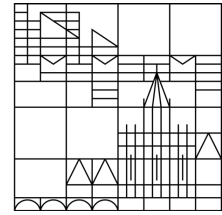




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# **Can Modern Sexism Help Account for the Divergence in Radical Right Voting Gaps between France and Germany?**

## **A Qualitative Cross-Country Analysis**

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## 1. Introduction

Radical Right Parties (RRP) have enjoyed a large influx in support throughout Western nations over the course of the last several decades. Since the 1990s, many have established themselves as permanent features of political landscapes all across Europe (Bergmann et al., 2020; Akkermann, 2015; Damhuis, 2020). A particularly distinct surge in support was noted after the 2015 ‘refugee crisis’. As RRP have a particular thematic focus on strict anti-immigration policies and gain a majority of their support from this positioning, the increase in popularity comes as no surprise. Besides an individual’s opposition to immigration (e.g., Akkermann, 2015; Immerzeel, 2015; Lubbers et al., 2002; Norris, 2005; Spierings & Zaslove, 2015) lower levels of trust in established political institutions (Norris, 2005) as well as personal indicators such as being less educated, younger, and male (Harteveld et al., 2015; Immerzeel, 2015) are associated with a larger likelihood of an individual to vote for a RRP in elections. Perhaps the most striking indicator for RRP support, is gender. This increased likelihood among men to support RRP is observable throughout practically all European countries (Norris, 2005; Mudde, 2007) and has been recognized in academic work from the onset of RRP gaining popularity in the 1990s: “From Austria to Russia, and from France to Slovakia, the electorate of populist radical right parties is constituted by roughly two-thirds men and one-third women” (Mudde, 2007; p.111). While many scholars have attempted to explain this phenomenon and an array of theories have been spun surrounding this disparity, none of the employed explanans were able to account for the entirety of the gender voting gap in RRP support. Previous findings have indicated there to be an ‘activating’ effect that higher levels of sexism in political parties have on male voters with similarly misogynistic values. As this phenomenon was not detected among women with similarly sexist beliefs, it is likely that this occurrence contributes to the gender voting gap in RRP support.

Based on this research, several hypotheses have been introduced in this research. It is hypothesized that RRP active in countries with a large gender voting gap will exhibit higher levels of sexism than RRP in countries with a smaller gender voting gap due to a correlation between the gender voting gap and sexist positioning of parties. Additionally, larger differences in the level of sexism portrayed between RRP and center-right parties are hypothesized to correspond to a larger gender voting gap, while cases in which RRP and center-right parties’ levels of sexism are more closely aligned will equate to a smaller gender voting gap in RRP support.

As overt levels of sexism have increasingly turned into a taboo not only in society but in the political sphere, it is unlikely for them to be openly portrayed by parties. Therefore, the

concept of Modern Sexism, which refers to subtle and underlying forms of sexism, will be employed as an explanans. In this thesis, the levels of modern sexism portrayed in official party documents, namely the election manifestos of the year 2017, will be investigated.

In order to investigate and analyze the levels of modern sexism in the election manifestos, a coding tool has been designed aiding the structural comparison of the different manifestos. With the help of this text-analysis tool, a comparative case study design has been employed. As France constitutes the only case in which the gender voting gap has thus far been overcome, the country and its political parties form the first case study. For the second case study, Germany has been selected. Each national case study includes a large-scale investigation of the country context, and a systematic analysis of the levels of modern sexism in the manifestos of the largest RRP and the most prominent centrist-right party in each country context. Subsequently, a cross-country analysis of the national findings was employed.

The showed support for the hypotheses made: The analysis revealed that in the French case even though the levels of Modern Sexism in the RRP were higher than those of the conservative-right, both parties had adopted similar stances on issues of gender and showed large overlaps while the German case study revealed much stronger dissimilarities between the levels of modern sexism of the RRP and the center-right party. Additionally, in France, a country with a small gender voting gap, the levels of sexism portrayed by the RRP were comparatively lower than the levels of modern sexism in the German RRP, a country with a large gender voting gap. The hypothesized covariation therefore did exist within the constraints of the small research design.

This thesis seeks to contribute to the academic research on three accounts: Firstly, it wishes to add onto the growing literature researching the influence of gendered attitudes in party positions as an explanans of further unraveling the gender gap. Secondly, by investigating whether RRP manifestos portray higher levels of modern sexism when compared to their centrist-right counterparts, the research wishes to contributing to the literature on comparative analysis of the radical right and the center-right parties to advance the understanding of gendered positions of both party families and how they differ from each other. And lastly, in order to be able to compare the levels of modern sexism exhibited in the manifestos of different party families, this thesis will create a coding scheme to help alleviate the “scarcity of proper measures of gender attitudes” (Anduiza & Rico, 2021; p.X). The introduction of a systematic tool of analysis for the levels of modern sexism further holds societal and political relevance. Through a more broad-scale use of the analysis tool, increased voter- and political awareness about the levels of modern sexism portrayed by political actors can be achieved. This will help

citizens make more informed decisions due to the disentangling of covert levels of sexism and incite political actors to put forward policies which truly advance gender equality.

## 2. Theory

Even though women have progressed widely in most social categories over the course of the last century, many political and societal hurdles have yet to be taken as gender inequalities have persisted. This is particularly true when considering the level of female political participation. To this day, men remain largely overrepresented in politics in Western democracies often occupying more than half of all seats in parliaments, making up the biggest share of members of political parties, exhibiting a higher likelihood to run for public office as well as holding most positions of the political elite. Furthermore, non-electoral forms of political participation such as, protest participation, political persuasion and campaigning also remain male-dominated (e.g. Beauregard, 2014; Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Córdova & Rangel, 2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). These differences between the political behavior of women and men have been the topic of research for a considerable amount of time now (Abendschön & Steinmetz, 2014). While gender, like many socio-demographic variables, constitutes a rather broad categorization criterion, dividing the population into large groups portraying almost as much in-group as inter-group variation, applying a gendered approach to the research of political phenomena is continuously gaining traction. Contrary to the classical political conflict lines like class, religion, or regionality, which some researchers assume are weakening due to social advancements and globalization, gender appears to continuously hold some explanatory power. When studying RRP support, it has been one of the most commonly referred to variables of interest due to the specifically gendered make-up of RRPs.

Many Radical Right Parties in Western democracies have first found traction as politically oppositional movements to the established parties with drastic and ‘extreme’ points on one or a few salient societal issues. Most commonly this issue was the opposition to immigration. With the gaining of political footing in recent years, these oppositional parties are suddenly faced with the need to maneuver the competitive space and develop a larger political profile in order to solidify their newfound success in the political sphere (Ellinas, 2008). To avoid a loss of relevance, parties of the radical right are forced to consider methods of re-election and voter activation. Therefore, RRPs commonly target voters of the moderate right. The capacity of said moderate right to keep its own voter base engaged and loyal, as well as re-attract those who have been drawn to the fringes has the potential to greatly influence the radical-right vote in future elections (Stockemer, 2017).

Another demographic for RRP to target is women. The existent support base for the radical right across most countries is overwhelmingly male (Mudde, 2014; Givens, 2004; Hartevelde et al., 2015). It is one of the radical right's most salient feature that men are overrepresented at all levels, from voters to activists, from party members to representatives in governments (Kitschelt, 2007; Ralph-Morrow, 2020). As a result, some RRP have recognized the importance of mobilizing the women's vote to ensure their continued electoral success.

Women's ability to participate in electoral processes, and thus the achievement of modern citizenship, has been one of the most clear-cut victories of feminist movements over the last centuries across Western democracies (Rubio-Marin, 2014). And women have increasingly made use of their hard-earned right: Women have become an established and valued part of the electorate in Western nations and their voter potential has been recognized across the party spectrum. The example of the United States illustrates this well. In the 101 years since the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, female voting behavior has adapted, changed, and gained traction. While women voters once lagged behind men in turnout numbers, the female voting population has increased and diversified over the years, (Junn & Masuoka, 2020) and has even come to surpass the number of male voters (Norris, 2002, Stauffer & Fraga 2021). Women have established themselves in the two-party system as a major electorate to be won over. While the female vote depicts large in-group variation, especially along the prominent cleavage of race (Junn & Masuoka, 2020; Kostelka et al. 2019), their vote has been decisive in several presidential elections. A gender voting gap in the two-party system of the USA generally only manifests as an overall tendency for women to support and elect Democratic presidential candidates at a higher rate than male Americans. And yet, women, and especially white women, have also been instrumental in electing Republican presidents, most famously, Donald Trump in 2016 (Setzler & Yanus, 2018): 41% of women, and 52% of men supported his candidacy with their vote (Statista data, 2016).

The example of the USA does not only highlight the fact that women voters are a diverse, and internally multi-faceted group that remain divided by traditional conflict lines of race, class, and many others, it also shows the importance the female vote has in the electoral sphere. The female vote has become a necessity for many parties in order to solidify their political standing.

The underrepresentation of women in the voter base of RRP however, has only been defied in a few cases. The persistence of the gender gap in radical right voting, particularly when considering the potential women voter activation could have for RRP parties in Western democracies, attracted and still attracts, a number of researchers to investigate the matter more

closely. An overview of the progression of research on the Gender Voting Gap in RRP support will therefore be given in the next paragraph.

## 2.1 Overview of Existent Research on the Gender Voting Gap

As previously established, the puzzle of the persistent Radical Right gender voting gap has received academic attention ever since its appearance. From the onset of research, a focus has primarily been put on the demand-side explanations of the phenomenon (Erzeel & Rashkova, 2017). Due to the parties' primary appeal lying within their radical position on immigration, the ethno-religious diversification of society, and the process of European integration (Mudde, 2007; Ivarsflaten, 2008), early theoretical approaches hypothesized strong gendered differences on these items: However, the perception of women as more peaceful, nurturing life-bearing beings, inherently averse to hate, and thus less likely to support the radical right, was debunked rather swiftly (Mudde, 2007). This construction of womanhood has been discarded in most academic work since. Other researchers theorized that due to the collective social oppression women have encountered simply due to their gender, women are in turn less likely to enforce similar oppressive forces on other marginalized groups, making them less likely to exhibit hateful tendencies and more sympathetic to other forms of societal devaluation (e.g., Birsl, 1994). Once more, these theoretical models did not hold (e.g., Coenders et al., 2004). Survey data concluded that women and men had no mentionable differences when it came to attitudes concerning immigration, ethno-religious diversification, and European integration (Givens, 2005; Immerzeel et al., 2015). Women were just as likely to share political positions associated with the radical right as men were. This realization changed the approaches used to analyze the gender voting gap drastically.

When discarding differences in political convictions, researchers focused on identifying variables of societal and economic differences as the root of the male dominance in the radical right. It was argued that workforce participation, and particularly participation in the manual labor force, could account for the gap in RRP support. Research showed early support for this theory, steering subsequent work into a similar path. In her research, Mayer (1999) established a correlation between blue collar work and support of the French Front National (FN) and tied the influence of a lower educational background to the likeliness of supporting the FN. Givens (2005) later showed that blue-collar workers had a higher likelihood of exhibiting anti-immigration attitudes that lead them to shift away from more traditional socialist political attitudes that used to be common in the sector.

More research has built on Mayer's findings and theories pertaining to gendered experiences of modern phenomena, such as globalization and modernization appeared. Due to higher levels of male employment in traditionally labor-intensive jobs which have experienced more intense levels of outsourcing and automatization over the last decades, men are often considered to be the 'losers' of globalization. Women on the other hand, are less likely to be employed at all, and if they are active participants in the labor force, they are more likely to find employment in the public sector which is less threatened by deindustrialization in the West. While in some country-contexts employment as well as employment in the blue-collar sector was statistically relevant in determining the likelihood of an individual voting for the radical right, controlling for these variables did not decrease the gender gap in radical right vote (Givens, 2005). In more recent findings, differences in occupational type, employment and education held some explanatory power for the gender gap, however once these characteristics and different attitudes were controlled for the gap did not substantially diminish (Immerzeel et al., 2013).

In addition to changes of workforce participation, processes leading to increased levels of gender equality are hypothesized to have reduced men's superior societal position while advancing women's social standing, contributing to the perception of women constituting the 'winners' of recent developments. This perceived loss of status men experience is hypothesized to have led to more dissatisfaction with the current political climate and thus more radical right voting patterns in men (Spierings & Zaslove, 2015; Immerzeel et al., 2015). Support was shown for the theoretical explanation of economic and societal differences between the genders accounting for parts of the gender voting gap. However, statistical models in which economic differences were accounted for still presented a difference in support for RRP across the genders.

As traditionally 'male' and labor-intensive jobs are often claimed to be more susceptible to take-over by migrant workers, a correlation between anti-immigrant sentiments and the employment in labor-intensive jobs was hypothesized. However, as previously established no significant differences could be found in anti-migrant sentiments across the genders, thus rendering this theory invalid (Harteveld et al., 2015; Norris, 2005).

It became increasingly apparent that the above-mentioned explanations could not fully account for the gender voting gap in radical right support. This realization has led to a recent development of more supply-side models (Erzeel & Rashkova, 2017) among which gender-sensitive research approaches were developed.



Theories which hypothesized that gendered political socialization contributes to the gender voting gap, emerged: Due to collective societal beliefs about what behavior is deemed appropriate and which societal positions are considered suitable for each gender in a specific cultural context, society is shaped. The more fixated a society is on upholding these gendered roles, the more backlash will be faced by people straying from the assigned role. In the political realm this socialization becomes visible when women seek to gain access to position generally reserved for men (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003), as seen throughout Hillary Clinton's campaign in 2016. While researchers acknowledge the manifestations of gendered, such as the fact that men are overrepresented in almost all aspects of political life and societal participation, these phenomena are rarely brought into association with subliminal socialization processes.

Spierings and Zaslove (2017) refer to political socialization when researching the gender voting gap in RRP: they hypothesized, that women due to their socialization are more averse to populism in general, which in turn makes women less likely to vote for the radical right. Results showed that populist attitudes had a mediating effect on women's voting behavior, leading them to avoid parties with a populist image much more so than men. This effect, however, was far more pronounced and consistent on the radical right than on the political left. While the voting gap in Radical Right support appears to be influenced and mediated by gendered socialization to an extent, other factors contribute to the particular difference on the radical right spectrum.

In their research, Hartevelde et al. (2017) uncovered strong evidence for a 'social cue mechanism'. They hypothesized that women, due to their particular socialization were more concerned with a party's image and the social cues from the media as well as their surroundings when casting their vote than men were. Their findings show that the perception of social acceptability of a party in society indeed influenced women's vote at a higher rate than it did men's. RRP's commonly negative public image is thus likely to contribute to gender gap. Immerzeel et al. (2015) tested whether women were more inclined to vote for the radical right once the RRP had become a political insider and used less populist discourse style. Their findings showed that this was not in fact the case, partially debunking Hartevelde et al.'s theory.

The last big theoretical development to be addressed in this overview is the radical right's framing of masculinity and its existent traditionalist views on gender. Several researchers found evidence for a correlation between masculinity and the support of the radical right: Participation in extremist political movements (Kimmel, 2018), as well as the support of RRPs (Coffé, 2018) were heightened in voters with personality traits labeled as 'masculine'. Ralph-Morrow (2020) in her research furthermore showed that RRP employ inherently

masculinist discourses and practices, supporting the hypothesis that the concept of masculinity in radical right ideology holds some explanatory power for to the overrepresentation of men in their voter base. The ‘need to feel like a man’ was a reoccurring phenomenon observed in male supporters of the radical right (Ralph-Morrow, 2020; Kimmel, 2018). Further evidence for this theory can be found in the research by Daddow and Hertner (2019): the policy positions, discourses and practices of UKIP and the German AfD were found to be ‘toxically masculine’. This term refers to a particular performance of masculinity which is characterized by “rage, the propensity to bottle up emotions, gang behaviour, limited empathy for others and maladaptive communication and interaction styles in person-to-person and online discourse” (Daddow & Hertner 2019, p.2). Men’s tendencies to value and defend their masculinity, as described in the research above, has previously been shown to have severe negative consequences, promoting destructive behavior as well as sexist attitudes that reinforce social inequality (Glick et al. 2015). The concepts of masculinity and sexism are thus closely interlinked.

Sexist attitudes are by no means exclusive to the radical right and depending on the national context, are represented across the political spectrum. However, a traditionally gendered understanding of society appears to be heightened among RRP.

## 2.2 Radical Right Parties’ Positioning on the Issue of Gender

The far-right draws much of its electoral appeal from the summoning of nostalgia for a supposedly better time long passed. It does so by opposing progressive trends such as multiculturalism, post industrialism and greater measures of gender equality (Allen & Goodman, 2020; Rydgren, 2013). The upholding of traditional gender roles in the ideological profile of RRP has become a staple across national contexts (Akkermann, 2015), however, the extent and intensity of this phenomenon varies largely across different cultures and appears to be evolving: While RRP were mainly recognized to be Männerparteien (men’s parties), processes of change have started to slowly set in: increases in female figure heads have been noted for the last 15 years (Givens, 2004), gender voting gaps have started to close in several Western nations, and recent overtures toward women’s equality and gay rights were noted among a few far-right parties. However, these progressive stances were most commonly adopted to be instrumentalized against the Muslim community, e.g., a re-framing of the burqa ban as a feminist struggle for female liberation has been observed (Allen & Goodman, 2020). Gender issues, which have emerged on the agendas of RRP and other parties, have thus become a means of demonstrating the “Backwardness of non-western cultures” (Akkermann, 2015, p. 40). In order to frame Islam as an oppressive ideology threatening the freedoms of

'native' women, RRP have enthusiastically adopted a façade of commitment to women's rights and the freedom of choice as a weapon against the alleged 'Islamization' of Europe (Akkermann, 2015; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2015). The protection of 'native' women against a foreign, often Muslim, male is hereby an often-employed trope masquerading as a feminist stance.

Overall, the progress observed in many RRP on the gender axis, thus not really constitute fundamental progress as it has not altered the radical right's position towards gender at its core (Givens, 2004). The traditional understanding of the family unit remains prominent across RRP in Europe: When analyzing the political communication stemming from RRP in Europe, traditionalist narratives surrounding the portrayal of the nation as a family governed by a patriarchal structure intended to protect its citizens, especially women, from sexually or ethnically different 'Others', have been noted (Norocel, 2010; 2013). This narration clearly reinforces and upholds traditional gender roles, particularly for women. It can thus be seen that the defense of the traditional family has remained a reoccurring theme in RRP manifestos, leading to the conclusion that no large-scale differences on the deeply gendered understanding of society have occurred (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2015).

In line with traditional gender stereotypes, RRP and other conservative players have more recently also added the 'fight against genderism' (Lang, 2015, p.167) as one of their core issues. Gender has historically often been understood as a "social usher" (Lang, 2015, p.169) predetermining a person's social standing, by conservative parties (Lang, 2015). Abstract feminine and masculine roles thus lay the basic foundation for internal coherence of the ideology of many. The ongoing societal deconstruction of such a simplistic understanding of (social) genders, has led to a 'fight against genderism' by both RRP and other traditionalist forces. An over-stylization of masculinity and a defamation of social changes occurs in the process: Often times, Anti-Genderist movements claim that elitist powers aim to destroy the fundament of the family and enforce a 'gender-doctrine' on everyone, especially young people and children (Lang, 2015, p. 172-173). In a European context, these elites are often seen in the European Union believed to be enforcing liberal elitist beliefs upon the people. Concerned players therefore positions themselves as the defender of the traditional family and the upholders of a 'freedom of opinion' in this powerful imagined gender 'dogma' imposed from above.

The above-mentioned positions held by many RRP unfold in complex and nuanced ways. In some instances, RRP adopt egalitarian policies supportive of gender equality on economic

issues to position themselves as advocates of women and in order to justify their anti-immigration (and especially anti-Islam) discourses (Möser, 2020). This “un-demonization” of right-wing discourse has led to a blurring of the lines when it comes to actual levels of sexism present in RRP. It has been noticed that the vague idea of equal rights and feminism has increasingly appeared in the discourses of the most prominent far-right leaders, accompanied by a denial of any existing discrimination in Western societies (Anduiza & Rico, 2021). An intentional obscuring of the constructs and the meaning behind sexism, feminism, and equality has thus ensued, rendering the concepts empty shells. As a result, the radical right has often managed to advertise themselves as the defenders of women, and gender equality, when their true political intent harshly counters these statements. Especially, the newly forming aspects of the Anti-genderism do not automatically register as being sexist in mainstream culture. Several talking points falling under the umbrella term are generally supported across societal groups, including a large portion of women. By framing anti-gender ideologies as a necessary step to ensuring the protection of children and the heterosexual family bond from elitist interventions, RRP have normalized the ideology. A structural comparison of the actual underlying beliefs of parties, and the way in which they are able to present themselves to the world is thus needed. The tool to be developed in this thesis can aid this process.

### 2.3 The Salience of Gendered Issues on Electoral Outcomes/Success

Researchers have established that the most reliable indicator determining radical right vote choice lies within the political ideology and the anti-immigration attitudes, as well as the levels of nativism of the individual voter (Spierings & Zaslove, 2015; Hansen, 2019). However, among individuals with the same radical-right political attitudes, men have a significantly higher likelihood of translating their political ideology into a vote for RRP than women (Hansen, 2019). Therefore, underlying causal mechanisms related to the gender of the voter must exist that lead to a higher likelihood of men supporting the radical right.

When trying to capture the underlying mechanisms for the above-mentioned phenomena at hand, the previously specified findings about the highly gendered worldview of the radical right have not sufficiently been employed as an explanans. Even though the importance of gender for the ideological profile of the radical right has been well established, a lack of research has gone into the influence these gendered beliefs have on electoral outcomes. Kitschelt and McGann’s (1997) early conclusion that gender issues were a characteristic feature not only of the radical right’s ideology but also of their electoral appeal, were not followed by the systematic analysis needed to substantiate it. Instead, most of the academic attention has been devoted to determining other potential ideological and attitudinal explanations, especially,

attitudes towards migration. The high amount of attention given to attitudes on migration is justifiable given the particular thematic focus of RRP on this issue as well as the surges of support experienced after migratory pressures. Nonetheless, the gender axis has been systematically overlooked in most research of the gender voting gap. This thesis seeks to contribute to the small amount of existent literature evaluating the gender voting gap in relation to the gendered roles and sexist convictions held by the RRP.

The intuitive assumption could be made that RRP continued emphasis on traditional gender norms and the upholding of conservative gender roles would lead less women to support the RRP, thus explaining the gender voting gap: As many positions of the radical right, such as the opposition to public childcare, the attempts to limit female reproductive rights, the strong rejection of the notion that women face discrimination in the work force, as well as the denunciation of ‘gender quotas’ and many more, are inherently anti-feminist and would affect women disproportionately if implemented, instinctively one would theorize women to be less likely to support such positions, and in turn, these parties. However, not all women are feminists, hold feminist beliefs or support strives towards gender equality in the political, economic and social sphere (Lodders & Weldon, 2019). A study by Roets et al. (2012) concluded that the gender of a person was only a minor predictor of the likelihood that a person would hold sexist attitudes. These findings mirrored earlier findings of the same “remarkably limited impact of gender on sexism” (Roets et al., 2012, p. 355) discovered by Glick et al. (2015).

Even after concluding there to be no mentionable differences of the levels of different forms of sexism between the genders, there remains good reason to believe that gendered attitudes of RRP might influence the gender voting gap: In their research, Lodders and Weldon (2019) found that higher personal levels of benevolent sexism in male voters, which manifests as affectionate but patronizing attitudes toward women who are seen as needing men’s assistance and protection were a key factor in ‘activating’ underlying attitudes into an RRP vote. This effect could not be detected among female voters: benevolently sexist women were even found to be less likely to vote for RRP. However, once controlling for anti-immigrant sentiments and authoritarian values, attitudes towards gender equality were also no longer significant predictors of RRP support in men (Lodders & Weldon, 2019). These findings help shed light onto the relevance of sexism in explaining parts of the gender gap in RRP vote and encourage further research pertaining to the issue of gender.

Earlier findings by Spierings and Zaslove (2015) mirror Lodders and Weldon’s conclusions: “a small negative effect [of voting for the radical right] was observed for men regarding their attitudes towards economic gender equality, whereas no such effect is found

among women.” (p.150). While women’s vote choice was unaffected by varying degrees of support for gender equality, the male vote was in fact influenced. Higher sexist attitudes in men led to a higher likelihood of these men voting for parties on the right.

Arguably the most interesting finding of Spierings and Zaslove was however, that sexist attitudes in men did not only translate into a vote for RRP but also for center-right parties, to the same extent. Spierings and Zaslove therefore uncovered another large gap in current research: Even though centrist right parties like RRP tend to promote predominantly conservative ‘anti-feminist’ views and attitudes, and when given governing power even translate these attitudes into policies, centrist parties receive a more equal distribution of votes among men and women. The researchers therefore concluded that in order to identify and understand the sex gap in voting for RRP, the differences between centrist-right parties and RRP regarding issues of gender needs to be evaluated more closely as their findings based on personal attitudes were primarily able to distinguish left-wing party voters from RRP and other conservative voter but not RRP supporters from centrist-right voters. Once more the lack of systematic evaluation of different parties, and party families, on the gender axis was identified.

Anduiza and Rico (2021) in their research stress that the lack of insights into the relevance of gender on voting behavior might be partially founded in the “scarcity of proper measures of gender attitudes” (p.4). Conceptualization work is therefore needed before the connection between attitudes towards gender equality and far-right vote can be systematically analyzed (Anduiza & Rico, 2021). This is precisely where my thesis seeks to expand the current research.

### 3. Research Question

In order to uncover the nature of the voting gap in RRP support, many theories have been employed. While some of the previously discussed theories hold partial explanatory power, to this day no satisfactory and conclusive explanation could be given that would account for the entirety of the gender voting gap in RRP support. In this thesis, several research attempts at explaining the gender voting gap will be combined in order to extend and broaden the understanding of the relations between gender and the voting gap in radical right support. Especially the formal communication of the radical right, and the sexism in such communication, will be evaluated in this thesis.

Even though sexism may have become a societal “taboo” (Lodders & Weldon, 2019, p.459), it remains a prevalent aspect of politics across Western democracies. Based on previous findings concerning the salience of gender for certain voter groups of the radical right, especially male voters, the hypothesis is formed that the difference in support between the

genders can be partially traced back to RRP's position towards gender roles and due to the close link in logic, in turn to the radical right's levels of sexism. Consequently, in this thesis it is being hypothesized that the radical right's positioning upholds, if not always overtly, sexist stances and traditional gender roles in an effort to attract male voters.

Overtly sexist statements are unlikely to be discovered in official party documents due to the societal taboo, however, by employing the concept of "modern sexism" (Swim et al. 1995) when analyzing party communication, underlying sexist attitudes are made detectable. The concept of modern sexism was designed to capture more subtle and underlying forms of discriminatory and prejudicial beliefs about women, compared to more plain and apparent forms of expressing sexist attitudes have started to lose societal acceptance (Campbell et al. 1997). In their findings, Anduiza and Rico (2021, unpublished at the time of writing) established a correlation between expressed levels of modern sexism in voters, irrespective of the respondent's gender, and the likelihood of supporting the radical right. Based on these findings, modern sexism is believed to hold some explanatory power regarding the gender voting gap.

#### Central Question and Hypotheses

The central question to be answered in this thesis is therefore if the Gender Voting Gap of Radical Right support is linked to the levels of modern sexism exhibited by the RRP. Less sexist RRP's are therefore expected to attract male and female voters to a similar degree, while more sexist parties would have an overrepresentation of men among their voters.

*H1: Radical Right Parties in countries with a large gender voting gap exhibit higher levels of modern sexism compared to the levels of modern sexism in Radical Right Parties in countries with a smaller gender voting gap*

In a subsequent step, the question, whether RRP's and centrist-right parties vary in their level of modern sexism is posed. While the vote for RRP's is often gendered, this is not the case for centrist-right parties overall. If higher levels of modern sexism in a RRP activate male voter potential, the Gender Voting Gap will be largest in countries where the RRP is considerably more sexist than their centrist counterpart.

*H2a: Radical Right Parties exhibit higher levels of modern sexism compared to their centrist-right counterparts in countries with a large gender voting gap*

*H2b: In countries with a small gender voting gap, the difference of levels of modern sexism between Radical Right Parties and center-right parties is also small*

## 4. Research Design

In order to test the established hypotheses, a qualitative comparative case study design consisting of two cases will be employed. This analysis will be followed by a cross-case examination. A qualitative case study design lends itself well for the research questions posed as the number of potential cases to be studied is very small (Western nations) and an array of potentially confounding factors could be at play due to the large cross-country variations. The absence of large data sets on the issue of interest, as well as the high degree of nuance of country context and the need for large scale contextualization render quantitative analysis unsuitable. Case Study design is thus uniquely suited to be employed as it aims to understand, in detail, how or why phenomena like the radical right voting gap occur, making it the appropriate choice (Lijphart, 1975).

### 4.1 Research Plan

The case study design will span two selected countries, each country constituting one case. Comparative case studies are uniquely suitable for the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal (Lijphart, 1975). Therefore, for each case an in-depth overview of the gendered differences in voting behavior, the country specific political and electoral system, the reached levels of gender equality in the country context, an overview over the RRP and its position on gender, as well as ongoing and significant public debates in the country context will be given. This is necessary, as issues of gender equality and thus of national RRP's position on gender policies vary greatly between the European countries. Potential confounding variables that vary between the two cases and might have an effect on the outcome of this analysis will be discussed. This first analytical step is highly relevant to the comparative case study design and constitutes an important factor in the production of more generalizable knowledge about causal questions (Goodrick, 2014). By highlighting differences and similarities in the country context, the findings can be best contextualized.

After a specific description of the features of each case, the selected cases are studied more closely in relation to the topic of interest (Goodrick, 2014). In this thesis, embedded in the previous cultural analysis, both the prominent RRP as well as a centrist-right party will be selected in each country case. Using a text-analysis tool developed for the purpose of this study



(see Section: Operationalization), official party communication will be analyzed to gather qualitative as well as quantitative data about the levels of modern sexism expressed in all four party manifestos. After the conclusion of the analysis, each national case study will be evaluated internally. While referencing the previously established country context, the levels of modern sexism found in both the centrist-right and the radical right party will be analyzed and compared to each other. This will help establish findings for hypotheses H2a and H2b.

After conducting both case studies and having gained a substantial understanding of each case, a foundation is established on which the researcher is able to analyze the data both within each situation and across situations and draw overarching conclusions speaking for the validity of the results (Yin, 2003). In this consecutive analytical step, the RRP's levels of modern sexism in their respective cultural context will be compared to each other. The findings will help determine the accuracy of H1.

#### 4.2 Operationalization

Even though sexism, if existent at the value level of a party, is hypothesized to be found across all levels of party communication, both formal and informal, this thesis will focus strictly on sexism in official party communication. Official party documents are considered “most suitable” for assessing ideological profiles as they represent the “voice of the party as a whole” (Akkermann, 2015, p. 40) and are thus likely to give a clearer view on systematic and institutionalized levels of sexism in the party. Especially when assessing RRP, a divide is often observable between the official party position and the statements made and political reality practices by the members of the RRP (Siri, 2016). Therefore, a strong difference between the type and overtness of sexism between official and unofficial communications from the party is anticipated: For example, the Twitter accounts of party members, or personal interviews of individuals are expected to portray much more overt and lurid forms of sexist speech and ideology. However, measuring the levels of sexism on the unofficial communication channels might lead to the measuring of personal views of the politicians and members of the party, rather than the overall ideological makeup of the political party.

In the context of this paper, party manifestos will form the basis of analysis as they best capture the party's official positioning on overall convictions. While it is commonly known that citizens themselves are unlikely to read election manifestos, citizen's perceptions concerning party positioning are influenced by political expert's assessments of policy positions and shifts in the manifestos (Adams et al., 2014). Therefore, official news sources who actively research party positions and give expert opinions a platform, will reflect the parties' programmatic

stances, which in turn help form voter opinion. In several countries, technological tools have been developed through which voters are able to determine which parties best correlate with their personal views (e.g., Wahl-O-Mat in Germany). The positions reflected in the tool are directly based on the party manifestos, and while the technological tools cannot claim to fully form vote choice, they do help give voters insights into the parties' positions (Vogel, Tagesspiegel, 1. September 2019).

However, official party communication, and thus party manifestos, is unlikely to portray overt levels of sexism. As RRP's seek to establish themselves in the political sphere for a prolonged amount of time and are thus reliant on broader voter appeal, a certain awareness about the appropriateness of political communication and the expected professionalism of the party's standing is anticipated, especially concerning official party documents, such as manifestos. Manifestos often more "carefully and moderately" (Akkermann, 2015, p.40) phrased, which could potentially lead to an underestimation of actual sexist attitudes.

For this reason, the thesis will measure the manifesto's levels of modern sexism. The concept of modern sexism was designed to capture more subtle and underlying forms of discriminatory and prejudicial beliefs about women, compared to more plain and apparent forms of expressing sexist attitudes have started to lose societal acceptance (Campbell et al., 1997). In order to measure these underlying sexist attitudes, a coding tool has been developed, enabling the systematic evaluation of modern sexism.

#### *Modern Sexism as a Stable Indicator of Overall Sexism*

Modern Sexism, first coined by Swim et al. in 1995, refers to a particular form of contemporary sexism. Traditional forms of sexism operate on overt, conscious levels and manifest tangible in the world, such as discriminatory hiring practices, the expressed belief of female inferiority, or issues such as domestic violence. These forms of discrimination are generally frowned upon and less accepted by modern standards. Modern sexism on the other hand refers to a set of more covert attitudes which indicate the presence of underlying sexist beliefs. As these attitudes are not directly referring to the treatment of women but around more subtle indicators such as opinions about the continued discrimination women face, modern sexism is more socially acceptable than other forms of sexism (Becker & Sibley, 2016). This in turn renders the measuring of modern sexism less prone to underestimation of levels of sexism present, which would apply for more overt forms of sexism simply due to social desirability. The concept of modern sexism was originally developed to capture the way in which individuals discuss gender equality today based on their personal sexist attitudes. However, in this paper, the concept will be molded in order to enable the systematic evaluation of sexism in political party manifestos.

As previously established, overt forms of sexism have become less acceptable in society. This also applies to the political sphere.

Due to the current progression of European gender equality in Europe, overtly sexist party programmes containing ideas about inferiority of women are unlikely to come by. However, just like voters possess personal levels of modern sexism, and have been shown to vote in accordance with these values (Anduiza & Rico 2021) party programmes are likely to exhibit underlying modern sexist beliefs about the necessity to further enable processes of gender equality. For this reason, a coding tool was developed, applying the central themes of modern sexism to evaluations of party manifestos.

In addition to evaluations of levels of modern sexism in the radical right, this tool can be applied to parties on the entire political spectrum. Researchers have often discussed the lack of systematic evaluation of gendered policies and attitudes between centrist parties of the moderate-right and the radical right. As, in many country contexts, women do not show a particular hesitation to vote for the center right parties, but the gender gap in RRP support is rather large, even though policies pertaining to gender do not vary significantly, the evaluation of modern sexism in parties across the political spectrum are needed.

#### *Establishing a Coding Tool capturing Modern Sexism*

Modern sexism involves several dimensions which when combined give a holistic overview over the underlying levels of sexism.

The first dimension refers to outright denial of women's (continued) discrimination in today's world. A modern sexist attitude would thus reflect the belief that the ideal level of equality which should be achieved, has already been reached (Anduiza & Rico, 2021; Maxwell & Shields, 2019). Sexism is thus not only reflected negative and derogatory attitudes towards women, but also manifests as an active "resistance to end with sex-based inequality" (Anduiza & Rico, 2021, p.6). This resistance is embodied by a refusal to acknowledge the continued existence of gender-based inequalities and discrimination in society.

In order to capture these sentiments as a dimension in the coding tool, seven dimensions on which gender equality is generally measured by EIGE in the annual Gender Equality Index are being employed. These dimensions include: the equality in issues of work, money, knowledge, time, power, health and violence. The indicators chosen for each dimension correlate closely to the points of measurements employed by EIGE, e.g., in the sector of "time" a crucial factor in establishing equality lies within the provision of public childcare, which would lower the care activities of women in turn creating higher levels of gender equality. The indicators of EIGE have been chosen as there is reliable longitudinal data available by EIGE

on how well the country cases have addressed existent inequalities in the past and how large the need to address certain inequalities still is. Therefore, if party manifestos in one country context do not address equality items in one area, e.g., time, the achieved level of equality on the indicator of ‘time’ from the EIGE data can be consulted, in order to determine whether the party in question refuses to acknowledge existent inequalities, or if inequalities have been addressed to a high degree in the past, rendering them less salient.

In addition to the seven established sectors in which gender discrimination is most commonly recognized in policy making, this paper will include an indicator in which the blaming of inequalities and oppression of women on immigrants, mostly Muslim individuals, will be coded as ‘denial of women’s continued discrimination’ as well. This is necessary, as many sources indicate that the denial of women’s discrimination in European countries has increasingly been solidified through a process of ‘othering’ across political parties (Scrinzi, 2017; Akkermann, 2015; Fangen & Lichtenberg, 2021; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2015; Farris, 2017). By deeming issues of gender inequality to be embedded in ‘foreign’ patriarchal cultures, mostly referencing the culture of immigrating Muslims, the parties introduce a tenor suggesting that optimal levels of gender equality had been present prior to migratory movements. Discrimination patterns are deemed “foreign”, which in turn diminishes and denies the levels of discrimination existent in the country context. Cultural practices, religious clothes, and foreign men especially stemming from Muslim contexts, are hereby framed as dangers to reached levels of gender equality in the country in question (Fangen & Lichtenberg, 2021). Through this process, the continued discrimination existent in Europe is denied and gender equality is diminished to a rhetorical tool against Islam. Therefore, the coding tool will capture statements made in support of this process of “Femonationalism” (Farris, 2017). Any statements made in support of such beliefs will be marked as indicative of modern sexism as it constitutes a form of denial of existent forms of gender-based discrimination in itself.

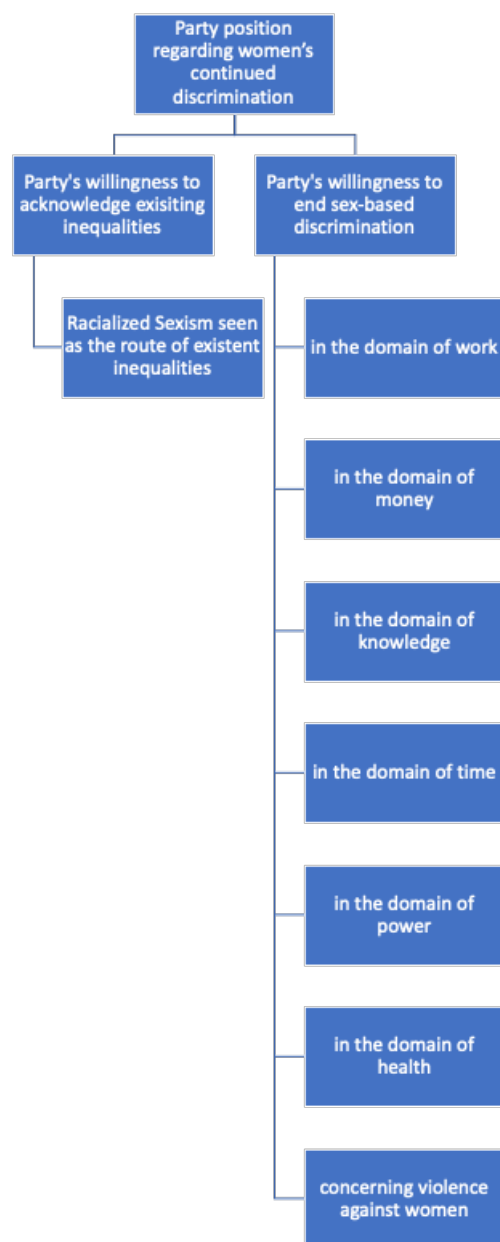


Figure 1: Parital Coding Tool 1, Overview, Parties' position on the continued discrimination of women

Figure 1 provides an overview of the coded areas, however, for reasons of readability, the precise codes for each subcategory have been excluded from the figure. For a more detailed visual representation of the first branch of the coding tool, see Annex 1.

To determine which proposed policies will be coded as indicative and non-indicative of Modern Sexism, inspiration has been taken from previous assessments of gender-sensitive policy making (Akkermann, 2015) as well as the determinants of gender equality in the EIGE indexing. Additionally, various sources were consulted on issues not previously addressed in the aforementioned sources.

In the domain of 'work', indicative of modern sexism are policies to reduce protections of women against gender-based discrimination in the workplace in line with EIGE's Index, and the planned introduction of a pro-natalist agenda by the party. The latter has been included in

the area of ‘work’, as the unrestricted support of motherhood is “insufficiently critical of its oppressive dimensions” (Gimenez, 2018, p.159). To this day, grave structural are connected to motherhood in Western nations. In a study in 2019, Kleven et al. found that the “child penalty”, the economic ramifications of the birth of the first child, remain very high. For example, in Germany, one year after the birth of the first child, women on average, earn around 80% less than a year prior to birth, and even 10 years after the first child, mothers still make 61% less than the last year before becoming a parent (Kleven et al., 2019). This “child penalty” does not exist among fathers (Kleven et al., 2019). Due to these insufficiently addressed disadvantages, a pro-natalist agenda will be coded as Modern Sexist. Additionally, policies enabling mothers to return to work more easily, such as foreseen reintegrative measures, as well as policies to end with sex-based discrimination in the workplace (career advancement, sexual harassment, etc.) and policies protecting women from job insecurity (e.g., support of part-time work, dismissal protection for pregnant women, etc.) have been coded as non-indicative of Modern Sexism in the area of work.

In the domain of ‘money’, policies coded as non-indicative of Modern Sexism include policy plans to introduce equal pay for equal work, plans introducing remuneration for care work, plans to raise pensions for mothers, and small pensions overall, or exempt them from taxation, policies seeking to raise family or child allowances from the state and all other measures lowering the financial burden of parenthood, e.g., longer allocation of unemployment benefits, enforcement of alimony payments, etc.. Several of the introduced codes while not directly referring to women, were designed to capture the overarchingly positive effect they have on mothers, women, and especially sole mothers. As the burden of care work still predominantly falls on women, hindering many from accessing the workforce, smaller pensions predominantly affect them. All measures which will lessen the financial burden attached to the role of motherhood in Western nations has thus been coded. On the other hand, plans to cut state funding from single parents, or those performing care work, plans to introduce barriers to alimony payments/child support, plans to cap social allowances in general have been coded as indicative of Modern Sexism in the domain of ‘money’. Capped social allowances have been coded as modern sexist based on data from the UK, where such a benefit cap was introduced in 2013. The result of an investigation showed that even though the cap was intended to lower the expenses of the state going to people who could work but chose not to, it disproportionately negatively affected mothers, especially mothers who were the sole care takers for children (House of Commons, Work and Pensions Committee, 2019). Single mothers thus made up over 85% of all affected households by the introduced capping of benefits (House of Commons,

Work and Pensions Committee, 2019). Therefore, any plans to introduce a social cap have been coded as modern sexist.

In the domain of ‘knowledge’, plans to introduce increased funding for women seeking to access universities, especially in MINT subjects, plans to fund childcare provisions for university students as well as plans to fund trainings and educations for mothers in order to boost their possibilities to find employment after maternal leave have been coded as non-indicative of Modern Sexism, largely in line with the EIGE Index. Policies seeking to further restrict the access to tertiary education for women, such as increased university fees, unavailability of childcare provisions, and others, were coded as modern sexist.

In the domain of ‘time’, policies introducing paternal leave or a more equal splitting of parental leave, plans to extend the school day or open hours of daycare facilities, policies to increase the available childcare spots, support of public childcare provision, and policies to increase the availability of public elderly care were coded to as non-indicative of modern sexism, while plans to shorten the school day or limit the opening hours of childcare centers, support of private childcare over public childcare, and policies rendering elderly care or care for disabled family members a private matter were coded to be indicative of Modern Sexism. The deliberate creation of an insufficient public care structure, especially in light of the rising needs of an ageing population, have “significantly and profoundly gendered effects” (Barbieri et al., 2020, p.47). As care tasks still primarily fall onto women in today’s Europe, the political will to organize care privately as opposed to publicly, has clear negative consequences for women’s participation in the labor force: due to difficulties of combining paid work and care responsibilities, many will be forced to give up their employment or take on part-time work, creating monetary disadvantages in the short (income) and long (pensions) run (Barbierie et al., 2020). Therefore, all support of a private care infrastructure, over a public one, have been coded as Modern Sexist.

In the domain of ‘power’, plans to introduce gender quotas in the political, economic, or social sphere, and plans to create incentives for businesses to ensure equality in their leadership board have been coded as non-indicative of Modern Sexism, while the objection to introducing gender quotas has been coded as modern sexist.

In the domain of ‘health’, plans to increase availability of healthcare surrounding pregnancy and birth, as well as plans to ensure the availability and barrier-free access to abortions, as essential health care have been determined to constitute non-modern sexist positions, while plans to restrict the access to abortions are seen as modern sexist. Restrictions on the essential health care that is abortions disproportionately impacts people with low

incomes, young people, LGBTQ+ persons, and people living in rural areas. A lack of access to abortions threatens women's health, lives, and futures (National Women's Law Center, 2021). Additionally, a ban on abortions further ignores the fact that many abortions are performed in order to "preserve the health and well-being of family members including other children" (Bloomer & O'Dowd, 2014, p.375) and that many women that have had abortions do become mothers later in life (Bloomer & O'Dowd, 2014).

Lastly, in the domain of 'violence', the formulation of concrete plans to fight violence against women, in the private and the public sphere, plans to increase legal safeguards for victims, and plans to create social housing/ women's shelters have been coded as non-indicative of Modern Sexism, while any plans to decrease the protections for women, such as an exit from the Istanbul Conventions, has been coded as modern sexist in the area of 'violence'.

In addition to the measurements of equality by EIGE, indicators for racialized sexism were included in this branch of the coding tree. Therefore, all instances in which Islam is framed as a threat to women/children, all policies seeking to restrict/ban the wearing of the hijab/niqab in sports, public life, work, etc. and all statements in which Muslim cultural practices are presented as Anti-feminist/oppressive have been coded as indicative of Modern Sexism.

The second branch of the coding tool captures the component "resentment that any complaints about women's discrimination generates" of modern sexism (Anduiza & Rico, 2021, p.6). In the Modern Sexism Scale intended for to estimate voters' personal levels of modern sexism, respondents are asked to what degree they understand why women's groups are still concerned about the societal limits constraining women's opportunities. This measurement is then seen as indicative for the level to which protests, mobilization or outrage of feminist groups are seen as justified. Modern sexist respondents would score very low on this indicator, since they believe there to be no discrimination left to correct. In order to codify this property of modern sexism, the novel concept of Anti-Genderism will be employed. Anti-Genderism captures the resentment of women and other marginalized groups' thrives towards equality and can be considered as a backlash to processes of more gender-sensitive societies (Sosa, 2021; Darakchi, 2019; Petó, 2016; Lang, 2015; Kovats, 2017). It refers to opposition of 'gender ideology' or 'genderism' and thus the wish to abolish or revoke women's and LGBTQ rights (Darakchi, 2019). In the European political context, it is often closely tied to the rejection of the 'enforced' promotion of gender inclusivity by the EU (Sosa, 2021; Lang, 2015).

Therefore, in the coding tool, Anti-Genderism is being captured in three dimensions most commonly shared by Anti-gender politics: the opposition to LGBTQ+ rights, the wish to



revoke women’s hard-earned rights, and the opposition to Gender Theory. These 3 dimensions capture the antagonism towards (proposed) policies that aim at addressing gender biases. Furthermore, they capture believes of unreasonable amounts of accommodation for women. While not all indicators under the Anti-Genderism umbrella are directly perceived as “anti-feminist” all of them, if perceived, have detrimental consequences for gender equality and sexual rights (Kovats, 2017, p.176). Party’s opposition to LGBTQ+ rights, harm not only queer people, but enforce the upholding of the binary understanding of gender and thus traditional gender roles. “Traditional gender norms expect men behaving in strong and agentic ways, whereas women being more passive and communal. Both men and women violating traditional gender norms are subject to backlash [..]” (Bettinsoli et al. 2019). The opposition to LGBTQ+ rights, especially in regard to gender-sensitive education and adoption rights for queer people, are thus indicative of larger strives against the breaking of traditional gender roles and thus against the emancipation of women from their restrictive roles. The opposition of Gender Theory and linguistic progression towards gender-sensitive language, even though shown to have positive effects on young girls and a proven positive effect on the male bias in mental representations (e.g., Irmen & Linner, 2005; Stahlberg et al., 2007; Vervecken & Hannover, 2015), furthermore fortify the party’s levels of sexism. All three aspects are captured in the coding tool.

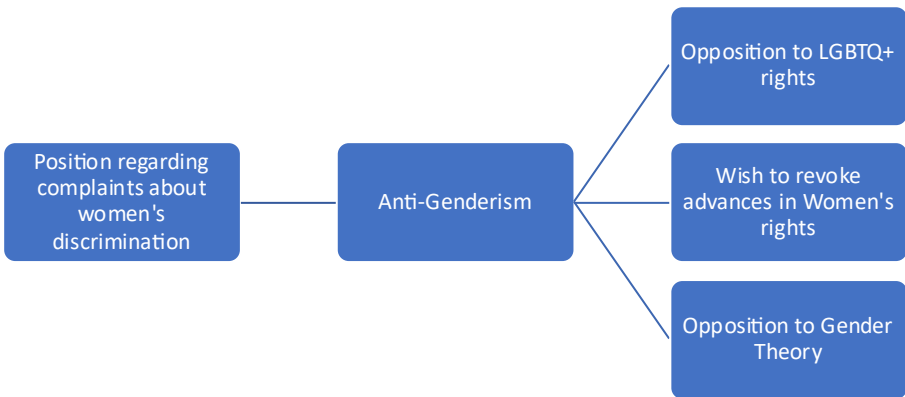


Figure 2: Partial Coding Tool 2, Short Overview, Postions regarding complaints about women's discrimination

Figure 2 presents an overview of the second branch of the coding tree, more detailed insights into the second branch can be found in Annex 2. For reasons of readability, only a shortened version is depicted in the text.

Under the umbrella term of LGBTQ+ rights, the support of same-sex marriage, support for same-sex adoption, surrogacy, etc., as well as the wish to introduce a gender-sensitive and diverse sex education program have been coded as non-indicative of Modern Sexism, while the wish to revoke legal protections of the LGBTQ+ community, the opposition to (the legal equality of) same-sex marriage, the opposition to same-sex adoption and the availability of reproductive methods to queer people, such as surrogacy, have been coded as modern sexist positions. Furthermore, the wish to counter sex education spanning beyond heteronormative views has also been coded as modern sexist.

Furthermore, the wish to revoke any protective rights for women, such as Anti-Discrimination laws or the Istanbul Conventions have been coded as modern sexist under the ‘wish to revoke advances in women’s rights.

Lastly, the mention of opposition to gender theory and its findings has been coded as Modern Sexist, while the use of gender-sensitive language in the party program was and the explicit mention of support for gender mainstreaming and gender theory were coded as non-indicative of Modern Sexism.

The third component of modern sexism accounts for the rejection of any measures taken to correct for inequalities and discrimination that women continue to face, as such measures are considered to be unfair favors or even discriminatory against men. (Anduiza & Rico, 2021): “campaigns, legislation on affirmative action, or even mere attention to these matters are contested” (Anduiza & Rico, 2021, p.7). This component relates closely to Anti-Genderism which has been codified in the previous component and can also partially be detected when accounting for party positioning on gender quotas in the first step of coding. In order to avoid an overestimation of the levels of modern sexism, under this component, only the mentioned opposition to existing EU laws and policies which ‘enforces’ the promotion of gender inclusivity (Sosa, 2021; Lang, 2015) as well as the referral to gender equality measures as “unfair favors” (Anduiza & Rico, 2021, p.7) which lead to ‘discrimination against men’ will be coded as ‘indicative of modern sexism’.

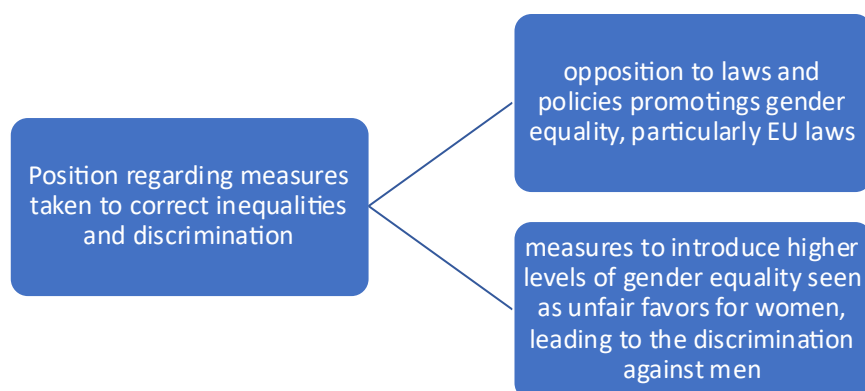


Figure 3: Partial Coding Tool 3, positions regarding measures taken to correct for existing inequalities

### Case Selection

For this particular research, the German *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) and the French *Rassemblement National* (RN) have been selected as case studies. The case selection has been made due to several contributing factors.

First and foremost, France has been chosen as it constitutes one of the few cases in Western democracies, in which the gender voting gap in radical right support has been overcome: In the 2017 legislative elections, the RN drew in voters of all genders, with only 46% of the RN electorate being constituted of men. It thus constitutes a special case, worthy of study, and functions as a ‘control group’ to test the constructed hypotheses. Due to the absence of a gender voting gap in RRP support, it will thus be hypothesized that the rhetoric employed by the party shows lower levels of modern sexism and has therefore shifted its thematic focus from which it gains its voter appeal, onto other topics.

Germany has been selected as the second case study for several reasons. Geographic proximity, as well as comparable size and population density, and similar levels of female employment played a contributing factor in this choice. Additionally, the German AfD still has a remarkably large gender voting gap. Case selection has thus partially been made due to the seeking of maximization on the outcome of interest (Gerring & Cojocaru, 2016). The German case presents a large gender gap in radical right voting with 57% of AfD voters being men in the 2017 Bundestagswahlen (Decker, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 26. Oktober 2020).

	France – Case 1	Germany – Case 2
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RRP	Rassemblement National	Alternative für Deutschland
Conservative Party	Les Républicains/UDI	Christlich Demokratische Union/ Christlich Soziale Union

For the analysis, the party manifestos of the RN and the AfD for the 2017 elections will be analyzed. Even though in France, 2017 constituted a year with both presidential and legislative elections, the RN only published one common party manifesto. Therefore, when it comes to the RRP, two party manifestos, one for each country case, will form the basis of the analysis. In addition to the selected radical right parties, in each country context one centrist-right party has been selected in order to test for both hypotheses H2a and H2b. In the German case, the largest and most popular centrist-right party has been selected, the Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU). For the analysis, the party program of the CDU for the 2017 elections will be assessed.

The selection of a French centrist-right party has been more difficult due to large instabilities and ongoing changes in party formation processes, as well as processes in which parties run for elections together. Both Les Républicains and UDI are centrist-right parties in France. Les Repubicains were the most successful center-right party during the primaries of the 2017 presidential elections for which one document was published by the party candidate. However, as the two parties decided to join forces during the legislative elections in 2017 in order to strengthen their position, the have also published a shared party program. As this thesis seeks to compare the Radical Right with the positions on the Center-Right, the shared document published for the Legislative Elections will be analyzed in this thesis. Differences in deviations to the presidential program of Les Républicains will be pointed out and referenced to, however, it is the researcher’s belief that analyzing the shared position of the center-right yields the most robust results for the French center-right, considering its overall instability.

## 5. Contextualization of the Case Studies

In order to accurately contextualize the findings of the subsequent quantitative text analysis, the case studies will in a first step describe the country specific attributes relevant to the subject of research. These include not only an overview over the development of gendered differences in voting behavior in the country context and the historical emergence of the respective radical right party, but also the level of gender equality reached in the respective country as well as the most prominent feminist struggles in the country.

### 5.1 Country Specific Gender Voting Gap

As the case studies are based on the size of the nations' respective gender voting gaps in RRP support, a short overview will be given concerning the development of these and other gender gaps in voting behavior across time. This step aids in underlining why the gender voting gap in RRP support constitutes a particularly interesting phenomenon, compared to all other gendered voting behaviors. Additionally, it will enable a better understanding of the voter base in question.

#### *The French Gender Voting Gap*

A traditional gender gap in which women vote more conservative than their male counterparts partly due to raised levels of religiosity and lower levels of employment, existed in France during the Fourth Republic (1946 -1958) and extended into the Fifth Republic up until the 1981 elections (Sineau, 2006). In this time period, women accounted for a large part of the constituency of Christian-based Popular Republican Movement and were less likely to vote for candidates of the left, both Communist and Socialist. In the 1974 presidential election, Francois Mitterrand the Socialist candidate, lost the election as voting women largely favored the more conservative candidate. In the following elections in 1981, this lack of support by female voters persisted but no longer kept him from winning the presidency (Sineau, 2006).

For a brief period of time in French voting history, starting in the 1986 parliamentary elections, and peaking in the 1988 presidential elections, a dual gender gap was visible in France: The previously observed gender-based divergence had become inverted and noticeably more women started to vote in favor of Francois Mitterrand, the Socialist candidate (Sineau, 2006) and additionally, the radical right gender gap emerged. The FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen was visibly unpopular within the female voter base. The increase popularity of the radical right among men had already established itself in the 1984 in France, visible in the European elections (Sineau, 2006).

After 1995, the gender-based left-right cleavage, excluding RRP support, as described in the theory gradually declined to a point where some researchers declared it to have disappeared entirely (Sineau, 2006). While women remained more skeptical of the radical right than their male counterparts, other gender-based discrepancies reportedly lessened to a point of insignificance. When looking more closely at the 2012 presidential elections, this claim is largely supported (Sénac & Parodi, 2013): slightly more women than men voted for Hollande (30.2% compared to 27%) and Sarkozy (28.3% and 26.1%), indicating the erosion of gender-based voting (Sénac & Parodi, 2013).

In line with the disappearance of other gender-based phenomena, the radical right gender gap that emerged in the mid 1980s is also disappearing in France. The FN/RN is one of the few RRPs in Europe that started gaining increased support from women. This disappearance started when Marine Le Pen took over the lead of the party. While under her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the gender gap had never been less than six point, Marine Le Pen managed to activate female voters: The 2012 presidential race is hereby referred to as a “magnifying glass of changing gender effects” (Mayer, 2015 p.395). While in 2002, gender had been a statistically significant variable regardless of age, education, occupational group, political orientation, and sympathy towards the leader of the FN, this was no longer the case in 2012 (Mayer, 2015). During the 2012 as well as the 2017 presidential election, no statistically significant differences in support of the FN/RN between the genders could be detected (Sénac & Parodi 2013; Amengay et al., 2017). Among voters that had only reached voting age after 2012, the ratio between male and female voters even became inverted, with 32% of women under 26 voting for the FN, compared to 25% of men in the same age group (Amengay et al., 2017).

#### *The German Gender Voting Gap*

Research on the gender-based voting developments in Germany is rather scarce. While findings showed that a modern gender gap, in which women support left-leaning parties to a higher degree than male voters had developed out of a previously more conservative party preference among women, around the year 2000 (Giger, 2009), more recent analyses of national elections results (Bundestagswahlen) from the period between 1998 and 2013 could find no support for that claim (Debus, 2016).

Data from the national elections in 2017 shows that women continue to vote more conservatively than men, unlike the developments occurring in other European nations. The conservative party CDU therefore received 29.8% of female and only 23,5% of male votes in 2017. Its sister party the CSU showed a similar ratio (6.6% of female, 5.7% of male votes). The biggest parties on the left, the centrist-left party SPD had captured exactly 20.5% from both

sexes and more women than men supported the Green Party, known to be left leaning (10.2% of female compared to 7.6% of male votes). Both extremist positions, on the left and the radical right were supported by a larger part of the male than the female population with 8.8% of female and 9.7% male votes going to the Linke party, and 9.2% of female compared to 16.3% of male votes going to the RRP AfD (data taken from Kobold & Schmiedel, 2018).

In comparison to the French case where environmentalist candidates have never quite caught on, the German Green party, generally considered left leaning, has managed to cut into the female base of the social democratic party. Together they capture almost a third of all female votes (30.7%). And yet, another third (36.4%) of the female elective power is given to conservative centrist parties. The largest discrepancy between male and female voter support can be found in the votes for the AfD (Berwing et al., 2019). The difference constitutes 7.1 points indicating that while the gender gap in Radical Right voting might be closing or becoming redundant in other countries like France, it is still very apparent in nations such as Germany.

Overall, French and German women have developed their voting behavior very differently from one another. While France, like most European country, over time experienced much fluctuation of the female vote, Germany has strayed far from its European neighbors: women still vote more conservative than their male counterparts, while men are overrepresented in the extremist positions on the left and right of the political spectrum. As the two nations have been selected due to their variance in gender gap for RRP, the voting behavior for RRP naturally differs as well.

## 5.2 Electoral and political system of the country

“Electoral systems are mechanisms by which power is allocated” (Hoyo, 2017, p. 673). When analyzing the rhetoric and values, as well as the political positions of parties, who all seek to access this power, the “rules of the game” (Hoyo, 2017, p. 673) help contextualize the approaches used and the significance they hold. Therefore, a short overview of the abilities of parties as political actors, the directness and proximity between the voter and the elected representatives, as well as the particularities of the systems will be given.

### *France*

The French institutional regime is a semi-presidential system, meaning that elements of both parliamentary as well as presidential regimes are present simultaneously. The election of the

president is a direct one and his or her position is equipped with an abundance of powers if they in possession of a majority in the French parliament. In the case a president is unable to unify the majority of parliamentarians under themselves their position is mostly reduced to foreign policy, while the position of Prime Minister gains in importance (Zimmermann-Steinhart & Kazmeier, 2010).

Political parties, like other political actors, are not particularly well-liked in France. The French public is known for its skepticism towards them, and they thus do not enjoy a large role in society. Political careers in France while often structured inside a party frame, are determined largely by a person's attendance of particularly elitist schools and the membership in certain clubs and associations (Zimmermann-Steinhart & Kazmeier, 2010). One of the most characteristic elements in the French party system which contributes to a lack of confidence by citizens, is its instability: in comparison to other countries, the French party system is under constant transformation. As a result, political parties experience frequent split-ups, and undergo processes of renaming and remarketing themselves, they dissolve altogether, or re-establish themselves as they form (mostly short-lived) alliances. This leads to much confusion for outside observers (Kempin, 2017).

France is known for its two-round majority-plurality electoral system. Which favors the creation of strong ruling majorities over the maximization of representation of all political ideologies (Hoyo, 2017). If no absolute majority is obtained in the first round, a second round with the strongest candidates ensues. During this second turn, plurality suffices to determine the overall winner of the election. The two-round system is much more commonly used in the case of presidential elections and a rarity when it comes to legislative elections, as (Blais & Loewen, 2009). In the French presidential elections, direct universal suffrage under the majority runoff rule is employed, meaning that if no absolute majority is achieved in the first round, only the top two candidates may participate in the second elective round.

The electoral system in place clearly gravitates towards large established players who are able to unite a majority of voters in their support. In an attempt to create such overarching players, electoral alliances among parties have become a common occurrence. These alliances have created a strong left-right-division, as parties of both camps are willing to unite with each other in order to defeat the ideological opponent. This left-right division directs the voter decision to the largest party of their own political conviction as they are perceived as most likely to gather support, thus creating a de facto Two-Party System (Camus, 2014).

The Front National has never been able to reach executive power outside of the local level. This fact is often attributed to the anomalies of the make-up of the French electoral system



previously mentioned (Surel, 2019; Stockemer & Amengay, 2015). As the party does not represent the moderate left or right and has not been fully accepted as a viable alternative to the established parties, Anti-FN mobilization emerged: In the presidential election of 2002, during which Jean-Marie Le Pen first qualified for the second round of voting, political parties across the ideological spectrum encouraged their voters to unite, regardless of political affiliations and jointly support Jacques Chirac, in order to block Le Pen from winning (Stockemer, 2017). This plan succeeded and was thus repeated in 2017, when all defeated major candidates from the first round of the presidential elections, apart from the left-wing Mélenchon, gathered around Macron in order to block Marine Le Pen from taking one of the highest offices in the nation (Breedon & Nossiter, NY Times, 24. April 2017).

### *Germany*

The German political system has been re-built around the principle of federalism after the Second World War. As opposed to other federalist nations such as the United States of America in which a strict division of competence is drawn between the federal and state level are drawn, the German Federal System today is characterized by its close cooperation between the *Bundesländer* and the *Bund* (the federal states and the federal government). The principles of solidarity and subsidiarity lay at the foundation of the federalist German state, granting the *Länder* a certain amount of autonomy in decision-making unless regulations by the federal government have been laid down. This is intended to create a political system closely aligned with the needs of the citizens (Klaeren, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 3. May 2013).

Political parties play a large role in the German democratic system and thus hold large amounts of power. This causes the German state to be described as a “party democracy” at times. The function of the parties in the system is manifold. It includes powers in the field of recruiting politicians as parties put forward and employ the personnel in charge of the political organs, as well as powers in the field of policy formulation as party members identify societal issues which they themselves then discuss and formulate policy solutions to, and it includes powers in the field of political control as the parties are in charge of questioning and controlling political decision-making processes. Solely the implementation of policies falls outside of party control (Niedermayer, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 28. April 2020). It is for this reason that the political party landscape in Germany has remained a stable and concise one with a total of seven well-established parties: the Left, the Green Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union, the Libertarian FDP, and the RRP AfD. While there are many other parties that have not established themselves to the same

extent thus far, it is unlikely for them to gain seats in the parliament due to specific electoral rules. The party system in Germany, in comparison to the French case, is therefore a very stable and rigid one.

Germany's electoral system has often been seen as the archetype of a mixed-member proportional system (Saalfeld, 2005). German citizens use this system to elect representatives to thirteen out of the sixteen Landtag at the Länder level, as well as the Bundestag at the national level. The electoral system is characterized by a deeply seated longing for stability and agreement (Saalfeld, 2005).

The Bundestag is elected for a total of 4 years and each eligible voter may cast two votes in the national election. The first vote determines the voter's preference for the candidate in their own electoral district. Each political party is hereby allowed to put up one candidate for each electoral district for the first vote. Whoever gathers the most votes among the first votes in the district is given a "direct mandate", and thus becomes a member of parliament. This leads to a total of 299 parliamentarians representing all districts across Germany, after taking all first votes into account. Counterintuitively, the second vote cast by citizens is much more significant than the first vote. The second vote thus decides about the proportional representation of the parties in the parliament, and thus, about possible coalitions and power struggles. Citizens vote for lists of candidates from the Länder level. Depending on the percentage of votes a party is given, the 598 parliamentary seats will be distributed accordingly across the parties. However, in order to avoid too many splinter parties accessing the parliament and complicating the processes of consensus building later on, there is a 5% hurdle that parties need to reach in order to gain any seats at all.

One of the first tasks performed by the newly established Bundestag is to elect the Federal Chancellor. The candidate is generally put forward by the party that has gained the largest percentage of all votes but needs to be officially proposed by the Federal President, in accordance with Basic Law. The members of parliament then decide through a secret ballot, and the candidate wins if an absolute majority of members support them. Most political parties reveal their candidate for the chancellor position during the election campaign. Over the course of the last years, research has intensified surrounding the importance of the announced candidate for the electoral outcome of the second vote. A trend of 'Americanization' is hereby theorized, in which electoral campaigns in Germany are hypothesized to increasingly resemble the highly professionalized and severely personalized campaigns in the United States. The phenomenon is closely associated with processes of de-thematisation and de-ideologization of the public political discourse, what has been described as images over issues (Holtz-Bacha

2002). This negatively connotated and hypothesized ‘candidate effect’ could not be detected in research (Brettschneider, 2009; Jucknat, 2007) and political parties, as well as questions of political issues remain at the center of media reporting leading up to the federal elections (Brettschneider, 2009).

The largest differences in the make-up of the political systems of France in Germany that are relevant to the analysis, lie within the differing stability and power of the political parties, as well as the divergence in the power held by the president/Chancellor. While the French system is built on weak and ever-changing parties that are forced to build electoral coalitions on the left-right ideological spectrum, the German system is heavily reliant on the strong and rigid established parties who hold large amounts of political power. The position of president in France grants a person and a party a lot of political power and is therefore directly voted into office by the public. Due to the two-round system voters have the option of collectively blocking a radical candidate from accessing this position, as seen by Le Pen. In the German system, the Chancellor, a position arguably equally influential, is not directly voted into office by the people. By giving their secondary vote to a particular party, the German people decide on the division of parliamentary seats among the parties. The members of parliament then vote the Chancellor into office. Thus far, this position has always been occupied by the candidate put forward by the party with the most votes. In Germany, thus far, there has never been an instance where one party had the majority of parliamentary seats, therefore, governing coalitions are formed. Until now, the AfD has never been involved in coalitions at the Bundes- or Länder level because all political parties have actively chosen not to do so.

### 5.3 Gender Equality in the country context

Political parties, like any other political phenomenon, do not exist in a vacuum and are thus molded and formed by the world in which they operate. Therefore, when analyzing the level of modern sexism depicted in and employed by political parties, the national context in which the parties exist plays a central role. Especially political party communication and the rhetoric, as well as the proposed policies, that are not only deemed appropriate but lead to positive outcomes in elections are forcibly tied to the current status of gender equality present in the country. The following section will thus shed light on both country contexts of reached levels of gender equality.

### *Gender Equality in France*

As equality represents one of the fundamental ideals on which the French Constitution is built, it comes as no surprise that the principle of gender equality also plays a large role in the country context. Gender equality policies in France have been developed since the 1970s and represent a consistent and comprehensive legal framework covering almost all domains of social, political and economic life today. In part due to this legal codification of gender equality, France has been able to score a 75.1 out of 100 on the European Institute for Gender Equality's 'Gender Equality Index' of the year 2020, where 1 indicates total inequality and 100 represents complete equality of the genders (EIGE, 2020, France). France thus reaches the third highest rank in the EU, with only Sweden (83.8) and Denmark (77.4) achieving higher marks.

Women's participation in decision-making has largely been facilitated and encouraged by state-enforced gender quotas. Quotas, when linked to legal sanctions, have been very effective and are thus applicable to corporate boards of medium and large firms, supervisory boards of public institutions, the highest tier of civil servants in public administration, university juries, elected political bodies, chambers of commerce and sports federations in France (Lépinard & Lieber, 2015). This leads to the high score of 79.8 in the domain of 'power' in the EIGE Index as compared to an EU average of only 53.5 (EIGE 2020, France).

Especially in the sectors of employment and professional life, France has a long tradition of gender equality legislation, starting with the Law of 22 December 1972 on equal pay (Lépinard & Lieber, 2015). Women's economic independence, even though long codified in law, had for a long time yielded rather poor results as the reliance on voluntary equality schemes and an enduring lack of interest and awareness by the private sector stalled the intended effect. As a result, an increasing fortification of the legal requirements for businesses and since the year 2010, a sanctioning mechanism for companies who have failed to establish a gender equality plan, were rolled out, strengthening the policies at hand (Lépinard & Lieber, 2015). As a result, women's employment rate is risen successfully, with only 8.4% of women unemployed in 2019 (data taken from the International Labour Organization, 2021<sup>1</sup>). However, the increase in women's employment in France can in large parts be attributed to part-time work (49% of total female employment in 2019) (data taken from the International Labour Organization, 2021<sup>2</sup>). Furthermore, gender occupational segregation remains high with 34% of female labor being conducted in education, human health and social work activities (EIGE 2020, France), that mostly constitute low-skilled and badly remunerated sectors (Lépinard & Lieber, 2015)

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<sup>1</sup> Accessible under <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=FR>

<sup>2</sup> Accessible under <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.PART.FE.ZS>

compared to 10% among men. A score of 72.8 in the domain of ‘work’ has been calculated for France, just slightly above the EU Average of 72.2.

Women thus constitute roughly two thirds of the workers with the lowest wages in France (Lépinard & Lieber, 2015) leading to large gender inequalities in pay: In couples with children, women reportedly earn 30% less than men, and in couples without children, women make 26% less money than their male counterparts (EIGE, 2020, France). Mean monthly earnings between men and women differ by 18% (508 euros) on average. However, when employing the mean equivalized net income, which includes pensions, investments, benefits and other sources of income, this gap is largely reduced (to roughly 1,05%), showcasing the effective political intervention on issues of monetary equality by the French state. This intervention has lowered and equalized the level to which the genders are at risk of poverty, and in turn has risen France into fourth place in the EU comparison in the domain of ‘money’ with a score of 87.0. The EU average lying at 80.6.

France has one of the highest birth rates in Europe, often attributed to the lack of stigma surrounding economically active mothers (Lépinard & Lieber, 2015). However, even though France has a very supportive policy framework intended to alleviate pressures stemming from the reconciliation of work and family life, in practice women remain in charge of domestic work and childcare, leading to large percentages of part-time employment and one of the largest gender care gaps in the EU (EIGE, 2020, France). 79.6% of French women are thus involved in cooking and/or housework outside of paid work every day, compared to only 35.6% of French men. On the EIGE Index, France managed to achieve an above-average score of 67.3 in the domain of ‘time’, compared to 65.7 score of the EU average, as employed women were able to participate in social activities to a higher degree than the EU average.

Scores in the sectors of ‘health’ and ‘knowledge’ are both slightly above the EU average (Health 87.4 France/88.0 EU; knowledge 66.3 France /63.6 EU). Access to abortion and contraception are (sufficiently) protected and accessible in practice. Surrogacy pregnancy is strictly forbidden by law, however, since the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, all women under the age of 43, including single women and women in queer relationships, are given access to reproductive technologies under law (Darmanin, Politico, 30 June 2021). Up until this point, this technology had been restricted to heterosexual couples with fertility issues only.

The reduction and prevention of gender-based violence has become central to gender equality policy in France and the Istanbul Convention was signed in May 2011 and ratified in July 2014. However, reliable data on the extent of the problem, and the level of alleviation

granted through targeted policies, has proven difficult to measure. 173 women were reportedly killed in France in 2020 either at the hands of a family member or a (former) intimate partner.

### *Gender Equality in Germany*

Germany has struggled with the concept of gender equality throughout its history. Challenging the traditional roles of the genders that had manifested after the Second World War, and the process of German reunification in which formerly equalitarian Eastern German society was integrated in a traditionalist society, complicated the process of reaching gender equality considerably. Therefore, when comparing Germany's performance in reaching gender equality to other European states, it has been described as “mediocre” (Botsch, 2015, p.5). It has rather consistently been ranked below the EU average in the EIGE Index throughout the years, and in the year 2020, was placed in 12<sup>th</sup> position overall with a score of 67.5 out of 100 points (EIGE 2020, Germany). Since the indexing process in 2017, this score has only increased by 0.6 points. The German government has often focused on family policies as opposed to targeting gender disparities directly (Botsch, 2015).

Although women are guaranteed equal rights by the Basic Law, by the Federal Equal Treatment Act and by the laws of the federal states, women are underrepresentation in almost all forms of decision making. Their score in the field of ‘power’ rests at 59.5 points in the EIGE Index 2020 even though large improvements in economic decision-making have been made in recent years due to the introduction of a quota of 30% for women on company boards (EIGE, 2020, Germany). This has led to an increase of women on company boards from 14% in 2010 to 36% in 2020, proving the efficiency of quotas, still widely underacknowledged in the German political sphere. However, in the areas of policy making and social power, women have been largely overlooked and decisions are made by the male population. At the federal level, the German Bundestag has remained at roughly a one third female and two-thirds male distribution for about 15 years. At the municipal level, the proportion of elected women remains even weaker (EIGE, 2020, Germany).

Just like their French neighbors, German women have entered the workforce in large numbers with an unemployment rate of only 2.73% among women in 2019 (data taken from International Labour Organization, 2021<sup>3</sup>), but similar to the situation in France a large part of this employment is provided in low-paying and part-time employment forms with high gender occupational segregation. The German score of 72.1 in the domain of ‘work’ in the EIGE Index 2020, therefore is just shy of the EU average of 72.2 points. Since 2010, the gap in full-time

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<sup>3</sup> Accessible under <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=DE>

equivalent employment rate has narrowed slightly, but overall, it remains very large: Among couples with children, the gap spans a whopping 38% (women 51%, men 89%), while among couples without children it only varies by 6% (women 41%, men 47%) (EIGE, 2020, Germany).

This strong difference in economic independence of women with and without children leads to Germany having one of the highest and most persistent gender pay gaps in the EU (Botsch, 2015): The mean monthly earnings for women and men deviated by a staggering 22,4% (752 Euros), with an average of 2602 Euros earned by women, while men made 3354 Euros a month (EIGE, 2020, Germany). Once taking into account pensions, investments, benefits and any other sources of income to calculate the mean equalized net income, this difference shrinks to around 4.14% between the genders, showcasing the political involvement in reducing the risk of poverty for all. However, due to the makeup of the pension system in Germany, these large differences in revenue lead to a considerable proportion of women facing the risk of poverty at retirement age (Botsch, 2015). As this fact is not taken into account when calculating the score for Germany's index on the indicator of 'money' to score 84.9 points.

The starting of a family in Germany is still a key moment in women's lives that lead to long term inequalities when compared to their male counterparts (Kleven et al., 2019). Caring for small children continuous to be the main cause for enduring disadvantages for women in career building in Germany and is thus attached to large economic, financial and societal constraints (Botsch, 2015). It thus accounts in part for the low birth rate of 1.54 children per woman (data on fertility rates taken from Staista<sup>4</sup>). A lack of childcare facilities, particularly for children aged 1 to 3 years old, as well as a large remaining social stigma surrounding the return to work among young mothers, particularly in West-Germany (Villa, 2017), lead to a practical obligation for parents, and mainly women, to take on long employment breaks, creating the return to paid employment increasingly difficult. Furthermore, schools and many daycare facilities only provide their services during the morning up until noon, making fulltime employment for both parents difficult to impossible. Especially single parents, under which single mothers are overrepresented, are particularly disadvantaged. 33% of lone parents are thus at risk of poverty (EIGE 2020, Germany). Reconciliation policies through the state, such as an income replacement scheme for the parent raising children (Elterngeld) introduced in 2007, that often contain incentives for fathers to also take parental leave, have proven effective as young mothers were able to return to gainful (part-time) employment earlier and young fathers contribute more actively to the raising of their children (Botsch, 2015). In 2020, every fourth person applying for 'Elterngeld' was male (compared to every fifth person in 2015), however,

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<sup>4</sup> Accessible under <https://www.statista.com/statistics/612074/fertility-rates-in-european-countries/>

72% of men only applied for the minimum amount of 2 months. Most women (62%) on the other hand apply for 'Elterngeld' for 10-12 months. While the care gap might be on the decline in Germany, cooking and housework remain firmly within the scope of women's duties. 72% of women perform these domestic tasks on a daily basis, while only 29% of men do so (EIGE 2020, Germany). Overall, Germany received a 65.0 score in the domain of 'time'. Once more, the German score lay just below the EU average of 65.7 points.

Tertiary educational attainments are increasing in both male and female students, with women still lagging considerably behind. However, due to large segregation, wherein 41.3% of all women complete their studies in education, health and welfare, humanities and arts, compared to only 17.3% of men, Germany only reaches a score of 54.0 points in the domain of 'knowledge', far below the EU average of 63.6.

In the domain of 'health', Germany reaches one of its highest scores with 90.6, compared to the EU average of 88.0. However, like in most countries the health care provision is centered around male needs with women merely presenting a deviation from men. "A consistent gender sensitive health strategy is lacking in the federal health policy" (Botsch, 2015, p.27). Furthermore, under article 218 of Penal Law, abortions are illegal in Germany. They are exempt from prosecution under certain conditions, such as mandatory counselling and a certain time frame in which the abortion takes place but depending on the region abortions are difficult to access: In a worrying trend, the number of doctors performing abortions is constantly decreasing, creating a large gap in supply of these essential services (Tagesschau, 5 March 2019). The morning after pill is available in Germany without any prescription since 2015 (Botsch, 2015).

Women's and civil society organizations have managed to advance the legal protection of women from gender-based violence in many aspects. The Protection Against Violence Act, action plans combatting domestic violence, also in regard to migrant women, as well as the addition of sexual assault and rape to the Criminal Code, and the categorization of stalking and 'upskirting' as legal offences are among the many advances that have been introduced over the course of the last 20 years. Germany has signed the Istanbul Convention under which a commitment to the protection of women has been made. Just like in any other country, the extent of violence women encounter has been difficult to measure as underreporting remains a large problem. Data from EIGE 2020 Index indicates there to have been 231 women killed in Germany in 2020 either at the hands of a family member or a (former) intimate partner (EIGE 2020, Germany).



Overall, Germany still has a long way to go on the path to true gender equality. As noted in Botsch's report, much of the achieved progress in gender equality, especially in the domain of employment, was driven forward by binding European legislation (2015, p. 7).

Strong differences between Germany and France are existent when measuring the two nation's levels of gender equality. While France has taken large strides forward and scores above the EU Average on almost all indicators, Germany is still lagging behind. It is expected that the party programs which will be assessed reflect this divergence: German parties are expected to address existent issues and inequalities at a much higher rate than its French counterparts. The largest divergences between the countries are found in the areas of knowledge (12.3 point difference) and power (20.3 point difference). It is therefore expected that German parties will try to introduce policies which establish a more equal playing field in these areas in particular.

#### 5.4 Overview over the National Radical Right

As the analysis revolves around the National RRP, several key developments which have occurred over the course of the last decade will be highlighted as they contribute to the current positioning of the parties today.

##### *Le Rassemblement National*

The *Rassemblement National* (RN), currently one of the strongest and most established radical right parties in Europe, has undergone several major adaptations over the course of the last decade which have largely contributed to the party's current success. Not only has the RN left its former name *Front National* (FN) behind, but it has also stripped itself of the highly negative image associated with the party and has therefore managed to find itself "at the gates of power" (BBC News, 7 September 2014).

The *Front National* (FN), which had evolved across several decades out of fragmented extreme-right (youth) organizations (Stoekemer, 2017) was officially established in June 1972 with Jean-Marie Le Pen becoming the first president of the new party (Stoekemer, 2017). For the first years, the young party struggled with the absence of internal coherence and poor electoral outcomes. Even though a quarter of the population eligible to vote, self-declared to have nationalist convictions when the party was first established, the FN failed to activate this voter potential (Kempin, 2017) and for the next 10 years, the FN remained at the margins of the political sphere with minor electoral success in the presidential elections of 1984 and 2002 (Stoekemer, 2017).

When the electoral success could not be matched in the election years 2004 (below 10%), 2007 (4,3%) and 2009 (6,3%), the party entered a stage of transformation. In a first step, the party leader, 82-year-old Jean-Marie Le Pen, was replaced by his 42-year-old daughter, Marine Le Pen, in January of 2011. Marine was able to rid the FN of its radical image and introduce processes of modernization, leading to a party to unprecedented achievements: In the 2014 European Elections, the FN was the French party receiving the most votes with 24,9%. In the regional elections of 2015, almost 28% of the French population supported the RRP (Kempin, 2017).

This upward trend has been the result of a process of “de-demonization” developed by Marine Le Pen and initiated mere weeks after her takeover of the party. This strategy involves the softening of the party’s outward image, and the seeking of credibility on issues outside of the field of immigration (Mayer 2013) in order to diversify and expand the electoral audience of the FN and turn the RRP into a mainstream party “capable of achieving political office” (Scrinzi, 2017, p. 87). Kicked off by Marine Le Pen’s personal distancing from previous Anti-Semitic, pro-colonialist stances of the party, the process of dédialisation then involved the stripping of the entirety of the FN’s personnel from its prior public image: a process of “spring cleaning” (Moscovici, *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 19 April 2011) was initiated in which party members that had made public statements containing antisemitic, racist, homophobic, or pro-colonialist sentiments or had glorified the Nazi regime, were forced to leave the FN (Kempin, 2017). Furthermore, in order to reinforce the message of renewal, the face of the party was rejuvenated: the newly appointed members of the FN board included solely party members born after 1969 that therefore had no connection to the Second World War or the war in Algeria. Most of these young politicians were highly educated and like Marine herself, embodied more modern forms of living, such as sole parents, or people living in homosexual relationship.

Alongside the extensive polishing of the party’s public image, programmatic changes were initiated in order to move the party from the fringes to the center of the French political sphere: A new political focus on conservative economic policies was introduced in light of the high unemployment rate, particularly among young people (20-25%) (Meyer, 2019). By framing the high unemployment rate as a symptom of larger processes through which France has sacrificed the control over its own economy, and thus risks the security of its workers that are reliant on a strong and independent economy. Foreign and EU financial interests have, in the eyes of the FN taken over and debilitated the national economic orientation, which is further weakened by the massive influx of migrants who seek to replace the hardworking French with a cheaper labor force (Kempin, 2017). Marine Le Pen thus seeks to limit free trade, reintroduce

a French currency, and wishes to focus on ensuring the prosperity of the French economy. The interlinking of Economic ideals with the rejection of a “foreign” take-over, masks some of the xenophobic arguments made and makes it harder to detect and criticize the racist undertones.

This process of “masking” true intent and genuine party positions is further emphasized by the rhetorical shift from one Le Pen to the other, while the fundamental message underlying the rhetoric has only marginally shifted (Alduy, 2016). Political scientist Mayer described Marine Le Pen’s manifesto as old cheese put into new packages (Mayer, 2012, while others referred to it as “window dressing” (Paxton & Peace, 2020). However covert, Marine Le Pen continues to uphold the racist legacy of her father as the opposition to immigration remains a focal point of the political success of the RRP.

Until Marine took over the party, issues of gender and family politics did not play a major role in the programmatic profile of the FN. While Marine’s father was known for his “overtly sexist declarations” (Scrinzi, 2017, p.91) and sexist policy positions, his daughter included talking points concerning violence against women, sexual assaults and the defense of women’s rights into her speeches and interviews. By centering her programmatic change around her own womanhood, Le Pen positioned herself and her party as the defender of women and the freedoms they enjoy against a foreign threat. She was able to weaponize the fight for equality against the migrant community by claiming that violence against women was perpetrated mainly in multicultural societies and thus had its roots in the refugee ‘crisis’ (Meyer, 2019). By claiming there to be “certain neighborhoods” in which “it is not good to be a woman, or a homosexual, or Jewish, or even French and white” (Alduy, 2016, p.22) and deliberately instrumentalized events such as New Year’s Eve 2015 in Cologne Germany, in which sexual assaults occurred between asylum-seeking individuals and German women, Le Pen managed to create a concept of a foreign enemy.

In order to claim to defend women’s freedoms, Marine has modernized the party’s position, especially on economic indicators of equality, such as the gender pay gap. Particularly her own experiences as a working parent solely raising three children have been highlighted during the presidential elections. This “skillful self-staging” (Seidendorfer et al., 2011, p.3) of Le Pen as a modern woman and mother seeking to defend the liberties of the Western world, has contributed to the voter influx of the FN (Seidendorfer et al., 2011).

### *Die Alternative für Deutschland*

Until 2017, Germany represented one of the few European nations without an established radical right party in the national parliament. However, after the founding of the *Alternative für*

*Deutschland* (AfD) in 2013, the party quickly rose in popularity. While the emerging party did not succeed in gaining seats in the German Bundestag in 2013 due to them falling short of the German 5% rule by 0,3%, a mere year later, the party had already made its way into the European Parliament (7 seats), and quickly reached enough support in 16 federal states to comfortably receive seats in all state parliaments. Up until the mass support of the AfD arose mere months after its founding, a commonly held position among scholars was that the German political culture due to its horrific past, would withstand the establishment of a RRP due to the “anti-populist consensus” (p. 389) in the republic (Nestler & Rohgalf 2014). The existence of the AfD led to a fundamental questioning of the (continued) existence of this consensus.

The AfD emerged out of several smaller protest movements who vehemently opposed the launch of the financial rescue packet for Greece in 2012, seen as highly disadvantageous for Germans (Bücker et al., 2019). It's clear and precise, but underdeveloped party program with a focus on Euroscepticism and loud criticism of the current government was met with support in the German political sphere. Subsequently, this thematic profile widened to include the areas of family, education, energy and, most famously, migration policy.

Around the turn of the years 2014/15, a pivotal moment in party history emerged: disputes and disagreements about the political direction of the newly founded party in relation to the growing societal Islamophobic and xenophobic sentiments brought on by the refugee ‘crisis’ emerged. The dogmatic protest movement PEGIDA (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, eng: Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) against the welcoming of refugees who were perceived as an ethnic threat (Berning & Schlüter, 2016) was largely well-received among the members of the AfD and many wanted the AfD to include PEGIDA's stance into the political profile of the party. An intraparty vote among all members showed support for this addition, turning the opposition to migration into another fundamental pillar of the party. This in turn caused 20% of party members (around 20.000 people) to leave the AfD abruptly.

While discussions about the potential radicalization of the AfD had been brewing before (Neuerer, 2018; Isemann & Walther, 2019), the monumental decision to collaboration with the openly xenophobic PEGIDA left no more doubt about this progression (Decker 2020). The members and figure heads of the AfD began to increasingly toe the line of social acceptability and legality in their public statements, with the chairwoman of the parliamentary group, Alice Weidel calling asylum seekers “headscarf girls” and “alimony knivemen” (Isemann & Walther, 2018), the AfD leader Gauland stating that “Hitler and Nazis are merely a bird shit in over 1000 years of successful German history” (Welt, 2. June 2018) as well as the introduction of political

slogans such as “politician trash into the gulag” (original: “Politikerpack in den Gulag”) (Isemann & Walther, 2019). These controversies, while sparking larger discussions about racism, Anti-Semitism, and xenophobia in the German culture, did not put a halt to the success of the party. The AfD has thus firmly positioned itself at the outmost right boundaries of legality of the German system and has been repeatedly monitored by the Federal Office of the Protection of the Constitution (DW, 15 January 2019; Götschenberg & Küstner, Tagesschau, 3 March 2021).

In its early days, due to the lack of stringent and well-developed programmatic content (Walther & Isemann, 2019), the party was often deemed to be a ‘protest party’ with the sole purpose of criticism of the political establishment (Lewandowsky, 2015). However, in the years of 2016-2017, the party sharpened its profile and formed clear political positions on many issues. The AfD increasingly adopted deeply conservative and traditionalist views, especially on policy issues concerning women and gender, exhibiting large overlaps with the programs of other RRP across Europe. “The party strongly campaigns against equal rights for women, against quotas in the economy and in politics, and against the EU-concept of Gender Mainstreaming” (Meyer, 2019, p.79). Laws introduced to counter existent inequalities, as well as the gendering of language and the subject of Gender Studies have become the targets of “hostility and ridicule” (Meyer, 2019, p.79), as the party believes these movements to deny biologically founded gender identities and aim at sexualizing children (Meyer, 2019). The inclusion of women with modern lifestyles in leadership positions of the party has shielded the RRP from critique surrounding their political intentions, thus serving as a “façade-modernity” (Meyer, 2019, p.78) behind which attacks due to the party’s homophobic and sexist intentions are safeguarded.

Both the AfD and the RN recently experiences large increases in support in their respective nations. Their (partially) female leaderships have enabled them to take on political positions generally recognized as opposing female liberation and gender equality. While the AfD leans into its sexist and racist image, the RN has increasingly ‘cleaned up’ its rhetorical and ideological stances in order to appeal to a broader voter base.

## 5.5 Current and Significant Political Discussions surrounding Gender

Political Parties are ideally in tune with the ongoing debates in their respective nations and hold policy stances which reflect the tenor of their voter base. Especially salient political discussions will be reflected in the position papers published before elections. In order to contextualize the

absence of or focus on certain gendered issues in manifestos, a quick overview of what is, and therefore, what is not being discussed in the nation, will be given.

### *Gender Policies and Policy Debates in France*

Even though France has been able to establish high levels of gender equality and even played a leading role in the establishment of binding EU legislation geared towards equality, (e.g., Art. 119 TFEU), over the course of the last two decades large parts of the French civil society, as well as large percentages of the political sphere, have vehemently opposed an array of forward-looking reforms on issues of gender and sexuality (Stambolis-Ruhstorfer & Tricou, 2017). Blidon (2018) states that, “[p]aradoxically, France, which prides itself on being the country of the Rights of Man, is significantly behind when it comes to recognizing the existence of inequality – with respect to sex [...] – let alone establishing ambitious public policies designed to address these issues” (p. 1039).

Progressive policies which would introduce any change that could be perceived as an undermining of conservative visions of the family, sexuality, and gender have received massive backlash in France over the course of the last two decades. Civil society groups, such as *La Manif Pour Tous* (LMPT) (the “manifestation/demonstration for all”, inspired by the opposition to the slogan “marriage for all”) initiated and established this resistance in France: During the years 2013-2014 the French population increasingly supported the “family values”-movement thus introducing a cultural backlash on progressive family policies developed by the government. What initially started as an opposition to the introduction of same-sex marriage (subsequently introduced in 2013), turned “rather bewilderingly” (Harsin, 2018, p.35) into a long-lived movement angrily resisting “what previously appeared to be an irreversible process of achievement of gender equality and sexual rights in the Western world” (Kuhar & Zobec, 2017, p.31). Through the strategic downplaying of the predominantly white, upper middle-class, and conservative Catholic origins of the organization and the fabrication of a secular identity of the movement (Stambolis-Ruhstorfer & Tricou, 2017) the LMPT has been able to recruit people outside of the Christian faith, including working-class families of color and Muslims (Stambolis-Ruhstorfer & Tricou, 2017, p. 6).

Together, the LMPT has mobilized against the access to assisted reproductive techniques for queer couples and single women, has obstructed efforts to reduce the administrative and medical burdens on transgender people (Stambolis-Ruhstorfer & Tricou, 2017), and most famously rallied against the introduction of a school curricular policy, the ABCs of Equality (“l’ABCD de l’égalité”). This aspired extension of the French curriculum, which according to the LMPT imposed the teaching of gender theory to high school students,

was in fact part of a much bigger education project dedicated to the erosion of gender-based inequalities ‘in’ and ‘by’ the school in 2013 (Salle, 2019). The program in itself contained no radical or groundbreaking differences to the previous curriculum, but the public statements of teachers, journalists and the government attesting to that fact were met with “flabbergasting futile fact-checks and desperate appeals to the moral outrage of people” (Harsin, 2018, p.47). The movement thus constitutes a primary example of post-truth populism (Harsin, 2018).

The instrumentalization of the ABC of Equality has been especially fruitful for the LMPT as it plays directly into the movement’s narrative of an alleged “corruption of minors” (Perreau, 2016, p.54) through ‘gender theory’. At the core of the anti-gender movement in general, and the LMPT in particular, stands the belief that children are being “sexualised and brainwashed by radical feminist ideology and homosexual propaganda” (Kuhar & Zobec, 2017, p.3) in schools as well as through the opening of adoption to people outside of heterosexual relationships and the legalization of surrogacy (Paternotte, 2018). Emphasizing the protection of children as the motive behind the actions brought forwards, as opposed to much more foundational Christian beliefs about the social order in society, has enabled the LMPT to gather support from an array of societal groups.

The LMPT perceived as movement expressing the outrage of diverse (ethnic) groups towards the notion of ‘gender theory’, a term which holds no actual meaning but serves as a placeholder term for a multi-purpose enemy (Kuhar & Zobec, 2017), has achieved substantial victories significantly altering policies and debates: a watering down of the law on marriage, the postponing and subsequent abandonment of measures to facilitate LGBTQ parenting, as well as the removal of the term ‘gender’ from all official documents (Paternotte, 2018; Stambolis-Ruhstorfer & Tircou, 2017). “Furthermore, intersecting ethical debates such as surrogacy, transgender rights, or euthanasia were at least momentarily halted, and sex education and gender-equality school curricula watered down” (Paternotte, 2018, p.156).

The LMPT further turned into a political actor and upholds as well as reinforces the deep-seated controversy surrounding any and all successive dialogues on topics of ‘gender’ in the broadest sense.

#### *Gender Policies and Policy Debates in Germany*

While the French public had organized in mass protests by the year 2013, topics of ‘gender’ only slowly made their way into the public and political debates in Germany at that time and remained primarily at the Länder-level (Villa, 2017).

A proposed Education Plan by the governing Green Party and Social Democratic Party, seeking to sensitize children to topics such as the diversity of sexualities in 2015 in the state of Baden-Württemberg sparked an initial broad-scale discussion in Germany, mimicking the debates in France (Blum, 2015). Conservative and Christian civil organizations organized protests under the motto “Demo für Alle” (demonstration for all) consciously indicating a connection towards the French movement (Blum, 2015). However, unlike their French counterparts, the demonstrations were largely contained inside the state of Baden-Württemberg and did not lead to a standing movement viciously countering all attempts at (Blum, 2015).

Discussions surrounding the issues of gender have been ongoing ever since. Especially the rejection of scientific research and findings in the field of gender studies, justified by the defamation of gender studies as “unscientific”, and the framing of gender theory as an ideology (Blum, 2015), has migrated from an extremist right position into the center of political discussions. Recently, these discussions have intensified and become much more emotionally charged. Henry-Huthmacher (2008) described the German debate surrounding gender as a “war zone”. She believes a societal struggle to have ensued about which social group holds the power and sovereignty to dictate and interpret the limits of the construct of gender, and thus the societal rules which apply to them (Henry-Hurthmacher, 2018).

In this ‘war zone’, the most controversial topic at the moment is the increased use of gender-sensitive language (Nöstlinger, Politico, 8 March 2021). The AfD has issued several petitions in the Bundestag seeking to prohibit the use of gender-sensitive language, stating that the “unnatural deformation” (“unnatürliche Verunstaltung”) of the German language would considerably impact the readability of the text (Deutscher Bundestag, 24 June 2021<sup>5</sup>). Inside the German society, there appears to be a growing endorsement of the Anti-Genderist movement introduced largely by the consistent defamation of ‘genderism’ by the AfD. A survey often-cited in media discourse showed that the majority of Germans (65%) did not support the use of gender-sensitive language in the press, radio, TV or in official documents (Infratest Dimap, 10.-11. May 2021<sup>6</sup>). In the face of these numbers, and considering the upcoming elections in September 2021, large parts of the CDU have recently joined the debates about a “Gender-Verbot” (ban on gender-sensitive language) (NDR, 24 May 2021; Alexe, Sächsische SZ, 21. July 2021). While the party had employed gender-sensitive language themselves in their official party programme in 2017, alongside the shift in public debate the conservative party has shifted its political stance.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2021/kw25-de-gendergerechte-sprache-846940>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/umfragen/aktuell/weiter-vorbehalte-gegen-gendergerechte-sprache/>



In both Germany and France, a process of scandalization of and mobilization of citizens against progressive family and gender policies has ensued. Introduced mainly by Christian and Conservative organizations and often fueled by the national RRP, these protests have been able to significantly impact the public debate, and in the case of France, altered the introduced policies in the area to great extent.

## 6. National Case Studies

### 6.1 Case 1 – France

The findings of the analysis of the French case study uncovered that while the political stances on issues of gender and family of the two political camps showed large similarities and overlaps, overall, the manifesto of the RN depicted relatively higher levels of modern sexism than the manifesto of the LR/UDI. However, the RN also addressed gender issues at a much higher rate than its centrist counterpart. Both parties' manifestos have been deemed to be modern sexist.

#### Rassemblement National

The party programme published by the RN for the election period of 2017, in which both presidential as well as legislative elections took place in France, is a very concise and simple 24-page document. The document, entitled “144 engagements présidentiels – Marine 2017” (Eng.: “144 presidential commitments – Marine 2017”) was published prior to the presidential elections held on 23 April 2017.

The manifesto is therefore centered around the candidature of Marine Le Pen for the presidential race. Presidential elections are, due to their nature focused on single personalities, and therefore, following the cover page of the document, a personal statement with Le Pen's signature accompanied by a personal photo of hers can be found. After Le Pen's defeat against Macron in the second round of the presidential election, she initially hesitated to even run for the legislative elections (de Boni, *Le Figaro*, 15 May 2017) and the RN did not release another position paper for the elections in June 2017. The reasoning behind this lack of a manifesto is unknown. It can be assumed that the presidential program which had been campaigned for by Le Pen in the months prior, was also indicative of the plans of the entirety of the RN in the parliament.

In her personal address precluding the presidential program, Le Pen states that the 144 commitments in the document detail her project which will “put France back in order in five years” (p. 2). Additionally, she states that the published program is not only intended as a political manifesto granting voters insights into the political positions held by the RN but is also meant to serve as a measure of control: Le Pen invites her supporters to hold her accountable on these written commitments once she holds the position of head of state (p.2). This accountability towards the people of France constitutes one of the pillars of the RN's program and is thus strongly emphasized. Additionally, Le Pen highlights her commitment to introduce social and fiscal policies that will “give the French their money back” (p.2). According to her

statement, the French public has been forgotten by the previously ruling “globalist” politicians who only enriched multinationals and squandered public money through “uncontrolled immigration” (p.2). The document thus states that in the upcoming election, the French are given a choice between two ‘visions’: “the globalist choice on the one hand, represented by all my competitors” (p.2) or the “patriotic choice” (p.2) for the RN. With her introductory words, Le Pen purposefully positions herself outside of the established French political sphere, outside of the ‘left-right’ division of French politics. According to her, all other political parties wish to abolish the economic and physical borders of France, leading to the destruction of economic and social balances as well as increases in migration. The only party that seeks to defend the national identity, independence, and unity of the French nation, according to Marine Le Pen, is hers (p.2).

The program with which she seeks to defend the nation, is divided into seven categories and as indicated in the manifestos title, spans 144 programmatic points. These seven categories have all been given titles which specify how France will be altered should the commitments be realized, e.g., the first category is labeled “Une France Libre” (A Free France) and contains topics of sovereignty, direct democratic reformation, and certain liberties to be (re)established (p. 3-4), the second division is entitled “Une France Sûre” (A Safe France) and consist of intentions surrounding internal security and the police, criminal law reforms, immigration and terrorism (p.5-6), and so on. The other categories are dedicated to: a prosperous France (employment and economic policies, guarantees of social protection, and issue of purchasing power) (p.7-10), a just France (health care, tax policies, and inclusion of all in the workplace). (p.11-13), a proud France (unity and national identity, education, and outward image) (p.15-17), a powerful France (France as a military and global power in the world) (p.19), and a durable France (agricultural and environmental policies, equality among the regions, and housing policies) (p. 21-23). Family and social policies, let alone gender politics, were not given their own specific section in the program. Programmatic points concerning any of the aforementioned policy fields were subsumed under the larger seven categories.

The 144 proclamations intended to make France more affluent, are all held very short, spanning not more than three to four sentences. For the most part, they do not contain actual policy measures to be introduced but indicate the larger intent of the RN in specific political areas, e.g., commitment number 91 reads as follows: “Defend the national identity, values and traditions of the French civilization. Include the defense and promotion of our historical and cultural heritage in the Constitution” (p.15). This lack of precision surrounding the ways in which the set goals will be achieved, is traceable across all 144 commitments. This level of

vagueness often holds space for interpretation by both the voter, and the media. This makes the content of the program less susceptible to criticism.

Before turning to the content of the 144 proclamations, the employed language and rhetorical devices will quickly be addressed. Unlike other RRP's like the German AfD, which will be analyzed later on, the RN has reached a high level of political professionalism. This is visible in the very neutral and matter-of-factly language of the document. Whereas more inexperienced parties tend to justify their political stances in the opposition to the current government and often resort to defamations of other positions, the RN's program stands on its own and appears as if a valid alternative to other programs. The previously mentioned ambiguity and brevity of the individual policy intentions, combined with the very straight choice of language, diminish the possible target for content related attacks and enforce the image of a normal, non-radical party well-integrated into the political sphere. The outward face of the party shown in official documents is therefore one of a serious and professional, and thus eligible party. The analysis of the content of the proposed policies, and the sexist undertones they transmit is especially relevant in these instances in which the outward appearance of a party has been successfully altered to the point where it's true intentions are no longer apparent to the public.

#### *Results of the Analysis*

During the coding process the party manifesto of the RN, an overall absence of issues of gender, family, and equality become apparent. Only 12 out of the 144 commitments contained aspects related to issues of gender equality. As several commitments contained multiple positions coded separately, 20 stances were coded overall in line with the developed coding tool. An overview of the results of the coding for the RN can be found in Table 1.

At first glance, the picture emerging from the table appears to be a very fragmented one. While a number of indicators attest to the presence of Modern Sexism in the manifesto, several others do not. Through the evaluation, high levels of Modern Sexism coupled with a feminist libertarian view on issues of work and pay were uncovered for the RN. Especially the RN's natalist position, the accumulation of racialized sexist attitudes, and its Anti-genderist stances have earned the RN the modern sexist label.

<i>Rassemblement National</i>	“Position regarding women’s continued discrimination”	“Position regarding complaints about women's discrimination”	“Position regarding measures taken to correct inequalities and discrimination”
Not-indicative of Modern Sexism	7	0	0
Ambiguous concerning Modern Sexism	1	2	-
Indicative of Modern Sexism	5	2	3

Table 1: Results of Coding the Party Manifesto of the *Rassemblement National* for the Levels of Modern Sexism exhibited

### Non-modern sexist Positions of the RN

When zooming into the collected data more closely, it becomes very apparent, that although the RRP might have adopted several non-modern sexist talking points, 6 out of the 7 indicators considered ‘not-indicative of Modern Sexism’ have been coded in the areas of money and work. The RN as previously touched upon, has adopted an ‘economically feminist’ position under Marine Le Pen. In order to be able to claim that the RN seeks to defend women’s rights and liberties against an imagined foreign, often Muslim, threat Le Pen has made use of her personal brand as a working mother and a sole parent and has adopted an array of ‘feminist’ stances, particularly in the area of economic policies (Seidendorfer et al., 2011). This process of ‘righting feminism’, wherein feminism has been recognized as a “source of cultural capital” (Farris & Rottenberg, 2017, p. 6) and consequently, been hollowed out and stripped of its structural critique, in order to be re-modeled into a tool of the right-wing discourse (Farris and Rottenberg 2017), should not be understood as an overarching belief in the equality of women: The almost complete absence of egalitarian positions outside the realm of economic equality attests to this.

The RN in its economically feminist position seeks to end “professional insecurities” of women (p.4), end the gender pay gap (p.4), lower the tax burden on widowers and widows (p.9), exempt parents of large families from taxes to their pensions (p.9), introduce a universal ‘family allowance’ covering the cost of living (p.9), and increase the ‘allocation de solidarité aux personnes âgées’ (solidarity allocation for the elderly), a monthly benefit granted to retirees with low incomes among which women are largely overrepresented (p.9). These six positions which will aid in creating equality of women in the areas of work and money, are further underpinned by the RN’s plan to restore the free distribution of parental leave between the two parents (p. 9), coded as “not-indicative of Modern Sexism” in the area of ‘time’. Most measures classified as ‘non-modern sexist’ in the area of ‘money’ also support the RN’s natalist agenda: the party heavily advertises for rises in birthrates among “French” women, promoted through

monetary incentives such as the ones seen above. The party did not portray any non-sexist stances concerning the complaints about women's discrimination, as well as measures taken to correct inequalities and discrimination.

#### Ambiguous modern sexist Positions of the RN

As indicated in Table 1, three positions have been coded as ambiguous. While this category was not previously foreseen to exist, several of the statements of the RN are highly subjective to interpretation thus necessitating the addition of a novel coding category. One ambiguous position falling into the category of equality of 'time' is concerned with the "rythmes scolaires" (p.16). The school rhythm in France refers to the distribution of days and hours which students spend in school, and due to its very nature, changes of this rhythm will affect the working schedules of parents, mainly mothers. However, the RN's plan to "revisit the reform of the scholarly rhythm" (p.16) gives no clear indication if the party wishes to extend the number of hours spent in schools which would allow caregivers to work more, or restrict the number of hours in education, in turn requiring a parent to be at home longer. A clear position of the RN on the issue could also not be found when consulting additional sources. In an interview of Le Pen in the year 2013, when asked about the rythmes scolaire, she did not position herself clearly and stated that there were larger issues to be addressed in the realm of education (L'Express, 3 October 2013).

Additionally, two other positions of the RN in the realm of education have been coded as ambiguous. Commitment Nr.11 which attests to the political will of the RN to "guarantee the freedom to educate one's children in accordance with one's own choices" (p.4) while simultaneously controlling more strictly whether (private) education adheres to the values of the Republic (p.4) and commitment Nr.102 which reads as follows: "Make the school an 'inviolable asylum where the quarrels of men do not enter' (Jean Zay), by enforcing not only secularism, but neutrality and security" (p.16), could both be interpreted to fall under the umbrella term of 'Anti-Genderism'. As the two positions seek to exercise control over the content that is taught to pupils, a core discipline of the anti-gender movement which heavily mobilizes on the fear of sexualization and brainwashing of children through gender sensitive educative programs (Kuhar & Zobec, 2017), and the mass-mobilization surrounding the ABC of Equality program in France at the time of the election dated back less than three years, commitments 11 and 102 could be interpreted as referencing this movement. However, both positions lack a definite reference to issues of gender and could just as well constitute a subdued racist position, much more than a modern sexist one. Both positions hold clear Anti-Muslim undertones: by referencing Jean Zay, a French politician who heavily molded the French school

system, especially known for his focus on an inclusive and non-religious schooling for all, and through the direct referencing to the “enforcement of secularism” (p.16), as well as the “values of the Republic” (p.4), the RN’s anti-Muslim positioning can be detected. In a public statement, the daughter of Zay condoned the instrumentalization of her father’s teachings by the RN to “defend the new attacks on Muslims” (Durupt, *Libération*, 19 February 2017). Even though the tenor of commitments 11 and 102 primarily hold Anti-Islam sentiments, the statement has been coded as ambiguous concerning Modern Sexism due to the national context of mass-mobilization on issues of gender education.

#### Modern Sexist Positions of the RN

Next to the 7 positions coded as not indicative of Modern Sexism, and the 3 positions labeled as ambiguous towards Modern Sexism, 9 statements in the manifesto have been classified as indicative of Modern Sexism.

The coded entries in the area of women’s continued discrimination are situated in the area of ‘work, and ‘racialized sexism’. In the area of work, the RN’s pro-natalist position has been coded (p.9). The many structural drawbacks for women related to the active governmental pursuit of high birth numbers, especially in the field of employment and monetary equality, have caused pro-natalist positions to be classified as modern sexist. This support of motherhood is “insufficiently critical of its oppressive dimensions” (Gimenez 2018, p.159) and is thus seen as indicative of Modern Sexism.

Furthermore, in this manifesto, 3 positions have been recognized to fall under the category of ‘racialized sexism’. By presenting a racially ‘Other’ as the source of gender inequality and ongoing oppressive forces in society, the party is able to claim France to have reached optimal levels of equality prior to immigration. Additionally, the structural problems causing gender-based discrimination can largely be ignored by the RRP. In the document, the RP commits to the “fight against Islamism” (p.4) due to Islamism’s oppression of the fundamental freedoms of women, according to the RN (p.4). As previously discussed, through a process of assigning a lack of equality to a racialized Other, the political party is able to assign blame to migrants. Furthermore, the RN is committed to “restoring secularism everywhere”, namely in public spaces (p.15) and in the workplace (p.15). This ‘restoring of secularism’ would effectively ban the Muslim headscarf, and thus Muslim women who wear it, from public life and employment. This policy positions constitutes not only the intent to significantly diminish the individual freedoms and bodily autonomy of Muslim women but is also a political position which disproportionately affects marginalized women by further pushing them into the private sphere of the home. It is therefore considered indicative of Modern Sexism. The RN stresses its

rejection of the Muslim headscarf in commitment Nr. 117, where the “imposing of strict respect for secularism and neutrality in all sport clubs” (p.17) is specified. Once more, excluding marginalized women from the public sphere and from participation in sport clubs is discriminatory and sexist.

In the classification of complaints about women's discrimination, 2 entries can be found for the RP. Both codings relate to the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. In commitment Nr. 87, the RN seeks to both “maintain the ban on surrogacy and reserve assisted reproduction as a medical response to infertility problems” (p.24) and create a civil union to replace same-sex marriage in France (p.24). The ban on surrogacy and assisted reproductive methods for queer couples and single parents is a highly debated topic in France. Especially in light of the mass mobilization surrounding the alleged sexualization of children by homosexuals (Perreau, 2016), the RN's position is largely in line with the anti-genderist mobilizers in France. While the RN's stance on reproductive methods for the LGBTQ+ community had been expected, the wish to revoke the legal option of same-sex marriage and reintroduce a civil union, 4 years after the legalization in 2013, was largely unexpected. While the issue had been a large-scale mobilizer in 2013, in 2017 73% of French people stated to be in support of gay marriage (Pew Research Center, 29 May 2018). The anti-genderist stance on both issues have been coded as indicative of Modern Sexism.

Lastly, in the category “position on measures taken to correct inequalities and discrimination”, three statements were coded as modern sexist. The RN claimed the EU to superimpose gender-sensitive policies upon France: This has supposedly forced the RN to uphold the previously mentioned ban on surrogacy “in the face of pressure from supranational authorities” (p.24). Furthermore, the RN states that it wishes to reintroduce ‘real equality’ by rejecting the principle of “positive discrimination” (p.15). This commitment Nr. 99 was coded twice: Once, for the claim that measures to combat the discrimination of women were a source of discrimination for men, and secondly, because the ‘positive action’ mechanism introduced by the EU intended to advance women's equality in employment, had been presented as a superimposition of ‘genderism’ by the EU.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the party manifesto of the RN depicts a variety of standpoints on the family, women's rights and gender. While many of them are indicative of Modern Sexism, others, particularly in the area of employment and remuneration seek to introduce more equal chances and opportunities in the workplace. Overall, high levels of Modern Sexism are visible in the party manifesto. The high number of modern sexist positions are coupled with a feminist



libertarian view on issues of work and pay. The RN's focus on natalist policies, an array of racialized sexist attitudes, and Anti-genderist stances have led to the classification of the RN as a modern sexist party. The commonly used expression "fiscally conservative, socially liberal" from the United States comes to mind: for the RN this phrase could be reinterpreted as "fiscally feminist, socially modern-sexist".

#### Les Républicains/Union des Démocrates et Indépendants

The party Les Républicains (LR) was initially selected as the one centrist-right party in the French system to be evaluated in this analysis. This decision was based on the party's success in the presidential primaries in 2017, where LR gathered the largest number of voters among all center-right parties. The LR candidate François Fillon, only came in third position behind Macron (24,01%) and Le Pen (21,3%), with 20,01% of votes and did thus not qualify for the second round. The exclusion of both the left and the right 'established' parties from the second cycle, in favor of a far right and an independent candidate led to large frustrations in the French political landscape. In order to block Le Pen from accessing one of the highest positions in the French political sphere almost all eliminated candidates pledged their support to Macron, skewing the race in his favor. As 2017 entailed a double election year and the legislative election were to take place in June, only one month after the second round of the présidentielle, the moderate right, consisting of the LR and the *Union des Démocrates et Indépendants* (UDI), decided to stand for the election together, forming the *project de l'Union de la Droite et du Centre* (the project of the Union of the right and the center). This decision was taken as both parties believed it to be their responsibility to offer voters a real conservative alternative to the "demagogic political project of the Front National" (p.2).

The analysis in this thesis will focus on the joint document put forward by the center-right coalition prior to the legislative elections, as the joint manifesto is believed to more accurately reflect the *overall* position of the political center-right in France, much more so than the presidential manifesto of Fillon would. As it is the overarching goal of this analysis is to assess how large the divergences of the levels of modern sexism are between the radical right and the center-right, this decision felt most appropriate.

The manifesto entitled "Projet: Majorité pour la France" (Project: Majority for France) a 17-page document, is made up of seven sections. The first of these sections contains a preamble in which the newly formed coalition articulates its frustration about the outcomes of the presidential elections and presents both the RN and La République en March as unfit to govern: the coalition states that the RN will lead France "to a dead end and to economic ruin"

(p.2), while La République en Marche's project is said to be based on "confusion and half measures" (p.2). The coalition therefore believes to have the duty to create a clear alternative by building a majority for France in the right and center that offers a "credible and transparent contract to the French people firmly based in the values of the Republic" (p.2).

The second segment of the document thus specifies the aforementioned values of the Republic that the coalition seeks to uphold and strengthen: the school, business, the family and secularism (p.3). After outlining the importance of the pillars and asserting their commitment to the establishment of policies which will sustain them, the coalition offers the voter 5 contracts to be fulfilled in the 5-year term. Each of the five contracts is later specified in one of the five subcategories of the document. The first contract to be introduced is the "contract for full employment and purchasing power" (p.4-6) (tax policies, minimum wage alterations, creation of a more liberal labor market, and a plan to make business more 'dynamic) which seeks to reduce the interventions of the state and liberalize the market forces in order to create growth and competition (p.4). Furthermore, the coalition proposes the "contract to protect France and guarantee the safety of the French" (p.7-10) (zero impunity for offenders, fight against terrorism, increased military sector, immigration quotas, "a more European and Sovereign France" (p.9), the protection of the environment as well as family values), a "contract of equity between all French people" (p. 11-13) (financing of the social sector, reduction of poverty, societal inclusion, processes of 'declassification' of rural and overseas regions, social equity), the "contract with the French youth" (p.14) (education), and finally, a "contract for the renewal and modernization of the public life" (p.15) (transparency, bureaucracy).

The last page of the document is dedicated to an appeal to the French population: while they might have chosen a president, who is "neither right- nor leftwing" (p.16), the legislative election gives the French the chance to "clarify things and give France a clear and coherent majority" (p.16).

The program of the coalition entails fewer but more developed political positions than the program of the RN. While the RN in most of the 144 commitments, only indicated the general political direction pursued, the coalition manifesto generally discusses the intentions behind the policies it strives for in slightly more detail. The employed language and rhetorical style while generally factual do not convey the same level of stoicism seen in the RN's manifesto. Especially the preamble and the concluding remarks are highly emotionalized, claiming political opponents to constitute the "economic ruin" of France, or political programs to be "confused". Another direct 'jab' towards a political actor, former president Hollande, is also present (p.2). The message of renewal that the coalition wishes to convey is thus partially

founded in the direct critique of other political actors. The process of marketing one’s party as a more viable political alternative to the ongoing political reality, which both the RN and the coalition have attempted, appears to be much more skillfully executed by the RN due to the high level of professionalism, the vagueness of the statements made, and the lack of direct critic of political actors or parties.

*Results of the Analysis*

When analyzing the party document using the Modern Sexism coding tool, in line with the party program of the RN, a lack of family and gender policies was discernible. Even though the document claims for the family to be one of the four Republican pillars it seeks to uphold, family and gender policies are scarce throughout the manifesto. Overall, only 11 positions on gender equality issues were coded. An outline of the areas in which these codes fall can be found in Table 2.

Like the RN, the coalition has a modern sexist party manifesto with a ‘fiscally feminist’ face: While the foreseen policies address inequalities experienced by women who are active participants in the labor force, the program simultaneously increases inequitable structures encountered by women who due to their specific gendered role have restricted access to the labor market. Outside of the economic realm and when excluding the Anti-Muslim sexism, women’s issues are largely inexistent. Therefore, the LR/UDI has a modern sexist party manifesto, albeit with lower levels of modern sexism when compared to the RN.

<i>Les Républicains/Union des Démocrates et Indépendants</i>	“Position regarding women’s continued discrimination”	“Position regarding complaints about women's discrimination”	“Position regarding measures taken to correct inequalities and discrimination”
Not-indicative of Modern Sexism	6	0	0
Indicative of Modern Sexism	5	0	0

*Table 2: Results of Coding the Party Manifesto of Les Républicains/UDI for the Legislative Election 2017*

*Non-modern sexist Positions of the LR/UDI*

When inspecting the positions of the coalition that have been coded as not indicative of Modern Sexism, a similar picture to that observed in the RN emerges: 5 out of the 6 positions coded are found in the areas of work and money: the coalition, like the RN, seeks to combat discrimination in the workplace, especially in the area of career advancements (p.13), it seeks to close the

gender pay gap (p.13), and wishes to re-introduce the universal family allowance (p.4). The coalition also addresses the financial difficulties encountered by many single mothers: while the program does not foresee increased financial support for sole parents, it is committed to enforcing more strictly the responsibility of the second parent to pay child support (p.13). Furthermore, the LR/UDI plans to develop the family tax credit system (p.10), a measure which encourages business to create the structures facilitating the reconciliation of family and professional life. By setting up childcare provisions or granting additional pay to parents, businesses are able to deduct certain sums from their owed taxes. Additionally, in the sphere of ‘time’, the LR/UDI coalition plans a relaunch in the creation of places available in nurseries (p.10).

The center-right coalition’s non-modern-sexist positions on the issues of gender and family overlap in parts with the plans of the RN. However, the center-right addresses issues of single motherhood and actively promotes the creation of childcare facilities. The topic of pensions or compensation of care work however remain under-addressed. All non-modern-sexist positions of the coalition fall into the category of ‘position towards women’s continued discrimination’ and are largely related to the monetary and economic equality of women.

#### Modern sexist Positions of the LR/UDI

In addition to the 6 non-modern-sexist positions of the coalition, 5 statements in the document have been identified to be indicative of Modern Sexism. Once more, all coded statements fall under the category of women’s continued discrimination. The coalition thus has no positions, in support or disapproval of gender theories or on laws designed to protect women.

While the coalition has many policy stances which seek to enhance the monetary equality of women, additionally two positions in the field of money have been coded as modern sexist: the coalition wishes to create a single capped social allowance in order to create incentives to return to work (p.13), a measure disproportionately affecting mothers. Furthermore, this capped allowance is designed to be lower than the minimum wage, in order to ensure that “income from work is always higher than income from assistance” (p.13). Data from the UK, where such a benefit cap was introduced in 2013, shows that even though the cap was intended for people who could work but chose not to, it has a disproportionately negative effect on mothers, especially mothers who were the sole care takers for children (House of Commons, Work and Pensions Committee, 2019). Single mothers thus made up over 85% of all affected households by the introduced capping of benefits (House of Commons, Work and Pensions Committee, 2019). The proposed capped universal social allowance for France, which is to be held below the minimum wage, in line with the developments in the UK, is likely to

disproportionately affect (single) mothers and people conducting care work in general. In order to care for elderly relatives or children, the state should provide care workers with the financial security to do so.

In light of the planned capped social allowance, the plans of the coalition in the field of elder care appear taunting: the coalition wants seniors to “age with dignity at home” (p.12). Therefore, it’s primary goal is to “support family caregivers” (p.12) through the assistance by professionals, as well as through private care insurance contracts. This deliberate creation of an insufficient public care coverage in light of the rising needs of an ageing population has “significantly and profoundly gendered effects” (Barbieri et al., 2020, p.47). Wanting elders to be cared for at home, while also capping the social allowance at a very low level to incentivize people to return to work has clear consequences for women’s participation in the labor force: due to difficulties of combining paid work and care responsibilities, many will be forced to give up their employment or take on part-time work, creating monetary disadvantages in the short (income) and long (pensions) run (Barbieri et al., 2020).

Lastly, the coalition, like the RN, has also chosen to employ ‘racialized sexism’ in its party manifesto: Violence and discrimination against women are solely presented as an issue when referring to “Salafist” movements and radical Islamism (p.8), and women’s rights are only mentioned in the manifesto when condemning the wearing of a face veil in public spaces (p.13). The coalition furthermore wishes to sanction repeated violations of the ban of the niqab. While violence and discrimination, as well as attacks on women’s rights are universal problems which affect women from all societal levels (Montoya & Rolandsen Augustín, 2013), only addressing them in the context of migration and not as the structural problem they are, creates a dichotomy between ‘non-violent Europeans’ and ‘violent others’ and “undermines the seriousness of [...] normalized forms of violence” (Montoya & Rolandsen Augustín, 2013, p.554).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the election manifesto only dedicates a very limited space to issues of gender equality, family policies, or women’s rights even though the Republic value of the ‘family’ has been stressed extensively. The Union of the right and the center addresses offers several solutions to the financial and employment disadvantages faced by women. Many of these economic stances on women’s equality mirror the positions of the RN, however, due to the LR/UDI’s fixation on economic liberalization, the coalition’s policies appear to be mainly favoring women who are able to participate in the workforce, while simultaneously creating increased disadvantages for those who perform care tasks. The coalition did not refer to issues

of ‘genderism’ and did not address laws and policies which rectify women’s discrimination. It did take on racialized sexist positions by referring to violence and discrimination only in a setting of criticism towards Islam.

Overall, the manifesto is primarily focused on market liberalization and even its positions on women and gender reflect this. The coalition is non-modern sexist towards women who are active participants in the labor force, while simultaneously portraying modern sexist positions towards women who due to their specific gendered role have restricted access to the labor market. The absence of women’s issues outside of the Economic realm and Anti-Muslim rhetoric, leads to the conclusion that like the RN, the LR/UDI has a modern sexist party manifesto that simultaneously supports women in the workforce. However, in comparison the LR/UDI is less modern sexist than the RN. Outside of the shared “fiscal feminist” stance, the coalition does address the issues of single mothers, childcare facilities, and most importantly, the coalition refrains from attacking movements seeking gender equality and the bashing of laws rectifying discrimination.

The French Case Study - Analysis

The coding of the two French election manifestos, that of the RN and of the coalition RN/UDI, uncovered very similar patterns regarding the addressing of inequalities between the genders. Both parties had a strong thematic focus on the rectification of inequalities at work and in the sector of money, giving both parties an overall ‘progressive’ face. However, the analysis of the statements coded as indicative of modern sexism unraveled differences in the overall level of Modern Sexism.

Political Party	Level of Modern Sexism
Rassemblement National	<b>High levels of Modern Sexism</b> coupled with a ‘progressive’ libertarian view on issues of work and pay
Les Républicains / Union des Démocrates et Indépendants	<b>Moderate levels of Modern Sexism</b> combined with a strong libertarian angle, e.g., promotion of equality for working women, while upholding inequalities for women with restricted access to the labor force

Table 3: The French Case: Comparing the RN and the LR/UDI

While the levels of modern sexism were determined by a process of coding, the results are now to be embedded in the particular country context in order to contextualize and analyze them. Relevant for this process are the political system in which the parties operate, the existent levels

of gender equality in the country, the radical right party's position in the political sphere, as well as the current debates surrounding gender theory.

As previously established, the RN while having existed in the political sphere for a while, has only recently managed to gain real political traction under Marine Le Pen. Since her take-over of the party, the positioning on issues of gender and other programmatic points have become much more tolerant, and the RN's public image has been stripped of its radicalness. By using her own personal story as sole parent and working mother, Le Pen has introduced economically liberal stances intended to support mothers like her into the RN's program. The increases in popularity that the RN has experienced across societal groups has been ill-received by many in the established political sphere. The previously entrenched right-left balance of the political system has been altered drastically, leading for the previously favored parties to call for a boycott of Le Pen in the presidential elections in 2017. Due to the two-round majority-plurality electoral system, structural elements have kept Le Pen and the RN from accessing national political power. The party appears to be well aware of the need to keep a presentable image resembling a moderate political party in order to increase the chances of overcoming the structural hurdles of the political system and continuously attract voter support. The party program is therefore the only one among the analyzed which features statements coded as 'ambiguous' and has been held in a neutral and rhetorically unemotional style uncommon for RRP's. The manifesto strictly emphasizes the French values on which the proposed policies are claimed to rest but does not attach moral or emotional tones to any position outside of the introduction by Le Pen.

The non-modern sexist positions of the centrist coalition between the LR and the UDI on gender portray a large overlap with those of the RN. While the RRP's position is largely founded in a process of modernization of appearances and the wish to enhance the compatibility of motherhood and work, an issue on which France scores very low on the EIGE Gender Equality Index, the coalition's overarching focus on market liberalization also includes processes which foresee a more equal allocation of money, and a more egalitarian treatment in the workplace. However, the RN's pro-natalist position stands in contrast to its promotion of employment amongst mothers. The two manifestos are united in their efforts to close the gender pay gap, end professional discrimination in the workplace, and wish to introduce an array of monetary policies from which mothers will disproportionately benefit, such as universal family allocations. In the area of 'money' France had already achieved the high score of 87 points according to the EIGE Gender Equality Index, however the equitable distribution of financial resources which partially determines this score, had only been situated around 80.9 points,

warranting the high level of proposed political intervention. The suggested capped social allowance below minimum wage by the coalition has put much of its non-modern sexist stances in the domain into perspective: the LR/UDI's positions in line with the wish for market liberalization are designed to benefit those women who are able to rejoin the workforce but not those performing care tasks. In the domain of 'time', France has a score of 67.3 indicating that most care tasks continue to be performed by women. Both parties introduce non-modern sexist positions in the domain of 'time': the RN seeks to reestablish the free division of parental leave among the parents, and the coalition is committed to the building of childcare facilities. However, even though childcare is seen as a responsibility of the state, elderly care is to be performed in the private domain, according to the coalition. The RN furthermore introduces an ambiguous statement about the reform of school rhythms which could either lead to parents being able to join the workforce for a longer time each week or restrict the availability of parents even further due to their child returning from school earlier.

In conclusion, the parties overlap in large parts of their proposed gender policies. While both parties seek to introduce more effective processes of (re)integration of women into the labor force, more equitable treatment in the workplace and financial advantages for parents, their overall position on each indicator is relativized by other introduced measures or political stances.

As previously touched upon, the success of the RN in the French society over the last years, has been noticed and disapproved of. Researchers have noticed that parties of the center and right are likely to "adjust their ideologies in response to public opinion shifts" (Adams et al. 2009, p.612). The change in public opinion surrounding the radical right and its ideas is thus likely to have altered the political stances of the center-right. While this change in position can only be proven through longitudinal research, there are a few indicators which allude to the fact that the French center right has moved its political positioning to mirror that of the RN in an attempt to keep parts of their voter base from embracing the RRP. Firstly, the program for the presidential election of the LR candidate Fillon had included several sections filled with positions on gender and women's issues. It included stances towards equality, the fight against domestic violence, and the support of single parenthood, among many others. After the defeat in the first round of the presidential election, the coalition did not choose to include any of them in the renewed legislative program. It appears as if the coalition had been taking cues from the successful program of Le Pen when drafting the shared proposal. Additionally, the coalition's proposed stances in the manifesto for the legislative elections mirrors positions of the RN and addresses issues in the same policy areas but not much beyond that. And lastly, the coalition's



adoption of racialized sexism, a trope of the RN appears as if mirroring the RRP. A process of ideological shift in party positioning due to a perceived transformation in public opinion is presumed to be at hand, through which the conservative-right is likely to have made itself obsolete.

The one persistent difference between the radical and center right in this analysis lies within the RN's Anti-Genderist positions as well as the positions held regarding measures taken to correct for gender inequalities, both of which are absent from the coalition's proposal. The rejection of supporting LGBTQ+ rights and ambiguous statements surrounding the education of children are all in line with the previously discussed Anti-Gender movement active across France, as well as the existence of anti-genderism across RRP. Additionally, claims surrounding the imposition of equal treatment through the EU and other supranational institutions, as well as the believe that men have been disadvantaged by the current developments dedicated to the reduction of inequalities, set the RRP apart in the levels of modern sexism displayed.

In conclusion, the RN has mastered the art of ambiguity through which it has masked or obscured large parts of its more radical intent regarding the proposed policies on women's issues. Furthermore, the party has taken on a strong Anti-Genderist position, seeking to appeal to the strong movement against gender theory in the civil population. Due to the drastic changes in the make-up of the political sphere in France, the centrist-right forces seem to be increasingly accroaching the RN's positions on the issue of gender policies in order win back voters lost to the RN. In doing so, the center-right seems to be contributing to its own obsoletion and to the increase of Modern Sexism in its own party. Both developments, the increased professionalism of the RN, as well as the increased mirroring of the RN's gender positions in the center-right are likely to have contributed to the closing of the gender voting gap. Firstly, the masking of overtly and radically sexist language is hypothesized to have weakened the particularly strong allure of the RN on men holding (modern) sexist positions, while the simultaneous increased approximation to the radical right by the center-right parties might have led undecided voters to favor the "original" over the "copy". The lack of distinct profile on the issue of gender and women's issues for the center-right might thus be contributing to the erosion of the gender voting gap in France. As both parties hold similar views on gender, voters who value a clear positioning on this variable, both sexist men and those who wish to support a party of the right and base their choice (partially) on the level of gender equality in the program, no longer clearly favor either political side. The gender division in RRP support thereby diminishes.

## 6.2 Case 2 – Germany

The findings of the German case study revealed an array of findings: While the AfD portrayed high levels of modern sexism and embraced the concept of Anti-genderism in its manifesto, the CDU/CSU while portraying the lowest levels of modern sexism out of all four manifestos, portrayed a lack of initiative and emphasis in the area of gender equality. As the CDU/CSU often emerge as the largest party after national elections, and thus form the government, the particular lack of vision for a path into a more gender equal society, especially in light of Germany's position on the EIGE Gender Equality Index, can be considered worrying.

### Alternative für Deutschland

Prior to the election of the Bundestag on 24. September 2017, the AfD, like most German parties, agreed upon and published a large political manifesto, spanning 76 pages. While, in comparison to the previously analyzed French programs, this length might appear excessive, the AfD released one of the shortest programs out of all German parties as the median length among the established parties was just under 145 pages. The manifesto entitled “Programm für Deutschland” (program for Germany), is subdivided into 15 policy areas the RRP seeks to address. Unlike the French manifestos, the AfD did not include a preamble in its program and instead, leads with a table of contents after which the policy content follows suit.

It is most common for German party manifestos to address almost all fields of political activity. Especially parties who expect to be in the opposition rather than in the governing coalition, are likely to introduce an array of plans. The AfD manifesto thus addresses the “defense of the German democracy” (p.6-12), currency, monetary and financial policies (p.13-16) foreign and security policies (p.17-21), as well as national security (p.22-26) in which a primary focus is put on sovereignty of the German people, e.g., through the wish to establish more direct democratic measures, and the withdrawal from the Euro, as well as a reformation of the police and the military. Furthermore, the RRP maintains its focus on the opposition to immigration in the above-mentioned policy domains and includes a chapter on the reform of the asylum system (p.27-32) which seeks to introduce a rigid identification process for all people seeking refuge, a banning of family reunification, and the restriction of access to the German citizenship conditional only on birth lineage. The following Chapter, chapter 6, is entitled ‘Islam in conflict with the free democratic basic order’ (p.33-35) and further reiterates the AfD's Anti-Muslim stances by claiming Islam to be incompatible with German law, thus

justifying the AfD's wish to restrict the freedom of religious expression and practice of the Muslim community (p.34).

Furthermore, the AfD's manifesto includes a chapter dedicated to the creation of a "welcoming culture for children" in which the promotion and strengthening of marriage and family, the protection of unborn life, the rejection of gender theory, as well as a plan for 'population development' is specified (p.36-41). This chapter is followed by sections dedicated to the area of education and schools (p.42-45), culture and media (p. 46-48), as well as taxation, finance, economy, and work (p.49-54). The AfD's positioning in the field of social policy (p.55-58) includes the aspiration of reducing child poverty rates, the removal of all discrimination against families, positions regarding the pension system, and a strive towards 'fairness in unemployment allowances', among other stances. Furthermore, the AfD addresses potential shortcomings in the health sector (p.59-63), proposes a path to energy and climate policy receptive to technological tools (p. 64-67), suggests developments in the areas of transport, and housing (p. 68-70) and presents policies to ensure the protection of nature, animals, and agriculture (p.71-74).

Unlike the RN which has reached high levels of political professionalism, the AfD's rhetorical style and programmatic stances still reflect a radicalness and maladjustment to the political system common in RRP. Several highly unprofessional and radical statements, such as calling Africa "a poor house of the world" (p.28), and claiming there to be a "considerable proportion of foreign offenders, especially among violent and drug-related crimes" which far too infrequently leads to deportations (p.23), among other statements, in addition to many extremist political positions, such as the wish to end the practice of granting asylum altogether (p.28), and a proposal to cut the financial support to single parents if their singleness is "self-inflicted or on the basis of their own decision" (p.38), attest to the party's unrefined and extremist profile. The statements made leave no room for interpretation and are clearly discernable to stem from the political radical-right. Furthermore, the party appears to have no intentions of masking its racist stances on migration, and even reinforces its xenophobic position through policies in areas outside of migration: Through the creation or emphasizing of links between large-scale immigration and security, family policies, education, pensions, internal security, the health sector, and many others, migration has been turned into the scapegoat of all shortcomings of German politics. In contrast to the unabashed advertisement of radical and xenophobic beliefs in the AfD, the party's position towards women is not quite as apparent and holds several policy proposals designed to aid the equality of women. The systematic coding of all gendered stances of the AfD is therefore a relevant undertaking.

### Results of the Analysis

When analyzing the AfD's party program, 35 positions were coded as either indicative or non-indicative of Modern Sexism. An overview of the number of coded positions can be found in Table 3.

Overall, the AfD shows very high levels of modern sexism. Even though many policies are not-indicative of modern sexism as they address existing inequalities, particularly those related to childbirth, these positions are outnumbered by an array of stances which seek to uphold and even revive discriminatory practices against women and the queer community. The coding tool for modern sexism was built on the assumption of an existing subtlety surrounding sexism in political programs. A portion of the positions of the AfD however, were clear and unmistakably sexist. Overall, the manifesto of the AfD has been the most clear-cut modern sexist program out of all analyzed documents.

<i>Alternative für Deutschland</i>	“Position regarding women’s continued discrimination”	“Position regarding complaints about women's discrimination”	“Position regarding measures taken to correct inequalities and discrimination”
Not-indicative of Modern Sexism	12	0	0
Indicative of Modern Sexism	9	11	3

Table 4: Results of Coding the Party Manifesto of the *Alternative für Deutschland* in 2017

### Non-modern sexist Positions of the AfD

In the RRP's manifesto, 12 positions were coded as non-indicative of Modern Sexism. All 12 of them were coded in the area ‘women’s continued discrimination’.

Just like the party programs visited before, a large portion of the coded text surrounded issues of women’s discrimination in the field of work and money. However, while the underlying reason for the overrepresentation of economic issues in the manifestos of the RN and the LR/UDI revolved around the women’s equal treatment to their male colleagues, the AfD’s positioning is rooted in its pronatalist position:

Through the reduction of financial barriers currently connected to parenthood, and mainly motherhood in Germany, the AfD seeks to encourage working women to bear more children. The party thus proposes a longer period in which parents are able to receive unemployment benefits (p.40), a reduction of student loan debts (BaFöG = financial aid from the state, 50% of which are to be repaid later) for students who become parents during or shortly after their successful professional training or studies (p.40), and seeks to reduce the inequalities in pensions by establishing that the time spent educating children, due to its large contribution

to the system, should lead to an “adequate” increase in pensions for mothers who also worked in their life (p.56). A distinction in pension allocation is to be made between those who have never worked and those who, due to small incomes or time at home with children, were unable to gather sufficient working years to increase their pensions above the guaranteed minimum pension level (p.58). The raising of children (p.39), as well as the provision of care to family members that require it, are both foreseen to be “better supported” by the state (p.39). The party states that these care tasks are to be recognized like any other job and should be financially compensated by the state (p.39).

A large point of critique of the AfD further lies within the current taxation model in Germany. Currently, the system is based upon a “Ehegattensplitting” system in which the incomes of both spouses are added, divided by two and then, the income of each partner is taxed on the newly calculated level. This system is often said to promote the ‘housewife marriage’ as second earners with a lower income than their partners are financially discouraged from working altogether (Wersig, 2013). The AfD sees a viable alternative in the French taxation system, in which regardless of marital status the raising of children, and in particular, a large number of children, leads to advantages in taxation. This approach would “eliminate the tax disadvantages faced by children and parents in separated and divorced families” (p.56) and would mean that “children no longer pose a poverty risk” (p.40), according to the AfD. The introduction of the new tax system was mentioned several times but only the two above-mentioned statements were coded. In order not to over- or underestimate the levels of modern sexism, all mentions of the new tax system without references to the end of discriminatory tax practices against (unmarried) women and purely as a form of promoting birth rates and reduction of financial pressures on families as a whole, were not coded. As poverty related to children affects 43,8% of single parents in Germany (Lenze, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 20 November 2017), among which women are overrepresented, the advances in the tax system are nonetheless important in aiding the financial equality of women.

In the field of work, the AfD promotes the reduction of hurdles for women returning to work from phases in which they cared for others, mainly children (p.39), as well as the establishment of “Wiedereingliederungshilfen” (reintegrative assistance) for employers hiring parents after their parental leave (p.40).

In order to promote the health of women, especially expecting mothers, the AfD envisages the coverage of travel expenses and co-payments for medically necessary doctor’s appointments by the state for families with kids and expecting parents in financial need (p.39) and seeks to promote the occupation of free-lance midwives. Due to large increases in liability

insurance for midwives over the course of the last years, many, especially those are self-employed, were forced to give up their important work. By introducing among other measures, a cross-subsidization of liability insurance, the AfD wishes to promote the field of work that is important to the well-being of mothers (p.63).

The coded positions actively promote the financial and economic equality of working mothers. However, the proposed policies appear to be deeply embedded in a natalist agenda and are not targeted to benefit the equality of women overall.

#### Modern sexist Positions of the AfD

While many of the aforementioned policies aid the overcoming of existent inequalities against mainly mothers in the German system, the AfD also holds an array of positions considered to be indicative of Modern Sexism. These statements are distributed across all three established categories: the AfD thus holds modern sexist positions on women's continued discrimination, as well as on complaints about women's discrimination, and about measures taken to correct existing inequalities.

In the area of work, the AfD's pro-natalist position has been coded. The AfD claims that if the 'local' population is unable to reach a "balanced birth rate" the "social peace" will be endangered as the social-, pension-, and health sectors are built around a constantly growing population that will continuously pay for those aging out of the workforce (p.37). This process of "self-abolition", as the AfD calls it, cannot be countered through migration, as "we do not want to leave the land of our fathers and mothers to just anyone who will squander or plunder our inheritance, but to our progeny in which we have instilled our values" (p.37). The AfD's positioning on birth rates, while also portraying racist undertones, does not take the grave structural disadvantages motherhood still holds in Germany into account (see Kleven et al. 2019). The AfD's position has therefore been coded as modern sexist.

In its manifesto, the AfD has dedicated an entire subcategory to single parenthood. Herein, the AfD underlines the "alarming findings surrounding the impact of single parenthood on the development of children" (p.38) and argues that based on these findings, this model of living is "not ideal" (p.38). The party thus wishes to revoke financial aid to all organizations that "propagate the 'One Parent Family' to be a normal, progressive, or even desirable concept of life" (p.38). While the AfD acknowledges the increased risk of poverty related to single parenthood in Germany and claims to see decisions surrounding family compositions to be a private matter, the party nonetheless wants to differentiate between those who have found themselves in this position due to circumstances out of their own control and those who have

become single parents “due to self-infliction or for reasons brought on by their own decisions” (p.38). The monetary support granted to lone parents would only be granted to those who “did not crowd out the other parent from participating in the responsibilities and performance of bringing up the child” (p.38) under the AfD’s policy making. It remains unclarified what the ‘acceptable’ decisions that have led to a splitting of the parents constitute. This introduced measure falls under the category of Modern Sexism in the area of ‘money’ as it seeks to cut single parents from financial funding they rely on for highly subjective and difficult to prove reasons. Furthermore, in the long term this measure could potentially lead to people remaining in abusive or dangerous relationships for much longer as they fear poverty for themselves and their children if they do leave. As intimate partner violence disproportionality affects poor women and is closely interlinked with economic dependence on a spouse (Weaver et al., 2008), this measure is thus dangerous and unjustified, leading more women to financial difficulties.

Even though the AfD claims family compositions and family affairs to constitute a private matter, in addition to processes which effectively hinder low-income parents from leaving their spouse, the party also wishes to return divorce law to its status prior to reforms in 1977. Before 1977, divorce was only possible if one, or both partners accepted the “blame” for the divorce. Blame was assigned if “culpable behavior” could be found, which would then negatively affect the ‘blamed’ party’s right to custody as well as alimony and other economic safeguards. This system affected women disproportionately negatively due to their economic ties to their husband at the time. In the Bundestag debate of December 1975, Dr. Lepsius of the SPD stated the following on the matter: “This case illustrates the one-sided privileges enjoyed by men under the current law. Without having to suffer any loss of social assets, he can escape from a long marriage, of 30 or 40 years. Vice versa, older women have only one weapon under current law: the right to object. In order to be economically cared for in their old age, they have to endure humiliating and inhumane situations” (Deutscher Bundestag, 1975, p.14427). The AfD wants to return to a system which takes “criminal offenses” and “serious misconduct against marital solidarity” into account when determining financial entitlements after separation or divorce (p.38). The AfD thereby wants to return to a model in which the economic stability of many women is tied to their ‘correct’ behavior in marriage.

In addition to the above-mentioned economic stances of the AfD, the equality of women is further reduced by the AfD’s continued focus on private child (p.39) and elderly care (p.39). While the AfD states that parents should be given a choice between private and public childcare, they claim that “children under the age of 3 feel most comfortable when looked after by their own parents” (p.39) and that “parents who care for their toddlers themselves, experience the

development of their children first-hand, and are able to give them education from the heart, thereby maintaining the children's physical and mental health" (p.39). This focus on and clear preference for private child and elderly care, still mainly conducted by women, leads to the coding of these two passages as modern sexist.

In the sector of 'power', one AfD position was coded. The AfD has clearly stated to resist all gender quotas (p.12) as the party believes quotas to be in opposition with German basic law, human rights, and to constitute a manifestation of 'gender ideology' (p.40). The rejection of all quotas has been coded as modern sexist due to its refusal to acknowledge persistent inequalities among the genders in the area of power distribution.

Furthermore, in the sector of 'health', in line with the AfD's pro-natalist position, the AfD opposes abortions and highlights that "unborn children have a right to life" (p.39). While abortions are not currently legal in Germany, they can be obtained without legal ramifications if performed in a certain time span after impregnation and if having obtained a document attesting to having had 'pregnancy conflict counseling' beforehand. The AfD has suggested that this counseling process should be regularly checked for its effectiveness, and if necessary, corrected to ensure "effective protection of life" (p.39). Furthermore, the party "reject[s] all efforts to make the killing of the unborn a human right" (p.39). Restrictions on the essential health care that is abortions disproportionately impacts people with low incomes, young people, LGBTQ people, and people in rural areas. A lack of access to abortions threatens women's health, lives, and futures (National Women's Law Center, March 2021). The AfD's position has thus been coded as modern sexist.

As previously established, the AfD has made little effort in concealing its racist ideology. The portrayal of racialized sexism in the party program is therefore not unexpected. The party seeks to establish a general ban on the full facial veil in the public sphere (p.35) as the AfD claims the veil makes cohabitation in a society more difficult. Furthermore, the AfD seeks to ban the headscarf from positions in public service, such as teacher positions (p.35), as the headscarf "contradicts the equal treatment between men and women and the unrestricted development of the personality" (p.35) because the Muslim headscarf is a symbol of "the submission of women under men" (p.35). Furthermore, the AfD wishes to ban religious pre-wedding ceremonies as they are said to often "bypass the civil wedding and enable under force polygamy, child marriage, and marriage of relatives" (p.35). All three positions were coded as modern sexist as they directly or indirectly suggest that Muslim religious practices need to be banned from public life as they are a danger to women, and children. These statements are made



without any limitations to extremist Islam but are generalized towards the entirety of the Muslim faith.

In addition to the party's positioning towards the continued discrimination of women, the AfD has developed a strong position concerning the complaints about women's discrimination. 11 positions have been coded as indicative of modern sexism in this field.

The AfD opposes Anti-discrimination laws set by the EU, implemented to protect the LGBTQ+ community and women (p.12). Furthermore, the party calls for large scale interventions in the education of children: firstly, the AfD wishes to instill and strengthen the traditional values of the family in children by including "recognized rules on partnerships and families, housekeeping, life protection and the raising of children in the curricula and textbooks" (p.37) of all schools. Additionally, "homo- and transsexualities" (p.41) are to be banned from all teachings, as they constitute "impermissible interference in the natural development of children" (p.41) through the "early sexualization of children" (p.41). This conservative intervention in the education of children, as a countermeasure to supposed "sexualization" through liberal forces, as discussed, is a staple of the Anti-Genderism movement. Additionally, the party opposes all attempts of including any other forms of cohabitation beside the heteronormative connection between wife and husband, into the definition of the word "family" in Art. 6. Para. 1. Basic Law (p.40).

The AfD has also included the rejection of gender theory into its manifesto: by claiming that gender "ideology" marginalizes inherent differences between the genders and questions gender identities in order to abolish the traditional family and gender roles altogether the AfD claims gender theory to stand in opposition to German Basic law (p.40). Additionally, gender studies are believed to have no scientific standing (p.41) leading to proposals of banning the academic research on the topic altogether (p.41). The classroom and teachings (p.41), as well as the German language (p.47), and art and culture (p.48) are to be protected from the "gender ideology", and the "political correctness" it is said to super-impose on everyone.

Lastly, the AfD opposes several measures intended to correct for inequalities and discrimination: The Anti-discrimination laws set by the EU (p.12) are seen as massive infringements on the autonomy of the German legislation. Furthermore, the opposition to positive action, such as gender quotas, as they are believed to lead to "disadvantages on the basis of gender" (p.12) for men, and the belief that men and fathers are being overlooked in politics when it comes family law (p.38) have both been coded as modern sexist.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the AfD portrays very high levels of modern sexism. While some existent inequalities, especially related to reproduction have been addressed to a certain degree they are mostly related to the encouraging of women to have more children. A certain duality between wanting women to stay at home and raise children and care for the elderly, while simultaneously not rely on financial assistance exists. The strong emphasis on Anti-Genderism and the belief of unjustified complaints about the current state of women's equality is hyper visible. The overall tenor of the manifesto remains deeply emersed in radical anti-feminism.

## Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich Soziale Union

The Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU) and the Christlich Soziale Union (CSU) are “sister parties”, and together form the “Union”: While the CSU is only active inside of Bavaria and only stands for elections there, the CDU is active everywhere but Bavaria. On the national level the two parties form a shared “Fraktion”, thus act as if one party. Programmatic differences between the two parties are slim. The Union has been part of the German government for the majority of the Federal Republic of Germany's existence. Since 2005 the Union has been governing the country under Chancellor Angela Merkel. The party program put forward for the 2017 elections is indicative of a strong trust in the Union's re-election and is therefore not called a manifesto or a program but a “Regierungsprogramm” (government program). The title of which is “Für ein Deutschland in dem wir gut und gerne leben” (for a Germany in which we live well and happily). Like the AfD's manifesto, the document of the Union spans 76 pages.

These pages are structured as follows: After the title page, and the table of contents, before diving into the policies envisioned under the new program, four paragraphs are introduced in which the Union reviews the status of Germany at the time and the reality in which the German people lived, while highlighting the achievements of the government since 2005. The prosperity and affluence of the system and most of the people living in it are underlined. However, the party still acknowledges current shortcomings and emphasizes its willingness to address them (p.4-6). The visions the Union has for a “good future for tomorrow” (p.6-7), and the underlying values of the CDU and the CSU (p.7-8) are then presented. And lastly, the union declares its willingness to take on “responsibility for Germany” (p.8-9).

The envisioned policy positions that follow these introductory paragraphs are divided into 9 sub-categories, directed at issues of employment (p.9-23) , family and children (p.24-

27), the creation of equal living conditions (p.27-30) including both a rural-metropolitan divide and the persistent East-West divide to be addressed, issues of prosperity and quality of life (p.31-48), digitalization (p.48-54), Europeanization (p.55-58), internal and external security (p.59-66), climate policy (p.67-69), and issues of societal cohesion (p.69-74). The last paragraph of the document is a call to action, particularly to give both votes to the CDU and CSU for a reelection of not only the union, but of Angela Merkel (p.75).

### *Results of the Analysis*

The results of the analysis showed a majority of non-modern sexist stances by the Union, vis-a-vis only few modern sexist positions. An overview of the coding can be seen in Table 4.

Overall, the party’s manifesto portrays low levels of Modern Sexism, however, the lengthy manifesto rarely contains programmatic points that will address long-standing inequalities between the genders in the upcoming legislative period. A particular focus of the manifesto is on reviewing and highlighting prior achievements made under the CDU/CSU and Merkel. The contentment of citizens with the current political and societal reality is thus a major focal point in the party’s election program.

<i>Christlich Demokratische Union</i>	“Position regarding women’s continued discrimination”	“Position regarding complaints about women's discrimination”	“Position regarding measures taken to correct inequalities and discrimination”
Not-indicative of Modern Sexism	12	1	0
Indicative of Modern Sexism	3	1	0

*Table 5: Results of Coding the Party Manifesto of the Christlich Demokratische Union in 2017*

### *Non-modern sexist Positions of the CDU/CSU*

As discernible in Table 4, most coded positions for the CDU/CSU fall under the category of not modern sexist. All mentions of previous political achievements have not been coded.

Starting with the addressal of inequalities in the area of work, the union states its intent to enable more women to work (p.11) and thus proposes the introduction of a “right to temporary part-time employment” in all companies of a certain size in order to facilitate the return into fulltime employment for parents (p.26), as well as the creation of regular consultations for single parents that did not return to employment after the birth of a child in order to inform them on the possibilities of professional reintegration (p.26).

In the field of ‘money’ the union clearly supports equal pay for equal work (p.13) and wishes to increase the monthly child allowance per child, as well as raise the tax exemption for

dependent children (p.25) measures which will disproportionately positively affect economically disadvantaged single parents.

Proposed measures to invest in the construction, operation, and renovation of day-care centers and schools, especially in financially weak cities and municipalities (p.24), and the introduction of a legal claim to a flexible day care spot for elementary students (p.25) in order to ensure the freedom of choice for parents regarding the education and care for their children, have been coded in the area of inequalities of time. The latter is tied to the creation of care facilities “wherever parents want or need them” (p.25). Furthermore, the union wants to set incentives for more commitment on the matter for companies: Tax exemptions for subsidies granted to childcare costs by the employer will be extended until the end of primary school education (p.25). Additionally, the union foresees the expansion of hospice and palliative care wards (p.41), coded as a measure to relieve the inequalities in the sector of time.

In the subdivision of inequalities related to power, the union addresses the effectiveness of having introduced a quota in supervisory boards in the past and seeks to expand this practice to all management positions in the public service sector. This quota is foreseen to be achieved by 2025 (p.43, p.14). The union seeks to ensure adequate medical care in rural areas, including the availability of midwives in antenatal and post-natal care (p.28) which has been coded as not-indicative of modern sexism in the area of health.

Additionally, the entire program is held in gender-sensitive language, which has been coded as a position regarding complaints about women's discrimination that is not indicative of Modern Sexism.

#### [Modern Sexist Positions of the CDU/CSU](#)

In addition to the statements in support of gender equality, the union has also proposed policies indicative of modern sexism.

Primarily the Union’s position on abortion has been coded under the category of ‘health’ here in line with previous coding of the AfD’s manifesto. The document states that the CDU and the CSU are “committed to protecting human life and dignity, especially in borderline situations” (p.55). Even though there is no definition given for borderline situations, abortions as well as euthanasia are assumed to fall under this category due to the unions Christian and conservative position. In the category of ‘time’, the party’s position on the care for dementia patients has been coded. The party seeks to strengthen relatives performing care work (p.40) as opposed to private care and has therefore been coded due to the reliance on mainly women to perform care tasks. Furthermore, in the paper’s subcategory surrounding the internal cohesion of all Germans, the CDU/CSU has mentioned that the concept of equality of men and women

applies to all people that live in Germany, and it is thus important to support and promote migrant women, as the “success of integration depends largely on them” (p.71). This position has been coded as indicative of Modern Sexism due to the process of racializing sexism. Lastly, one position was coded in the area of Anti-Genderism. The party claims to “dictate no particular family model” (p.24) and to respect all forms of cohabitation. However, it supported the continuation of the registered civil partnership as opposed to the same-sex marriage (p.24) at the time. Due to the large advantages of the marriage over the civil union, such as the aforementioned “Ehegattensplitting”, or the right to adopt children, has led to this section being coded as indicative of modern sexism when it comes to the rights of the LGBTQ+ community.

### Conclusion

Overall, the union’s ‘governing program’ focuses heavily on reviewing the achievements for gender equality that have been made by themselves in the past. Therefore, many mentions of women’s issues refer to previously established policies by the Union intended to rectify them. The manifesto thus highlights the party’s prior performance extensively. However, plans to address the moderate levels of gender equality currently reached in Germany, are underdeveloped in comparison.

As the Union has led the government in the prior legislative period and constitutes a party that is very likely to gain a large following once more, the Union is not in the position of having to propose large-scale modifications of the status quo in order to promote its political profile. Unlike parties who have not been in a governing position that now have to advertise why voters should support an alternative approach to governing, the Union as a successfully governing party stands for the preservation of the status quo. Its lengthy manifesto thus contains very few forward-looking programmatic points, particularly on women’s issues, to be introduced in the future. The ones who were included in the manifesto, however, mostly constitute stances non-indicative of Modern Sexism. The four positions coded as modern sexist are largely embedded in the union’s Christian faith. Overall, the party has very low levels of Modern Sexism. However, the absence of a wish to address persistent gender inequalities in the country, especially in light of Germany’s low score on the EIGE Equality Index, is more than noteworthy.

### The German Case Study – Analysis

The coding of the German election manifestos of the AfD and the Union for the election of the Bundestag in 2017 uncovered large overarching differences in the addressing of gender-based inequalities, and the understanding of gender roles in society between the two parties. While

the French case depicted large similarities between the cases, the two analyzed German parties constitute the most modern-sexist and the least-modern sexist parties analyzed in the scope of this thesis. This finding is in line with the hypothesized connection between the attraction of male voters to more (modern) sexist party positions and might help account for the overrepresentation of men in RRP voter bases.

Political Party	Level of Modern Sexism
Alternative für Deutschland	<b>Particularly high levels of Modern Sexism</b> with a strong emphasis on pro-natalism
Christlich Demokratische Union/ Christlich Soziale Union	<b>Low levels of Modern Sexism</b> but a lack of forwarding-looking policies to overcome inequalities

*Table 6: The German Case: Comparing the AfD and the CDU/CSU*

In Germany, much of the political power emanates from the established political parties as they take on several decisive roles in the political process. Among other key duties, the parties play a role in the agenda-setting process. Before the elections of the Bundestag every 4 years, in which voters elect regional parties and politicians which then form larger coalitions on the national level, parties publish rather lengthy election manifestos specifying their political intent. The content of these manifestos while not commonly read by voters, are reproduced across media outlets that are consumed by the voter and thus partially contribute to the vote formation process. The positions of the party specified in writing are thus able to steer and shape the election campaign and the discourse surrounding it. Especially parties that expect to form part of the opposition might therefore introduce a large quantity of positions even outside of their established topics in order to get introduced the talking points to the agenda.

The AfD has only recently reached the German political sphere in 2013 and is the first RRP to establish itself firmly in the German political realm. It has made its way into all state parliaments since its founding which has baffled many across German society and academia, that believed there to be a certain ‘immunity’ against radical right forces due to the particular historical context in Germany. Across different elections, the electorate of the AfD has remained predominantly male, a characteristic trait among RRP. The conservative-centrist coalition of the CDU/CSU however, draws in voters from both the male and female electorate. The party has made no efforts in hiding its radicalness, and openly states their radical and racist positions in the party manifesto. However, when addressing the issues of women, the party program

While the AfD primarily addresses issues in the realm of ‘work’ and ‘money’ as it seeks to reduce the current economic challenges related to motherhood, while the CDU/CSU applies

a more holistic approach to the improvement of gender equality, addressing five out of EIGE's seven categories in which women's equality is measured. Both parties seek to improve the return into employment after childbirth, and wish to improve the financial situation of parents, although the AfD has introduced several proposals seeking to cut single parents off from allowances, and even from alimony payments if their singleness is found to have been "self-inflicted". As Germany scores below the EU average in the domain of work, addressing persistent inequalities in this domain is warranted. Even though the German score in the area of money lies above the EU Average by 4.3 points, the birth of a child is still related to large-scale monetary disadvantages for women in Germany (see Kleven et al. 2019). Due to these remaining financial difficulties related to motherhood, the pronatalist stance of both parties are also considered to be modern sexist. The CDU/CSU additionally addresses issues in the domain of 'time', another area in which Germany has scored below the EU average (65.0 DE/ 65.7 EU). This score indicates that German women still take on a considerably higher amount of care tasks as well as housework compared to their male counterparts. Whereas the CDU/CSU seeks to introduce an array of policies enabling parents to take advantage of public childcare provisions, and other care facilities, the AfD sees the domain of care to constitute a private matter and encourages parents to stay home with their children for 3 years and care for any relatives at home. In the area of 'power', wherein France scored a 79.8, Germany is only able to reach a 59.5. The introduced measures of Union seek to introduce a quota in the management positions of the public service by 2025 (p.14). Meaningful political participation, consisting of a high share of female ministers, female members of parliament and female members of regional assemblies as indicated by the EIGE will not be introduced through the Union's proposal. The AfD on the other hand, rejects all forms of quotas to be introduced. Both parties address current issues in the health sector, even Germany has reached one of the highest scores on the EIGE Index in the domain of health. Both parties stress the need to strengthen the profession of the midwife and the provision of health care related to maternity.

Overall, the AfD's position towards gender-specific inequalities is informed by its pronatalist agenda. By creating more 'mother-friendly' circumstances in the country, the AfD hopes to increase the birth rate among 'German' women. However, these monetary incentives introduced are often tied to the conditionality of a partnership or a marriage, and single parenthood and divorces are foreseen to be heavily restricted. Additionally, the issues of women who have not had children remain unaddressed. The CDU/CSU while introducing an array of proposals in domains in which they are necessary and needed, appears to have rather low ambitions of improving the overall levels of gender equality. While the party is introducing

several policies intended to aid women struggling to reconcile work and care tasks, the Union's positions in the areas of money, knowledge, power, health, and violence appear to be introducing very moderate changes and lack an overarching vision to improving equal rights. Especially considering the central position of parties in the German political sphere and the certainty of winning the party portrays in the manifesto, the underdevelopment of forward-looking policies, and the focus on reviewing achieved successes lacks a real determination to improve the status quo. When taking into consideration the low levels of achieved equality in the European comparison, with Germany ranking 12<sup>th</sup> in the EU on the Gender Equality Index, the absence of a meaningful and coherent equality agenda appears to be counterintuitive.

In addition to the address of persistent inequalities, both parties portray positions of racialized sexism. Furthermore, the AfD has come to fully embrace Anti-genderist positions. A staggering 13 positions refer to complaints about women's discrimination and the measures taken to rectify existent inequalities. They include the aversion to gender theory, the ban of diverse educational practices, the rejection of anti-discrimination laws, plans to prohibit funding for gender research in universities, and the opposition to gender-sensitive and 'politically correct' language, art, and culture. This insistence on an aversion to 'gender ideology' in large parts of the AfD's proposal, as well as in the election campaign and throughout speeches and postings has introduced the position into the political discourse. While the CDU/CSU had employed gender-sensitive language in the 2017 election manifesto, today, 4 years later, the Union has started to question whether a return to the standard masculine form should be pursued. As seen in the French case study, through the AfD's consistent and loud positioning changes in the public's perception and ultimately, the Centrist-conservative's position are increasingly visible.

In conclusion, the AfD has fully embraced its pro-natalist agenda, forming its political stances on women's issues around the aim to increase birth rates. Derogations from the aspired ideal of married but working mothers are not only unwanted but foreseen to result in financial disadvantages. Furthermore, the AfD is leaning into and reinforcing Anti-genderist ideas in the political discourse, slowly influencing the public opinion (see section 5.5). The CDU/CSU on the other hand, addresses an array of policy areas in which inequalities persist. While the Union portrays very small amounts of modern sexism itself, the pursued policy goals surrounding women's issues are few and unambitious. Considering the influential role of parties in the political arena, this lack of initiative in pursuing equality is indicative of a satisfaction with the status quo. The two parties' levels of modern sexism portrayed are thus both accompanied and



informed by more overarching disregard for women's issues outside of either party's main political program. Unlike the French case study, the centrist-right in Germany appears to only be marginally influenced by the RRP. Furthermore, the AfD has made no attempts at concealing its radical ideas to render itself more appealing to a larger voter base. All positions considered, the AfD holds very conservative and (modern) sexist position which might contribute to its overwhelmingly male voter support. Additionally, the substantial contrast of the AfD's and the Union's position on gender might lead undecided ideologically right-wing voters that hold moderate views on gender issues to be more inclined to support the Union as opposed to the AfD.

## 7. Cross-Case Analysis

The previous case studies gave detailed insights into the Radical and Center-Right parties' positioning on issues of gender and women's rights in France and Germany. Both cases are heavily influenced by their respective political and societal context, as well as the position and reputation of the radical right party inside of the political sphere.

The foundation of this thesis lies within the hypothesized linkage between the different levels of sexism portrayed by RRPs and the gender gap in RRP support in the nation. As findings have suggested that the vote of men who hold (modern) sexist positions is more likely to be given to parties that in turn hold high level of sexist attitudes, while the same effect could not be detected among women, this thesis hypothesized RRPs in countries with a small gender voting gap to be less modern sexist than RRPs in countries with a large gender voting gap (H1). The findings in the case studies supported this hypothesis as the French RN portrayed lower levels of modern sexism compared to the AfD in Germany.

The two parties both gathered traction in their country context around the years 2011-2013 and have both achieved a level of success unprecedented for a RRP in their respective county context over the course of the last decade. While the RN has been existent in the French political sphere for a much longer time than its German counterpart, the party had a highly negative image surrounded by a stigma of racism and Anti-Semitism. The process of dédabolistion introduced by Le Pen had thus been necessary in order to overcome the previous negative stain of the party. Due to its politically rather unsuccessful and highly controversial past the current success of the party is unlikely to stem from the more long-term establishment in the French political sphere, and the comparison to the AfD remains valid. The actions of Le Pen taken to modernize the party and its political profile included several policies intended to appeal to the female voter base, especially working mothers and single partners like her. This

progressive profile is still existent today. Other aspects in which the discrimination of women prevails have not been addressed in the 2017 election manifesto. The AfD under its pronatalist agenda has followed the same path: while addressing the issues of mothers in domains of money, work, and health, the party has overlooked any other aspects in which women's rights require political attention. When compared to their moderate counterparts, only the RRP address and propose Anti-Genderist positions, indicating a strong aversion among the radical right to the dissolution of strict gender roles and the establishment of structural equality between all genders, in matters of language, art, and throughout political and societal structures. Additionally, Anti-Genderist positions are introduced as a means of winning conservative and Catholic voters and as a way of introducing these conservative talking points into the political sphere as seen in Germany.

The RN has reached a level of political civility still missing from the AfD's presence. The neutral and factual rhetorical style employed in the manifesto as well as the framing of political stances in the domain of women's policies as 'feminist' and 'progressive' while simultaneously holding anti-genderist positions, has been finessed by the RN. As prior findings indicated there to be no influence of the employed discourse style on the extent of the gender voting gap (Immerzeel et al., 2015), the success of the RN could be rooted in its concealment of the real intentions and a lack of clarity surrounding many proposed policy changes. Especially the employing of racialized sexism, the framing of immigration as a threat to women and their equality has become a staple in France to be copied by others. By suggesting that the main topic of the radical right, immigration, is directly related to women's issues, the RRP has been able to adopt a feminist face to the outward world without having to introduce an overarching feminist agenda. In addition to its 'feminist' anti-migration stance shielding the RN from being framed as a sexist party, its female leadership, and the array of introduced policies which do support working mothers, have also been upheld. Regardless of the progressive picture the party is able to paint, the underlying levels of modern sexism remain above those of the center-right in France. The AfD on the other hand, while also shielding itself from critiques by supporting policies intended to benefit mothers in Germany, has been less successful in concealing that most of the suggested policies are rooted in its natalist position. Especially the introduction of 'punishments' for single parents and the dissolution of marriages, among other policies has

Because the AfD is aware of its current 'outsider' position, especially on the national level, the party leans into its radical image. By suggesting and introducing policies which appear extreme the party is able to marginally impact public opinion, the political discourse,

and in some cases, the positions of other parties who seek to win back voters that have started to support the RRP. The RN is no longer a political outsider. Its framing will therefore naturally differ from that of a ‘protest party’ like the AfD. When comparing the underlying levels of modern sexism, however, both parties in their respective country context have the highest degrees of modern sexism. Differences between the two RRP do exist with the AfD holding more sexist positions, confirming H1, however, the main difference appears to lie within the contrast of the position of the RRP to the Centrist-right party.

The elevated levels of modern sexism of the AfD far transcend those of the Union, confirming H2a, while the levels of modern sexism of the RN while still exceeding those of the LR/UDI portray large overlaps and indicate a process of approximation from the center to the radical right in the coalition. This in turn, confirms H2b. The larger the gender gap in a country is, the bigger the difference in levels of modern sexism between the RRP and the Center-right parties appears to be when evaluating the two case studies presented. While such a small sample size is unable to lead to overarching conclusions and generalizations, initial support for the hypotheses could be found. In order to confirm the validity of these findings, a more broad-scale analysis with a larger study population would be required. The programmatic proximity between the two parties inside of one country context appears to be contributing to the erosion of the gender voting gap, indicating that when several parties uphold similar positions on issues of gender, the draw of men towards the radical right lessens.

The two cases have given valuable initial insights into the interaction between the gender voting gap and party positioning on issues of gender. In order to confirm these primary findings, further research will be required. Both the correlation between the gender voting gap and the levels of modern sexism in the RRP, as well as the influence of the proximity and remoteness of the programmatic stances of the radical and center-right parties on the gender voting gap necessitate further inquiry.

## 8. Synopsis and Conclusion

### Synopsis

This thesis wishes to contribute to the growing literature surrounding the gender voting gap in radical right support. This phenomenon is existent across varying national and regional contexts as well as across time periods and has therefore attracted large amounts of academic attention. However previously employed explanans have all been unable to account for the entirety of the phenomenon. Partial explanations have been detected within gendered differences in

occupation, employment, and education, as well as economic differences between the genders. Particularly the radical right's position on issues of gender and women's rights has been underdeveloped when analyzing the political occurrence.

RRPs across Europe have been characterized by a particular nostalgia for an imagined, more ideal time passed. This includes a longing for the re-introduction or upholding of the conservative family model built on heteronormative and strictly divided gender roles. As the abstract and complementary feminine and masculine roles in society on which the ideology of RRP hinges, have increasingly been deconstructed by the societal advances made over the course of the last 70+ years, as well as gender researchers, and feminist activists, the radical right has centered much of its ideology around an over-stylization of masculinity from which it draws many male supporters, as well as around a fight against advances towards true gender equality. Very recently RRP among other more centrist parties, have been recognized to have adopted the 'fight against genderism' into their ideological profiles. By claiming that supranational feminist forces wish to enforce a gender-doctrine on everyone, especially young people and children, the radical right has mobilized against an array of 'progressive' reforms in the areas of LGBTQ+ rights, women's rights, as well as gender theory. Furthermore, legal and political actions intended to rectify existent inequalities have been claimed to introduce inequalities for men. These positions manifest in different ways across European RRP and take on different levels of gravity portrayed.

A small number of previous findings have suggested there to be a causal relation between the radical right's position on gender and the overrepresentation of men in the voter base of RRP. Even though the assumption that women are less likely to be sexist and are less likely to support a party holding sexist attitudes, might suggest itself, research has shown that men who hold sexist attitudes were more likely to translate these misogynistic feelings into a vote for parties of the political right. Among women, similar levels of sexism were noted as those noted among men, however, these did not affect the women's vote choice. Anti-feminist stances in male voters did not increase the probability of their vote supporting the radical right, but also center-right parties.

Based on these previous findings, this thesis has investigated the question whether the size of the gender voting gap in RRP support is related to the levels of sexism portrayed by the RRP, and if the difference between the levels of sexism of RRP and those of center-right parties in a country context influence the size of the gender voting gap.

As overt sexism has increasingly turned into a taboo in the political sphere and is unlikely to be portrayed overtly, the concept of modern sexism was employed. This theory had

been introduced in 1995 and remains very current today: it intends to measure the underlying and covert levels of sexism, rather than overt, traditional sexism. While traditional sexism believes men to be superior to women, especially in an intellectual and cognitive manner, modern sexism is more closely linked to the individual's belief surrounding the existent levels of structural equality, e.g., respondents who believe women to have reached optimal levels of equality will resist any attempts made to end with existent inequalities in society and will thus be more modern sexist than respondents acknowledging persistent injustices.

In order to investigate whether the levels of modern sexism in political parties correlated with the size of the national gender voting gap, the research design foresees a comparative case study design. Due to the small population size, namely Western democracies, and the large amount of possibly confounding variables, in addition to the need of large-scale contextualization, renders case study design most suitable for the analysis. Two national case studies spanning the analysis of one RRP and one centrist-right party each, will be created. Case selection was based on the size of the gender voting gap, therefore one nation in which the gender voting gap in RRP support has been closing and is sometimes observed to be reversed, namely France, and one in which the gap was still very apparent and persistent, namely Germany, have been selected. France, as one of the only nations currently lacking the characteristic gender divergence, hereby constitutes an anomaly to be studied. Germany had been additionally selected due its large gender voting gap, and a similar size and similar levels of female employment. For the analysis, the researcher decided to investigate the levels of modern sexism portrayed in official party documents, namely the election manifestos of the year 2017. The decision to rely on official documents, rather than other available outputs, such as interviews, social media posts, or public statements of the members of these parties has been made, in order avoid the over- or underestimation of the levels of modern sexism in the political party by measuring the levels of modern sexism in individual party members. Additionally, RRP's are known to 'speak in forked tongues', portraying a large difference between official and unofficial statements. For this thesis, only official documents were consulted. Each national case study included a large-scale investigation of the country context, and a systematic analysis of the levels of modern sexism in the manifestos of the largest RRP and the most prominent centrist-right party in each country context. Based on these findings, a cross-country analysis of the findings was employed.

As the concept of Modern Sexism had been designed primarily to investigate individual voters' levels of modern sexism, the concept was not suitable for the analysis of party programs prior to the adaptations made in this thesis. The designed coding tool now enables the evaluation

of levels Modern Sexism in party programs in three overarching categories: positions regarding women's continued discrimination, positions of the party in regard to any complaints about women's discrimination, and the party's position on measures taken to correct for inequalities and discrimination faced by women.

Before coding the manifestos, an overview over the development of gendered voting behaviors in each country was given, followed by a summary of the political and electoral system in which the parties operate, the levels of gender equality which have already been reached in Germany and France, as well as insights into both radical right parties are given. Additionally, information about significant debates surrounding issues of gender have been highlighted in both nations. This provided information has later been used to contextualize the findings of the text analysis.

Subsequently, the two case studies ensued. After laying out the findings of the analysis for each party, the findings were contextualized and analyzed. The analysis revealed that in the French case, both parties had adopted similar stances on issues of gender: while taking on a 'feminist' or progressive stance on the reduction of inequalities in the economic domain, the parties both held positions indicative of modern sexism in other areas. While the levels of Modern Sexism in the RN were noticeably higher than those in the conservative coalition, both parties only supported the egalitarian agenda when suitable in the larger ideological profile: While the coalition held libertarian views in the areas of work and money in the name of market liberalization, women who due to their gendered position as the primary care taker were unable to partake in the workforce would face increases in economic marginalization under the proposed policies. In the RN, the 'progressive' libertarian views were accompanied by racialized sexist statements and Anti-Genderist positions, and merely served a façade effect justifying the claims that the Muslim community is to be blamed for existent inequalities among the genders.

The German case study revealed a much stronger dissimilarity between the levels of modern sexism of the RRP and the center-right party. While the AfD proposed many non-modern sexist positions aiding in the reduction of monetary and economic inequalities particularly for mothers, its pro-natalist agenda and the high levels of Anti-Genderism portrayed led to a particularly high score on the Modern Sexism scale. The CDU/CSU on the other hand, largely supported proposals advancing gender equality, except for traditionally Christian issues, such as abortion, or same-sex marriage.

Overall, initial support of the hypotheses made could be detected in the analysis of the case studies. In France, a country with a small gender voting gap, the levels of sexism portrayed

by the RRP were lower than the levels of modern sexism in the German RRP, a country with a large gender voting gap. Furthermore, inside the French case study, the levels of modern sexism between the parties only portrayed slight differences, whereas the German parties' levels of modern sexism clearly diverged.

### Validity of Research Findings

While creating internal and external validity for case study designs might be more difficult compared to other research designs (Riege 2003), several measures have been taken in order to support the credibility of the claims made in this thesis: among other steps, all theories which have been consulted and thus contributed to the theory-building process of this thesis have been accounted for, the data used is publicly available for reanalysis by others, the study describes explicitly the methods and procedures employed, and the designed coding tool has been used consistently across cases. Furthermore, both case studies follow a structured to semi-structures protocol, and the findings have been clearly recorded and communicated in a similar manner in the thesis. Additionally, tables have been used in the data analysis phase to assist the explanation building, and the analysis has been supported by a large amount of contextualization stemming from an array of outside sources. Additionally, the contribution this thesis makes, and the boundaries of the research method have been highlighted (Riege 2003). These measures are recognized to contribute to the validity of case study designs.

### Discussion

The chosen research approach has focused purely on the official party documents, in particular party manifestos. This decision while valid, does exclude other important factors contributing to the image and outward face of a party: voters are likely to be influenced not only by the official programmatic standpoints, but also by the public appearance and social media presence of the members of each party. Additionally, the presentation of parties and candidates in media plays an important role. While the analysis of both the official and unofficial images and positioning is valid, the findings of this study can only reflect one side of the coin. Additional research into the levels of (modern) sexism in less official channels is thus needed to gather a more complete picture.

Additionally, the choice of employing Modern Sexism as an explanans while excluding measurements capturing Traditional Sexism, might have influenced, or skewed the findings presented in this document. Through the creation of a tool capturing both concepts, a clearer distinction could have been made between the two constructs, potentially adding depth to the analysis.

Future research in the domain, potentially adding on to these findings would ideally enhance the current research approach and add above-mentioned dimensions to the concept, as well as enhance its validity by including a variety of Western nations. It has to be noted that the coding tool is time-sensitive due to the inclusion of the relatively new Anti-Genderism dimension. Longitudinal analyses might therefore lead to obscured outcomes and is not recommended unless the researcher adapts the presented coding tool.

### Concluding Remarks

The research presented in this thesis contributes to the growing literature surrounding the gender voting gap in RRP support. The initial findings encourage additional research to consider sexism as a valuable explanans in this field. While research on the gender axis has only emerged rather recently in the field of political science and has overall faced much societal scrutiny through the Anti-Genderist movements, a “gender mainstreaming” approach in academic research, entailing the short address of possible confounding or contributing effects of the variable gender on the findings, could lead to both a sensitization towards the omnipresent gender-axis in humanitarian research as well as unexpected findings contributing to the deepening of the understanding surrounding the research topic and the findings at hand.



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# Annex 1

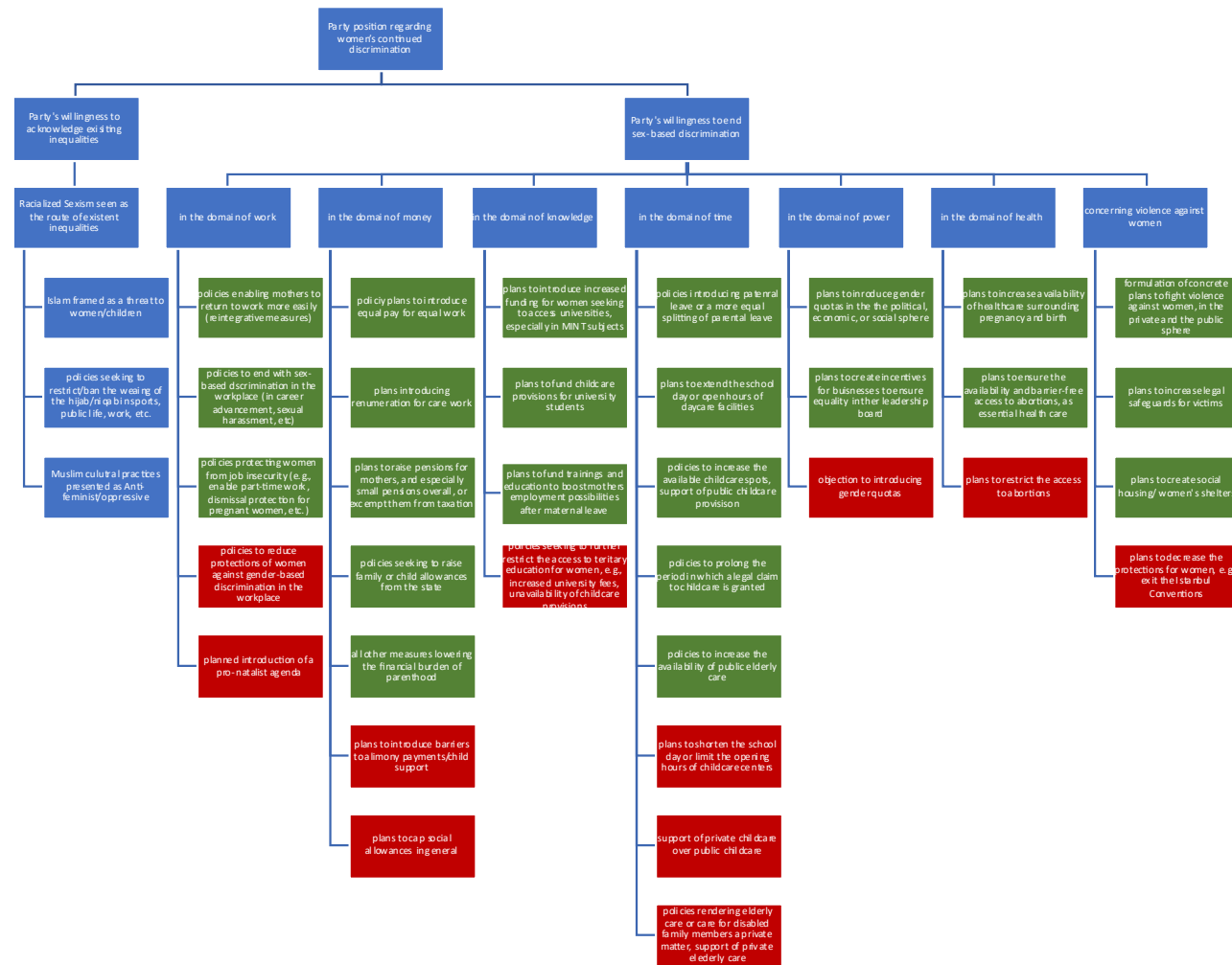


Figure 4: Partial Coding Tool, Extensive Overview, party positions concerning women's continued discrimination

## Annex 2

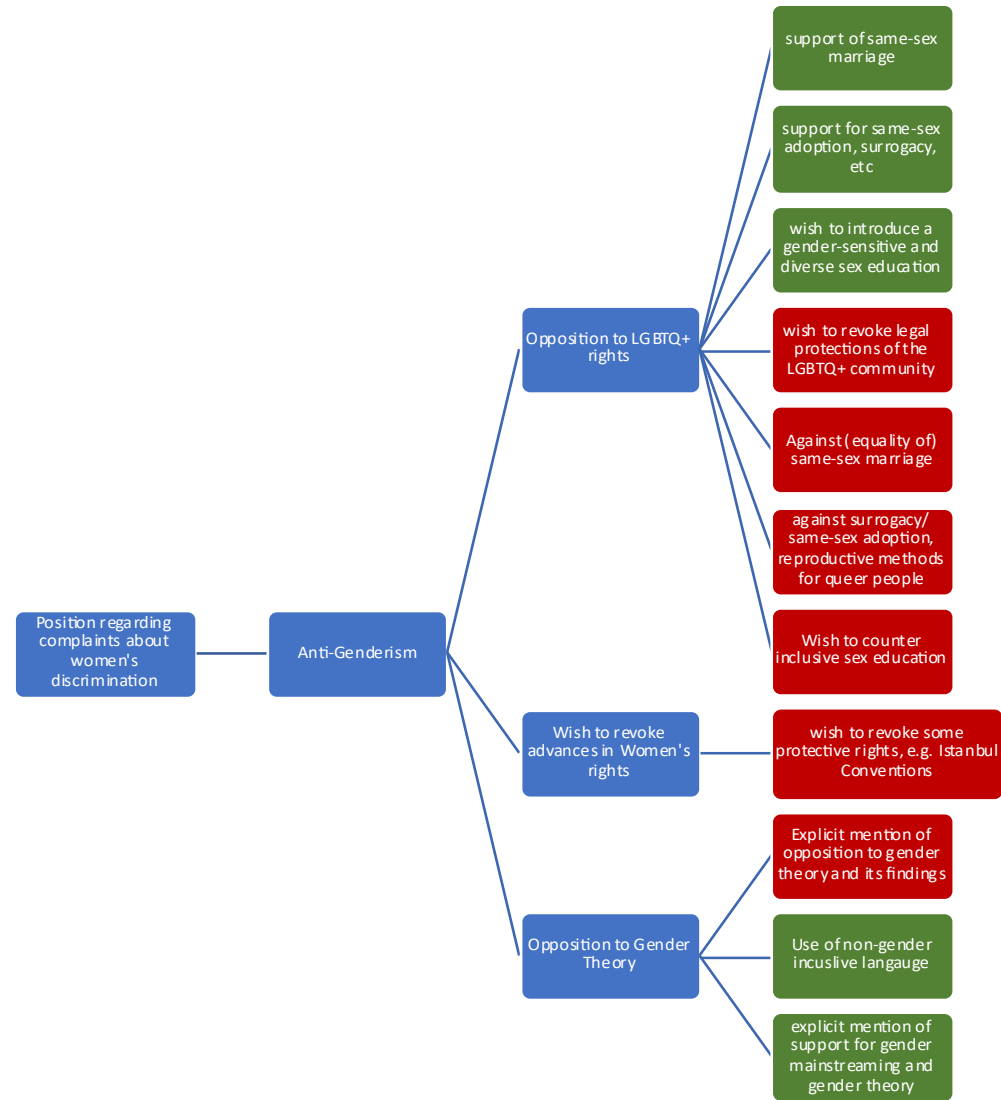


Figure 5: Partial Coding Tool 2, Holistic Overview, Positions regarding complaints about women's discrimination