7. Framing strategies of the anti-LGBT movement

This chapter investigates the way movement actors use frames to sustain their resistance against LGBT rights. Erving Goffman defines frames as "schemata of interpretation" (Goffman 1974: 21) that organize social experience and affect people's actions. In social movement studies, more specifically, *collective action frames* have been defined as "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the campaigns of a social movement organization (SMO)" (Benford/Snow 2000: 614). Collective action frames highlight the agentic and innovative aspect of frames, that is, "the conscious signifying work carried out by social movement actors" (Lindekilde 2014: 201). Successful framing serves the the movement's purpose to change people's thinking and, ideally, mobilizes them for collective action.

Frames represent one, if not the most important means used in the 'cultural war' that the Korean anti-LGBT movement is fighting. In Gramscian terms, the goal of this 'war of position' is to achieve ideological leadership in order to then exert concrete and stabilized influence in the political arena. For the purpose of gaining such hegemony, the movement tries to change the 'common sense' (*senso comune*), the taken-for-granted conception of the world so that it also actively includes anti-LGBT attitudes. As this chapter and the following chapter shall demonstrate, anti-LGBT activists make use of bits and pieces from common sense to change common sense itself. Put differently, they systematically reinforce and re-organize existing portions of common sense to create a 'good sense' (*buon senso*) – 'good' having the sense of being processed in an orderly and resonant manner. Such strategic redeployments of existing elements become manifest in the frame alignment processes enacted by the anti-LGBT movement:

- *Frame bridging*: "the linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem" (Benford & Snow 2000, 624), also called *frame articulation* (Snow et al. 2013, 229)
- *Frame amplification*: "the idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs" (Benford & Snow 2000, 624), also called *frame elaboration* (Snow et al. 2013, 232),

- *Frame extension*: "depicting an SMO's interests and frame(s) as extending beyond its primary interests to include issues and concerns that are presumed to be of importance to potential adherents" (Benford & Snow 2000, 625), and
- *Frame transformation*: "changing old understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones" (ibid.).

These strategic processes of frame alignment show up in the workings of the anti-LGBT movement, with the addition of *framing contests*, which include counterframing against opponents and frame disputes within the movement (Benford & Snow 2000, 626–627).

These framing processes affect the mechanisms and conceptual determinants analyzed below. Frame bridging, for example, is part of the *bricolage* mechanism of combining old and new frames, while the amplification and transformation of frames is enacted in attempts at *identity shift*, with the corresponding *drift* (change of existing aspects due to environmental shifts) and *conversion* (change of existing aspects through their strategic redeployment) modes of identity change. All these, in turn, fall into the category of *dynamic continuity*. Dynamism is also present in the way movement actors turn towards LGBT themes after years of relative disregard, as exposed in chapter 5. This study shows which frames the movement uses for this *attribution of threat*. The analytical category of *opposing desires*, then again, manifests itself in framing contests, which in turn are an indirect part of the *boundary work* mechanism of determining a common opponent. Chapters 7 and 8 now delve further into the diverse framing strategies and corresponding mechanisms deployed by the anti-LGBT movement. Prior to presenting the main results of frame analysis, however, I will give a brief overview, along with a rough classification of the most-used frames.

7.1   Most-used anti-LGBT frames

Table 7 summarizes the frames used by anti-LGBT activists more than 14 times in the period January 2000 until April 2020. For this time, the PEA found a total of 2094 instances of frame usage, which can be roughly categorized into overarching topics. The relatively low number of explicitly religious frames such as Biblical arguments against homosexuality leaps to the eye. The cumulated percentages of Table 7 show that such frames only appear in about 13.7% of protest events and this number does not increase a lot when also considering religious frames with less than 15 usages. There are also frames that point towards Protestantism, but as an institution or group, for example, when anti-LGBT activists claim their own alleged victimhood due to the anti-discrimination law (what they call 'reverse discrimination'). While such frames may directly appeal to adherents of Christian faith, the vast majority of frames does not have any religious inclination. This is surprising, considering the conservative Protestant background of most of the anti-LGBT movement. It is at the same time a reasonable choice from a strategic point of view. This is because only a minority of South Koreans (around 20%) belong to Protestant or evangelical denominations. In order to also win over other publics, the repertoire of frames must be larger. Anti-LGBT activists therefore commonly suggest that the majority of Koreans is against granting LGBT people same rights, thereby fueling a purported

confrontation between a 'normal' majority versus an overly demanding, 'abnormal' minority unworthy of rights.

Secular narratives commonly describe homosexuality and related themes as threats: an alleged threat to children, families or the whole nation, a menace to health, and one that is supposed to emanate from abroad. The next subchapter will elaborate on this aspect. Activists also often invoke alleged legal restraints that either formally make pro-LGBT legislation impossible or again consciously create an image of danger surrounding such bills. On another front, the movement uses frames in a conspiracy-like fashion, suggesting that pro-LGBT attitudes of (especially left-wing) politicians and related law proposals are part of a full-fledged hidden agenda, of 'gender ideology', or 'Cultural Marxism' – narratives that may resonate with the citizens of a country that still finds itself in a geopolitical position of ideological confrontation on the Korean peninsula. The public cost for supporting the LGBT community, for example, concerning the treatment of HIV/AIDS patients (as if only LGBT people were affected), is also a frame that may appeal to everyone regardless of one's religious affiliation.

Another large part of the anti-LGBT movement framing efforts consists of symbolic frames, which is a type of frame and not so much a category in terms of discernable topics. Symbolic frames provide metaphorical images and symbolic representations of contentious issues rather than presenting more elaborate arguments (cf. Koopmans & Statham 1999, 207). This is the case when anti-LGBT activists speak of "destruction", "chaos", or use adjectives such as "toxic" in relation to LGBT issues.

From a temporal perspective, the PEA data does not depict a clear pattern of (types of) frames being used increasingly or decreasingly over time. Of course, some frames directly refer to specific events or occurrences and therefore only appear in that period. For instance, the MERS, SARS and Covid-19 pandemics were used to argue that queer culture festivals should not take place. In most other cases, though, the peaks in frame usage coincide with the increased number of protest events in that period.

Table 7: Most-used frames, 2000–2020 (N ≥ 15)

Overarching topics	Frames	N[a]	Percent (%)[b]
Symbolic frames	"Destruction", "collapse", "harm"	75	10.8
	"Dictatorship", "autocratic", "Nazi fascism"	35	5.1
	"Confusion", "chaos" [*hollan*]	29	4.2
	"Healthy society"/"healthy sex ethics", "healthy nation" etc.	22	3.2
	"toxic" ("toxic clauses", "toxic law")	21	3.0
	"Obscenity" [*ŭmnan*], "perversion" [*pyŏnt'ae*]	20	2.9
	"Distorted" [*oegok*] sex culture etc.	16	2.3

Overarch-ing topics	Frames	N[a]	Percent (%)[b]
Majority vs. mino-rity/ Victimi-zation	Majority is against homosexuality/same-sex marriage etc., it is against the national sentiment	74	10.7
	"Reverse discrimination": violation of (human) rights of major-ity/churches/anti-LGBT activists	39	5.6
	If teaching that homosexuality is bad/if teaching the Bible/if pro-LGBT law gets legislated, one gets punished	30	4.3
	Homosexuals use "hate", "oppression", "victim", "discrimination" frames	21	3.0
	Pro-LGBT laws suppress/threaten Christian institutions (schools etc.), in general: oppression of Christians	20	2.9
	Homosexuals use "human rights (abuse)" frame	16	2.3
	Homosexuality is abnormal (but pro-LGBT laws aim to make it seem normal)	15	2.2
Religion	'Hate the sin, not the sinner': One should not hate/ discrimi-nate/use violence against homosexuals	27	3.9
	Homosexuality is an (abominable) sin	23	3.3
	Bible condemns homosexuality (citing or alluding to Bible passages)	23	3.3
	Homosexuality/same-sex marriage is against the creation order, against God	22	3.2
Homosex-uality as a threat	Threat to national security/military combat power[c]	54	7.8
	Infringement of religious freedom, freedom of expression, of Christians' human rights	47	6.8
	Destroys/is bad for marriage and family (systems)	45	6.5
	Goes against/destroys (healthy sexual) morality and ethics	43	6.2
	Spread of homosexuality etc.[c]	36	5.2
	Fear that children/youth/students could be ruined through pro-LGBT legislation, teaching, or events	19	2.7
	Nation/country will be ruined/is endangered by/will collapse due to homosexuality/pro-LGBT legislation	18	2.6
	Homosexuality destroys tradition/traditional values/norms/is not compatible with Korean traditions	16	2.3
	Creates social conflict/division/controversy/turmoil	15	2.2
Legal as-pects/ law-re-lated	Pro-LGBT legislation is unconstitutional/incompatible with Korean law	44	6.3
	If homosexuality/same-sex marriage is legalized, it could have ripple effect	31	4.5
	Pro-gay legislation may/will promote/instigate homosexuality	26	3.8

Overarching topics	Frames	N[a]	Percent (%)[b]
Threat from abroad	Presenting 'worrisome' examples from abroad, like "fall of Christianity"	43	6.2
	One should not follow (Western) countries just because they are considered advanced, one should not be obsequious	15	2.2
	Western countries force homosexual culture upon Korea, "cultural imperialism"; interference into domestic issues	15	2.2
Accusation of hidden agenda/ biased position	Public institutions or TV stations etc. must not have a biased, (i.e. positive) position on homosexuality, must report 'truth'	37	5.3
	Advocacy for LGBT minority under the guise of human rights, "human rights logic"	37	5.3
	Need to procure and provide "expert", "real" knowledge and data, to educate about homosexuality and AIDS	25	3.6
	Hidden Marxist/communist agenda of spreading sympathy for LGBT themes, "cultural Marxism"	22	3.2
	Politicians/public institutions (and the underlying laws) promote homosexuality, there is a culture of promoting h.	19	2.7
	Problematic that homosexuality is taught/treated (as legitimate, normal, and not as harmful) at schools/by media	17	2.5
'Health'/ medicalization	Homosexuals are a high-risk group for AIDS	36	5.2
	Homosexuality is not genetic/innate, is caused by environment, education; can be cured	23	3.3
	Danger of (spread of) AIDS	21	3.0
	Churches should/one has to try to heal homosexuals	15	2.2
'Gender ideology'	"Equality of sexes" [sŏngp'yŏngdŭng] vs. "equality of both sexes" [yang sŏngp'yŏngdŭng] means supporting homosexuality and/or gender ideology	23	3.3
	'Gender ideology'	19	2.7
Other	It is not ok to use citizens' taxes/public budget for homosexuality/fight against AIDS/ gender education	25	3.6

[a] There have been a total of 2094 instances of frame usage in the years 2000–2020 (April 30). [b] The calculation of the respective percent is based on the total number of protest events (693). The sum of percentages would be higher than 100 because multiple frames can be used at one given protest event. [c] These categories consist of pooled data, i.e., combining all the frames that refer to the overarching theme.

The following sections will now delve deeper into the framing strategies of the anti-LGBT movement. I cannot go into the detail of every framing approach, but will rather carve out – as already mentioned – the general types of framing strategies in light of *dynamic continuity* and *opposing desires*. I argue that through these lenses, we can make sense of a large part of the movement's framing activities. Some final remarks on the term 'strategy' are in order before proceeding to the next sections. It is of course difficult

to claim that all utterances of individual anti-LGBT actors follow an elaborate strategy. It would be an intricate matter for movement actors to control this or to educate all activists in this spirit in the first place. Be that as it may, as I have shown previously and will further elaborate in chapter 10, there is a clear-cut leadership circle who does announce recommendations on how to ideally act and approach things. What is more, the fact that certain types of frames are frequently used by diverse actors suggests that there must be some common understanding of which frames may be beneficial for the movement's purposes, for example in terms of using overt religious frames more often when protest events take place in Christian contexts. Against this background, generalizable statements on framing strategies seem not only possible, but necessary to bring light into the ways the Korean anti-LGBT movement approaches the fight for hegemony on the ideational level.

7.2   Attribution of threat: creating fear around LGBT issues

At the beginning of any socio-political struggle, an issue needs to be made contentious. Nothing is per se problematic or prone to conflict. Things only become contentious if and when there are actors who recognize and label them as such. From the perspective of political opportunity structures, the *Dynamics of Contention* research agenda asserts that opportunities do not exist as "objective structural factors". Rather, they are subject to attribution (McAdam et al. 2001, 43). The social mechanism of *attributing opportunity (or threat)* is clearly observable in Korean anti-LGBT activism. I argue that the Protestant Right has deliberately chosen LGBT issues for problematization. As chapter 5 demonstrated, homosexuality and related topics have been largely disregarded by conservative Protestant actors at a time when similarly oriented political and civic actors elsewhere in the world had already entered the fight against LGBT rights. Then, from the mid-2000s onwards, the Protestant Right in Korea did not merely react to pro-LGBT legislative proposals, but actively construed the whole issue as problematic. Over the years, such activism intensified, broadened its scope both in terms of participant organizations and mobilization, as well as concerning the contents, and thus developed into a mature movement. The forms of this activism have been demonstrated above, and the actors of this movement will be treated in chapter 10. This section shall concern itself with the contents of anti-LGBT activism in South Korea, and in doing so, carve out the country-specific features of the movement's framing strategies.

At the beginning of anti-LGBT activism, there was the creation of fear. In the case of many social movements, the attribution of opportunity is rather a process of invoking threats. In the case of right-wing movements, these deliberately constructed 'threats' often have the goal of legitimizing the exclusion and ill treatment of certain social groups. Ruth Wodak calls such a phenomenon "the politics of fear", which, she argues, right-wing populist actors use to instrumentalize "some kind of ethnic/religious/linguistic/political minority as a *scapegoat* for most if not all current woes and subsequently construe the respective group as dangerous and a threat '*to us*', to 'our' nation" (Wodak 2015, 2). Wodak builds her analysis on David Altheide's book *Creating Fear* (2002), in which he argues that the creation of fear has become pervasive in large parts of US politics and media.

[F]ear has become a dominant public perspective. Fear begins with things we fear, but over time, with enough repetition and expanded use, it becomes a way of looking at life. Therefore, it is not 'fear of crime', for instance, that is so interesting to me, but rather how fear has emerged as a framework for developing identities and for engaging in social life. Fear is one of the perspectives that citizens share today; while liberals and conservatives may differ in their object of fear, all sides express many fears and point to 'blameworthy' sources – often each other! The fear 'market' has also spawned an extensive cottage industry that promotes new fears and an expanding array of 'victims'. (Altheide 2002, 3; cited in Wodak 2015, 4f.)

In his seminal book *Fear: The History of a Political Idea*, Corey Robin argues that fear has in fact been a common denominator of politics irrespective of time and place. He differentiates between private and political types of fears, the latter being political because the fear stems from society and has consequences for it. Robin (2004, 2) defines 'political fear' as "a people's felt apprehension of some harm to their collective well-being – the fear of terrorism, panic over crime, anxiety about moral decay – or the intimidation wielded over men and women by governments or groups." The main argument of his study is that fear is political in the sense that it is used for political purposes, a fact that is, however, often ignored or underestimated (Robin 2004, 3).[1]

Attempts at instilling fear do not necessarily predict the actual emotions of addressed publics. From the perspective of political psychology, measuring anxiety in individuals is an intricate matter (Wagner & Morisi 2019, 6f.), which shall not be covered in this study. Rather, the agentic and purposeful level of framing in order to create anxiety is at the center of this analysis. The creators of fear may, however, make use of social-psychological insights on the causes of anxiety. There are three main dimensions that render people anxious or fearful about a given situation: uncertainty, the feeling of lacking control, and unclear accountability. Yet if responsibility or blame can be attributed to an external actor, people tend to react more with anger rather than with fear (Wagner & Morisi 2019, 4).

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1   A similar and widely used concept is that of 'moral panics', introduced by Stanley Cohen in his 1972 (2002) book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. Cohen defines moral panics as happening when "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (2002, 1). He also provides a list of constituent elements of a moral panic: "(i) *Concern* (rather than fear) about the potential or imagined threat; (ii) *Hostility* – moral outrage towards the actors (folk devils) who embody the problem and agencies [...] who are 'ultimately' responsible [...]; (iii) *Consensus* – a widespread agreement (not necessarily total) that the threat exists, is serious and that 'something should be done' [...]; (iv) *Disproportionality*: an exaggeration of the number or strength of the cases, in terms of the damage caused, moral offensiveness, potential risk [...]; (v) *Volatility* – the panic erupts and dissipates suddenly without warning" (Cohen 2002, xxii). This study will not use Cohen's concept of moral panics since it is interested in long-lasting, socially constructed 'threats' that serve to support counterhegemonic struggles rather than investigating short-lived phenomena. Moreover, the fear-related frames analyzed here go beyond mere morality issues. This does not mean that the Korean anti-LGBT movement does not create actual moral panics. Quite to the contrary, the protest events can be said to offer suitable platforms for sowing hostility, seeking consensus, and exaggerated rhetoric.

The framing strategies of Korean anti-LGBT activism tick many of the boxes offered by the above approaches to the political 'usage' of fears and threats, as this section shall demonstrate, and as previous research has found. The Protestant Right singles out lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and – to a lesser extent, yet more so in the recent years – trans people as a menacing minorities. This LGBT minority is used as a scapegoat to distract attention from grievances within Korean Protestantism such as declining membership and scandals (Siwoo 2018), as well as to create an "external enemy" for the purpose of closing the ranks internally and increasing political leverage (Han, Ch'ae-yun 2017). The anti-LGBT movement has the goal of making apprehension of LGBT issues ubiquitous, framing LGBTs as threatening 'others'. These politics of fear do not only concern the opponent, though. The goal is to change Protestant identity itself in a way to activate and reinforce the dislike of homosexuality and in order to present oneself as the actual 'victim' of an alleged pro-LGBT climate in politics and society.[2]

When taking a closer look at how anti-LGBT activists frame homosexuality and related topics, the threat that they create turns out to be virtually all-encompassing. The invoked threats cover a wide range of individuals and collective entities, for whose well-being and continued existence one should worry. These 'threats' are presented as targeting children and young people, and stretch to families, churches, and the nation as a whole. These groups are then claimed to be affected in various areas, ranging from concrete topics such as health, reproduction, their freedom rights, national security, and the taxes they pay. More abstract fears are created in relation to morality, values, tradition, and order. I argue that this broad spectrum of 'fears for any taste' is constructed in a way to resonate with as many different publics as possible. Faithful members of a conservative Protestant congregation, for example, may worry more about an alleged moral decay due to 'sinful' homosexuality, whereas non-believing individuals might be anxious about a purported spread of HIV/AIDS and an allegedly decreased combat power, which are both attributed to gay men by anti-LGBT activists.

Such fear-related frames around LGBT issues are not exclusive to Korea. For instance, the alleged danger posed by queers for children and the youth is commonly evoked by right-wing actors worldwide. They spread false information on LGBT people, purporting that they are trying to seduce, to 'sexualize', and abuse children. Consequently, right-wing actors promote the need to protect them – in short, to 'save our children' as a whole anti-gay campaign came to be named in the 1970s in the United States (Williams, 2018; McCreery 2008; cf. also Graydon 2011 on Canada; Kämpf 2020 on Germany). Narratives of seduction, family values, and disease have been widely used in early anti-LGBT activism in the US. They are still in place, but have been complemented by rights-based frames, presenting LGBT individuals as a minority undeserving of

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2   The strategy of creating threats around LGBT issues also came up in my research interviews and was confirmed by two pro-LGBT activists (Interviews 3; 18) and a theology professor (Interview 19). The latter explained that conservative Protestant actors do the same regarding Islam. "It's this islamophobia or homophobia. It is a phobia. It is about identity and fear. And this identity is not a thoroughly developed identity, but rather, I think, fear of the multi-pluralistic society. […] It is not so much about religion, and I am very sorry that they do things like this in the name of Jesus. But the contents [of activism] are actually not related to Christianity" (my translation, from German to English).

rights, and focusing on the church members' own rights to religious freedom (Herman 1996; Williams 2018). Such framing contests on human and civil rights will be covered in a later chapter (8.1). I will now focus on three areas in which the Korean anti-LGBT movement engages in fearmongering in relation to LGBT themes. I do this to investigate commonalities with cases of anti-LGBT framing elsewhere and to carve out the Korean specifics. These topics are: (1) family values and child and youth protection, (2) health, and (3) national security. Further deliberately constructed threats such as the ones against churches will be treated in the then following subchapter 7.3.

The oddly unspecific queer menace to children, families, and the nation

Consider the following two short statements:

> "If homosexuality spreads widely, families will be destroyed and the nation will collapse."
> Kim Sun-hŭi, representative of the *Parents Association Loving Education and School* (*kyoyuk-kwa hakkyo-rŭl saranghanŭn hakpumo yŏnhap*) at a protest event against the National Human Rights Commission of Korea; cited in Yu, Yŏng-dae 2015, January 28

> "The homosexual nude festival makes teenagers sick and ruins the Republic of Korea"
> Text on a handwritten poster of the *Jesus Foundation* (*yesu chaedan*) at a protest to demand the withdrawal of the permission to hold Seoul Queer Culture Festival on the central Seoul Plaza; cited in Yu, Yŏng-dae 2015, March 30

These quotations show that Korean anti-LGBT activists are quick to press every button on the fearmongering keyboard. Owing to homosexuality and related events and policies, their story goes, young people and families are harmed. But the cascade of alleged doom does not stop there. It is not only the children and the heterosexual family system that is claimed to be threatened. It is the whole society, the country, and nation that must tremble in face of the LGBT menace. In many cases, the lists of purported threats proposed by anti-LGBT activists culminate in an imminent collapse of the entire social and political structures. The link between family and nationalist ideologies has been at the center of diverse social-scientific studies (e.g., Freiner 2012; Albanese 2006), as has the connection of these topics with anti-LGBT activities, also in Korea (Jung, Gowoon 2020; Kim, Nami 2016, 81–107). The family has traditionally played an important role in Korean society. Neo-Confucianism lies at the root of strong intra-familial hierarchies, filial piety, and the will to beget a worthy (male) heir. Chang Kyung-Sup argues that under industrial modernization in South Korea from the 1960s on, this traditional familism became even more pervasive. Chang emphasizes the newly appreciated affectionate dimension of families as against the hardship of industrial-style labor, as well as the instrumental aspects of family life. Koreans "came to develop an ideology that family has to function as the primary instrument for its members' social competition for status, wealth and power" (Chang 2010, 17–19; cf. also Johannemann 2021).

Unsurprisingly, the continuation of families and, ultimately, of the nation is a major concern in statements and texts of the anti-LGBT movement. Homosexuality is not only

presented as a moral vice from a religious perspective, but also as having direct conse-
quences for the survival of Korea. South Korea has one of the lowest birthrates world-
wide, and activists create the fear that it might even further decrease owing to an alleged
spread of homosexuality. Families are at risk of being discontinued if sons and daughters
are 'seduced' by the media or the educational system to 'become' gay or lesbian, if the state
allows same-sex marriage and abandons the traditional family model. Low birthrates in
themselves, however, are only the beginning of the potential damage – the economic con-
sequences are also part of the movement's framing endeavors. One anti-LGBT activist
puts it as follows: "In Korea, premarital cohabitation is on the rise, and if same-sex mar-
riage is legalized, the birth rate will be lower than it is now, which will significantly slow
down national competitiveness" (cited in Yu, Yŏng-dae 2015, January 28). Another activist
extends the danger to the alleged harm children experience if they were to be adopted by
same-sex couples.

> In the end, the biggest victims will be our children […] The same-sex couples will be
> unable to give birth, which will lead to a decrease in population and a weakening of
> the national labor force, and even if same-sex couples adopt children, they will have
> serious emotional and psychological difficulties, as shown in many cases. (Cited in Yu,
> Yŏng-dae 2016, January 19)

While the linkage of homosexuality with the lowest-low reproduction level can be called
a specifically Korean frame that may resonate in this national context, other frames are
not exclusive to Korea, but no less powerful. This is especially true when claiming a threat
towards children and the youth. They are described as a particularly vulnerable group,
falsely claiming that homosexuality is a condition one acquires (see also chapter 8.3).

> [..] because of the excessive exposure of homosexuality to students whose sexual iden-
> tity is not yet properly established, many students could be turned into 'potential ho-
> mosexuals', which shows that this [exposure] is not done for educational purposes.
> Rather, it can be expected to encourage a corrupted culture and to ruin the future of
> the students and of the nation. (KACC 2014, January 2)

The rhetoric gets quite harsh when it comes to alleged threats to children. In this con-
text, activists try to arouse repulsion against LGBT people by suggesting that children
themselves might turn against the traditional marriage and family systems, or that they
could fall victim to alleged homosexual sexual offenders. Yi Chae-hŭng, representative
of the *Parents Union for Education of the Chosen People* (*sŏnmin kyoyuk hakpumo yŏnhap*), char-
acterizes this alleged threat at an event of ex-gay groups against the Seoul Queer Culture
Festival: "Our children are in danger […] What would you do if a man entered [your fam-
ily] as your daughter-in-law, and a woman as your son-in-law? Homosexuality is love?
Don't lie to me. Homosexuals are just sex addicts looking for food" (cited in Yu, Yŏng-dae
2015, June 10).

The trio of children–family–nation is, as has been shown, a frequently used combi-
nation of frames, which indeed addresses what one might call rational or at least logical
fears of a diminishing population. This insight cannot be drawn only from the PEA data,

but these frames were also used by several anti-LGBT activists interviewed for this study (Interviews 16; 31; 32; 34). Homosexuals are said to not be able to procreate, hence the alleged danger of even lower birthrates – without, of course, considering the responsibility of the way larger, heterosexual part of society. Anti-LGBT activists here engage in frame amplification: they extend the existing perception of problematically low reproduction rates by also blaming homosexuals and those supporting LGBT rights for it. Along with the narrative on low birthrates goes the framing strategy to invoke potential harm to children and adolescents through LGBT influence – also by falsely insinuating that scientific studies have shown a negative impact for children adopted by LGBT people. All this is done using extreme language, suggesting that destruction, collapse, corruption, chaos, and other mischiefs were imminent.

It is astonishing, however, that the vast majority of statements in relation to the alleged threat of homosexuality to children, families, marriage, and the nation as a whole fails to convincingly explain *why* this is the case. Most speakers at anti-LGBT events just present a list of (often unconnected) threats whose relation to homosexuality remains oddly abstract. It seems that the movement, to some extent, takes anti-LGBT attitudes for granted. One example from the founding statement of the minor *Christian Liberty Party* (*kidok chayu tang*): "The Republic of Korea has achieved industrialization and democratization in the shortest period of time in world history, but it is threatened by suicide, divorce, smoking, homosexuality, pornography, homosexuality [sic!], Islam etc." (cited in Yu, Yŏng-dae 2016, January 31). Why exactly the ROK should fear homosexuality – or any of the other aspects mentioned, for that matter – is unclear, not only here, but also in many other statements made at protest events. Reduction of complexity is, of course, necessary when trying to convince people who are still unfamiliar with a certain topic, and to win over new adherents for the fight against this purported grievance. The frequent absence of any real explanation or evidence as to why homosexuality is something one should fear is surprising nonetheless, but not exclusive to the Korean case. Melinda Miceli (2005) argues that the US Christian Right uses morality frames of the kind seen also here, exactly because evidence and facts are not necessary when certain cultural beliefs are claimed to present something as abnormal or immoral. She cites Haider-Markel and Meier (1996, 333) in this context, who argue that "morality politics issues are highly salient with little need to acquire any information (technical or otherwise) to participate in the debate. Everyone is an expert on morality." Many of my interviewees confirmed this strategy of stigmatization (Interviews 1; 2; 3; 5; 15), demonization (Interview 11), and creation of an external enemy to cover up internal problems (Interviews 1; 12; 13; 26; 29).

This particular way of framing and of combining seemingly unconnected frames (*frame bridging*) has the potential of yielding effects in two ways. First, the very uncertainty and unclear accountability may generate or increase fear around LGBT issues (cf. Wagner & Morisi 2019). The opponent remains obscure and unfathomable to a certain extent. When repeatedly hearing that homosexuality is bad, sinful, and detrimental to one's children, one may turn to opposing homosexuality and everything that is (said to be) linked to it. At some point, perhaps, it is enough to just mention the term 'homosexuality' to instill people with aversion. In a press statement from April 2020 demanding the cancellation of the Seoul Queer Culture Festival due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the KACC does not give proper reasons why this should be done other than the pandemic.

Rather, the KACC (2020, April 2) writes: "The anti-family, anti-social, anti-ethical and negative aspects of homosexuality are already well-known to all people." In the year 2020, after around 10 years of fervent activism, one can expect that a certain level of anti-LGBT 'knowledge' got established, at least among specific constituencies within the Protestant Right. Regarding the general public, however, it is not so obvious that anti-LGBT attitudes became an unquestioned and manifest part of common sense. In this context, the above speech act of claiming that something is common knowledge is a potentially powerful means to make bystanders consider their position on the issue, at the very least to avoid the appearance of being ignorant.

The second aspect is – despite the relative diffuseness of the opponent – that the opponent can be pinpointed. Even though the reasons as to why homosexuality is harmful remain unclear at times, homosexual people can be named and, thus, be turned into a scapegoat. This way, fear and threats can be modified into something productive, canalizing potential anger into mobilization against LGBT rights. The question of what the opposing group can actually be held accountable for is of secondary importance. At least, this is the case for LGBT individuals and groups who – as I have shown previously – are not a frequent target of anti-LGBT activities. Concrete outlets for one's anger, however, are available in most cases. These consist of the governmental, educational and media institutions that promote pro-LGBT policies and attitudes, or that are accused of doing so.

Overall, I argue that homosexuality has become a *master frame* of the Protestant Right. Master frames are special due to their flexible usage, wide interpretive scope, and influence (Benford & Snow 2000, 618f.). As this study will show also in other chapters, 'homosexuality' has not only developed into an organizational frame that is only used by actors from the Protestant Right. The generic use of this overarching frame has stretched to other actors, most notably politicians who discovered the potential of negative politicization of this topic as well (cf. chapter 10.5). Within the repertoire of issues commonly vilified by the Korean Protestant Right, homosexuality has risen to prominence besides anti-communist, anti-Muslim, anti-migration, and anti-feminist claims. As shall be shown later in this chapter, activists flexibly combine anti-LGBT impulses with these bones of contention in a *bricolage* way.

"For a healthy society": evoking homosexuality as a disease and threat to public health

Presenting homosexuality – and to a lesser extent also transsexuality – as potential health risks is a common framing strategy of the Korean anti-LGBT movement. Activists focus on two main aspects of this alleged threat to public health. First, they claim that homosexuality itself is a disease, an acquired condition that can be 'healed' rather than something one is born with. Second, homosexuals are presented as being prone to catching and spreading diseases, first and foremost HIV/AIDS. To prove their points, activists often refer to alleged scientific results or statistical information on infection rates. Many speakers at protest events are professors, medical doctors, and pharmacists, giving the image of educational and expert authority. Whether they are in fact experts on the topic at hand is questionable, though, as is the accuracy of the data they provide – and often

exaggerate, for example, in terms of the frequency and gravity of HIV/AIDS cases in Korea. The following statement by Min Sŏng-gil, a former psychiatry professor, summarizes many of the claims anti-LGBT activists make to conflate homosexuality with disease.

> Homosexuals have mental and health problems, which add to the social, economic, and medical costs for the general public. [...] Advocates of homosexuality claim that homosexuality is inherited, but it has been proven to be a scientifically wrong claim. Some homosexuals naturally change into non-homosexuals as they get older, and some have changed to be heterosexuals by Christian faith. [...] Even if you have a homosexual tendency, practicing homosexuality is a matter of individual choice and it is not an ethically and morally responsible act. [...] It is necessary to properly inform all citizens, especially teenagers, about the truth on homosexuality from a perspective of medical science. (Cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2015, October 8)

Homosexuals are not only blamed for allegedly spreading diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, but also for the public costs needed for the treatment. Sexual minorities are displayed as a financial burden since taxpayers' money is used for supporting people who, the story goes, have themselves chosen their way of life. Anti-LGBT activists frame them as individuals unworthy of receiving health care like anybody else due to their immoral 'decision'. And worse, their self-inflicted misery entails consequences for everyone's financial situation.

Another aspect often invoked concerns the alleged possibility of 'healing' homosexual people, of converting them to 'healthy' heterosexuals 'again'. A phrase frequently seen on posters is that of demanding LGBT people to "come back", assuming that they succumbed to evil and unethical temptations and got corrupted (cf. Interviews 1, 12; Siwoo 2018, 189). Rather than treating homosexuality as a medical indication, the overcoming of one's 'unhealthy' sexual orientation is framed in a religious way. It is argued that by means of strong faith, by praying and following Jesus, one can 'escape' homosexuality. The lost sheep strayed from God's path, but is called to come back to the flock. Indeed, many anti-LGBT activists claim that churches, through teaching the 'truth' about homosexuality, can 'help' people leading 'normal' lives again. Many also call for providing explicit services to assist people on their path 'back' to heterosexuality. There are a few groups within the anti-LGBT movement that offer what is commonly called 'conversion therapy'. *Holy Life*, an ex-gay group around Pastor Lee Jonah (*Yi Yo-na*) in particular represents a spectrum of the movement which promotes the motto 'love the sinner, but hate the sin', showing sympathy for homosexuals willing to 'come back' rather than besieging them with hateful statements in public. However, the mainstream of the anti-LGBT movement criticizes this as thinning out the issue, while the ex-gay group around pastor Lee reproaches other organizations of the Protestant Right of merely using the topic for the purpose of increasing their political clout (Siwoo 2018, 78). Chapter 8.1 will elaborate on this internal conflict.

Creating fear of homosexuality spreading all over society fits in the image of an infectious disease. The youth are presented as being especially vulnerable to this 'health threat', since their sexual identity is viewed as still unstable during puberty. Besides homosexuals, the anti-LGBT movement also detects other alleged agents who propagate

und thus spread homosexuality. Schools textbooks, the media, the NHRCK, and the *Korean Disease Control and Prevention Agency*, to name only a few, are confronted with accusations of not reporting the 'truth' about the harmfulness of homosexuality. The following excerpt from a KACC press statement shows this reproach. It is also an example of the exaggerated claims on the HIV/AIDS infection rate of homosexual people.

> The correlation between homosexuality and AIDS is almost absolute, but the media is not reporting it. The reason for this is that the National Human Rights Commission of Korea ordered the Journalists Association of Korea to create the 'Human Rights Reporting Rules', according to which one must not to report criticism about homosexuality or homosexual diseases, so most people's right to know is blocked. (KACC 2017, May 19)

In 2011, the *Journalists Association of Korea* in fact established such rules, but with the goal of preventing reports that include false, distorted, discriminatory or hateful content on sexual minorities – apparently the exact opposite of what the anti-LGBT movement intends to do (cf. Journalists Association of Korea 2022). It is a common strategy of the anti-LGBT movement to accuse others of withholding 'actual facts' and 'the truth' on sexual minorities and their alleged connection to diseases. This is duplicitous behavior since anti-LGBT activists themselves engage in circulating false or at least inaccurate information. For example, they exclusively speak of AIDS, concealing the fact that an infection with the HI virus does not necessarily mean that there will also be an outbreak of AIDS, even less so in a developed country like South Korea, which has a well-functioning health care system. An infection with HIV is not a death sentence any more these days, and, if treated, the transmission of the virus is virtually impossible. Rather than creating fear around HIV/AIDS in relation to one specific group only, it would be better to inform objectively about the disease without prejudice, for it is not only homosexual men who can get infected. It is to be doubted, however, that an actual concern about people's health lies at the heart of the anti-LGBT movement's health-related framing endeavors.

Overstating risks and presenting wrong information is not only done with respect to health issues, though. Siwoo (2018, 184–190) found that many anti-LGBT activists emphasize that they state the truth while in fact telling a lie, or at least sharing distorted information – which he analyzes as a "post-truth" strategy (cf. also Fuller 2018). As already mentioned above, the movement tries to hide the distinction between appearance and reality not only by claiming truthfulness in a speech act, but also by undergirding this with purported academic experts pronouncing their alleged expertise. 'Stretching' the truth is also part of this strategy. For example, it is true that numbers of HIV infections have been rising in South Korea until 2020, yet, on a relatively low overall level (about 1000 new infections per year). The share of infections due to same-sex activities passed the 50 percent threshold (of all HIV infections) for the first time in 2020, thus, revealing that assertions of an 'absolute correlation' are excessive (Kim, So-hyun 2020, July 14). Anti-LGBT activists also often claim that LGBT people suffer from loneliness and depression *because of* their chosen lifestyle. It is true that LGBT people, especially younger people, have mental health problems, but these are predominantly caused by the experience of discrimination, rather than being innate (Lee, Hyemin et al. 2021). It seems that the anti-LGBT movement engages in blame shifting here. It is cynical, however, when the very ac-

tor who makes the lives of LGBT people (increasingly) complicated in the first place takes recourse to such framing strategies.

To sum up, using health-related frames in one way or another proves effective for the anti-LGBT movement. Everybody has an interest in their health, which explains its high potential of resonating with larger publics. Therefore, the term 'health' is frequently used in symbolic and generic ways by anti-LGBT activists: 'healthy family', 'healthy nation', 'healthy sex ethics'. At the same time, the fear around this issue remains diffuse and may therefore even get stronger. In view of the manifold avenues through which one can allegedly contract homosexuality, uncertainty prevails. However, this fear can be transformed into action because the 'perpetrator' – or, in some cases, the object of healing through faith – is well known, as are the institutions that are hold accountable for their alleged pro-LGBT (and anti-health) complicity. The topic of health seems beneficial to the movement to the extent that two of the most important anti-LGBT organizations have the term in their names: the *People's Solidarity for a Healthy Society* (*kŏnganghan sahoe-rŭl wihan kungmin yŏndae*) and the *Korean Association of Family and Health* (*han'guk kajok pogŏn hyŏphoe*). The latter SMO hosts an annual event on December 1st, World AIDS Day, to inform about dangers of this disease and, of course, about the alleged connection to homosexuality. In 2017, pro-LGBT activists disturbed this event by taking the stage and criticizing the spread of false information with slogans such as "Hatred related to AIDS is the problem, not the treatment of infected people" and "Hatred against homosexuals spreads AIDS" (quoted in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2017, December 1). This confrontation is noteworthy, since the pro-LGBT movement does not frequently enter into direct conflict with anti-LGBT activists, and it shows that deliberately false and vilifying narratives do not go unchallenged.

Securitizing gay men in the army: the geopolitical dimension of anti-LGBT fearmongering

The military plays a huge role in South Korea. In face of the North Korean military and nuclear threat, South Korea spends a considerable amount of its national budget on defense and requires virtually all male citizens to perform a compulsory military service. The South Korean army features its own jurisdiction with a *Military Criminal Code*. Since 1962, this Code includes a provision banning and punishing sexual acts between male soldiers that is in force until today. Since the turn of the millennium, there have been several attempts to abolish this provision, article 92(6). The Constitutional Court, however, upheld the article three times, in 2001, 2011, and 2016.[3] Whenever such court decisions were pending in recent years, the anti-LGBT movement got active to lobby for maintaining article 92(6) of the Military Criminal Code. This chapter shows how the movement has been trying to further politicize the issue of gay men in the military.

Table 7 demonstrates that matters of national security and the Korean military are frequent contents of anti-LGBT framings. I argue that the strategy of creating a threat

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3   For more details on article 92(6) of the Military Criminal Code and recent events around it, see footnotes 12 and 13 in chapter 5.2.

around LGBT people in the military can best be analyzed using the concept of *securitiza-tion*. Buzan et al. (2022 [1998], 25) define securitization as being "constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects." Traditional international relations theory commonly regards such existential threats as pertaining to the area of geopolitics and the military. Securitization theory also takes into account non-traditional security issues, claiming that basically anything can be constructed as an existential threat, for example, to a state's ideology in the political sector, to collective identities in societal affairs, or to the survival of species in the environmental arena (Buzan et al. 2022, 22f.). Securitizing issues is thus a form of politicization, but distinctive in that it designates a certain issue as a security threat. In this sense, securitization is similar to the *attribution of threat* mechanism of the DOC research agenda.

Several studies have focused on the securitization of LGBT issues. Nuñez-Mietz (2019), for instance, shows how LGBT themes have been turned into existential threats in Russia and Hungary as a means to fend off local advocacy for sexual minorities. Other studies in the field of social psychology focus on gay men in the Israeli military and demonstrate that preconceived ideas of gay soldiers as negatively influencing combat power – upon which policies like 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' (DADT) in the United States are based – are in fact flawed (Kaplan & Rosenmann 2012; cf. also Jones 2020). The DADT policy was abolished in 2010, but until then, it was a very concrete symbol of the suspicion against LGBT service members. In South Korea, this distrust persists until today on the legal level, and the anti-LGBT movement strives to maintain or even intensify the image of LGBT soldiers as security threats, also on the societal, ideational level.

Anti-LGBT activists use two main lines of argument against homosexual men in the army. The first follows the alleged threat to the nation state as a whole seen in previous sections. It is argued that allowing gay soldiers to serve openly (or at all) in the military would considerably weaken combat power and thus jeopardize South Korea's defensive power and its geopolitical standing. The second purported threat is created through presenting the army as a homosocial breeding ground for homosexuality where male soldiers are claimed to fear molestation or seduction by gay 'sex offenders'. In all this, we can often find a dash of conspiracy thinking like in the following statement by Kang Yŏnggŭn, a representative of the *National Buddhist Council for the Security of Korea* (*taehanmin'guk chik'gi pulgyo tongch'ong yŏnhap*), a right-wing Buddhist organization, which occasionally sends speakers to anti-LGBT protest events.

> The reason why the provision of the Military Criminal Code, which does not have an equivalent in general society, exists in the military is because it is a special organization that requires strong discipline. [...] Homosexuality is not a matter of human rights and freedom, but a strategy of forces to topple the Republic of Korea. (Cited in Paek, Sanghyŏn 2016, June 22)

Another activist, Yi Hŭi-bŏm from the *Korean Patriotic Citizens' Coalition* (*taehanmin'guk aeguk simin yŏnhap*) also sees military discipline at risk. He argues that allowing openly gay soldiers in the army would be especially damaging in light of the important position that the army has in Korean society.

No matter how much Korean society suffers from extreme confusion among ideologies, generations, and regions, there is an organization that fulfills its duty, which is the army. [...] If homosexuality is allowed in the military, military discipline will be shaken, and defense capabilities will be undermined. I ask the Constitutional Court to declare the Military Criminal Code constitutional. (Cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2016, June 22)

Anti-LGBT activists create the fear that normally steadfast institutions such as the army would waver should homosexuality be allowed in its ranks. In an attempt to prove this point, the KACC uses foreign and historical examples, the substance of which is dubious, though.

It is a well-known fact that one of the reasons why the army of the Roman Empire, an ancient superpower, collapsed helplessly in face of the invasion of the barbarians was homosexuality and the promiscuous sex life prevalent in the army. Military power comes from military discipline, and if discipline collapses, the army will collapse in a moment without being able to fight properly like the Vietnamese army or Chiang Kai-shek's troops. Doesn't North Korea execute soldiers who engage in same-sex acts because it knows all this? (KACC 2016, May 23)

In this statement, North Korea is presented as a drastic example in the way it deals with homosexual service members. In other contexts, the KACC compares the issue of gay soldiers with that of the security threat posed by North Korea: "The issue of homosexuality in the army is a matter to be more vigilant about than the North Korean nuclear issue" (KACC 2014, March 19). Such hyperbolic statements are used to substantiate the alleged 'existential threat' emanating from queer soldiers in the army. The geopolitical conflict – on the military level, but also on the ideological level between South Korea and North Korea in particular – combines well with the movement's anti-LGBT fearmongering. With these securitizing moves, the anti-LGBT movement tries to make relevant audiences accept their threat claims (cf. Buzan et al. 2022, 25). The most important parts of the audience are, of course, lawmakers and judges, but also high-level military representatives, since they are the ones potentially performing countermeasures proposed by the securitizing actor. "If a given type of threat is persistent or recurrent, it is no surprise to find that the response and sense of urgency become institutionalized" (Buzan et al. 2022, 27). While one cannot discern clear-cut causalities between the activities of the anti-LGBT movement and the way decision makers act, I suppose that the constant reinvigoration of alleged LGBT threats to national security does leave its marks on political, judicial, and organizational decisions.

One if not the crucial demand of the anti-LGBT movement is the preservation of article 92(6) of the Military Criminal Code. In fact, the Constitutional Court has upheld its constitutionality so far. This provision does not only concern security in the traditional sense but also, as hinted at above, but also defines further aspects as threatening, that is, the alleged spread of homosexuality and other 'non-traditional' types of gender identities within the military. Anti-LGBT activists create an odd narrative of how soldiers are allegedly put in danger due to the hierarchical and homosocial character of the army, as displayed in the following press statement.

> The military consists of vertical human relationships in strict upper and lower orders, and has an environment in which a large number of vigorous young male conscripts live in closed groups for a long time, with no way to smoothly resolve sexual desires with the opposite sex. Therefore, compared to the general society, abnormal sexual bargaining between people of the same sex is significantly more likely to occur than sexual encounters between people of the opposite sex. (Cited in Yu, Yŏng-dae 2016, July 13)

In another strongly worded press release, the KACC problematizes the claim that consensual sex between men should not be subject to judicial persecution – a claim made by agents of "desecuritization" (Buzan et al. 2022, 29) such as the NGO *Center of Military Human Rights Korea* (*kun in'gwŏn sent'ŏ*). But the KACC goes even further, trying to create fear among parents who have conscripted children in the army and demanding that military officials proactively crack down on homosexuals in the army.

> Even if there is a so-called 'consensus', it is very dangerous to think that everything is just as soon as consensus is reached. If so, is it possible to commit a felony such as a crime or a murder by 'consensus'? When homosexual sex crimes occur within the military, the thing we have to worry most about is the parents who send their children to the army. Parents sent their children to the army to fulfill their sacred 'duty of defense', not to be asked to be homosexual by their superiors or senior soldiers, or to be sacrificed by same-sex sexual violence. If this is not prevented, what kind of parents would want to send their children to the army? [...] Our army must constantly track down homosexuals in the army, without an inch of error, fear or hesitation, and isolate them in the military organization. This is because homosexuality will ultimately harm the nation and its people. (KACC 2017, April 25)

The demand to actively track down gay soldiers within the Korean military was indeed fulfilled by military staff. The persecution of male soldiers who were accused of having sex with other men increased significantly in 2017, when 29 soldiers were investigated. This "gay soldier witch-hunt", as the Center for Military Human Rights (2019, 1) called it, was bolstered by Kukmin Daily as well. In fact, one could argue that it was this daily newspaper that initiated the renewed application of article 92(6) in the first place. Paek Sang-hyŏn, a Kukmin Daily journalist who frequently covers anti-LGBT content, published an article in June 2016 scandalizing the fact that soldiers used a gay dating app, and especially, that one soldier used an explicit photo of himself that is presumed to be taken inside military premises (Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2016, July 11). When in May of the following year, a soldier was sentenced to two years of prison for having had gay sex, Kukmin Daily welcomed this conviction, writing that homosexuality should never be tolerated in the army (Kukmin Daily 2017, May 24).

The securitizing efforts of the anti-LGBT movement thus proved 'fruitful', yielding the concrete result that military officials resumed the active persecution of gay soldiers in the Korean army based on article 92(6) of the Military Criminal Code – a provision that had actually not been applied at all for a long time. The securitization moves of anti-LGBT activists had, and continue having grave legal and personal consequences for gay soldiers. The court sentences, I argue, play into the hands of the anti-LGBT movement,

since they can be interpreted as an official, legal proof of the alleged danger of homosexuality for the army and for the nation as a whole. It is not so clear, however, that this perspective will prevail after all. In April 2022, the Constitutional Court changed its own interpretation of article 92(6) to a certain extent, retracting the sentences against two gay soldiers who had had consensual sex outside the barracks (Choe, Sang-Hun 2022, April 21). This decision was taken in the course of desecuritizing efforts of the Center for Military Human Rights and other pro-LGBT civil society groups. They provided legal and moral support and were thus able to chalk up this partial, yet important victory against the vilifying activities of anti-LGBT actors. It is to be expected, however, that the anti-LGBT movement will continue exploiting the 'potential' of securitizing LGBT issues in relation to the military, as well as in other societal areas, for they serve their deliberate construction of in and outgroups, as the next section shall demonstrate.[4]

7.3   'Us' versus 'them': boundary work and identity shift

Attributing threat to LGBT issues is not only done to create fear and a sense of urgency to counteract among the general public. It also serves to construct or refine collective identities. Through the attribution of threat, activists determine opponents and, consequently, provoke conflict. Alberto Melucci (1995, 47) argues that conflict strengthens internal solidarity, or what Snow and Corrigall-Brown (2015: 175) call a "shared sense of 'one-ness' or 'we-ness'". Self-identification and the identification of imagined or actual 'others' are crucial for collective identity (Melucci 1995, 47; Snow & Corrigall-Brown 2015, 175). In turn, a strong collective identity is important for the establishment of social movements and sustainable participation in the first place (Gamson 1991, 27). Creating threats around LGBT issues also contribute to other aspects that Melucci (1995, 44f.) defines as key elements of collective identity: the shared cognition of goals, that is, to make the 'LGBT threat' disappear, and emotional involvement associated with fear, which further reinforces the sense of unity.

   This section demonstrates that two social mechanisms in particular can be observed in relation to the collective identity of the anti-LGBT movement – or rather, concerning its endeavors in relation to collective identity: boundary work and identity shift. *Boundary work* "involves creating a reciprocal identification between group members that simultaneously expresses commonalities with and differences from reference groups" (Flesher Fominaya 2019, 435). This is the typical creation of a collective 'us' versus a collec-

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4   Another outgroup within the Korean military are trans servicemembers. The recent tragic case of Byun Hee-soo (*Pyŏn Hŭi-su*) is indicative in this respect. Sergeant Byun had undergone a sex-transition surgery in late 2019 and subsequently had her legal gender officially changed. The Korean army, however, declared her mentally and physically ill and thus unfit to continue working in the military. Byun did not accept her dismissal and, with the help of the NGO *Center of Military Human Rights Korea*, filed a lawsuit against this decision and went public – making her the first openly trans soldier in Korea. In October 2021, the Taejŏn District Court ruled that the discharge of Byun was invalid. Byun Hee-soo, however, was not able to witness the result of the lawsuit. She had committed suicide half a year before the court decision (Lee, Jian 2021, October 7).

tive 'them'.[5] In this context, Ruth Wodak (2015, 28) speaks of "negative identities", that is, identity construction aiming at "contrasting 'our community' with dangerous 'others'", which also creates new social divides (ibid., 21). *Identity shift* is defined as the "formation of new identities within challenging groups whose coordinated action brings them together and reveals their commonalities." (Tilly & Tarrow 2015, 37). I slightly modify this definition by combining it with yet another mechanism, *appropriation*. In the context of identity shift, appropriation involves one newly emerging actor trying to reorient an existing group to a new conception of its collective purpose without necessarily altering a pre-existing collective identity in its entirety (cf. McAdam et al. 2001, 316). I argue that a group of actors within the Protestant Right 'discovered' the topic of LGBT rights and then increasingly engaged in identity work in order to change collective identity in a way to actively include hostility towards LGBT-related themes. In this sense, appropriation means (re)activating pre-existing negative attitudes so that they become, in Gramscian terms, an active part of 'common sense' and thus exploitable for sociopolitical contention.

Depending on the public addressed, the strategic outlook of change agents, and environmental factors, this study discerns three ways of attempts at identity shift, which are broadly based on Mahoney and Thelen's (2009) theory on gradual institutional change:

- *Layering*, the introduction of components of collective identity on top of or alongside existing ones;
- *Drift*, the changed impact of existing components of collective identity due to shifts in the environment; and
- *Conversion*, the changed enactment of existing components of collective identity due to their strategic redeployment.

All these three ways of identity change have an element of dynamic continuity. Layering, for example, can be observed in what I describe as *bricolage* – the combination of existing attitudes such as anti-communism with new ones. Drift and conversion also build upon 'old' identity components, namely the negative sentiments on homosexuality in Korean society in general, and in Protestantism in particular. The latter two mechanisms differ in terms of whether structure or agency prevail. While identity change in the form of 'drift' is induced due to external factors, 'conversion' is a process actively shaped by change agents. As I will show, drift and conversion are not easy to differentiate; most likely, they take effect side by side. It is, however, to be expected that conversion is especially effective in contexts where change agents have extensive authority, for instance, as church leaders of a Protestant denomination.

Let me point out that observing identity change is an intricate matter. Therefore, I do not describe or explain actual identity change here, but rather focus on the ways the anti-LGBT movement engages in framing in order to reach the goal of making LGBT issues

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5   As chapter 12 will elaborate, boundary work is not only present in relation to 'apparently' opposing forces, but also *within* Korean Protestantism and even within the Protestant Right, where conflicts on how to deal with LGBT issues have emerged in recent years.

contentious and, ultimately, to have anti-LGBT sentiments engrained in people's common sense. This section thus gives an insight into the identity framing of the anti-LGBT movement, having foci: (1) framings which are geared to legitimize anti-LGBT activities by suggesting that a vast majority of people is against LGBT rights, (2) presenting Christians as 'victims', while at the same time claiming that (3) only Protestants can, and do protect Korea against alleged LGBT-related dangers.

Inciting 'the' majority versus a minority

Besides the fearmongering symbolic frames, which are intended to create the image of chaos, collapse, and crisis related to LGBT topics, the second-most used single frame suggests that the majority of Koreans is against homosexuality and LGBT-related laws and that these issues are contrary to the national sentiment (cf. Table 7). Statements in this direction look like this: "it is more dangerous to destroy the order of the majority than to pursue the happiness of the few", writes the Christian Council of Korea (CCK) in a press statement demanding the NHRCK withdraw its decision that certain websites with LGBT content are not harmful for youth (cited in Yu, Yŏng-dae 2003, April 7). Depicting homosexuals as a very small minority whose needs and demands are presented as less relevant than the allegedly opposing opinion of a purported majority is imbued in many topics problematized by the anti-LGBT movement, such as the human rights of sexual minorities: "It is wrong to ignore the human rights of the majority in the name of protecting the human rights of the minoritarian homosexuals" (cited in Kim Chae-san 2016, February 28). Attacks against institutions that support LGBT rights are also often part of this kind of framing: "The National Human Rights Commission only protects the human rights of immoral minorities and ignores the human rights of many people who oppose it. [...] Don't destroy morality and ethics anymore in the name of human rights" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2019, January 23).[6] The framing thus does not only denounce the alleged neglect of the majority's opinion, but also – again – claims that the majority is, or may be harmed if it succumbs to the minority and its 'excessive' demands.

By playing off an unspecified majority against a minority, LGBT individuals are portrayed as a group unworthy, or undeserving of having equal rights, let alone of enjoying lives free of discrimination (cf. Herman 1996). Here, anti-LGBT activists display a questionable understanding of human rights, which are generally considered as being universal. Actors from the Protestant Right, however, frequently claim that any pro-LGBT measure and law needs to reach public consensus first – a consensus which, the argument goes, does not exist in Korea. Ahead of the presidential election in 2017, the KACC wrote a press statement, in which it cast doubt on the stance of presidential candidate and later president Moon Jae-in on LGBT issues. The latter had said in a TV debate that he opposed homosexuality. The KACC, however, fears that this may not be true and therefore reminds Moon of the lacking consensus on pro-LGBT issues and of the grave consequences for most people should pro-LGBT legislation be introduced:

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6   For the way the anti-LGBT treats the topic of human rights or rights in general, see also chapter 8.1 on framing contests.

> [..] sexuality is a matter of personal conscience and choice. If the state provides rights and power to homosexuals, this is not the protection of privacy but interference in privacy and therefore amounts to oppression of the vast majority of people, and it does not fit the emotions, humanity, and social consensus of the people. (KACC 2017, April 28)

The talk of needing to reach a social consensus first creates the image of a democratic concern. In a press conference against the Seoul Human Rights Charter, Christian groups demanded the resignation of the preparatory citizens' committee for acting "undemocratically" by pushing ahead with the charter and thereby ignoring the opinions of the majority of Seoul citizens (Yu, Yŏng-dae 2014, November 28). According to this frame, lawmakers do not have the right to pass or change legislation or ordinances that go against the public opinion, social consensus, the 'majority' – or what is presented as such. While confounding representative and direct models of democracy here, taking recourse to public opinion is of course a powerful means to influence the political process when suggesting that challenging groups must win the sympathy of the majority of people first. Siwoo (2018, 141–149) shows that Korean politicians have in fact adopted the focus on societal consensus formation as a way of denying or avoiding political responsibility – also for anti-queer hate and discrimination. Former Seoul mayor Park Won-soon and vice-mayor Im Chong-sŏl, for example, put off LGBT activists by arguing that the public has to be convinced first. This strategy of postponement was met with resistance from queer activists. The official motto of the Seoul Queer Culture Festival 2017 was evidence for this: "There is no later, we [demand] change now" ("*najung-ŭn opta, chigŭm uri pakkunda*") (Siwoo 2018, 154).

The deliberate construction of ingroups and outgroups, of an alleged majority versus the LGBT minority has thus diffused successfully from the Protestant Right's anti-LGBT framing efforts to political circles. But how does the anti-LGBT movement substantiate their claims? Unsurprisingly, they use data from public opinion polls. Such data is frequently used at protest events and is part of the action repertoire of anti-LGBT actors. They commission opinion surveys themselves and hold press conferences to present the results. The KACC, for instance, commonly uses survey data in its press releases. Consider the following quotation, which criticizes the demand by progressive women's groups to include education on sexual minorities in school curricula.

> It is argued that the prohibition of discrimination against homosexuals and transgender people should be taught in sex education classes, but the issue of the prohibition of discrimination against homosexuality has not reached public consensus. In several public opinion surveys, nearly 80 percent of Koreans oppose homosexuality. In a digital survey by a daily newspaper, this number reaches 99 percent. Still, insisting on teaching this is no different from the idea of ignoring the sound ethics and social concerns of the entire nation. (KACC 2015, August 26)

While the KACC claims that very high numbers of people are against homosexuality according to surveys, it remains unclear where the data stems from and, more importantly, if the methodology of the quoted survey is reliable. The second percentage, 99 percent,

seems to be unlikely, especially when considering that digital surveys often lack representativity. Other surveys directly commissioned by anti-LGBT organizations display similar methodological problems. A survey conducted for the group *People's Solidarity for a Healthy Society* holds that 82.9 percent of Seoul citizens opposed the Seoul Queer Culture Festival. However, the question and answer possibilities were highly biased, potentially influencing the way survey participants responded. One question of the survey read like this: "What do you think about the homosexuals' queer festival, which is controversial due to excessive exposure and the sale and exhibition of adult goods?", with the answer options being "It is inappropriate because it is a public place for citizens and children", and "Excessive exposure and obscene performances are self-expression, so it is okay" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2018, July 12).

In all this, the anti-LGBT movement ignores or conceals the fact that other, arguably more objective survey data point in another direction. The Pew Research Center, for example, has continually surveyed public opinion on homosexuality in Korea and many other countries worldwide. The results for South Korea are illustrated in Table 8 below. The numbers of people saying that homosexuality should be accepted by society have increased from 25 percent in 2002 to 44 percent in 2019. Despite the fact that are majority of people still thought that one should not accept homosexuality (53 percent in 2019), the increase of accepting voices is remarkable. When including other demographic factors into the analysis, the picture of acceptance diversifies. There are massive divides in terms of age, political leaning, religiosity, and gender. 79 percent of people aged 18–29 have favorable views on homosexuality, but only 23 percent of people older than 50 think the same way. A similarly large chasm exists between people leaning to the political left (67% acceptance) as against those on the right political spectrum (28%, after all). The differences in these two categories are the highest among the 34 countries surveyed by the Pew Research Center. The second highest divide (after Israel) can be found in the area of religion. Only 22 percent of people who say that religion is very important to them think that homosexuality should be met with acceptance in contrast to 62 percent who are not or less religious.

Table 8: Acceptance of homosexuality in South Korea (Pew Research Center 2019)[a]

Percent who say that homosexuality should be accepted over time				
2002	2007	2013	2019	'02–'19 change
25%	18%	39%	44%	+19
Percent who say that homosexuality should be accepted by age cohort (2019)				
18–29	30–49	50+	Youngest–oldest difference	
79%	51%	23%	+56	

Percent who say that homosexuality should be accepted <u>by political leaning</u> (left–right) (2019)			
Left	Center	Right	Difference
67%	51%	28%	+39

Percent who say that homosexuality should be accepted <u>by importance of religion</u> (2019)		
Religion is very important	Religion is NOT very important	Difference
22%	62%	+38

Percent who say that homosexuality should be accepted <u>by gender</u> (2019)		
Men	Women	Difference
37%	51%	+14

[a] The surveys were commissioned by the Pew Research Center; Jacob Poushter and Nicholas Kent (2019) are the authors of the 2019 report where the data presented here stems from.

While these data show improvements in the public opinion on homosexuality, they also reveal a significant level of polarization on this very topic. One could on the one hand say that the efforts of the anti-LGBT movement to convince large parts of the general public of the danger of LGBT issues has not proven very effective after all. The high level of acceptance found in young people may raise the hopes that future generations of queer people will have to fear less hostility – should there be a cohort effect. On the other hand, the polarization could be an effect of anti-LGBT activism, which plays into the hands of the Protestant Right. Religious people leaning to the right-wing political spectrum may have developed into a secure support basis of anti-LGBT activities, featuring a consolidated hostile perception of homosexuality and related topics. Studies by Timothy Rich and others confirm this analysis, showing that Protestants in particular have consistently been less supportive of homosexual issues (Rich et al. 2012; Rich 2017).

While it is difficult to exactly quantify this consolidated support base of 'hardliners', I argue that they do not represent the majority of Koreans, as evinced by the survey data just shown. As we have seen, however, the framing of the anti-LGBT movement suggests the opposite. Often, anti-LGBT activists resort to blatant exaggerations to make current and potential adherents believe that the vast majority of Koreans opposes LGBT rights. They claim that they speak in the name of basically all people, thus extremely overstating their alleged solidarity basis. This corresponds to populist strategies, which commonly include the claim of speaking for an alleged 'silent majority (Minkenberg 2011, 506). When the *National Institute of Korean Language* changed the definition of 'love' in a dictionary to also include same-sex couples, the fiery reaction of anti-LGBT actors also involved such questionable claims, specifically on the numbers of homosexuals and heterosexuals in Korea.

> At present, the percentage of homosexuals in Korea is about 0.1 percent. If so, can the feelings and values of 99.9 percent of the people be ignored for 0.1 percent? Ignoring the people's social wisdom and sentiment when interpreting the words we use on a daily basis is never okay. (KACC 2014, April 22)

On another occasion, similarly exaggerated assertions were made by suggesting that *all* residents of Kyŏnggi Province were against an LGBT-related policy, the province's *Gender Equality Ordinance*: "The Democratic Party of Korea is opposing God's absolute sovereignty and creative order by revising the Gender Equality Ordinance in the Kyŏnggi Provincial Assembly, ignoring the absolute opposition of 13.5 million Kyŏnggi residents" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2019, October 20). The speaker does not only co-opt the population of a whole province – which in fact counts about 13.5 million inhabitants – for anti-LGBT purposes, but also for a homophobic version of Christianity. Such hyperbolic statements may appear absurd to non-Christian bystanders, but they may very well invigorate conservative or fundamentalist Christians with even more fervor. The next section demonstrates how the 'Christian card' is played out in the creation of an imagined 'us' against an evil 'them'.

Using victimhood frames

Inciting majoritarian groups against minorities does not only concern matters of public opinion or an alleged lack of democratic legitimacy. Using such frames also – again – serves to create threats of the kind that a powerful minority is allegedly plotting against the rights and interests of the majority of people, with the majority ultimately falling victim to these schemes. Such victimization narratives are increasingly used by right-wing actors worldwide. Lee Bebout (2019, 66) argues, for example, that the US political right uses narratives of a "faux-victim status" to legitimize their exclusionary politics, but also to counteract a (felt) loss of power and esteem, a strategy he calls "weaponized victimhood". "While social justice movements have long pointed to injustice to achieve equality, those that deploy weaponized victimhood do so to maintain their positions in a social hierarchy" (Bebout 2019, 66). Claims of human rights violations have also entered the repertoire of contention of right-wing actors, as Ron Dudai's (2017) study on actors from the Israeli right-wing camp demonstrates. The "victimhood work" he identifies entails a purported underdog status and an anti-establishment ethos to gain moral authority and to substantiate self-justification. In divided societies, there can even be a dynamic of "competitive victimhood", such as in the case of the Israel-Palestine conflict (Dudai 2017, 876). Similar dynamics will be treated in chapter 8.1, in a section on framing contests, especially in terms of human rights claims.[7]

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7   In religious contexts, self-victimization is often conflated with the concept martyrdom. From a sociological perspective, a martyr can be defined as follows: "The martyr will be seen as a member of a suppressed group who, when given opportunity to renounce aspects of his or her group's code, willingly submits to suffering and death rather than forsake a conviction" (Weiner & Weiner 1990, 9). Extreme right groups also use narratives of self-sacrifice and martyrdom (Koehler 2020). Be that as it may, this study will not make use of this concept. In contemporary discussions, martyrdom is mostly used in relation to religiously motivated terrorism and suicide attacks. This focus

The Korean anti-LGBT movement uses victimhood frames in two ways. First, anti-LGBT actors accuse queer people, activists, and their supporters of deploying victimization narratives while, secondly, also creating an image of victimhood for themselves. This double-track strategy may as well be regarded as a competition over who is the 'greater' victim and therefore worthy of recognition. At the very beginning of this overall section, we have seen such a reproach by an important anti-LGBT activist, Yi Su-jin: "homosexuals are suing for the legalization of same-sex marriage with the image of the weak and the victim" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2016, June 8). Other anti-LGBT actors criticize that they are accused of discrimination and hatred against LGBT people, which they claim is just a strategy to block legitimate criticism. Kil Wŏn-p'yŏng, another central figure of the anti-LGBT movement, said the following at a press conference, demanding to delete the term 'sexual orientation' from the NHRCK Law: "The 'hate logic', which unconditionally bans hatred, is a dictatorial ideology that suppresses the freedom of conscience, ideology, academia, and religion" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2019, November 20). Using strong wording, he thus denies that the anti-LGBT movement acts in ways that could be perceived as hateful behavior, while at the same time denouncing alleged infringements on other people's rights. The purported "hate logic" is presented as a victimization strategy that he claims is not only used by LGBT groups, but also enforced by public institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission of Korea.

Actors within the Protestant Right assert that terms such as 'hate', 'discrimination', but also 'diversity' are used by progressive activists and politicians to introduce 'wrong cultures' into Korea. When the municipal council of Puch'ŏn, a city in the suburbs of Seoul, tried to pass a *Multiculturalism Ordinance* (*munhwa tayangsŏng chorye*) in 2019, anti-LGBT activists immediately mounted the barricades against this policy proposal, criticizing the alleged promotion and support of homosexuality should the ordinance be introduced. Despite the fact that the ordinance did not include any mention of homosexuality or related terms, the ordinance was eventually withdrawn owing to the massive pressure from anti-LGBT groups. Ko Yŏng-il, head of the *Freedom and Human Rights Research Center* (*chayu-wa in'gwŏn yŏn'guso*) describes the alleged strategy of instilling existing concepts with new meanings as follows:

> Terms such as equality, discrimination, diversity, and hatred, which are claimed by advocates and promoters of homosexuality, are used as a kind of terminology strategy, but there is a big difference between these concepts and the general public's thinking. […] There are attempts to accept wrong cultures such as homosexuality and radical Islam through using such ambiguous terms, which we should actively block. (Cited in Paek Sang-hyŏn 2019, June 25)

What Ko Yŏng-il omits here is the fact that the anti-LGBT activists do the exact same thing they accuse others of. They extend the interpretation of existing concepts to suggest that whenever terms like multiculturalism come up in political contexts, what is ac-

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on 'dying for a cause' does not fit the Korean anti-LGBT movement, nor does the focus on suffering alone. The term 'martyrdom' is not used by activists and rather than merely concentrating on suppression, the movement also prominently highlights its strength and agency, as the following section shall demonstrate.

tually meant is the promotion of homosexuality. They claim that bills on gender equality, human rights, and multiculturalism in fact have the central aim of codifying LGBT rights through the backdoor, despite the fact that many of these proposals have no direct connection to sexual orientation or gender identity protection. This effort to attach additional semantic levels to existing terms is a case of frame amplification.

The concrete victimization framing reveals similar double standards: the movement creates an image of oppression, injustice, and victimhood especially of Christians and Christian churches while denying this status to LGBT people – even claiming that the latter deliberately fashion this image of vulnerability and exclusion. It may be that it is a strategic move in the form of victim blaming to distract attention from the fact that the Protestant Right actively and openly shows hostility towards LGBT people in Korea. I argue, however, that victimhood framing mainly has the purpose of closing the ranks of those opposing LGBT rights within the Protestant Right in particular. It is another example of creating competition between an 'us' and a 'them'.

A frame that is frequently used by anti-LGBT activists is that of 'reverse discrimination'. This storyline includes the claim that pro-LGBT legislation – first and foremost the anti-discrimination law – and any support for LGBT people would lead to disadvantages for the rest of the people. The *Esther Prayer Movement* (*esŭdŏ kido undong*) is a particularly active anti-LGBT group. In 2013, its head, Yi Yong-hŭi, criticized the Sŏngbuk District Office in Seoul for supporting the establishment of an LGBT counseling center. "It is wrong to use the Seoul Metropolitan Government's budget to advocate and promote homosexuality. [...] The human rights of most citizens will be reversely discriminated against under the pretext of promoting the human rights of sexual minorities" (cited in Yu, Yŏng-dae 2013, July 3). Especially Christians are claimed to be threatened by pro-LGBT developments in politics and society. At the start-off event of the newly formed *Korean Church Council for Countermeasures against Homosexuality* (*han'guk kyohoe tongsŏngae taech'aek hyŏbŭihoe*), So Kang-sŏk, chief pastor at the large *New Eden Church*, denounced an allegedly anti-Christian atmosphere. "The logics of supporting and promoting homosexuality and anti-Christian sentiments are surging like a tsunami to destroy the pastoral ecosystem of Korean churches" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2016, December 19). Attempts at passing a comprehensive anti-discrimination law in particular are framed as threats for living one's Christian faith, creating the fear that one could get legally punished if sticking to one's 'Christian' anti-LGBT attitude. At a meeting of Christian university presidents, where also the anti-discrimination law was a topic, one lecturer, the lawyer Yi T'ae-hŭi, put it like this:

> As soon as homosexuality is normalized, the Bible will be reduced to an abnormal book, and churches and Christians will become an abnormal group. [...] If this happens, pastors and Christians must bear legal punishment and restrictions if they want to live according to Biblical teachings. The Biblical truth will be distorted into teachings against human rights [of Christians] and for the promotion of discrimination [against Christians], and anti-Christian sentiments will spread in our society. (Cited in Kim, A-yŏng 2015, June 8).

Also in the context of victimization, the frames used by anti-LGBT activists work with hyperbolic statements, suggesting as in the above quote that the Bible would be censored or even entirely forbidden, that people of Christian faith would have to fear draconic punishments for advocating the 'sinfulness' of homosexuality, and that Christianity as a whole would be pushed to the margins of society. In short, the anti-LGBT movement frames pro-LGBT laws and pro-LGBT societal developments as a danger to religious freedom. The movement presents itself as a victim, too, as expounded by Cho Yŏng-gil, a lawyer and leading anti-LGBT activist:

> The core of the anti-discrimination law, which supports homosexuality, is to ban anti-gay activities. […] If it is declared illegal to call homosexuality a sin as outlined in the Bible and if you then say it is a sin, you will be punished and religious freedom will be hindered. (Cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2016, June 7)

Framing Christian churches and believers as victims is not only done in relation to LGBT issues in the strict sense. The Protestant Right often denounces infringements on their privileges and interests and generally accuses politicians, government institutions, and non-Christian parts of society as having a penchant for 'Christian bashing'. When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in early 2020, the *Communion of Churches in Korea* (CCIK) demanded to "stop the oppression of churches", accusing the government of a biased position for restricting church services without also prohibiting the Seoul Queer Culture Festival (SQCF): "The state does not have the authority to enforce and suppress people's religious activities. […] The government and local governments should stop threatening Korean churches" (cited in Ch'oe Ki-yŏng 2020, March 25). Eventually, the SQCF was postponed from June to September and took place entirely online. In another case, the NHRCK came under fire for a change in its leadership team. The newly elected national government under President Moon Jae-in had appointed a new human rights commissioner, whose position had previously been filled by a person of Christian faith during the two conservative administrations. The KACC criticized this nomination, fearing that the move may be part of a strategy to rashly introduce the anti-discrimination law and promote homosexuality. "This [appointment] amounts to depriving Christianity of its important role, failing to grant Christianity respectful treatment, and disregarding Christianity. It seems to mean to exclude the religious world" (KACC 2018, January 30).

These examples demonstrate that claims of oppression, reverse discrimination, and deprivation of rights have entered the action repertoire of the Protestant Right. Han Ch'ae-yun (2017) and Siwoo (2018) show that, in fact, Korean Protestantism finds itself in a state of crisis due to shrinking membership, and scandals such embezzlement or handing down churches from father to son. The two researchers argue that Protestant churches do not really tackle these problematic issues, but rather chose the anti-LGBT movement as a means to overcome the crisis. Siwoo (2017, 96) assumes that by doing so, they even aggravate the crisis, for there is still an absence of genuine self-examination and open and critical discussion. While I agree with the general line of this argument, I am not convinced that it is only about internal conflict management. Han also points to the political leverage that the creation of an 'external enemy' intends to achieve. I agree with this perspective on the importance of political influence for the Protestant Right,

but argue that we can only make sense of this when taking a close look at the conundrum of scapegoating, victim blaming, self-victimization, and displays of strength. The latter aspect is of particular importance. The actual dire situation of Korean churches is combined with a deliberately constructed image of oppression in order to consolidate or reinforce unity among Christians – also in relation to the common LGBT opponent. However, I argue that this form of identity formation, or rather identity shift is only effective when this display of alleged victimhood is accompanied by a simultaneous show-off of power and assertiveness. The mere claim of being a victim due to external grievances may already serve to close the ranks and create a sense of urgency. Yet, in order not to give the impression of being powerless or driven into a corner, demonstrating (and not only having) agency is crucial. This insight is also present in the framing endeavors of anti-LGBT activists, as the next section shall describe.

Framing the Protestant Right as a 'savior'

Besides identifying and attributing problems (diagnostic framing), and providing solutions for said problems (prognostic framing), one of the core framing tasks for a social movement according to Benford and Snow (2000) is to offer a motive for taking action. This *motivational framing* "provides a 'call to arms' or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action" (Benford & Snow 2000, 617). Benford (1993) claims that in order to reach this goal, actors resort to four types of vocabularies of motive, which they use to increase the issue's salience with potential adherents. These vocabularies refer to severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety or duty. The first two types, severity and urgency, can be observed in the – often hyperbolic – framings in the areas of threat attribution and victimization seen in the previous sections (cf. also chapter 8.2). In order to mobilize effectively, however, framing agents also need to invoke the agency that they have or can potentially exert. Anti-LGBT activists in fact refer to Protestant churches as a crucial actor in this respect, one who goes to great lengths to struggle against grievances, also pointing out the duty and efficacy of so doing.

Many of the motivational frames used by anti-LGBT activists have an appellative character: "In an era where vicious human rights dictatorships are rampant, Christians should take the lead in protecting the truth, preventing social diseases and protecting the health of the people" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2018, November 25). Other statements take the shape of promises and expressions of willpower, like the following promise made by Pastor So Kang-sŏk: "We will do our best to protect the safety of the citizens of the Republic of Korea and the Korean churches from homosexuality" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2015, September 7). Another activist, Han Hyo-gwan, head of the group *People's Solidarity for a Healthy Society*, claimed: "We will fight to the end without compromise to protect the freedom of expression, conscience, thought and religion of the people" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2018, October 12). Activists also often refer to the success stories they have been able to achieve like in the following quote. "So far, conscientious Christian efforts have prevented the attempts to enact an anti-discrimination law" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2017, June 2).

When framing the role and actions of Korean Protestants as efficacious and dutiful in terms of preventing equal rights for LGBT people, activists frequently credit this

sense of obligation to their historical legacies. The Presbyterian *T'onghap* denomination, for example, emphasized its continuous sense responsibility in the following statement directed against homosexuality:

> Since its foundation in 1912, our General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (*T'onghap*) has faithfully defended the Bible and Christian traditions, and has been striving to exert ethical, social, and political influence by implementing social movements such as the non-smoking and piety movements. Our General Assembly will take on the public responsibility to build the ethical foundation of the state and the national community by expressing its position on the problem of homosexuality. (Cited in Kim Tong-yŏp 2014, April 9)

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian *T'onghap* denomination here combines its Christian mission with a political one and justifies its political actions – also, but not exclusively, against homosexuality – by referring to its volition to uphold sound ethics in Korea. In another press statement, the KACC also suggests such a historical continuity, making a link between the Protestants' fight against Japanese colonial rule and the present-day struggles against LGBT-related grievances.

> The Korean Church was a patriotic religion from the early days of the gospel tradition and its spirit must be succeeded. The Korean church has devoted itself to the restoration of national sovereignty during the Japanese colonial period in the dark and challenging last century. […] This was a patriotic manifestation in that the national and Christian spirits could not be taken away by Japanese ghosts. However, the cost was an indescribable and divisive pain. We can take great pride in the fact that the sacrifice of Christianity is a small contribution to the freedom of the Republic of Korea today. It is also a common heritage of our society. Also now, we protect the soundness of the social spirit, we care for the growing generations, we champion a right future for our nation and therefore oppose homosexuality. We have to respect the human rights and freedoms of individual homosexuals, but it would be very unfortunate if this eventually led to our own misfortunes and eventually broke down the sound morality of our society. In addition, it is already a well-known fact that the public opinion is against the anti-discrimination law, which would result in suppressing the majority for the human rights of minorities. (KACC 2013, May 24)

The Korean Association of Church Communication implies a connection between patriotism and anti-LGBT activities, also by referencing past heroic deeds of Protestants. This historical account is, however, inaccurate. After the March 1st independence movement in 1919, the Protestant community in Korea has not engaged further in nationalistic endeavors. In fact, many prominent Christian figures even became collaborators of the Japanese colonial regime (Park, Chung-shin 2003, 156). Also in other instances, actors of the Protestant Right conceal their dark past, for example, when accusing others of 'dictatorial' excesses while hiding away their own active role in the South Korean post-colonial authoritarian regimes (Park, Chung-shin 2007). Anti-LGBT activists often refer to South Korea's first president Rhee Syngman, his Christian background, and the involvement of Protestants in his government (cf. also Park, Chung-shin 2003), and apparently take

pride in this legacy. I argue that they do this to demonstrate the ways in which Protestants have been crucial to the socio-political development of Korea. They claim good deeds for themselves and vow to continue to protect Korea – also against newly emerging threats. From a Christian perspective, they present themselves as a unique 'savior' who unveils queer 'ruses' and, ultimately, is the only one able to defend not just the churches, but the nation as a whole.

Discussion: 'conversion' and 'drift' in attempts at identity shift

The othering strategy of the anti-LGBT movement seems like a tightrope walk. The framing alternates between assertions of representing the majority on the one hand, and victimhood claims on the other. Then again, the Protestant Right presents itself as an efficacious and historically proven actor against alleged bad influences on Korea. Along with the attribution of threat expounded in the previous subchapter, this strategy serves to create boundaries between a collective 'us' and an opponent 'them'. The latter is being vilified and presented as a minority unworthy of equal rights since it purportedly puts the vast majority of people in danger. The anti-LGBT movement strives to change the perception about LGBT people in a way to make them look threatening. However, it is not only the opponent's character that movement activists wish to alter in people's perception. Importantly, they also aim for identity changes within their own constituency and among bystanders whom they wish to convince of their political goals.

We can divide the addressees of the identity shift strategy of the anti-LGBT movement in two broad groups: Christians, most likely those with a conservative outlook on their faith, and the (non-Christian) general public. Figure 5 summarizes how such identity work is performed. I argue that anti-LGBT activists actively try to appropriate people for their purposes by reinvigorating elements of their identity that had been dormant or, in any case, not regarded as a matter of socio-political importance. Antonio Gramsci's concept of *common sense* (*senso comune*) helps us understand how such an appropriation proceeds. Gramsci's model of gaining hegemony, and, ideally, achieving political power, centrally relies on transforming people's common sense, that is, reconfiguring the "heterogeneous beliefs people arrive at not through critical reflection, but encounter as already existing, self-evident truths" (Crehan 2016, x). These popular conceptions of the world can be exploited by change agents who employ existing elements from common sense and recast them in a way that serves their purposes. They form a coherent body of thought – in Gramscian terminology 'good sense' (*buon senso*) – that has the goal of convincing and winning over people (cf. Olsaretti 2014, 375). This mode of appropriation has the benefit of building upon relatively familiar parts of people's worldviews, thus avoiding the strenuous process of having to create completely new identity appeals.

Figure 5: Identity shift through 'conversion' and 'drift': different framing strategies depending on the addressee
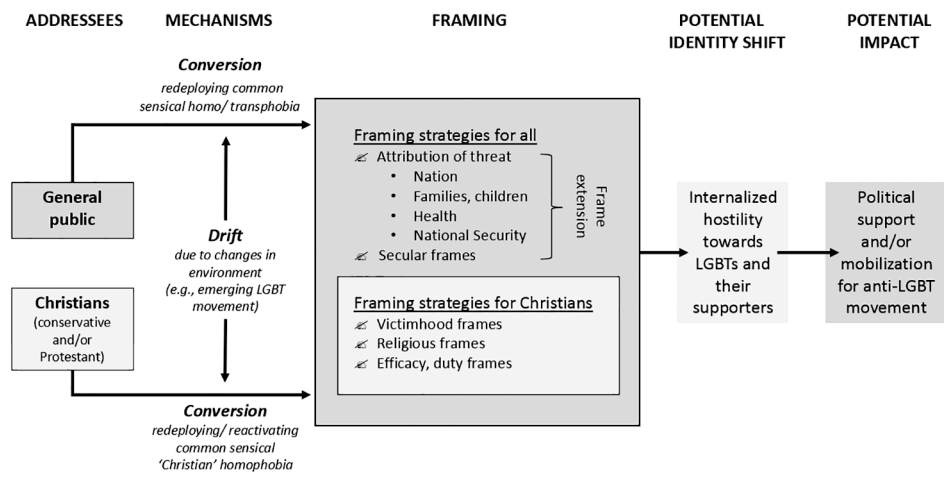
In the case of the identity work of the Korean anti-LGBT movement, we can observe such continuous, yet dynamic aspects. Two main mechanisms help explaining the identity framings demonstrated so far in this chapter: drift and conversion. *Drift* takes place when external changes lead to shifts in the enactment of existing elements of collective identity. While it is possible that this passive form of identity shift takes place in the general public, I argue that it particularly affects people within the Protestant Right who identify LGBT issues as problematic and worth politicizing in the first place. As I have demonstrated in chapter 5, actors within the Protestant Right started to treat LGBT topics in earnest only when LGBT activism emerged, when LGBT concerns gained media attention and, importantly, when pro-LGBT legislation was proposed in the political arena. It is the people who would later become the leading figures of the anti-LGBT movement who first experienced collective identity shift. In the 1990s, the Protestant Right did not show much interest in LGBT themes. But from the early 2000s onwards, conservative Protestant media, church organizations, and leading lay people 'rediscovered' their hostility towards homosexuality and related issues, which they founded in literal interpretations of Biblical texts and anti-gay church teachings. Upon this they subsequently built what would become a powerful anti-LGBT movement.

However, a social movement cannot properly work without people who support its ideals and goals, and who participate in collective action. This is where the *conversion* mechanism enters the stage. It is similar to 'drift' in the sense that existing identity components get enacted in altered ways. But this does not happen passively. Rather, it is a strategic move by change agents who engage in identity framing by redeploying existing elements of identity. This strategy needs different approaches depending on the public addressed. For Christians with a conservative or fundamentalist orientation, religious frames such as pointing out the alleged Biblical condemnation of homosexuality might do the work. Protestants with a strong bonding to their churches may also be intrigued by accounts of Christian victimhood, efficacy, and duty.

For non-Christians, however, such arguments will not work. This is why anti-LGBT activists employ a broader repertoire of threat frames, which ideally have the potential to speak to the entire general public – including conservative Protestants. The anxiety that the anti-LGBT movement intends to create among the general public also have precedents, which activists wish to 'reactivate'. These are not based in moralizing contents as in the case of 'Christian' argumentation, but rather include the strong heteronormative familism in Korea, nationalist sentiments, and a continued unease in terms of security matters. In one of my research interviews, an anti-LGBT activist confirmed that the most effective frames included those on health issues and statistics since they are also convincing for non-Christians (Interview 7). Attitudes, convictions, and fears that are commonly held by supposedly large parts of the South Korean public get resuscitated and realigned in a way to also include hostility towards homosexuality and related topics. In fact, the mechanism of 'conversion' is accompanied by *layering* here: LGBT issues get introduced on top of existing sentiments. This strategy of combining originally unconnected themes is an example of *frame bridging*, which will be covered in detail in the next subchapter on 'bricolage'.

Another framing strategy we can observe here is *frame extension*: anti-LGBT activists present the issue of homosexuality as being relevant to a public beyond the confines of Christianity. For the purpose of also reaching people outside their 'natural' Protestant communities, they engage in secular framing, which potentially resonates with larger publics. As I will show, religious, and secular frames compete within the argumentative repertoire of the anti-LGBT movement (cf. chapter 8.3). The ultimate goal of all these framing efforts is, first, to instill a shift in collective identity so that hostility towards LGBT issues becomes an integral part of people's individual but also collective identities (e.g., as Christians, as Koreans, as people leaning to the political right). Second, if this identity shift is successful, leading activists hope to receive more political support and to mobilize new adherents for concrete movement actions.

It must de doubted, however, that the movement was able to reach out far beyond its traditional Protestant strongholds. As public opinion data show, the overall attitude towards homosexuality has been improving in South Korea over the past two decades.[8] Only Protestants continue to depict very high levels of disapproval. It is true that the movement has been capable of mobilizing impressive numbers of people for signature campaigns and rallies. While data on the composition of participation is largely lacking, I assume that most of the participants are in fact Christians. Chapter 9 will provide some evidence to support this assumption. Despite the 'secular' frames employed in speeches and statements, anti-LGBT protest events continue to have a clearly 'Christian' nature, with prayers and noticeably Christian personnel playing important ceremonial roles. It seems that an identity shift towards integrating anti-LGBT sentiments has first and foremost impacted conservative Protestantism itself. Anti-LGBT activism may have

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8   Some of the pro-LGBT people interviewed for this study are of the opinion that the fierce and partly extremely hostile activism of conservative Protestants has in fact had the unintended reverse effect of rather highlighting the bad situation of LGBT individuals in Korea, which might have led to an ameliorated public opinion and also to an increase in size and activity of the pro-LGBT movement (Interviews 11, 26).

contributed to creating a renewed sense of unity and 'we-ness' in these circles. However, this unity – if existent at all – appears to be rather unstable. There are many opposing desires to be found within the Protestant Right and its anti-LGBT framing strategies, as chapters 8 and 12 shall reveal.

7.4   Dynamic continuity in action: combining 'old' anti-communism with 'new' hostility against LGBTs

As shown above, movement actors draw on historical accounts of the alleged glorious role of Christians in Korean history, for example, against the Japanese colonial regime, to justify present-day socio-political involvement against similar 'evils'. Invoking elements from the past to utilize them for present purposes can be described as a form of dynamic continuity, namely the type that is situated on the temporal and ideologically congruent levels. This is also true for the specific types of identity shift mechanisms employed by anti-LGBT actors. In fact, all three mechanisms – drift, conversion, and layering – resuscitate long-standing convictions from the past (either actively or passively) and recombine them with current 'threats'. As just demonstrated, the anti-LGBT movement reactivates general or specifically 'Christian' hostility against LGBT issues by linking it to other concerns, some of which themselves bear on longstanding persuasions like nationalism or familism. This way, these connected or 'bridged' frames unfold relevance also in contemporary socio-political struggles – or so the activists who engage in these frame alignment processes hope.

This subchapter takes a closer look at this specific type of framing. The analytical tool for this specific analysis shall be 'bricolage', which "pulls together accepted and new frames to legitimate contention and mobilize accepted frames for new purposes (Tarrow 2011, 146). Bricolage consists of both continuous and dynamic parts. Past elements are being *revitalized* and then also *fabricated* or recombined. "Revitalization involves the resuscitation of forgotten or buried cultural elements and their linkage to current issues or events" (Snow et al. 2013, 225). This change process is akin to Swidler's (1986) concept of culture as a 'tool kit'. "Fabrication involves the melding together of different cultural elements in a *bricolage* fashion to create new ones" (Snow et al. 2013, 225). Della Porta and Diani (2006, 84) argue that the "creative manipulation of new symbols and a reaffirmation of tradition" is in fact a constitutive element of any socio-political collective action. While bricolage offers opportunities such as creating legitimacy, resonance, and saliency, it can also operate as an obstacle. Reference to a specific cultural heritage, for example, contains the risk of creating distance between adherents to this culture and the rest of society, discouraging the latter from joining the fight (cf. della Porta & Diani 2006, 85).

Despite such potential impediments, I argue that the Korean anti-LGBT movement prominently engages in such framing strategies. Conservative movements in particular can be supposed to make use of bricolage. They have an interest in referring back to traditional ideas and beliefs to create an image of continuity. It would be a misconception, however, to consider conservative movements (or conservative or rightist political parties, for that matter) as merely 'reactionary' proponents of bigotry. They have a fu-

ture-oriented outlook and political program just like progressive actors. My argument highlights the process through which conservative movements create the "appearance of continuity" (Oakeshott 1962, 170) as a strategic move to actually tackle current issues that they perceive as problematic.

This kind of dynamic continuity can take different shapes. The combination of LGBT issues with nationalist tendencies ('homosexuality destroys the nation') and ethno-nationalist impulses ('homosexuality is un-Korean'), for example, are commonly used framings. I will now focus on another topic, that is, the way the Protestant Right uses its deeply rooted anti-communism to additionally disparage LGBT people and those who support them. The geopolitical dimension of the movement's framing strategies has already been introduced above in the section on securitization. The combination of anti-communist ideology with anti-LGBT attitudes also pertains to this area, considering the continuous threat posed by North Korea. As I will demonstrate in the following, however, this bricolage-style framing goes beyond a mere focus on the enduring conflict on the Korean Peninsula. The anti-LGBT movement creates a chimera of an all-encompassing menace allegedly emanating from leftist and queer conspirators.

The legacies of right-wing anti-communism

As outlined in chapter 3.2 on the conservative historical bloc in Korea, conservative actors in society, politics, and churches have been fierce advocates of a sweeping anti-communism. Anti-communism has been described as the political ideology that has had the biggest influence in South Korea (Kim, Hak-chun 2004, quoted in Cho, Hyo-Je 2015, 369). The authoritarian regimes of post-colonial South Korea in particular made use of anti-communist ideology to justify their oppression of civil society – an anti-communism that was also sponsored by US-American patronage (Choi Yong Sub 2020, 1711; Kim, Dong-Choon 2020; Shin, Kwang-Yeong 2017). "Whenever a pro-democracy movement threatened the interests of conservatives, their response was to fall back on the discourse of anti-communism in attacking the dissidents" (Kim, Dong-Choon 2020, 185). This right-left divide continued also after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc in the late 1980s. The content of anti-communism, however, changed in a way that then linked anti-North Korea stances with market-liberal ideologies (Shin, Kwang-Yeong 2017; Shin, Jin-Wook 2008).

The ardent anti-communism of the Protestant Right can be explained by its close connection to the conservative historical bloc in the political realm (Clark 2008; Park, Chung-shin 2007). However, there are also church-internal reasons. When communist ideology made its entrance on the Korean Peninsula in the 1920s – at a time in which the Japanese colonial regime already promoted anti-Marxist stances – Protestants resisted anti-Christian campaigns advanced by communists. Western missionaries fueled this resistance with their antipathy towards Marxist ideas (Ryu, Dae Young 2017, 4; Hwang, Jae-Buhm 2008). The conflict between churches and communism intensified after the liberation from Japanese rule (1945) and especially through the Korean War (1950–1953). When communists seized the Northern part of the Korean Peninsula, many Protestants fled to the South and subsequently promoted both politically and theologically conservative views, as well as staunch anti-communism. Many of the defectors from the North be-

came leaders of Protestant churches and occupied important political positions in President Rhee Syngman's government. Rhee actively supported Christianity as an alternative to North Korea's Marxist ideology (Ryu, Dae Young 2017, 5f.; Clark 2008, 219; Kang, In-Cheol 2004). This strong anti-communism of the Protestant Right was carried on up until the time after democratization and especially regained traction during the administrations of the two progressive presidents Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2008). In the early 2000s, the Protestant Right figured prominently in establishing the Korean 'New Right', a loose rightist movement featuring strong pro-American and anti-communist ideology and decrying the governments' allegedly pro-North Korean and leftist policies.[9] Ryu Dae Young (2017, 14) argues that the political and theological core of conservative Protestants' anti-communist ideology consists in a "Manichean dualism", that is, a simplifying view which divides the world into 'good' and 'evil', 'friends' and 'foes'. According to this ideology, anything that is (claimed to be) related to communism or leftist endeavors has to be met with resistance. As shown in chapter 7.3, conservative Protestants regard and present themselves – along with conservative governments – as the ones who have to, and who are able to fight these 'ills' in order to protect the Korean nation and churches.

Combining the threat of communism with other alleged dangers is nothing new. Barbara Epstein (1994), for example, showed how homophobia and anti-communism were used as vehicles to counteract the fear of declining masculinity in the 1940s' and 1950s' United States. In South Korea, researchers have studied the amalgamation of anti-communism with anti-asylum and anti-Islam sentiments (Heo 2021), as well as with anti-gay tendencies in recent years (Cho, Min-Ah 2011). Min-Ah Cho, like Siwoo (2018) and Han Ch'aeyun (2017), argues that the combination of classic anti-communist and nationalist ideological elements with hostility towards LGBT topics is a response to growing challenges faced by fundamentalist Protestants. At the same time, Cho maintains that this very amalgamation strategy reveals their actual political motivations, making apparent the discrepancy between religious and political identities of the Protestant Right (Cho, Min-Ah 2011, 305f.). While agreeing with Cho's claim that the mixing of these spheres may appear irrational, I do not agree with the argument that this framing strategy constitutes a "fallacy" that may jeopardize the political endeavors of the Protestant Right (ibid.). As the evidence on mobilization displays, these framings do resonate with at least the staunch adherents of the Protestant Right – presumably exactly because of their political *and* religious conservatism. I will now show that the anti-LGBT movement does not merely use 'old' anti-communist common sense, whose persuasiveness may in fact wear off after years and years of inconclusive fearmongering. Rather, anti-LGBT activists also attempt to liven up the established anti-communist master frame in dynamic ways by adding new narratives to its core.

The anti-LGBT movement has not amalgamated anti-communism with homophobia from its start. As Min-ah Cho (2011, 313f.) showed, such frame combinations only emerged around the year 2010, when the CCK ascribed the danger of military defeat

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9   Shin Jin-Wook (2009) argues, however, that the establishment of the 'New Right' in South Korea did *not* involve ideological changes. He rather observed a significant continuity between 'old-right' and 'new-right' ideologies.

against communist North Korea to the presence of homosexual soldiers in the army for the first time. A term which condenses the mixing of these two topics is '*chongbuk kei*', which roughly translates into 'pro-North Korea gay'. Siwoo claims that this reproaching notion first emerged in the fight against the anti-discrimination law in 2013, reflecting the common usage of the term '*ppalgaeng'i*' ('commie', 'leftie') against left-wing politicians and activists (Siwoo 2018, 177f.). During the presidential election campaign in 2017, for example, Protestant Right activists used the term '*chongbuk*' to disparage Moon Jae-in as a 'pro-North Korea' candidate (Sŏul Sinmun 2017, April 30). According to Siwoo (2018, 179), presenting homosexuals as sympathetic to North Korea does not make sense since homosexuality is illegal there.

While Siwoo (2018), Cho (2011), and two of the pro-LGBT experts interviewed for this study (Interviews 5; 26) present '*chongbuk kei*' as being a generic invective used by anti-LGBT activists, the term hardly ever appears in the PEA dataset, nor in the additional Kukmin Daily articles analyzed. It seems to be an oft-cited catchphrase mainly used by scholars and pro-LGBT activists to analytically grasp the framing strategy of confounding anti-communist and anti-LGBT attitudes. This observation does not mean, however, that this form of bricolage does not find usage by anti-LGBT activists. Quite to the contrary, since 2015, they have been engaging in creating a new version of this anti-communist narrative, which buttresses their hostility towards LGBT rights. This novel framing strategy lumps together more recent variants of communist or socialist thought (or what is regarded as such) – Neo-Marxism, Postmodernism, and 'Cultural Marxism' – to justify anti-LGBT activities and reinforce the need to counteract against what is claimed to be a large-scale leftist conspiracy against the nation, traditional culture, conservatives, churches, and families.

Reviving anti-communism: LGBT rights as part of the new 'Cultural Marxist' threat

Among these 'schools of thought', *Cultural Marxism* has emerged as a master narrative in recent years, subsuming basically all grievances that (far) right-wing actors claim as being problematic. This is not only the case for South Korea, but also for right-wing movements in other parts of the world. The 'Cultural Marxism' conspiracy theory originated in the United States where the paleo-conservative politician Pat Buchanan popularized the idea of a 'cultural war' in the early 1990s. The idea regained popularity in the late 2010s in the context of the emergence of the so-called 'alt-right' and the election of Donald Trump (Tuters 2018, 32). "The alt-right represents cultural Marxism as responsible for or equivalent to every idea, value, person, group, organization, product and, practice that purportedly offends, challenges, or afflicts the identities of white conservative Christian Americans" (Mirrless 2018, 56). In this sense, Cultural Marxism is a resurrection of 'cultural Bolshevism', a term which was used in Nazi Germany for the equivalent purpose of denigrating anyone and anything oppositional (Mirrless 2018, 53). The far right's narrative on Cultural Marxism generally goes like this: Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich, and Erich Fromm, Jewish scholars from the Frankfurt School, had to flee Nazi Germany in the 1930s and migrated to the United States. According to the alt-right, these intellectuals sowed a Marxist seed in generations of US-Americans, using the Gramscian strategy of winning cultural hegemony ('war of position') through

taking control over educational institutions, the media, and cultural industries. The progressive social movements of the 1960s and 1970s like feminism, pacifism, and the LGBT and civil rights movements are depicted as direct effects of the Frankfurt School's cultural Marxist ideology. These days, the story goes, the ideology of 'political correctness' is a particularly pervasive part of Cultural Marxism in that it oppresses the freedom of speech of those in favor of conservative ideas (Mirrless 2018, 54). This essentially racist and antisemitic conspiracy theory commonly gets amalgamated with other branches of critical thought such as postmodernism and deconstructionism (Tuters 2018, 33). Tanner Mirrless (2018, 58–60) describes Cultural Marxism as a political instrument of "intersectional hate", which uses a cultural war strategy to create a threatening and antagonistic 'other' to obscure actual oppression, discrimination, and – ultimately – power structures. It is a strategy that "pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice" (Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008, 3; cited in Mirrless 2018, 60). The cultural Marxist conspiracy theory attributes great power to the (alleged) ideas of the Frankfurt School and other leftist thinkers – an 'analysis' that does not stand up to actual historical facts. As argued by Marc Tuters (2018, 33), "we can nevertheless understand Cultural Marxism as a prime example of how the ideas of conservatism grow above all in reaction to those of the left."

As this study shows, right-wing actors do not only build their *ideas* upon left-wing thought, but also their strategies. I argue that the Korean anti-LGBT movement uses Gramscian tactics to achieve their goals. The Korean case is thus an example for the spread of right-wing ideological and strategical repertoires beyond their initial usage especially in the US and Western Europe (cf. also Mirrless 2018, 61f.). I will now demonstrate how anti-LGBT activists and organizations in Korea combine allegations of neo-Marxism or cultural Marxism with attacks against LGBT rights.

Resurrecting anti-communist attitudes in the guise of criticizing an alleged Cultural Marxism began in 2015. It is thus a rather new addition to the framing repertoire of the anti-LGBT movement. Korean anti-LGBT activists adopted most, if not all of the elements of this conspiracy theory while also adapting its narrative to the Korean context and, particularly, to the needs of the Protestant Right. The basic premises of this framing strategy are as follows: The political left tries to install communism in South Korea through the backdoor, with LGBT people acting as central revolutionary proxies or accomplices in this fight. The goal of the latter is to force the general public to accept non-heteronormative lifestyles, ultimately leading to an oft-cited 'homosexual dictatorship' where the freedom of expression and religious freedom become endangered, and churches, the traditional family model, and the nation eventually get destroyed – as intended by communist ideology. These 'dictatorial' efforts mostly take place at the cultural level, that is, at universities and other educational institutions, as well as through media and social media channels. Anti-LGBT activists commonly refer to foreign cases of such an alleged decay and doom, demanding that South Korea must not follow these examples. Protestant churches are presented as a crucial, if not the only actors who can, and do fight against cultural Marxist threats, claiming they defend liberal democracy. The Protestant Right sees itself involved in a Manichean fight of good against evil.

The anti-LGBT movement has expounded this narrative in many press statements, in Kukmin Daily columns written by central figures of the movement, and through lectures at anti-LGBT 'educational' events.[10] In a 2019 press statement by the Korean Association of Church Communication (KACC), a rainbow flag performance by students of the private Christian Changshin University gets criticized. The KACC expresses the fear that cultural Marxist ideology in the form of the human rights protection of homosexuals has already made its way into the minds of Christian university students, taking this as an evidence for the eminent danger faced by Korean churches.

> Homosexuality is not merely about a minority or weak persons, it is a satanic ruse that aims to destroy the churches through Cultural Marxism. Homosexuality is not just a matter of sex, it is sex politics, sex ideology and sex revolution. What they pursue is a strategy to destroy Christian values, families, society, and the church. [...] Homosexuality is no small matter. In the 21st century, homosexuality is the test of good and evil. Regarding the circumstances so far revealed, Changshin University students seem to have already been exposed to many aspects of homosexuality unknowingly. Changshin University should now be clear about the issue of homosexuality, and disciplinary procedures should be taken again through thorough investigation and analysis of the students concerned. One must not be trapped in the language play, which uses terms such as 'tolerance', 'love', and 'prohibition of hatred'. Rather, in order for the order of the Biblical law to stand upright, the seminary, denomination, and students should firmly protect the university with one voice, and strongly urge the Korean church to re-establish its honor. (KACC 2019, July 23)

In many texts, the alleged ideological infiltration of people is explained in rather broad terms as in the above quote. As I have demonstrated previously, leaving people in the dark about the exact character of a phenomenon can serve the purpose of creating fear. The KACC deliberately omits a precise explanation as to how a purported sex ideology can destroy churches. The press statement does propose, however, solutions to the vague, yet allegedly grave problem. That is, punishing the students involved, rekindling church unity from within, and relying on the church for protection against the enemy.[11]

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10   I conducted a participant observation at an event entitled 'Christian academy for countermeasures against homosexuality' on 18 March 2019, which was organized at the Hapdong Seminary by the *Committee for Countermeasures against Homosexuality of the Presbyterian Hapshin Denomination* (*taehan yesugyo changnohoe [hapsin] tongsŏngae taech'aek wiwŏnhoe*). Several of the lecturers at this 'educational' event referred to the alleged danger of North Korea and socialism. Before the lecture given by Pastor Kim Yŏng-gil, a representative of the *Just Military Human Right Institute* (*parŭn kun in'gwŏn yŏn'guso*), in which he decried left-wing thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci, Giorgio Agamben, and Antonio Negri, the moderator said that he knew well the contents of the lecture, to which he had listened on many occasions already. It can be therefore assumed that anti-LGBT activists frequently bring up the conspiracy theory of Cultural Marxism in their talks and lectures. In fact, other speakers also attended to this narrative. Cho Yŏng-gil, a lawyer, for example, elaborated in his lecture that the sexual revolution was the new socialism and that homosexual ideology was much stronger than Marxism.

11   Cf. also chapter 12 for a thorough analysis on animosities within Protestant churches and denominations in Korea concerning LGBT issues.

In other instances, anti-LGBT activists provide more detailed accounts on the alleged dangers and workings of Cultural Marxism. Yŏm An-sŏp, a medical doctor and active campaigner of the anti-LGBT movement, has been writing a recurring Kukmin Daily op-ed entitled "God's righteous army against homosexuality". In the 22nd issue of his column, he comments on what he regards as a distortion, that is, homosexuals claiming that they are a weak social group. Yŏm maintains that this strategy is part of the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory.

> Critical Theory aims to criticize and destroy all systems that form the basis of Western civilization (church, family system, morality, etc.). To this end, homosexuals and others are used as new revolutionary forces. In other words, Christianity, the family system, and morality suppress homosexuality. So in order to be freed from this oppression, homosexuals and new left-wing forces must unite to destroy Christianity, the family system, and morality. In this way, if the homosexual movement succeeds and Christian civilization collapses, the communist revolution will be realized after that. [...] Major figures of Korea's new left wing are making various laws and guidelines, saying that after they are elected to the National Assembly, they will be renovating the spirit of good citizens. People with common sense ideas are forced to undergo compulsory mental modification treatment such as human rights education, diversity training, and gender sensitivity education. (Yŏm, An-sŏp 2020, March 24)

The activist here draws a clear connection between left-wing politics and pro-LGBT activism. Laws and ordinances such as proposals for an anti-discrimination and human rights bills are depicted as actually having the goal of distorting people's minds, mainly through education. Yŏm invokes the threat of collapsing morality, families, and churches and presents these menacing scenarios as a common goal of both LGBT rights activists and leftist politicians. According to the anti-LGBT movement, lying behind all this is the ultimate aim of introducing communism in South Korea.

Portraying and vilifying LGBT people as the central force of a far-reaching conspiracy allows anti-LGBT activists do divert attention from the actual grievances experienced by queer people. Among these grievances are in fact, among others, a fundamentalist interpretation of Christian scriptures and doctrines, as well as the heteronormative family model. Pointing out the exclusionary aspects of these systems is therefore a logical framing strategy for pro-LGBT activists and politicians. The Korean anti-LGBT movement, however, frames these activities as full-fledged attacks against the foundations of the nation and churches, and even aggrandizes this alleged threat by making recourse to the master frame of anti-communism, which can be expected to resonate well with large parts of the Korean public.

To substantiate this arguably far-fetched narrative, anti-LGBT activists frequently refer to historical events that they claim are testament to the steady infiltration of society with neo-Marxist ideas. So Kang-sŏk, head pastor at the New Eden Church, a Protestant mega church in the outskirts of Seoul, is particularly fond of such storylines. In his Kukmin Daily column, he commonly attributes all 'ills' faced by Korean churches, and by Korea at large to neo-Marxism.

Neo-Marxism is a clever mixture of communism and humanism, and on the surface, it seems to embody human rights, equality, justice, and philanthropy, but what is hidden behind it is its materialistic socialist ideas. When the Bolshevik revolution and Maoism ended in bloody failure, [Marxists] advocated Neo-Marxism and dreamed of a cultural revolution. The social movement that emerged from there was the 68 revolution that swept Europe, and the sexual politics movement that used homosexuality as a weapon. (So, Kang-sŏk 2018, March 6)

Pastor So indirectly refers to Antonio Gramsci here. Gramsci advocated the view that the strategy of introducing communism through force and active revolution (the 'war of movement') would not work in western societies, where more subtle tactics to convince people on the ideological level (a 'war of position') were needed to sustainably get hold of power (Gramsci 1971). What Gramsci certainly did not conceive, however, is the view that homosexuality would figure prominently in the fight for Marxist revolution. But So Kang-sŏk tries to make his readers believe that this is the case. He continues his column by quoting a law professor who gave a lecture at his church and who attributed the problems of present-day churches to 'anti-Christian' neo-Marxist endeavors.

In the words of Professor Yi Chŏng-hun, 'In one word, the whole anti-Christian movement is an act that makes the church shut up.' It makes churches and Christians no longer shout the gospel freely. That is why in Europe, where anti-discrimination laws and other bills have been passed, they [Christians] are subject to reverse discrimination. They are punished if they shout, 'Jesus is the only salvation' or declare that 'homosexuality is a sin'. As he [Yi Chŏng-hun] said, churches in Europe closed their mouths and became silent. As a result, the church is declined sharply. […] Therefore, we should all join the holy ideological and spiritual war of this era and shout together. Isn't the Korean church the heart of the nation? Wasn't the Korean church the heart of the nation, not only during the enlightenment period, but also from the Japanese colonial era to the modernization and advancement of the country? If the Korean church collapses, the hope for the nation [*minjok*] cannot be guaranteed. (So, Kang-sŏk 2018, March 6)

What So Kang-sŏk is doing in this column is providing agency to church members and legitimizing their actions. His focus on purported anti-Christian endeavors of left-wing actors singles out Christianity, again, as a victim – this time combined with anti-communist ideology. Then again, he points to the alleged glorious history of Protestant Christians in Korea, claiming that it is only them who can protect and save Korea like in the past. This overemphasis of the role of Protestantism in protecting and building Korea makes Christians seem special. At the same time, this framing strategy attempts to extend the motivation to do so again in the present to fight new enemies.

Spreading false information and claiming wrong correlations undergirds this strategy. The freedom of speech of most European Christians is certainly not endangered – especially not by state actors. Also, there is no proof for the claim that pro-LGBT attitudes and policies lead to a decline in church membership. And referring to enlightenment additionally gives the impression that it is the Protestant Right that has spread the 'truth' and rational ideas in the past, and continues to do so these days. This self-victimization in combination with self-aggrandizement aims at mobilizing Christians for the

fight against LGBT rights. Pastor So strives to fight back the alleged silencing of Christian churches, which, conversely, means that churches and church members should be active in society and politics. The usage of military-style terms such as 'weapon' and 'war' emphasizes the urgency of the fight. At the same time, using the term "ideological and spiritual war" could also be a broad hint towards Gramsci's 'war of position'. So Kang-sŏk thus confirms that there are two sides in this cultural war for hegemony, indirectly admitting that the Protestant Right also engages in ideology-based Gramscian strategies for its socio-political struggles.

Part of this Gramscian struggle for cultural hegemony consists of, as I have argued before, resurrecting parts of, and at the same time changing 'common sense' in an attempt to convince people of the need to fight against LGBT issues and mobilize people for movement activities. Anti-LGBT activists recreate existing convictions shared by many Koreans (or so they expect) to establish a 'good sense' – 'good' having the sense of representing an organized, seemingly logical, and relatable narrative with the goal of eventually changing people's common sense. A pro-LGBT actor I interviewed for this study concisely summarized why the particular strategy of mixing Neo-Marxism with othering strategies works well in the Korean context.

> The basic situation in Korea makes it possible. As a divided country Korea has long been a society with wounds and trauma due to ideological confrontation. Marxism is of course regarded negatively, especially by those who think that communism is a huge disaster. There is a theory of communism based on this theory [Marxism], and a link between liberation theory, women's rights, and sexual minority rights is created. Abortion and women are grouped together, and sexual minorities, migrants, and refugees are grouped together. It is too typical to connect [these groups] like this. Because sexual minorities, migrants, and refugees are complete 'others'. They create a target and say, 'These people are all impure and dangerous people, we must protect ourselves from these people.' These are people who then say that they would protect people, and they create the illusion that people would be safe under them. Neo-Marxism is fake news, but as soon as Koreans hear Marx, they automatically feel, "This is strange and dangerous." So it is all strange to connect these aspects, but they [the anti-LGBT movement] are taking full advantage of what people perceive without saying it. (Interview 18)

It would take us too far afield to go into the details of what neo-Marxism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism actually mean – beyond the largely untenable assertions of anti-LGBT activists. Clear-cut definitions are in fact not necessary. This is because I argue that in the Korean case, and presumably also in other contexts, Cultural Marxism and its derivations serve as a blank slate that can be inscribed with anything right-wing actors deem problematic or antagonistic. Besides LGBT rights, Protestant Right actors also commonly connect other issues such as multiculturalism, Islam, and feminism to neo-Marxism to disparage the people, contents, and convictions behind these concepts and movements. This subchapter revealed the anti-LGBT movement's flexible and yet continuity-prone framing strategy in terms of resurrecting old elements and combining them with new threats or grievances. The bricolage undertaken by the Korean anti-LGBT movement, this recombination of originally unconnected frames is dynamic in two respects: the obvious dynamic consists of melding old anti-communist impulses with hos-

tility against LGBT issues, which the Protestant Right has reactivated in the first place. The second dynamic aspect concerns the reframing of leftist dangers. The long-standing master frame of a communist or socialist threat gets revitalized not merely by repeating antiquated anti-communist narratives. Rather, new forms of leftist thinking and practice are being problematized and deliberately enriched with contents that do not have much substance when thoroughly investigated, but that serve to create a threatening image of ideological 'warfare' and conspiracy.

There is a twisted, yet cunning logic behind this form of bricolage, especially when analyzed from an international or transnational perspective. Cultural Marxism – an 'updated' version of communism – is presented as a dangerous school of thought developed abroad, more specifically by left-wing scholars from western Europe and the United States. It is true that Cultural Marxism was developed abroad. However, this was not done by left-wing thinkers but by people and organizations on the (extreme) right political spectrum as I have shown above. Be that as it may, Korean anti-LGBT activists willingly embrace the Cultural Marxist narrative, but not only to have a new module that they can fill with contents as they wish. I argue that most importantly, this narrative provides them with something they can dissociate themselves from. As the next subchapter demonstrates, the Protestant Right warns against negative developments abroad, for which it often blames Cultural Marxism. Along with this go endeavors to keep such 'bad' influences out of Korea. The transnational dimension of the narrative of Cultural Marxism, but also of the Korean anti-LGBT movement and its overall framing strategy comes to the fore.

7.5   A right-wing transnational network of ideas aiding in creating a foreign threat

"In order for the Korean church to win the great war of ideas, it must continue to establish a network." The network that So Kang-sŏk (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2018, March 2) has in mind does not only stretch domestically in South Korea, but also across borders.[12] He cautions against the dangers of homosexuality also by pointing out the allegedly dismal development of churches abroad that he claims have fallen victim to pro-LGBT ideas.

> We should see where the tsunami-like phenomenon came from. The ideological background of the advocacy culture for homosexuality stems from the post-structuralism which dismantles all authority and standards. It is important for the Protestant church to keep its faith pure-blooded, but it should work harder to protect the pastoral ecosystem. Look at the European church and the American church. As the gospel giants like Billy Graham disappeared, they degenerated into independent churches [*kaegyohoejuйi*], and the pastoral ecosystem was broken and the environmental structure changed. The Korean church must establish a network before facing such a tragedy. For the first time in Asia, Taiwan legalized same-sex marriage, and the embankment [dike] of the Taiwan Church collapsed. (ibid.)

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12   For a closer look at the network of anti-LGBT actors *within* South Korea, see chapter 10.3.

Pastor So presents ongoings internal and external to churches as threatening to Protestantism. Internally, he regards the absence of leading figures such as the prominent US-American preacher Billy Graham as problematic – putting himself, a leader of a Korean mega church, in a crucial position. Externally, he references negative examples from abroad: he claims that US and European churches were not able to protect their 'pure' core, also due to the influx of pro-LGBT attitudes. In this context, the ruling of the Constitutional Court in Taiwan in favor of same-sex marriage in 2017 is not only seen as a sign for further church decline. So Kang-sŏk promptly creates the image of destruction of Taiwanese churches. Since it is the first time that an Asian country introduced same-sex marriage, the subtext suggests that Korean churches may face a similar fate because such negatively framed events are getting closer not only on the ideological, but also on the geographical level.

This subchapter deals with the transnational and international dimension of Korean anti-LGBT activism in general, and the movement's framing in particular. I discern five intertwined elements of transnational framing processes: (1) anti-LGBT activists create a foreign threat by invoking examples from abroad where churches are alleged to be affected by decline and hostility due to pro-LGBT socio-political developments. (2) The activists popularize the idea that neo-Marxism and similarly oriented left-wing ideologies and strategies are the cause of grievances faced by conservative-minded people in general, and Christians in particular, abroad and at home. (3) The anti-LGBT movement frequently invites speakers from abroad, or refers to foreign rightist thinkers, many of which have a conservative Christian background. These foreign activists testify the allegedly bad situation in their countries and they are part of a transnational network – a *transnational conservative historical bloc* – of ideas within the conservative political spectrum. (4) Korean anti-LGBT activists use motivational frames urging people to fight against what they present as unwelcome external influence and cultural imperialism, and denounce obsequiousness to such western influences. (5) Finally, they present South Korea as a 'haven' that is still resisting, and should keep doing so. Corruption and doom come from abroad. Korea, in contrast, is presented as a fortress, as a place that is still largely unspoiled by harmful foreign influences, a sanctuary that one has to defend against inimical forces.

Internalizing external threats

Building connections with organizations and actors abroad is commonly referred to as the *transnationalization* of social movements. Transnationalization can take different forms. This section focuses on two mechanisms related to transnationalizing processes: *diffusion*, that is, the spreading of ideas, strategies, and frames, and *internalization*, the playing out of external conflicts in a domestic setting (della Porta & Tarrow 2005, 3–6).[13] While direct diffusion channels are hard to detect, one can assume that the usage of

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13   The mechanism of *externalization*, i.e., encouraging supranational and transnational organizations to get involved in domestic conflicts (Keck & Sikkink 1998) will be treated in chapter 8.1, which deals with the way anti-LGBT – and especially so-called 'ex-gay' activists attempt to reframe 'human rights', also by appealing to international organizations.

similar frames in different national contexts hints at adoption processes at work. I argue that the adoption and adaptation of the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory by Korean anti-LGBT activists is an obvious case of diffusion. This narrative was not developed in Korea but abroad, by right-wing thinkers and political actors in the United States and in Europe, as demonstrated in the previous section. Internalization, on the other hand, is clearly observable in the framing activities of the Korean anti-LGBT movement.

Activists frequently report about developments and events abroad that they frame as worrisome and alarming. Among these disconcerting occurrences are, according to the anti-LGBT movement, for example, the introduction of same-sex marriage in many countries, laws acknowledging the rights of transgender and intersex people, and the alleged downfall of Christian churches due to homosexuality and related issues. Part of this framing strategy is to present exaggerated or just false accounts of what is going on abroad in terms of sexual politics. The following quote from a KACC press statement evinces this fact.

> What is happening in countries that have allowed homosexuality and same-sex marriage in today's world is so serious that it is beyond our imagination. In their countries, homosexual education curricula in schools have been created, a third sex has been introduced, multi-marriage legalization is promoted (incest, pedophilia, polygamy, robot sex, zoophilia), they treat opponents of homosexuality as psychopaths, they check if people preach against homosexuality in churches, and their armies are weakening due to homosexuals in the military. (KACC 2017, July 19)

Another KACC press release ascribes problems faced by Christian churches abroad such as decreasing church attendance and membership to the influx of homosexuality in these societies. As already demonstrated above, in doing so, the Protestant Right's mouthpiece creates a wrong or at least inaccurate correlation.

> Homosexuality is not only a problem in Korea. In 2001, homosexuality was legalized in the Netherlands, in the United Kingdom and in the United States in 2015, and in Germany, the home of the Reformation, in 2017. The problem is that the countries where homosexuality has entered and has been legalized have in common the decline of Christianity. (KACC 2019, July 23)[14]

As I have shown previously, it is not only Christian churches that are presented as being endangered by homosexuality. According to anti-LGBT actors, other social institutions are affected just as much, not only in Korea, but also and particularly in western countries. The KACC (2015, July 21) writes: "Recognizing homosexuality and same-sex mar-

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14   Another inaccuracy of this statement concerns the usage of the term 'legalization' (*happŏphwa*). Homosexuality was not legalized, that is, decriminalized in the years quoted. Germany, for instance, abolished the criminal law punishing male same-sex act partially in 1969, and fully in 1994. Rather, these countries introduced same-sex marriage in the years mentioned. Anti-LGBT activists often describe the passing of marriage equality bills as a 'legalization of homosexuality'. I argue that they do this deliberately to construct the reverse – and incorrect – image that homosexuality is not a legal conduct in South Korea (cf. chapter 8.3).

riage is now evident in the widespread destruction of social order in the western society, as well as in the collapse of the family, dehumanization, and social conflict and division [...]." A frame that is frequently employed is depicting western countries as hotbeds for a degenerate and decadent sex culture. The image of ubiquitous destruction due to such allegedly immoral forms of sexuality lacks hard evidence. A cross-check, however, is difficult due to the geographical distance and the cultural differences between western countries and Korea. This type of frame thus comes in handy, for it amplifies the diffuse threat that the anti-LGBT movement strives to create (cf. chapter 7.2). This is done to construct threats that are claimed to exist abroad in a way that extends their relevance also to the Korean public. Anti-LGBT activists wish their audience to come to think that they do not want to experience such troubles domestically. It is, again, a type of identity framing and boundary formation, agitating against one group actor to rebrand and strengthen one's own collective identity. The only difference is that this identity framing concerns whole countries, and not only societal subgroups and minorities. In this sense, it is actually the anti-LGBT movement that creates, or at least contributes actively to social conflict and division – a reproach that they launch against the pro-LGBT movement like in the above quote.

The framing strategy of creating foreign threats is rife with contradictions and inconsistencies. In the Korean case, the depiction of the United States as a country in mayhem due to its increasing socio-political recognition of LGBT rights seems to be incompatible with the Protestant Right's perpetual emphasis on the utmost importance, and their general defense of the Korea-US alliance. The Korean anti-LGBT movement, however, uses this argument in reverse. In 2014 (as also in the following years), the anti-LGBT movement criticized the US embassy for participating with a booth at the Seoul Queer Culture Festival. The KACC commented in a statement that the US support for the rights of Korean LGBT people was illogical since "the forces advocating the homosexual movement are mostly progressive/leftist, and there are a lot of forces [among these groups] leading the anti-American movement" (KACC 2014, June 10). The KACC lumps together anti-US and pro-LGBT sentiments due to their progressive backgrounds. This purportedly contradictory behavior of the United States, the KACC warns, might have grave consequences. "A United States advocating for homosexuality is losing its traditional support base in Korea, and it can be said that it [i.e., this behavior] does not differ from an 'act of invasion' [ch'imnyak haengwi] using culture" (ibid.). While one may regard the mentioning of a dwindling support base for the United States in Korea as a statement of fact, it could be read as a threat by the Protestant Right to withdraw the support even further should the US continue such 'acts of cultural invasion'. Anti-LGBT activists, in fact, commonly use accusations of 'cultural imperialism' and an 'infringement of national sovereignty' in their framing efforts. What they do not mention in this context is that they adopt ideological and strategical tools from abroad themselves. As already mentioned, the extensive framing efforts around the alleged dangers of progressive and leftist schools of thought, or the conspiracy theory of Cultural Marxism are prime examples for this.

Safeguarding Korea against unwelcome foreign influences

The transnational diffusion of right-wing ideas is apparent in other instances as well. In late 2017, a new alliance of conservative Protestant groups called *First Korea – People's Union to Straighten Up the Republic of Korea* (*p'ŏsŭt'ŭ k'oria taehanmin'guk paro seugi kungmin yŏnhap*) was established. Its name is a clear replica of the 'America first' campaign popularized by Donald Trump. While the Trump administration served as a model for this new alliance, other foreign examples are presented as undesirable developments. Pastor O Chŏng-ho, chairman of the newly formed alliance, puts it like this: "We are following a series of failed European models, including the human rights of migrants and multicultural policies that were passed in Korea, the human rights movement for minorities, and the push for a constitutional amendment for homosexuality and same-sex marriage" (cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2017, December 6). The pastor adds: "We will focus on straightening up families, churches and the state through First Korea" (ibid.). The intended image is obvious: Protestant groups defend Korea in face of purportedly detrimental influences from abroad. In case such influences have already made their mark domestically, the Protestant Right will fight for "straightening up" (*paro seugi*) Korea.

In a similar vein, anti-LGBT activists use the frame that obsequiousness and toadyism are not acceptable when it comes to allegedly un-Korean and unethical things like homosexuality. Referring to the danger of same-sex marriage being introduced in Korea, Yi Ae-ran, head of the *Center for Freedom, Unification, and Culture* (*chayu t'ong'il munhwawŏn*), raises the issue of levels of development. "Just because something belongs to advanced countries, it is not all advanced culture. [...] A homosexual culture full of obscenity should not be allowed to be embedded in the Republic of Korea where ethics and morality are still alive" (cited in Yu, Yŏng-dae 2015, October 1). The activist portrays South Korea as a positive example in contrast to other countries where she sees moral decay becoming rampant. The KACC champions similar views regarding the anti-discrimination law, demanding the Ministry of Justice not to follow allegedly regressive developments abroad in an obsequious way. "[...] it [the ministry] should not be affected by the decadent toadyism culture of the United States. No, there is no need to follow the US, which is falling into a backward country in terms of ethics and morals" (KACC 2013, June 27). South Korea is put on a pedestal as a shining example of 'healthy morals', which also outshines other self-proclaimed advanced countries. Such framing contributes to nationalist sentiments, presenting Korea as a fortress defying and desisting from foreign dangers. At the same time, foreign examples are used to argue that with its rejecting position against LGBT rights, Korea is in good company when compared to the attitudes held worldwide. The KACC (2015, May 20) notes: "only 18 of the world's 200 countries have legalized homosexuality, and most countries do not support it." Again, the KACC provides wrong or at least inaccurate information. Homosexuality is legal in many more countries than 18. But this narrative serves the anti-LGBT movement's purpose of pitting an alleged majority against the rights of sexual minorities – also on the international level.

Concrete transnational support on the ideological level

The Korean anti-LGBT movement also gets direct support from anti-LGBT allies abroad. This transnational cooperation works in two areas. First, on the relational level, interpersonal and interorganizational connections are established or intensified. Second, on the epistemic and ideological levels, foreign anti-LGBT activists or right-wing thinkers endorse and substantiate anti-LGBT frames used in Korea, especially in terms of threats from abroad.

Foreign speakers are often invited to anti-LGBT events. In some cases, these foreign activists have a Korean origin like Yi T'ae-hŭi, a US lawyer who frequently speaks at such events. In other cases, it is mostly western anti-LGBT activists without a Korean background who travel to Korea to give lectures and interviews and thus support the Korean anti-LGBT movement. What they have all in common is their conservative Christian background. When in Korea, these activists buttress the framing strategy of creating a foreign threat. Among the most prominent anti-LGBT advocates from abroad is Andrea Williams, head of the UK-based evangelical NGO *Christian Concern* (formerly: Christian Concern for Our Nation). In the period investigated in this study, Williams travelled to Korea three times. Within the Korean anti-LGBT camp, this UK activist is famous to the extent that a Kukmin Daily journalist called Kim Chi-yŏn, a central figure of the Korean movement, the "Andrea Williams of Korea" (Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2016, August 19). Andrea Williams herself reinforces narratives that we have seen above, alleging that the British church has collapsed due to homosexuality and that "the issue of homosexuality is a global trend" (cited in Sin, Sang-mok 2015, March 19). Therefore, she appeals to Korean churches to remain steadfast in the face of such "trends", a point she reinforces during a trip to Korea in 2017: "The Korean church should be the last front to stop the spread of homosexuality to the world" (cited in So, Kang-sŏk 2017, June 20).

While Andrea Williams emphasizes the special role of South Korea as the 'last bulwark' against the spread of homosexuality, other foreign activists undergird neo-Marxist conspiratorial theses popularized by Korean anti-LGBT activists. Gabriele Kuby, a German Protestant-turned-Catholic activist, shows great eagerness in propagating this narrative. During a visit to Korea in June 2017, she was a keynote speaker at the 'Seoul Global Family Convention'.

> Many universities deal with gender ideology, and the roots of this idea are based on Marxism. These ideas have the ultimate purpose of destroying families through sexual liberalization. [...] In the 1990s, radical feminism joined forces with homosexuals to create genderism. [...] Gender ideology networks are attacking Christian values under the guise of breaking down identities worldwide and sexual liberalization through legal coercion. [...] We need to know how to distinguish wrong gender ideologies wrapped in tolerance, inclusiveness, justice, and equality. (Cited in Paek, Sang-hyŏn 2017, June 3)

'Gender ideology' and 'genderism' have become buzzwords used by conservative and far-right actors in the religious and political arenas worldwide over the past two decades (Strube et al. 2021; Dietze & Roth 2020; Hark & Villa 2015). Common themes of anti-gen-

der actors include the opposition against LGBT and reproductive rights, the disparagement of the concept of gender mainstreaming, which strives to reach gender equality in all societal areas, as well as a critique of gender studies as an academic discipline. There is, however, no clear definition of what 'gender ideology' actually entails, leading some scholars to describe it is an "empty signifier" (Mayer & Sauer 2017, 23). The anti-gender discourse originated in the mid-1990s, when the 1994 UN conference on population and development and the 1995 UN conference on women recognized sexual and reproductive rights. The Holy See "feared that sexual and reproductive rights would become a vehicle for the international recognition of abortion, attacks on traditional motherhood and a legitimization of homosexuality" (Paternotte & Kuhar 2017, 9). As a result, it started pursuing the vilification of 'gender' as a dangerous concept promoted by allegedly ideological political and bureaucratic elites in the western world.[15]

Gabriele Kuby in particular has been very active in propagating such a discourse in Central and Eastern Europe, but also elsewhere (Paternotte & Kuhar 2017). She published several books on the subject, and her book *The Global Sexual Revolution: Destruction of Freedom in the Name of Freedom* was translated into Korean (Kuby 2018). She claims that a new totalitarianism is breeding in the guise of equal rights for sexual minorities and combines this threat with anti-Marxist stances as in the above quote. The discourse on gender ideology is thus very much compatible with the conspiracy theory of Cultural Marxism. In fact, the PEA dataset reveals that the terms 'gender' and 'gender ideology' have found increasing usage among Korean anti-LGBT activists in recent years, especially from 2017 onwards.

Like Kuby, other politically and religiously conservative actors also argue that the 1968 sexual revolution laid the foundation for the alleged onslaught of 'gender ideology' nowadays. Pastor So Kang-sŏk (2015, June 3), for instance, quotes a book written by the far-right French journalist, politician, and presidential candidate of 2022, Éric Zemmour. In his 2014 book *The French Suicide* ('Le suicide français'), Zemmour argues that the French nation state began to decline in the 1970s, for which he blames a plethora of aspects such as feminism, the gay rights movement, Islam, immigration, the European Union, post-structuralism, and neoliberalism. The fact that So Kangs-sŏk refers to the writings of foreign far-right actors is yet another evidence of the Korean anti-LGBT movement's transnational network of ideas. News stories of purportedly threatening events and de-

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15   In contrast, the Catholic church in Korea has been reticent to actively oppose LGBT or gender issues. Korean Catholics are particularly reluctant to cooperate with Protestant or evangelical churches, as asserted by one Catholic interviewee of this study (Interview 4). Another interviewee who is related to the Catholic church explained that Catholics in general tend to not bring their faith all too much into politics due to the separation of church and state. While the attitude towards the issue of homosexuality is conservative according to the interviewee, people lean toward not talking about it. There are also almost no theological texts from Korean Catholicism on this topic (Interview 10). The PEA data shows that, in fact, only very few Catholic actors engage in the anti-LGBT movement. Among them are, most prominently, Kim Kye-ch'un, a Catholic priest and representative of the *National Alliance against Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage* (*tongsŏngae tongsŏnghon pandae kungmin yŏnhap*), and the right-wing group *Patriotic Catholics for Korea* (*taehanmin'guk suho ch'ŏnjugyoin moim*).

velopments abroad get adopted and adapted just like more theoretical and 'foundational' works from abroad such as the book written by Zemmour.

Transnational support for the socio-political struggles of the Korean movement also stretches to the area of theology. Peter Beyerhaus, a German professor for Protestant theology who died in 2020, was a frequent visitor to Korea where he disseminated his conservative theological views. Besides his strictly theological activities, he also engaged in criticizing an alleged 'gender ideology' becoming prevalent in society. In 2014, he initiated a transnational ecumenical manifesto against 'gender ideology', which also found reception in Korea. At a 2016 special lecture held at the Korean *Academia Christiana* (*kidokkyo haksulwŏn*), he claimed that the 1968 sexual revolution with the ensuing gender mainstreaming movement represents the third big revolution in human history after the French revolution in 1789 and the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. According to Beyerhaus, 'gender ideology' destroys the naturally heterosexual family and has the ultimate goal of creating pagan societies. Kukmin Daily dedicated a detailed and extensive obituary to Peter Beyerhaus, in which the journalist highlighted his important role for the anti-gender movement, but also for other concerns of conservative Protestant Christians. Just like the Korean Protestant Right, for example, Beyerhaus was a fierce opponent of the *World Council of Churches*. Beyerhaus was highly regarded in Korea's conservative theological circles to the extent that the *Beyerhaus Society* (*paiŏhausŭ hakhoe*) was founded in his honor in October 2018 (Sin, Sang-mok 2020, January 28).

Right-wing 'rooted cosmopolitans' on the level of ideas

Transnational channels play an important role in the framing activities of the Korean anti-LGBT movement. Strategic and ideological elements such as the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory have been adopted from abroad and adapted according to the Korean context and to the needs of the Protestant Right. The latter presents itself as a 'white knight' shielding Korean churches and society at large against putative foreign threats. At the same time, the Korean anti-LGBT movement receives support from foreign, similarly oriented activists. These substantiate the narrative of decaying western societies and call on Koreans to withstand such allegedly harmful influences.

As I have demonstrated, several social mechanisms are at work when it comes to the transnational connections of the anti-LGBT movement. Activists frame events and developments in other countries as threats and thus engage in the *internalization* of external conflicts for domestic purposes. This is a form of *boundary work*, that is, an effort to distance Korea and, particularly, Korean Christians from negative examples abroad, 'apostatized' countries that are claimed to regress in regard to morality and values. *Diffusion* of ideas and strategies is also taking place. The Korean movement does not, however, adopt these elements passively or uncritically. Rather, it accommodates them in a way to fit historical continuities and consequent constraints in the Korean context, as well as customizing them to the interests of the Protestant Right. This *norm localization* (Acharya 2004) goes hand in hand with *modularity*: action forms used by right-wing actors abroad serve as models for Korean anti-LGBT activists who reuse and adjust the 'modules', for example, the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory, so that it exploits its full potential and resonates with Korean publics as well.

Marco Giugni (2002) argues that such transnationalization processes render social movements worldwide increasingly alike. Following his *structural affinity model*, one could argue that such homogenization is also taking place in the case of anti-LGBT movements in different countries. Conservative organizations worldwide share similar political perspectives and can therefore be expected to be eager to learn from each other. They are, effectively, part of the political opportunity structures and serve as models for other resembling social movements in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world – especially when it comes to the adoption of cultural elements like single frames or whole framing strategies, since this can be done without much cost. Ann Swidler's (1986) 'culture as a tool kit' thus also works transnationally, and for conservative movements. On the level of ideas and ideology, I argue that one can refer to Korean anti-LGBT activists as 'rooted cosmopolitans' (cf. Tarrow 2005, 29). As I have shown, they are cosmopolitan not in the sense of supporting an open, inclusionary, and multicultural society – quite to the contrary. But they do feature an openness to foreign influences as long as they are compatible with their general ideological orientation and hold promise to serve their needs and interests. At the same time, anti-LGBT activists, as well as the Korean Protestant Right as a whole, is 'rooted', meaning that they very much build upon domestic legacies, both in terms of Korean national history and 'Korean-ness' in general, as well as concerning their distinct conservative Christian foundation. The latter aspect is reflected in the concrete transnational connections of the anti-LGBT movement. Most if not all foreign activists who collaborate with the Korean movement have a conservative Christian background. Vice-versa, the outgoing anti-activism is predominantly directed towards Koreans or people of Korean descent living in other countries. One activist told me in the research interview that he/she often travels abroad to give lectures to popularize anti-LGBT issues in Korean Christian congregations abroad as well (Interview 7).

Through researching the transnational connections of the Korean anti-LGBT movement, I was able to demonstrate its growing embeddedness in right-wing and conservative Christian networks on the level of ideology and strategies. While concrete interpersonal or interorganizational connections are rather scarce and definitely lack institutionalization, foreign ideas are eagerly adopted and modulated in a way to suit the Korean circumstances. From a Gramscian perspective, I analyze this particular form of cooperation as a *transnational conservative historical bloc*, "a loose but increasingly interconnected network of right-wing actors worldwide who learn from each other, support one another and, ultimately, strive to gain socio-political power", as I have written in chapter 3.2 (p. 86). This mutual support and increasing interconnectedness occur mainly on the level of diffusing ideas – at least in the case of Korea. The fight for cultural hegemony against 'gender ideology', LGBT rights, and Marxism is fought using transnational means and thus builds upon the "the *ensemble* of the social relations" (Gramsci 1971, 366) to change common sense. This particular 'war of position' is fought on a global scale. But ultimately, these struggles remain firmly rooted in the domestic conservative historical bloc, its workings, legacies, values, and ideological underpinning. Overall, framing activities that cross borders – both in terms of contents like creating foreign threats and concrete relations – contribute to the dynamization of Korean anti-LGBT activism. Domestic and foreign, as well as old and new elements get combined in a way that supports the argument of 'dynamic continuity', also when it comes to transnational connections.

If assuming that the Korean anti-LGBT movement adopted a Gramscian strategy for reaching cultural and political power, this adoption can be described as a process of transnational diffusion and learning. This shows that rightist movements do not only learn from each other, but also adopt and adapt strategies and framings from opposing thinkers and movements, whether local or foreign. The next chapter shows how such a seemingly contradictory 'borrowing' actually makes a lot of sense and often develops into framing contests between anti and pro-LGBT actors.