The politics of visibility and LGBT rights in Europe

> Come out, stand up and let that world know. That would do more to end prejudice overnight than anybody would imagine. I urge them to do that, urge them to come out. Only that way will we start to achieve our rights.
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> – *Harvey Milk, 1977*

In the 1980s, activists of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in New York coined the slogan "Silence = Death," an expression that came to define much of the LGBT movement in that decade. In the spirit of Harvey Milk, who rejected what he called a "conspiracy of silence," the activists were responding to the Reagan administration's silence on the HIV/AIDS epidemic that had brought the gay community to its knees. ACT UP adopted a logo that featured, above the words "Silence = Death," a pink triangle symbolizing the patch that gay concentration camp prisoners were forced to wear during the Second World War (WWII). That historical context also evoked the theme of silence and death: in the 1940s, the silence of a nation and the silence of a social group resulted in death in the camps of Dachau, just as it did in the hospital beds of Chelsea in the 1980s. Equating silence with death is therefore neither new nor unique to a particular context. Indeed, nearly a century earlier in 1896, a German gay advocate (using the pseudonym Ludwig Frey) wrote that "*Stillschweigen ist der Tod*" (staying silent is death) (Beachy 2014, 107). At various points during the twentieth century, members of a marginalized group who sometimes had the ability to disguise their sexual orientation and gender identity were compelled to come out, to act up, and to make themselves visible.

Extending the logic of the "Silence = Death" campaign, I argue that visibility explains the transnational diffusion of LGBT rights in Europe. The premise that visibility leads to change is not new among European rights activists, many of whom share Harvey Milk's theory that gay and lesbian people should publicly declare their orientation if they wish to see society accept them (Herek 2004, 14). That said, they also caution that coming out – especially on an individual basis – is a privilege that can be more or less difficult depending on context (a point I return to at the end of this chapter). Visibility functions by facilitating the interactions that empower groups at the political periphery. It helps LGBT people find each other in contexts where their identities are invisible – increasing the potential for their mobilization – and it brings states and societies into contact with new norms. Increasingly, this process is both domestic and transnational, as external sources of visibility influence the spread of new legal and societal standards into the framework for the nation state. I thus define the core concept of *norm visibility* as the relative ability of governments and publics to see and interact with new ideas and images that define the standards of appropriate behavior within their international societies.

In this chapter I develop a theoretical framework around norm visibility that specifies the conditions under which states comply with, and societies begin to internalize, norms of tolerance toward sexual minorities. Norm visibility engenders this broader diffusion of images and ideas that empower the political margins. It moves the margin – in this case LGBT people – to the center of political debate and public recognition, making it possible for them to claim the rights that are their due. Coming out is thus a social and political process – one that brings states, publics, and marginalized groups together – for making the invisible visible and cashing in on the human rights and dignity movements that have marked European and world politics after WWII.

Such a conception of visibility goes beyond strategic movement choices. For Ashley Currier (2012), whose pioneering work integrated the concept into theories of contentious politics, visibility is primarily a social movement strategy that activists can choose to implement (or not) in their work (see also Zivi 2012). While this is true of LGBT activists in Europe, who also view visibility as a goal, my definition of norm visibility involves a more diffuse transnational process. Visibility can be the source of the identities that lead to mobilization in the first place, provide the political inspiration for both movement actors and state authorities, and be the involuntary transmission of ideas and images via information

flows that cross borders. Social interaction is at the core of all of these aspects of visibility that bring disparate actors and states into dialogue transnationally via brokerage, deliberation, and processes of learning.

In the remainder of this chapter, I elaborate on the mechanisms and processes through which norm visibility functions in the transmission of the movement and its ideas across borders. First, I break down the functioning of norm visibility into two related subcomponents: inter-personal visibility and public visibility. Through social relationships, *interpersonal visibility* brings individuals into interaction with people identifying as LGBT. These interactions can be both among people who come to identify as LGBT (in-group) and between LGBT people and their broader social networks. Put most simply, it is about members of the group seeing each other and being seen by segments of their other communities. *Public visibility* is the collective coming out of a group to engage and be seen by society and state. Both interpersonal and public visibilities have political consequences for the diffusion of norms. Second, I discuss the channels of visibility (transnational political, social, and movement channels) that connect states and societies to the norms of the international communities in which they are embedded. I describe how these channels can lead to compliance with LGBT norms by states.

Finally, I turn to contestation and internalization in the domestic realm. Contestation heightens the norm's salience and subsequently leads to further interaction with the norm, via well-connected actors in the movement and, in some cases, their opposition. Channels of visibility and contestation have effects on state compliance and societal internalization. I close by discussing the scopes and caveats of the theory in terms of the valence of visibility and then briefly introduce the methods for analysis that drive the subsequent chapters.

The politics of visibility

Seeing each other

Visibility facilitates the construction of politically salient identity markers and can inspire marginalized people to create the networks of trust and solidarity that lead to mobilization. A large part of LGBT identity develops later in life in interaction with other LGBT people and their allies, and such identities that distinguish the group from heteronormative culture have been used as a strategy to mobilize people (Bernstein 2002). It is this aspect of visibility, which I call interpersonal visibility, that provides

the foundation for such interactions to take root and for collective action to materialize. The visibility of LGBT norms brings to light the shared experiences of many gender and sexual minorities, both among the activists and among the constituents they represent. Gloria Steinem (2014), an American activist in the women's movement, described this process vividly when she recollected her own mobilization and politicization:

I don't think I understood the need for a movement until I went to cover an abortion hearing. I had had an abortion when I first graduated from college and I'd never told anyone. And I listened to women testify about all that they had to go through: the injury, the danger, the infection, [and] the sexual humiliation to get an illegal abortion. I began to understand that my experience was not just mine … And that meant that only if you got together with other women was it going to be affected in any way.

The idea that "the personal is political" – that is, social and systemic instead of isolated and individual (Crenshaw 1991) – mobilized the second and third wave of feminists once they came to see themselves as part of a collective and discover who "they" were (Whittier 2010). Similarly, many LGBT people experienced a fusion of the personal and the political as relatable sexualities became visible. The pioneering homosexual activist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs described a related experience of discovery when he left Göttingen – where "as far as he could see, there was no one else like him" – for Berlin in the 1840s (Beachy 2014, 9). It was there that he would meet other men with same-sex desires, whom he would describe (using the term *urning*) in writings that inspired the world's first homosexual rights movement just one generation later.

Most of the contemporary activists I interviewed mentioned the centrality of (in)visibility to their work, because in many European contexts LGBT people find it difficult to show themselves openly. Being visible is thus a privilege (Bernstein and Reimann 2001, 10), and the visibility of LGBT life varies greatly by context. Fearing rejection from family, friends, and employers, LGBT people often conceal their sexuality and gender identity, rendering part of themselves invisible. Thus, many LGBT identities have been built in safe spaces – such as cafes, bars, and private homes – that remain secluded from society and state. While these spaces have been transformational by fostering an awareness of collective grievances and social solidarity, they lack the public dimension that scholars have found to be important for a group's democratic participation (Evans and Boyte 1992).

Private or designated safe spaces remain invisible to society at large almost by definition, as they exist to shield the identity of LGBT people

from out-group members. While invisibility can provide security, it stifles domestic movements for change because there are few actors to mobilize in public and too few openly LGBT people for the nation to perceive the issue as local. In many European states, activists interviewed described difficulty in recruiting potential activists at the turn of the century because of fears and discomfort associated with coming out to friends and family members (interviews no. 8, 9, 129, 131, 139, and 140). Many possible LGBT activists had to keep low public profiles because they did not want their families to see them in the media. In Slovakia, a campaign, simply called "Come Out," was started specifically to address the centrality of this issue for political mobilization: "People did not come out in Slovakia; we needed them to see role models" (interview no. 118). Similarly, activists in Malta emphasized that Maltese LGBT people found it difficult to see their situation as collectively shared before the issue became visible: "Discrimination is very systemic and insidious, making it hard to get people to *see* that their rights are being infringed. Visibility politicizes gay people themselves" (interview no. 112, emphasis added). These obstacles are acute in countries where the discourse on LGBT rights is new.

While coming out strategies (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002, 726) are effectual movement repertoires, they are arduous to realize in such contexts. The activists' testimonies echo what Brett Stockdill (2003, 17) argued years ago, that "the transformation of collective consciousness is a crucial aspect of social movement development: people in marginalized groups must be able to see their situation as shared before they can collectively challenge both cultural and institutional symbols" (see also McAdam 2013 on cognitive liberation, and Weeks 2015 on collective consciousness).[1] The visibility of LGBT life, even when examples come from external contexts, can aid LGBT people in seeing their situation as shared and can inspire them to become politically active (interviews no. 5, 12, 16, 118, and 138).

Transnational visibility also helps establish networks of solidarity among LGBT people across borders (Altman 1996). Like many of her colleagues in the European LGBT movement, a Swedish-born activist with Latvian roots describes her involvement and political activism this way: "I was deeply bothered that LGBT people were invisible in Latvia" (interview no. 138). Like her, many LGBT people were appalled by the

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[1] Jeffrey Weeks (2015, 47) writes that "by coming out, people could begin to show the world that they existed, but as important it would show other lesbians and gay men that they were not alone, that through coming out all could come together, and construct new narratives about who and what they were."

first LGBT Pride parade in Riga, in 2005, which was a "huge, violent disaster, with counterprotesters outnumbering protesters ten to one" (interview no. 138). In the winter of 2006, along with fifteen other activists, she established an organization called Mozaika, which lobbied the Open Society Foundations for funding to organize campaigns of socio-legal recognition, including subsequent Pride parades in the Baltic states. The Mozaika activists are examples of *rooted cosmopolitans*, individuals and groups who carry out their activities by maintaining ties within transnational networks and to other countries, while remaining deeply connected to their societies of origin (della Porta and Tarrow 2005, 237). But the arrows run both ways. Interpersonal visibility is also important for mobilization in states that lead on LGBT rights. When the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights (RFSL) organizes to send LGBT youth to the Riga Pride, they wish not only to make the issue more visible in Latvia but also to motivate apathetic youth at home in Sweden by showing them that anti-LGBT prejudices are "a serious problem" (interview no. 138).

In sum, visibility can trigger clandestine groups to rise up and tap into their latent movement potential. Verta Taylor (1989) has called such groups "movements in abeyance" because they have the potential to mobilize under the right conditions, when new opportunities arise. In what follows, I suggest that these opportunities are often transnational in contemporary European politics. First, though, I elaborate on the political potential of moving a once private issue into the public sphere. Through this transitional dimension, norm visibility affects in-group dynamics by making members visible to each other across multiple domestic contexts. I argue that the fact that LGBT groups in some of the most unexpected places have found the ability to assert themselves and to formulate demands of their societies and states supports norm visibility's transformative transnational effect.

Being seen by state and society

On June 27, 1969, officers from Manhattan's Sixth Precinct raided the Stonewall Inn, an LGBT bar on Christopher Street in New York City. Unlike those previously subject to such routine raids, patrons of the bar fought back, capturing the community's attention and giving rise to a long-repressed subculture that had established covert networks in abeyance. Events like Stonewall and the gay rights demonstrations at Independence Hall in Philadelphia each July 4 from 1965 to 1969 greatly amplified the public nature of gay activism and the public visibility of

sexual minorities.[2] The Gay Liberation Front that emerged as a result was paramount in redefining the experience of coming out as a repertoire for sociopolitical change – both in the United States and in Europe. What was once an isolating and atomized individual experience shifted to the public sphere (D'Emilio 1998). The European and American leadership of the postwar Homophile Movement of the 1950s and 1960s had, to a much lesser degree, engaged the issue publically, but they rarely advised their constituents to do so. On both continents, post-Stonewall gay liberation politics went much further. Its understanding of coming out, according to John D'Emilio, was the:

open avowal of one's sexual identity, whether at work, at school, at home, or before television cameras, [that] symbolized the shedding of the self-hatred that gay men and women internalized … [The act] quintessentially expressed the fusion of the personal and political that the radicalism of the late 1960s exalted. Coming out also posed as the key strategy for building a movement. Its impact on an individual was often cathartic. The exhilaration and anger that surfaced when men and women stepped through the fear of discovery propelled them into political activity. Moreover, when lesbians and homosexuals came out, they crossed a critical dividing line. They relinquished their invisibility, made themselves vulnerable to attack, and acquired an investment in the success of the movement in a way that mere adherence to a political line could never accomplish. Visible lesbians and gay men also served as magnets that drew others to them. Furthermore, once out of the closet, they could not easily fade back in. Coming out provided gay liberation with an army of permanent enlistees. (1998, 235–6)

By the beginning of the 1980s, the public visibility of gay liberation had done wonders for the movement, both fueling organizational capacity and increasing the numbers of mobilized participants. "In a relatively short time, gay liberation achieved the goal that had eluded homophile leaders for two decades – the active involvement of large numbers of homosexuals and lesbians in their own emancipation effort" (D'Emilio 1998, 238). Modern LGBT movements may not retain the radical politics of gay liberation, but they have kept at their core the profoundly political act of coming out, which makes visibility an end and a means for changing the personal and collective experience of gay and lesbian people. Pride marches and parades are at the center of this collective coming out process, occupying the public space in resistance to heteronormativity. Still today, European LGBT activists refer to Pride as "more political, more

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[2] It is important to emphasize that change was already afoot before Stonewall, even if the riots in New York are remembered as the most symbolic representation of that change (Weeks 2015).

aggressive, more visible than other cultural events" (interview no. 119; see also Carlson-Rainer 2015). Others elaborated that "[G]ay pride is powerful because it leads to visibility. 'LGBT' becomes a key topic after Pride, as discourse and media attention begin to happen" (panel no. 205).

Simultaneously with Stonewall and the formation of the Gay Liberation Front in the United States, other radical groups were created in contexts as diverse as Australia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, and the Netherlands (Jackson 2015, 41; Rimmerman 2014). In Paris, the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire staged a public demonstration in 1971, just a year after the premier gay pride march down the streets of Greenwich Village in Manhattan. In West Germany, gay action groups emerged following Rosa von Praunheim's 1971 film, *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist Pervers, sondern die Situation in der er lebt* (Not the Homosexual is Perverse, But the Society in which He Lives). In 1972, they staged the first "gay demo" in provincial Munster (Griffiths 2015).[3] Building on a long history of homophile activism in Europe, gay liberation supported a simple but powerful idea: that sexuality itself must be visible – a matter of public, not just private, concern – before it can serve as a basis for mobilization.

Indeed, the public visibility of LGBT norms is built on the foundation of a ripe history of activism in Europe, beginning when Magnus Hirschfeld founded the Weltliga für Sexualreform (World League for Sexual Reform) in Germany in 1928.[4] While persecution and repression during the Third Reich destroyed such LGBT organizing (except in neutral Switzerland) and the little visibility that had been attained, a new wave of activism, called the "homophile movement," would flourish after 1945.[5] The homophile movement existed amidst a challenging period of Cold War politics, including active antigay policing and surveillance. Nonetheless, it developed and maintained the movement's characteristically transnational

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[3] In later decades, organizational models of activism in response to the AIDS epidemic – mainly those of the Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACT UP – similarly spread around the world from their center in the United States (Broqua 2015).

[4] While visibility has changed over the decades, and took new meaning after Stonewall, other forms of coming out existed in pre-WWII metropolitan areas such as New York, Amsterdam and Berlin. Then, coming out referred to an initiation into the gay world, though there remained a pattern of wearing a double-mask in society at large. George Chauncey's (1994, 7) description of the formal presentation of gay men at drag balls in New York City is one of the best examples of coming out in the pre-WWII years.

[5] WWII gave many homosexual military men mobility, furthering interpersonal visibility by offering an escape from life rooted in family structures (Chauncey 1994).

features, connecting activists in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom (Rupp 2011).[6] As noted earlier in this chapter, this more clandestine and private – though not timid – activism would become increasingly public in the late 1960s and 1970s. Formal transnational networking ties thus started in the 1940s and multiplied in the 1970s. The early objectives were both to advance the human rights agenda and to serve as networks of solidarity in times of difficulty.

In 1978, following gay liberation activism, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA), called the International Gay Association until 1986, was founded in Coventry, United Kingdom (Paternotte 2012). ILGA's founders were oriented toward European frameworks from the start, recognizing that they could provide a fruitful venue for their activism and a possible pressure point through which to influence reluctant states to address gay rights. In many cases, domestic movements for LGBT rights were impotent, even while a handful of other European states were paving the way forward in some domains of lesbian and gay rights. This imbalance caused great frustration among gay and lesbian activists in Europe, many of whom saw their situation as shared. In response, these movement actors envisioned a role for the EU on LGBT rights before the EU itself had a social mandate, as David Paternotte and I have argued (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014). The view among these multinational activists that supranational institutions could serve as a venue for minority rights politicking has proven to be both farsighted and revolutionary for LGBT rights politics in the European polity.

As I elaborate in Chapter 3, the transnational movement has targeted European institutions (the EU, the CoE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) ever since. This tactic has further enhanced the public visibility of LGBT rights and multiplied the presence of LGBT rights groups across the continent. In 2010 ILGA-Europe – funded predominantly by the European Commission and the largest and richest of ILGA-International's six regional organizations – counted 291 member organizations. The idea, or imagination, of contemporary Europe as LGBT-friendly is itself an evolutionary process, built on the interaction between these movements and supranational institutions. This

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[6] The Netherlands replaced Germany as a central node in the 1950s, due largely to the active role played by a Dutch organization, inconspicuously named the Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum (COC, Center for Culture and Leisure), as well as to the annual meetings organized by the International Committee for Sexual Equality (ICSE).

relationship – between LGBT rights and the idea of Europe – has become increasingly pronounced and further cemented as activists in new-adopter states take the EU flag with them to protest for LGBT rights, framing their struggle in terms of European democratic values and human rights (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014). In turn, European institutions play a central role in this process by legitimating the norm and signaling to states and societies how to behave "appropriately." In this sense, the EU has come to play an important institutional role in furthering the publicness of the norm's visibility. The movement and its complex relationship with political institutions explains much about where visibility originates and how institutions have come to adopt it.

While visibility took root in many European states, the politics that surround the idea were far from uniform across the European continent, especially on the eastern half of the Iron Curtain. This continental divide at least partly reflects the fact that some European states defined the issue earlier than others through developments that produced visibility, such as the 1960–70s sexual revolution, including gay liberation, and the politicization of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s (Chetaille 2011, 122–3; Owczarzak 2009); with *politicization* referring to "making previously apolitical matters political" (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, 139–40). While fears about coming out exist in every EU member state, several interviewees argued that it is more difficult to come out in a context like Poland's, where surveys carried out in 2000 found that only 10 percent of Poles claimed to have ever encountered a gay person (interview no. 9). Similarly, an Estonian activist explains:

In Estonia our goals are to generate visibility. The problem is that we [LGBT people] have no role models, no open politicians, and not even the Social Democrats have a clear stance on the issue. This is why we have to find the new sources for visibility. Visibility leads to debate, and even if that debate is at first hateful, it gets us over the hump. Through it we learn how to talk about sexuality as a society. (interview no. 105)

    In societies where LGBT people are mostly invisible, it is also not costly for state and societal authorities to target LGBT people for their own political gain, because such actors can assume that none of their constituents are LGBT. Public visibility reveals such falsity, because it sheds light on local LGBT people. Transnational channels of visibility also signal that substantial change is indeed possible and mobilize new potential activists. The European context of social sanctions changes standards of conduct and connects LGBT actors across states with differing degrees of LGBT

visibility. While the extent of change depends on both international and domestic normative structures, in states that have recently begun learning about the norm, widespread public visibility depends especially on transnational interactions.

How visibility brings about change

To theorize that the visibility of international norms can lead to social and legal change, I draw from evidence in social psychology suggesting that engagement can lead to a reduction in prejudice among individuals. This research makes clear that conditions of invisibility, such as those I described in preaccession Estonia and Poland, are not conducive to change. According to one activist in Warsaw, "The problem in Poland at the time of EU accession was that no one was coming out – everyone stayed in their closets. In terms of socialization, there is a strong correlation between knowing a gay person and being agreeable toward gay rights" (interview no. 9). Indeed, studies have repeatedly found that respondents who know at least one person in their in-group with friendship ties to an out-group member report decreased levels of prejudice toward that out-group (Wright *et al.* 1997). Gordon Allport's (1954) seminal contact hypothesis rested on this same idea: interactions among different groups could change intergroup relations by leading to positive perceptions of the other. In addition, a long tradition of research finds support for the negative relationship between contact and prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). The finding is especially true under conditions of cooperation, common goals, and institutional support, some of which the "idea of Europe" provides. While these studies usually measure change at the individual level, there is also evidence for the understudied effect of contact on societal change (Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux 2005). Several studies have found that a positive interaction, whether direct or imagined, is more likely to reduce prejudice than a neutral one (Stathi and Crisp 2008).[7] Yet, psychologists note that anxiety – or perceived threat – is likely to lessen after contact, as adopters "come to realize they have

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[7] Recent experiments show that even imagined interactions, if they are positive, can significantly reduce negative feelings toward unfamiliar out-groups (Crisp and Turner 2009; Mazziotta, Mummendey, and Wright 2011). These findings hold for studies of interactions between heterosexual and homosexual groups, with heterosexual participants displaying more positive attitudes and fewer stereotypes about gay people after imagining an interaction (Turner, Crisp, and Lambert 2007). Imagined contact is entirely cognitive, referring only to an image or story of interaction.

nothing to fear from such interactions" (Crisp and Turner 2009, 235).[8]
Learning through interaction is a central mechanism for change because
it reduces the level of threat associated with the out-group.

Through social and political channels across borders, transnational
movements play a role in socialization by linking the LGBT norm to
membership in modern Europe, by setting rules of compliance, and by
dispensing ideas and images about LGBT people that make them visible.
As a Lithuanian respondent emphasized, "Litigation at home is long
and cumbersome, but discourse is changing. A discourse exists and it is
growing. Young Lithuanians might not have known there was a commu-
nity out there, but now they hear about [same-sex] marriage because of
what's going on in Brussels" (interview no. 144). A Portuguese respond-
ent described a related transnational process of legitimization, "Discourse
itself leads to change. If politicians – be they in Brussels or at home –
support it rhetorically, it influences what becomes acceptable" (interview
no. 100). The European polity is effectual in this regard, in that it shifts
the dynamics of movement out of the nation state, which historically
has a long history of silencing LGBT people (Weeks 2000). Providing a
new platform for visibility can engage publics and governments at home,
when the channels of visibility exist.

  While psychological research supports the general theory that visibil-
ity, through interaction, produces change, psychological studies are con-
fined to laboratories, devoid of politics, and removed from the relational
ties between actors across states. My argument moves beyond cognitive
mechanisms and takes into account the fact that similar interventions,
such as the ones described in psychological experiments, mean different
things in various contexts. The support of institutions, law, or custom can
have a strong effect on individual shifts in prejudice – and they make it
possible for activists to engage a politics of visibility at home (a point that
I elaborate on later in this chapter).[9]

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[8] Richard Crisp and Rhiannon Turner (2009, 234) point out that a "positive tone is also
important to guard against a possible negative tone, which might emerge if the partici-
pants are left to their own devices." The authors go on to note that participants are left to
their own devices under conditions of segregation, or arguably under conditions of invis-
ibility. Anxiety about interaction, in which an in-group associates threat with the "other,"
"can arise when there has been minimal previous contact" (Crisp and Turner 2009, 235).

[9] As Crisp and Turner (2009, 232) suggest in their call for future research, "Contact can
only work where the opportunity for contact exists." Thus, as Pettigrew also argues,
"institutional and societal norms structure the form and effects of contact situations"
and "societal norms of discrimination [can] poison intergroup contact." Referring to a

Acknowledging that these norms are contested requires us to rethink the traditional set of mechanisms that drive diffusion processes. Constructivist scholars highlight the mechanisms of argument and persuasion to explain political and social outcomes. The mechanism of argument has to do with the ongoing discourse between norm entrepreneurs and followers, which fosters shared understandings. The mechanism of persuasion has to do with the expectation to conform to international, universalistic, liberal values – interactions with international society socialize states to alter policies and practices (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998).[10] I argue that the effectiveness of these cognitive mechanisms of appropriateness is limited when transnationally embedded domestic LGBT organizations do not exist to make the issue visible and clearly interpret it. Deliberative mechanisms of diffusion are complicated when the moral hierarchy between contending norms is difficult for states and societies to establish. I deal with these shortcomings by bridging cognitive mechanisms (framing, learning, and deliberation) with relational ones (norm brokerage and sociopolitical channels of visibility), and by theorizing cases of norm rejection and contending norms.

The European polity furthers norm visibility by connecting states through channels of social information and political rules, as well as by connecting LGBT actors across states to help broker and interpret the norm. Put simply, transnational and international channels of visibility provide for interaction among social actors that leads to a change of ideas.[11] Through mechanisms of learning and deliberation,

study during apartheid in South Africa, he notes that "even there, modest improvements emerged in white attitudes toward their neighbors of color. Yet the larger social context constrained these effects. Alternatively, when a society embraces intergroup harmony, equal-status contact between groups is no longer subversive. Normative support makes attainment of other optimal conditions far easier" (1998, 79).

[10] Socialization is "a process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community"; it implies "that an agent switches from a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness" (Checkel 2005, 804). One type of socialization is role playing, whereby actors learn what is appropriate and behave accordingly. A second type involves actors adopting the interests and identity of the community – in such a case *taken-for-grantedness* replaces instrumental calculation.

[11] I use the customary definitions for transnational and international: I think of *transnational* relations as involving the cross-border activities of nonstate actors. Nonstate actors can include, for example, activists, NGOs, religious actors, multinational corporations, and terrorism rebels. *International* relations involve the activities between states or between states and international institutions. While most of the channels I refer to are transnational, they were often facilitated by processes of political internationalization (e.g. increased mobility via the EU's Schengen Treaty) and continue to be supported

these ideational changes can influence the ways the legal and social structures of the state adopt the norm. Other mechanisms of European institutional influence, such as pressures of competition and political sanction via hard law, also play a role, but the following analyses will demonstrate that these mechanisms are more limited in their ability to produce change. The mechanisms most central to this argument are social, and they include:

- *Norm brokerage:* the process by which actors endowed with local knowledge mediate between often-divergent new international norms and domestic norms. Norm brokers aid diffusion by framing the international elements of the norm – in a domestically familiar discourse – so that they resonate with the domestic traditions of the society. They also connect disparate actors across contexts to politicize and draw external attention to the domestic situations of LGBT people.[12]
- *Framing:* the process of "presenting and packaging ideas" to fashion meanings for a given audience (Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002, 10; see also Snow and Benford 1992).
- *Deliberation:* the communicative and thought processes by which groups (subnational, national, and transnational) weigh and debate conflicting norms after new norms become visible (cf. Risse 2000).
- *Learning:* the process by which individuals and communities reassess their fundamental beliefs, values, and ways of doing things through interacting with new ideas and norms. Learning can refer to the transfer of knowledge between international organizations, governments, societies, and individuals, and it includes both simple learning, which leads to instrumental change, and complex learning, which leads to change in beliefs.[13]

These mechanisms of socialization can have a transformative effect on prevailing societal behaviors and state institutions by making international norms visible. They come together to prime the contexts for

by international channels between state and international institutions. For simplicity, I occasionally use the terms *transnational channels* or *channels* to refer collectively to transnational and international channels. I do this especially when I contrast the *international/transnational* with the *domestic*.

[12] The first part of my definition of brokerage is a slight variation of Sidney Tarrow's (2005b) emphasis on the brokers who connect actors in different contexts.

[13] My broad definition of learning draws upon a vast literature on processes of learning, both individual and collective (Deutsch 1963; Haas 1991), and both complex and simple (Checkel 2005; Zito 2009).

diffusion by signaling to society and state that they (as publics and governments) must react to the norm. For the LGBT norm to resonate in various states, it helps for the issue to be clearly associated with Europe and be visible within the domestic contexts of the state. In this dimension, new member states vary in important ways. While European directives set a minimal hard-law standard,[14] I find the diffusion of the issue beyond these basic measures relies largely on both the extent to which transnational channels make the issue visible and on the effectiveness of transnational actors who identify the issue as one of singular importance to membership in modern Europe.

Norm brokers help the state and individuals in society give meaning to the issue – which constitutes a new idea in many of the domestic spheres analyzed – by framing the LGBT norm as a European value of human rights. Not only do they help states and societies, more broadly, to interpret international information, they also help to frame that information in ways that resonate in local contexts (Hafner-Burton 2013, 5). In my conceptualization, brokers connect domestic LGBT organizations to a transnational network of actors and to European institutions. Ryan Thoreson (2014) also speaks of the important role of brokers in transnational LGBT activism, taking us a long way in understanding the intricacies of how LGBT activism is negotiated and campaigned for across borders. My related concept of *norm brokers* is slightly different, in that I place emphasis on the translation of the international to the local and vice versa. I am thus focused on both domestic organizations that are transnationally embedded – that is, doing the groundwork in their own local contexts – and on the actors within external organizations like ILGA-Europe. Thus, brokers are not only the umbrella organizations that connect disparate actors, they are also domestic LGBT groups and rooted cosmopolitans who frame and graft international scripts to make them fit specific domestic contexts.

The premise of a visibility argument is that, for states and societies to understand how to "behave appropriately," they must see the norm and receive cues about how to interpret it. Societies must come to understand – often through the brokerage and deliberation spurred by contestation – how the universal elements of the norm connect to their

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[14] The EU's directives on anti-discrimination reflect the late emergence of LGBT issues in the international rights revolution. Sexual orientation, along with disability, is protected in only one category (employment), compared to four for race (employment, social protection, social advantages, and access to goods and services) and two for gender (employment and access to goods and services).

own, local understandings of self. In the next two sections, I posit that norm visibility is a transnational process.

Channels of visibility

Drawing from the contentious politics literature, I argue that the nature of the channels between the originator and the receiver of a social norm influences diffusion (Givan, Roberts, and Soule 2010).[15] Channels can be relational (*direct*) or non-relational (*indirect*), in that they are direct and personal, indirect and impersonal, or brokered by institutions or organizations (Tarrow 2005b). Within direct channels, ideas diffuse most rapidly to new European states with domestic LGBT rights activists who are in close and frequent contact with their counterparts in leading European states. Relational ties to transnational organizations provide domestic LGBT groups with credibility, funding, and expertise, legitimizing domestic political and social campaigns to make the issue visible in their respective domestic contexts. More resource-rich transnational LGBT organizations can set the agenda around certain functional goals and help certain issues to get transnational traction (Carpenter 2011, 72). The actors most effective at engendering change in this case are domestic LGBT rights organizations that can command transnational resources from first-mover states. Transnational organizations provide resources that domestic actors are then able to use to enhance visibility by organizing demonstrations, engaging the press, lobbying government, and demanding outside intervention when necessary. In turn, transnational activism leads to deliberation and social learning in the target state.

State compliance

Figure 2.1 illustrates three important types of channels for state compliance. The presence of local LGBT actors who are embedded in transnational networks makes the norm visible by sending signals to state and society. As the right side of Figure 2.1 shows, visibility is higher in contexts with transnationally embedded actors – norm brokers – who send strong and clear signals with their presence and information on how to approach

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[15] Sarah Soule (2004a) isolates four attributes required for diffusion: a *transmitter*, an *adopter*, an *innovation*, and a *channel* that passes the innovation from transmitter to adopter. In my case, the *transmitters* are transnational LGBT organizations in leading European states, the *adopters* are societies and states, the *innovation* is the LGBT rights norm, and the *channels* are networks of activists and channels of social transnationalization and political internationalization.
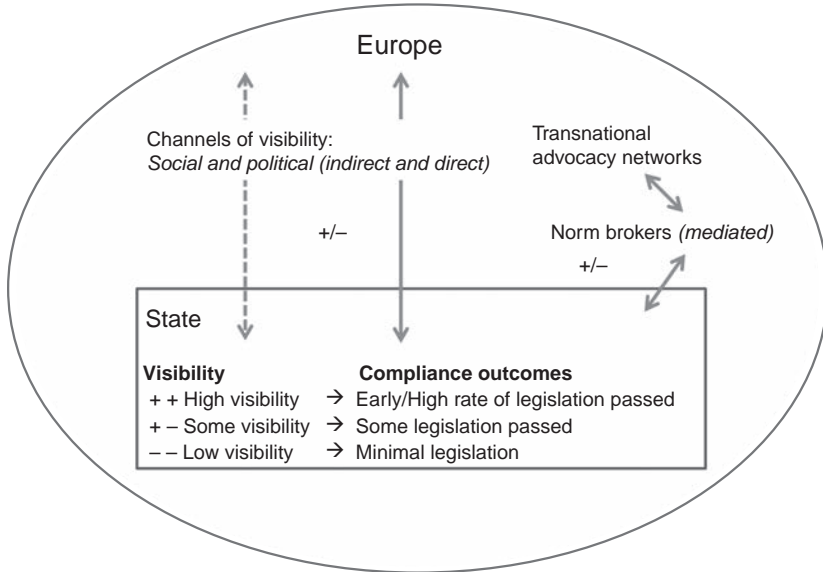
FIGURE 2.1. (In)direct and mediated channels of norm diffusion and compliance outcomes.
Note: + (channel exists), – (channel does not exist).

the issue. Political authorities respond to grievances most in cases where movements can send strong signals, in terms of their presence and strength in numbers (Gillion 2013; Lohmann 1993). Social movement actors can help state authorities interpret messages. I find that especially when they are embedded in transnational networks, European LGBT groups disperse guidelines and rules of best practice that converge to send clear and strong signals.[16] In addition, transnationally linked LGBT rights groups mediate diffusion when they act as brokers connecting disparate activists and grafting international ideas to domestic ones, which accelerates the diffusion of information and frames the message appropriately – especially when confronted with domestic resistance. They often guide this

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[16] Conor O'Dwyer and Katrina Schwartz's (2010) excellent work correctly privileges the influence of the socialization mechanisms of Europeanization in the realm of LGBT rights in their case studies of Poland and Latvia. However, they are somewhat indifferent to the importance of transnational advocacy networks in this process. Their brief mention of the ILGA-Europe refers to the organization as a small NGO in Brussels, sidestepping its importance as an instigator of social change. As Chapter 3 demonstrates in detail, it is also the work of a wide network of norm entrepreneurs that helps establish the mechanisms of social change that O'Dwyer and Schwartz find to be important.

process of transnationalization by "appeal[ing] to the values consistent with the self-concept of [local] individuals and supported by their important reference groups" (Herek 2004, 13). This mediation is a necessary step, because when a society – especially one in which LGBT people are invisible – is left to its own devices to interpret new contentious ideas, its reactions will tend to be more negative (Pettigrew 1998, 79).

Also shown in Figure 2.1, the visibility of the LGBT rights norm also diffuses through political and social channels (both relational and non-relational) between first-mover and new-adopter states. First, the extent of relational ties between the state and international organizations – what I refer to as *political channels* – furthers norm visibility. These relational ties include state membership in international organizations, the signing of bi- and multilateral treaties, the number of host embassies and high commissions, and involvement in United Nations (UN) peace missions (Dreher, Gaston, and Martens 2008). Second, drawing on Sarah Soule (2004a) and David Strang and John Meyer (1993), I also identify in Figure 2.1 two mechanisms of indirect diffusion that lead to norm visibility, which I call *social channels*: (1) a sense of shared political identification between adopter and transmitter; and (2) the presence of social information flows that broadcast the issues of the transmitter to potential adopters. These international and transnational channels prime the contexts by providing legitimacy and scripts for interpretation of the issue, both of which are critical for the norm brokers trying to make their case. They help bring states and societies into contact with LGBT people.

Norm brokers are better able to mobilize and to credibly diffuse their arguments in an environment where the visibility of the issue has been fostered by these channels. It is under these conditions of visibility that actors can harness ideas and adapt them to manufacture resonance in their domestic contexts, even when the ideas did not previously have local appeal. A visibility argument thus dovetails with the research of social problems theorists, who emphasize that issue salience leads to public and social action (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). The visibility of a problem – or the construction of LGBT rights as a problem – explains much about the timing of state actions to combat homophobia, despite the persistent marginalization of sexual minorities previously.

In sum, direct and indirect channels of visibility prime the domestic contexts by introducing images and ideas about the LGBT norm to the state. If domestic LGBT organizations become transnationally linked to organizations in leading states, they fuel domestic norm visibility, in large

part through engaging state and societal institutions (e.g. by lobbying the state, staging demonstrations, and attracting media attention). They act as brokers between the movement and the state, framing and interpreting the norm to make it fit locally. Varying degrees of visibility lead to diverse outcomes in regard to state recognition of the norm.

Contestation: perceiving threat, internalizing new norms

What we know about mediated, direct, and indirect channels of norm diffusion offers plausible concepts and mechanisms for understanding the spread of new ideas from one state to another, but the contentious element of the LGBT rights norm requires us to pay special attention to resistance in the domestic realm.[17] My theoretical framework also deals with cases of diffusion that fuel an active social opposition, such as the mobilization of resistance movements that challenge and externalize the positions endorsed by proponents of LGBT rights. The argument thus requires expanding the pool of usual actors and rethinking what part of the domestic context matters for diffusing contentious norms. In particular, studies often conceptualize transnational actors as "good" norm entrepreneurs and overlook contention in the domestic sphere.[18] At the

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[17] Robert Benford and David Snow (1999) suggest four agential relationships: (1) *reciprocation*: cases of diffusion in which both the transmitter and the adopter favor the item being diffused; (2) *adaptation*: cases with an active/copying adopter and a passive transmitter; (3) *accommodation:* cases of diffusion in which the transmitter promotes the diffusion of a foreign practice by tailoring it to the needs of a passive adopter; and (4) *simple contagion*: cases in which neither party wants to diffuse the innovation. Often the adopter is welcoming or passive. Above, I am also describing as adopters larger social entities who are in fact resistant to the innovation. I am thus also interested in a relationship not suggested by Benford and Snow: active transmitter, resistant adopter.

[18] International relations theories of diffusion are largely silent about such countermovements as an element of domestic and transnational opportunity structures, which explains why international norms that elicit active resistance have received so little scholarly attention. As one critic put it, much of the research "overestimate[s] diffusion to the domestic level and underestimate[s] possible domestic conflict between norms" (Landolt 2004, 585). Those scholars who are sensitive to the misfit between the international and domestic often study socially noncontentious issues (Acharya 2004). However, it is commonly difficult to make LGBT rights norms congruent with local beliefs (Manalansan 1995), which is why framing the issue as one of European standards becomes an attractive tool at the disposal of transnational activists. Finally, scholars of transnationalism typically addressed the "common good" (Risse-Kappen 1995), which says little about the many transnational issues that deal with minority rights. This omission is critical, because minorities, arguably more than others, have incentives to look beyond their states to join forces with those who share a common identity.

national level, the actors relevant to diffusion go far beyond state elites to include societal actors and countermovements. In the case of LGBT rights, pro- and anti-LGBT groups are mutually constitutive because they exist partly on their own initiative and partly as a response to opposing actors (Fetner 2008). They compete to define the nation according to their perceptions of what is appropriate and legitimate in their particular society.

This second element of my theoretical framework thus takes into consideration the domestic political and social contexts in which actors operate and how these contexts affect the diffusion and reception of ideas. For example, how might the Catholic Polish context mediate the influence of a well-networked LGBT organization and active sociopolitical channels that affirm LGBT rights? Not all societies will find the imported norm equally threatening, depending on the perception and legitimacy of social institutions within the domestic context. As such, we must not view states as undifferentiated rational actors. Instead, their varied state and national identities emerge "from their interaction with different social environments, both domestic and international" (Katzenstein 1995, 92).

While states increasingly do nod to the LGBT norm by complying with some level of legislation, the process of internalization is more complex.[19] The domestic context in which individuals are socialized mediates the ability of societies to internalize international norms. Different societies associate different levels of threat with the LGBT norm, and threat perception facilitates the interaction between domestic and international norms. I define *threat* as the anticipation of danger to a set of values that defines a group, and *perception* as the process of apprehending by means of the senses.[20] It is important to note that these definitions assume that threat can have a symbolic value at the collective level, in that threat is socially constructed through discourse among political authorities and publics (C. O. Meyer 2009). Drawing on Carl Schmitt's (1996) 1932 thesis, Peter Katzenstein (2003, 736) argues that:

conceptions of identity, of self versus other, are always part of threat perceptions. The norms and identities that trigger different threat perceptions are not merely

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[19] Internalization must also take into account a distinction between state and national identities. Whereas state identities "are primarily external; they describe the actions of governments in a society of states," national identities "are primarily internal; they describe the processes by which mass publics acquire, modify, and forget their collective identities" (Katzenstein 1997, 20).

[20] This international relations definition can be related to the social movement literature's definition of threat, where it "denotes the probability that existing benefits will be taken away or new harms inflicted if challenging groups fail to act collectively" (Almeida 2003).

derivative of material capabilities … The threat perceptions of groups and states are embedded instead in systems of meaning that affect what is and what is not defined as a threat.

My sociological interpretation of perceived threat stipulates that social understandings within the domestic realm define the way state actors respond to international pressures (Andrews 1975, 524–35). Thus, similarly strong channels of LGBT visibility will have differing effects depending on the level of threat that societies attribute to the norm. I find that the degree to which the LGBT norm is perceived as a threat is at its highest in domestic contexts in which religion is deeply embedded in the national identity.[21] Where this religious-nationalist relationship exists, contending actors can better cast external LGBT rights norms as threatening.

The strength and legitimacy of competing (heteronormative versus LGBT rights) norms in distinct domestic environments explain the variation in the internalization trajectories of LGBT norms. Due to the religious and national basis of much LGBT rights denial, anti-LGBT rights mobilization is politically effective when narratives of nation hinge on religious identity, because sexual politics then become indirectly linked with nationalism. Take, for example, the cultural paradigm that Russian President Putin advocates, which directly juxtaposes "traditional" values of nation and religion with "alien" norms of homosexuality – a trope he and other Russian leaders have used to justify political maneuvers ranging from a domestic "gay propaganda" ban to opposing intensified Ukraine–EU relations (Riabov and Riabova 2014). In this sense, societies and social groups define their domestic identity and use this identity to evaluate and determine which outside norms are acceptable to internalize (Rousseau 2006, 211). Societies thus assign different levels of threat to the norm import, depending on how domestic social institutions perceive it. The EU's standards of appropriate behavior on LGBT rights norms are perceived as outside imposition to some societies and welcome modernity to others. As the example above illustrates, I do not argue simply that historically religious states will oppose the norm; Russian leaders link

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[21] This concept builds on the notion that "the normative and organizational arrangements which form the 'state,' structure society, and link the two in the polity" influences the availability of channels for transnational actors to enter the political realm, and the ability of these actors to form winning coalitions that change policy (Risse-Kappen 1995, 6; see also Evangelista 1999). However, for processes of internalization, the emphasis here is on normative structures that facilitate legitimacy, as opposed to state structure, conceived of as central versus fragmented governance models.

religious values and national identity even though Russia has not been a religious state in recent history. In many cases, religious institutions lose their clout to hinder the societal internationalization of LGBT norms: "In recent Estonian politics, [for example,] religious groups tried to get their message across but they were simply not legitimate" (interview no. 105). Instead, I find that traditionalist religious scripts are only legitimate – and subsequently effective – if they are tied to the popular nation.

Religious institutions – when they have mobilized to challenge EU pressures on behalf of LGBT rights – have varying degrees of social legitimacy in different states, and cannot always frame the "external" LGBT norms as threatening to the national identity of the state. Whereas in some Catholic cases, for example, the church has political authority and has been successful in fueling resistance and framing a message of threat to resonate with popular beliefs (e.g. Poland, Lithuania, and, until the turn of the century, Ireland), in other plausible cases it has not (e.g. the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Spain). In the latter cases, LGBT groups, using their European frames, found earlier success. To explain this difference, I demonstrate that the church's political and moral authority depends on its history as a political actor in the domestic realm. In Poland, the Catholic Church, as a champion of the Solidarity movement, created a role for itself as an autonomous, progressive, moral entrepreneur with deep ties to the popular nation. In contrast, the Slovenians linked the Catholic Church to Nazi German occupation, the Czechs and Slovaks linked it to state socialism in Czechoslovakia, and the Spaniards linked it to Franco's regime in Spain. Strong resistance is less likely in states where the church fell on the "wrong" side of democratic transition and lost its political authority as a constitutive part of national identity.

Societal internalization

In sum, state and societal responses to European norms concerning LGBT rights developed differently, depending on levels of the LGBT norm's visibility and on the different domestic perceptions of threat associated with the norm. Figure 2.2 (process) and Figure 2.3 (outcomes) predict a set of internalization outcomes depending on norm visibility and the level of threat perception. Since norm visibility is a function of both transnational and domestic factors, one can anticipate an initial backlash in many new-adopter states, as they are cases where the issue is made more visible from the periphery.

A *Type I process* results in minimal change. Few channels of visibility in states with low perceived threat will have little deliberation and minimal
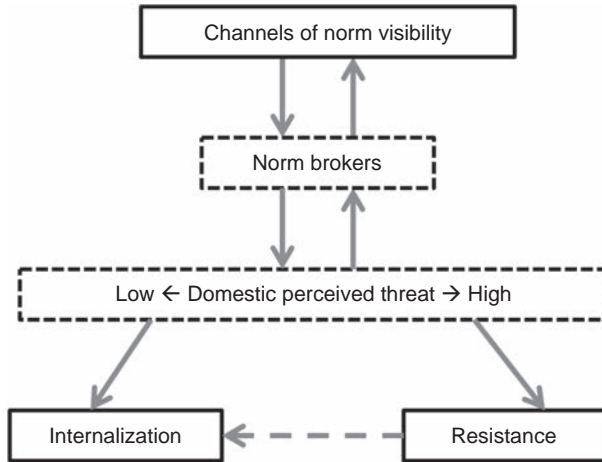
FIGURE 2.2. Processes of internalization.

FIGURE 2.3. Internalization outcomes based on conditions of threat and channels of visibility.

change. A *Type II process* results in internalization and societal attitudes improve. In this case, the LGBT norm generates deliberation once visible. Norm brokers illuminate historical narrations of LGBT people in their respective countries, leading to learning. International ideas of democratic responsibility/human rights resonate and states steadily conform to the standards of a community to which they belong. A *Type III process* results in resistance and societal attitudes worsen. Here we can expect the intensification of anti-LGBT politics by some religious and nationalist sectors of society that can take advantage of LGBT invisibility by targeting the group for political gain. Since few channels of visibility exist, a discourse of threat goes unchecked. Finally, a *Type IV process* results in cautious internalization after a period of resistance and social attitudes eventually improve. In this case, norm brokers call attention to resistance, and transnational and international attention heightens, fueling active

deliberation in the target state. This process of contestation suggests a strategic relationship, where resistance leads to more visibility – and ultimately learning – if norm brokers exist.

In sum, Figure 2.3 reasserts the importance of strong transnationally connected domestic actors to broker and frame the message according to context. Whereas high levels of perceived threat foster active resistance, in the long run that resistance is only effective if the presence of transnational channels of visibility in the domestic realm is weak. Where norm brokers have existed, they have channeled international EU attention, which has led to the deployment of additional outside pressures on states for breaching appropriate standards. Ironically, the mobilization of anti-LGBT groups creates a type of visibility on its own, which in many cases has proved to work against their cause.[22] Activists repeatedly noted that, in a context such as Europe's, they preferred backlash to silence because the former made LGBT people visible and their rights politically salient (cf. spiral model, Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 2013). Indeed, a recurrent theme of the study was that resistance opens doors for internalization. In cases as varied as Ukraine (outside of the EU) and the United Kingdom, LGBT organizations reported that "the [LGBT] issue became more visible because of the homophobic rhetoric of politicians," "the religious right would campaign and speak out heavily against it whilst the general public generally became in favor," and "improved attitudes followed an initial backlash in attitudes when conservative parties, antigay movements, and clergy started to organize" (surveys no. 19, 28, and 94). There is thus an interactive relationship between political opportunity and threat (Almeida 2003). Political opportunities can lead to enduring social movement organizations and networks that, when in place, can further fuel the movement if they are faced with threat. However, backlash on its own is not a sufficient condition. Norm brokers need to be present and well networked to draw international attention and reshape the local interpretation of the norm. If the backlash meets LGBT norms without domestic actors to guide the discourse, the deliberation that emerges may fail to localize the issue in an effective way. Chapter 6 presents and discusses the findings of my organizational survey, showing that the large majority of respondents described such Type II or Type IV outcomes.

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[22] As I address in Chapter 6, the church no longer monopolizes anti-LGBT rhetoric during phases of resistance. Instead, the populist far right also adopts an anti-LGBT politics as a central issue to oppose outside influences (e.g. Jobbik in Hungary, or the League of Polish Families in Poland).

I expect that transnational channels, which connect states to each other and to their international community, make norms visible (both in terms of interpersonal and public visibility). This leads to heightened mobilization of movement actors, who frame the norm for a local audience and help to guide deliberation in the domestic sphere. In many cases, states will start complying with the norm by adopting it into their legislative frameworks at this stage. Depending on the level of perceived threat domestically, norm visibility can produce social learning in low-threat contexts. It can provoke contestation in high-threat contexts, especially as state actors start to pass laws that anti-LGBT groups begin to mobilize against. Such resistance leads to heightened public visibility and deliberation. I also expect additional mobilization by norm brokers who channel international attention and support to their cause. In these high-threat contexts, cautious societal learning and internationalization should follow on an extended time horizon. These expectations apply to states embedded in international communities that extend the LGBT norm legitimacy, such as the EU states analyzed here.

Scopes and caveats: the valence of visibility

While my research gives credence to the optimism that proponents of LGBT rights express for change (even in hard cases, like Poland [Chapter 3]), it remains attuned to the struggles they describe in many facets of their work. Just as feminist scholarship has critiqued linear progress narratives, sequential and teleological theory is limited at explaining change related to human rights (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 2013). While the interactive model presented above suggests an analytic sequence, its focus remains on mechanisms of change, which do not depend on a rigid empirical sequence. Instead, I hope that the model describes a framework for the processes involving the introduction of norms, both in terms of transnational channels and domestic structures. While broad visibility is indeed new and different in its attractiveness during the period that I analyze, history reminds us that previous advances for LGBT people have been followed by repression. The *valence of visibility* is thus particularly important; its intrinsic attractiveness or averseness – and, possibly, its helpfulness or harmfulness – is contextual.

Germany is a key example of the visibility of homosexuality making social and political gains that were followed with forceful repression. Wilhelmine Berlin (1871–1918) had a laissez-faire stance toward gay social spaces, such as bars and clubs, and Magnus Hirschfeld freely led a

pathbreaking research initiative on homosexuality, the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre-Komitee (Scientific Humanitarian Committee), starting in 1897. Weimar Berlin (1919–33) was even more of a home to vibrant gay visibility, in the form of political and research organizations and within the arts (especially in literature, film, and music), as Alex Ross (2015, 76) describes:

During the golden years of the Weimar Republic … gays and lesbians achieved an almost dizzying degree of visibility in popular culture. They could see themselves onscreen in films like "Mädchen in Uniform" [Girls in Uniform] and "Different from the Others" – a tale of a gay violinist driven to suicide, with Hirschfeld featured in the supporting role of a wise sexologist. Disdainful representations of gay life were not only lamented but also protested.

Such visibility had remarkable social and political impacts. According to historian Robert Beachy, Germany was at the cusp of a mass movement, and the Reichstag was poised to decriminalize homosexuality in 1929, just as the tremor of the stock market crash threw a final vote out of orbit (2014, 220–40). The rise of Hitler in 1933 extinguished what remained of that visibility and, subsequently, that potential, as narrated so beautifully in Christopher Isherwood's aptly titled novel, *Goodbye to Berlin*. Despite the relative tolerance that visibility had engendered, with a changed institutional environment Germany would in 1935 revise Paragraph 175 of its Criminal Code to more broadly criminalize homosexuality, leading to the internment and deaths of thousands of gay men during the Third Reich. In those times, invisibility became a survival strategy for marginalized people.

Thus, variation in threat perceptions is an important moderating component of this argument. As the example from Germany illustrates, my argument has conditions of institutional and regional scope, in that the marginalized population must have claims to legitimacy from the international community in which the state is embedded. This condition for positive valence is embedded in the concept of norm visibility. While I see great potential for the presence of such norms outside the state, if no norm exists at any level relevant to the state, the valence of visibility may not be attractive. When the Third Reich began, no norms legitimizing LGBT people had yet won standing among political institutions.

At any given time, norm visibility and threat perception play a role in the valence that visibility has for marginalized groups. The valence of visibility also makes certain aspects of the theory work uniquely in the set of EU states I analyze here, which are embedded in a polity that has

bestowed a considerable degree of legitimacy on LGBT rights claims. If a wider authoritative context offers such legitimacy, then visibility is paramount to achieving change in the sociopolitical fabric of the state, even if the process begins with resistance. If a wider authoritative context offers illegitimacy, then both visibility and invisibility become rotating strategies for LGBT activists and their survival. Visibility is deeply dependent on time and place, as Ashley Currier (2012) has argued. For example, the introduction of an LGBT norm has fueled resistance in many African countries, a region in which actors have struggled to frame the norm successfully in the local context. There, many forms of internationalization are seen as "un-African" because they hark of colonial – that is, *external* – imposition (Currier 2012). The "un-African" frame is operative; even if it is ironic, given that British colonialism criminalized homosexuality in much of Africa in the first place, and conservative networks of American evangelicals have played no small part in fomenting and inflating the threat associated with LGBT rights (Bob 2012). By contrast, in Europe transnational actors have an important frame at their disposal: "We are all European." There, Europeanization can at least sometimes be seen as self-reflection and internal learning, not external imposition. Indeed, Estonians are both Estonians and Europeans, just as Swedes are both Swedes and Europeans.

Consequently, the valence of visibility, and ultimately the direction that norm compliance and internalization take, is influenced greatly by the international community in which the state is embedded. For LGBT rights, these international communities vary. With *norm polarization*, a term I borrow from Jonathan Symons and Dennis Altman (2015), different spheres of influence impact LGBT rights and result in starkly different perceptions of the legitimacy of those rights. While Europe (broadly conceived) has become a champion of LGBT rights in the imaginations of many states, Russia has become a vocal opponent of them, using the issue to champion a moral conservatism that purposefully distinguishes Russia from "Europe" and "the West." The Ukraine crisis that began in 2013 illustrates the situation of a state caught between the EU and Russia, where Russian authorities framed the Maidan protesters as "gay" and westward alignment as an abandonment of Ukraine's moral and traditional values. This imaginary "European" or "Western" plot to spread gay rights has led Russian popular commentary to use the term *Gayropa* when referring to Europe – a concept "bound up with a traditional, perceived opposition between Russia and Europe" (Riabov and Riabova 2014). The trope works for some in contemporary Russian geopolitics.

As Alexei Pushkov, the Chairman of the Russian Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee, explained to Ukrainians, turning toward a demasculinized Gayropa would mean "an expansion of the sphere of the so-called gay culture, which has now turned into the official policy of the EU" (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014, 1). In sum, the international communities to which states belong facilitate the valence of visibility, and visibility's effectiveness depends on how easily movements can destabilize the "external" tinge of frames used by the opposition.

Indeed, norm brokers are always aware of the valence of visibility in the ways they frame their cause. This explains why many of my interviewees in new-adopter states approach *transgressive visibility* – visibility that challenges culture head on – cautiously (see also the concept of defiant visibility in Bruce in press). When issues are new, norm brokers are not organizing marches that display naked torsos on floats – scenes we would expect at the Berlin or Madrid pride parades.

Globally, the power of visibility is contingent on time and place, and local movements must determine that time and place for themselves. The same is surely also true for visibility politics on an individual level. While the group process of coming out has the potential to change cultural politics and better lives, that is not to say that all individuals must come out to be "model" LGBT people. Indeed, the often-challenging act of coming out also involves a great deal of privilege that is not equally available to all people. LGBT people are well aware of the risks that can accompany coming out, such as a threat to their safety and losing the support of their social networks, which vary according to context, social situation, and intersectional identities of the individual at hand. In sum, an individual's coming out can be a political matter, but it is always a personal one, one that LGBT people must navigate individually. While this book is about the power inherent in visibility, we might still hope that this very challenging step of coming out – especially on an individual basis – will itself be increasingly less necessary for individuals one day.

For states, my theory proposes that visibility can have a great deal of potential when times are ripe (in terms of the valence some international environments can provide visibility), even if the domestic discourse is not ready. Indeed, visibility can be especially important within states that suppress LGBT rights, if those states are embedded in international communities that champion an LGBT norm. In contemporary times, the international level has offered a venue for legitimization outside of the state,

one that can affect this calculation in favor of visibility. The European activists in this story have the good fortune of readily available political opportunities at the international level, opportunities that the vision of their predecessors in the movement enabled in the first place (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014). These specifications should clarify the theoretical scope of the project, as well as the methodological decisions made to investigate the problem at hand.

Research design and methods

Case selection

I addressed the study's overarching research questions by collecting data on (1) the EU-27 and (2) the case studies of Germany, Poland, and Slovenia. Europe offers the ideal laboratory for testing and refining my theory because of the EU norm to protect sexual minorities and the presence of states on both ends of the "gay friendliness" spectrum. Furthermore, the EU is a very likely case for diffusion (Checkel 1997). The fact that it provides the mechanisms that regularly function to constrain states to conform to international norms makes the varied adoption of LGBT rights all the more fruitful for analysis.

The book uses quantitative methods to test correlations between predictors in all EU member states, and qualitative methods to trace channels of diffusion from Germany and the EU to Poland and Slovenia. Within the first large-*n* set of states, I also analyzed the 2004 and 2007 waves of EU member states (the EU-12) separately, because after 1989 these states experienced greater exposure to advanced norms on homosexuality (originating in Western Europe, the United States, etc.) and all were successful in gaining membership in the EU. Here the EU-12 refers to the new members of the EU, including the ten ex-Communist Bloc countries, plus Cyprus and Malta. As demonstrated by Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.5, on average, these states score markedly lower on rates of acceptance of sexual minorities compared to the pre-2004 EU member states (the EU-15). The new EU-12 emerged from transition having had little discourse on the LGBT rights issue prior to beginning the EU accession process, which subjected them to the only internationally recognized legal protections for sexual minorities in the world (Swiebel 2009). Even in the most secular of these states, discussion of homosexuality was rarely public prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall (McCajor Hall 2009). The year 1989 was thus a turning point for Europe, the reintegration of the continent, and the proliferation of new international channels. The time frame of the study,
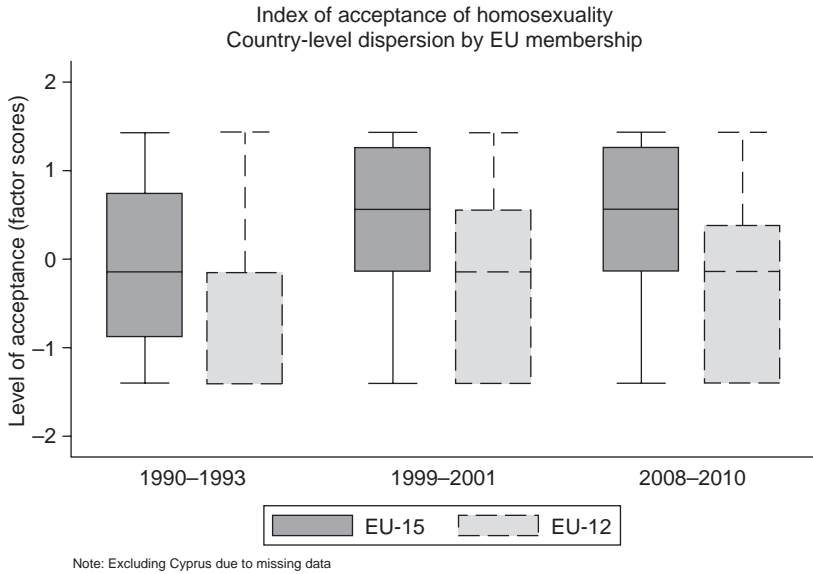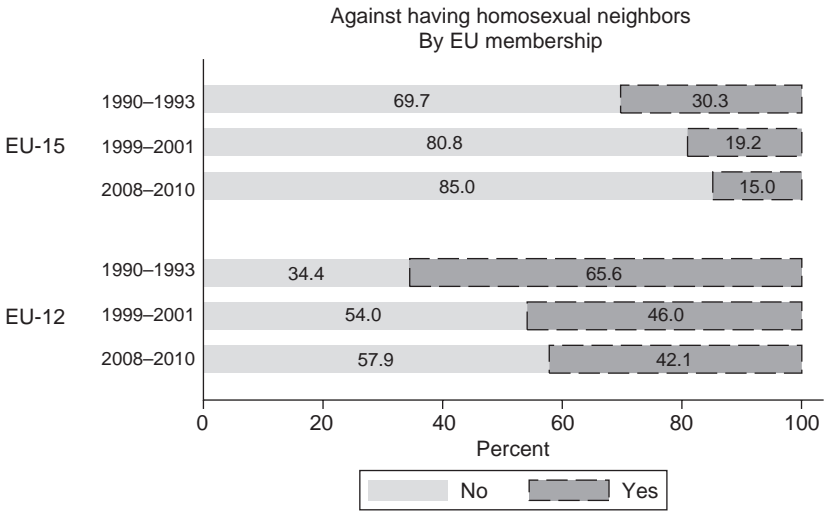
Index of acceptance of homosexuality
Country-level dispersion by EU membership

FIGURE 2.4. Variation in attitudes toward homosexuality between new and old EU states.

Against having homosexual neighbors
By EU membership

FIGURE 2.5. Variation in objections toward homosexual neighbors between new and old EU states.

beginning with gay liberation in the early 1970s and tracking differences through post-Cold War Europe to the present, is thus methodologically useful for understanding diffusion processes and explains why I put the needle on the record when I do.

The second set of states, for qualitative analysis, represents ideal cases for understanding the mechanisms by which ideas are diffused. I compared Poland and Slovenia on their different rates of change along both indicators of the dependent variable: social attitudes and laws toward sexual minorities (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). The different outcomes in these two historically Catholic countries merit analysis (Chapter 6). Germany represents a "norm entrepreneur" case for analysis (the norm also originates elsewhere, a fact I explore in the large-n analysis of channels to recipient states). In particular, the cases of Germany and Poland illustrate how ideas moved from a first-mover to new-adopter state, a process in which actors based in Germany became involved in Poland. Many analogous examples exist, making the involvement of groups within and across German borders a valuable case for the study of the transnationalization of LGBT rights activism.

Finally, the LGBT norm lends itself to cross-national analysis because it applies to a minority that exists – in various forms – in all societies. The data also show a bimodal trend in attitudes, a trend apparent in other data on homosexuality (T. W. Smith 2011) (survey respondents usually position themselves at the ends of a scale by answering that homosexuality is either "always" or "never" acceptable), suggesting that individuals in society rarely take a middle position on the issue. In other words, people either embrace or reject equal rights for sexual minorities. Thus, there is little contention about the specific content of the norm, a situation that is an important precondition for norm implementation (Dimitrova and Rhinard 2005). LGBT rights are a case of a contentious norm at an early phase of development and a symbol of sociocultural modernity (Carrillo 2007) from which we can generate theory to explain other contentious norms – for example, those concerning gender and immigrant rights politics.

Research methods

I developed an eclectic multimethod research design to discern the processes by which LGBT rights norms diffuse. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, I considered the transnational actors and transnational channels that carry international LGBT rights norms, as well as

the domestic structures that welcome or reject those norms. Data gathering included more than two years of on-site fieldwork, semistructured interviews, participant observation, and archival research, as well as an organizational survey of transnationally linked LGBT organizations. My qualitative research focused on my case studies (Germany, Poland, Slovenia, and the European institutions), although I also interviewed numerous actors from other European states. My data collection resulted in three data sets for analysis. The Appendix provides a more detailed description of my research methods.