist identity field in which the Catholic identity is seen in opposition to 'otherness', based on a collective imaginary

identifying and detailing the existence, traits, and threat posed by the out-group (Snow and Benford 1988; see chapter 6).

Once the pre-existing platforms are appropriated for the purpose of the ‘anti-gender’ campaign, religious networks help to promote social conservatism. The messages, activism, and initiatives of social conservatives can take a wide variety of forms, including the religious service itself, Bible study groups, religious retreats for young people or married couples, meetings in town halls, schools and universities, voluntary activities for young Catholic activists, as well as in more direct forms of political action, like petitions and demonstrations. A closer look at their structure reveals a limited number of people who appear and act as representatives of different institutions and realities, ranging from medical associations to social and civil organisations, and religious spaces. The ‘anti-gender’ campaign is therefore built around a relatively small number of militants who are devoted to the cause, who need social, interpersonal and religious networks to expand their capacity for mobilization. This process is called bloc recruitment (Diani 2013) and underlines how different organizations (or entire networks) become connected through one or few individuals who belong to both. In the Italian context, the Church is indispensable for the organisation of large mass mobilizations, and, unlike in other European countries where the involvement of the Church is seen as potentially damaging to the scientific credibility of the issues at stake and the secular nature of the state, in Italy the support of the Catholic Church has given legitimacy to the ‘anti-gender’ campaign. Although some organisations emphasise their non-religious nature and highlight the scientific character of their arguments to overshadow the religious dimensions, the latter appear overwhelmingly prevalent in a more careful

analysis of the social and political background of the personalities who are part of the campaign.

The transformation of churches and parishes into platforms for political mobilization requires great efforts from below and sustained support from above. There is an important and complex relationship between religious networks and the ‘anti-gender’ mobilization; most of the so-called ‘anti-gender’ activists are, in a significant way, personally rooted in religious communities and in particular in ecclesial movements. As Mario Adinolfi, director and founder of the specialised Catholic newspaper *La Croce*, himself declares in the *Appeal to the Italian Bishops* on April 19th, 2015, the aim is to promote ‘a real parish by parish mobilization, to prevent the deception at the people’s expense, of the Cirinnà bill’²⁹. In this sense, it is important to remember, as a function of a strategy of prevention and of dialogue with counterparts, that: ‘The last feature of the Catholic world [...] is particularism, namely the privileged link that Catholic militants have with the local context, with social and spiritual reality of which they make direct experience’ (Marzano 2013, 118).

Many of the recently established organisations in the ‘anti-gender’ campaign function with a flexible, non-binding participation and affiliation model. Many new recruits have followed the logic of ‘personalism’ (Lichterman 1996), according to which people feel a personal sense of civic responsibility to participate but do not want to feel limited or bound within a community or group. As an example of this dynamic, we can cite the participation modality adopted by the Standing Sentinels, which gives individuals the chance to take part in one or more vigils, if only as

²⁹ Accessed 15.05.2016: <http://www.lacrocequotidiano.it/articolo/2015/04/18/chiesa/appello-ai-vescovi-italiani>

observers. Groups in several cities, both small and big, organise the vigils independently and spontaneously; this creates a horizontal network of citizens participating simultaneously with other associations, in particular Generazione Famiglia and CDFN who are often present at these events. Although there is a national coordination body for the Standing Sentinels, it is not possible to contact it, because it is purposely kept 'invisible' in order to emphasise the 'spontaneity' of street initiatives.

For the same reason, groups like Generazione Famiglia and CDFN easily allow anyone to open a local group or committee affiliated to the national leadership, and this can be done via simple email exchange without having to face significant bureaucratic procedures. Each group or local committee is allowed to operate independently, by proposing meetings, debates, various initiatives on the basis of their respective local and contextually situated requirements, the only requirement being that they adhere to the general line taken by the national leadership. As one of the coordinators of Generazione Famiglia stresses,

Given the fact that Manif (Generazione Famiglia) is made of parents, families, people who are not involved in the political scene, we are a-politic and a-partitic. Actually we have nothing to gain or to lose in what we do. The committee is made up by people of different age, from 20 to 50, different backgrounds, different religious experiences and sexual orientation; others are politically involved in right-wing parties (Interview n. 34)

This strategy has facilitated the widespread dissemination of activities throughout the country, and particularly in small provincial settings. Citing the *Handbook for the Establishment of Local Committees*³⁰ of the CDFN, which currently operates in sixty cities:

³⁰ Accessed 15.05.2016:
http://www.difendiamoinostrifigli.it/statuto/D03_VADEMECUM_COMITATI%20LOCALI.pdf

The goal is to support the National Committee and recognize and promote their initiatives. [The local committees] are not further associations to be added to those already existing and operating; they're not even a top-down coordination directing other committees as higher instance [...]. Respecting the specificity and autonomy of each group or committee, they cooperate to support initiatives that match the mission of CDNF.

Among the operational guidelines, we read that contact with the media is reserved for the national leadership, in order to guarantee singularity in the indications, information, and political messages given by the organisation.

Even in the case of *Generazione Famiglia*, the association shares a database of activists and participants with other associations (such as the Standing Sentinels, CDNF, and Family Day promoters, to name a few) which is a valuable resource for increasing their presence at street demonstrations. The leadership is closely linked to those of other organisations such as *Giuristi per la Vita*, the *Forum delle Famiglie*, CDNF.

The *Forum delle Famiglie* serves as an effective mobilization coalition, building alliances among its member associations, and is therefore an important indicator of which associations will participate in the organisation of activities in the 'anti-gender' campaign. The Forum has a top-down structure with offices in every represented region, each of which manages the local forums and their member associations. For example, the Lombardy Regional Forum brings together 10 local forums and 28 associations, including Catholic Alliance, Association of Catholic School Parents, National Association of Numerous Families, Movement for Life, Pope John XXIII Association, and Consumers League.

Once the mobilization structure has been assembled, the organisers have to cooperate, negotiate, and make decisions to set up a campaign. The developments of these negotiations affect the processes of *coalition formation* and *consolidation*

(Tilly and Tarrow 2007). This may result in the emergence of divisions within the movement, not only because of ideological differences, but also because of choices regarding the form and modalities of the campaign itself, divisions that can affect future collaborations between different groups. Intra-movement competition dynamics are crucial to understand if we want to truly capture one of the most basic characteristics of social movements, namely the heterogeneous nature of their networks (Diani 1992; Bosi and Davis, forthcoming). As we will see in the last section of this chapter, the same strategic dilemmas can be read and solved differently by different players of the same movement that will opt for competing strategies. During the time period between the Family Day in June 2015, and the next in January 2016, conflicting dynamics were observed within the Catholic countermovement groups, and between the Italian Episcopal Conference and the Family Day's promoters' coalition. This situation led Filippo Savarese, the spokesman of *Generazione Famiglia*, to declare, 'In recent years some important realities of Catholic associations have slowed down, if not completely stopped their activities.' As outlined by Jasper (2001, 293), "[p]eople develop a 'taste' for certain tactics, partly independently of their efficacy in attaining formal external goals (...). Some may pride themselves on their moderate demands and tactics, others on being avant-garde or radical." Indeed, tactical choices are affected by internal movement cultures but also by choices made by other players. In the following section, I analyse the repertoires of action adopted by the countermovement during the campaign.

5.2.3 Repertoires of Action

Repertoires of action are defined as the ‘whole set of means [a group] has for making claims of different types on different individuals’ (Tilly 1986, 2). Yet, repertoires of action are constrained both in space and time, and in many cases, are subject to *repetition* (della Porta and Diani 2006). Before considering the merits of the performed activities and strategies by means of the structures and interactions listed above, it is important to understand that Catholic activists, who are required to use an ethics of citizenship (based on the explanation in the preceding paragraphs about the heterogeneous nature of the movement), may reflect different tastes for tactics. In the most radical case, citizens disagree with the opinion of the majority shareholders on specific laws, and want to publicly express their dissent. To publicly express their disagreement with a particular law or policy, for example to reject the Scalfarotto and Cirinnà decrees, or oppose gender and sexual education legislated by the reform of the so-called ‘Good School’, is a citizen's right. However, the adoption of more defiant tactics which directly violate these laws, such as boycotting courses dedicated to gender equality in schools, refusal to buy textbooks or even protest against faculty's professors, is part of the repertoire of civic disobedience. The repertoire adopted by the countermovement involved a diverse range of said tactics. Here, I will identify the most commonly used approaches during the campaign.

The core strategy of the campaign was organised around three main actions. The first, as already mentioned, were *conferences and public meetings* on ‘gender theory’ and ‘gender ideology’. I analyse their content and discursive strategies in the following chapter. During the period of time between 2014 and 2016, events of this type were scheduled on a weekly basis, everywhere in Italy, from the smallest province to the biggest metropolitan areas. This type of action was notably

significant in terms of *numbers*. Some of the conferences, or public meetings, were also specifically directed toward *sensitisation campaigns* in favour of the *monitoring* of educational activities around gender equality and sexual issues. The large-scale diffusion of these events and the size of the audiences attending, was contingent on the availability of physical spaces – for the most part, they took place in Churches’ properties, municipal halls, and schools. The strong connections with public institutions, at the local and regional levels, granted significant support to the countermovement, not only in terms of economic resources, but also in terms of public legitimacy. Usually, an extensive campaign of information and advertisement preceded the events, through leafleting, articles in specialised (Catholic) press outlets, and all sorts of media communication following the logic explained in the last section. In addition, proselytising and informative activities, such as sit-ins in the streets, in public squares, and outside schools were enacted in between different events. Public display of posters, often with messages that could be deemed abusive, was also very common. One such example happened before a major convention of *Generazione Famiglia* in Rome, in October 2015, when the city was covered with abusive posters displaying slogans such as ‘Stop gay marriage and adoption’, ‘Stop homosexual civil unions’, along with posters of the group *Forza Nuova*.



Sources: Author.

Figure 8. Abusive posters of unknown group (above) and Forza Nuova (below)

The second major type of collective action employed was *demonstration*. In particular, the wave of demonstrations in the form of spontaneous protest that the Standing Sentinels organised in hundreds of Italian public squares, and, this time in the form of national events, the Family Day and Marches for Life. As already stated, the Family Day constitutes the major event which unites activists and associations of the countermovement, as well as sympathisers, in a single public demonstration. These events have been strategically used by the main organisations involved, such as Generation Famiglia and CDFN (the organisers of this protest) as a prime stage to

show the *unity and worthiness* of the movement (Tilly 2002), through the display of coordinated behaviour – such as shared signs, colours, symbols, dress and chants – and the participation of political figures, namely members of the Parliament. As shown in the picture below, symbols and codes were used to transmit the ideological stance of the movement on issues relating to family and gender.



Source: *Generazione Famiglia – LMPTI*, retrieved from: www.generazionefamiglia.it

Figure 9. Demonstrators at the Family Day, January 2016

The third main category of actions employed included *lobbying activities* of various kinds. As already mentioned, the countermovement was granted access to the political arena in different ways, such as attendance at parliamentary hearings, and through direct connections to political parties, members of the Parliament and the Senate. These affiliations helped the movement to gain the support of public administrations on a range of ‘anti-gender’ measures, including the removal of books on sexual and gender education from public libraries and schools, the cancellation of courses in schools, and even the enactment of ‘special measures’ to assist parents in monitoring the spreading of ‘gender ideology’. A case in point is the Lombardy region’s recently established ‘anti-gender helpline’; a service made available to coincide with schools reopening in September 2016, which will be at the disposal of

parents who feel compelled to denounce the spreading of ‘gender ideology’ in public schools.³¹



Source: Lega Nord (left) and Corriere del Veneto (right).

Figure 10. Poster of Lega Nord, supporting the ‘anti-gender’ campaign on behalf of the Lombardy regional council (left), and title of the newspaper *Corriere del Veneto*, announcing the decision of the Veneto region to forbid ‘gender books’ in schools.

I conclude the analysis of the Catholic countermovement by examining the actions and strategies employed by its leaders to expand the mobilization structure and the movement’s network through the notions of *open*, *closed*, and *semi-open channels* (Walgrave and Klandermans 2010). The ideas of open and closed refer to a channel’s scope of audience: closed channels, such as meetings or newsletters, limit their target to their own group; open channels are potentially aimed at everyone, with mass media being the clearest example. In addition to these, there are semi-open channels that set the objective beyond their own group but often only attract

³¹ As reported in the national newspaper, *La Repubblica*: Entrusted to ultra Catholic association AGE, Italian Association of Parents, the ‘Family Helpline’ wanted by the Lombardy Region to counter and control all initiatives dedicated to homosexuality and gender in schools. The anti-gender counselling, or anti-gender phone [...] will be launched as early as September, as announced by the Regional Councillor for Culture of the Northern League, Cristina Cappellini, already the victim of a ‘bombing’ of online retaliation organized to protest against the initiative of the League. Accessed 16.08.2016: http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/07/22/news/sportello_anti_gender_regione_lombardia-144651835/

‘outside’ people who are already interested in, and probably agree on, the matter at hand. The reach of semi-open channels in ‘anti-gender’ mobilization has played a key role in the recruitment and restructuring of the membership base. Contemporary examples of these channels are increasingly online-centred: organisations’ websites, forums, blogs, social networks, and most recently emailing lists. These channels stood out from others for two reasons: firstly, they have been exploited to discredit information transmitted by the national press and to provide an alternative means of communication; and secondly, they were of primary importance in the recruitment of volunteers. As an activist of *Generazione Famiglia* explains:

By chance I sought information by the school my daughter was attending, and I found out that a gender project was there, too. I argued with the Dean and I wanted to know why, despite the fact that I do not have any political role, I couldn't contribute and actively work to get the parents’ voice heard. Someday I got contacted via Facebook by *La Manif Pour Tous Italia*, whose page I was following, they asked me to cooperate and together we opened up a new local committee (Interview n. 33)

The organic dissemination of relevant information through websites, blogs and especially social networks advertised by associations, or shared between the followers themselves, has been instrumental in the spread of ideas and information. Many associations played crucial roles as *brokers* (*Giuristi per la Vita*, *Generazione Famiglia*, *ProVita*, *Sentinelle in Piedi*) in order to form and expand coalitions and develop linkages among groups. The social mechanism of *brokerage*, which corresponds to actors’ ability to ‘produce a new connection between previously unconnected or weakly connected sites’ (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 215; Diani 2003), was set in motion by groups’ leaders who linked their websites to those of other related associations, thus inviting the visitor to follow a ‘Russian Doll’ chain of information and connection. Word of mouth also plays a crucial role in this accumulation process, whether through personal or virtual interactions, and is particularly salient when performed by groups’ influential members who act as

speakers and ‘preachers’ for the ideas of their association. Hence, each group acts as a mouthpiece, as a sounding board, for the positions or actions of the other, generating a growing network of activists to consolidate and expand the foundations of the Catholic countermovement’s social base. By way of an example, lectures and conferences organised primarily by one countermovement group, in many cases, involve several other groups in both the structuring of the event and the appointment of panel speakers which consequently brings together activists, members or sympathisers of group X and group Y who are all taking part in the initiative. Thanks to this kind of semi-open channel, groups are able to make the most of every ideological point of intersection with others, thus maximizing participation and networking between associations.

5.3 The LGBTQ Movement

The aim of this section is therefore to identify the movement’s main players in the campaign for same-sex marriage/partnerships, and the promotion of gender and sexual education in schools.³² These players overlap, to a great extent, with those who later coalesce to defend their claims against the attacks of the ‘anti-gender’ campaign and to respond to the so-called ‘gender paranoia reactionary movement’, as it has been labelled by LGBTQ activists. The ultimate goal of these common efforts is the development of a counter-strategy, based on a counter-narrative and concrete actions both in the public and policy fields. Similarly to the Catholic countermovement analysis proposed above, the following paragraphs do not attempt

³² In this section, I make use of the label in different ways, either using LGBTQ or LGBTQ(I), depending on whether or not is appropriate to integrate queer and intersex groups in the same set of players, which, in turn, depends on the issues at stake or similarity/difference in claim-making.

to present the LGBTQ movement in its entirety, but again aim to examine a subset of actors who played relevant roles in the mobilization and contentious events under query.

5.3.1 Players, Factions, Allies

For the sake of comparison, I make distinctions between the main players in a way which mirrors the criteria adopted for the analysis of actors in the Catholic countermovement. Still, it is important to note that, in comparison to the Catholic countermovement, the LGBTQ movement is significantly less structured, less institutionalised and, as I will explain, differently organised – all of which gives rise to highly volatile coalitions and alliances, resulting from a dispersed, disconnected, yet dense network of personal and organisational relationships. The number of associations and groups active in Italy is almost incalculable; some of the ones analysed in this project reflect the profile of major players within the movement, others I have decided to mention in order to exemplify a specific type of group active in the mobilization.

Identity LGBTQ groups

Under this heading, I refer to the groups and associations that have traditionally been involved in the protection of LGBTQ persons and the promotion of LGBTQ rights. These include historical, pioneering groups at the national level, such as Arcigay and Arcilesbica, Circolo Mario Mieli and Di Gay Project in Rome, and the Movimento Identità Transessuale (MIT – Transsexual Identity Movement). Such groups constitute the backbone of the movement at the national level, proposing

numerous social, political, cultural, and institutional initiatives, and having a leading and influential presence in the biggest Italian cities. In addition, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Rainbow Families) and AGEDO (Association of Homosexual Parents) work throughout the country for the promotion and safeguard of same-sex couples with children, as well as parents with homosexual offspring. Beyond being the biggest in terms of numbers, the major feature of these organisations is that they are among the most institutionalised, interfacing with public authorities at various levels, and functioning as coordinators and organisers for major national events. Arcigay, in particular, is a leading LGBTQ organisation in the media and is positioned as the Italian homosexual organisation for public, political audiences, and outsiders. Beyond the ‘big names’ in the LGBTQ network, a plethora of different groups exist and work in local contexts all over the Italian territory. I note here the presence of LGBTQ students groups in almost every major Italian university, as part of the broader student movement (see, for instance, the groups listed among the interviewees).

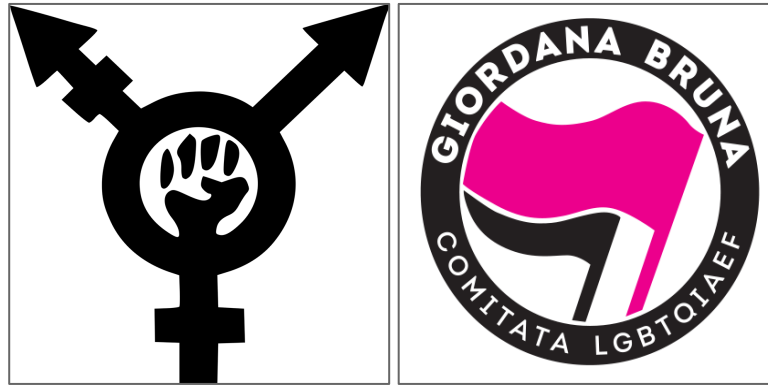
*Queer, Feminist, Radical groups*³³

Among these players, I include other groups of the movement that are more or specifically focused on queer, intersectional, and intersex identities. Given the discussion presented in the previous chapter concerning the ‘queer dilemma’, it is important to differentiate these groups by stressing the queer, intersectional, inclusive, and often, radical nature of their activism. Prominent examples of these

³³ By ‘radical’, I make reference to the distinction made by other scholars (Adam, Duyvendak, Krouwel 1999) between liberal and radical approaches to social protest within the gay and lesbian movement.

players are the Favolosa Coalizione (Fabulous Coalition), the SomMovimentonazioAnale ‘Anal struggle against the Capital’, the Comitata LGBTQIAEF Giordana Bruna (the Giordana Bruna LGBTQ, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Heterosexual, Feminist Committee) against the ‘Catholic-fascist hegemony’, Rompiamo Il Silenzio Bergamo (Break the Silence Bergamo), Intersexioni, Queersquilie, Collettivo Anguane, Squeerto, Laboratorio Smascheramenti, Sguardi SuiGeneris, Mujeres Libres, and Cime di Queer³⁴. What is distinctive about these groups is their focus on the intersection of different battles, finding their *raison d’être* in a common cause. Crucially, they strategically deploy *identity for critique*, as I have already explained. This is particularly true of groups who fight class-based, anti-fascist, feminist, sexual and gender struggles simultaneously. Although the groups are built around sexual and gender issues, the set of goals and policies that they target also encompasses economic, social, cultural, ideological, sexual, religious, medical, environmental, human and animal rights issues. They often propose different sorts of counter-information, counter-culture initiatives and narratives characterised by a powerful performative content. They actively participated in the campaign against the ‘anti-gender’ movement by contributing to public information and knowledge on gender and sexual issues, and maintained a continuous presence in the streets and at counter-demonstrations.

³⁴ The groups’ names are deliberately based on provocative word puns, which makes translation very difficult.



Source: *Squeerto Torino*, retrieved from: <https://ahsqueerto.noblogs.org/> (left)
Comitata LGBTQIAEF Giordana Bruna, retrieved from:
<http://comitatagiordanabruna.blogspot.ch/> (right)

Figure 11. Logos of Squeerto and Comitata Giordana Bruna

‘Pro-gender’ groups and secularly oriented organisations

I mentioned in previous sections that the ‘pro-gender’ stance has been adopted by LGBTQ movements in reaction to ‘anti-gender’ claims. For movement activists, in fact, being ‘pro-gender’ is a fictive position, which does not belong to the movement’s claims or common knowledge. Many activists confirmed that this designation has no meaning to them, in the same way that notions of ‘theory of gender’ and ‘ideology of gender’ do not. Still, for comparison and reasons of completeness, I include here groups that have emerged as a consequence of the outrage caused by ‘anti-gender’ claims, and those whose participants have been activated or re-activated around these issues and whose cooperation in collective action was sustained over time. This includes a variety of groups, in addition to the players mentioned in the last two sections, ranging from well-established secularist organisations who are specialised in the medical, educational, and/or legal fields, to more spontaneous, cause-driven groups. Starting with recently founded groups, we can cite examples such as *Coming Out* and *Un Secco No (A Definite No)*, both of which formed in response to the *Standing Sentinels* and made counter-

demonstrations to the Sentinels their major tactic. The counter-demonstrations were often supported by members of the Pastafarian movement, who jokingly proposed alternative nicknames such as ‘Tagliatelle in Piedi’. To these, I should add more specialised associations, such as NUDI (National Association of Psychologists for the Well-being of LGBTQI people); Certi Diritti (Certain Rights), a politically oriented association linked to the Radical Party, which works closely with governmental and public institutions for the protection of LGBTQI rights; Unione Atei Agnostici Razionalisti (Union of Atheists and Agnostics Rationalists); and, in the legal field, Rete Lenford - Lawyers for LGBTQI Rights. I must also mention, at the institutional level, RE.A.DY (National Network of Public Administration Anti Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity), which reunites over 100 partners divided in municipalities, regions, and public bodies with the aim of sharing good practices against the discrimination of LGBTQI people; and Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (National Office Against Racial Discrimination), within the Ministry of Equal Opportunities which works through a National LGBTQ Strategy, particularly in the area of education.

Political forces of the left, post-Communist groups

Political support for same-sex unions came, mostly, from the post-Communist left, in particular from Sinistra Ecologia Libertà (SEL), the Radical party (secularists), and other minor parties with socialist/ecologist/pro-human rights orientations (Giorgi 2015). Although Prime Minister Renzi's Democratic Party was the official promoter of the draft bill Cirinnà, several factions of the party still hold a strong Catholic identity, particularly on moral and ethical issues, therefore opposing the bill. Besides the debate on civil unions, I would like to include here the groups, associations, collectives, and labour unions from the radical left, who, in recent years, have included the defense of LGBTQ people in their agenda, either by participating in demonstrations, or releasing official statements and press releases. Examples include the Associazione Partigiani d'Italia (ANPI), different antifascist groups, and, importantly for this study, several collectives in the student movement (see for instance the antifascist collective Borroka, in the interviewees list).



Source: Borroka, retrieved from: <http://sostieneborroka.blogspot.ch/>

Figure 12. Poster of the collective *Borroka*: ‘There are only two races: the exploiters and the exploited’

5.3.2 Structure, Organisation, Networks

In many instances, activists stressed the need to ‘fare rete’, that is ‘networking’ with other groups and associations. Management of the movement’s internal conflict has been identified by activists as a necessary condition to create a common front able to contain the spread of the ‘anti-gender’ campaign. Although it must be acknowledged that LGBTQ(I) associations and groups increasingly work in coordination and cooperation with other groups and associations, internal and external to the movement at the local level, cooperation at the national level is almost inexistent. Rather, in Italy, we can observe a division between national and local levels, a breakdown of skills and competencies among different groups, a sort of principle of subsidiarity developed during the movement’s history. Therefore we observe a certain fluidity in the Italian movement that often produces feelings of fragmentation or ineffectiveness of the strategies that are usually not coordinated, but widespread and diffused all over the country. The structureless character of the movement, is a distinctive feature of the Italian LGBTQ(I) community.

The absence of a pyramidal structure is not the only reason for the prevalent factionalism within the movement. We have already seen the complexity in grouping together such diverse groups under a single label ‘LGBTQ(I)’. These groups vary greatly, not only in terms of identity claims, but also in terms of taste for tactics, resources, and, of course, social basis and networks. The reasons to join the movement or become a member of a specific group might change as well. Indeed, another factor found to influence recruitment in this case is prior activism. Particularly, in line with the argument proposed earlier in the thesis on youth and postmodern participation, activists coming from left wing political forces have identified disappointment and dissatisfaction with traditional politics as a reason to

join the movement, which provided young people with an inclusive space for direct participation, expression, and recognition. This pattern is clearly identified in the biographical history of one of the interviewees:

The political disappointment that I and so many other young Communists have suffered was caused by an internal vote in which they decided to count the votes of young people in half, simply because our vote was not convenient for the party. And this, in a leftist party angered enough people; the youth are the manual force, by leafleting, which you always put forward and then when there are important decisions to make, you consider them in half. Here it is almost the opposite. I think it is because the political awareness, political commitment, have another charge whereas activism, particularly personal such as LGBTQ activism, comes to you when you're young, recognizes you as a LGBTQ person, you see that the world around you does not acknowledge you and discriminates you, and you know that you would find your safety in those associations. And there you can also do activism, which attracts many young people, because they are above all those who need it most, there is a recognition that you need. While political activism is not as much of a need for recognition, but for those who want to make a career, wants to change the world and still believe that the political party is an effective medium. There is much difference of age; there are very few young people in the party. After that experience, it was the end of my party activism in the sense that after three campaigns I was fed up so I left the party. In part for political issues, because I came to the conclusion that the organizational form that was better suited to me was not that of a party but something more fluid, such as a collective, self-managed group that did not have any domestic and international constraints. (Interview nr. 3)

Whilst many lesbian and gay associations attract new members through welcome groups and supporting activities, providing protected spaces to live out one's gender identity and sexual orientation openly, and often offering a first point of entry to the LGBTQ community for many individuals, others, particularly feminist, queer, and transgender groups, develop as a consequence of the dissatisfaction with so-called 'mainstream' organisations. They are usually comprised of a base of activists who have already gained experience in other fields, in feminism or anti-fascism campaigns for instance, and more often in the traditional LGBTQ groups, but who became increasingly critical towards their homonormative character, or felt marginalised as a consequence of homonormativity based on middle-class, white, gay, and/or cisgender privileges. The internal conflict can therefore become polarised when activists of the lesbian and gay movement (I am purposely excluding

transgender and bisexual people from this statement, since they are usually the first victims of sexism and transmisogyny within the community) are accused of perpetuating the policing of gender norms and expressions, and, echoing Butler's concern, mimicking binary gender roles. Particularly, this concerns an assumption that part of the community wants to be integrated into mainstream, heterosexual society, by favouring the economic interests and consumerism of the dominant culture, which constitutes a major breaking point within the movement as a whole (to the extent that some queer activists and scholars increasingly refer to the LGB movement as an economic, capitalist, neoliberal movement).

The discussion above leads us once again to the concept of intersectionality, which in this case functions as a governing principle for building alliances, and expanding the mobilizing structure within and outside the movement. Notably, through the mechanism of *attribution of similarity* (Tilly and Tarrow 2007), by which other players are identified as falling within the same category as your own, the LGBTQ movement, including queer groups, have expanded their network through cooperation with other movements, including, among others, the women's movement, particularly in the fields of gender equality and gender violence, the labour movement, and the student's movement. The principle of intersectionality, in a reversed dynamics, has pushed some activists to join the movement because of the connections built among different networks (environmentalist, political, secularist), as an activist explains:

When you are a teenager, you are a little bit more extreme, I had great rage, and I tried to invest it doing something and the political party I thought was the instrument that had more capacity to change, in particular the PC [Communist Party]. Then like all those who come into politics, politics disappoint you, there are too many trade-offs ... In the meantime I was doing a very different job with WWF, and I had met the Union Atheist Agnostics and Rationalists [...] It is thanks to them that I knew the LGBTQ movement. My personal understanding of my identity was one thing, my activism was another. I remember that in my head it was just a parallel path, which then coincided

with my political career of that time because the PC [Communist Party] was defending those rights, and then also with my activism with UAAR [Union of Atheists, Agnostics, and Rationalists], I saw that there was a principle of secularism ... that matched as a discourse, but my identity was in a parallel path. When I came in here [Arcigay] I was already at peace with myself, in the sense that I had already said everything, I had already been declared to the whole world. (Interview nr. 1)

In terms of strategy, these alliances and, in general, the work carried out in conjunction with third party organisations external to the LGBTQ community, has a double advantage – besides taking an intersectional approach that recognises the overlap between different inequalities and social struggles. First, it helps the movement to enhance *visibility* and expand their network into a wider range of fields, thus linking their own cause with other movements' causes. This *cross fertilisation* between movements grants access to additional arenas, physical spaces, connections, and resources, as well as giving activists opportunities to acquire new skills. Second, it has been acknowledged by LGBTQ activists that partnership with organisations outside the community helped them to gain public *legitimacy* and popular acceptance, as well as higher regard from institutions. In fact, as a consequence of the 'anti-gender' campaign, LGBTQ groups have found cooperation with and support from institutions increasingly difficult to obtain.

To conclude, we should emphasise that the 'anti-gender' campaign has strongly affected the LGBTQ movement's connections with public institutions, and increased the amount of effort required on their part to find alternative linkages in the associational world. It is also safe to argue that the feeling of *false certification* (Tilly and Tarrow 2007) experienced by the movement during the months preceding the civil union bill's approbation, might have played a role in delaying the formation of a coordinated response to the 'anti-gender' campaign. As the next section examines, the lack of resources, both physical and economic, and increasingly complicated

relations with the political arena, have oriented the tactical repertoire of the movement towards different strategies.

5.3.3 Repertoires of Action

This section presents the repertoires of action employed by the LGBTQ movement within the context of the ‘anti-gender’ mobilization, highlighting the strategies developed in *response* to the countermovement’s claims and actions.

Although many individual groups, sometimes allied with other local groups, were engaged in actions aimed at countering the rapid development of the ‘anti-gender’ campaign between 2011 to 2016, the first attempt to organise and coordinate a common response at the national level came very late in 2016, when ‘anti-gender’ groups had already had a significant impact at the political and cultural level with huge media exposure. The development of a coordinated response took place within the framework of a national project, ‘Responding to the Gender Paranoia Reactionary Movement’, implemented by Arcigay in coordination with partner organisations AGEDO, Arcilesbica, Certi Diritti, Famiglie Arcobaleno, Intersezioni, MIT, and Rete Lenford. The project represents another example of the *brokerage* mechanism and aimed to trigger a new process of coordinated action. Before discussing the actions and strategies developed within the project, I examine the repertoires employed by different groups, by first explaining the motivations for specific sets of actions, and then providing some examples based on fieldwork.

Following the logic of subsidiarity explained above, it is possible to sort different repertoires of action into several key macro-areas of intervention. Broadly speaking, the means employed can follow one of two different directions depending on the overall strategy and its aims. In addition, this distinction corresponds to Bernstein’s (1997) concepts of ‘identity for critique’ and ‘identity for education’, as two different strategies adopted by the LGBTQ movement. On the one hand, actions are

directed toward *raising awareness* among different audiences, through provision of information to the larger public, education in schools, and training for social service professionals, teachers, and police, to name just a few. In addition, the repertoire includes organising all sorts of social assistance activities for LGBTQ people. On the other hand, movement groups use a different repertoire when the overall strategy consists in *demanding specific rights*, this time directing actions towards political figures and institutions.

In the former case, a wide range of cultural activities is proposed in order to raise awareness. As many interviewees outlined, these activities include book presentations, film screenings, theatrical performances, festivals, sporting activities, public meetings with citizens, leafleting in the streets, and, of course, demonstrations. At these events, activists raise awareness about homophobia and campaign in favour of public visibility of LGBTQ people. As one interviewee explained:

We work on many different levels, we go leafleting in the schools, we go in the clubs where we meet with youngsters and there again, you give them a flyer, you chat with them (...) we are also lucky to have this on-going project in the schools, this year we met over 800 youth and we talk, we share stories, experiences (...) I think that what the committee tries to achieve is to change the collective imaginary of the society in this city, of the people who live the city, rather than pushing and interfacing public institutions (Interview nr. 13)

Of course, online activism via social media is crucial to all of these groups, where, in addition to the promotion of single initiatives, the sharing of news and stories about other LGBTQ experiences happening worldwide constitute a source of inspiration and awareness for both ‘followers’ and ‘members’ of the LGBTQ community. ‘Secret’ or private message threads are also very common among groups’ members, used anonymously in order to protect their identity. Social

networks have also widely been used to post information regarding the activities of ‘anti-gender’ groups, to build a counter-narrative based on their arguments, and to trace the initiatives proposed by the countermovement so as to organise counter-demonstrations or disruptive actions. Online platforms also constitute the main channel through which informative material on gender is distributed to the larger public.

A second set of tactical repertoires included numerous groups engaging in direct contestation with Catholic demonstrators, particularly with members of the Standing Sentinels, and their ‘disruptive attendance’ at ‘anti-gender’ events. Several campaigns were organised to coincide with happenings proposed by the countermovement. A key feature of these demonstrations was performance based on ‘opposite’ codes and symbols, as exemplified by **Figure 13** below.



Source: Author.

Figure 13. Demonstration of the Standing Sentinels (in the left corner), and counterdemonstration by LGBTQ groups, Piazza del Popolo, Cesena, February 2015

Other actions included programming workshops and courses on gender in order to ‘clarify’ the scientific meaning of gender studies and highlight the importance of

gender and sexual education, while simultaneously acting as platforms to call for boycotts against specific groups or communities.



Source: Comitata Giordana Bruna

Figure 14. Poster by queer collectives inviting its audience to boycott homophobic parishes (#BoycottYourHomophobicParish)

Stressing again the close links between online and offline activism, another interviewee claimed:

Nowadays, if an association wants to take roots among youth, it must use social networks. There is a difference in this, between who was fighting in the 1970s, when it did not matter if a struggle was graphic and if you could put pictures on Facebook. Now you need to do something that strikes, colourful and beautiful...People watch the video of your protest and you get 1000 likes, instead of 300” (Interview nr. 2).

The practice of flashmobbing, probably the most diffused and repeated performance among LGBTQ groups, would in fact lose much of its *raison d’être* if it could not be adequately reported on social media channels. The symbolic dimension of this practice and other forms of street performance, in addition to being easily reproducible in different contexts nation-wide thus enhancing diffusion and visibility, is their capacity to ‘build community’ with the audience. An example of this effective type of performance, as reported by an interviewee, is the tradition on “the day of the victims of transphobia when we go to the square and we list out loud

all the victims' names (...) you keep on listening to a river of names that never comes to an end, and then you tell yourself 'ah, maybe transphobia really exists'. We also go to visit the monument for homosexual victims of the holocaust, and so on. All this is highly symbolic for us, because visibility is important" (Interview nr. 10). Other instances include the national initiative *Piazzate d'Amore #lostessosi* (Squares of Love #thesameyes) within the framework of the campaign for same-sex marriage, which involved the reproduction of the same performance (see picture below) in different squares throughout Italy, on the occasion of St. Valentine's Day. Similarly, a major initiative which took place nationwide in Italy and at an international level across Europe, also within the context of the pro-marriage campaign, was the *Sveglia Italia #èoradiesserecivili* (Wake up Italy #nowistime) demonstration during the negotiation of the civil unions bill. These emblematic events played an important role in the movement's 'self-representation' strategy, by publicly displaying the number, force and commitment of actors (Tilly and Tarrow 2007).



Source: Arcigay

Figure 15. Posters of the pro-civil union campaigns *Piazzate d'Amore* (left) and *Sveglia Italia* (right)

In line with my statement about community building, it is important to note that most of the initiatives proposed by LGBTQ groups not only aimed to raise public visibility through symbolic performances, but also sought to engender direct participation with the public, often in ironic, playful ways. During counter-demonstrations to ‘anti-gender’ groups, for instance, many initiatives were oriented to a family audience, offering biscuits, pizza and even pasta dishes at events to engage young participants; a strategy that directly challenges the narrative of groups opposed to so-called ‘rainbow families’. With a more ironic take on this approach, one interviewee told me about their initiative to distribute herbal tea with fennel in the streets, making a pun on the term *finocchio* (fennel) to re-appropriate this derogative expression used in the Italian vernacular to define homosexual men. With their cup of tea, my interviewee wanted bystanders to take a biscuit, a famous type of biscuit in the Italian industry called *abbracci* (literally, ‘hugs’), asking them if they would rather have a biscuit or a real hug, and thereby transcending the barrier of having physical contact with a homosexual person. To continue assessing the diversity of actions undertaken, another activist explained how “we put in motion different dynamics, ranging from direct messages with slogans, flags and shouting, to mockery, parody, and glitter bombing: we shoot you with glitter that is harmless, we cover you with sparkles” (Interview nr. 17). Finally, I must mention transvestism, which is often practised within the ‘walls’ of the LGBTQ community, but less so out in public (as I explore in detail in chapter 7). As a means to convey a message, however, some initiatives that took place at the local level in Italy, took transvestism as a medium. Here we can cite the example of a performance by a group of drag queens during sporting events in Bologna in 2015 (basketball and football matches, sporting stores). The aim was to place and picture drag queens in an ‘unexpected’

context, in order to “get in touch with the people (...), exploit the showiness to make people curious about what is going on, and maybe eventually transmit a message” (Interview nr. 17). Here we recall Butler’s stress on the importance of the publicization of theatrical agency through drag performativity (1993, 176). In this example, the citation of gender norms emerges as theatrical in a context – sports – where both hetero and masculine bodies, sexualities and norms dominate as the ‘real’, ‘authentic’ referent. In this sense, the embodiment of femininity by ‘male’ bodies in a heterosexually hegemonic domain effectively renders hyperbolic the ontological presuppositions at play. As Butler explains, the point about drag is not only to expose gender norms as non-natural and non-necessary, but also to amplify the mechanisms through which they are altered when reproduced in a context that defies expectations (2004, 218). The important question is, as the activists emphasised, how to enter the political by transmitting a message. Again, the key is to make people question what is real, which norms govern reality and how they can be reworked through alternative modes of being, as embodied by drag performers.



Source: Arcigay Il Cassero LGBT Centre

Figure 16. Drag queens’ performance by Arcigay’s activists

Actions developed within the context of schools, as we have seen, have been one of the primary targets of the Catholic countermovement. An increasing number of LGBTQ groups have worked in primary and secondary schools, in close cooperation with public institutions, within the framework of gender education, particularly with the aim of raising awareness about the diversity of gender identities and family models. This was also identified as one of the core areas in which a counter strategy was needed, in order to provide a response to the harsh repression operated by ‘anti-gender’ groups. I turn now to the analysis of the counterstrategies undertaken in response to the ‘anti-gender’ mobilization.

The Responding to Gender Paranoia Reactionary Movement project, started in the Spring 2016, with the aim of analysing the ‘anti-gender’ movement to share the results with different realities and develop future strategies.³⁵ The three main areas for action were education, public events, and communication strategy. In each of these areas the movement attempted to develop strategic objectives, implement good practices and repertoires of action, consolidate points of strength, and to review mistakes made in the past. Because of the position the movement found itself in as a consequence of the ‘anti-gender’ mobilization, the starting point for developing a counterstrategy was a process of self-reflection, and criticism of the work undertaken by the LGBTQ associations and the ‘anti-gender’ associations, in an attempt to identify points of weakness and strength in order to understand the evolution of the current situation and the next moves to be taken. It is important to note that the ‘anti-gender’ campaign signalled a turning point for the LGBTQ movement, providing a

³⁵ Since it has been organised as a ‘confidential’ project, I will not directly mention participant organisations, suffice to say that there were 28 different LGBTQI organisations involved in the project, covering most of the Italian territory. The participants’ profiles included students, researchers, teachers, psychologists, LGBTQ Christians, lawyers, media specialists, and parents.

single opportunity for self-reflection among members, and highlighting the necessity for coordinated action nation wide, an almost unobserved event in the history of the movement.

Among the major problems identified by the participants, the fragmentation of the LGBTQ(I) movement's voices and actions constituted a great source of weakness. First, the communication strategies employed within the movement are often 'unclear' and filled with 'technicality' about gender and sexual themes, which results in confused and dispersed narratives, with a risk that they may be instrumentalised by the opponents. Compared to the Catholic countermovement, in fact, the unwillingness to build strong coalitions among LGBTQ groups makes it difficult for the movement to portray a clearly identifiable front to oppose the 'anti-gender' groups. The need to reach out to the broader audience is thus based on shared knowledge, a foundation from which to build a stronger identity, through a single-voiced, accessible narrative. This entails the mechanism of *boundary activation*, whereby the saliency in the distinction of 'us versus them' has been increased (Tilly and Tarrow 2007). In addition, the high level of knowledge, skills, and competences can, under certain circumstances, become an obstacle to the clarity and accessibility of the discourses and explanations proposed to the larger audience. Movement activists have identified this as an ambivalent feature, which is at the same a 'cold' advantage – particularly the scientific nature of the arguments proposed compared to the more 'emotive' ones advanced by 'anti-gender' groups – as well as an obstacle. Still, enhancing knowledge of gender issues remains a priority for the movement, particularly in educational settings, and is often approached through the provision of learning tools for teachers, schools' directors, and social workers.

Another challenge that emerged was the difficulty in building a dialogue with the counterpart, namely the broader Catholic world, as a consequence of differential ideological positions and prejudices, particularly in relation to issues of family rights. Members of trans-queer-feminist groups tend to be particularly radical in their opposition to dialogue with “a world that has oppressed us as women and homosexuals for centuries” so that it becomes very challenging to find a common ground when “such a great power imbalance exists”. Still, other activists insisted on the necessity of proposing a family model as a social construct, by erasing the natural and universal character of the family, and recognising instead its cultural background.

In light of the movement’s internal reflections, as explained above, it is possible to observe that a common ground on which to build a counterstrategy has been found in initiatives directed at the so-called ‘movable middle’. That is, given the difficulties faced in finding strategies to provide a direct response to the Catholic countermovement, it seems that a more feasible and accepted strategy has been to reach out to the general public, calling media attention, gaining visibility and building alliances at the national and transnational level. Once again, the approach of mirroring the strategies of the countermovement, namely through reactionary measures, found little consensus among the LGBTQ movement. On the one hand, delivering speeches on gender at conventions and public assemblies seems acceptable only when there is direct co-participation from the audience, when the public has opportunities to express their ideas and opinions. Giving frontal lectures on gender issues is likely to be a less efficient strategy, especially given the stress put on creating empathy with the audience. Rather, providing clear, concise, and shared informative material to members of the movement and the citizenship

simultaneously would be a favoured option, which guarantees consistency of the messages transmitted. The same kind of consistency is needed in collective actions. The idea is to reproduce and diffuse the same practice – a performance, a demonstration or an initiative of a different kind – on the same day, at the same time all over the country. Performative actions of this sort have shown to be the preferred means of action among the movement's members. Being creative and ironic in cultural and performative initiatives is essential, as different groups have stressed it, and these tactics have been crucial for community building purposes. The use of songs, for instance, has been cited as a major tactical success: singing famous Italian songs during demonstrations, but changing the content of the text to make it ironic and political at the same time, has proven to be very effective in involving the audience.

At the same time, we must again underscore the importance of intersectionality. The underlying reason for advocating a stronger intersectional approach is the need to reach out to those sections of the population who believe that they are not directly touched by the LGBTQ cause. As many queer collectives have claimed, the intersection of different struggles is at the basis of a common understanding of rights and equality. The idea of linking gender, sexual, migration, race, and welfare issues finds its rationale in the principle of auto-determination. This cross-movement fertilisation would give the LGBTQ movement opportunities to build broader alliances and gain more visibility during third-party associations' events, making affiliations with members of other movements. As reported in the 'Declaration of

Independence of the People of Twisted Lands by the queer movement

SomMovimentonazioAnale:³⁶

We are not only a more colourful and crazy segment in pride events, we are not the last letter of LGBTQ, we are not the latest idea of radical dissident sexuality, we are not the ones that “we want this, but also that”, and even the homosexual branch of heterosexual radical movements: this queer wave comes from networks of relationships and exchange, from a heterogeneous political space, experimental, structured, horizontal and always open, from which we see - because we live on our skin and in our bodies - connections between compulsory heterosexuality, racism, borders, neo-liberalism, welfare cuts and austerity policies, job insecurity and labour exploitation, reducing the spaces of dissent and political self-organization from below, acceptance can but always partial, conditioning and paternalistic of gays and lesbians in the ranks of respectable people.

This quote clearly underlines the need for the strategic deployment of *encompassing identities* in order to face the challenges posed by the ‘anti-gender’ campaign, and social conservatism more generally. To conclude, this section has attempted to put into perspective the different and competing cultures of protest of both movements. Following the ‘recent identity arguments [that] reject the commonplace opposition between identity as expressive and strategy as instrumental’ (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 296), I highlight the different roles that identity played in movements’ interactions. Moreover, I showed how movement identities could distance themselves for strategic reasons, depending on the recognition of bystanders, opponents, authorities, and other actors.

³⁶ SomMovimentonazioAnale, *Declaration of Independence of the People of Twisted Lands*, posted 5.05.2016: <https://sommovimentonazioanale.noblogs.org/>

5.4 Opposing Collective Identities: Dilemmas

I discuss here the mechanisms and processes underlying the organisation and extension dilemmas – when groups became more bureaucratic, more radical, divided and how this affected internal movement cultures.

Before getting into the empirical details, it is perhaps important to resume a key element of the ‘queer dilemma’ presented in previous chapters. Indeed, we have seen how the production of a coherent lesbian and gay identity at the political level is experienced by many activists as problematic, particularly in the context of alliance-building. On this point, Butler reminds us that alliances based on fixed identifications are foreclosing the inclusion of subordinated groups and fails to take into account the fact that most activists are themselves at the crossing of different subject-positions:

The insistence on coherent identity as a point of departure presumes that what a “subject” is is already known, already fixed, and that that ready-made subject might enter the world to renegotiate its place. But if that very subject produces its coherence at the cost of its own complexity, the crossings of identifications of which it is itself composed, then that subject forecloses the kinds of contestatory connections that might democratize the field of its own operation. (2011 [1993], 77)

In this respect, issues of coalition building, as well as collective identity cross-cut both dilemmas of organisation and extension at different levels. Although a case has been made around ‘queer’ identities in the LGBTQ movement, we can agree with Butler that the production of a coherent identity – be that on the basis of coherent heterosexuality or homosexuality – is accompanied by (identity) processes of opposition, rejection, and exclusion.

Organisation

As we have seen, the organisation dilemma revolves around the extent to which formal bureaucratisation and structured organisation helps or hurts movements (Jasper 2004). Issues of *bureaucratisation*, *formalisation*, and *centralisation* are therefore important to consider for the success of collective action. Generally speaking, we observed divergent trajectories in the organisational structure between Catholic countermovement and LGBTQ movement.

On the one hand, the organisation of the Catholic countermovement has increasingly developed towards more *formalisation* and *centralisation* around few key players. We observe a progressive structuring of the movement around CDNF and Generazione Famiglia that act at the top of the countermovement as representatives and coordinators, ensuring leadership. In this sense, the countermovement is formalised by acquiring an organised form that performs the unity of the countermovement through a collective identity easily recognizable within the militant field, outside the political arena, and in the media. The 2014-2015 season marked the transition from widespread but loosely coordinated action to a structured mobilization. Still, the level of *bureaucratisation* has been maintained relatively low in order to facilitate grassroots participation and the capillary spreading of the movement throughout the country by granting autonomy to the periphery.

On the other hand, given the enormous diversity of the groups and organisations composing the LGBTQ movement and the lack of a hierarchical structure – which makes it almost exempted from issues of formalisation and bureaucratisation – it is important to note that despite the high degree of internal fragmentation, the development of the ‘anti-gender’ mobilization constitutes one of such social conflict

that pushed the LGBTQ movement towards a re-composition of internal voices and made possible the identification of a common enemy. As Butler put it, “[w]ithout the presupposition or goal of ‘unity’, which is, in either case, always instituted at a conceptual level, provisional unities might emerge in the context of concrete actions that have purposes other than the articulation of identity” (1990, 21). In this case, a concrete attempt towards unity and *centralisation* is represented by the RGP project, led by a consortium of several LGBTQ groups. Yet, the movement ‘failed’ to unify around a well-organised structure and act in a coordinated fashion but nonetheless provided groups with a ‘goal of unity’. In particular, the ‘anti-gender’ campaign had a clear influence on the LGBTQ movement as it pushed its activism into different arenas, as well as on resources (money, volunteers, connections to elites). It is in this context that several LGBTQ groups attempt to join and focus their efforts in a more organised way, under the lead of key resourceful players in the movement. In this sense, the project represents another concrete example of *brokerage*. It is fair to argue that the strength of the LGBTQ remains, ultimately, the unwillingness to regroup around a coherent identity, yet achieving provisional unity in opposition to specific political goals, while acknowledging the existence of a plurality of identifications.

However, contrary to some positions of the Catholic community who reacted by declaring themselves open to the recognition of certain rights of homosexual couples, the promoters of the ‘anti-gender’ campaign defend a position of radical rejection of any possible legal recognition of homosexual unions (with or without stepchild adoption), to the extent that, according to them, the institution of the traditional and natural family is the only legitimate union that the State must recognise and guarantee. For this reason, a political change is observed in the spring

of 2016 facing the prospect of the civil unions bill's approval. After three years of campaigning, the countermovement took an additional step towards *institutionalisation* with the creation of a political party. Similar to the strategic move taken by the French *Manif Pour Tous*, we assist to the creation of the Italian party *Popolo della Famiglia* on March the 11th 2016, headed by the leaders of the Catholic countermovement (La Croce's Mario Adinolfi and *Giuristi per la Vita*'s Gianfranco Amato). As I will outline in the next chapter, the decision to form a political party has to be appreciated in the context of a shift in the countermovement's goals. In this sense, the countermovement sized the political opportunity provided by the administrative elections of June 2016 to further formalise and centralise its organisational structure.

Overall, both movements attempted to centralise their efforts at different stages of the campaign. While the Catholic countermovement has proved successful in formalising its constituency around few key players, to the point of institutionalise it into a political party, the LGBTQ movement has faced major difficulties in trying to formally coordinate its actions. Eventually, we can sustain that both resolutions have worked for both movements. The presumed failed attempt to form a united front against the countermovement still granted the LGBTQ movement the advantage of promoting grassroots activism and its disruptive character. The centralisation and institutionalisation of the Catholic countermovement, on the other hand, helped the leadership making connections to additional arenas, particularly party politics.

Extension

A further dilemma faced by the movements relates to the *extension* of their mobilizing structure and the extent to which this process affects the coherence of movement's goals and actions. As we have seen, the processes and mechanisms in place in this case were *social appropriation* of previously existing non-political religious groups and networks for the Catholic countermovement, and the *attribution of similarity* (Tilly and Tarrow 2007) for the LGBTQ movement. In addition, both movements managed different choices through *brokerage*.

Starting with the Catholic countermovement, we observed that an increasing *polarisation* is installed between coalitions, particularly as a consequence of *radicalisation* and *escalation* processes (Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Kriesi 1996) of some groups – Generazione Famiglia, CDNF, Notizie ProVita, Giuristi per la Vita – that shifted toward increased assertiveness and pushed for a more contentious repertoire of action, on the front line, more deployed. This trend pushed the countermovement towards gaining the adhesion of radical right and neo-fascist groups, such as Forza Nuova and Casa Pound. However, it also put the leadership in a rather uncomfortable position and in front of a new dilemma. The *radical-flank* dilemma (as part of the extension dilemma), defines precisely the extent to which 'extreme words and actions get attention, and often take opponents by surprise, but they usually play poorly with bystanders and authorities' (Jasper 2002, 13). It is safe to affirm that rather than taking opponents by surprise, such moves created great discomfort within the countermovement's coalition and the Vatican authorities. In fact, the Catholic Church has started a reflective pause, creating a moment of confrontation between the Pontiff, bishops, and ecclesial movements in view of the 2016 Family Day event. The different evaluation concerning the most appropriate

and effective repertoire of action to adopt for the campaign has led some ecclesial movements to *defect* from the coalition and the event, as is the case of *Comunione e Liberazione* and *Focolari*, following Pope Francis line of action. Actually, Bergoglio did not grant audience to Family Day's organizers and did not mention the event neither before nor after its occurrence, thus triggering a mechanism of *decertification*, that is, an external authority's signal that it is withdrawing recognition and support from an actor (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 215).

Among the possible reasons for this gap between the Pope and an event called and blessed by Italian bishops stands the fact that Pope Francis' style and language is indeed different from the ones adopted by Family Day's promoters, despite the attempt of the organizers to give a positive message and not 'against' someone. The Pope redefined its relationship with Catholic movements and bishops in general: Bergoglio's Church is in fact a church of the people, as the Pope himself stressed several times in his speeches, and not the church of political and cultural elites. However, factions of the Church hierarchy and the ecclesial movements insist on going to 'the conquest of public space [...], use the best weapons of the public sphere to form citizens' opinion and exert influence on institutions with the purpose of directing or shaping policy decisions' (Urbinati 2013, 159).

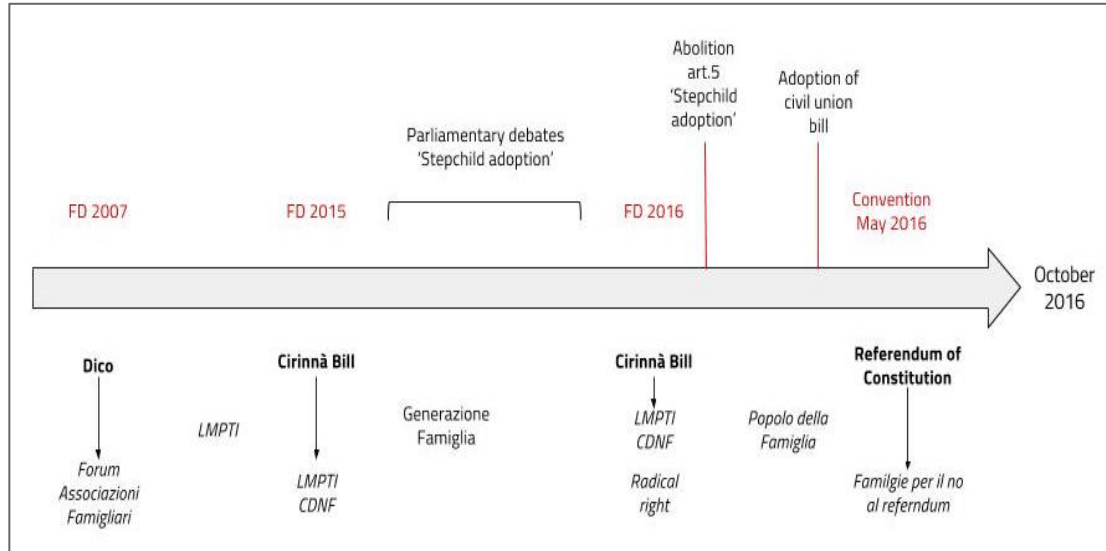
As a consequence of these developments, the LGBTQ movement was confronted with different choices. In envisioning tactics to undertake in response to the countermovement's actions, the LGBTQ movement expressed the need to 'fare rete', that is 'networking' with other groups and associations. In this sense, we must underscore the importance of intersectionality principle. The underlying reason for advocating a stronger intersectional approach is the need to reach out to those sections of the population who believe that they are not directly touched by the

LGBTQ cause. As many queer collectives have claimed, the intersection of different struggles is at the basis of a common understanding of rights and equality. The idea of linking gender, sexual, migration, race, and welfare issues finds its rationale in the principle of auto-determination, or in the common destiny of living precarious lives, as Butler argues (2015) – that is, lives who do not qualify as intelligible, livable, and for recognition under conditions of precarity. As encapsulated in the discourses presented in the next chapter, the notion of precarity elaborated in the work of Butler (2015), underlies principles of alliance among different – vulnerable, marginalised, invisible – bodies in collective performances.

Notably, the LGBTQ movement has increasingly expanded its mobilising structure and network through cooperation with other movements. In terms of strategy, these alliances and, in general, the work carried out in conjunction with third party organisations external to the LGBTQ community, provided the double advantage of enhancing visibility by attributing similarity to other movement's causes, along with legitimacy and recognition. Here again, we want to underscore the potential for political deconstruction and democratic contestation of 'queer politics', by safeguarding its contingency as a 'discursive site whose uses are not fully constrained in advance [...]', creating new opportunities for alliances among different movements' constituencies. (Butler 2011 [1993], 172-73)

In sum, the decisions taken by both movements in relation to the extension dilemma have played differently on the outcome of the mobilisation. Particularly, in the case of Catholic groups, the extension of the movement's coalition to a growing number of groups, including and especially extremist groups from the right, had a negative effect on bystanders, public opinion, institutions and religious authorities. In contrast, the LGBTQ movement demonstrated of being able to build strategic

alliances with different movements and associational sectors thank to the stress put on the intersectional nature of its work.



Source: Author's elaboration

Figure 17. Mobilization Timeline

Chapter 6

Public Narratives and Framing Strategies

After analysing the players, arenas, tactical repertoires and strategies adopted by the LGBTQ and the Catholic movements, I turn now to the examination of the contention at the discursive level. If we try to outline a timeline of frame encounters on LGBTQ rights and same-sex unions, it is possible to identify three phases that shaped the debate preceding the current campaign (Giorgi 2015, 152-154). In the period from 2000-2006, both the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic Church contributed to making the issue of same-sex marriage public. In this context, the LGBTQ movement framed same-sex marriage as a matter of non-discrimination and human rights. In contrast with the traditional and conservative stance of the countermovement, the LGBTQ community articulated the need to change the legislation on marriage in order to bridge a gap with other Western countries. This position was reinforced when the European Parliament approved a resolution against discrimination towards homosexual people in 2003. As the issue entered parties' political agendas in 2005-2006, and subsequently the parliamentary agenda in 2006-2008 with a draft bill to recognise domestic partnerships under the name DICO (*Disciplina dei diritti e dei doveri di reciprocità dei conviventi*, in English 'Rights and duties of stable cohabitants'), the rhetoric of the debate became increasingly polarised between alternative interpretations of 'tradition versus change' and 'private versus public'. On the one hand, the countermovement identified an injustice in the legalisation of same-sex unions; they viewed the institution as a means of officially granting 'special rights' to LGBTQ people. On the other hand, the LGBTQ

movement identified the lack of legal recognition of the community's rights – be it in terms of same-sex marriage, right to adoption, ART, or the punishment of homophobia – as discriminatory. In this sense, sexual citizenship and democracy has come to define hierarchies between the states that legally recognise and protect LGBTQ rights, and those, such as Italy, that are falling behind in this domain.

This chapter represents an important piece of the analysis, adding equally significant data on the cultural messages transmitted across movements. Through frame analysis, I intend to investigate the public narratives on gender and sexuality that have been strategically constructed and conveyed by movements' leaders and activists. An increasing number of works have focused on the analysis of the discursive field in the context of the 'anti-gender' campaign, paying particular attention to the frames advanced by the Catholic countermovement. A significant gap remains in the research in relation to the discourses brought forward by the LGBTQ movement before, during, and as a consequence of the campaign. Moreover, a dialogical analysis of the narratives and counter-narratives has been largely overlooked by scholars so far. My attempt is therefore to present the frames of protest on both sides, and particularly the co-creation of a discursive field on gender and sexuality in Italy within the time frame of the campaign.

The chapter starts with a review of the most important concepts developed in the literature on framing and social movements, as they are useful tools for conducting an empirical analysis; it continues by examining the narratives, discourses, and framing strategies of the Catholic countermovement and then moves to the specificities of the LGBTQ movement's claims. I conclude the analysis by exploring how movement and countermovement present competing interpretations of the 'gender struggle'. Particularly, I compare data on the *reaching in* or *reaching out*

dilemmas (Jasper 2006). As detailed in the methodological chapter, data sources include texts and frame devices collected from public debates, events (conferences and meetings), press releases and official material produced by major actors involved in the discussion.

6.1 Frames of Protest: Conceptualisation

In order to analyse movements' frames of protest, I rely on the conceptual frameworks developed by scholars in the field of frame analysis (Goffman 1974; Snow *et al.* 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Benford and Hunt 1992; Gamson 1992; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Johnston and Noakes 2005). Moreover, in order to fully appreciate how public support is obtained, it is important to pay equal attention (in line with the overall approach of this thesis) to how social movements implement framing strategies; the tactical aspects of framing, and the less strategic aspects linked to how targeted audiences understand and attach meaning to movements' claims (I explore the notion of self-narratives in more depth in chapter 7).

In their review of the core concepts of framing, Noakes and Johnston (2005) identify strategic and expressive dimensions which are reflected in two alternatives, although in some aspects overlapping, conceptions of collective action frames developed by Snow and Benford (1988) and Gamson (1992) respectively. The concept of *frame* refers to “an interpretative schema that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action” (Snow and Benford 1988, 137). In other words, it is a system of making sense provided to potential participants and existing members of a movement in order to generate and guide collective action by

means of three basic framing tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational. The *content* of collective action frames includes different components and is built on a selection of raw cultural material, terms, symbols, values and images which ‘make the case’ for action (Gamson 1992). **Table 8** condenses and relates Snow and Benford, and Gamson’s alternative conceptions of framing, building on the work of Noaks and Johnston (2005, 5-6).

Table 8. Basic Framing Tasks and Components of Collective Action Frames

Basic framing tasks (Snow and Benford)	Components of collective action frames (Gamson)
Diagnostic: present potential recruits with new interpretations of a social issue; identification of a problem and ascription of blame for the problem	Identity: identify the ‘we’ and the ‘them’
Prognostic: present a solution to the identified problem	Agency: encourages those identified in the ‘we’ to become agents of social change
Motivational: motivate people to join collective action and implement the proposed solution in practice	Injustice: ‘hot cognition’ that something is wrong and must be changed; place the blame on individuals composing ‘them’

Source: Author’s elaboration from Noakes and Johnston, 2005: 5-6

As Noakes and Johnston (2005, 6) noted, ‘the major difference between these alternative conceptions of collective action frames concerns the role of injustice in mobilization. [...] Snow and Benford explain the work of frames in the mobilization process from the perspective of social movement, Gamson from the perspective of potential participants’. Although the similarities between the two conceptions have led social movement scholars to privilege Snow and Benford’s model, I believe that both perspectives are useful to understand the interpretative processes of the social events under analysis.

In addition, *resonance* is a property of frames that makes them sound ‘natural and familiar’ (Gamson 1992) and thus renders frame receivers responsive to movements’ claims. In order to resonate with target audiences, frames must link individual and collective experiences, aligning personal interests, values, and beliefs with movements’ goals and ideological orientations (della Porta and Diani 2006, 82). Furthermore, the success of this process depends on the credibility and legitimacy of frame makers and the quality of frames’ content (cultural compatibility, centrality, narrative fidelity). In other words, movement entrepreneurs achieve resonance through different forms of *frame alignment* (Snow *et al.* 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Noakes and Johnston 2005).³⁷ Yet, I concur with the argument that a frame’s resonance is difficult to measure (Johnston 2005). Particularly, I believe that a definite distinction of the various approaches that frame makers use to re-appropriate meanings in order to achieve resonance might be contrived or artificial, and may overshadow the interactive complexity of meaning construction. Therefore, I abstain from providing a clear-cut distinction between these processes in my analysis. Nonetheless, given the case under study, which can be appreciated in Tarrow’s (1998) terms as a ‘struggle for cultural supremacy’, I focus on the discursive tactic of *frame-debunking*, which refers to ‘efforts of SMOs to advance their own ideology by discrediting competing ideologies. [...] Frame debunking is a deliberate engagement with rival claims, for the purpose of undermining their resonance’ (McCaffrey and Keys 2000, 44), in order to shed light on the dialogical aspect of movement and countermovement discourses. In the literature on countermovements, the struggle

³⁷ Snow *et al.* (1986) identify three major forms of frame alignment: 1) *Bridging*: linking previously unconnected frames/interpretations; 2) *Amplification*: particularly through the use of slogans and symbols; 3) *Extension*: the extension of frames to areas important to the target audience.

between pro-choice movements and pro-life countermovements has been examined as a prominent example of framing contests (Staggenborg 1991; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). As I attempt to emphasise in this chapter, movement and countermovement dynamics affect the framing strategies adopted by each side, especially in the selection of issues and solutions they pursue.

6.2 Collective Action Frames among Catholic Activists:

One, No One and One Hundred Thousand³⁸

In recent years, a number of scholars have analysed issues related to the Church's influence on popular and policy preferences, particularly by examining the role of religion and politics both at the theoretical and empirical levels (Giorgi and Ozzano 2015; Giorgi 2016); by considering the interplay between religion and secularism (Marzano 2012; Marzano and Urbinati 2013), and by observing the impact of religious attitudes on conceptions of gender and sexuality (Prearo 2015; Garbagnoli 2014), specifically in the Italian context. Concerning the rise of the Catholic 'anti-gender' countermovement, few scholars have produced critical contributions to explain the ascent of *la théorie du genre* in the French context (Carnac 2014) and *la teoria del gender* in the Italian setting (Garbagnoli 2014; Prearo 2014). Garbagnoli (2014) stresses the importance of critically analysing the goals and functioning of what she labelled as an 'effective and reactionary rhetorical device' (p. 251), namely *the* 'gender theory', while paying particular attention to the social spaces available for its elaboration and diffusion. Carnac (2014), who analysed the development of

³⁸ The title of Luigi Pirandello's novel, *One, No One and One Hundred Thousand* (1926) has been used by Catholic speakers talking about sexuality in reference to the denial of gender and sexual dualism.

the Catholic discourses around sexuality and family in the French and Italian contexts, with a particular focus on the genealogy of ‘gender theory’ and ‘gender ideology’ as objects of discourse, reveals two important results. First, that gender has become a powerful militant claim (Carnac 2014, 128-129) and a political cause, around which the Catholic countermovement has structured its most vehement fight. In this sense, gender is constituted through discourse in the public and political arena, and it is the interpretation of ‘gender’ constructed and voiced by specific actors in this discourse, that make certain ‘anti-gender’ claims possible. Second, we observe a strategic move towards a secularisation of the discourse around gender and sexuality, with reasoning based on bioethics and anthropology, an essentialist vision of human nature, and scientific proof of functional, behavioural and cognitive differences between the sexes (Carnac 2014, 131). Here, Garbagnoli (2014) stresses the institutional (that derives from an institution and institutes something, being performative in this sense) character and logic of a reactionary discourse, which centred on human nature and a pre-social order of sexes and sexualities.

In chapter 5, I underlined how the Catholic countermovement essentially reacts to discourses belonging to feminist and LGBTQ movements’ repertoires. This reaction is based on the opposition to political claims and theoretical concepts that these movements have helped to produce. Moreover, the Catholic countermovement is not only opposed to the claims of feminist and LGBTQ struggles, but also to the epistemic project, negating the legitimacy of the theories underlying these struggles. This reaction against the LGBTQ movement has been iterated through a discursive field that uses the references and stylistic grammar of feminist and LGBTQ

movements in order to pull them apart and to delegitimise them (*frame-debunking*).³⁹

In a sense, it reflects the observation made by other scholars (della Porta 2002) that frames evolve over time and can be employed for purposes other than those for which they were originally intended. In 2012 the neologism ‘Family Day’ entered the Italian *Treccani* dictionary, defined as a ‘manifestation of Catholic associations in favour of traditional family values, organized against the legal recognition of same-sex couples.’⁴⁰ Interestingly, this definition affirms what the promoters of the event repeatedly denied: it was a Catholic event and it was a demonstration against civil unions. For Catholic activists, matters that broach the sexual and family spheres belong to the human order, to what the Vatican has, for the past twenty years, called ‘human anthropology’ in reference to the natural moral law. This project against cultural hegemony, or, in other words, for cultural supremacy, has unfolded over the course of two decades following three major developments: an *anthropological turn* in the Vatican’s public speech – from theology to anthropology; a *linguistic turn* in relation to its interests – the Vatican deals with language, categories, concepts, writing dictionaries and glossaries (as we have seen in the *Lexicon*); and a *bio-political turn* that has moved the object of the Church’s social doctrine from economic injustice and poverty produced by capitalism to gender and sexuality (Garbagnoli 2014; 2016). The last three reports on the social doctrine of the Catholic Church no longer address poverty and the disastrous consequences of capitalism, but

³⁹ As we will see, the reactionary discourse produced by Catholic activists and radical right allies is inscribed in a blend of what Albert O. Hirschman labelled as perversity and jeopardy arguments within a rhetoric of conservatism (1991). In a nutshell, these refer to the ideological and political beliefs that, on the one hand, reform and change will eventually backfire, thus rendering the problem at hand even worse – a radical claim, frontal attack against any form of change; on the other hand, reform will endanger whatever has been previously gained at a significant cost – a more nuanced argument which aims at unveiling the weaknesses of the proposed action, resulting in the ‘exact contrary of the objective being proclaimed and pursued’ (Hirschman 1991, 11).

⁴⁰ Treccani Dictionary Online: [http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/family-day_\(Neologismi\)/](http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/family-day_(Neologismi)/)

focus instead on the dangers of ‘gender’, criticism of postmodern feminism that sponsors gender and that completes the initial battle against biological barriers (such as motherhood), legal manipulation and the threat posed by allowing unions between homosexual persons. As we will see, it is possible to identify several instances of Foucault’s conceptualisation of sexuality in the discourses advanced by Catholic activists, particularly regarding the deployment of sexuality – namely, how do Catholics speak about sexuality and which effects such discourses produce – along with the policing of sexual behaviours and recurrent, implicit, references to the four strategies and figures through which sexuality has been produced. Moreover, as Butler underlines (2011 [1993], 10), when the material positivities, namely that gender and sex are taken as natural givens, bio-power is most effectively dissimulated:

When this material effect is taken as an epistemological point of departure, a sine qua non of some political argumentation, this is a move of empiricist foundationalism that, in accepting the constituted effect as a primary given, successfully buries and masks the genealogy of power relations by which is constituted. (2011 [1993], 10)

In 2003 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a guiding document reporting the *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons*, signed by Cardinal Ratzinger and approved by the Pontiff John Paul II⁴¹. As it is clearly stated in the introduction of the document, ‘Homosexuality is a troubling moral and social phenomenon, even in those countries where it does not present significant legal issues’ (p.1). The aim of this publication was to provide arguments which could be used by Bishops, Catholic politicians, and ‘all the persons committed to promoting and defending the common

⁴¹ Accessed 4.09.2016:
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030731_homosexual-unions_en.html

good of society’ in order to prepare and legitimate ‘specific interventions, appropriate to different situations throughout the world, aimed at protecting and promoting the dignity of marriage, the foundation of the family, and the stability of society, of which this institution is a constitutive element’ (p. 1), through the exercise of their right to conscientious objection and the duty of moral conscience. I purposely cite this document as it constitutes the foundation from which a dominant interpretation, a master frame, emerged and in which particular elaborations of various organisations of the Catholic countermovement and Catholic politicians can be encapsulated. It is crucial to note that, although the document dates back to 2003, it is cited – under the entry ‘Certain complex situations’ (p. 187) – as the main referent in Pope Francis’s post-synodic apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, issued in 2015, on the topic of love in the family⁴². With the aim of analysing how these meanings are declined and re-appropriated by countermovement players, I report the core elements and general orientations that constitute the dominant interpretative frames advanced in the cited document.

Among the principal ethical considerations, we predictably find arguments from the ‘biological and anthropological order’ (2003, 4), which sustain that homosexual unions should not be granted legal recognition because they do not fulfil the purpose of marriage and family, namely procreation, and because they would be harmful to the social and moral development of children, with negative repercussions on behaviour in younger generations:

Homosexual unions are totally lacking in the biological and anthropological elements of marriage and family which would be the basis, on the level of reason, for granting

⁴² Accessed 4.09.2016:
http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_it.pdf

them legal recognition. Such unions are not able to contribute in a proper way to the procreation and survival of the human race. [...] Sexual relations are human when and insofar as they express and promote the mutual assistance of the sexes in marriage and are open to the transmission of new life. [...] As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such union would actually mean doing violence to the children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development. (2003, 4)

These arguments are given weight with a specific interpretation of the ‘social and legal orders’ of reason (2003, 4-5), where ‘by putting homosexual unions on a legal plane analogous to that of marriage and family, the State acts arbitrarily and in contradiction with its duties’ since ‘not even in a remote analogous sense do homosexual unions fulfill the purpose for which marriage and family deserve specific categorical recognition’ and therefore ‘the principles of respect and non-discrimination cannot be invoked to support legal recognition of homosexual unions.’

Although from 2007 to date, the Family Day has been rhetorically described by the event’s spokesperson as a square that unites, a forum for the people and not for the lobby, celebrating women, motherhood, children and the complementarity of the sexes, in 2015 and 2016, the rhetoric was enriched with the elaboration of collective action frames based on the assignment of blame to a clearly identified enemy. Gender is the enemy and the basis for invoking a set of collective, transnationally recognisable action frames, made of pink and blue colour schemes, of images of children to defend, similar logos, references to anthropology and science. In the *Amoris Laetitia*, the Pontiff dedicates a paragraph (56) to gender ideology by clearly defining the terms that have come to inform the content of most of the countermovement’s collective frames:

Yet another challenge is posed by the various forms of an ideology of gender that

denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programs and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time. (2015, 44-46)

The exhortation concludes by highlighting the danger of such ideologies, which manage to ‘assert themselves as absolute and unquestionable, even dictating how children should be raised’ (p. 45). That is, in other words, the dictatorship of the single thought.

Under these ideological orientations, it is possible to pinpoint five different frames that have emerged and been reinforced during the mobilization, which have been identified in other studies in the past (Dugan 2004; Fetner 2008; Giorgi 2015), echoing more or less consistently with previously discussed Sedgwick’s ‘universalising’ and ‘minoritising’ views on sex/gender and homo/hetero definitions:

1. Tradition versus change: civil unions, particularly same-sex unions, represent an attack on the social institution of the traditional family and the Italian identity; versus the legalisation of same-sex marriage as a necessary condition to bridge a civil rights divide between Italy and other Western countries.

2. No special rights versus no discrimination: the approbation of laws protecting LGBTQ people against abuse and discrimination is not seen by Catholics as a formulation of ‘equal rights’ but as an attribution of ‘special rights’ to LGBTQ people that consequently targets freedom of expression based on religious belief; versus the need to recognise the legal protection of LGBTQ people in existing anti-discrimination laws that ban racial discrimination and protect religious affiliation

(regulated in the Mancino bill, 1993).⁴³

3. Public versus private: the regulation of same-sex unions and sexual orientation as a matter of public interest, an action which is positive for society at large; versus same-sex unions and sexual orientation as issues that are personal, private interests, but that thus regulated can be harmful for society.

4. Personal freedom versus state secularism: the interpretation of same-sex unions and homosexuality as a matter of personal freedom that does not require regulation, control or interference from political or religious institutions; versus the need for state institutions to regulate specific aspects of citizens' private lives in order to oppose the Catholic Church's intervention.

5. Diversity versus indifferentism: education about, and recognition of, sexual and gender diversity as an important step towards tolerance, respect, and freedom of choice; versus the abolition of gender binaries through gender ideology as a deliberate attempt to destroy traditional gender roles, heterosexuality, and the model of the 'natural' family.

The following paragraphs outline, in detail, the content of these frames, advanced through the afore-mentioned framing tasks: articulation of the problem, blame assignment, and call to action.

⁴³ The Law of 25 June 1993 n. 205 is a provision of the Italian Republic that sanctions and condemns gestures, actions and slogans related to Nazi ideology, and which have as their aim the incitement to violence and discrimination on racial, ethnic, religious or national basis. It is now the main legislative instrument that Italian law provides for the prosecution of hate crimes. It has long been discussed whether a possible extension of the Mancino law to crimes based on discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is necessary. The proposal (Scalfarotto bill), also as an alternative to the introduction of a specific law in the penal code, has been repeatedly voted on in parliament and never passed.

6.2.1 The Dictatorship of the Single Thought

Cogito ergo sum? Or sum ergo cogito?

– Jacopo Coghe, President of *Generazione Famiglia*

This is one of the first sentences that *Generazione Famiglia*'s Jacopo Coghe enounced during the convention organised for the launch of the association in October 2015 in Rome. During his introductory speech, President Coghe informed the audience by means of an example, taken from Thomas Aquinas, who, according to Coghe, used to begin his lectures with an apple in his hand, saying 'This is an apple, whoever does not agree, can leave the classroom'. 'What does this mean?' continued Coghe, 'It means that *being* is independent from thought. This is an apple. A mom, a dad, and their children form the family. Children are not for sale, and *il gender* exists.' (Jacopo Coghe, Conference in Rome, October 2015)



Source: *Generazione Famiglia*, retrieved from: www.generazionefamiglia.it

Figure 18. Banner of the conference displayed on *Generazione Famiglia*'s website

According to Catholic theorists, the distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, as understood in Cartesian's terms, along with the different lines of thought addressing the dialectic of relations, (in the work of Hegel, Marx and Engels, and

later touched upon in literature on feminism and queer, within which Butler figures as the ‘Pope of gender theory’), constitute the historical and philosophical foundations of the current ‘anthropological war’ opposing the ‘cyber anthropology’ of gender and queer theories with the ‘Christian, natural anthropology’ (Pillon 2014). The former is responsible for the deconstruction of binary dualism and the consequent ‘death of the self’, which, with the help of bio-technologies (clones, assisted reproduction technologies, etc.), would lead to sexual indifferentism. The outcome of this ‘un-raveling’ would not be gender equality, but rather a lethal assault against maternity, the family, and procreation. This is, in short, the rationale for action at the heart of countermovement public discourses, which sketchily retraces the opposition between essentialist and constructivist positions as seen in previous chapters. **Figure 19** below synthesises the historical and philosophical origins of the on going ‘anthropological war’, as they unfold in the countermovement’s discourse.

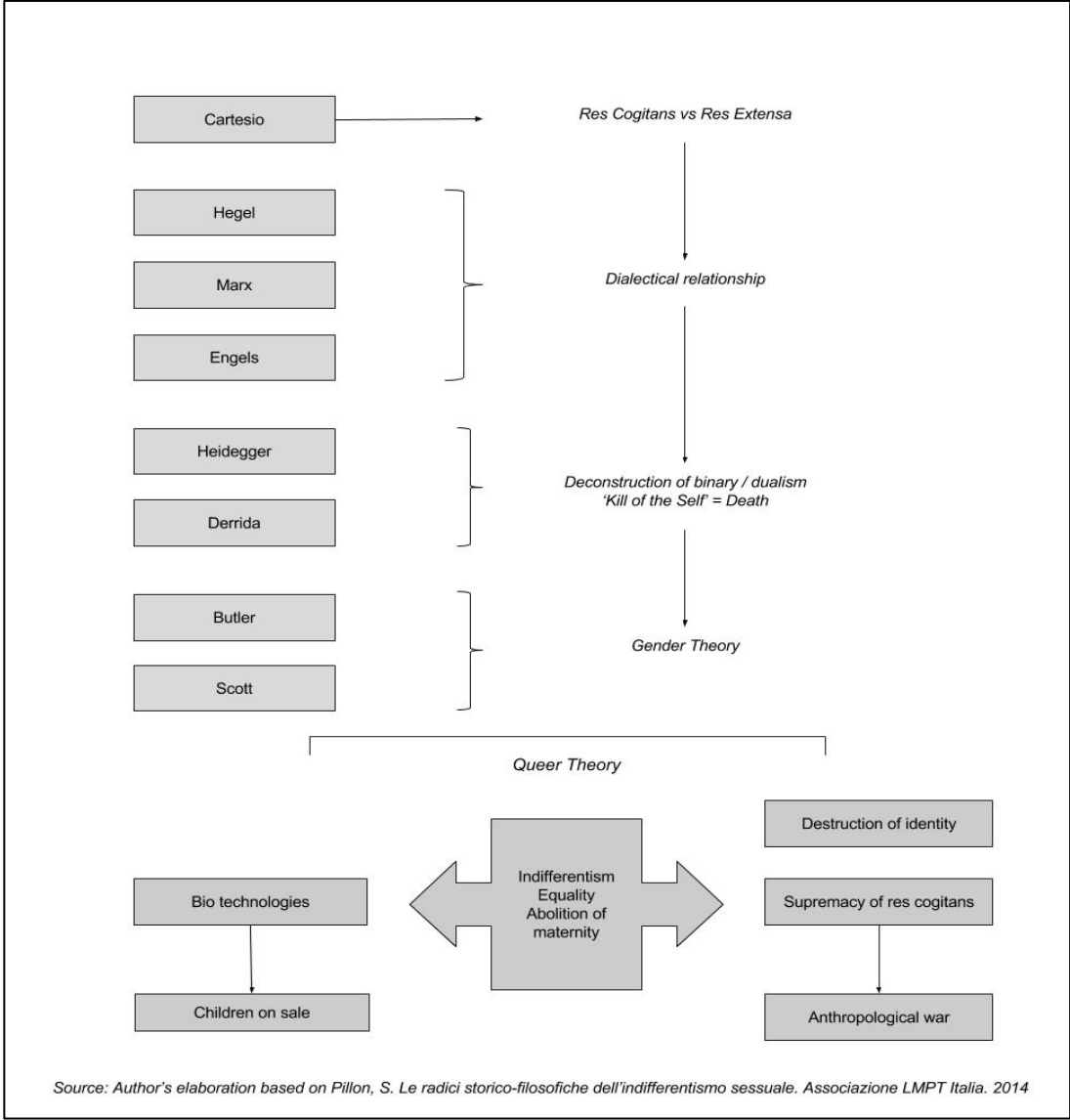


Figure 19. Sexual Indifferentism

In collective frames employed by the Catholic countermovement, it is possible to identify a specific and recurrent discursive structure based on the core cognitive tasks cited at the beginning of the chapter. First, the movement's leadership identifies and presents the social problem under question to the audience – *diagnostic framing* – assigning blame to those responsible for the situation perceived as unjust. In other words, 'gender' is explained to the audience as a dangerous 'theory' and 'ideology' created, sustained and promoted by different actors. In this process, frame makers establish their own legitimacy to speak about these issues in the name of certain interests (della Porta and Diani 2006, 75), which, as we will see, fall under the moral obligations prescribed in the Catholic doctrine. Discourse evolves around explanations concerning the goals and objectives of the already-identified opponents and the consequences for society. Subsequently, through *prognostic framing*, different solutions are sought. It is worth noting that through these discourses, as we have seen in the last chapter, different players identified in the 'anti-gender' campaign select different representations of the same theme, although they are based on some relatively homogenous ideas. As the next paragraphs will show, the positioning of groups from the extreme right differs from that of political forces of the populist right, or the ecclesial movements, even at the discursive level. Finally, a strategy for countermobilization is advocated – *motivational framing* – and potential participants are identified and mobilized. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, the structure is based on the demonstration of a collective imaginary, used as a framework for both consensus and activation. In doing so, specific frames are put forward showing the relevance of collective action to the individual experience of potential participants (della Porta and Diani 2006). As we will see, identity deployment strategies play a crucial role in this process,

particularly those that are built on identities which fall into the category of ‘family members’: identities such as ‘mother’, ‘father’, ‘parents’, and to a lesser extent, ‘Christian’, are framed and claimed for recruitment purposes. In synthesis, the Catholic countermovement has articulated an interpretative scheme for sexual morality based on three main master frames: identity, values, and tradition. Keeping in mind Foucault’s discussion in previous chapters, it remains crucial to understand what effects of power and knowledge are produced by Catholic discourses, along their strategic use.

The ‘gender nemesis’: a threat to the natural order

Sexual duality, contrary to what is sustained by gender ideology, does not contradict the fundamental equality between the sexes. In fact, men and women share the same human nature: man-woman duality is a complete equality, in the matter of human dignity, and a wonderful complementary of the properties and tasks linked to masculinity and femininity as being human. [...] This thesis [sexual indifferentism], which finds fertile ground in relativism and individualism, aims to create a utopian society where no differentiation is legitimate. (Generazione Famiglia, *L’ideologia gender è contro l’uomo*, 2015)

The reference to natural law is derived from the assumption of the existence of a ‘pre-social’ order in which nature and ‘divine plan’ often overlap, in a nexus that natural law governs. Relying on the opposition between science, nature, and ideology, the countermovement presents itself as a project of truth, opposed to the manipulation of knowledge, legal order, and educational systems, enacted by ‘Gender’. The term is strictly reported in English and capitalised, to evoke an unknown entity that threatens our culture as Catholic and Italian. The ‘Gender’, in fact, is both a theoretical paradigm (or an ‘ideology’, a ‘theory’ etc.) diffused by the Anglo-Saxon world to colonise our culture, and a set of mysterious LGBTQ subjectivities:

The West is falling into a new witch-hunt, where the ‘spreaders’ are alleged homophobic, or those who maintain a critical thinking towards this post-modern ideology. (LMPTI, *L’Ideologia di genere*, 2014, p. 19)

During a conference organised by Generazione Famiglia – LMPTI, hosting a lecture by Giuristi per la Vita’s director Gianfranco Amato – in September 2015. Mister Amato articulated the problem in the following terms:

Look, the theory of gender is extremely simple to understand, so simple as it is devastating. It is the idea that an individual is a man or a woman, male or female, not on the basis of how he is biologically or anatomically structured, but rather on the basis of how he *feels* in that precise moment because, you see, this is a condition that can change with time. (Gianfranco Amato, Conference in Milan 2015)

The narrator addressed the audience as though the latter was sadly uninformed and unaware of the danger posed by ‘gender theory’. As Amato continued to explain:

Do you know what is even more remarkable? The majority of the Catholic world, the so-called Catholic world, has no idea of what the gender theory is, including some priests. But why it is remarkable? Because Pope Francis spoke 40 times about this issue, we have counted them, and only seven or eight have managed to break the wall of silence of mass media [...] Do you know what Pope Francis thinks about gender theory? He thinks that gender theory is like an atomic bomb, with the only difference that the atomic bomb kills bodies, whilst gender theory kills souls and minds.

Papa Benedetto
XVI, la
“teoria
gender”
e la minaccia
alla nostra
civiltà

Source: *The Fatima Center, "Papa Benedetto XVI, la "teoria gender" e la minaccia alla nostra civiltà", printed in Italy by Inmediacom srl, 2015.*

Figure 20. Pope Benedict XVI, "gender theory" a threat to our civilisation⁴⁴

The statement above is an example of attempts to identify the actors who are entitled to have an opinion on the issues of gender and sexuality, and in this case, Amato asserts that one of the most valued viewpoints must be that of the Pope, the highest Catholic moral authority. In the name of Pope Francis, and because of the lack of engagement of the Catholic world, Amato affirms his legitimacy to convey his message on behalf of the Catholic community. The 'gender issue' is diagnosed through a normative discourse where 'gender theory' and 'gender ideology' are explained as a postmodern social problem, a concrete manifestation of rampant relativism and individualism:

The gender ideology is the latest version of an alleged human liberation movement, which has tried for centuries to dissolve the man from the bonds that constitute it. The alleged goal of this absolute affirmation of man's freedom is to set humans free; the effect is rather to make them more alone, because free of ties, devoid of reference points, they are therefore not only lost to themselves, but also more easily manipulated. It was the battle of secularism against religion, Marxism and Communism against private property, and gender ideology today, which aims to free the man from sexual self-definition, finally free to define himself in every respect. The promise of freedom is added to a total equality: the elimination of sexual difference would in fact abolish all gender differences, which are understood as injustice rather than richness. (LMPTI, *L'ideologia di genere*, 2014, p. 6)

⁴⁴ This is a scanned copy of the flyer I collected at the conference. Although Amato refers to Pope Francis, the publication identifies the perils of gender theory as already expressed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012.



Source: <http://www.notizieprovita.it/media/comics/>

Figure 21. Comic stripe realised by ProVita: “Male or female” (left) “Mom says I can decide when I grow up!” (right)

In this context, in fact, LGBTQ claims emerge forcefully, expressing the need not only for political and symbolic recognition, but also for material rights in terms of sexual citizenship (Richardson 2015). Furthermore, these claims arise in the midst of the current economic and social crisis, where government imposed austerity measures have gradually eroded social protections and rights, delegating state functions to the traditional family because a number of economic and social guarantees, now referred to as subsidiary, can no longer be covered by public services. The demand for new rights of civic, economic, and sexual citizenship brings the institution of the family as the primary and exclusive place for the recognition of reproductive and affective relationships into question, and consequently also contests its function as the ‘site’ for the attribution and distribution of welfare resources, giving way to deep cultural and social contradictions.

It is on this basis that the ‘anti-gender’ discourse develops a populist rhetoric, which concentrates its content on the welfare of families. Such rhetoric opposes universalist rights to the claims of LGBTQ movement; the LGBTQ movement’s opinions on sexual citizenship are re-appropriated and represented as a set of selfish

privileges, as the commodification of the person, that divert the few available economic resources from ordinary people and their families to their own cause. Extreme right CasaPound Italy, for instance, subscribed to this kind of argument, when it decided to join the ‘anti-gender’ campaign:

On January 30, CasaPound Italy takes the streets, despite our reservations about the confessional nature of the Family Day. [...] In very difficult times, CasaPound Italy has recognised the possibility of the recognition, in the context of an organic state, of some forms of cohabitation that could also target persons of the same sex, however, with very specific limits, which concerned the adoption of children by gay couples. Which it is what they are now trying to legitimize, fraudulently, by the ruse of stepchild adoption that will pave the way to the final commodification of the female body and of children themselves. [...] Beyond any religious mortgage, in fact, this battle must be conceived as a battle of the nation against the faction, the public interest against the lobbying of organised minorities. The family has an ethical and social function only if it widens the nation rather than withdraw into individualism, which, however, has nothing ‘traditional’. We will be at the Family Day and we will be very visible, with an agenda of four points: no adoption for gay couples, no surrogate motherhood, no gender ideology, no hunting witch against ‘homophobia’ which is intended to only reduce the concrete liberties in the name of fictitious freedom. This is our battle, all the rest does not interest us. (CasaPound Italia, press release, 26 January 2016)

This passage, along with the excerpts presented above, encapsulates several of the mentioned frames underlying the diagnosis and prognosis of the problem. In particular, under the ‘tradition versus change’ frame, activists point to individualism and relativism as fundamentally antithetical to tradition, harmful for a society already battered by the current economic and social crisis. Moreover, some elements present in far right’s claims are clear manifestations of a broader reactionary rhetoric. It is precisely in the exhalation of social conservatism through the traditional family ideal that ‘neo-nationalist’ claims support religious fundamentalist orthodoxy.

Sexual panic

Moral panic constitutes a key feature of the ‘anti-gender’ campaign, and is used to

evoke and shape the paramount struggle between ‘stigmatisers’ and ‘deviantisers’ (Cohen [1972] 2011). As Fillieule (2013, 1) explains, moral panics are ‘struggles for moral hegemony over interpretations of the legitimacy (or not) of prevailing social arrangements and material interests’. They usually involve a group of moral entrepreneurs vying to demonise a group of persons who represent a threat to societal values. Although it would be misleading to understand the current mobilization as a simple conflict over moral values, it is interesting to apply the concept in order to shed light on processes of stigmatisation on both sides of the struggle. Moreover, it is an important aspect to consider when looking at the evolution of frames during the mobilization. We can identify, in fact, a heightened state of moral alarm concerning the dissemination of ‘gender ideology’ in concomitance with the multiplication of initiatives and demonstrations by the countermovement, during the years of 2015 and beginning of 2016. However, as other scholars have noticed, moral panic, and its underlying emotions, cannot be sustained for long since it is intrinsically temporary and fleeting (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Pedwell 2016). In this sense, ‘gender anxiety’ faded away quickly after the civil union bill was passed, despite the countermovement’s efforts to keep the topic relevant and the emotional engagement alive. We will see later in the chapter how the extension of frames opposing the Cirinnà bill to claims made against the constitutional referendum (Famiglie per il no al referendum) is an example of a (failed) attempt to sustain moral panic and emotional responses over time.

The opposition to sexual citizenship for LGBTQ people is expressed through *sexual panic*, understood as a moral panic (McRobbie and Thornton 1995; Herdt 2009; Hier 2011): a mobilization fuelled by widespread social alarm around dehumanised and hyper-sexed otherness (*sexual scapegoats*) that destabilises the

heteronormative social order because of claims made about the civil, economic and social dimensions of sexual citizenship, the sphere of reproduction, the affection and the recognition of sexual and family relations. The creation of sexual panic can thus shape the way individuals think about sexual citizenship and rights.

The theme of pathologising and de-humanising LGBTQ people is used during public conferences to degrade homosexuals' affectivity and sexuality as sub-human behaviour. On the one hand, a major narrative of the 'diversity versus indifferentism' frame is found in the biological medical discourse, which neurologist and CDNF's president Massimo Gandolfini shares his expertise about in the tour of lectures 'What is gender': from an opening address about gametes, chromosomes and cells, Gandolfini defines the binary relationship between biological sexes (male and female) as the only natural one, which leads him to describe any deviance from this binarism as pathological:

If the child gives a sign to move towards the female, a responsible school must act in order to overcome it, and bringing back it to the natural identity. There is an identity disorder that should be addressed. If the child begins as quadruped, you have to teach him to walk with two feet. (Massimo Gandolfini, *What is gender?* Conference 2015)

The reference to quadrupeds is not random and introduces another recursive topic in public narratives. The biological medical discourse focuses on the defence of heterosexuality as the natural norm and argues that this is indisputable by citing scientific facts related to reproduction. Then, talking about the crime of homophobia, people such as Gianfranco Amato move this discourse to the moral level, through the explicit association of LGBTQ people to the animal world, claiming that their behaviours are forms of corruption of the heterosexual family, and with it, of human nature:

[...] If we keep the feeling as the unique criterion, and we decide to translate in legal terms what family is, paradoxically, we could reach the point of saying that five

women who love each other can make a family, or three women and three men, or even a man and a dog if we keep into account the emotional element that binds men to animals (Gianfranco Amato, *Omofobia e Ideologia del gender*, Conference 2014 almost 15,000 views⁴⁵)

The first victims of the ‘pathology of gender’ and ‘homosexualism’, therefore, are children, defenceless by definition, and exposed to the risk that their growth and natural development may run into the ideological denial of the need to be born and raised in a heterosexual family:

The sexual identity is made up of nature and culture (psyche, biology and culture). If this set is altered by gender, children will be the first to pay the consequences [...] The harmonious and coherent development of biological / somatic sexual identity and structuring of the personality is the foundation of an healthy growth. The supreme interest of the child is to have a physical and mental representation through maternal and paternal relationships with the female body and the male body. (Gandolfini, *What is gender?* Conference 2015)

The reference to ‘the supreme interest of the child’ is the central *topos* of sexual panic (Robinson 2008). The defence of children’s innocence from corruption is a powerful discursive device, which produces a profound emotional and moral shock. On the one hand, children represent the idea of ‘nature par excellence’, as they are not yet contaminated by the corruption of man (or gender). The same idea of violated innocence is framed in terms of severe surveillance of children’s sexuality at the exclusive right of parents (not the educational system). A conception illustrated in Foucault’s representation of the masturbating child, suggesting something terribly wrong about the cult of innocence and around which power-knowledge deploys itself (Foucault 1984). In Foucault (1976 [1990]), the control of infantile sexuality represents an instance in which a specific form of power has been exerted through medicine and regimentation. Both doctors and educators, among which parents, and the adult world more broadly have been mobilised in the production of ‘corrective

⁴⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0PzT81ZCnE>

discourses' (pp. 99-100), particularly against children's onanism. This trend reflects a major frame found in the Catholic discourse against gender education in schools along with the medicalization of discourses around children's sexuality. We find several instances of what the French author calls *scientia sexualis* in the discourses advanced by Catholic activists:

This was in fact a science made up of evasions since, given its inability or refusal to speak of sex itself, it concerned itself primarily with aberrations, perversions, exceptional oddities, pathological abatements, and morbid aggravations. It was by the same token a science subordinated in the main to the imperatives of a morality whose divisions it reiterated under the guise of the medical norm. (p. 120)

The medicalization of discourses implicitly relates to the possibility of recovering and recodifying a deviant behaviour. In the arguments put forward by different Catholic groups, this corrective practice is presented as a preventive operation to monitor children's sexuality, and the possibility that they might fall into the development of homosexual identity and behaviour, as well as to the deviant practices of yet convertible homosexual adults. As Foucault explains:

Throughout the nineteenth century, sex seems to have been incorporated into two very distinct orders of knowledge: a biology of reproduction, which developed continuously according to a general scientific normativity, and a medicine of sex conforming to quite different rules of formation. From one to the other, there was no real exchange, no reciprocal structuration; the role of the first with respect to the second was scarcely more than as a distant and quite fictitious guarantee: a blanket guarantee under cover of which moral obstacles, economic or political options, and traditional fears could be recast in a scientific-sounding vocabulary." (1976 [1990], 123-24)

The labeling of LGBTQ people as led by irrational instincts and individualistic interests that are not oriented to the project (natural and / or divine) of procreation, suggests that subjective arbitrariness flows into arbitrariness in the law, recalling the frame of the totalitarian state and the dictatorship of the single thought. The transition from the manipulation of reality to the totalitarian state is a constant in

the countermovement narrative. Hitler, Soviet re-education camps and even Orwell's writing are cited as instances in which the control over people's thought evokes apocalyptic scenes. The freedom of ordinary citizens is not only put at risk, but so is their very identity:

The Gender term is translated in Italian with 'genere'. When you hear about sexual orientation, gender policies etc. you have to keep in mind that gender refers to an individual subjective choice variable in time. From this choice comes the demand for existential and social sexual rights not belonging to their sex but their choice of gender. If the element that determines the choice is my subjectivity, I can come up with any kind of gender, that's why genders have now become 58. (Gianfranco Amato, Conference 2015)

The evocation of the ethical state, the re-education camps and the Orwellian thought control system, resurfaces constantly to provide 'reasons' to oppose the inclusion of programs on gender and sexuality in schools' provisions:

You have a duty to read the Orwellian document by UNAR. They used an English word: the empowerment of LGBTQ people (meaning, giving power to LGBTQ people), also at managerial level: diversity management, and introduce gender identity. [...] Three actors converge in the schooling system: students, teachers and parents. Do you know where is it written that parents have the right to education of their children? The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. It was decided to introduce this principle in 1948, because after the war, the experience had shown the world how devastating, destructive and deadly was the indoctrination of young people through the state education system of the Third Reich. We understood, as public education in the hands of power could become a lethal weapon. In fact, do you know what was the full name of the German Ministry of Education? Ministry of public education and propaganda. It is no coincidence that those two skills, education and propaganda were united. After 70 years we are here to claim the same principle. (Gianfranco Amato, *Educated by whom?* Conference 2015)

The emphasis on distinction between private and public spheres, and arguments against State secularism, are repeated endlessly and often in conjunction: the State must not interfere with children's sexual education, or with the regulation of sexuality more generally, as this is a strictly private issue. It is safe to affirm that it is in the field of education and reproductive rights that the 'anti-gender' narrative reaches its highest point of radicalisation and rhetorical violence. Making the analogy with the propaganda of the German Ministry of Education during the Nazi

era sounds like a real call to arms that leaves little space for interpretation: we are in a totalitarian regime, which wants to take away parents' right to educate children, and manipulate consciousness through indoctrination. The 'State ideology' (Pillon 2014), based on sexual education, or 'porn in school' as it has been called by countermovement's leaders, will inevitably lead to the destruction of children's identity.

Underlying this argument is the assimilation of homosexual subjects with rich, European, white, male, liberal characters who can afford to satisfy their whims:

The central issue is: the contemporary men who meets the strict requirement of nature and must be able to say I am a man, are limited, but no: some think that the solution is to cultivate an envy in the heart, the envy of God. They want to be God. By mean of which infernal tool do you want to cross that line? With money. (Mario Adinolfi, Family Day 2016)

They say [LGBTQ people] 'we love each other, we love and we respect each other, we contribute also economically in our mutual sustenance, why don't we have this right [to marry and have a family]?' [...] The marriage has shaped the civilisation of the last millennia and shaped the family, if we change the matrix, we are going to change what will shape the next millennia of generations. And then I have to tell you, there is another limit that now exists by virtue of the fact that marriage is based on procreation: not only that of the number, but that of consanguinity. (Filippo Savarese, Conference 2015)

The reference to neocolonialism, slavery, and the exploitation of women's bodies is a key theme that pervades all interventions on the draft bill on civil unions and in particular on the regulation of *stepchild adoption* and artificial reproduction technologies. Referring to the issues of 'surrogacy' and the commodification and exploitation of women's bodies, in particular the bodies of poor women from underdeveloped countries – a paternalistic and colonial discourse *per se* – Generazione Famiglia explains the reasons behind one of its initiatives:

Kids with bar codes in shopping carts. That was the symbolic complaint staged in a flash mob of Generazione Famiglia, which was held this morning in front of the Chamber of Deputies, in Piazza Montecitorio. Concurrently with the opening of the parliamentary debate of the bill on civil unions, Generazione Famiglia has wanted to emphasise the risks arising from the legitimacy of the practice of the ART as a result

of the legalisation of adoption for homosexual couples. (Generazione Famiglia, press release, 28 January 2016)



Source: *Generazione Famiglia – LMPTI*, retrieved from: www.generazionefamiglia.it

Figure 22. Flash-mob organised by Generazione Famiglia in Piazza Montecitorio, Rome, 28 January 2016: ‘Everyone is born from a mom and a dad’.

Indeed, the issue of reproductive technology becomes particularly contentious, not only for Catholic but also for some lesbian and gay activists, when the rejection of ‘nature’ occurs parallel to a questioning of the ‘natural’ links between kinship and biological reproduction within a unitary understanding of family. Beside the clearly homophobic accent put on the discursive formulation of Catholic activists – namely, that the spreading of ART practices would be a direct consequence of recognising adoptions for same-sex couples – the stake here is represented by the relationship between the natural and the social, in which new forms of social innovation directly intervene in the natural domain.

Blame assignment

There is no doubt that the vagueness of the concept of gender enables itself to serve a multiplicity of claims. The 'gender' struggle can federate activists, academics, politicians and masses of people with goals not always compatible. (LMPTI, *L'ideologia di genere*, 2014, p. 18)

An apparent trend emerges from much of the countermovement's public discourse; while the identity(ies) of the out-group are carefully detailed, little knowledge and information is provided concerning the nature or make-up of the in-group. A discursive split exists between players' self-affirmation as a-confessional and a-political, the content of the narratives presented, and the networks and strategies put in place. In the process of identifying the groups 'us' and 'them', the auto-definition of the countermovement is reduced to a few identities, as we have seen, such as family member or Catholic, while the hetero-definition of the opponents is articulated around several different actors and the series of cultural stereotypes constantly projected onto them. Similar to the attempt of simplifying the social complexity of gender and sexuality, the use of collective stereotypes and cultural generalisations recurs in processes of blame assignment. Collective stereotypes can be used as 'highly abstract beliefs about groups and their members' (Lehtonen 2005, 63), which prove particularly powerful in achieving consensus among in-group members. Different dynamics of cognitive and emotional processes are at play in reinforcing group membership.

Social movements have often relied on cultural themes that revolve around a critique of individualism and consumerism, where the status of human, of nature and social, is subdued to the advancement of technology, market dynamics, and bureaucracy. In this context, anxiety and outrage against these developments make efficient starting points for raising moral issues that rest on the sensibilities of

adherents. As we have seen, in the ‘tradition versus change’ frame, common representations of Western liberalism and ‘neo-capitalism’ are aligned with the ‘gay rights’ frame, or, more broadly, individual rights embodied in the devastating force of an almost personified ‘ultra-individualism’:

Ultra-individualism tends to abandon the real marginalised, the poor, the sick, the elderly and, more generally, the victims of all new forms of social poverty. A society that promotes the perpetual movement and transgression breaks the generational ties and effective solidarity deriving both from grandparents who support the grandsons, both by children that support with dignity their parents in times of crisis. In a world affected by the violence of the ultra-individualism and mercantilism, breaking the solidarity of the traditional family and social solidarity (giving, receiving, returning) can lead to devastating results. (LMPTI, *L’ideologia di genere*, 2014, pp. 24-25)

The biggest culprit in the propagation of ultra-individualism is neoliberalism, as symbolised by the ‘Anglo-Saxon world’, which is responsible for the commodification of gender ideology, through companies that promote ‘gender neutral’ clothing collections, social media⁴⁶ that allow for an infinite number of gender identities on their platforms, and newspapers⁴⁷ that advertise the life of self-proclaimed gender fluid actors and actresses. Through ‘pop-culture’ and mass media in the Anglo-Saxon world, ‘gender fashion has spread’:

The gender fluid generation has already become a devastating fashion, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. We are not aware yet, but gender is coming, as the rock’n’roll, blue jeans, and Halloween did. (Gianfranco Amato, Conference 2015)

⁴⁶ The reference is made to the *Facebook Diversity* campaign, which allows users to select among more than 70 gender identities.

⁴⁷ Among others, the most frequently cited are the *New York Times*, the *Huffington Post*, and the *Guardian*.



Source: *I Tempi*, 'Arrivano anche in Italia i 58 gender di Facebook. Ma il vero dramma è capire se uno è LGBT o LGBTTIQQ2SA', 4.07.2015, retrieved from: http://www.tempi.it/arrivano-anche-in-italia-i-58-gender-di-facebook-ma-il-vero-dramma-e-capire-se-uno-e-LGBTQ-o-LGBTTIqq2sa#.V_Yc-5OLRo4.

Figure 23. Facebook gender alternatives

International institutions also play an important role in this 'ideological colonisation', a movement spearheaded by the European Union and the World Health Organisation. In several conferences, Generazione Famiglia, Giuristi per la Vita, and CDNF ascribe to the frame 'tradition versus change' and particularly to a form of social change imposed by external players pressuring Italy to align its sexual and gender policies with other Western countries, in order to denounce such institutions as foreign agents, and promoters of values that are antithetical to Italian identity:

The political elites of Europe today face two serious restrictions in their work: first the constraints of globalisation (which becomes the current version of the Greek Fate and the pretext of a neo-fatalism), secondly, the Brussels requirements. Similarly nation states lose their sovereignty, selling it to European directives, a set of resolutions and reports that make up a 'road map' of the gender. (LMPTI, *L'ideologia di genere*, 2014, p. 18)

This kind of rhetoric has been favoured by right-wing populist and nationalist parties, particularly the Northern League – which submitted a motion against

teaching gender theories in schools in the Lombardy region⁴⁸ – and Forza Nuova, who sees the introduction of gender education in schools as a combined attempt by the Italian State and the EU to interfere and undermine the national culture that is intrinsically Christian:

FORZA NUOVA asks the return in force of the 1929 Concordat with the Italian State recognising the Roman Church its role as spiritual leader of the people and placing the proper limits between the work of the State and work of the Church. FORZA NUOVA considers it essential that the faith that has accompanied our people for two thousand years is guarded and faithfully transmitted to future generations rejecting the nihilist and secularist culture prevalent today. (Forza Nuova, Programme point. 6)



Source: *La Repubblica*, “Manifesti funebri di Forza Nuova contro le prime unioni civili a Cesena”, 25.09.2016, retrieved from: http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/09/25/news/manifesti_funebri_di_forza_nuova_contro_le_unioni_civili_a_cesena-148496702/?ref=search

Figure 24. Poster of Forza Nuova hung in Cesena after the celebration of the first civil unions between same-sex people, 25 September 2016⁴⁹

Our goal is to make sure that the gender theory is not taught in schools of the Lombardy region. The overcoming of the natural family and the scrapping of values dear to us is being pursued in a systematic way. A re-education of the new generations that we do not agree with, and that meets our peaceful but firm opposition. (Massimiliano Romeo, leader of the Northern League, press release 25 September 2015)

⁴⁸ Consiglio Regionale Lombardia, Mozione nr. 500, “Educazione sessuale e contrasto alla diffusione della teoria gender nelle scuole lombarde”, presented 3.09.2015.

⁴⁹ “Manuel and Marco, along with their families and the citizenship, announce the end of civilization, of our traditions, of the natural family, the one and only foundation of our society and of children’s right to grow up with a mom and dad. Sunday 25 September 2016: Gay Marriage, Italy’s Funeral. Italy needs sons, not homosexuals”.



Source: LMPTI, n.d.

Figure 25. Leaflet by LMPTI on WHO guidelines for gender theory and sexual education in schools⁵⁰

In addition to supranational entities, the ‘deniers’, those who deny the existence of ‘gender theory’, are identified – in particular the National Office against Racial Discrimination (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali - UNAR) and associations belonging to the LGBTQ world – and any other promoter of gender and sexual education in schools, including municipalities and government ministries. We have already noticed in previous paragraphs that pejorative terms such as ‘deniers’ (in reference to deniers of the holocaust) are used to label adversaries. This process referred to as *identity vilification* involves the framing or the picturing of an opponent as evil, corrupt, hypocritical, against whom the movement must position itself as a moral agent (McCaffrey and Keys 2000, 44). In this sense, players in the Catholic countermovement vilify their adversaries by depicting them as ‘pervert,

⁵⁰ “Do you want this [having two moms or two dads] to be taught to your children? They are already divulgating it, maybe even in your children’s school”. The figure is a scanned copy of the flyer I collected at a conference.

authoritarian lobbies and elites that want to spread gender ideology in society and promote the marketing of children’, as Standing Sentinels’ Benedetta Frigerio puts it, and adds:

Equality, which is one of the most powerful LGBTQ lobbies that finance politicians. Not only that, they began to also pass legislations, like the one that has also been introduced in Italy in 2013 which has been stopped thanks to the mobilization of the Standing Sentinels, precisely the laws against homophobia, this term invented artfully in fact, while in 1973 homosexuality was removed from the manual of diagnostic diseases and it was created this new term ‘homophobia’ so the sick becomes who disputes the possibility that two persons of the same sex can marry. (Benedetta Frigerio, Standing Sentinels’ leader, Conference in Milan 2015)

Blame assignment not only identifies those responsible for supporting and diffusing gender ideology, but also how the diffusion takes place. Narrowing down what has already been mentioned in other sections of this chapter, Amato points to four principal channels of dissemination:

Gender theory is spreading among the public through four channels: the legislative channel: the law; the judicial channel: the judiciary; the cultural channel: mass media; and the educational channel with the introduction of gender education in schools. (Gianfranco Amato, Conference 2015)

Particularly worrying is the transmission of gender ideology through education. It becomes even more dangerous when the ‘lobby of organised minorities’ accredited by the government as training institutions host and teach courses on gender diversity. However, based on the discourses presented above, we must not forget to add that gender is also ‘the outcome of capitalism’ and that ‘the capital is heterophobic’ in the ‘monotheism of the market’ and ‘dogmatic atheism’, as different speakers emphasised during Generazione Famiglia’s conference in Rome in October 2015.

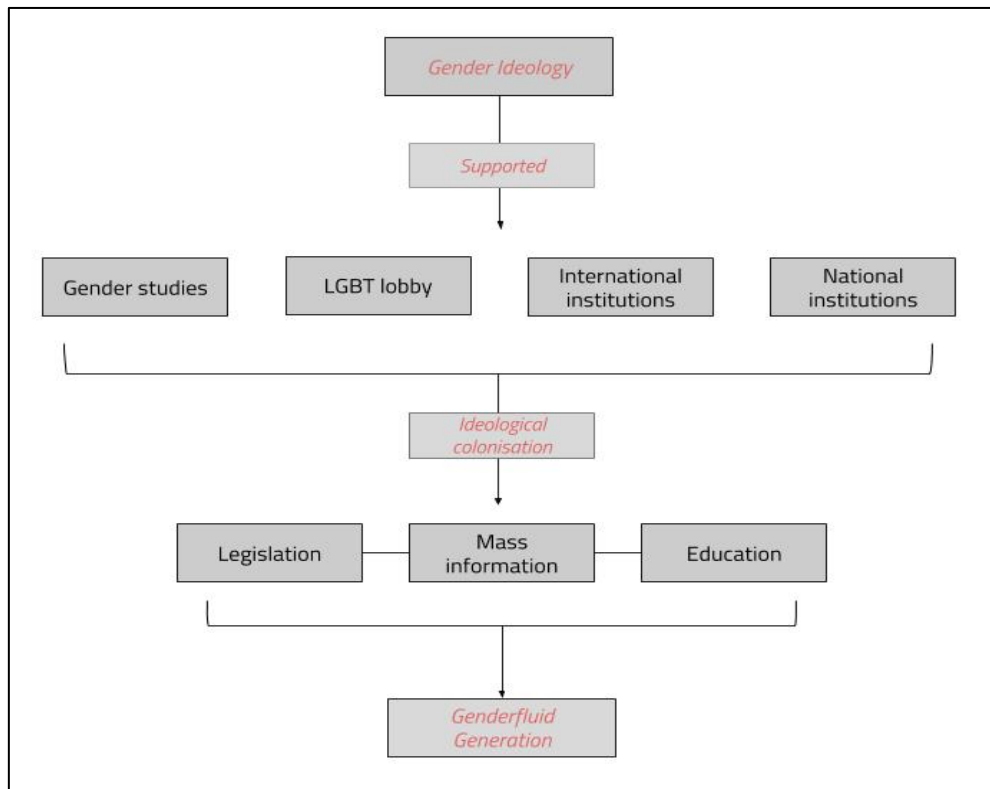
A clearly related discourse in which processes of identity polarisation and vilification occur concerns the frame of ‘special rights’ for LGBTQ people. In particular, the opposition to a legislation regulating hate crime based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Here, Catholic leaders articulate the concept of

‘homophobia’ as a normative tool to discriminate against the freedom of expression of heterosexual people, and particularly freedom of belief for religious people, with the help of two main arguments. On the one hand, a sense of injustice is perceived because LGBTQ people do not need special rights or privileges, i.e. legal protection, since they do not qualify as a minority (but rather, a powerful elite or lobby): “The idea that exists today in our country a discriminatory condition such as to justify a specific and therefore privileged, legal protection, because of personal and arbitrary sexual choices” (Amato 2013). Being ‘sick and sinful’ is an arbitrary personal choice, and as a consequence it would be unjust to grant this choice values and protection. It is, in other words, an endeavour to first consider homosexuality and transexuality as collective values to be protected, as an affirmative source of human rights, and, second, the idea that heterosexuality and homosexuality are the same natural condition (or worse, that homosexuality deserves to be legally overvalued). On the other hand, religious people, and Catholics specifically, are depicted as victims of this unjust condition in which they would be deprived of the right to express their disagreement (in whatever form they choose) with homosexual people and practices.⁵¹

Eventually, the injustice, the ‘hot cognition’ that something is wrong and must be changed, becomes evident and compels immediate action:

And what are we doing to these poor children? Do you know who gave the harshest judgment on all that crap done to those poor children? Him, always him [the Pope]: we must shun any kind of experimental education on children and young people, used as guinea pigs in a laboratory, in schools that increasingly resemble more to re-education camps and remember the horrors of educational manipulation already lived in the great dictatorships of the twentieth century, substituted today by the dictatorship of the single thought. (Gianfranco Amato, Conference in Milan 2015)

⁵¹ Gianfranco Amato, “Tredici motivi per dire no alla legge sull’omofobia”, last modified 12.12.2013: <http://www.lanuovabq.it/it/articoli-tredici-motivi-per-dire-no-alla-legge-sullomofobia-7952.htm>



Source: Author's elaboration

Figure 26. Blame Assignment

'Solidarnosc Italiana': Call to arms, call to politics

Family, as the only possible constitutive unit of a human anthropology, is invoked in a single step as an institution (the traditional family based on marriage) to defend and a collective identity imbued with the responsibility to take action. In order to stop the devastating consequences of 'gender ideology', a reaffirmation of traditional values is necessary since 'movements' cultural production implies a relationship which involves both conquering and revitalizing aspects (or at least some aspects) of a given population's traditions' (della Porta and Diani 2006, 87). As one of the founders of the Standing Sentinels explains in relation to how the group was born:

We think that parents' educational freedom is very important, the priority of education over their children, that you have the right and duty to keep. [...] Because we are in the world for a reason, especially a Catholic should know that the world is to build something for the kingdom of God, to build the Church. Then the Standing Sentinels, in the way they are built, the fact of standing in silence for example is a profound appeal to conscience, to dependence, to the fact that in life you answer to someone, that there is a law, there is an order, and if we do not follow this order we self-

destruct, we hurt ourselves. So I invite you all to come and look for us, and then to come and stand with us. (Benedetta Frigerio, Conference in Milan 2015)

Through *motivational framing*, identity deployment becomes crucial in motivating and activating potential participants: by heightening the saliency of specific identities – fathers, mothers, Catholics – they take on a responsibility, an ‘ethics of citizenship’, which then compels individuals to take action against the spreading of ‘gender ideology’ – an *agency component*. The empowerment of a particular identity refers to the fact that ‘activists must draw on an existing identity or construct a new collective identity in order to create and mobilize a constituency’ (Bernstein 1997, 537). In the case of the Catholic countermovement, the choice to mobilize identities such as those of a mother and a father, a wife and a husband, a woman and a man, is intended to reinforce existing social categories through ‘gender dualism’ and to resist the emergence of new identities that could foster cultural and social change:

What is that we must defend in order to prevent that this ideology will be completely established in society? What are the bulwarks in this society that we have to protect? There is a natural institution that is the sworn enemy of gender ideology because it has in it the natural ability, vocation to witness to the generations exactly the opposite of what this theory teaches. This institution is the family. (Filippo Savarese, Conference 2015)

I explained in chapter 5 how the movement witnessed a major change with its institutionalisation into a political party. However, formalising ‘anti-gender’ activism into a different arena (party politics), required the countermovement to adjust its own discursive repertoire to take aim at a changed target. The decision stems from the need to reorganise the countermovement’s base around a new political actor, to bring their claims from the public arena (represented by the actions in squares on the Family Day) to the institutional arena of formal politics. It is, in other words, an attempt to keep the mobilization going after failing to prevent the

approval of the Cirinnà bill. As *La Croce*'s Mario Adinolfi writes:

The people were manifested as a great novelty at the Circus Maximus, and, from that appointment, throughout the country. The Catholic people were reported missing and irrelevant in the public arena. Someone rejoiced for having marginalised and rendered them harmless. [...] But now the People of the Family has once again chosen to manifest itself. Mario Adinolfi and Gianfranco Amato, members of the CDFN, took the initiative to give a concrete response to thousands of requests after the Circus Maximus demanded a permanent mobilization to defend the values betrayed in the Parliament. (Mario Adinolfi, *La Croce*, 3 June 2016)

The “values betrayed in the Parliament” represent the object of further alignment strategies operated by the countermovement. The challenge was posed directly to Prime Minister Matteo Renzi with the hashtag *#renziciricorderemo* (Renzi we will remember), along with threats to campaign against the referendum on the Constitution. Taking advantage of the new political opening, the II Convention of the countermovement held in Rome, in May 2016, saw the announcement of a new committee, ‘Famiglie per il no al referendum’ (Families against the referendum) and introduced a new political platform. The group’s sentiments were encapsulated in the slogan of the Convention: ‘non rottamiamo la Costituzione’ (let’s not demolish the Constitution). They attempted to combine a double rejection based on the same subject: the reform of the Constitution put forward by PM Renzi and the approval of the law on civil unions both amount to a ‘scrapping’ of the Constitution, the fundamental charter of the Italian Republic. The developments listed above underline some key processes. It is, in fact, through the processes of institutionalisation and normalisation that we must contextualise the shift in the countermovement’s goals. Once again, the frame in play is that of ‘tradition versus change’: ‘same-sex unions as an issue related to the respect for Italian tradition both in relation to the Constitution, and to social institutions, such as the traditional

family’ (Giorgi 2015, 42). The invitation to a ‘solidarnosc italiana’⁵² by the countermovement’s leadership reflects their acknowledgment of the Family Day’s failure. As a consequence, we witness a clear ‘call to politics’, a call to the Catholic community to retrieve the public sphere through politics:

We have to seal an Italian solidarity, updated to the Church’s social theme, to biopolitics, to the non-negotiable values. The laity has to be reconsidered. Secularism was born to guarantee religious freedom; today has become the active process through which State’s atheism is promoted. Christianity is not only about faith; it is a constitutive element of the Italian identity. Our proposal is an alliance between believers and non-believers in order to promote the anthropological values against the single thought. (Fabio Torriero, Conference in Rome June 2016)

The idea of a pact of solidarity between believers and non-believers around non-negotiable values, which are represented by the ideal-type of the traditional family, represents the latest development in the discourses and strategies of the Catholic countermovement, and the ideological base of the current campaign proposed under the new label of ‘Famiglie per il no al referendum’:

What will happen to the sensitive issues related to the right to life or the right of parents to educate their own children in the school they wish, without having to pay more? In how many days will be approved a law on euthanasia? And what about gender in schools, how and by whom will be countered in the Chamber of Deputies? And if the adoptions by gay couples would be imposed by decree, who and how would be able to expose and organise some parliamentary opposition? What will happen to the principles that are the foundation of democratic institutions and fundamental freedoms? (Manifesto *Sì alla famiglia, no al referendum del governo Renzi*, 2016)

⁵² <http://www.intelligonews.it/articoli/1-giugno-2016/42190/editoriale-il-5-giugno-la-solidarnosc-italiana>. The expression is used by leaders to talk about an alliance of Italian citizens, believers and non-believers, based on solidarity.



Source: CDNF, n.d., retrieved from: <http://www.difendiamoinostrifigli.it/famiglie-per-il-no/>

Figure 27. Logo ‘Famiglie per il no al referendum’

The second part of this chapter analyses the discourses and framing strategies adopted by the LGBTQ movement, mirroring the structure presented in this section, that is; diagnosis of the problem, blame assignment, and motivational framing. Particularly, I look at discursive strategies implemented to ‘respond’ to the countermovement’s claims.

6.3 Collective Action Frames among LGBTQ Activists: Wake up Italy!

A body of literature has focused on the ‘for and against’ arguments of legally recognising same-sex partnerships. However, as stressed by different scholars, it is important to investigate the complexities of the discourses, practices, meanings and effects of same-sex relationship recognition (Young and Boyd 2006; Neary 2016). The next section analyses the complexities found in the LGBTQ movement’s discourse on the broader frames of ‘equality’. As I will point out, LGBTQ groups can vary greatly in their understanding of issues related to sexual citizenship and gender equality – same-sex partnerships, reproductive capacities, living arrangements, ethics of care, and questions about identity – and even more so in their

approaches to questioning the appropriateness of policies and norms for achieving equality for LGBTQ people.

Same love, same rights: marriage and equality

We have seen how sexuality, or sexual orientation, constitutes a critical system of values through which a group's social status and right to participate in public life is determined (Fraser 1990; Vasilev 2016). As neatly explained by Vasilev (2016, 750):

Such patterns of value can be anchored in formal institutional sites through legal codification and incorporation into government policies. Or they can be institutionalised informally by ingraining themselves in attitudes, beliefs, representations, and longstanding customs. Accordingly, a move towards recognition occurs when a society's laws, system of government, and patterns of interpretation and evaluation alter in a manner that increases a group's public acceptance, its ability to be politically consequential, and its self-worth.

We will see how different practices and discourses, employed at the collective and individual levels, can lead to social changes which bring about more acceptance of alternative, non-hetero sexual gender identities.

Through the slogan 'le cose cambiano' ('things change'), the LGBTQ movement launched the afore-mentioned process of change with regard to legal and identity recognition for homosexual people in Italy. Tracing the sequence of campaigns promoted by the movement in the context of 'equal rights', it is possible to identify the rhetoric of 'change' in most of the deployed frames' contents and slogans. After a long fight on the issue of egalitarian marriage, which up until this point had been enacted primarily through support demonstrations for the proposed laws on civil unions (the so-called DICO) in 2007, in the lead up to Italy's 2013 general election, the LGBTQ movement first launched the *#temposcaduto* (*#timeout*) campaign to

monitor and pressure candidates from all political parties represented in the election, by asking for specific commitments on four points, and assigning a score to each candidate: among these commitments was a positive position on egalitarian marriage and homosexual parenting. A similar initiative was introduced during the European elections in 2014 with the slogan *#cominciato* (*#youstart*), which again asked all candidates to give their support to the battle for egalitarian marriage. At the beginning of 2015, the movement began a new campaign for egalitarian marriage which became known as hashtagged *#lostessosi* (*#sameyes*) – roughly translated as same love, same yes, same rights – and aimed to rally together various LGBTQ organisations. As we have seen, many actions were organised in this context; the flashmobs on Valentine’s Day, the International Day against Homophobia in 2015 and 2016, events during Gay Pride in 2015, the mobilization *#svegliatitalia* (*#wakeuptaly*) which saw citizens in different Italian cities take to the streets on January 23, 2016.

The campaign ‘same love, same yes, same rights’ emerged at the same time as and in response to the ‘anti-gender’ campaign against civil unions. Although the primary goal of the campaign was to sustain the narrative of equal rights promoted since the early 2000s within the context of same-sex marriage, several ‘new’ framing strategies were arguably adopted by the movement in order to directly counter the narratives advanced by the Catholic countermovement. In this perspective, LGBTQ activists view the approval of the civil unions’ bill as an achievement towards *partial* equality but not full equality:

On days when you are waiting for the decrees for the implementation of the law on civil unions, we want to reiterate a goal, which is full equality for all, and that our country has not yet managed to achieve. With the approval of the Cirinnà bill we scored an important first step forward, very partial if we consider that excluded the children of same-sex families. It is important that right now the battle does not lose strength and that the country remains mobilized: the goal is marriage for all and

everyone, that is, full equality. (Gabriele Piazzoni, National Secretary of Arcigay, press release 11 May 2016)

Contrary to the argument sustained by Catholic activists, LGBTQ activists interpret full equality as a matter of public interest, a common good that would foster a culture of tolerance and respect in wider society:

Yet it has been shown that the full recognition of equality has positive effects not only for the gay, lesbian and bisexual people, but also for the entire community. First launches a positive message of recognition and cultural acceptance.

As the promoters of the campaign ‘same love, same yes, same rights’ have argued, the idea is to make the frame of equal rights for LGBTQ people resonate in society as a whole. It is, therefore, through frame extension and amplification (use of symbols and slogans) that activists transcribe the concept of non-discrimination:

To support a cause is not necessary to be the cause: the goal of this campaign is to bring out the battle for the egalitarian marriage outside the restricted sphere of associations LGBTQI and make it a target for everybody. To do so, we are using symbols and images with a strong communicative power and build opportunities for interaction and instance comparison with as many people as possible, stimulating concrete adherence to the mobilization. We want to make it clear to all that the spread of a culture of equality is the only antidote against all forms of discrimination and homotransphobia, so it can benefit all of society.⁵³

As in the case of forms of organisation and strategy explained in chapter 5, it is important to make a distinction among various interpretations of equal rights that emerged within the movement, particularly with respect to queer and trans-feminist collectives. In fact, in trying to complement ‘mainstream’ discourses on same-sex marriage, peripheral fringes of the movement have made important contributions to the extension of the narrative of equality, incorporating alternative interpretations of affective ties and intimate relationships which do not fall into the model of a traditional, liberal-oriented family formed by parents and children, independent from

⁵³ <http://www.gay.it/gay-life/news/intervista-lo-stesso-matrimonio-egualitario/4>

sexual orientation. This is to say that, while supporting the claim that equality is achieved through the recognition and legitimation of same-sex families, they advocate an additional step toward the recognition of an entire range of possible and plausible affective ties, including those excluded by traditional family models that are based on the neoliberal idea of 'a couple', for both heterosexual and homosexual people. One of the major queer collectives active in the campaign, La Favolosa Coalizione, called these alternative forms of kinship a 'sfamily way':

It is all those relationships of affection, intimacy and care that deviate from the model of the couple and the family, and that are often undervalued and made invisible because of a dominant imagery that says that what matters, what gives meaning to life, it is only the love of the couple - preferably straight, and even better if producer of children. This model not only discriminates against gay families, but all life choices that deviate from the linearity job-marriage-children: families recomposed hetero (= a pair of former partners with their new partners and their sons and relatives), the affective links constructed from single people with their friends, lovers, ex-lovers, roommates and everything else, the experience of those who by chance or by choice grows a child alone or with the help of people who are not partners, emotional and sexual relations are not exclusive. (La Favolosa Coalizione 2016)

To understand the extent to which discursive practices can constitute a significant source of disagreement, it is important and interesting to note that a sound critique of the rhetoric used by mainstream lesbian and gay associations comes from queer activists. In line with previous observations concerning the strategic deployment of identity for critique, the propositions formulated by such groups are extended to a dominant system of norms and beliefs. In this frame of understanding, there are some similarities to the language used in Catholic narratives, although with opposite connotations. For instance, for queer activists homotransphobia is conceived and publicly spoken about as a form of racism and fascism, in the same that gender Catholic activists consider gender ideology and homosexuality as forms of dictatorships and repression of identity. At the same time, the fight for equal rights cannot be disentangled, even discursively, from a narrative that calls into question

the Italian state, along with the economic and political interests of different actors:

You know, one of the bogeys agitated by the neoconservatives is the ‘crisis of the family’: the fact that fewer and fewer people get married and have children is, according to them, a sign of a crisis of values to fight homophobic and anti-feminist campaigns and with incentives from the State, the reproduction of traditional families. Depending on the schools of thought, the causes of this ‘crisis’ are in the perfidious plots of the ‘gay lobby’ or precariousness, individualism or in the frenzy of modern life ... But, in hindsight, a major cause is that the people, and especially women, are less willing than before to sacrifice ‘for the good of the family’. And then, so be it family crisis! (La Favolosa Coalizione 2016)

From quotes like the one cited above, we can infer two criticisms. The first is related to the assumption that access to the system of civil rights would inevitably lead to the reproduction of heteronormative and exclusionary practices, particularly through the inclusion, even if partial and subordinate, of gender conventional models for homosexual people (Richardson 2004; Young and Boyd 2006). In this sense, gender conventional traits such as gay, white, middle-class and monogamist, the stereotyped mainstream representations of homosexual people, are placed within a new ‘family-oriented’ connotation (Butler 2004; Rohrer 2009). The second criticism concerns a diffused narrative among LGBTQ activists and secularist supporters alike that sexual rights for LGBTQ people constitute the benchmark to define civilised countries. In essence, LGBTQ rights were justified with reference to European values. According to some groups, this ‘civilizational’ rhetoric is intrinsically based on racist and socially exclusive premises:

These days the Parliament discusses to extend to same-sex couples some scraps of rights. We hope that this law is just a step, not only towards the full recognition of all couples, but to a policy that promotes and protects the affection relationships of any kind. A wish that we do in the name of solidarity and social justice, not in the name of a ‘civilization’ which, in these times, too easily assume racist anti-Islamic overtones. (La Favolosa Coalizione 2016)

This sort of critique is usually labelled as ‘homonationalism’⁵⁴, as ironically expressed in the ‘Declaration of Independence of the People of Twisted Lands’ (2016): “We proclaim the beginning of de-civilization. We refuse the logic which divides cultures into ‘advanced’ and ‘backward’ under the pretext of ‘rights’ for women or for so-called sexual ‘minorities’.” The instrumentalisation of LGBTQ rights in the forms of homonationalism or ‘pink-washing’⁵⁵ are denounced in this context as a pretext used by specific political parties, economic powers, and lobbies to pursue different interests that would not lead to equality of rights, but rather would exacerbate differences between ‘the norm’ (conventional gender identities) and those subjectivities that are excluded from the model sustained by neoliberalism. In this sense, a point of agreement can be found between queer critiques and Catholic narratives; both blame the current economic and political system, guided by neoliberal orientations, for instrumentalising LGBTQ rights for economic purposes. This is a case in point where movement and countermovement dynamics push actors to adopt and imitate tactics and frames from the other side; in this case, Catholic activists endorse progressive frames such as the ones above. State’s focus is on regulating the ‘marginalised’ instead of reducing structural inequalities that bring along disproportional marginalisation for specific LGBTQ subjects; in other words, the state would be responsible of institutionalising a system of gender inequality.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The term homonationalism refers to a specific rhetoric that relies on nationalism in order to promote sexual and gender equality. As De Vivo and Dufour (2012) explain, homonationalism is found in Italy across discourses for the recognition of LGBTQ rights.

⁵⁵ The term ‘pink-washing’, formed by the union of ‘pink’ and ‘whitewashing’ has been used with different connotations relating to feminine emancipation but also to the LGBTQ community. Here, it refers to the idea of promoting a product, a policy, an organisation, by making leverage on the fact of being gay friendly.

⁵⁶ This argument reflects Hirschman’s reactionary narratives, similar to the ones advanced by Catholic activists. In this case, the idea is to oppose ‘false’ and ‘instrumentalised’ progressive narratives that establish a hierarchy between countries on the basis of political and economic interests.

Some queer and radical left groups therefore sustain that gay marriage aims at mirroring a model that perpetuates a system of economic inequality, where the married become more worthy of health care, economic, and social rights (Neary, 2016). While these groups advocate policy measures that would take into account the diversity and complexity of LGBTQ experiences, Catholic activists see the traditional family model as the solution to the dismantling of social safety brought about by neoliberalism and capitalism. Eventually, the advocates of radical politics of sexuality and kinship find difficult to fall under definite and polarised identities such as ‘us’ (mainstream LGBTQ groups) and ‘them’ (opponents). In this respect, the discourses on reproductive rights represent one of the most contentious issues not only between Catholic and LGBTQ activists, but also within LGBTQ groups themselves. As shown in the next paragraphs, these are questions that push towards gender separatism, according to Sedgwick’s models, as self-identified female activists tend to bond together independently from their sexual orientation.

The issues of adoption and ART are two important themes that accompanied movement’s same-sex marriage in the discourses of sexual citizenship and reproductive rights. Although all parties consider the question of stepchild adoption a matter of full equality, the issue of ART has been a source of divergent discourses within the movement. It is important to note that feminist and lesbian collectives have articulated most of the views and discourses on the topic; rarely, gay activists or even mixed-gender groups have publicly expressed their position. This suggests an intrinsic gender bias within the movement, as if only groups composed of female subjects were entitled or responsible to comment – either sustaining or condemning

On the other hand, it is the accusation that reforms implemented by the state (in this form) would only exacerbate the current situation of LGBTQ people.

– on matters of reproductive rights and the female body. Once again, the arguments articulated by some LGBTQ factions hold some similarities with the narrative of the Catholic countermovement. Both Catholics and individual lesbian and gay activists are opposed to the commodification of women's body, reproductive rights, and children, as stated in the call *Lesbiche contro la GPA: nessun regolamento sul corpo delle donne*⁵⁷ ('Lesbians against ART: no regulation of the women's body') recently published, written and signed by more than 50 lesbian activists, and praised by Catholic activists:

In the name of self-determination of women and newborn rights, the fifty signatories of the appeal reject the commodification of the reproductive capacity of women. They reject the commodification of children. They ask all countries to maintain the rule of elementary common sense that the legal mother is the woman who has given birth, and not the party to a contract, or the oocyte origin. They ask all countries to abide by the international conventions for the protection of human rights and the child they have signed and firmly oppose all forms of legalization of surrogacy on the national and international level, abolishing the (few) laws they have introduced it.

Other groups, particularly the ones representing families or couples who might have had already benefited from ART, such as Famiglie Arcobaleno, and officially Arcilesbica, at least at the national level (as just mentioned, many activists of Arcilesbica have in fact detached themselves from this position), have responded to these claims endorsing opposite positions:

We promote strongly the freedom of women to choose what to do with their body and one's uterus with no paternalistic nor maternalist controls. [...] There are too many Madonnas in the collective imagination, and still too few women who dare to really free their body and their mind from the idealized motherhood-myth, from ideological images that change according the historical context of the place and economic necessity. Even today, for example, too many women suffer strong psychological and social pressures on these issues. These pressures often weigh on the choices that not only should remain the preserve of women, but they must be always respected and never forced or derided. For us the ART remains a crucial experience of female self-consciousness; when helps gay fathers or single fathers to become parents, it is an additional tool for the liberation of males and an extraordinary way to make blow social representations, gender roles, historical impositions against women. (Famiglie

⁵⁷ *La Repubblica*, 26.09.2016: <http://download.repubblica.it/pdf/2016/cronaca/no-regolamenti.pdf>

Arcobaleno)⁵⁸

As anticipated, the question of ART has been long debated within feminist and queer circles as an example of a domain subject to the exercise of bio-power through state's and medical discourses on the female body and its reproductive capacities. Biological reproduction through ART is therefore increasingly questioned by the LGBTQ movement, to the point of asking whether it is a LGBT right or an idealized biological model of parenthood, favouring heteronormative forms of kinship (Boucai 2016) based on monogamous, reproductive heterosexual union. At the same time, some queer theorists and activists have been critical towards the constitutive networks of power and knowledge in which ART is embedded, with the 'power over life' exerted in the social, political, legal and medical regulation of (female, fertile and infertile) bodies – i.e. the disciplinary production of sexual subjects (Foucault 1978).

Blame assignment

Two broader issues have been at the centre of blame assignment on both sides of the struggle. The first concerns homophobia, and particularly the introduction of a law against hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The second, closely linked to it, relates to sexual and gender education in schools. In a way, the two are interdependent as, according to LGBTQ activists and in contrast to what it has been sustained by Catholic activists, sexual and gender education aim at creating a culture of respect and acceptance of gender diversity with positive effects for the

⁵⁸<http://www.famigliearcobaleno.org/userfiles/file/Posizioni%20FA%20su%20temi%20eticament%20sensibili.pdf>

society at large. Discourses of ‘anti-gender’ activists have been clearly identified by the LGBTQ movement as the major barrier to its activities during the last three years:

For some years in Italy and Europe there have been active and organized players that, under a general umbrella of ‘anti-gender’ movements and initiatives (fighting what they call ‘gender’), actively oppose all forms of inclusion and openness of civil society and institutions against LGBTQI people. [...] In opposing the rights and equality of LGBTQI people, this movement spreads ideas that effectively disqualify the root of the right to existence of LGBTQI persons, with topics ranging from unnatural identity and reality of homosexual or transgender persons, to the opposition of these to the divine plan for humanity, a feared conspiracies of LGBTQI lobby supposed to confuse and divert the minds of young men and women. Based on a toolbox of manipulation and falsification of the topics usually used instead to spread respect for diversity and combat homo-transphobic violence, these people are very active in spreading propaganda [...] in interfering with the already few prevention activities of homo-transphobic bullying in schools and in putting pressure on government institutions to ensure that they do nothing to improve the lives of LGBTQI people. (Arcigay, <http://www.arcigay.it/cosa-facciamo/lotta-alle-discriminazioni/>)

In this context, processes of identity vilification and polarization are set in motion by the LGBTQ movement as a counternarrative to Catholic activists. In a reversed process, therefore, ‘Catholics’ are labelled and stigmatised as conservatives, fascists, retrogrades, and bigots:

Gender Panic! A name, a program: the reflection at the base of the Favolosa Coalizione is that if Standing Sentinels, Manif pour Tous, NoGender, catholic, fascists and conservatives of all kinds foment panic around gender theories, homosexuality, family crisis, by our attempt to show the reassuring face of LGBTQ lives and tell people that there is nothing to fear is not the right strategy. Beyond the apocalyptic tones, in fact, what they fear is the sunset of compulsory heterosexuality and the binary system of the sexes / genders, which serves to keep women always one step below men. But changing this system is precisely our political goal, and groped to mitigate it or hide it does not serve to reassure them, but only to weaken us. (La Favolosa Coalizione, Facebook event)

Again, queer activists underline the risks of deploying a type of collective identity that builds on heteronormative models in order to display movement’s worthiness, which contradicts the overall strategy of fighting this same system of gendered and sexual power relations – compulsory heterosexuality and binarism. Showing that ‘gay is good’, a dominant frame in traditional LGBTQ groups, although it might

have a positive impact on public opinion and enhance chances for inclusion, does not serve the political goal of ‘changing this system’.

Changing people’s mind about LGBTQ subjects has been a major cultural goal of the movement, as it has been, conversely, the marginalisation of LGBTQ individuals from institutions and society by the countermovement. The value of visibility is one of the thematic and political focuses of the historical identity of the LGBTQ movement’s motivational/prognostic framing. The driving principles of freedom and self-determination have always been considered vital in the personal emancipation of people and politics. This visibility is a progressive path that begins with the ‘coming out’ (agency component) and can develop in a more ‘in-your-face’ style of activism. The movement actively promotes ‘coming out’ as an instrument of emancipation and affirmation of oneself, whether it is on the personal and private side, or on the civil and political. In the belief that every physical dimension of the person inevitably contains a political significance, ‘coming out’ becomes a basic precondition in the process of liberation and expression of individual and relational identities. Based on these values, the pride of social visibility emerges and is celebrated through symbolic activities and signs of identity, such as the rainbow flag. The metaphor of light, color and festive joy is to be appreciated for its historic value as it testifies the end of an era in which LGBTQ subjects lived hidden and concealed (related to the metaphor of the closet), with the condemnation to silence and social invisibility. Through the ‘light of the presence’, occupying a physical space, with the noises and sounds of the ‘Parade’, the community claims the existence and the right to be equal, the pursuit of happiness according to values, nature and inclinations that each one will recognise as their own in a fluid and dynamic relationship with identity.

Once again, references to ‘humanity’ and ‘civilization’ of the ‘whole society’ in different framing strategies are therefore used to selectively call attention to specific aspects of reality that better resonate with the targeted audience. A concrete framing strategy is put in place in order to extend the concept of ‘gay pride’ to the one of ‘human pride’ or ‘everybody pride’, through the adoption of universalistic terms (similar to the normalisation of the Catholic discourse and in line with Sedgwick’s universalizing view) and with the aim of involving a wide range of supporters and sympathisers, calling for diversity as a common denominator to a shared identity. Frame amplification through the image of a big wave of pride running through Italy was critical in claiming a collective identity and presenting the cause as meaningful for targeted audiences:

Every Pride is a unique time for composition, identities and modes, which changes in every region, enriching and feeding of the many different characteristics of our country, but all are bound to each other in a big wave that surrounds and runs through Italy. The Wave Pride arises from the common will of networking the many different LGBTQI associations to involve the institutions, the citizens, friends, family and neighbors in a big joint effort to demand rights, equality and visibility to all people and all families, without discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. (Onda Pride, <http://ondapride.it/londa/>)



Source: Onda Pride, retrieved from : <http://ondapride.it/gallery/>

Figure 28. Official poster by Ondra Pride : ‘Diversity makes us equal’.

The idea of a ‘wave pride’ recalls Butler’s idea of performativity of mass demonstrations, as well as queer activism, based on the alliances among various minorities holding a ‘precarious status’, as she states : ‘[i]t does not exactly presume or produce a collective identity, but a set of enabling and dynamic relations that include support, dispute, breakage, joy, and solidarity’ (2015, 27).

We have seen how fringes of the movement vary in their interpretations of the problem at hand, and present different solutions, ranging from queer oppositional, deconstructive and radical discourses to framing strategies centred on the alignment with already-established interpretations of social reality in the case of ‘mainstream’ groups. The LGBTQ movement agrees in locating gender and sexual repression not only in institutions, but also and especially in the dominant society. As I outline in the next section, interactions between movements, public opinion, political and non-political allies and institutions have traced different mobilization trajectories and alternative patterns of choices in the selection of issues, claims, and frame diagnosis and prognosis strategies.

6.4 Countering opposing frames: Dilemmas

There are different forms in which discourse influences political and social action. Public narratives can be very persuasive; justifying an actor's position in relation to the appropriateness of specific behaviours, and particularly their institutionalisation through political reforms. A wide range of techniques can be endorsed by opposing movements that try to humiliate, devalue, and condemn marginalised identities and arguments. In these efforts, generating resonance is the key to advancing alternative positions.



Source: Arcilesbica, retrieved from: www.facebook.com/Arcilesbica

Figure 29. Poster by Arcilesbica created in response to Standing Sentinels' vigils, exemplifying the strategy of frame debunking in which different affirmations about LGBTQ people made by the countermovement are pulled apart and falsified.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ 'They say we are against nature : false. We defend nature and value differences ; They say we don't have the right to have 'one' family : false. What if they were two?; They say we don't have to live a lie : true. We do indeed revolt against false ideologies ; They say we want to get married : true. We like to be upstream, we like to be free to choose ; They say we are going into schools teaching that gender doesn't exist : false. We do not teach, we promote critical thinking. Don't watch over, wake up !

We observed a number of shifts in the countermovement's discourses. In the context of the recognition of same-sex partnerships, discourses varied from a strong 'anti-gender' position, to a radical defence of the traditional family in line with pro-family values. In this, we have seen how heteronormativity aggressively establishes the traditional family as the idealised institution for support, kinship, and education. The *normalisation* of the Catholic countermovement's discourse defines a strategy that, while maintaining its radical opposition to the egalitarian policies in the field of civil rights, is less 'negative' and more 'positive'; that is, it is centred on the defence of a condition seen as the indissoluble anthropological premise of society, applying a recasting of the argument in terms to appear less sectorial and more universal. In contrast, we have also observed an intensification of homophobic hate speech: the vilification of homosexual people as mentally ill, as liberal-oriented and sinful individuals in the discussion about the extension of hate crimes to sexual orientation and gender identity and education. Nevertheless, the countermovement has managed to adapt to a new opening in the political opportunity structure offered by the constitutional referendum by translating frames to fit the consequent discursive opportunity structure.

The mechanisms and processes explained above refer to the *reaching in or reaching out* dilemma. Building a stronger identity through *boundary activation* ('us versus them') was crucial to reach internal audiences in the case of the LGBTQ movement. The countermovement was also successful in directing efforts that reached different audiences, denying or mitigating the religious nature of its own arguments and collective identity in specific arenas. This was particularly the case during the initial phases of the mobilization where it identified its own leaders and spokespeople as skilled and legitimate players, such as lawyers, politicians and

journalists. This type of strategy is reflected in the hetero-definition of the LGBTQ movement as a stereotyped enemy (the ‘gay lobby’) and a parallel overshadowing of the countermovement’s auto-definition (‘we are a-political, a-confessional’; ‘we are not an association, a party, a movement’). In the same vein, the LGBTQ movement’s need to reach out to the broader audience was based on the production of a shared knowledge about gender issues, from which to build a stronger identity, through a single-voiced, accessible narrative. A strategic choice adopted by the movement was to change the nature of the language used for projects and initiatives that needed the support of public institutions representing different, non-aligned constituencies; most notably by building on broader themes, the famous ‘ambiguous terms’ mentioned in the *Lexicon*, such as discrimination, gender violence, and human rights in general.

Overall, the LGBTQ movement has opted for the deployment of different collective identities: *identity for critique* and *identity for education*, depending on the audience. By emphasizing similarity with other movements, and shifting discourses towards more inclusive terms, it managed to expand its own mobilizing structure and build external alliances. Eventually, the movement had to constantly negotiate identities on the base of *direct confrontation* with the opponent (critique), and *indirect moves* (education) – through persuasion and resources gathering – aimed at public and third party involvement. It is important here to acknowledge and recall the relevance of some of the questions surrounding sexual politics already raised by Butler. These questions all pertain to some extent to the meaning attached to ‘equality’, and whose subjectivities, relations, intimacies will be recognized before the law. Particularly, Butler (2009) along queer activists remain critical over the fact that only certain forms of living gender (and life in general) will be recognized as legitimate. This is a question of gender performativity and how one’s life becomes

eligible for recognition. In this sense, queer activists look at issues of gay marriage, adoption, and even biological reproduction as problematic insofar they grant non-heterosexual subjects with the rights of heterosexual bodies, ultimately serving the dominant order and promoting institutionally sanctioned ways of being whose bounds do not include alternative bodies and relationships. These are therefore interpreted as sensitive issues where more equality for some might actually lead to further marginalization and discrimination for others, once again, by means of the exclusionary power produced through institutional recognition. Eventually and in light of the challenges emerging from ‘queer dilemmas’, we can point to the presence of divergences in both discourses and modes of participation within the LGBTQ movement, as a consequence of the fact that certain practices and articulations do reinforce the dominant order and hegemony, while some subjects, bodies, and sexual lives get sacrificed in the pathway to equality.

The countermovement’s narratives have had a significant impact on the rhetoric and framing strategies used by the LGBTQ movement. On the positive side, a definite ‘anti-gender’ stance has pushed the movement towards the adoption of a ‘pro-gender’ position, which has forced activists to reflect upon the technicality of the language and vocabulary used in the public sphere with respect to gender and sexual issues. We can consider this impact as a positive outcome, in the sense that it has drawn public attention to LGBTQ issues and provided the movement with the opportunity to re-formulate a set of narratives to make them more accessible to the wider public. As Fetner (2008, 104) has noticed, ‘[...] with their superior financial and media resources, the religious right was able to pose multiple challenges across a number of political venues, perhaps playing an even bigger role in producing public discourse about lesbian and gay lives than the lesbian and gay movement itself’.

Alternatively, the emergence and affirmation of ‘anti-gender’ discourses forced the LGBTQ movement to carefully select the issues that its activism would target. This often revealed the challenges faced by different groups in articulating single-voiced arguments and initiatives, therefore playing a harmful role on movement’s worthiness and unity.

Finally, in reference to the interactionist dynamics between opposing movements as explained in the theoretical chapter, we can point to several instances in which mechanisms of imitation, adaptation/adoption took place during the campaign. In the attempt to stress that such relations are not only of competition, we witnessed a spillover in the repertoire of tactics used by both movements, particularly in the context of demonstrations. A case in point in this sense is the adoption by the Catholic countermovement of one of the core tactics of the LGBTQ movement, namely flash-mobs and street performances as in the case of Standing Sentinels. Another example, closely linked to the content of this chapter, is the recurrent adaptation of progressive movement slogans and frames. In light of the discussion on reactionary discourse, we have seen how specific frames – such as neocolonialism, neoliberalism in Catholic and queer groups – were adapted and declined by the movements in order to resonate with their respective, oppositional, discourses.

Chapter 7

Protesting within Gendered Social Structures

I take it that this is the first formulation of “gender trouble” in this text. I sought to understand some of the terror and anxiety that some people suffer in “becoming gay”, the fear of losing one’s place in gender or of not knowing who one will be if one sleeps with someone of the ostensibly “same” gender.

– Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990, xi)

This chapter presents empirical evidence based on 37 interviews conducted with young Catholic and LGBTQ activists⁶⁰, disclosing findings on the interplay between identity construction, negotiation processes, and the social structural context. It aims to answer one of the leading research questions of this study, namely: *how do young activists interact within gendered social structures to reproduce or contest gender hierarchies as they protest?* Overall, the chapter handles data collected from the groups under analysis with a main theoretical premise presented in previous chapters: the horizontal nature (interactionist) between structural constraints as they are experienced, challenged or reiterated by activists, and the negotiation of gender identities originating from social interaction. Understanding how gender is produced in different ways through social interaction is the central goal of this assumption.

First, the chapter provides findings on the understanding, use and perception of gender of individual activists: the meanings that we can discern in the consciousness of individuals through the ideas they espouse and the assumptions they reveal in interviews. In this section, I explore the meanings that Catholic and LGBTQ activists attach to gender, focusing on gender identity, roles, and expression. Although these

⁶⁰ For details concerning participants’ age, gender, origin, and organisational affiliation, see Annex 1. Sample of interview respondents.

concepts operate together, by teasing them apart, I hope to help the reader gain an understanding of the variations in the meanings and values attached to gender. Finally, by highlighting critical areas of investigation, the section analyses how gendered structures have been internalised by individuals and consequently operate in the identity negotiation that individuals constantly perform through social interaction.

Second, it analyses the role played by social movement activities in the development of practices that either challenge or sustain gender structures and order, and how social movement spaces provide a place for critical reflections and attitudes on issues of gender and sexuality. It elaborates on the concepts of a gendered *habitus* explored in previous parts - the embodied performative aspect of social gendered structures, reflecting the practical sense for acting that agents express – performativity, and subversion, and compares data on the practices of gender and the symbolic manipulation of the gendered body experienced by LGBTQ and Catholic activists. Namely, after examining how gendered social actors develop and are predisposed to challenge or reproduce the gender structure and order through interactions, I consider the ways in which alternative understandings of being can be articulated in social movements’ spaces – through social performances in a continuum from expressive to strategic. After presenting the conscious efforts by recruiters and members to craft their identity and positions through discourse, this chapter propose to take a closer look into the on going culture inside the movements.

As in previous chapters, this section is structured with the analysis of Catholic activists first, the equivalent examination of LGBTQ activists second, and concludes with a comparison of activists’ patterns of engagement. Data are reported by means of interview excerpts and consequent observations, with comments from the author

on major themes issued from evidence. Translation of interviews from Italian to English is mine.

7.1 Understanding Gender: Between Collectivism and Individualism

I have always felt like a man, since I was born, even before, and now that I know God's word even more.

(Interview nr. 24)

To me, my gender identity is equal to my political thinking, to my hair colour. I think almost everything is fluid and can change in life. It is useless to put yourself under a banner and say 'I am this', 'cause I am many things.

(Interview nr. 5)

The notion of gender identity includes the reflexive views and perceptions of social actors derived from processes of interaction with other actors, structures, and different social groupings (Wharton 2005). In particular, it embeds understandings and meanings of femininity and masculinity used to define others, and ourselves, that are usually supported and reinforced by existing social structures and norms. To clarify, 'building or reproducing identities is an important component of the process through which individuals give meaning to their own experiences and to their transformations over time' (della Porta and Diani 2006, 92). Collected evidence shows a range of interpretations and meanings attached to gender by participants from both movements. By highlighting variations in participants' understandings, based on the value content they attributed to social gender identities, roles, expressions, and behaviours, along with the evaluations of their salience with respect to society as a whole, the section aims to answer the following question: what systems of understanding and perception constitute participants' *habitus*, and to what extent is this congruous, or not, with the external structure (thus reproducing the very

structure itself)? That is, how is being female or male expressed in activists' understandings of gender? These conceptions inform how identities are negotiated through social interactions between individuals, and between individuals and the social structures forming their social environment. In this process, individuals negotiate different aspects of their identity within a specific social context through performance. Depending on which aspects of their identity they want to convey, different performances project different images and perceptions of the self to the outside, which in turn, have an impact on the production and perception of one's social identity.

7.1.1 Catholic Activists

When I started writing this chapter, I came across a reflexion written in the Sunday editorial of the newspaper *La Repubblica*. I would like to report an excerpt of the text, which I believe constitutes an important premise for the pages that will follow:

The biggest obstacle that Francesco [the Pope] encounters is the contrast that still divides the absolute truth and secular relativism. These two ways of looking at the truth are irreconcilable and that is a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to the encounter with modernity that is one of the most important precepts of Vatican II. [...] Our truth - says Francesco - is absolute because God is absolute. This principle cannot be overcome and it is what makes the difference between believers and non-believers. But every religious person in his own way perceives our absolute. People are not clones. Each believes in the absolute truth but in his own way. So the absolute truth is mine, is yours, is that of many bishops who for example have a stance on family, a truth that is not the same as other bishops, and so it is for many other things. These are differences that enrich, and I might add, that enrich the Catholic world but also the secular world of non-believers. Above all this looms the doubt, which it does not preclude the action, but keeps the critical vigilance. This is humanism.⁶¹

⁶¹ Eugenio Scalfari, "Francesco ci ricorda che la terra nasce dal mare e dal fuoco", *La Repubblica*, 4.09.2016.

This passage sheds light on some important reasons why religion is a complex phenomenon to study. The main reason for this difficulty, as articulated by scholars concerned with the sociology of religion, is the need to be attentive to the social structuring and social impact of religion, rather than its essence. A second reason is related to the fact that treating religion as a cultural phenomenon is clearly at odds with how the faithful conceive it, that is in terms of faith, and the underlying dichotomy between culture, the social, and the natural order created by God. It is important to clarify that the results and comments advanced throughout the chapter are therefore based on inclusive definitions of religion in sociological terms, which “tend to emphasize the ‘functions’ that religion performs for individuals (generating motivation and morale) and for society (strengthening social integration)” (Aldridge 2006, 142). Moreover, it is crucial to understand, as the same Pope Francis noted, that individuals are not clones, and will not act as ‘cultural dopes, passively accepting pre-written scripts for gender behaviour, but nor are they entirely free to develop and act out their own scripts’ (Scott 2006, 163). Conscious of the challenges posed by the task of analysing religion, my aim is to avoid treating individuals, and Catholic activists in particular, as passive conformers to gender norms, and rather to highlight how the religious discourse positions itself with respect to their life experience.

Questioning gender identity and roles, data on young Catholic activists shows that one’s perceived gender identity cannot be disentangled from the religious structure in which it is embedded. Following Foucault’s mode of subjection (1985), that is, the relation the individual establishes with respect to a moral and prescriptive system, religious experience and faith, constitute the primary system of ‘making-sense’ available to participants, as one interviewee clearly states:

Before, I did not ask myself these questions [about gender]; on the contrary, I was completely ignorant. Now, when someone asks you to reflect, especially from a Christian point of view, it shapes your ideas in a way that is Christian, that is, for a Christian, ‘man and woman form the traditional family’ [...] I give myself answers based on my experience, therefore I became who I am because I had a Christian experience, which is my point of reference on which to base my answers. (Interview nr. 27)

Based on the fundamentals of Catholic discourse and praxis, activists connect questions related to sexual and gender identity to a natural, taken-for-granted, self-evident, commonsensical world - thus favouring, in Bourdieu’s terms, a ‘doxic state’. The biological difference between a man and a woman is stated as a governing principle and *value* for the functioning of society at large. Moreover, according to interviewees, it is an empirical fact that men and women are *naturally* born into their respective gender identities, and therefore they are not socially constructed. Reflecting on the perceived damage caused by ‘gender theory’ and the idea that gender identity is a social construction, some activists reacted firmly:

In few words? Very briefly, it is the idea according to which a human being would be born neutral, not male nor female ... we are convinced of the contrary, because this anthropological vision has been imposed on us, culturally and historically through centuries. It becomes dangerous [the gender theory] when it is socially established, because all our anthropology is based on the dichotomy of a man and a woman, and when this is missing several structures that are the foundation of society will fail, first of all of course that of the family. A family that is clearly founded on the union between a man and a woman in order to create life. Here, briefly. (Interview nr. 34)

The ‘data of the flesh’, biological sex, gives empirical evidence that cannot be overlooked and must be taken as the only valid fact for the natural construction of one’s gender identity which is a necessary condition for the stability and continuity not only of the individual, but also of society as a whole. Here again, a major concern among Catholic activists relates to the determination of ethical substance (Foucault 1985), in which the individual establishes a part of himself as the primary material for moral conduct. In this sense, a substantializing view of gender declined

into *essentialist assumptions* - that gender difference is innate, transcultural and historical - therefore constitute the fundamental belief in the real:

It's all bad! The worst thing in my opinion is the fact that reality becomes an opinion; this is the monstrosity of gender. In the sense that the gender does not say that I am born male or female but ... Or rather, that the sexual apparatus with which I was born and which configures me as male or female does not tell me anything about my identity, this is the drama, and that the identity depends on the way in which I perceive myself. So losing, this is the drama of gender, losing reality as a benchmark goal, obviously my identity is not tied to anything stable and consequently can change constantly over time, because as there is no longer the reality as of yet, as a natural fact, of course, what I am will depend solely on the perception of me ... thus on the impulse of the moment, and hence my identity will change forever. (Interview nr. 33)

However, we must ask how the *natural* is understood. In Butler's view, this is an arbitrary move that lays at the basis of the heterosexual matrix. According to participants' accounts, the unquestionable meaning of the act of faith finds its foundation in the understanding of sexual behaviour, desire, and gender identity as natural and causally linked to one another, for the sake of procreation. Therefore, the 'data of the flesh', the biological body is fundamental to every dimension of identity, it cannot be understood in isolation, and more importantly, it cannot be 'manipulated' by personal desires and choices:

This [gender] produces an individual who is no longer having an identity based on the solid natural fact, is an individual who has no fixed identity, a fluid individual, ranging from one identity to another. Thus, a person who substantially does not have a stable identity does not know who he is, and not knowing who he is, he becomes an individual easily manipulated by the power, because there is no connection with himself, 'who am I', and consequently it is difficult for me to relate with someone else if my identity is not clear. [...] Then, the data of the flesh is reduced to nothing, because it becomes a given that I can use it depending on my desire, this way the data of the flesh is detached from all the other data of the person, from the psychic dimension for example: it is not true that no one is born male or female, we are born male or female, because the moment you are born male or female a cerebral dimorphism is created; two different types of brains, the male and female also differ structurally. So also the sexual given with which I am born depends on the different way of thinking, that is, sexuality is something that forms all aspects of the person. (Interview nr. 33)

At no point has the heterosexual assumption been questioned by activists. The conflation of gender with sexual identity is an accepted understanding that does not

come from confusion or misunderstanding; rather, it is actively argued through essentialist notions and substantialising discourses. This, in turn, constitutes the evidence bridging external structures and the internal structures of *habitus*:

However, what I do not agree with is the idea that gender identity is only a social construction, and that the individual has the possibility of choice regarding what he wants at any age, namely ... Before choosing, one is; in a way nature has its weight and having a male or female reproductive organ is important, because it still has its weight, no matter how many surgeries one can do, the ability to reproduce belongs to the female organ and the woman. Fortunately, we have not come to be able to facilitate reproduction in the male body yet. (Interview nr. 31)

As I will explore in the last section, the indisputable character of sexual and gender themes lies at the very heart of Catholic protests. There are issues that are impossible to take a secular standpoint on, and it is precisely around these issues that the need to publicly engage in preventing social change arises. Although understandings of gender identity were consistent in content across different accounts, drawing on the principles and knowledge expressed above, it is possible to observe variations in participants' reflections on gender roles. While men and women are considered to be born into their respective roles and identities with natural (read, social) masculine or feminine characteristics acquired at birth, some, particularly female, young activists seem increasingly uncomfortable with gender stereotypes attached to men and women:

I agree with an approach that wants to tear down an education made of gender stereotypes, that my daughter is female, then must grow in a pink room with dolls and strollers and if he is male, so he must grow in a blue room with toy cars, and so on. This is the basis of stereotypes that lead to adulthood: you are the woman, and mother, the one who takes care of cleaning the house and so on. Rather, I am in favour of promoting an education as if my daughter wants to play with the toy car she can, if my son wants to play with the doll, he plays with it and it does not mean anything ... It does not mean becoming homosexual either [...] (Interview nr. 30)

However, this position is difficult to defend if compared to the overall assumption that women and men are intrinsically different, and that sexuality and gender

function in tandem. This duality produced contradictions concerning roles – particularly women’s roles – in several accounts, as shown in the examples below:

I believe that women and men are on par, but have different functions, I do not know how to say, they are evenly matched, but each is critical to something. So I am not at all of the idea that now, everything is fine; we are all equal in all, this absolutely not. (Interview nr. 29)

No, they don’t have different roles to play, but different capacities because of nature; that is, men are definitely stronger than women by nature, for their physical appearance. Women instead, by nature, are generally more affectionate, so that is ... It’s not that, I ... that is, on the contrary, I agree that if everyone wants to do a certain job, a certain kind of life, both male and female is free to do so but that the nature of differences of the two genders are obvious. (Interview nr. 32)

With regard to society, that is, work, all of it, and then I think a woman is clear that she must also make a choice, whether to follow the motherhood, family or professional life, and apart from a few exceptions, however, she must follow it. But I think that a woman can choose if she prefers to have a professional career or ... it is an absolutely acceptable choice. (Interview nr. 36)

Going back to Foucault’s moral experience, we can appreciate the challenges posed by the ethical work undertaken by Catholic activists – the extent to which activists relates themselves to prescribed rules and recognise them as mandatory in the attempt to comply with them. Moreover, what these observations suggest is that young Catholic activists are maybe less inclined than earlier generations to emphasise *gender polarisation*, leaving room for a less rigid frame of binary role and behaviours. Still, assigning appropriate gender roles and differentiating between female or male-inclined attitudes and ‘sensitivities’ has also explicitly been used at the structural level, as an organising principle of labour within the association to which activists belonged. As one interviewee explained, “the basic principle from which FUCI’s associational world starts is that we have both a male and a female president, precisely because they have different points of views, different sensitivities.” (Interview nr. 20)

As data has shown, gender and sexuality are conflated in the same heteronormative discourse, and so are firmly entrenched in a conception which links

them together (heterosexual matrix) in a coherent and stable way. The first value to be advanced is therefore the natural difference between men and women, with the consequent overlap of gender and sex. Yet, it is not clear how gender roles develop throughout the life course, as it seems commonly accepted that gender identity is acquired at birth and remains fixed over time. On the one hand, individuals are inscribed into traditional understandings of femininity and masculinity, without being given the agency to change such identities. Men and women are said to hold the status of pairs but not equals, again for biological reasons. Here, observations clearly resonate with biological determinism. Yet, they also relate to social determinism as understood in Butler's notion of performativity – we comply with obligatory norms to be one gender or the other, within a strictly binary frame. It is crucial to understand, however, that for Catholic activists, it is only biological determinism that counts and in which, as Butler says, 'the appearance of gender is often mistaken as a sign of its internal or inherent truth' (2009, i). On the other hand, data suggests indecision about the extent to which women and men can choose, in their *adulthood*, to prioritise identities, whether religious, professional, as a parent, etc. Although some degree of freedom is granted to women to decide whether to pursue a professional career or a 'maternal career', it is strongly suggested, by both women and men, that priority should be given to the creation of a family:

I have been educated to think that I will marry and I will have children, one day. And it is true that for me, to be honest, certain things, are disturbing [...] for instance, if someone in school can register as 'male, female, or undecided', it is something that shocks me a bit. (Interview nr. 28)

These last observations are revealing of the cultural matrix through which gender identity becomes intelligible (Butler 1990), that is, the alongside requirement that other identities cannot exist. In particular, we have seen how certain identities fall outside dominant cultural understandings of gender, in ways that are mostly

perceived as ‘disturbing’. Most importantly though, identities and the roles that accompany them become problematic when coherent gender norms are not asymmetrically distributed and do not conceal heteronormative imperatives. In this sense, the existence of a ‘maternal career’ to be followed reveals how the category of sex, as argued by Butler and Foucault, is a regulatory ideal, normative from the start. However, questions arise concerning the different discourses, knowledge, and positioning referred to in participants’ narratives. How are these reflections and assumptions intentionally or unintentionally transmitted? How do some meanings come to be dominant, and others to be muted? There is, in fact, a significant theme that is subdued in activists’ accounts. Biological sex is cited over and over, and valued at the highest as a distinctive trait of identity and source of identification, but none of the respondents, with the exception of one, referred to *sexuality* as someone’s personal experience. The taken-for-granted belief that dominates in this unspoken question seems to find its foundation in the perfect integration and coherence of one’s sexual identity (hetero) into gender identity. That is, sex as authentic, natural, and not as the effect of cultural performances. It is interesting to note therefore how a certain ‘rule of discourse erasure’ prevails in narratives about sexuality as in one’s sexual identity and experience. This is consistent with movement’s discourses about the ‘socialisation of procreative behaviour’, borrowing from Foucault’s conceptualisation (1976), and the naturalization of the category of sex conceived as prediscursive and politically neutral (Butler 1990).

Interestingly, sexuality, sexual behaviour, was a notion suppressed even when participants were asked about *homosexuality*. Some seemed to accept the possibility that love could exist between two persons of the same sex. Yet, this love, in order to be accepted, has to be split from sexuality, somehow it must transcend sexual desires

and behaviours. In a way, homosexuality was ‘most acceptable’ if partners were ideally behaving as monks and nuns, sisters and brothers, with no sexual dimension to their relationship. And this, once again, for a major reason: sexuality is bound to reproductive imperatives. Even more so as homosexuality questions the internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire. Because no linear connection can be drawn between biological sex, gender, and sexual practices, we find again instances of ‘unthinkable’ and ‘unsayable’ identities. Yet, the heterosexual logic implies that sexual identification and desire are mutually exclusive, ‘if one identifies *as* a given gender one must desire a different gender’ (Butler 1993, 183):

Especially for children, the adoption of children by same-sex couples, people use to say ‘ah two men and two women can love each other, and after the baby can feel maybe better with two people of the same sex rather than with two people of different sexes arguing all the time’, you always hear this thing, and it is not true. I think that the child, for example a boy, must identify with the father and have a mother with maternal instinct, I am of this idea. (Interview nr. 25)

Yes. I am not opposed to homosexuality, for both sexes, I am not opposed because in any case if they feel so strong this thing, if you do not feel good with yourself and you feel better being with one of your same sex is fine, I’m happy for them that at least they are happy, but I am opposed to same-sex families, this is wrong. I am not opposed to them as homosexuals but to the fact that they can create a family. (Interview nr. 27)

Still, the degree of acceptance varied among participants, and was notably higher for those who knew or had met homosexual people in their close environment, whether friends, fellow students, or colleagues:

My position has not changed totally to the opposite but I tried to use a little more of reasonableness that is first of all to realise that the world is going towards a new direction, one can make all the resistance he wants, with all his reasons, ideological reasons, though objectively the world is going in a certain direction, the opening to those who are homosexual couples, the adoption, ... And so I talked to two or three friends, in particular with a friend who is particularly dear to me, who is gay, we studied together at university and always had a beautiful dialogue, independent from his homosexuality, he was really my fellow student, so the nights spent together studying ... so I could be contrary to what he was when he was in a couple, then I could not help but saying ‘this is still a person whom I respect for everything we've been through, so is it a reasonable position to be completely opposed, setting limits on this thing? (Interview nr. 28)

As I have already analysed in previous chapters, the differing degrees of opposition and acceptance are also reflected in the strategic choices made by groups within the movement; some groups publicly withdrew from demonstrations, showing an approach directed towards dialogue and reflexion, while other groups were radically opposed to any kind of compromise. The overall understanding and representation of homosexuality showed to be extremely diverse and relativistic across accounts, depending on the present level of homophobia. However, homosexuality in itself within the context of certain groups remains heavily sanctioned, as reported in the account of one interviewee who went through ‘conversion’ in his adulthood:

There are moments in which is difficult for me to resist certain impulses, that struggle, yet I realised one thing: that the more I am in contact with God, with praying, with God’s word and God’s presence, and the more I am a man in the will of God. When I am in the presence of God even my desire, my heart is towards women, and the will to have a family. However I realise that when I leave room for sin, the more I walk away from God, the more certain thoughts come back from the past, about men, but you try to push them out of your mind because you know it’s wrong. God made me man and this is how I must be. (Interview nr. 24)

It is also clear from the example above how, very much in practice, some Catholic groups actively participate in the regulation of gender and sexual norms, behaviours and performances. Particularly, it shows the power of religious structures in shaping self-monitoring behaviours and identity management, or, in the process of self-formation of one’s ethical subject (Foucault 1985). The account below shows how, as Butler analyses concerning gendered and sexual performativity, ‘[...] heterosexuality can be said to operate through the regulated production of hyperbolic version of “man” and “woman”, ones which none of us choose, but which each of us is forced to negotiate’ (1993, 181). And precisely because such norms are constantly questioned by their own inefficacy, their reproduction is bound to a continuous effort

to affirm and enhance their jurisdiction through the policing of behaviours and shaming of gender:

I feel like a completely different person now. Before I converted, my behaviours were more effeminate. Even after the conversion though I wasn't really aware of it, but thanks to a sister in Christ who helped me all along this change, she made me aware of certain behaviours and she helped me feeling more like a man. [...] For instance, I used to cross my legs, or move my hands in a certain way that was closer to a woman...yet she helped to acknowledge the problem, because first of all I had to recognise the problem. Then she pointed to behaviours that for me were maybe 'normal' and she made me notice that a man cannot behave like that, and I started to change [...] She really valued the man that was in me. (Interview nr. 24)

This observation is in line with studies reporting the radical transformations that individuals often undergo after joining a movement (della Porta and Diani 2006; Snow *et al.* 1980): 'conversion to a cult or a sect often implies more or less radical transformation of one's identity and loyalties, and this is deeper the more demanding membership criteria in the new group are' (della Porta and Diani 2006, 97). The reinforcement of heterosexual imperatives in this process can turn into a highly anxious experience, over the homophobic terror of performing homosexual acts or losing proper gender (Butler 1993).

Maybe unsurprisingly, the most recurrent system of norms and dispositions, in addition to religion, through which understandings of gender emerge, and through which a person's gender *habitus* is structured - in Giddens's terms - is family. I have already stressed how identity negotiation may arise from the learning of social roles through personal experience. Closely related to the data presented above, reflexions and assumptions on gender roles and identities were, in all cases, linked to one's personal family experience and history:

I believe that men and women are different. Women have some characteristics that a man could never have, and *vice versa*. [...] For instance, I always think of my parents, and I think that if I never had a dad for some things, for masculine things, at the practical level and also at the level of a different love from my mom, and if I never had my mom, for all the rest, for the maternal love, for femininity, who educated me to be more feminine, both in wearing clothes and sitting at the table, in the way I take

care of my figure, I would have never been the person I am now. Hence I strongly believe that everyone needs a man and a woman, they are not the same. Even when we talk about feminism, well I can understand, but I keep my idea that a man is a man and a woman is a woman. (Interview nr. 27)

Data suggests that it is within the structure of the family, which has to be appreciated in the traditional sense, that participants formed their own understandings of ‘being a man’ and ‘being a woman’ and where first-hand information on gender-appropriate behaviours was learnt. In other words, it is through family relations that a gendered *habitus* is acquired, or in Butler’s terms, where the citation of gender norms is installed. Consistent with common assumptions in the literature on the sociology of gender socialisation and role-performance, it is also within the context of family interactions that individuals, and here we mean all and not Catholics specifically, are first socialised into their gender roles. Most importantly, data elucidates the ways in which family, as a structure at the intersection with the religious structure, becomes particularly powerful in providing frames of meaning that guide individuals’ actions. That is, religion plays an important role in reinforcing the gendered structure. However, what emerges from data is not a blatant justification of unequal gender roles between men and women, but rather a peaceful consensus that justifies, once again for the common good – good of the family, community, and society – the differences in roles to be covered by males and females, in what Foucault refers to as the ‘Malthusian couple’ (1976):

I have always seen the two of them complementing each other very much, my mom had one eye on the whole family, my father sometimes was lost because of work and many times came back home late in the evening really tired, and everything that he didn’t do, she did. The ideal is that ‘we have to carry on this family’ so they did not have the problem of saying I have to do things while I would like to do others, no, they are simply interested together in carrying on the family. Then I honestly can not tell you if two men or two women know how to do it, I know what I have seen, that is them, living the Catholic faith in marriage and not having the problem to say ‘I have these roles, you have these’, that the role was unique only, build the family, that the family could continue to grow. (Interview nr. 26)

Yet, it cannot be taken as a given that young people growing up in a Catholic family will automatically adopt their parents' faith and values (Shepherd 2010). The process of 'believing and belonging' results from complex life-experiences but also, particularly when it is undertaken through active engagement in movement activities, from choice.

Indeed, a strong attachment to values and meanings learnt through interactions with family members, which translates into a path-dependent need to *reproduce* the same experiences and practices in the present, was expressed by the majority of participants, who champion protection of 'the traditional family' ideal-type from disintegration by the forces of social change. The account provided below, from a 22-year-old activist of *Comunione e Liberazione*, overtly synthesises the dominant understanding of the traditional family as a *preferred form of organisation*, giving a representation of 'the family' as an *ideology*, where meanings of gender difference, and messages of morality and normality are reinforced:

I don't know in the society, but in the family for me is why that is, I am watching my family and I feel like saying that my father and my mother are two different things, right? I have learned to be a man watching my father as he posed with his life, right? I learned to love my brothers watching as my mother loved them, right? I do not think this can be simplified into two same-sex parents. [...] My father taught me certain things, my mother other things though to me to see them, for example, as they were together, as they went over the years and are still together in a world where everything seems pretty fragile right? Relationships are fragile, it worries me that relationships are so fragile and instead to see them having almost 60 years and they love each other more than before, this thing is too good for me not to see it. And this is a given, then the fact of the figure of the mother and father, I think they are essential. (Interview nr. 26)

Yet, along with the positive stories of some activists' family experiences, others acknowledged the different ways in which family can also turn into an oppressive structure, thus testifying how the forced reproduction of gender norms can be very painful:

Yes, because my father I know he would say, when I was still doing those things secretly, he said that if he had a gay son he would have killed him. And my father is Sicilian, so it is not one like the North that is more 'libertine', he is much more restricted with the mentality... In quotes I say thank God for that mentality. So for years I have hidden and I remember that when I was downwards in Sicily, on vacation, I had sexual relations, abominable relations I felt as if inside me I felt dirty, in front of my family, I looked at my family and through this thing really made me sick. (Interview nr. 24)

Well first of all because I feel like saying, you know it is a bit in the sense ... it is either man or woman, both biologically and culturally, so that after when you grow up you take awareness and so on, but I think that is, it is a bit like saying, I can not find the term, is a bit overwhelming, in early childhood, for me. (Interview nr. 28)

The family model supported by Catholic activists is at the intersection with two other influential structures, one of which I mentioned above, sexuality, and the other being *education*. Looking at the data, it becomes immediately clear that neither sexuality nor education can function independently from the family structure. Most importantly, *sexual* and *moral* education is a 'closed subject' and cannot be conceived of outside the private sphere. In line with discourses expressed by the leadership of movement's organisations, and the Constitution of Italy (art. 30) for that matter, parents are the first enactors and parties primarily responsible for children's education. As an activist (aged 21) claimed in response to a question about sex education in schools; "I'm his father, I'll do it, you cannot put compulsory sex education in school, if I consider that for the sake of my son is not the top to have masturbation classes in the second grade, this is my business and you do not interfere." (Interview nr. 35)

This theme was identified by activists as another undeniable right, and repeatedly linked to the question of freedom; the right to refuse the imposition of a sexual education on children - that comes from outside the family, i.e. from the educational system - that would deprive the child of his/her freedom of choice (that is, the 'choice' to follow a heteronormative life) and of their innocence. The way in which

participants articulated this argument was contentious at times. On the one hand, the child is not free to choose what he/she would like to become, in terms of gender and sexual preferences; the freedom referred to in this sense is a freedom from the imposition of ideas and conditioning in schools, rather than a freedom of choice for children:

All relies on education, so the thing I'm most worried about is that in schools they do not guarantee that freedom of education anymore; they impose a certain type of education. Following on freedom of speech above, do yourself a family as you like [same-sex couples] and in a sense let me educate my children according to what I believe that is not what I believe, but what I have lived ... that freedom also lies in not killing the experience that I have done so if one day I had children, I wish they could live what I experienced, but not because I try to inculcate them, or because I want the same for them, but because I want that the experience that I have done in the ways that I had, could be a proposal for them ... then they are free to choose, but that this proposal should be also free to exist. (Interview nr. 36)

On the other hand, therefore, a child is not born free; they have an irrefutable imprint from their parents, and the freedom of choice lies in parents' hands to transmit the family values, a Catholic family model and an education based on Christian values - with the consequent regulating norms concerning sexual and gender behaviours - that eventually, once the child has grown, he or she might have the choice to disregard:

It is a matter that in order to stand in front of certain things you need a certain background, that one cannot go around the world without having an hypothesis, and being influenced by everything he meets, rather having a father or a family that provides you with an hypothesis to go and verify, that is to say 'I think that's better.' Then he will verify it in his life, that is, it is not a conditioning, it is a 'mark the way', and then he is free to do what he likes. (Interview nr. 37)

This is an example of how Catholic activists see their lives (in this case their parents' lives) as experience; a concrete manifestation of principles and a way of living that is 'correct' to be handed down to future generations, with the attitude of "let me educate my children according to what I believe that is not what I believe, but what I have lived", as outlined in the excerpt above. In other words, it is

manifestation of Bourdieu's symbolic capital, where a parent uses the authority granted by its status in order to instruct the child to do or not do something. This is consistent with previous studies suggesting that for "those who grow up in a community of faith being 'a Christian' is both a collective identity, a choice and 'youth' lifestyle" (Shepherd 2010, 151). It is also important to note that it is common practice within Catholic communities to embrace the infant from the beginning of life and provide groups and activities that accompany him/her at various age stages up until adulthood. Therefore, the child is not given a 'hypothesis' but rather a very clear 'guided direction' which is emphasised in every aspect of life, and which proves very difficult to escape because it operates a 'competitive exclusion' against all other scenarios and 'proposals'.

I identify two important themes that emerged from the data presented above. The first is the development of *moral resilience*, which I define as the ability of young Catholic activists to be responsive to moral and ethical challenges in a conscious way – through self-monitoring behaviours – and to revise or adjust their values in view of social change. Moral resilience develops during the process of identity negotiation within the diverse, and sometimes conflicting, comprehension and recognition systems available to activists. In this, I subscribe to Jasper's argument that 'morality is that dimension of culture which draws implications for judgement and action from the emotions and cognitive understandings that people hold. [...] Protest is pre-eminently about moral vision, for participants make claims about the world should be, but is not' (Jasper 1997, 135).

The second theme is the denial of individual agency in the social construction of one's gender identity, which forms the basis of one of the core values expressed by participants: *collectivism*, in contrast to *individualism*. I will return to the

comparative analysis of these important aspects in later sections; my aim here is to underline the different ways in which Catholic activists attribute importance and meaning to a *collective understanding* of gender, that is, an understanding of gender related to society and collectivism, as they seek to link the personal to the collectivity as a way to escape individualism. As we will see, this comes alongside a sense of believing and belonging related to the close social environments in which believing becomes a source of expression and agency.

After presenting data on Catholic activists' individual projects of relating individual and collective understandings of gender, the next section looks at LGBTQ activists' stories and their understandings of gender identity, roles, and expressions which come from their personal experience. As it will become immediately evident, they provide a stark contrast to the opinions expressed by their Catholic peers.

7.1.2 LGBTQ Activists

In their accounts and conceptions of gender identity, LGBTQ activists reveal a high degree of variation and fluidity with regards to identification and awareness. A common view among interviewees, in contrast to the ideas expressed by Catholic activists, was a pronounced distinction between one's perceived gender identity, role, expression and the respective sexual identity and orientation – not in terms of a distinction between sex and gender, but rather an insistence on a allegedly 'incoherent' connection between gender, sex, and desire:

My sexual orientation is openly gay, my gender identity and my gender roles are another story, much more mixed and less defined and clear. (Interview nr. 20)

I am definitely not a traditional woman, my gender expression, aesthetics but also behaviour and character, is much closer to the stereotype of a masculine expression. I have a perhaps more 'strong' character, but also on the strong I put quotes, rather than the feminine stereotype of being a little into the background. (Interview nr. 5)

LGBTQ activists acknowledge the fluid and evolutionary character of their gender identity in non-binary terms, which sustains the argument against the fixed, polarised, traditional notions of masculinity and femininity that Catholic activists support. Although sexual orientation and desire tend towards one direction for many individuals, sexed identifications remain non-static. The excerpt above also suggests how binary gender identities are phantasmatic ideals, ‘stereotypes’ of this or that gender norm about masculinity or femininity, whose performance is only possible to approximate. The challenge and, following Butler, impossibility to reproduce hyperbolic versions of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ (‘as the image of woman’, see below) through compulsory performances is often experienced with pain but also defiance:

I still feel that I am evolving mostly because my story is ‘recent’, the approach, and also the acceptance of my identity. I have never recognised myself in what is the male in society, since I was a child, and I have always felt very inadequate in the contexts where I was, I have always hidden, I've never done anything, I have never express myself freely, and it's something that I only started doing a few years ago. It is not that I've ever thought about a physical transformation, I've never thought ‘I'd like to be a woman’ as the image of women, but I think I would like to be more free of crossing different genders, starting from dress code and behaviour. Recently I then have begun to buy women's pants. (Interview nr. 13)

Moreover, what is clearly evident is the restrictive character of the artificial distinction between masculine and feminine ideals. This was shown in conversations about personal experience, as well as in discussions concerning the broader understanding of society. Participants expressed their discomfort with such a strict dichotomy through their answers. On many occasions, activists' first reaction was to laugh or preface their answers with comments such as ‘It's much more complicated than that...’ and ‘This is very simplistic...’ or similarly ‘If I have to really simplify my answer...’, as if they were forced (and indeed they are) to think about themselves in binary categories of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’:

As for me, woman / man is very restrictive, since all the characteristics that are attributed to one or another I think are highly interchangeable. If I had to make a very simplified comparison, I would tell you I am female, I think the only things that can distinguish a female from a male is sexual difference at the biological level, the body and the ability to breastfeed and have a gestation. From that point of view, it is clear that I fit in a small box, but from there, there is a world of possibilities that continually opens. (Interview nr. 3)

I believe that inside me there's a personality component that is more or less 51% male and 49% female ... In the sense that there are things I do that are very masculine, and others feminine... It goes from burping to housewife mode, or when I go to an evening event that is another story, three hours of preparation, a different gender, is not quite the same thing. (Interview nr. 14)

This is something a little complicated. I think I have a male preponderance rather than female, let's say I am at peace with my own body so I would say to be more masculine than feminine ... from there to identify what could be the sides of my character more close to a gender or the other would be a very big effort because they are very complicated nuances to bring out, however, I say that I am not completely polarised, however, say a 70/30 or 65/35. (Interview nr. 17)

In contrast to Catholic activists, LGBTQ interviewees all agreed on perceiving and understanding gender beyond the categories of masculine and feminine, as fluid and in constant evolution, crossing among different identifications in which sex and gender do not necessarily overlap. Here again, it is interesting to note how participants make (implicit) reference to the citation of gender norms 'close to a gender or the other', quoting heterosexual stereotypical traits of masculine or feminine identities.

The theme of distinct gender roles was never mentioned except for denouncing the gender order, as being patriarchal and heteronormative. In addition, and again in contrast to Catholic groups, LGBTQ activists recognised the unfitness of such distinctions in the organisational form of their groups, expressing awareness with respect to some of issues raised by the 'queer dilemma', namely the establishment of coherent gay, lesbian, gender identities as a basis for action, and against homophobic stereotypes:

It is a unique situation, because we are the first who have realised that this differentiation man / woman / gay / lesbian does not exist anymore in our group. It is

not true that the lesbian yells at you in the face as it is not true that the gay is turning with her purse, let's keep calm.” (Interview nr. 19)

A recurrent theme in interviews was a sense among participants that the pressure to socially conform to gender norms was particularly strong in specific social contexts, and in some cases independently from individuals' sexual orientation. In the work environment, for example, some participants, as in the examples below, had felt uneasy about expressing a gender that does not comply with heteronormative expectations, or had been explicitly sanctioned for doing so. As one Arcigay activist, who identified as female and heterosexual, put it:

Especially in my work: I am doing an internship at a centre for eating disorders, where it is much looked at how you present yourself, if you're not feminine enough, if you do not have heels, if you have the dress, once I went with Converse and a vest and colleagues already look at you differently, strange, like 'who you are, is not you, you're not the girl that I want.' (Interview nr. 23)

Particularly, the pressure coming from family and society in order to perform a gender in conformity with heterosexual imperatives, was pinpointed by the majority of participants as a major source of distress and discomfort in everyday situations:

I lived a pretty bad experience concerning sexuality and gender expression, even identity, however, the discomfort started with gender expression. About sexuality, I went from saying that I had a boyfriend when in fact I had a girlfriend, she remembers it because we went to a Catholic university [...] I was afraid to tell her, because we were in a Catholic university. As for gender expression, ok with parents shopping was problematic, I maybe would like certain things and maybe my mother would like the dress and she said 'but you are never feminine' or so ... or even at work, having to wear certain types of clothing in which I do not feel comfortable, however, you are forced to, and if maybe they do not see you at ease, they are going to tell you to be a bit more correct in the posture, rather than asking you whether anything is wrong. I do not live well [...] So what goes maybe is that I feel and seem awkward in a certain type of dress and this really bothers me. (Interview nr. 22)

In my teenage life and as a young woman I still had some thoughts on dress code, which then lead back everything to the gender role, right? That society imposes on you or somehow invites you to follow, and so I then realised that there are moments in my life where I feel very woman and others where I maybe want to 'do the tomboy' and then get dressed differently, by linking not only to clothing but also to those attitudes that can be attributed to femininity, to masculinity. (Interview nr. 2)

In particular, dress codes, clothing and mannerisms on which the performance of a certain gender is based, constitute critical traits through which an apparent inner coherence or incoherence between gender and sex is produced. Indeed, they are all means through which the assigned version of gender is to be achieved, yet at the same time provide the possibility of non-compliance.

At work I am controlled because they are controlled, I change a bit the voice, perhaps there is an argument sometimes I'm quiet at times I pissed off [...] I'm more quiet, absolutely I never talk about my private life, my feelings. (Interview nr. 18)

At first I am very detached and maybe not immediately pull out the femininity that is in me, gesturing, making jokes ... At first glance, I am are very calm. With my family I am obviously not the same person as when I am with my friends, it depends a lot, even among friends, however, things change ... Between close friends and not so close friends. It is strange to say but with real friends I am not as nonchalant as maybe I am with the Arcigay's boys. I have best friends who are heterosexual women; however, when I am in Arcigay I feel freer, I do as I please ... So it changes depending on the context as I show myself to others. (Interview nr. 6)

On the one hand, therefore, the degree of autonomy an individual has to enact a gender is highly dependent on different social contexts. In other words, gender performativity emerges differently within different cultural possibilities. Under institutional regimes and structures that seek to normalise gender, as family and parenting, the bodily enactment of gender tends to follow prevailing norms of recognition. On the other hand, this is not, in turn, necessarily dependent on one's personal acceptance of sexual identity, and/or orientation. As several activists clearly put it, family members had tried to assign a binary gender identity on them, particularly during childhood. Others recount how, even after having declared their sexual preference, the family environment continued to be particularly oppressive, not only in cases where homosexuality was not accepted, but also in the ones where it has, apparently, been metabolised.

I'll tell you this little anecdote. As a child, teenager, in short, 11-13 years, tomboy, also because being physically robust clothing was hard to find, I happened one day to go to a shoe store with my mom, and comes the guy who welcomed the guests and asked my mom, 'what size is your son?' My mom pretended not to notice, I said

‘Mom but the guy thinks I’m a boy, did not you tell him I’m a girl?’ And she said ‘it doesn’t matter, don’t worry, let’s not put him in embarrassment.’ And that memory has always remained inside; also because at the physical level I always suffered a bit the comments of my mother when she told me ‘you are a hybrid’, it has always been very strong. Later I reworked this thing though in retrospect I realise that comments were very strong and that probably helped to bring along a series of thoughts. (Interview nr. 6)

The need to adapt, to comply with external expectations in specific social contexts, has pushed some participants to change their behaviours and expressions, consciously and unconsciously, in order to meet those expectations. Moreover, an activist interestingly mentioned the notions of ‘convenience’ and ‘self-interest’ as a basis for gender performance, thus alluding to a strategic use of different performances in different contexts, in order *not* to challenge expectations on gender norms and be able to negotiate one’s gender identity:

The daily appearance, in work environment, in the world outside, where I have an attitude a bit different in the sense that I tend to maintain an attitude that is more suitable to the outside world. There are always extremes of what you can do and you cannot do. Outside there is an aspect of my personality that I really like, that is being very composed, very polite. I believe there is a definition of what can be a sexless person that you can have in public, in the sense that I prefer that a person does not give the impression of either homosexuality or heterosexuality in public [...] To put in front of people something that makes them uncomfortable, and to create in turn a reaction that makes me uncomfortable too, you lose the advantage. For convenience, self-interest, I try not to hurt other people feelings. So of course I will not express myself so excessive as I like to express at times, because it can bother other people. (Interview nr. 17)

The quote above exemplifies an important point raised by Butler, when she says that ‘[s]ometimes gender ambiguity can operate precisely to contain or deflect non-normative sexual practice and thereby work to keep normative sexuality intact.’ (1990, xiv). As the author rightly stresses, gender norms define who and how can appear in public and private space, based on the intelligibility of their genders, namely the mode of presentation of gender. Participants, who felt the need to leave their social environment, in order to be able to live their sexual and gendered lives freely, have manifestly revealed this pattern. Many activists coming from Southern

Italy moved to different social contexts. A strong need for *emancipation* from the family is expressed in tandem with the need to leave behind a perceived coercive social reality:

Something changes, definitely much; I know that when I come down [in Calabria, Southern Italy] when I'm with my family is very different. I was on a skiing holiday this year, I was in line with a girl, after a minute that I was talking I thought 'ah fuck I'm gay, I'd forgotten', and I was almost flirting with her. But it was a week I was with my family, and despite my boyfriend felt really buried every day, I changed behaviours, doing the things that were much more in the social norm here, definitely. I would never do a stupid joke with a guy down there although here maybe I would do it with a straight guy, I do not have physical contact, I'm always very careful about how I behave with people because I know they might react differently, but not because I'm afraid to be beaten, just not to create weird situations ... because I've had friends who have found themselves embarrassed when I did come out because of the intimate relationship that we could have and they would tell me 'don't worry, you're not gay'. So this surely changes, it also changes the way I feel, I do not know there will always be this change because in fact I have no interest in having certain attitudes in a city where there are no people with whom it is fun or is it necessary. However you change behaviour even in a definitely psychological way, it changes the way I feel. (Interview nr. 18)

When I came here [Florence] a lot has changed, I was a person in the midst of several hundreds of thousands of people so I was much less under the spotlight, because in my town [in Southern Italy] we are 14,000, we know more or less each other all... so even after a while when I go home, I've got two or three days of trouble leaving the house because I feel too watched. Then there is this mentality, unfortunately, is a bit a stereotype, the southern province village is always a bit ... everyone staring at you in the car, the square. But here I was immediately amazed at being able to do what I wanted, I also exaggerated, I experienced such absurd things out in my pyjamas, in shorts, deliberately embarrassing situations without feeling embarrassed. People eventually see you once and then do not see you anymore. [...] I then personally managed to have an awareness of myself during graduate studies, when I arrived here six years ago. Before it was more difficult in the sense that I knew what I wanted, what I liked, however, open up publicly was almost a forbidden thing that I've kept hiding for so many years of my life. (Interview nr. 5)

Unlike Catholic activists who took part in this project, many LGBTQ activists that I interviewed had undergone a process of relocation, from small provinces to bigger urban centres, and from Southern cities to Northern ones. Data suggests that for Catholic activists, to have physical proximity to their hometown and family is considered 'normal', or even preferable, while for many LGBTQ activists data suggests the contrary: moving away from the parental home enhance possibilities to break from constraints to the gendered and sexed self and, consequently live their

gender in contexts where less conforming identities become more ‘legible’ and ‘recognised’ (Butler 2015). The majority of interviewees had fostered a certain detachment and increased independence from their family and relatively ‘closed-minded’ realities, as they described them, as a consequence of difficulties in negotiating one’s sexuality:

In my town it was some kind of joke [homosexuality], Catanzaro counts 100 thousand inhabitants and is closed, is a city of mostly right-wing people, I left because this thing [homosexuality] in me surely burst and took me out, however, it was not the only reason why I went out of town. It was culturally dead for me, so I cut out with all my friends. I have not told many people, but I could notice it in my family, which is quite progressive and everything, despite this anyway you know, our neighbour is gay, clerks in stores that you see for twenty years and they are gay, there is always a bit that attitude a bit with a little laugh, a little comic side, as if it were something a little itchy. Nevertheless when I told my sister, who forbid me from telling my parents, she did not want to mess with the family, my sister is a girl who studied outside, grew up in a liberal family, with whom I have a close relationship, and she said ‘I do not want to see absolutely anything about your homosexual lifestyle, nothing, I hope I will never experience it and from now on things are going to change’. The association, the city [Milano] has helped me a lot, but when I go away I see that is not all resolved...there are baptisms, and people give me the readings of Sodom and Gomorrah and is a little heavy, people do not realise that there is a lack of sensitivity. (Interview nr. 18)

The assumption, put forward in previous studies, that male gender-boundary crossers are much more culturally stigmatised than female gender-boundary crossers is not confirmed by data presented in this study (Bem 1993). For LGBTQ participants, the need to prove one’s femininity or masculinity to others in specific context was felt equally across genders. However, some male, gay activists admitted how they faced a strong pressure to conform to heteronormative masculinity within their family more than in the broader social context. As anticipated by some excerpts above, interviewees often testified that the process of ‘coming out’ was met with embarrassment, shame and denial from family members:

Let us not make it known to all; let us not make this known to the aunt who is president of Catholic Action of the parish. (Interview nr. 5)

My parents, in front of my public disclosure have not reacted really well, in the sense that my mother was a little ashamed, because you are suddenly to be put at the centre

of the attention to something that is not your fault. Whenever a child is coming out then it also forces parents to come out or to hide.” (Interview nr. 19)

The biggest problem was when I came out in the family. [...] Unfortunately, me, us Southern people ... Southern mentality is much more closed than Northern mentality. So think of tradition, so the male child that has to give birth to another child, calling him by the name of his father, and the first-born should have the same name of his grandfather, the tradition of marriage, the wedding favours here and there, etc. ... So they are very conservative and having a homosexual son, is a scandal ... They thought that being homosexual doomed me to be a single person who could not find work, a person who went around the night with high heels and fishnet stockings or a person who had no opportunity to build a house, a social life ... Then with time, it is true I was thrown out of the house half a year because of my homosexuality, then in the unfortunate luck, after I managed to get through a very dear friend to reconnect especially with my father although my mother was a bit cold with me ... After two years, they accepted my partner. (Interview nr. 10)

The radical rupture with past life experiences was described by several activists as a major turning point, from which there were no possibilities of coming back. This vision was prevalent in accounts where activists expressed an unwillingness to ‘go back and change things’, depicting those ‘left-behind’ social contexts as ‘unchangeable’, ‘not ready’, or even ‘too risky’ to make efforts toward social change seem worthwhile in:

It is a constant struggle, a continuous repression, you struggle out of the house, inside the house, everywhere, all the time, not only with friends that after half a year of coming out starts fighting you because they are homophobic. [...] Even if you try to escape in the end you never run away because there is always the rope attached to the leg that pulls you, and you hope to be able to pull but you can’t because your roots are there [...] I left saying ‘I will never be able to change this mentality, I’ll go myself, I don’t fit here’ and as I have heard so many other people who made this move [...]. I think it is a bit that binds all of us to move forward, the fact that we continued to believe in marriage and unions, the fact that now we are fighting, that we were there during the pride to shout out loud, last year as well as this year. (Interview nr. 19)

It is interesting to note that engagement in social movement activities coincided in most cases with the change in social setting, namely the displacement to the new city. Coming to a new environment went hand in hand with a search for new social ties, networks, and the emergence of new socialisation processes and feelings of belonging. One activist even defined it as encountering a ‘new family’:

I've found my dimension, I saw a family in here. As if I was looking for all my life the courage that I missed because I got in the game, I have dared so much, I did come out, I did a lot of things, I try to be as active as possible, I try to do so many things as possible. (Interview nr. 19)

Identifying with others is an essential way of expressing oneself identity. By belonging to a group, activists find a source of individual strength and self-expression. As many activists reported, their very first contact with the movement happened through 'welcoming groups' directed towards young LGBTQ people:

Then in fact, many of us come from conflictual situations and are still a bit in discovering themselves, many of us are actually from the South where it is not that you have many opportunities that push you to find yourself, it's all very limited to your head. (Interview nr. 9)

I started from a welcoming group, which is the youth group, and then the first time I came to this place during the day was for the youth group, which has a form of acceptance that allows you to get in touch with some issues and to have an entry point, compared with other more serious groups of volunteering and more active work. (Interview nr. 1)

I come from the island of Elba, and I moved to Pistoia in 2007 when I was 20 years old. And in fact, what he said, what inspired me was that too, because in any case first having lived an adolescence a little ugly, in my case was not so much the bullying around, but it is still inside, feels wrong to you, you feel different, you feel alienated from others. I already knew that gay clubs existed on the island of Elba, gay associations, I looked on the Internet but it's not that ... I had never participated. And in fact, the first thing I did when I came here in Pistoia, I thought, maybe I should go to Arcigay rather than go to a gay club because I'd just seen it as a reception point, that is where I could find people like me, with whom simply speak. So for me personally this is the first thing, even just a place of welcome. Talking with others, to understand that you are not alone ... (Interview nr. 11)

Finally, it was a common theme among participants to mention the religiousness of the social context in which they grew up, particularly education in Catholic schools, the presence of parishes and Church hierarchies in key areas of their social experience. As we saw in chapter 5, this observation has to be appreciated as a peculiarity of the Italian context, where the presence of Catholic institutions is hegemonic. Not surprisingly, the impositions coming from religious authorities were repeatedly identified as an obstacle in challenging gender conformity:

It remains a small city in the hands of clerical power that has a very big influence on people's thinking. Even the constant presence every month and a half / two in the square was significant, and above all the feedback that we find in young [...] it is not

easy considering the power of the church, the priests, that there is in Bergamo, where many schools are in the hands of priests. There was a little girl we met in a school during the hours of the school project who told us ‘the only time I have had occasion to speak about sexual orientation and gender identity has been with my professor of religion’. (Interview nr. 6)

Unfortunately the context we grew up in, in the Catholic context in which we were born, has always given a certain connotation to the idea of transgender people [...] rather, you must understand the drama of those who do not identify themselves in their own body, of those who have these two different visions. (Interview nr. 21)

The first part of the chapter has scrutinised data with the aim of understanding how gender is produced at the individual level, taking into account the difficulties in pinpointing the exact processes through which this occurs, but nonetheless outlining differences in how LGBTQ and Catholic activists perceived themselves as gendered beings. The analysis continued with observations about the features of the social context in which gender distinctions are produced through social relations and interactions. In addition to social contexts, evidence showed the influence of family, religion and education as gendered social structures and practices that sustain the institutionalisation of heteronormative identities. As anticipated in the previous section, LGBTQ activists demonstrated an interest in self-expression with regards to gender, that is, an *individual* understanding and concern with their gender and sexed beings, and an awareness of the processes of social construction and negotiation of such identities. This attitude must be recognised as being contrastive with the *collective* understanding of gender held by Catholic activists.

As I will explore further, this sense of personal responsibility and personal freedom, this development of awareness and acceptance, is mirrored in younger activists and decreases with time, leaving room for a type of activism that is more engaged in promoting collective social rights of the LGBTQ community. In other terms, we will see how the reasons to join the movement can differ from the reasons to stay in the movement, and how complex the relationship between individual and

collective dimensions of identity building can be. This process is accompanied by the development of gender consciousness, as I explain in the next section.

7.2 Gender Consciousness, Conscientiousness and Moral Resilience:

A Comparison

Understanding how Catholic and LGBTQ activists ‘do gender’ differently was the main objective of the previous paragraphs. Data has displayed how specific factors, social structures and systems of belief either shape or constrain activists’ ability to produce gender by supplying them with meaning and material practices. It is important to recall here the concept of agency as elaborated in the theoretical chapters, and reflected in the works of Bourdieu and Butler. It designates an understanding of acting indissoluble from structural conditions (cultural, political, socioeconomics) within which it emerges, is produced and supported or hindered at the same time. Agency in this sense is therefore a structured acting which, simultaneously, constitutes a form of acting able to change these same processes of structuration, where resistance and subversion might happen. Evidence has also suggested that activists develop different degrees of gender consciousness through their involvement in movements’ activities (Bierema 2010). I will go on to explore the learning process that leads individuals to become gender aware, where I treat gender consciousness as a movement outcome, and I examine how consciousness acquired through different life experiences motivates specific actions. In fact, biographical histories ‘may help explain why some individuals fit more easily into expected roles than others do, why some follow the rules more readily or enthusiastically than others’ (Jasper 1997, 67). We have seen how categorisation of sex and gender in binary terms was one of the most important understandings at the basis of Catholic activists’ social interactions. It is now important to address how this categorisation generates gender differences and inequalities and how, in both

cases, gender is activated and becomes central to people's awareness in the context of protest. In addition, we must turn our attention to the social practices that are associated with the different movements, in order to appreciate the role that they play in the production and reproduction of gender.

Before entering into the details of the above-mentioned discussion, looking from a general perspective, few observations stand out in relation to the roles played by men/women and gay/lesbian during protest activities. Generally speaking, as other studies have demonstrated in relation to the Italian case (Magagraccia and Vingelli 2015), the voluntary sector seems to be more gender equal than political parties and trade unions. Younger generations have higher levels of participation and differences between men and women usually increase with age and the social situation of activists, coinciding with major life events such as marriage and parenthood, which tend to normalise gender identities.

It is possible to recognise the signs of new forms of mobilization, which call into question the traditional forms of division between private life and public life, between individual and collective commitment to action. In the context of protest presented in this study, gender is perceived as a radical interpretation to direct action or, vice versa, as a calming tool to find a role in a male-oriented social environment. Although, in the case of young Catholic activists, patriarchy does not intervene in an openly repressive form, it often makes the subordination of women to men somehow seductive. Generally, in most of the conferences and public events, therefore, women are called on stage to talk about 'bad feminism', to explain to other women what is the expected role of women in society and why this (subordinate) position constitutes a fundamental value for the functioning of the community. Looking at leaders and spokespeople, the profiles of female activists range from teachers,

psychologists, journalists, writers, which locate them in the position of carrying out female-oriented tasks also in the context of activism: to listen and try to understand, be attentive, and educate. Yet, whereas it is true that women are underrepresented within the leadership, as spokespeople, particularly in public events, and that respective roles of attention-giving for women, and attention-getting for men exist (Bargel 2005), the attendance and participation to protest events is almost the same for men and women, if not higher for women in some contexts. The Standing Sentinels are a case in point, which, interestingly combines physical and visible presence in the public sphere while being vocally silent, claiming the right of female bodies to ‘appear’ in public while at the same time denouncing the right of appearance to other bodies (LGBTQ in this case). Looking more closely at young Catholic activists, the situation is slightly different. On the one hand, activism allows young female members to feel stronger and set the theme of gender as emancipation device to more traditional forms of gender relations; on the other hand, the places they inhabit are not free from asymmetrical relations between genders. For young Catholic females gender appears to be a component that covers their intimacy, a personal trait that does not affect the balance of power and collective power. In this sense, it was possible to observe the creation of spaces of solidarity and re-negotiation of gender norms in which female activists felt more at ease, such as ‘female only’ moments and spaces.

As for young LGBTQ activists, differences among female and male members in relation to division of labour and positions within the leadership are almost inexistent in mixed groups. Yet, an interesting observation could be made for smaller groups, where lesbians and gays respectively tend to organise in clusters, namely lesbians with lesbians, and gays with gays, thus defining a scenario where self-

proclaimed mixed groups are formed by a majority of either lesbians or gays, mirroring Sedgwick's suggestion concerning gender and sexual definitions. However, even in such cases, I did not find significant differences in the style or ways of protesting among participants.

7.2.1 Making Sense of Gender Difference

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, my aim was to present and elaborate data while trying to avoid treating Catholic activists as individuals who seem to be programmed in their attitudes towards gender. Rather, data has confirmed that Catholic activists actively participate in the legitimation of the dominant gender order, maintaining and implementing the conditions (discursive, relational, organisational) that reproduce gender norms and power relations. In particular, we have seen that sustaining the gender system involves a major process, namely the creation of distinctions among women and men, which simultaneously reproduces gender hierarchies. Recognition of cultural dynamics and pre-existing beliefs is important to study some kind of movements, including religious and political movements, by pointing at the visions of the world, moral values, and affective ties of their members. The first part of the chapter tackled the question of how gender is produced at the individual level, and how participants perceived and projected themselves as gendered beings. In this case, sex and gender difference, alongside their naturalisation as inherently stable and coherent categories, has been consciously argued and unconsciously experienced by Catholic activists as a governing principle of social relations and interactions.

In this section, I analyse the findings reported in previous paragraphs, compare them to existing literature on the topic as presented in previous chapters, and identify the different processes Catholic activists employ to make sense of gender difference and actively participate in the reproduction and concealing of the heterosexual matrix. In a way and from a complementary level, we can understand motives, not only as based on pre-existing beliefs and preferences, but also as justifications of protestors' activities. It is clear from the interviews presented so far that so-called 'narratives of conversion' (Jasper 1997, 82) are quite similar among members, particularly Catholic activists:

Once in a movement, participants often 'rewrite' their own biographies and reasons for joining, in order to heighten the rhetorical message of the movement. [...] Such stories are not simply accounts of the past; they are affirmations of allegiance and identity in the present, a kind of ritual by which people align their own lives with important basic values. (Jasper 1997, 82)

These processes can be summarised as: *legitimation* of the natural existence of differences between gender categories (male and female) based on biological sex, and the consequent attribution of appropriate attitudes and behaviours to these categories, in particular sexual practices and desires; the active *institutionalisation* and reproduction of such categories through social relations and interactions, particularly through the development of *moral resilience* and *conscientiousness*, and the fierce defence of models of highly institutionalised gender relationships, such as the ideal-type of traditional family and heterosexual marriage. Taken together, these processes sustain the arguments and understandings of Catholic activists with regard to gender, but while they clearly establish and legitimise the existence of differences between men and women, they do not aim to exaggerate stereotypes about masculinity and femininity as individual traits, but rather to strongly idealise them as hyperbolic models within the framework of the traditional family. This is part of an

intense ethical work in which gender performance is brought into compliance with Christian rules in order to 'transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behaviour' (Foucault 1985, 27).

The regulation of sexual and gender behaviours according to Christian values, continues to be present in the life course of activists. Through the notion of 'ethics of citizenship' mentioned in previous chapters, the ethical work performed by Catholics is activated in the public. Reinforced by increased moral resilience, Catholic activists are guided into the development of curiosity, responsibility, critical knowledge and commitment, in one word, *conscientiousness* along the lines of the Catholic doctrine. The group, and in wider terms the community, become the reference, the space of survival, reflection and knowledge production among activists. The *moral commitment* towards society and the social environment in which someone lives becomes indispensable. In other words, the cultic milieu (Kaplan and Löow 2002) provides a physical space for identity production, and for the reinforcement of collective feelings of belonging:

Each group is autonomous in its work, but all groups share two common values: the search, that is, figure out what's going on outside of our group and then perhaps understand the actuality and various other things ... and then the faith, which is what unites us so we also share spiritual deepening moments, guided by a spiritual assistant. Every year we choose a theme, this year, for example, the theme focuses on power and responsibility. For example, the responsibilities that we bear towards the environment, or the power that we have on younger generations in the sense of education, or as even the media can manipulate the information and how various citizens perceive it. (Interview nr. 29)

This being said, the perception of one's personal involvement and attachment to the movement or group is also dependent on individuals' past experience. Some were somehow 'born in the movement', inheriting parents' affiliation to it:

I'm a breeding CL, my parents are in the movement, and so I grew up in the movement. I was born in a very Catholic family. CL is a Catholic movement first of all, my parents have always left me free to choose, so even in high school I have

always followed the movement, what they proposed, because the movement offers a path to follow ... in life, at all levels. So even in high school there was an education movement, it was very beautiful, I went on vacation with these friends, I went on vacation together in the mountains, and we studied together, then at the university too. (Interview nr. 26)

Others indicated the motivation for joining the movement as a 'need' to have belonging and solidarity with a group, to have a space where they could perform their Catholic identity by practicing Christian morals, and above all, to perform the values mentioned above which are reflected in a collective understanding of social relations. Belonging to a community represents a way to gain empowerment, security, support, and a conscientiousness that young Catholics can use when facing social struggles and choices:

During high school, I knew absolutely nothing about this reality, this religious movement [Comunione e Libereazione]. Then, when I arrived at the university, I tried the experience of a 'study co-existence'; they are also in cohabitation, in which we study together three days. I was absolutely in another world, really, just did not give a damn about anything, whereas I saw these people who in the simplicity of the whole were more happy than me, and I thought I was at the peak of happiness, but maybe just because I was going to dance every night, or I drank every night. So I thought I was at the peak of my happiness, then I saw them [people of Comunione e Libereazione], they were doing anything and they were happier than me. So I just started staying with them, without doing anything, when I wanted, and then I realised that going to Mass was why they were so happy, and why they were still together in a simple way, so it makes you say 'either there is something more, or if not ... there must be something more, because even I am with my friends, when I go to dance, but I am not as happy as them. So, if you're smart and especially if you are in need, you start to follow them and try to figure out what they have more than you. From there I joined the movement, and it is a completely different life. (Interview nr. 27)

I sought the Lord at a time in my life where I asked myself many questions about life, death, I was not happy, even though I had a lot, I was not so happy, I had a sense of inner emptiness, and this thing was rewarded through God, I was filled with the holy spirit and I can say that God is alive. (Interview nr. 24)

The values expressed by activists suggest, once again, a significant inclination towards collectivism, namely valuing society, belonging to a group, following a common path and the consequent ethical and moral responsibility that originates from being part of a whole. These values are also reflected in a significant degree of attachment to, if not dependence on, the proximate social and physical environment,

that is the religious community. As other studies have underlined (Collins-Mayo 2013), among the possible factors explaining incentives to religious involvement could be a sense of lack of meaning, such as the one expressed in the account above, and by other activists who spoke about the ‘sense of perdition and loneliness’ experienced in their lives. Particularly, some activists alluded to the notion of individualism, which they saw as a lack of concern for what is meaningful in life, as a major incentive towards embracing the faith. By providing rules and rituals to develop a moral conscientiousness, religion can create a ‘safe’, and structured social environment to socialise in:

Because in any case I think it’s important to have a group of reference, beyond the informal friendships you meet on the life course ... the relationships that arise within a group are different because there is a project, there is a goal, a path. I found this group that brought together two fundamental aspects of my life, which are the study and the faith, then I thought it would be the group for me. (Interview nr. 31)

Young Catholic activists are directly asked by their spiritual guides to interrogate the surrounding environment, to question social changes, and to critically reflect upon current issues in terms of the ultimate meanings of life. This observation highlights another important aspect of how religious identities can be constructed in different ways by drawing upon different sources of social authority. In line with the discussion presented in previous chapters concerning the religiosity of young people, data confirms that Catholic youth endorse religious tradition with critical awareness, developing a sense of ‘believing and belonging’ linked to their proximate religious environment and social groupings; in a sense they are distanced from Church hierarchies and are instead ideologically close to the ‘spiritual guides’ in their immediate context (their neighbourhood, school or university, for example). These communities of ‘believing and belonging’ are also community of feeling, of the moral and the emotional, and most importantly for young people in search of an

authentic faith, of shared solidarity around a particular style of living. Such practices provide activists with a capital to be reflexive and manage social change:

Commitment. Responsibility and conscience. We are also future professionals; we should have a consciousness, however we need to know, to know what happens. We need to understand what is right and what is wrong in a conscious way. It is not that we have to be mere puppets of a system. (Interview nr. 29)

Curiosity, interest. We are anti-individualism. Knowing that we are persons within a society that can give something to us and we can give something back to it.” (Interview nr. 30)

I learned to live the study experience in the sense of research also on the world around us, then maybe use that study on the books for questioning about the reality and ... and it's nice to put together the intervention of professors with more spiritual meetings led by a priest.” (Interview nr. 36)

Faith requires a certain gender *habitus* and the group is the place where such *habitus* is reiterated. Faith in God and belonging to the group provide an important source of identity and the on-going participation in the group is seen as significant in managing the challenges to Christian and traditional gender identities that arise. More specifically, through *moral resilience*, Catholic activists are able to find meaning in social situations where ethical obligations and moral sensitivity are under threat. Moreover, it allows them to be persistent and consistent in their actions and behaviours despite constraints and pressures coming from outside. By performing moral resilience, for instance through rituals that embodies religious belief, activists create faith, so that the domain of make *believe* and the domain of make *belief* overlap (Schechner 2013, 43). At the same time, moral resilience can be seen as a particular kind of gender performativity insofar it implies a continuous effort in the reproduction of gender norms in order to force them to resignify.

What distinguishes activists from other believers is that they do not feel Christian only because they have been raised this way, but because they have made a conscious choice and are supported by the group. It is important to note that youth

choose to involve themselves in movement politics and identify with a community which appears from outside to have a strong emotional hold upon them; belonging as a source of expression and identity is an act of agency. Through moral resilience they are able to navigate and cope with challenges to their moral and ethical positions, particularly their standpoints on gender. Performing social movement activities helps them to articulate and appropriate the centrality of choice in their faith. Nonetheless, some activists have stressed the difficulties they faced in defending their understanding of gender roles, as approved by the religious group, to mainstream society:

On a practical level now things are changing, and we young people, among young people is increasingly rare to see someone who thinks like you, right now I'm the one upstream. So sometimes it's a bit too hard for this. (Interview nr. 27)

It is true, and I ask myself why then my friends who are part of this movement [Comunione e Liberazione] are real people, from head to toe, strong, with a strong identity, that is, my father would say 'with balls', and instead I go out and I see people fall wobbly [...] (Interview nr. 27)

On the other hand, reading between the lines, it is possible to observe how religious identity, that 'strong identity', brought happiness, and put a focus on relationships and emotional expression, a series of traits that are not entirely in keeping with gender stereotypes, particularly the ones attributed to 'maleness'. It seems that there is a discrepancy between one's religious identity and certain gender expressions of masculinity performed by Catholic activists, if considered in light of the belief that traditional representations of masculinity are more desirable and highly valued. This interpretation is consistent with field observations about young people's body posture, gendered use of space, and gestures, which at the same time reflected normative gender expectations, and, on the other hand, revealed certain gender performances, bodily acts which contradicted common assumptions regarding masculinity and femininity. If we relate these observations to a theory of

performativity, we can agree with Butler that indeed, the possibility to miss the mark of gender is always there, in which the bodily enactment of gender is not always in precise conformity with the norm (2015). The willingness to conform too well to a norm might well reveal the weaknesses of that same norm, especially when there are conflicting versions of what gender models have to be followed.

We have also seen how gender polarisation - ‘the belief that what is acceptable or appropriate for females is not acceptable or appropriate for males (and vice versa) and that anyone who deviates from these standards [...] is unnatural or immoral.’ (Wharton 2005, 34) - is not emphasised as much as might be expected by activists, and it is safe to assume that this is a feature or trend of younger generations. As some female activists expressed, moral resilience towards gender polarisation is generated by attempts to integrate different sources of identification: religious and gender based. Sexuality, instead, remains in the realm of the natural, essentialist meaning. In this sense, therefore, we must bear in mind that even essentialist meanings are socially constructed and are part of the ‘endeavour to expel from reality those forms of sexuality that were not amenable to the strict economy of reproduction: to say no to unproductive activities, to banish casual pleasures, to reduce or exclude practices whose object was not procreation’ (Foucault 1979, 36).

Drawing from the stories reported above, as well as the analysis presented in previous chapters, we can conclude that the ways in which ‘gender differences are done and sustained’, namely performed, is much more diversified and complex than the movement’s public images and discourses display. In a way, this can be called ‘wearing the values’ (or equally reading, performing the values) that they are trying to defend, as one activist put it. In actively adopting behaviours and lifestyles

consistent with traditional gender expectations, activists express their positions and resignify gender norms by which are themselves produced.

7.2.2 Challenging Gender Inequality

In contrast to Catholic activists, for many LGBTQ activists, sexuality is political as much as the personal is political. In this section, I discuss data and provide examples of situations in which activists challenged gender norms and structures. These challenges are displayed through different social practices: the conveyance of gender consciousness, being ‘out and proud’, and gender performances in the context of drag activism, cross-dressing and transvestism. Before tackling these questions, it is crucial to understand how movement activities had an impact on the individual transformation of activists, that is, the ways in which activist identities have been transformed over time and came to be gender aware:

Entering the association I began to meet an infinite variety of people, who live their sexual identity, I mean everything, role, gender identity and orientation in a manner very different from me ... Even my way of living it has changed: if before I tended to be very moderate in my mannerism, to limit myself, to placate myself, now is a bit less so. In the sense that I know to be effeminate in my attitudes and in my way of talking, and when I was in high school I tended to hide this thing, or at least to stop it, I tried to limit it ... But here at some point I told myself ‘hello, who cares’. At one point I was doing it only in here, now I do it everywhere and I have no problems. Then, I recognize that I have my own personality, of living things so they are not changed completely: I have my shyness, I have my own way of living masculinity and femininity in a manner different from that which may have other people in this place, however, from this point of view I have never felt lower or higher than the others. (Interview nr. 26)

For me personally, psychologically, [activism] served very well to grow and metabolize my homosexuality. Even though I had already accepted myself before, it made me be surer of what I am, not to be ashamed. Now, if people at the university ask me if I'm gay, and I answer yes, I have no more problems as before. (Interview nr. 16)

Certain expressions of gender and embodiment constitute ways to challenge dominant gender and sexual models. We have seen in previous sections how gender performances that cross boundaries between femininity and masculinity represent a relatively conscious way to challenge gender stereotypes. By ‘relatively’, I refer to the observation that gender performances can vary greatly depending on their context, particularly whether they take place ‘within’ or ‘outside’ the social movement environment. This observation is linked to one of Butler’s basic assumptions about gender performance: the repetition of performance is meant to reduce the anxiety caused by not being comfortable in my skin, namely in the person I am supposed to be. Data has also shown that, although participants might be perfectly conscious of these changes, we cannot infer that individuals have unbounded agency, rather, it is precisely in these variations that the interplay of structural constraints and participants’ actions is most evident. Through my research, interviewees confirmed two important ideas that are central to this thesis. Firstly, that social movement activity encourages an awakening of consciousness, affecting activists’ habitus and practices. Secondly, that alternative modes of being can be articulated in social movements’ spaces with the aim of challenging normalised understandings of gender and sexuality.

Over the years I have always hoped that the others were to ask me so I started to try to separate a lot less who I am here [in the association] and who I am there [outside]. Which is not that I’m here changing face, surely, here I can gesticulate or make stupid jokes because of the dynamics of the group. There is always this moment where I say ‘let me do the stupid girl’ but it is not definite of who I am. (Interview nr. 18)

When I was 13 years, I was already trying to escape a bit from the girl role, and then I tried maybe to conform, perhaps for the need to be accepted, in short. Doing activism has helped me to become aware of the fact that you have to be basically what you feel, what you want without having to flaunt to be recognised in some way, or brought back to your sexual orientation, to a minority. (Interview nr. 3)

Here I feel absolutely free, and I think the approach to a social centre, getting to know persons who have already behind and within himself a consciousness with respect to these issues has allowed me to feel much freer and not judged. And it was a very strong stimulus for growth and also for personal assertiveness. (Interview nr. 2)

It is evident in the excerpts above that the LGBTQ activism environment, as in the case of Catholic activists who felt able to express and practice their religious identity freely and performing gender accordingly, provides a safe space to exercise one's ability to perform gender differently. It is interesting to note, however, that the feeling of belonging to a group that has developed in the LGBTQ community was established through a 'reverse principle' of Catholic activists' identification strategy. We have seen how LGBTQ activists often have a sense of 'being and feeling different' from the majority and so seek shelter in groups where this diversity can be appreciated and respected, as well as fully experienced. Aside from 'born in the movement' activists, Catholic activists often look for a group of belonging in the first place, and then, within this group, they find faith.

In addition, other activists recounted the gradual process of beginning to 'do gender' in different ways within the context of activism, and then progressively taking those performances – now tuned to one's gender and sexual preferences – into the 'outside world'. Processes of identity formation do not reflect the advantage of having many different choices available but rather a politicised experience that emphasises the importance of the expressive and belonging. Although for some it remains difficult or, by choice, not preferable to go through a similar process, for others 'being out and proud' becomes a manifest political stance:

For me there can be places where you make more efforts to be yourself and others where maybe you're more at ease, but I think it starts from how you accept yourself. You don't have to go trumpeting it from the rooftops, but not even denying it if you're asked to, or pretend it does not concern you. It happened with other gay people in certain contexts, they teased homosexuality because they did not accept themselves. (Interview nr. 16)

Coming out. Always, and explain to people the importance of coming out. Not hiding ever since the first half to gain rights, to not be discriminated against, even the suppression of homophobia is precisely to ensure that LGBTQ people have a face, a face, so that when any hate speech comes to people's ears, these people will

remember that this message of hate in the end is addressed to the same person who met in another situation, and that in the end is just a person. (Interview nr. 4)

Similarly to Butler's renown claim, when she says that since the age of sixteen 'being a lesbian is what I have been', which has important ontological implications in terms of being on the fence between authenticity and innovation, activists recognise the process of becoming, or opening up to different gendered and sexed identifications, and the political consequence of performing them:

In my personal life course I became a lesbian very late, and I had to immediately give it that kind of nuance (activism), which helps you learn about feminist history, gender issues, and shapes you as a woman: first as a woman, feminist, and from there the next step ... you come to understand that you need to relate to another woman. (Interview nr. 2)

Yet again, Butler's commentary about 'outness' is important to understand why, as much as the affirmative action of 'coming out' remains important in the personal and political lives of many activists, for others it does not represent a viable option. In this sense, similar to other processes of identity politics, coming out might be subject to exclusionary operations of those who cannot reconcile public visibility with racial, ethnic, or religious affiliation (Butler 2011 [1993], 173).

Some activists spoke about the ways in which they tried to convey gender awareness to members of their close social environment, such as their family. Many activists also recounted how 'doing activism' has been a positive factor facilitating parents' acceptance of homosexuality. In this sense, activism helped them acquiring credibility, legitimacy and worthiness to the parents' eyes, particularly in families carrying a tradition of political activism:

My mother every time she talks about her youth, telling me that she was in the streets to demonstrate in Colombia, with students ... And I immediately made the comparison, she was fighting for her rights as a student, I am doing now for the fact of being a gay person who does not have the rights ... I'll do it also in a different way, without throwing stones at the buses in the street, but maybe I inherited this thing of wanting to exercise my rights. She always made me weigh the fact of being flabby,

not interested in politics, and so on ... At first she was hesitant, then when I told her that I was appointed responsible for youth affairs and foreign policy, and I had to go to a conference in Brussels, she took me seriously, she told me to be proud of me. (Interview nr. 16)

I worked a lot on my parents; to educate them, make them understand, although my mom rests uncomfortable with my sexual orientation. While my father called me the other day and told me 'you know it's been knighted a man of our town who is gay and now lives in London, it helps gay youth to settle abroad and find work' and here I was surprised I said 'fuck, I did it, but it's you daddy?' (Interview nr. 17)

It becomes evident from these accounts that accountability towards themselves, to understand and accept one's identity and orientation – as in non-compliance with social norms – and the anxiety that often comes with this process, has pushed LGBTQ activists to extend this responsibility to others. It is, in other words, the ability to develop a critical relation with binding social norms that do not represent me, maintain a distance and be able to articulate an alternative by reworking these norms (Butler, 2004). Crucial to a process of detachment from normative ideals, activists are better placed to question the terms by which the life of LGBTQ people is constrained, propose alternative modes of being, provide shelter and inclusive conditions:

Not so much concerning my gender identity, I am cisgender anyway, but certainly concerning my sexual orientation being here [Arcigay] has allowed me to undergo an 8-year process in continuous transition, acceptance and even visibility. At present being an activist and being Jonathan is often one thing that keeps going forward. In my opinion, I was given the opportunity to help other people in this process, to approach this world, or find their project or have an empowerment process. There are several people I knew for other things, you are approached, entered into a group, they did a machining process on themselves. In the time here I was able to have training on this. The school group for example it was important to have training on gender issues and also on gender identity. (Interview nr. 20)

So ... be at the forefront of such topics, struggling to allow a person, a boy / girl, a man / woman, to know what it means to love and what it means to be discriminated, labelled etc. ... get in the first ranks and fight, and make your own contribution to support the guys that are still closed in themselves, they discovered their homosexuality but do not want to expose themselves, but not because they do not want to expose themselves, but for fear of family reprisals or fear of retaliation of society because unfortunately in Italy we have not yet a law against homophobia. So get in the front row and make it clear to a young man that is not sick, he is not mistaken, that love is free ... I think that's the only thing that brings you to face difficult situations, to put the face outside. (Interview nr. 10)

Since however I see all the time come up boys and girls who begin to have doubts, at least about their identity and their sexual orientation, it seems to me that it is appropriate to intervene as if someone had intervened when I was 15, which speaks only 10 years ago, however, there is already a big difference, it probably would have taken much less. (Interview nr. 5)

We have seen how the gendered habitus acquired through different systems of socialisation constrained processes of gender and sexual liberation for many activists, particularly through binding gender performances as they determine the viability of individuals' existence and recognition. Yet,

If my doing is dependent on what is done to me or, rather, the ways in which I am done by norms, then the possibility of my persistence as an "I" depends upon my being able to do something with what is done with me. (Butler 2004, 3)

Again, this does not mean that individuals, activists, have unbounded agency to deny their own constitution, but maintain the possibility to rework and transform the norms by which are constituted through their own paradox. Different examples of how this process can take place are seen in the practices of cross-dressing, transvestism and drag activism, which all aim to introduce a different gender than the one that would be commonly expected, but in different ways, with some aspects overlapping among practices. These differences can be traced back to this thesis' assumption that performances can range on a continuum between expressive and strategic, even in their subversive function. The following comment, from an activist speaking about non-normative gender performances, articulates precisely this idea:

I'm sorry to see it as a form of protest because it is not. You feel it as a form of protest when you realise that it bothers other people when you're not letting the small box that one would like to give you to fit you. So in my opinion, gender performance is about personal expression. It is beautiful in itself. Then it can be used as a personal guerrilla to bring it to the outside, but it is much more true that in reality is only the personal expression of who you are. (Interview nr. 14)

If we consider these practices in a continuum from expressive to strategic performances, we could suggest that on the more expressive side of the continuum, we find cross-dressing, which is the practice of habitually wearing clothing that

‘belongs to’ another gender. As we have seen, this practice is very common among LGBTQ people as a way to express their gender identity in conformity with how they feel, regardless of the motives and the ways in which it might have an impact on resisting heteronormativity. Transvestism uses cross-dressing and can be both expressive and strategic in its subversive function, depending on the context in which it is done, as one activist explained regarding his motivations for practicing transvestism:

I do it for fun. First of all because it's fun to do something I do not say ‘strange’ but it is different from the usual. It allows me to bring out a different side that maybe I could not carry out often, maybe one side a bit more feminine that I have inside emerge, (I think it emerge, many tell me ‘you're more a man as a transvestite than in reality’). I have much more courage as I would normally do because I know that I have a mask that protects me, but the mask itself is what I have to protect in the first place, I have to bring up that image that I'm carrying out because it has a meaning and bring these meanings out then bring people to this strangeness and explain ‘look, this is not strange, it's just your idea’. (Interview nr. 17)

The excerpt above is an eloquent example showing how gender marks of masculinity and femininity are the product of arbitrary acts – performativity of heterosexuality – in which the non-naturalness of gender categories can be made explicit. Transvestitism plays a gender practice that allows individuals to relocate from heteronormative categories. As the activists put it, it is about unmasking the ‘masquerade’, by wearing a mask, using gender as a way to ‘deconstruct the matter’ (Butler 1993).

This way to act and to bring the cross-dressing out of the quiet walls of our house, the fortress, it is easy to make the disguise in here where people are expecting it, try and get it out where people do not know that these things can exist, especially does not expect it, is a real personal challenge. This will also intrigue people to come to you and to ask why, what, what are you doing, then you give an idea or mostly it brings doubt in people and you can take advantage of this flamboyance to carry out even the content that can be more or less frivolous. (Interview nr. 17)

Indeed, performing such gender practices requires courage, but it can be very effective in casting doubts in people concerning the relationship between gender and

sexuality, the sexed body and gender in an extremely dynamic way. A drag queen is very different from a transvestite, activists say. The transvestite transsexual, for example, wears women's clothes because she feels like a 'woman trapped in a male body' and pays attention to bodily performance and aspect, to what actually lies beneath the dress, to the entire range of signs that define femininity. This can include decisions such as removing body hair or modifying voice and gestures to adopt a register based on female refinement and elegance. Transvestite transsexuals strongly identify with the opposite sex. Other male transvestites are not necessarily transsexuals, nor homosexuals, but simply wear women clothes in order to defy gender norms. The point is the extent to which such performances critically or uncritically questions heteronormativity, and therefore lay the basis for subversion and resistance.

The drag bases his/her performance on ambiguity, on the contrast between appearance and what it belies, and the construction of a different 'gender surface', a different 'matter'. The drag activist wants the hairy chest or the moustache to produce a kink effect to collide with their smart, shiny, extremely feminine dress. By contesting patriarchal and *doxic* assumptions on beauty, naturalness, and sexuality, activists make use of a radical habitus (Crossley 2003), a type of habitus that question the status quo through critical know-how and skills. It is a theatrical performance, a hyperbolic identity game, which conveys a strategic, often political message. The drag queen is the stereotypical woman par excellence, and performances or even staged shows are usually done by 'professional performers', as one activist highlighted. Drag activism can overlap with transvestism in the sense that it appropriates the codes that create the culture and symbolism of transvestism, and then revisits them in a personal, unique and parodic way:

Doing drag activism, means introducing yourself in certain serious situations as a drag, whilst it does not take away any seriousness from you. Also at last year's annual conference I presented myself in heels and it was the most serious occasion, in which I participated, there was only seriousness and bureaucracy. Why did I do it? Because it increases my authority, it gives a different tone to my figure, much more decided. While I usually go around as a boy even more composed, additional things sometimes, such as 15 cm more, give you a different integrity, even stronger, you're there and you say 'I am here'. (Interview nr. 14)

Drag activism can therefore be understood as a performance which fits at the other side of the continuum, because it is essentially employed strategically and critically. It enacts, interprets, and negotiates cross-dressing practices in order to achieve a particular goal.⁶² Moreover, through carnival-like performances and tactics of disorder and subversion, the new persona assumes alternative identity expressions in which the boundary of the body and the subject, the inside and the outside, becomes blurred, it literally make gender rules sway from the inside:

A friend of mine always told me that he did not consider [transvestism] an art but a handcraft, meaning you do not create anything new but are using things that already exist. I think it is more of an art as a whole because it allows you to express yourself in various ways and in different ways from those that you currently have with your potential, opens up a broader range of possibilities, and allows you to express your ideas and your emotions. I have done things to send very clear messages, such as going to the pride in wedding/bride dress or going to an evening with an Israeli host, in Palestinian dress. You can give a lot of direct messages, or at the same time just dress how you feel tonight. [...] That day I was having a clear idea of how transvestism should be done in political contexts: that is, it must be clear that any person who looks at you could not think anything bad of you, such as the old lady who passed the street could not think bad of me, because I was perfect." (Interview nr. 14)

A major point must be done with respect to the subversive potential of such practices in order to resist compulsory heterosexuality, as we have seen through Butler notion of performativity and performance. As she writes:

[...] drag is not unproblematically subversive. It serves a subversive function to the extent that it reflects the mundane impersonations by which heterosexually ideal genders are performed and naturalised and undermines their power by virtue of

⁶² Yet, drag performances do not explain homosexuality *per se*. Many drag activists might be straight and yet do not identify with heterosexual gender conventions.

effecting that exposure. But there is no guarantee that exposing the naturalized status of heterosexuality will lead to its subversion. (Butler 2011 [1993], 176)

A call into question of heterosexual norms is necessary for a performance to be subversive. The hyperbolic gesture is therefore key to drag activism's political aims. The first lines of the activist's quotation above, 'you do not create anything new but are using things that already exist', sound very much with the notion that gender is not the product of a choice, but the citation of a norm (performativity) and that the same citation would appear as a theatrical performance insofar it mimes and overstates heterosexual conventions.

The set of traditions presented above leads us to another important conclusion about LGBTQ and Catholic activists concerning the different modes of participation adopted by each group, either to sustain or challenge gender difference. In previous chapters I have underlined one of the major characteristics of the LGBTQ movement: the highly heterogeneous nature of its members. As the interview excerpts presented in this text have shown, this variety is also reflected in the individual modes of participation adopted by single activists. Compared to Catholic activists who act relatively homogeneously, it is in fact difficult to find a common pattern of participation for LGBTQ activists, whose profiles range from drag activists, to militant lesbians, and younger activists who participate 'just for fun', to name but a few. The relationship between individual and collective dimensions of identity in the LGBTQ movement is therefore much more complex due to the variety of experiences and motivations. In other words, while Catholic activists bring their person in its entirety to the associational world – including family, a specific lifestyle, ideas about society, politics that coincide in every way with the manifesto of the Catholic community – LGBTQ activists usually bring one or a few specific

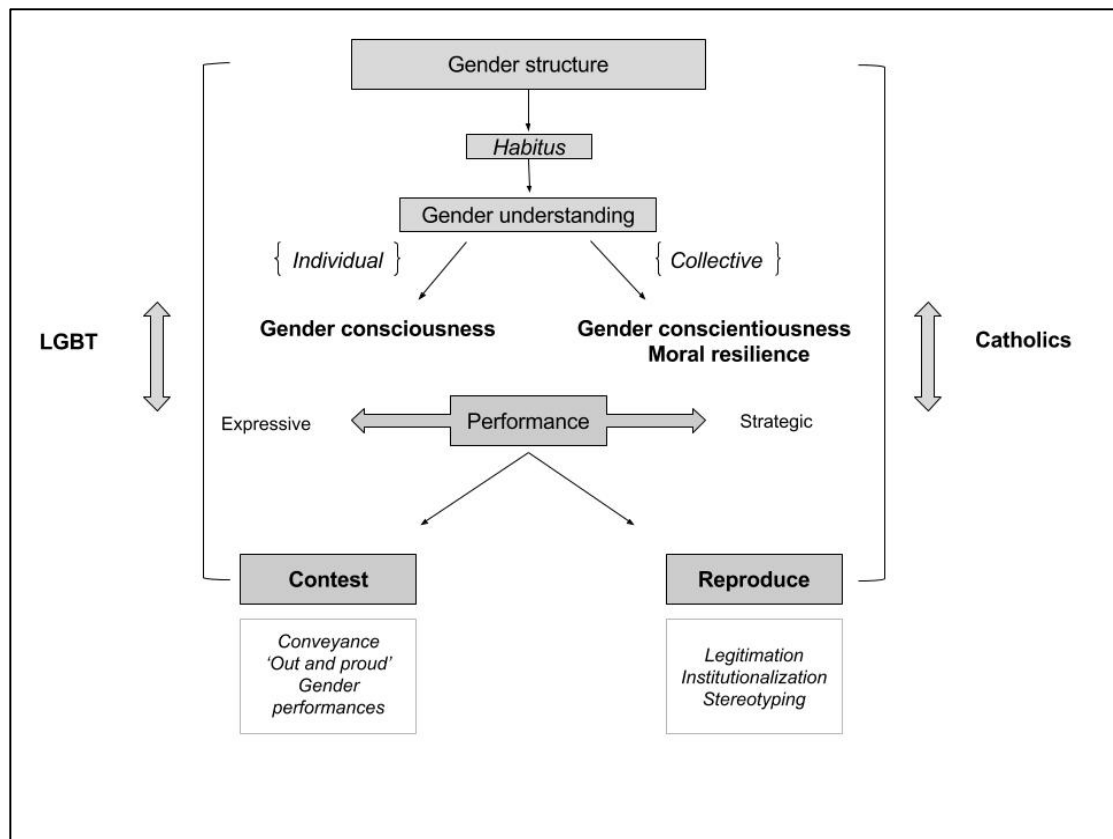
personal aspects of their life into play in the movement. Catholics activists offer a model to follow and bring themselves as examples of the core values which sustain it; they are the first witnesses of how society should be. In a way, every aspect of their life is activism, as many ideologies at the basis of specific movements (see for instance *Comunione e Liberazione*) command.⁶³

Throughout the chapter, I have explored how, in constructing their own identities, activists attribute different meanings to their own personal history, including gender experience and practice. This raised questions about how gender identities are negotiated at the individual and collective levels and subsequently reproduced/challenged in the context of activism. Activists' representations of gender are constantly confronted with the reactions of social groups, individuals, institutions, and public opinion at large in the context of different interactions. As I have tried to make explicit, 'the story of movements is therefore also the story of their members' ability to impose certain images of themselves, and to counter attempts by dominant groups to denigrate their aspirations to be recognised as different' (della Porta and Diani 2006, 106). A range of gendered structures – among the most prominent in this analysis: religion, family, sexuality, and education – impacted activists at the individual and interactional levels, and, overall, have facilitated and influenced the development of a gender consciousness and conscientiousness in the context of activism. Following from this assertion, we can cite a number of performances and processes that activists engage in, ranging from expressive to strategic, to either contest or reproduce gendered structures. Recalling

⁶³ See for instance the *Dimensions of the Christian Experience* included in the pedagogy of *Comunione e Liberazione* that details the ways to live an authentic Catholic experience, and includes cultural, political and social actions. Accessed 17.09.2016: <http://english.clonline.org/whatiscl/default.asp?id=532>

Giddens, this duality is characteristic of the structure, which is both medium and outcome of gender practices, which are, in turn, both structured and structuring.

Figure 30 attempts to summarise this dynamic.



Source: Author's elaboration.

Figure 30. Protesting within Gendered Social Structures

Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Recapitulation of Purpose and Findings

This research was intended to investigate the question of how gender identities and performances of young activists change and adapt to the context of mobilization; in particular, the alternative ways in which young activists in the LGBTQ and Catholic movements engage with and within gendered social structures and reproduce or contest gender norms as they protest. Especially, the study had the aim of exploring how gender, at the intersection with other social structures, defines and redefines the possibilities for young people to participate in social action and negotiate their gender and sexual identities. In a similar vein, the thesis subscribed to the position of other social movement scholars who locate collective and individual identities at the interactional level. As I have analysed through the chapters, different processes of identity work played an important role in the formation of collective identities and recruitment strategies of movement organisers, along with individual processes of identification. Particularly, data presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7 have revealed the complex nexuses between, on the one hand, the formation of individual identities through cognitive processes, feelings of belonging and commitment, personal action frames and, on the other hand, collective identities and collective action frames. From a theoretical perspective, the emphasis put on interactions, in order to shed light on the relational and dialogical nature of different analytical units and levels of analysis – movement/countermovement, individual/collective, agency/structure – and transcend essentialist positions, constitutes a contribution to recent trends in

social sciences.

In relation to the specificities of the case under study, I have traced the trajectory of the politicisation of sex and gender issues by Catholic and LGBTQ actors while looking at the recent mobilization opposing ‘anti-gender’ and ‘pro-gender’ activists in the Italian context. The inquiry has been oriented by a set of concepts and theoretical grounds anchored in different sociological disciplines: social movement, critical studies on gender and sexuality, and to a lesser extent youth and religion studies. The selection of the conceptual framework has been partly driven by theories capable to discern the phenomenon empirically – such as in the case of approaches to identity and iteration, particularly theories of gender performativity and habitus – and to describe it conceptually through the lenses of strategic interactionism. Although, as I stressed in the introductory chapter, I acknowledge the limited potential for generalisations, the thesis has demonstrated that the in-depth analysis of the Italian case can nonetheless inform the study of other cases, particularly in terms of theoretical insights.

The project started from the consideration of a number of important issues relating to the structure and agency debate. Questions of perspective help us to place ourselves in specific positions, and to assess, from where we are, a phenomenon and its possible development. However, we can easily fall into the trap of a single perspective, when we assume that our viewpoint is the only (or the best) one possible. The aim of the theoretical chapters was to ‘set the scene’ so as to avoid producing, (or reproducing), a dualism of structure and agency in my work. By first acknowledging the impasse that current social movement theories are faced with, I then proposed my approach to tackle the challenge of not adhering to a single perspective, but rather adopting an integrated approach to the analysis of gender/sex

relationships and dynamics in protest movements. Acknowledging the numerous concepts reviewed in the theoretical framework, I chose to present the ones that provide me with the most appropriate theoretical groundwork upon which to build my own analysis; Bourdieu's theory of practice, Giddens's theory of structuration and Butler's theory of performativity. Particularly, Giddens's concept of the duality of the structure and Bourdieu's concept of habitus are valuable tools to link social structures, including gender as a social structure, to individuals' agency in the form of social performances, and vice versa. The understanding and the acknowledgement of the role of gender as a social structure and as a social performance a major theoretical premise of this research. To summarise, in the words of Haluza-DeLay (2008, 208), is to admit that 'ultimately, we are not creators of our lives, so much as reworkers of the raw materials yielded to us by history and experience.' Taking into consideration the theoretical framework presented in the thesis, an important contribution emerged from the critical understanding of the concept of gender performativity – the embodied-performative aspect of social structures – as advanced in Butler's argument, particularly its underling potential for subversion and resistance through citations of gender norms, in relation to the historically, culturally-scripted character of identities. Parallel to this, I have sustained the argument that activism takes shape at the interaction between structure and agency and has a deep impact on activists' gender identity, and the ways they understand it, at different levels – cultural, physical, psychological, and social. In this sense, we have seen how individuals and their subjectivities are fluctuating, multiple and at times conflicting, in other words non-binary, unstable and incoherent and how costly and painful can be to adhere to hegemonic cultural norms and ideals of gender/sex coherence and stability, no matter the model of political transformation or

preservation one is following. If we have to understand social change, therefore, this study showed the necessity to come to terms and reconcile structure and agency, explore its implications in terms of individual resistance, relationships to forms of dominance and how individuals, through activism, try to liberate themselves towards forms of oppression.

Other than gender dynamics, the explanations relating to SM-CM dynamics provide a ground to generalise some of the results to non-gender mobilization, that is, mobilizations that are not directly concerned with gender as a contentious issue. In particular, this study has provided useful directions on how to analyse the consequences for a movement when reacting or opposing other movements: the choice of tactics, the agenda and the kind of practices, organizational structures, alliances that have been invented or transformed to counteract other players' initiatives. We have seen how, crucially, SM-CM dynamics are built around different sets of choices and non-choices, again, ranging from strategic, conscious considerations to less conscious moves, concealed under customary and institutional practices and rules. I believe that this project has in part demonstrated how players come to conceive unexpected choices as possible alternatives, and how, in turn, some choices become part of routinized practices. Gender is a good example of how activists' interpretation, understanding, and awareness of its underlying structure of power changes according to the circumstances in which gender is either acted out or withheld as a background condition. In this case as well, we can certainly look at movements and players in other settings and see how they have done things

differently. Moreover, as evidence in this study has demonstrated, gender can be part of a strategic project in which gender structures and hierarchies are reproduced.

Although, as mentioned at the end of this chapter, in the autobiographical note, I have attempted to build my case through resonance with previous studies on similar mobilizations and movements, particularly in the United States, and more recently and more concretely in France, the study maintains the historical and contextual specificities of Italian society. In short, the mobilization under analysis is a case of competing cultures of protest on gender and sexuality issues between the LGBTQ and the Catholic countermovement in Italy. In a general sense, it is a case of the public and private role of religion and its social and gender implications or, conversely, a case of gender as a field of contention and the reconfiguration of traditional gender and sexuality categories. In a theoretical sense, it is a case of social movements as gendered processes and particularly activists' construction, deconstruction, transformation and negotiation of gender identities during protest.

The findings presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7 suggest that social movements indeed constitute gendered terrains of struggle and negotiations. One of the themes to emerge from my analysis of social resistance was the impact that movement activities have on activists' awareness for gender roles and relations at the subjective level; namely, the gendering of consciousness. Differences arose among participants in relation to their awareness, especially the ways they perceived gender as problematic, as an issue to be addressed either changing, resisting or reproducing the structures and meanings that sustain it.

In line with previous studies on movements and counter movements' dynamics, interactions between the LGBTQ movement and the Catholic countermovement have influenced the opponent's opportunities, affecting tactics,

resources, discourses and public images. In order to shed light on these aspects, the study applied and tested strategic interactionism as a sizeable approach to the centrality of individuals' motives and thought-processes, both at individual and collective levels. I have used the lens of the current literature on strategic interactionism, and particularly the concept of dilemma proposed by Jasper (2002; 2006; 2015), in order to highlight the decisions, choice points and trade-offs faced by the respective movements at different times. For the scope of this research, I chose to focus on four specific dilemmas: organisation, extension, reaching in or reaching out and shifting goals. While the latter dilemma has been analysed transversally over the empirical chapters, the first three dilemmas have been investigated more specifically in chapters 5, 6 and 7, respectively. Reasoning through dilemmas allowed us to truly 'get into the mind' of the actors making decisions and to understand what the options for each player actually are. It is worth emphasising that a focus on strategic choices is not meant to overshadow more expressive, emotional aspects of mobilization. Rather, the choices and decisions taken by single and compound players encapsulate the 'cultural meanings, moral sentiments, emotions, and forms of rationality' (Jasper 2004, 10) that guide collective action. From this perspective, there is abundant room for further progress in investigating how actors make decisions.

Chapters 5 and 6 have been preoccupied with the analysis of gender as a central dimension in processes of collective identity emergence and negotiation, along with recruitment strategies, forms of organisation and framing strategies. Taken together, the analyses presented in this study indicate a variety of strategies employed by a wide range of players in the Catholic and the LGBTQ movements. By teasing apart the Catholic countermovement, from which the 'anti-gender' mobilization has emerged and developed, the analyses aimed at helping the reader understand the

complex dynamics through which ‘pro-family’ and ‘anti-gender’ identities have been generated and negotiated along the period of the mobilization. Most importantly, I have also focused on intra-movement interactions; namely, competition processes between different factions of the same movement at multiple levels. I believe that these findings have contributed to elucidate the heterogeneous nature of both movements, not only by pointing to the variety of actors, but also their positions, choices and decisions within the movement. In this sense, the investigation presented aimed at complementing common assumptions that rightly and importantly sustain the heterogeneity of different movements but often fail to demonstrate why and how, by actually providing an analysis, supported by empirical material, of the elements that make up the movements’ heterogeneous nature.

More specifically, findings in chapter 5 explored the organisation and extension dilemmas, revealing how the ‘anti-gender’ campaign from which the mobilization has sprung gradually led to a strong structuring of a conservative Catholic counter movement in the Italian socio-political context, in particular through processes of social appropriation, centralisation and institutionalisation. Recent developments in the mobilization and strategic trajectory of the countermovement have traced the boundaries of a fundamentalist ‘anti-gender’ and ‘pro-family’ Catholic collective identity, formally organised and structured within a movement constantly changing but relatively stabilised. However, the increasing radicalisation of specific factions of the countermovement, particularly during the conflict escalation in 2015-2016, has led to a growing fractionalisation of internal voices reflected in the processes of decertification on behalf of Vatican’s authorities and defection of some groups close to the Pontiff’s line of action.

Because of the fragmented nature of the LGBTQ movement, facing both organisational and extension dilemmas, we have witnessed, in this case as well, attempts towards coalition formation within and outside the movement through brokerage and boundary activation. This latter has been used to reach the internal audience of the movement and strengthen the self-representation of the movement outside. The appropriation of a 'pro-gender' stance constituted a strategic choice dictated by the 'anti-gender' claims. In addition, in response to the increasingly difficult relationships developed with public authorities and institutions, the movement had to build alliances with third party organizations and groups, external to the movement. Theoretically speaking, we have seen how 'precarity', as underlined in the work of Butler (2015) and mirrored in the practices of queer activism, constitutes an effective glue to brings together a plurality of bodies based on their condition of existence (rather than a homogeneous collective identity) at the margin of cultural, social, economic domains.

Chapter 6 was concerned with the reaching in and reaching out dilemma and movements' collective action frames. It highlighted the ways in which movement strategies make use of common associations with traditional imagery of masculinity and femininity, explicitly in the case of Catholic activists, to foster mobilization. In this sense, movement's leaders have advocated an emphasis on gender symbolism and gender dualism. An increased recognition of gender related issues and the subsequent integration into movement objectives has been observed in both movements. Overall, the LGBTQ movement has decided on the deployment of different collective identities, depending on the audience; namely, identity for critique and identity for education (Bernstein 1997). Moreover, the movement was faced with different choices in the process of negotiating these identities, through

persuasion and resources gathering, especially between direct confrontation with the opponent and indirect moves aimed at public and third party involvement. On the other hand, we observed different shifts in the Catholic countermovement's discourses. The most relevant finding in this regard was related to the normalisation around universalistic values within public discourses, in order to reach out to different audiences, often downplaying the role of religion in collective action frames. Moreover, the countermovement experienced a shift in its goals and overall strategy as a consequence of the failed attempt to prevent the approval of the legislation on same-sex partnership. In this sense, following the opening of a window in the political opportunity structure – and subsequent discursive opportunity structure – during the campaign for the administrative election first, and the constitutional referendum after that, the countermovement adjusted its discursive repertoire on the basis of these developments.

In chapter 7, the research delved deeper into the spaces of gender performances, identities and relations. Underlying the awareness level, I have attempted to pinpoint diverse taken-for-granted assumptions about gender and alternative expressions of femininity and masculinity 'inside and outside' activism. Following Jasper's suggestion (1997), I was interested in observing activists and their biographical histories in order to uncover alternative choices of cultural meanings and strategic tastes. Particularly, data have shown how gender identities change in their salience and subjective importance across LGBTQ and Catholic activists. Activists have experienced changes in their gender identities as a consequence of different events, interactions and social structures. In line with previous studies, we have seen how family and other socialisation environments play a crucial role in this process, and, most importantly, in very different ways. It is manifest, as activists have expressed

through their accounts, that their gender identities have gained saliency and centrality through their involvement in the respective movements, although following alternative trajectories. Evidence has suggested that participation in movement activities triggers changes in identity meaning and expressions. Particularly, we have seen how, within the context of contemporary expressivism, gender identities are both made and unmade. Activists expressed alternative ideas about ‘doing gender’, about dress and about the body, just as much as through values and ideas. Identity and politics are, therefore, linked within this performativity: gender expression can become a powerful political tool, and social movements a fertile ground through which gender mediates and is mediated. Overall, findings have displayed how different aspects of gendered structures, such as family, sexuality, age and religion, have shaped individual and collective practices of doing gender by providing them with meaning, beliefs, and social practices. Through the concept of habitus, I have underlined the interplay between embodied gendered structures and different gender understandings, opposing individualist versus collectivist perspectives. In the context of protest, these views, in turn, have activated a number of cognitive processes that I called, respectively, gender consciousness, conscientiousness and moral resilience. Based on such processes, activists deploy a number of social performances, ranging from expressive to strategic, either to *reproduce* or *contest* gender structures as they protest.

A closely related theme that emerged throughout the chapter is the variation of gender performances within the context of activism, or ‘outside’ the safe net of spaces provided by the associational world, pointing to the ‘right to appear’ as developed in Butler’s thinking. Certainly, activism is critical for the development of gender consciousness, even in cases where individuals are not directly concerned

with gender issues. Consequently, activists began to act consciously in relation to gender, although in different ways. Activism provides people with the opportunity to feel more at ease with their gender identity; in this sense, processes of self-awareness and acceptance are increasingly accelerated. Expressing their own gender identity in the ‘outside world’ was also important for many LGBTQ and Catholic activists. It helped making differences between ‘here’ and ‘there’ progressively less significant, or less challenging, by claiming the right to appear as a ‘legible’ human being even through gender non-conformant modes of presentation. Parallel to this, activism has enhanced gender consciousness and acceptance of others, and vice versa.

In addition to gender factors in mobilization, and movement-counter-movement dynamics, the present research has also shed light on some key characteristics of youth activism. First and foremost that not only activism provides youth with a space for learning and development through intense socialization processes, as already shown in the literature, but also a context for a deep transformation of identities, through processes of awareness and consciousness. Parallel to this, young people might develop resilience at different levels: psychological, moral, cultural, as well as individual and collective levels. Collective identities need to be built and negotiated by activists – they do not exist by nature – and the same goes for individual identities. In a sense, processes of identity work are accelerated through activism, not only in the case of gender. Activism provides youth with an opportunity to feel more at ease with themselves as a consequence of questioning one’s personal history, worthiness, and values. Even the ‘age’ variable is redefined in this context, where the ‘activist age’ does not necessarily coincide with the social age in the ‘outside world’, especially in terms of responsibilities, skills, and visibility. Findings have

also shown how gender influences youth activism, particularly where gender imbalances become a push to action.

Unlike previous generations, youth activism in Italy is not organised in the wake of large organisations (to which activists may still choose to affiliate) but more according to the trend among young activists to form associations or small groups often shaped on the basis of local needs (for instance, study groups in the case of Catholics, discrimination and social exclusion for LGBTQ). We have observed how Catholic groups are organised in a rather hierarchical and vertical way, while LGBTQ groups are characterised by horizontal forms of organisation, in which participation is more dynamic, fluid, spontaneous, and based on individual needs. In this sense, it is possible to see Catholic activism among young people as influenced by ‘top-down’ dynamics, somehow filtered by institutional figures, with a higher degree of control and supervision, as well as homogeneity, among initiatives.

Compared to previous generations of activists, Catholics have only partially implemented or renewed their methods of organisation and action, which essentially follow pre-established lines of action as dictated by ‘mother’ associations to which they respond. In the case of LGBTQ groups, participation is shaped on the needs of different age groups and links to different ways of doing activism, often very diverse from those of the past that are brought forward as ‘traditions’ (transvestism, for instance) or completely abandoned (for example, direct contestation to political institutions). Youth groups significantly rely on social media to aggregate, communicate, advertise, and recruit new participants. In some circumstances, young people have expressed criticisms towards ‘old’ ways of doing activism, considering them of little use. Their action seeks to be less oriented towards challenging authorities and more towards cooperation (for instance, getting permission to provide

training courses and workshops in schools), and very widespread in recruiting members, particularly through the use of condensed and immediate messages such as slogans (an example of tactic maintained over the decades), images, and more in general visual media guaranteeing an amplified impact on bystanders and targeted audiences. Groups of ‘adult’ activists rely heavily on word of mouth and direct knowledge between people, remaining far less visible than young people who make wide – and almost unique – use of modern-day media (in other words, much less leaflets and much more Facebook). Finally, among older generations, activism tends to be based on the achievement of broader political goals, while youth are much more invested in activities of aggregation and sharing.

Looking at the role of movements’ activities in the individual transformation of activists, the findings also suggested that social age plays an important role in the different practices of activism, along with the values that accompany such practices. Indeed, as hypothesised at the beginning of this study, different forms of activism adopted by youth reflect changes in gender relations and, in turn, impact their gender perceptions. On the one hand, within both the LGBTQ and the Catholic movements, newly experienced activists are driven by a need for social identification and aggregation, in which a sense of empathy with like-minded people constitutes a primary incentive for joining and participate in the movement. Personal values attached to the self, the individual, are predominant, along with a sense of responsibility in showing worthiness to other youth. On the other hand, more experienced activists are, in both cases, oriented toward the promotion of values that take the wider society as the main referent, rather than the individual person.

8.2 Avenues for Future Research

Further research is needed in order to understand how different types of movements respond to similar dilemmas with different patterns of choices. The case examined in this dissertation has focused on four specific dilemmas, clustering different choices within the context of SM-CM dynamics. Indeed, it is a preliminary analysis that lays the basis for more scrutiny on the case under study. Moreover, some dilemmas can be solved through explicit choices and trade-offs: others are left off the table, kept silent and implicit. It would be important to understand how and why some dilemmas are never discussed. Here again, we are faced to the general dilemma, besides movements' choices, of structure and agency. Some dilemmas may remain under the layers of institutional and custom rules (Jasper 2006), for cultural or psychological reasons. Some players may decide to keep the debate behind closed doors, or simply decide for everyone else within the movement. An important cluster of dilemmas in this sense concerns the risks faced by movements, and particularly the extent to which it is possible to discuss over the future, success or failure. Yet, new dilemmas may arise once specific issues are eventually expressed. We have seen how, for instance, in order for religious institutions to succeed in regulating the physical and sexual body, the framing of public discourses must be clearly articulated and strategically deployed. The introduction of gender education in the public system in Italy forced the Catholic movement to clarify and strengthen its message and position about sexuality in the public sphere. The shift of gender and sexual education from the private to the public sphere gave rise to new important dilemmas. As Jasper stresses, there are different sets of questions that a researcher can attempt to answer in studying strategic choices, depending on whether the dilemma is taken as 'explanandum or explanans' (2002, 11). This study has shown

how strategic dilemmas provide useful points of comparison and explanation to be explored in other cases, and across more than one case. A particularly insightful perspective for future investigation consists of combining strategic interactionism and social movement outcomes approaches, focusing on questions such as whether and how the fact that a movement faces different dilemmas matters for the outcome of the mobilization.

An additional area for further research would be into the specific of the emotional interplay in opposing movements. In particular, the ways in which movement and countermovement dynamics affect participants' emotional responses and structures of feelings. As this study demonstrated, emotions play a crucial role in shaping activists' perceptions and actions. I believe that, in general, research on movements and countermovements could benefit from additional efforts in trying to approach and understand both sides of the contention in equal measure, particularly at the micro level of participants. As challenging as it might be in terms of research practice, an empirical investigation based on a comparative, relational and interactionist perspective is the way forward, in order to critically assess not only potentially controversial issues such as gender and sexuality, but also social change in general. As I have anticipated at the beginning of this thesis, religious studies scholars began to explore the potentials of queer theory in the late 1990s, in an effort to engage with and subvert heteronormative research practices, or at least approach them critically. From a heuristic perspective, I think that the implications of queer theory for approaching complex interactions between religion and gender deserve more attention in future research.

Finally, it would be interesting to broaden the scope of the present research at the transnational level. In fact, comparable mobilizations have sprung up across Europe

in the last years, and brought some practitioners (including activists themselves) to refer to the ‘anti-gender’ phenomenon as transnational. I therefore believe that one area for future research could include the analysis of similarities and differences across several European countries, as well as the dynamics of diffusion from one country or a set of countries (initiators) to others (followers). Taking the French mobilization, led by La Manif Pour Tous as an example, I have pointed out through the dissertation how specific groups, LMPTI – Generazione Famiglia specifically – have ‘imported’ the same tool-kit of practices, symbols and discourses in the Italian context and how they have been able to expand the mobilization structure through linkages with the leadership and resources other countries’ movements. Questions remain as to the extent to which a common transnational project exists, for instance, among such movements along with relative issues of organisation, diffusion, distribution of resources and existence of master frames differently declined in each country-specific context.

To this aim, being an activist myself, I am strongly convinced that cross-fertilisation, not only among different sociological disciplines, but also between knowledge produced by academics and practitioners, is key for truly understanding rapidly and constantly evolving phenomena.

8.3 Autobiographical Reflection

When I started researching this topic, I often referred to various works in the American sociological tradition, particularly in terms of movement and countermovement dynamics opposing LGBTQ groups to the religious conservative right. The majority of these works date back twenty years. Therefore, I could not avoid asking myself whether Italy, in the specific case, has been (and is still)

experiencing a gap of almost two decades, with respect to some contexts in the United States (and in Europe as well, for that matter, such as in the Netherlands). The doubt was two-fold: is it a 'delay' in terms of social change, or is it because of negligence toward such issues in the European academic tradition? Why am I researching a topic that, reading between the lines of many authors, sounds like an 'old story'; something that has already been talked about and even solved? I have no answer to these questions, other than specific reasons must exist for the emergence of apparently similar events in this specific moment, in Italy. Fortunately, some of these questions lie at the basis of the efforts made in trying to understand, delve deeper in the matter, asking questions to the questions. So I did ask young people on both sides, 'Why now and what now?' I hope that this thesis has, at least, partially succeeded in providing some answers. I owe a great deal to research practice, for giving me the opportunity to try and understand something that was completely obscured to me before now. Coming from an atheist family and, if it is possible, tradition, my contacts with the Catholic world have been almost absent all my life, at least in an explicit and purposive way. Trying to understand something that I knew nothing about and that possibly, in a context like the one in which I grew up, everyone else took for granted (similar to gender, but in a much more conscious way), required a significant effort, as a researcher and as a person. Yet, maybe paradoxically, I found myself knowing a lot more about Catholic movements, Pope Francis' declarations, the Catholic doctrine itself, towards the end of this journey, than whatever was in the agenda of my groups of reference in the LGBTQ associational world. Yes, I did go protesting in front of the Italian embassy in Brussels for the 'Wake up Italy!' demonstration, and yes I did go demonstrating against the Standing Sentinels, many times last year, among other things. But I also

went to talk to the Standing Sentinels themselves, to Catholic young volunteers, to priests and whoever wanted to share with me her or his piece of knowledge, concern, fear, anger or happiness on the matter. It helped me in being emphatic towards myself, in the first place, and towards others. That was, eventually, what I was really looking for.

ANNEX 1. SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS⁶⁴

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Place of origin</i>
1	Female	27	Arcigay Il Cassero Bologna	Leader	Ravenna
2	Female	20	Borroka Forli	Volunteer	Ferrara
3	Female	23	Taboo Forli-Cesena	Volunteer	Pescara
4	Female	25	Arcigay Il Cassero Bologna – Gruppo PeapALL	Volunteer	Bologna
5	Female	25	Gruppo giovani LGBT Firenze	Volunteer	Basilicata
6	Female	25	Rompriamo il Silenzio Bergamo	Leader	Bergamo
7	Female	21	Studenti BEST Milano	Leader	Campania
8	Female	20	Studenti BEST Milano	Volunteer	Puglia
9	Male	25	Arcigay Il Cassero Bologna	Volunteer	Calabria
10	Male	28	Arcigay Pistoia	Leader	Napoli
11	Male	28	Arcigay Pistoia	Leader	Isola d’Elba
12	Male	28	Centro Gay Lucca	Leader	Lucca
13	Male	25	Rompriamo il Silenzio Bergamo	Volunteer	Bergamo
14	Male	22	Arcigay Il Cassero Bologna – Gruppo PeapALL	Volunteer	Bologna
15	Male	26	Arcigay Il Cassero Bologna – Gruppo PeapALL	Leader	Calabria
16	Male	21	Arcigay Pistoia	Volunteer	Firenze
17	Male	22	Arcigay Il Cassero Bologna – Gruppo PeapALL	Volunteer	Bologna
18	Male	25	Studenti BEST Milano	Volunteer	Calabria
19	Male	21	Studenti BEST Milano	Leader	Puglia
20	Male	28	Arcigay Il Cassero Bologna – Different groups	Leader	Predappio
21	Female	23	Arcigay Grosseto Gruppo Giovani	Volunteer	Grosseto
22	Female	24	Arcigay Grosseto Gruppo Giovani	Leader	Grosseto
23	Female	21	Arcigay Grosseto Gruppo Giovani	Volunteer	Grosseto
24	Male	28	Evangelic Church	Volunteer	Sicily
25	Male	26	Evangelic Church	Volunteer	Cesena

⁶⁴ This table does not include activists and protestors that I have surveyed during participant observation at demonstrations and related events, particularly people from two of the main Catholic groups under analysis, the Standing Sentinels and LMPTI - Generazione Famiglia.

26	Male	22	Comunione e Liberazione – Student Office Bologna	Leader	Piemonte
27	Female	23	Comunione e Liberazione – Student Office Bologna	Volunteer	Forli
28	Male	25	Comunione e Liberazione	Volunteer	Forli
29	Female	20	Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana	Leader	Rimini
30	Female	18	Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana	Volunteer	Rimini
31	Female	21	Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana	Volunteer	Rimini
32	Female	18	Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana	Volunteer	Rimini
33	Female	32	Manif pour tous Italia	Leader	Apulia
34	Male	30	Manif pour tous Italia	Leader	Calabria
35	Male	21	Comunione e Liberazione – Student Office Bologna	Volunteer	Bologna
36	Male	25	Comunione e Liberazione – Student Office Bologna	Leader	Cesena
37	Male	26	Comunione e Liberazione – Student Office Bologna	Volunteer	Bologna

ANNEX 2. SAMPLE OF ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS⁶⁵

<i>Movement</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Creation</i>	<i>Constituency</i>	<i>Activities</i>
LGBT	Arcigay	1985	LGBTQI activists	Public demonstrations; support groups on sexual, gender, immigration issues, employment discrimination; LGBT information; e-learning platform; conferences; debates; leisure activities; art and music festivals; political initiatives
LGBT	Arcilesbica	1996	Lesbian activists	Public demonstrations; support groups on sexual, gender, immigration issues, employment discrimination; information on sexual and gender issues; conferences, debates; leisure activities; art and music festivals; political initiatives
LGBT	Famiglie Arcobaleno	2005	Homosexual parents	Support to homosexual parents, families; information on ART, legal advice; seminars, conferences; promoters of the campaign 'Family everyday'; public demonstrations
LGBT	AGEDO	1992	Parents, family and friends of LGBT people	Support to parents and family of LGBT people; conferences, debates; education in schools; public demonstrations
LGBT	MIT – Movimento Identità Transessuale	1982	Transsexual, transgender, genderqueer, transvestite activists	Public demonstrations; support groups on sexual, gender, employment discrimination for transsexual, transgender people; medical advice and support; conferences; debates; leisure activities; art and music festivals; political initiatives

⁶⁵ The sample contains the organisations and groups that have been analysed either by means of in-depth interviews or participant observation as described in the chapters. It does not include the entirety of organisations and groups that have links to the movements, or form part of them. The order of entry in the table is random.

LGBTQ	Favolosa Coalizione	N/A	Queer, trans-feminist activists	Counter-information; counter-culture; public demonstrations; workshops, seminars
LGBTQ	SomMovimento nazioneAnale	2012	Queer, trans-feminist activists	Counter-information; counter-culture; public demonstrations; workshops, seminars; production of knowledge on queer theory and practice
LGBT	Taboo	2013	LGBT and left-wing activists, students	Cultural, social and recreational activities; conferences/debates concerning sexual/gender identities and civil/human rights
LGBT	Borroka	2014	Students, left-wing/antifascist activists, anarchist, workers, pro LGBT activists	Public demonstrations; debates/conferences
LGBT	Rompiamo il Silenzio Bergamo	2014	LGBT and antifascist activists	Cultural, social and recreational activities; public demonstrations
LGBT	Centro Gay Lucca	2015	LGBT activists	Leisure activities; public demonstrations; debates, support groups
LGBT	Studenti BEST Milano	2009	LGBT students	Public events; conferences and debates concerning equality and LGBT rights
LGBT	Gruppo giovani GLBTI* Firenze	2011	LGBTQI activists	Weekly gatherings; public events and demonstrations;
Catholic	Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana	1896	Catholic university students	Training school; in-depth debates about theology, culture and spirituality within the academic/research framework

Catholic	Comunione e Liberazione – Student Office	1990	Catholic university students	Community school; formation and services to the students; weekly religious gatherings; conferences and debates for students
Catholic	Manif pour Tous Italia – Generazione Famiglia	2013	Parents, grandparents, families and anti-gender activists	Public demonstrations; conferences; lobbying
Catholic	Comunione e Liberazione	1954	Catholic Christians, priests	Religion and spirituality promotion in every social and political context
Catholic	Sentinelle in Piedi	2013	Anti-LGBT/gender rights/pro-family activists	Public demonstrations
Catholic	Evangelical Baptist Church	1863 (world) 2003 (Cesena)	Baptists Christians	Religious gatherings; preaching
Catholic	Azione Cattolica	1867	Catholics Christians, priests	Religion and spirituality promotion in every social and political context
Catholic	Movement for Life	1980	Catholics, Christians, Pro-life activists	Public demonstrations (Marches for Life), petitions, lobbying, political actions
Catholic	Forum delle Famiglie	1992	Catholics, Christians, Pro-family activists	Organisation of community events, meetings, knowledge production on family issues
Catholic	Notizie ProVita; Vita è	2012	Catholics, pro-family, anti-gender activists	Production of knowledge, pro-life and anti-gender, public conferences, meetings
Catholic	Giuristi per la Vita	2012	Catholics, pro-family, anti-gender lawyers	Legal complaints and actions
Catholic	Associazione Scienza&Vita	2005	Catholics, pro-family, anti-gender activists	Production of knowledge on bioethical issues, several formats (dossiers, research, surveys, books...)
Catholic	Alleanza Cattolica	1960	Catholics, pro-family, anti-gender activists	Demonstrations, lobbying and political activities

Catholic	Conferenza Episcopale Italiana	1952	Bishops	Managing of relationships with State's institutions, guidelines for action in the public sphere
Catholic	Comitato Difendiamo i Nostri Figli	2005	Catholics, pro-family, anti-gender activists	Public demonstrations, petitions, lobbying, promoters of Family Day and 'Famiglie per il no al referendum' committees
Catholic	Popolo della Famiglia	2016	Catholics, pro-family, anti-gender candidates	Political party
Catholic	La Croce	2014	Catholics, pro-family, anti-gender journalists	Specialised newspaper, conferences, promoter of 'Comitato voglio la mamma'

ANNEX 3: INTERVIEW GRIDS⁶⁶

Interview Grid Catholics Groups

1. Introduction and background experience

- Tell me about you : how old are you, do you study/work, where do you come from,...
- Tell me about your experience as an activist in the organisation...
- How long have you been involved ?
- What were the reasons that motivated you to join the organisation, movement ?
- What are your role and tasks within the group ?

2. Gender

- What is gender ?
- Do you think is dangerous/harmful ? Why ?
- Do you think that men and women have different roles to play in society ?
- Do you feel that your involvement in the group's activities gave you the opportunity to better understand which roles are assigned to men and women in society ?
- Do you think that activism has had an impact on your perception as a woman/man ?
- Is it important for you to perform your being man or being woman ?
- Are there any contexts and moments in which you believe is more easy/difficult ?

3. Performance

- What kind of values do you promote through your activities?
- Do you see any differences between you and older activists of your group?
- Do cultural forms, such as art, cinema, theatre, and music play a role in your activities?
- What kind of technologies do you use the most in your activism?
- Can you give me an example of a demonstration, public activity in which you participate?

⁶⁶ I present here the basic version of the interview grids. During the course of each single interview as well as along the period of fieldwork, some questions have been added depending on the undergoing conversation and participants' responses. In particular, some details have been added to some questions in order to make them more specific and able to grasp the information I was seeking. The original interview grids were in Italian; translation to English is mine.

Interview Grid LGBT Groups

1. Introduction and background experience

- Tell me about you : how old are you, do you study/work, where do you come from,...
- Tell me about your experience as an activist in the organisation...
- How long have you been involved ?
- What were the reasons that motivated you to join the organisation, movement ?
- What are your role and tasks within the group ?

2. Gender

- What is gender ?
- How do you perceive yourself in terms of gender identity and expression ?
- Do you feel that your involvement in the group's activities gave you the opportunity to better understand which roles are assigned to men and women in society ?
- Do you think that activism has had an impact on your perception as a gendered subject? How ?
- Is it important for you to perform your gender?
- Are there any contexts and moments in which you believe is more easy/difficult ?

3. Performance

- What kind of values do you promote through your activities?
- Do you see any differences between you and older activists of your group?
- Do cultural forms, such as art, cinema, theatre, and music play a role in your activities?
- What kind of technologies do you use the most in your activism?
- Can you give me an example of a demonstration, public activity in which you participate?

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