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'You Can't Repeal Regret': Targeting Men for Mobilization in Ireland's Abortion Debate

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Abstract: This study explores how social movement organizations (SMOs) involved in the abortion debate in the Republic of Ireland attempted to appeal to men in their campaign messages before the 2018 referendum on the Eighth Amendment concerning abortion. We scrape SMO Twitter accounts to conduct quantitative and qualitative content analyses of images and videos the organizations posted and find evidence that SMOs sometimes extended their frames to men as voters. SMOs evoked themes of hegemonic masculinity in their imagery and messaging, though these themes were not a large portion of overall campaign tweets and there were distinct differences in how this was done by the two organizations we study. Previous research suggests anti-abortion organizations extend their frames to incorporate "pro-woman" messaging. Our research contributes by exploring the ways that frames may be extended by both anti- and pro-abortion actors to target men and mobilize masculinity in public debates over women's rights.

Key words: social movements, gender targeting, abortion, masculinity

Key messages
- Social movement organizations may extend frames to target men and mobilize them as voters on women's rights issues.
- Image analysis of SMO online campaigns reveals how SMOs used male identities to mobilize men.
- Hegemonic masculinity was evoked, but typically in ways that were consistent with SMOs general campaign strategy.

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On May 25, 2018, the Republic of Ireland held a public referendum on the Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution, which acknowledged an equal right to life of the unborn fetus and its mother. The proposal was to repeal the amendment and to replace it with language allowing the termination of pregnancy to be regulated by law. This would create a legal pathway for liberalizing abortion laws. Prior to the referendum, public opinion polls revealed that women were more likely than men to agree with the statement "The law in Ireland needs to change to recognise a woman's right to choose to have an abortion if she wishes" (Irish Times 2018). Additionally, while the same percentage of men and women disagreed with the statement (28 percent), men (13 percent) were more likely to respond that they had "no opinion" on the issue compared to women (7 percent) (Irish Times 2018; Leahy 2018). This gap between women and men in their views on abortion and the referendum sparked a public discussion about the possibility that men were more likely to be undecided voters compared to women, which may have been seen by campaigners as an opportunity to convince men and gain their support.

Social movements are key movers and shakers during referendum campaigns because of their expertise in deploying strategic messages via multiple platforms (posters, canvassing, social media, protests, and more), mobilizing supporters, fostering collaboration across groups, and raising funds (Oliver and Marwell 1992). Literature on social movement communication suggests that at times, movements will practice frame extension in attempts to reach new supporters or people who they may have previously overlooked in their messages (Cornfield and Fletcher 1998; Rose 2011). We ask whether the revelations of men as undecided voters during the run-up to the referendum were reflected in social movement organizations' (SMOs) campaign efforts. Did these campaigns extend their frames to appeal to men as voters? If so, how were men and their roles in society represented in relation to the issue of abortion? Ultimately,

the referendum passed comfortably, with 66.4 percent of voters supporting repeal. Understanding men's role in the debate and how this was represented by SMOs in their attempts to reach them contributes to a larger puzzle regarding how frame extension is conducted during contentious rights debates and how gender – especially masculinity – is mobilized during these debates.

Previous research on the use of frame extension to target men has focused on men's role in ending things like violence against women and sex trafficking of girls (Fabiano et al. 2003; Steele and Shores 2015). Such research suggests that campaigns may tap into hegemonic gender stereotypes about masculinity that reinforce the gender roles that drive the problem (Steele and Shores 2015). This is because men in these campaigns are often targeted as perpetrators: for example, as the buyers of sex. As a result, one campaign has targeted men by featuring masculine celebrities who serve as role models for other men and make the argument that "real men don't buy girls" (Steele and Shores 2015). This statement appeals to hegemonic norms of masculinity and what it means to be a "man" in its attempt to shame men into compliance (Trujillo 1991). But pregnancy and abortion are different types of issues and men's roles vary widely. While some men may be perpetrators, as in the case of rapists who impregnate someone, men may also become pregnant (as in the case of transgender men) and are also fathers, partners, sons, and friends of pregnant women. When it comes to appealing to men as voters on the issue of abortion rights, the possibilities for frame extension are wide, and diverse approaches may be taken. This study compares the gendered approaches of two SMOs – one in favor of abortion rights and the other opposed – in the Republic of Ireland through the lenses of frame extension and hegemonic masculinity.

Literature Review

Central to this study about how movements working on the issue of abortion attempt to encourage men to participate as voters is framing and frame extension. A frame provides meaning to issues or events and defines what the controversy is essentially about and what may be done about it (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 143). As part of their strategy for generating support, social movement actors attempt to resonate with their audiences by triggering feelings of solidarity among their supporters through emphasis on shared experiences (Ferree 2003; McCammon 2012). But different frames may appeal to different audiences within the same cultural context, and experiences can vary widely, particularly across subsections of SMO audiences (McCammon 2012). Research on framing suggests that social movements will micro-target specific groups of people by extending frames that are strategically oriented toward the perceived experiences of the group – including using gendered messaging (Ferree et al. 2002; Ferree 2003; Magin et al. 2016; D. A. Snow and Benford 1992; Valenzuela and Michelson 2016).

Institutional constraints and interactions with antagonists have been shown to constrain and influence the possibilities of frame extension for labor and union movements, potentially limiting their ability to appeal to new members (Cornfield and Fletcher 1998; Heery and Conley 2007). On a broader level, some research has explored the importance of understanding frame extension in explaining the role framing has in shaping political debate and narratives which may influence political outcomes (Brown and Ferree 2005; Ferree et al. 2002; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; D. Snow and Benford 1988).

We know that frame extension has been practiced by anti-abortion organizations in attempts to attract more women supporters and eschew stereotypes of the movement as being made up of a large proportion of older and male members. In the United States and Canada,

some organizations have begun to replace claims that "abortion is murder" with frames that include women's experiences and emotional reactions to abortion (Hopkins, Reicher, and Saleem 1996). This focus on women, rather than the fetus, in such framing strategies (Rose 2011; Saurette and Gordon 2016) argues that abortion harms women and may be more appealing to some women compared to past framings regarding abortion as murder (and women as murderers) (Lee 2017; Pan and Kosicki 1993).

While anti-abortion organizations may try to attract women to their ranks through frame extension, we know little about whether men are targeted as potential supporters in abortion debates and, if so, whether there are differences between anti- and pro-abortion rights organizations in their approach to such frame extension. Research suggests that when more privileged groups are brought into social movements working for the rights of marginalized minorities, this can risk co-optation or distraction from the core issues of movements (Heo and Rakowski 2014).

Yet, men may be essential allies for women's rights given their positions of power and privilege, though women's political representation has grown over time (Annesley, Beckwith, and Franceschet 2019; Cress and Snow 1996; Entman and Rojecki 1993; Hunt 2013; Lukes 2005; Polletta 2006), and men are certainly important as voters when it comes to policy making. When social movements fighting for women's rights view men as critical to their success, they embark on difficult terrain. How can they emphasize the importance of men's voices and votes without allowing the focus to shift away from women's experiences? Do they attempt to appeal to men by appealing to ideals of hegemonic masculinity or do they defy such stereotypes in an effort to remain consistent with their progressive aims (Hearn 1992; Trujillo 1991)?

The study mentioned earlier by Steele and Shores (2015) about the campaign to end sex trafficking entitled "Real Men Don't Buy Girls" (see also Majic 2017) featured "real men" who are celebrity spokespeople and are juxtaposed against men who buy sex. The authors argue that the creation of this binary between men who buy sex from girls and are not "real men" and those who do not buy sex and are "real men" reproduces existing gender roles and power dynamics that create sex trafficking in the first place (Majic 2017). Abortion is a very different issue from sex trafficking, and men have different relationships to pregnancy and abortion than they do to sex trafficking and sex work. Our study addresses how abortion movements mobilize gender during contentious debates often construed as primarily affecting women's rights. How are men – and their roles in pregnancy, abortion, and as voters – situated in these debates by social movements in their efforts to mobilize supporters and voters (Melucci 1995; Polletta and Jasper 2001)?

Expectations

First, we expect that the SMOs campaigning during the Irish referendum attempted to extend their frames to men given the public polling and discussion that took place at the time. In light of previous research on framing, frame extension, and attempts to mobilize gender, we also propose, more substantively, that when it comes to mobilizing men as voters, stereotypical ideas about masculinity may serve as convenient "short cuts" for movements to appeal to new audiences. Literature on hegemonic masculinity points to five core features. Though these emerged from the American cultural context, they provide a useful starting point when it comes to considering hegemonic masculinity and include 1) physical force and control, 2) occupational achievement, 3) familial patriarchy, 4) frontiersmanship (symbolized by daring and strong outdoorsmen, such as cowboys), and 5) heterosexuality (Connell 2005; Hearn 1992; Trujillo

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1991). Men who fulfill one or more of these features may be positioned as role models for other men and, we argue, this is possible whether or not they are accompanied by explicit messages, such as "real men don't buy girls" (Steele and Shores 2015; Trujillo 1991). Therefore, studying the images of men that social movements post or share on social media adds nuance to observations on how men are represented in these campaigns.

The Case: The Irish Abortion Debate

Abortion in the Republic of Ireland has been restricted since 1861, and the prohibition on abortion was strengthened in 1983 with the passage of Article 40.3.3, known as the Eighth Amendment, to the Irish Constitution. This amendment was installed by a national referendum with 66% approval and established an equal right to life for the unborn fetus and its mother (Bacik 2013). After 1983, a number of events relating to abortion occurred, including several Irish court cases, international and regional human rights bodies and court decisions (Cahill 2014; Erdman 2014), and the death of Savita Halappanavar, a woman who died in 2012 as a result of a septic miscarriage that may have been prevented with termination (O'Toole 2013). Legislation was created in 2013 in response to these events, but it only clarified the existing restrictions on abortion due to the Eighth Amendment by stating that abortion is only legal when pregnancy threatens a woman's life (Beesley and Cullen 2013).

The May 25, 2018, referendum that was held in the wake of these events was a landmark moment concerning abortion rights in a country where the Catholic Church remains strong and opposes any granting of abortion rights (Irish Central Statistics Office 2016). In the national discussion leading up to the referendum, divisions in the population were cited as potentially influential to the outcome, including gender, generational and urban-rural divides (McGee 2018). These divisions led to intense campaigning across the country by the SMOs studied here,

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political parties, and other interested groups. Ultimately, turnout for the referendum was 64%, with 66% voting in favor of repealing and was seen as a "landslide" victory and a clear mandate for liberalizing abortion laws in Ireland (Leahy 2018).

Prior to the referendum, the government released the draft legislation that they would put forward should the referendum succeed, which included allowing abortion for any reason up to twelve weeks into pregnancy. Considering that this was a substantial step toward liberalization, compared to the existing regulations on abortion, there was uncertainty as to whether the Irish public would support such a move. And, indeed, one of the core messages of the anti-abortion organizations was that the proposed legislation was "too extreme." We explore whether the campaigns working on the referendum reached out to men in particular with their messages, and if so, how men were represented in these efforts.

Data and Methods

The two social movement organizations (SMOs) included in this study – pro-repeal *Together for Yes* and anti-repeal *Love Both* – are not necessarily representative of the larger social movements for and against abortion rights in Ireland. They represent the campaign efforts as two broad-based umbrella organizations, though many different organizations with distinct identities were also involved in the referendum campaign. For example, the organization *Save the 8th* was another anti-abortion organization known for more extreme rhetoric and controversial advertisements. Groups such as *MERJ*, or Migrants and Ethnic-minorities for Reproductive Justice, and *TMFR* (Terminations For Medical Reasons), which was organized by parents affected by severe fetal abnormalities, were also active.

We concentrate our study on these two organizations' messages on Twitter because they attempted to appeal to broad audiences and Twitter was an important site of debate during the

referendum campaign. Past scholarship recognizes Twitter as a primary social media outlet for political debate and framing, especially for SMOs and political elites (Bastos, Mercea, and Charpentier 2015; Hunt 2019; Hunt and Gruszczynski 2019; Stier, Schünemann, and Steiger 2018). While the organizations involved in the campaign were also active on other social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, Twitter provides a strong sample of the online campaign strategies of the organizations.

The Twitter accounts of @LoveBoth (anti-abortion) and @Together4Yes (pro-abortion) were scraped using the *rtweet* package in *R* (Kearney 2017). Twitter allows the most recent 3,200 tweets from an account to be accessed. Once we did this, the results were narrowed to include only original tweets from each account, excluding retweets, which leaves only the original content posted by each organization in the dataset. This included 1,418 original tweets from *Together for Yes* and 1,885 original tweets by *Love Both* between April 10-May 25, 2018. While these dates do not account for the entire campaign period, they do account for the time period during which the issue of men's involvement in the referendum was receiving the most public attention (Irish Times 2018).

Table 1 shows additional information about each account that elaborates on the scope and reach of the organizations' online activities. The *Love Both* account was created in 2016 but they officially launched as an umbrella campaign in early 2018. They were run by the *Pro Life Campaign*, which has 16,000 followers. Because we were interested in the accounts dedicated to the referendum campaign, the *Together for Yes* and *Love Both* accounts were considered most representative of this effort. The number of total retweets and favorites each account received provide an idea of the reach of these organizations and are displayed in Table 1. Considering

Love Both had far fewer followers, its retweets and favorites are still relatively high, suggesting

it benefitted from the larger network of its parent organization, *Pro Life Campaign*.

Table 1: Organization Account Details

Organization	Followers*	Total Retweets	Total Favorites	Joined Date
Together for Yes	26.9k	76,241	211,114	Feb 2018
Love Both	5,160	26,644	51,956	Oct 2016

*As of May 18, 2020

We conducted a content analysis of images that were attached to each account's tweets.

Following research by Farris and Mohamed (2018, 18) who argue that images are a potentially

powerful type of framing that are frequently not captured in traditional framing analyses, we

coded images, GIFs, and videos attached to original tweets from each of the accounts we

analyzed (whether original content from the organization or content the organization chose to

share in an original tweet). In our coding, we did the following:

- Assigning a *1* if men were featured in images and videos, a *0* if not.

- Assigning a *1* if only men are featured, or a *0* if women or children are also
  pictured.

- Classifying the men pictured by their identities, if known.

- Determining if the image is explicitly targeting men by using terms addressing
  men specifically.

Explicit targeting included messages to men, such as a video where one voter flying into Dublin

airport says, "It's incredibly important as a man that I make that statement ... I need to make this

happen tomorrow and I urge every man in Ireland to do the same" (Together for Yes 2018b). An

implicit message simply entailed photos of men holding campaign signs or talking generally

about the referendum.

Once we completed the above counts of the categories, we conducted a qualitative thematic analysis (Ahmed et al. 2019) wherein we identified three core "roles" – men as advocates, men as impacted by abortion, men as role models – assigned to men that emerged from the images and deepen our understanding of how men were represented in the abortion debate by SMOs and whether this targeting appealed to key features of hegemonic masculinity.

The breakdown of images in tweets versus totals for both campaigns are presented in Table 2. A majority of both Together for Yes tweets (57%) and *Love Both* tweets (60%) included an image, GIF, video, or link. Of these images, 18% of *Together for Yes* tweets and 17% of *Love Both* tweets included men. These similarities in approach give way to distinct differences in the *types* of men featured.

Table 2: Total Number of Tweets and Tweets Involving Men in Irish Abortion Campaigns

	Total Tweets	Total Image Tweets	Men Involved in Image Tweets	Only Men Featured	Men Explicitly Targeted
Together for Yes	1418	811	148 (18.2%)	89	28
Love Both	1885	1136	195 (17.2%)	77	17

What Types of Men were Featured on Twitter?

Previous literature on targeting men in campaigning tends to focus on men's role in relation to the issue – for example, as buyers of sex that perpetuate sex trafficking (Steele and Shores 2015). Following this role-based analysis, when analyzing SMO Twitter campaigns, we determined there to be five types of men featured with specific roles in relation to the issue of abortion in Ireland: politicians, doctors/experts, fathers/partners, celebrities/athletes, and campaign advocates without clear identities. Most of the time, the man's identity was indicated in the tweet text – particularly when politicians or doctors and lawyers were featured. For all

other men pictured, we searched online for their name to determine if they were a public figure. The fathers and partners were also identified via the image or video content, such as men holding a "Grandfathers for yes" campaign sign or a man holding a child with an accompanying message about parenthood. In the cases where the men were not identified by name or if they were identified as working for the campaign, we classified these men as "advocates." Table 3 displays the number of each category of men featured in images from both campaigns.

Table 3: Types of Men Featured in Twitter Images in the 2018 Irish Abortion Referendum Campaigns

	Politician	Doctor/ Expert	Father/ Partner	Celebrity/ Athlete	Advocate	Total Male Images
Together for Yes	18	47	19	37	27	148
Love Both	23	31	21	11	109	195

In the *Together for Yes* repeal campaign, celebrities and athletes made up 25% of male images, indicating this may have been an intentional strategy to feature them as "role models" for other men, which will be explored further later, whereas *Love Both* featured celebrities and athletes in less than 1% of their male images. Another third of the *Together for Yes* images included doctors, lawyers or other experts. Doctors were the top category for *Love Both* after male advocates and featured both anti-repeal physicians speaking about the dangers of abortion and images of doctors who supported repeal accompanied by critical messages. Politicians were also common on the *Together for Yes* and *Love Both* accounts. The large number of male advocates in *Love Both* images (56%) included men canvassing or talking about their experiences as a person whose mother nearly aborted them but did not. While it is possible that *Love Both* simply had fewer celebrity supporters, this does not explain why they didn't

emphasize those they did have more. These results suggest a difference in strategy where *Love Both* tended to focus on male advocates more than men who had specific public roles in relation to abortion. Analyzing the roles assigned to the featured men elucidates how their masculinity was mobilized by the campaigns.

Thematic Analysis of Men's Representation in the Social Movement Images

We analyzed the tweets featuring men through the lens of their positions in the debate as seen in the images posted by SMOs, and three general themes, or roles, emerged that guide the following analysis: 1) men as advocates, 2) men's experiences as impacted parties, and 3) men as role models and experts.

Men as Advocates

Men who were featured as active supporters and voters with no other clear role were presented as supportive advocates. A plurality (45%) of the Love Both male image tweets featured men by themselves or with small and large groups, holding signs simply encouraging people to vote "no," or other campaign materials while canvassing or at rallies. The language in the captions of the tweet and the campaign signs were rarely explicitly targeting men in these cases. Only 7 percent of *Love Both* images of men as advocates accompanied text that targeted men directly by featuring messages with wording such as "Men, your voice matters." Rather, images of these men tended to descriptively represent men and demonstrate that the campaigns were composed of diverse groups of Irish society.

The few messages that did explicitly point out that men were important to the referendum are worth discussing because they reveal more about the way in which men were actively targeted in those rare instances. One image featured a group of men walking down the street wearing the *Love Both* campaign's bright pink canvasser vests. The text with the image read,

"Man & pro-life? You are not alone!" (Love Both 2018d). This invitation to join other pro-life men in advocating for *Love Both* was explicit, though again more often male advocates were seen simply encouraging everyone to vote or participate in events. Even in these more generic messages, though, there was sometimes an implicit nod to hegemonic masculinity. An illustration of this may be seen in one post that read "Do you have strong shoulders? Do you have a spare hour? Join us!" and featured a photo of two men, one of whom was sitting on the shoulders of the other to put up a *Love Both* campaign poster. This example points to physical strength – one ideal of hegemonic masculinity (Trujillo 1991, 2) – to seemingly attract men as (quite literally) supporters of the campaign.

When *Together for Yes* posted images of men as advocates, they followed a similar pattern in featuring photos of men canvassing or participating in other campaigning events. With 19 percent of these images of men as advocates accompanying text explicitly appealing to men, *Together for Yes* extended frames to men in this category more but featured them less frequently overall than *Love Both*. But the images featuring male advocates typically just urged people to vote, join the campaign, or tell their stories. Some had quotes from outdoorsy, perhaps "frontiersman" (Trujillo 1991) type individuals, such as farmers who argued in favor of abortion rights for women. This interesting juxtaposition of masculine images of men and messages supporting women's autonomy is explored further in the "role models" thematic category.

Men's Experiences as Impacted Parties

SMOs appealed to men beyond their roles as advocates through messaging about how men might be personally affected by abortion. The *Love Both* account frequently featured male advocates whose mothers did not choose abortion, as in the case of Gavin from Dublin, who often spoke at events (Love Both 2018b). As seen in Table 3, fathers and partners were also

featured as impacted by abortion, the messaging centered around a protective frame of choosing

not to abort one's own child (e.g. the case of Grace, a child with Down's Syndrome) (Love Both

2018e) or wanting to have a say if their wife or girlfriend gets pregnant. For example, a photo of

a man with his back turned, displaying his *Love Both* canvassing vest, and the text, "Don't men

have any say over protecting the life of their baby?" (Love Both 2018a). The *Love Both*

campaign situated men as fathers and "family protectors," which coincides with the ideal of

"patriarchy" (Trujillo 1991), but they also offered other approaches, as when they posted that

"Guys tend to bottle up pain ... But men need to start talking about the burden they carry from

the abortion experience" (Love Both 2018c). This approach adds nuance to the idea of men as

"family protectors" by extending the campaign's frame about regret after abortion to include

men.

The *Together for Yes* campaign also featured fathers but rarely emphasized their role as

"family protectors." Only one video posted by *Together for Yes* began with, "A father's instinct

is to protect their daughters" (Together for Yes 2018a). Far more often the organization posted

emotional videos with fathers – or spouses together – describing their experiences with fatal fetal

abnormality and the trauma of having to travel with their partners to England for an abortion of a

wanted pregnancy. Alternatively, one video lightened the mood and featured a man who

proposes to his girlfriend, only to realize he has forgotten to vote "yes" in the referendum. He

then rushes to vote – aided by the women in his life who provide him with directions and his

passport. While most were not humorous, other videos and images featuring men as partners or

fathers similarly emphasized their role as supporters rather than protectors. While this is

consistent with progressive visions of male-female relations, it is interesting to note that in our

data, we found only one *Together for Yes* tweet that included a link to an article about inclusion

of transgender men in the movement and their experiences with abortion. Though we did notice some text-only tweets that mentioned transgender men during our data collection process, they were not included in this analysis which focused on images.

Men as Role Models and Experts

Finally, the other major role for men in SMO images focused on experts (usually doctors) providing their expertise on the issue of abortion and celebrities – actors, comedians, musicians, or athletes – using their popularity to encourage people to oppose (in *Love Both* tweets) or support (in *Together for Yes* tweets) repealing the Eighth Amendment. We view these men as "role models and experts," in the hegemonic masculinity framework, to engage with the messaging the SMOs posted with their images and videos. These are men who have all reached one feature of hegemonic masculinity: "occupational achievement" (Trujillo 1991). Their successful careers give them either the expertise or the public standing to speak to men and they may also fulfill other features of hegemonic masculinity that add to their "role model" status and allows them to implicitly or explicitly speak to men as voters.

As stated, *Love Both* rarely featured images of celebrities or athletes. Within this role, Mickey Harte, a football manager, was the most outspoken advocate featured in many of their campaign images and messages. One such message accompanied an image of Harte in his role as football manager and the words "We [people of Ireland] look out for the most vulnerable and … nobody [is] more vulnerable than unborn babies." The text was not explicitly targeted toward men, but the combination of the protection frame and the image of Harte at a football game implicitly appeals to a certain view of men's gender roles, similar to Steel and Shores' (2015) discussion of how "real men" are presented in campaigns against sex trafficking.

Interestingly, when it comes to athletes and other celebrity role models, *Together for Yes* deployed more images of these men in their posts and 60 percent of the organization's messages that explicitly addressed men were accompanying images of athletes or celebrities. Within this category of men, 38 percent of these images were of athletes, especially rugby and football players, while the rest of the images featured a mixture of actors, singers, comedians, and musicians. This appears to have been a concerted effort on the part of *Together for Yes* to highlight that these particular men support abortion rights, thereby tapping into their popularity and their masculine athleticism to put their images forth as role models for other men. Among the images of athletes, half of the messages that accompanied them addressed men as a group, with messages about why men's voices – and votes – were important to the referendum. For example, one image of several athletes, grinning and laughing and holding up their fists in mock-fight poses appeared with the text, "Men, if you think the 8th referendum is about healthcare, and that it's for a woman to decide what healthcare she needs, then you are a YES voter" (Together for Yes 2018c). The imagery in this approach combines three features of hegemonic masculinity, including "frontiersmen" and "physical force and patriarchy," as these men appear rough and outdoorsy and ready to fight, as well as "occupational achievement," as these men are all successful athletes. Yet, the accompanying text contrasts with these nods to hegemonic masculinity by making the statement that men should not make decisions for women and should actively support women's bodily autonomy.

The fascinating juxtaposition of hegemonic masculinity and messages supporting women's bodily autonomy could also be seen in the images of doctors, who spoke primarily as experts at the top of their field (occupational achievement) but often argued that women must have the right to make their own medical decisions and that doctors must support them or

women's lives may be put at risk. In one video posted by *Together for Yes*, Dr. Mark Murphy spoke to men directly, referring to their roles as husbands, brothers, sons, and friends, and urged men to "take responsibility" for the unsafe and difficult situations women have been placed in due Ireland's restrictive abortion laws (Together for Yes 2018d). Murphy's message emphasizes care and compassion while also singling out men and their role in ensuring women's rights are recognized – and goes so far as to call this men's "responsibility." *Love Both's* posts featuring male doctors included messages arguing that pro-repeal doctors were "misleading" the public, but no messages by male doctors that were addressed directly to men.

Discussion

While the accounts of both of the largest umbrella organizations involved in the referendum campaign sometimes featured men and sometimes even explicitly addressed men as a group, these male targets were a small number of the images and overall tweets from these campaign Twitter accounts. Our analysis of language and images suggests that extending frames specifically to men was not prevalent. But the fact that men were specifically targeted *at all* beyond these umbrella campaigns' appeals to society as a whole, and their general focus on women, is an intriguing finding. Because men have varying roles relating to abortion, SMOs were able to reach out to men implicitly through imagery representing these roles, often without wading too deeply into stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity that have been seen in other campaigns targeting men. However, the way in which these organizations approached this delicate balance between appealing to men and staying on message regarding how abortion impacts women was quite different.

Love Both situated men in the debate most as grassroots advocates campaigning for a "no" vote across the country. In the rare cases that they included messages directly addressing

men (only 1% of messages accompanying images), some discussed the way abortion impacts men as fathers who might feel sadness and regret if their partners chose abortion. But, even in these messages *Love Both* was more likely than *Together for Yes* to explicitly appeal to men as the "family protectors" consistent with the patriarchy feature of hegemonic masculinity (Trujillo 1991, 2). In one video a man states, "as men we have a duty to step up and protect both our partners and our children … Vote No, because you can't repeal regret" (Love Both 2018f). While *Love Both* focused more on "average men," they also evoked hegemonic masculinity in more explicit ways.

Alternatively, *Together for Yes* more often featured men as role models who have succeeded occupationally and may sometimes be seen as rugged "frontiersmen." But the messages they communicated with this imagery often defied other aspects of hegemonic masculinity, such as patriarchy and control, because they emphasized men's role in handing women their autonomy. While *Together for Yes* sometimes posted messages about protecting women, these were addressed to general audiences. We found only one video that explicitly appealed to men as protectors. Why are these differences apparent in these organizations' approaches to representing and appealing to men? We propose that part of the explanation lies in the SMOs' general campaigning strategy.

We suggest that the fact that men were rarely directly targeted by *Love Both* and men who were featured were most often seen in advocacy roles can be explained by previous literature on anti-abortion frame extension. While anti-abortion organizations lean toward traditional, conservative values, scholarship on these movements in the United States and Canada has identified recent efforts to eschew more patriarchal campaign messaging and instead focus on a "pro-woman" approach (Rose 2011; Saurette and Gordon 2016). *Love Both* demonstrated

this approach in their name and its reference to the Eighth Amendment affirming that women and fetuses have an equal right to life (rather than only focusing on the "unborn"), and in their campaign materials which tended to feature women and their babies. They often retweeted content from other organizations, such as *Women Hurt*, an anti-abortion organization comprised of women who speak about abortion regret and trauma as a result of having abortions. Perhaps the SMO's decision to engage in a women-focused approach precluded more frame extension to men.[1]

Together for Yes was slightly more likely to extend their frames to men (though only 4 percent of images specifically targeted them), which also fits with their general campaign strategy. Ailbhe Smyth, co-director of *Together for Yes,* described this outright in June, 2018: "We knew what we needed to do was to reach out beyond the feminists, pro-choice people and human rights groups to the general public, and the best way to do that was to tell personal stories alongside the voices of medical experts" (Loughlin and Ó Cionnaith 2018). Extending frames to the general public without derailing the core emphasis on women's personal stories and medical science was already part of their general strategy. Many of *Together for Yes's* campaign messages could appeal to men and women, such as "a woman you love needs your Yes." However, the organization did also occasionally reach out to men more directly and, in doing so, relied on men who acted as role models for other men. Doctors and experts were already part of the organization's campaign and acted as implicit role models, while athletes and other celebrities joined the campaign and explicitly addressed men most often. These role models implicitly appealed to norms of hegemonic masculinity, but they accompanied statements affirming men's importance as voters for women's autonomy, thereby remaining consistent with the campaign focus on women and their experiences (Cullen and Korolczuk 2019). On this note,

it is important to point out that beyond women with personal abortion experiences and women who were acting as advocates for the campaign, women doctors, athletes, and celebrities were also featured by both campaigns. Because this study focuses on men and the way social movements attempted to reach them and situate them in the debate, we did not analyze these images and messages.

Beyond men and their roles in the debate, other themes emerged that are noteworthy. An unexpected finding – mentioned in the discussion of men as advocates – was the use of humor, especially by *Together for Yes*. At times, the use of humor appeared to be a way for the pro-repeal organizations to get around the problem of using overtly masculine stereotypes while still appealing to men. Still, while videos featuring forgetful men who need women to remind them to do important things were humorous (such as the one described about the man proposing to his girlfriend), they could also be seen as reinforcing gender roles that lead to men's lack of engagement with women's rights issues. Throop describes some stereotypical depictions of men's and women's roles in Ireland with women as "strong, stoic, and self-sacrificing in contrast to men, who are seen as weak, overemotional, and often selfish little boys" (Throop 2003, 321). Poking fun at these stereotypes through humor could be appealing to such stereotypes or it could undermine them. In a more serious message, posted in a link by *Together for Yes*, a father argues that men have a duty to vote yes because "we're not little children anymore," nodding to this culturally constituted gender stereotype. Future research should consider whether in some contexts, humor may be an implicit appeal to masculine ideologies, how and when it can be used with serious issues like abortion, and how men respond to such framing. Furthermore, why do some organizations, like *Love Both*, rarely use humor?

Conclusion

Our findings make several contributions to social movement theory, framing literature, and political communication. Previous research has found that anti-abortion movements in some countries have extended frames to incorporate "pro-woman" messages. We contribute to this conversation and find that, in some cases, SMOs may extend frames to target men on issues like abortion that have historically been viewed as "women's issues." Building on previous research on masculinity and men as allies for women's rights (Fabiano et al. 2003; Steele and Shores 2015; Trujillo 1991), our findings on gendered frame extension reveal some engagement with hegemonic masculinity and other stereotypes in the images shared by SMOs. These images were often tempered by messages of compassion and the importance of men's emotions and men's role in supporting women, an interesting juxtaposition that was consistent with the organizations' broader campaign strategies.

Contributing to political communication and social movement theory, we have undertaken one of the few analyses of use of images, links and videos in social media campaigning. By exploring how men were represented in images, we provide a fuller picture of how these advocacy groups used a variety of male identities to emphasize particular messages to their intended publics without necessarily using explicitly gendered language. Relying upon textual analysis alone would not have provided the level of detail and context contained in the tweets the public consumed in the weeks leading up to the vote and would have missed important cues. For example, *Together for Yes* featured images of rugged male athletes, accompanied by progressive messages about why men should support women's bodily autonomy. Though it takes a great deal of time, even with two Twitter accounts over a short time period, we encourage social movement scholars to take the step beyond text analysis to visually analyze frames,

particularly when considering complex identity and rights issues and the movements surrounding them.

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Endnotes

[1] The organization's few messages aimed at men may have served to counter pro-choice frames that targeted men (Ayoub and Chetaille 2020).