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Excluding Diversity Through Intersectional Borderings

Politics, Policies and Daily Lives

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Introduction. Excluding Diversity Through Intersectional Borderings

Abstract This edited volume 'Excluding Diversity Through Intersectional Borderings: Politics, Policies and Daily Lives' critically examines the interplay between anti-migrant and anti-gender discourses and policies in Europe and North America, elucidating their convergence and divergence in targeting migrants and their families. The analysis foregrounds the normative constructions of family, gender, and sexuality that underpin these exclusionary political narratives and policies. Central to the analysis is Cassidy et al.'s (2018) concept of intersectional borderings, which articulates the reproduction of complex experiences at the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality. The book contributes to the burgeoning scholarship on the governance and exclusion of migrant families by scrutinising how bordering processes are constructed through exclusions based on race, gender, and sexuality. It demonstrates the perpetuation of these processes by radical-right and conservative political movements, as well as their institutionalisation in migration, welfare, and family policies. Furthermore, it investigates the dual nature of these exclusionary discourses and policies, considering both the resistance and reinforcement by the 'audiences' of such discourses and those affected by them in their daily lives. This chapter outlines the key concepts and themes of the volume, underscores its contribution to the analysis of exclusion processes, and provides an overview of the nine chapters of the book.

It is 2017. The International Organisation for the Family (IOF) is holding its 11th World Congress of Families (WCF) in Budapest. The Congress is opened by the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, who refers to 'besieged Europe' and brings up 'the continuing cultural conflict between immigrants and the continent's indigenous inhabitants'. Orbán announces Central Europe's and Hungary's opposition to addressing 'Europe's demographic problems through immigration' and pronounces that the 'family is at the centre of the Hungarian government's vision of the future…the restoration of natural reproduction is…the national cause. And it is also … the European cause' (Opening Speech at the 2nd Budapest World Congress of Families, 25 May 2017).

It is 2020. VOX, a Spanish radical right-wing party, achieved its largest electoral success to date the year before and entered the lower house of the Spanish Parliament, the Congress of Deputies. Now, a VOX representative articulates his party's defence of family against the left-wing parties:

> We have a State that invests more in death than in life and thus, of course, with a birth rate that is lower than replacement-level, along with the 2.5 million unborn children since 1985, which would have greatly alleviated this lack of generational replacement…. But you don't just want to abolish the family, ladies and gentlemen, you clearly want to abolish the family, by abolishing women. (Parliamentary Record of the Congress of Deputies, 18th February 2020, quoted in Fernández Suárez, in this volume)

It is 2017. The French presidential campaign is rolling. And the far-right party 'Rassemblement National' led by Marine Le Pen issues a policy aimed to 'fight against Islamism which reduces women's fundamental rights' (Rassemblement National, 2016). In a twist to legitimate their fight against immigration, and while predominantly voting against policies that favour gender equality, all of the sudden, Rassemblement National is using feminist slogans (see Van Oost et al., in this volume).

These three vignettes highlight the extent to which increasingly varied political groups are deliberately *excluding diversity*. Diversity of ethnic/racialised citizens in a given nation is excluded in an anti-migration expression. Simultaneously, the diversity of sexualities and rights supporting people's body integrity is excluded in an anti-gender/anti-feminist expression. Symbolic walls are built to establish and protect what is seen as 'us' from an imagined threatening 'them'. And while these are erected in the pursuit of specific political ambitions, they produce concrete exclusionary experiences for many people. These vignettes, related to cases presented in this book (Koch, this volume; Fernández Suárez, this volume; Van Oost et al., in this volume), are among many examples of processes that centre the traditional or 'natural' *family,* consisting of (white, Christian, heterosexual) mother and father with children, in mobilisations against immigration and gender/sexuality rights (primarily, reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights). Paradoxically, the third vignette also shows that feminist claims are selectively used to reinforce exclusionary claims targeting racialised migrant groups – such as the protection of women from sexual harassment allegedly perpetrated by immigrants.

This edited volume focuses on how anti-migrant and anti-gender discourses and policies diverge, converge, and sometimes merge to target and exclude migrants and their families in Europe and North America. In particular, we examine how specific normative constructions of family, gender, and sexuality underlie anti-migrant political and policy narratives, and how the political discourses and policies they generate are experienced, negotiated, and resisted by migrants and their family members. To this end, central to this book is Cassidy et al.'s (2018) approach of *intersectional borderings* that are (re)produced in the interaction/dialogue between different complex experiences (at the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality), which can be observed in political discourses and policies, and everyday social life.

Intersectional Borderings at Two Levels of Analysis

Bordering consists of the attempt to erase territorial ambiguities and ambivalent identities and thus form a unique and cohesive order, while (re)producing differences in space and identity (Van Houtum & Lagendijk, 2001). This process of (b)ordering/othering, of demarcating an 'us' versus a 'them', is crucial to understanding our everyday contemporary lives. It plays out not only at national borders but also within societies, at an everyday level, through exclusionary discourses and practices (Amilhat-Szary & Giraut, 2015; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2002). For Yuval-Davis et al. (2019, p. 5), 'bordering constitutes a principal organising mechanism in constructing, maintaining and controlling social and political order', and affects societies as a whole. Intersectional bordering invites us to consider social exclusion at the intersection of individual migration status, national origin or race, gender, and sexuality (or any other characteristic rendering them (un)desirable to a particular society or migration regime). These markers of differentiation are not approached as individual 'properties', but as cultural logics of exclusion that serve as the basis for evaluations of (non-)belonging.

In this volume, we focus our analysis on the exclusion of diversity through the activation of a variety of bordering processes. In particular, we highlight how normative (racialised) constructions of family, gender, and sexuality are used to draw boundaries against specific groups of migrants and sexual minorities. For this purpose, the chapters of this volume analyse bordering discourses, policies, and processes, and how these are experienced and resisted in everyday practices. We believe such an approach responds to Cassidy et al.'s (2018) call for intersectional perspectives on bordering processes, and for firmly connecting this framework to the politics and politicisation of intimacy (Pain & Staeheli, 2014). They stress:

> Borderings are […] conceptualised as practices that are situated and constituted in the specificity of political negotiations as well as the everyday life performance of them, being shifting and contested between individuals and groupings as well as in the constructions of individual subjectivities (2018, p. 139).

Mobile, portable, and more or less tangible boundaries are generated by political discourses, policy implementation (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2012), and exclusionary mobilisations that target minorities along racialised, gendered, and sexualised lines. These boundaries operate by 'intersectionally racialising and sex-gendering target populations according to emerging and historical stereotypes' (Mai et al., 2021:1608). In particular, the family represents a key site for the (re)production of the nation-state and has increasingly become the target of rising populist discourses and policies, often in conjunction with racist and anti-immigrant stances (Grzebalska & Pető, 2018; Waterbury, 2020).

This book contributes to the emerging literature on the governance – and exclusion – of migrant families and their intimacies through bordering processes (Turner, 2020; Wemyss et al., 2018; Bonizzoni, 2018). It does so by providing an analysis of bordering processes as they are constructed at the intersection of race, gender, and/or sexuality-based exclusions, and it shows how these are *(1)* (re)produced in the

political discourse and practices of the radical-right and conservative political movements *and* institutionalised in migration, welfare, and family policies (section 1 of this Volume, which adopts a from-above lens); and *(2)* (re)produced and/or resisted by both the 'audiences' of such exclusionary bordering discourses and policies, and those affected by them in their everyday lives (section 2 of this Volume, which adopts a from-below level of analysis).

In terms of political discourses, 'protecting the (traditional) family' is one of the most consistent political frameworks of the anti-gender movement in all its different campaigns and configurations (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017a; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). Such a stance on the family also fits easily into the discourse of the (national) demographic crises often articulated by the right-wing populists (Hellström et al., 2020). We see this, for example, in discourses on the so-called 'great replacement' which target migrants as a demographic threat to host societies (Ahmed & Pisoiu, 2021; Varga & Buzogány, 2022). Such framing then extends into the realm of political demands and campaigns. These can range from familialistic policies that seek popular support by extending special assistance to traditional heterosexual families with children (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022), to welfare chauvinist policies that prevent access to any such assistance to immigrants. These policies are supported in different contexts by both heteronationalistic and homonationalistic arguments[1] (Hellström et al., 2020; see also in this Volume: Blum, this volume; Safuta, this volume; Fernández Suárez, this volume and Díaz de León and Yrizar Barbosa, this volume).

Furthermore, unlike many other approaches to these issues, this volume does not limit its analysis to a top-down analysis of bordering. Bordering is a dynamic process that is reproduced or deconstructed in the interaction and at the intersection of both political and everyday practices. Indeed, as highlighted by Yuval-Davis, intersectional bordering is:

> by nature, a multilevel process that takes place, for example, at the level of high politics, manifested by physical [and intangible] borders [It] is the embedding of everyday border-crossing experience and issues of family, gender, sexuality. (2013, p. 10)

Working with a bottom-up lens, we also examine the individual experiences, negotiations, and resistances of those (and their families) who are targets of exclusion. Here we highlight everyday practices as a level at which resistance also takes place (Hanafi, 2015; Scott, 1990), through negotiating, pushing, or reframing the boundaries of intersectional borderings in one's everyday life and intimacy (Brainer, this volume; Vuckovic Juros, this volume; Busse & Montes, this volume). Equally, we show how the level of everyday practices is also the one at which resistance sometimes do not occur. This is not because 'audiences' are passive consumers of top-down messages, but rather because such messages can sometimes be

[1] Heteronationalism is defined as 'heteronormative nationalism that relies on the exclusion of homosexuals from the nation' (Slootmaeckers, 2019, p. 241) and homonationalism as the 'use of "acceptance" and "tolerance" for gay and lesbian subjects as the barometer by which the legitimacy of, and the capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated' (Puar, 2015, p. 320).

reproduced or adapted to meet the particular needs of people (see the work on cultural reception, e.g. Griswold, 1987, 1994; Schudson, 1989).

Bridging two levels of analysis highlights the importance of analysing responses to exclusionary discourses. While scholars have emphasised the value of countering exclusion with oppositional mobilisations and resistances (e.g. Hellström et al., 2020; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022), the focus of existing approaches has remained at the level of politics, civil society, and social movements. We emphasise that resistance, like bordering, takes place at different levels of everyday social life. Indeed, we do not limit the definition of resistance to public and organised forms of opposition, such as social movements or contentious politics (Tarrow, 1998). While such forms of organised resistance are extremely important and need to be disentangled analytically—and we do include one such case in this book (Busse & Montes, in this volume)—our focus is on the everyday experiences of and responses to bordering, whatever form they take.

This is all the more important because, as Murru and Polese (2020) point out, resistance is practised by all categories of people who challenge power relations along a wide spectrum of ideological beliefs—for example, a neo-Nazi group protesting against migration policies is also resisting a progressive worldview that they reject. Following recent scholarship that emphasises the importance and centrality of migrants' points of view and knowledge (Pezzani & Heller, 2013), autonomy (Mezzadra, 2010), and resistance (Stierl, 2018), it is analytically crucial not to think of migrants—and other marginalised minorities—as merely passive victims of a system that oppresses and excludes them. On the contrary, it is essential to explore—and thus bring to the surface—how migrants and their families actively respond to these power relations. Aligning with new developments in Resistance Studies calling for a more complex understanding of resistances, it is essential to illuminate individual experiences of resistance as situated within complex bordering practices (Lilja, 2022; Murru & Polese, 2020).

Within this framework, we include in this book contributions that build on the literature on anti-migrant mobilisations and the exclusion of migrants, highlighting how normative constructions of family, gender, and sexuality are used to draw boundaries against specific groups of migrants, and how these groups negotiate and resist such borderings. We also include contributions grounded in the literature on gender and sexuality-based exclusions and anti-gender mobilisations, which similarly highlight how racialised constructions are often used to draw boundaries against sexual minorities, and how these are experienced by migrants and their families in their everyday lives. Finally, we juxtapose the level of bordering through exclusionary discourses and policies with the level of everyday practices, experiences, and resistances of bordering. By doing so, we aim to disentangle how anti-gender and anti-migrant mobilisations merge at these levels.

Family in the Crosshairs: Excluding Diversity Within the Crisis of Liberal Democracy

Exclusions along migration, gender, and sexuality lines are deeply embedded in a global context of austerity and liberal capitalism. This context has proven fertile ground for populist mobilisations, drawing on convenient 'scapegoats' or 'enemy figures'—whether Muslim migrants or LGBTQ+ minorities—to create new societal polarisations (Kováts, 2017; Grzebalska & Pető, 2018; Dietze & Roth, 2020a). Once hailed as triumphant, the (liberal) democratic model is now cracking all over the world. These cracks are often produced by ordinary citizens who feel increasingly disenfranchised and made vulnerable by the global neo-liberal project, rather than empowered and prosperous. Their fears and insecurities are exploited by various populist actors who often use conventional means of protest within liberal democracies (such as petitions, referendums, or marches) to achieve non-democratic ends, from obstructing or rolling back gains in gender and sexual equality to threatening any attempt to achieve racial justice and secure migrants' rights.

This broader social context underscores both the rise of the populist right and the new empowerment of religious-conservative political actors. The former mobilises citizens by specifically targeting immigrants (Delanty, Wodak, & Jones, 2011; Lazaridis, 2016; Hawley, 2017), while the latter increasingly mobilise citizens to restrict or roll back various gender and sexuality rights (Grzebalska & Pető, 2018; Kováts, 2018; Roth et al., 2022; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). It is therefore not surprising that these two very different groups of populist actors often form pragmatic alliances (Kováts & Põim, 2015; Korolczuk, 2020), both nationally and transnationally, and share many general mobilisational and discursive strategies. Foremost among these is a specific construct of 'family', which can be imbued with different meanings for different political agendas: from 'protecting' white Christian family from Muslim immigrants, to 'protecting' children and their parents from sexual deviants and gender 'ideologues'.

Right-wing populist actors, whether those entering mainstream politics from the fringes, like VOX, or those leading their countries into illiberal transitions, like Orbán, attract public attention because they have exposed the failures of the liberal democratic model. However, new right-wing populist rhetorical strategies putting the protection of the 'traditional' family in the spotlight owe much to earlier wave of religious-conservative mobilisations against gender and sexuality rights that took place in Europe and elsewhere since the mid- and late-2000s (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017b; Corrêa, 2021). Religious-conservative actors learnt from the populist playbook and innovated mobilisational and discursive strategies. Notably, they have pitted 'the people' against 'corrupt elites' and presented themselves as democratic defenders of 'the people', i.e. the (Christian) majority (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017a; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). This populist and pseudo-democratic discursive shift proved crucial to the successes of their recent campaigns.

The largest such mobilisations were against same-sex marriage; others expanded public concerns to broader issues, including sex education, abortion, and gender in general – the so-called ‘gender ideology’ (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018). This resonated with the right-wing populists who frequently centre their ideologies around heteronormative patriarchal values (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). Many of these, such as the *League* (*Lega*) in Italy, were already vocal in targeting gender and sexual minorities. With religious-conservative movements popularising anti-gender claims, right-wing populists could more easily use these alongside a strong anti-migrant agenda as a strategy to enter mainstream politics and expand their appeal to voters (Dietze & Roth, 2020a; Hellström et al., 2020). Across these agendas, so-called ‘gender ideology’ has proven a powerful ‘symbolic glue’ (Kováts & Põim, 2015) connecting right-wing populist and religious-conservative actors. Specifically, the content made more widely salient by religious-conservative campaigns—concerns about gender, sexuality, and the family—became more easily attachable to the right-wing’s ‘thin’ ideology (Mudde, 2004). This creates fertile ground for ‘opportunistic synergies’ (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022).

Such more or less temporary alliances between these two groups of actors operate at both national and transnational levels (Kováts, 2018; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018). Indeed, although many empirical studies on both right-wing populism and anti-gender campaigns focus on national cases (e.g. De la Torre, 2019; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017c; Dietze & Roth, 2020b), several analyses also specifically acknowledge that the patterns described above are a product of transnational networks and alliances that transmit ideas and discursive strategies across and beyond national borders (e.g. Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017a). Furthermore, a growing number of studies explore the transnational dynamics linking and fusing mobilisations which target racialised groups of migrants, as well as sexual and gender minorities (Stoeckl, 2020; Cupać & Ebetürk, 2020; Trappolin, 2022; Kalm & Meeuwisse, 2023; Velasco, 2023), including Koch’s contribution to this volume.

Although this book’s studies were all undertaken before the COVID-19 pandemic, this sanitary crisis and the (ongoing as we write) war in Ukraine have made all these issues even more prominent. On the one hand, they have reduced the credibility and legitimacy of many of these semi/nondemocratic formations, whose political success was built on long years of fervently exclusionary political discourses and policies (Bieber, 2022). This is even more the case for those parties with strong past and present ties to Putin’s regime in Russia (Carlotti, 2023). The pandemic and the war also exacerbated and exposed discriminatory policies operating in Europe, such as the different media and political treatment of Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian asylum seekers, and the dramatic consequences that discrimination can have on minorities and vulnerable populations (Domingues, 2020). In other words, they made the limits and dangers of ‘populism(s)’ (more) visible to the general public.

On the other hand, both the COVID crisis and the economic consequences of the war in Ukraine also contributed to increasing precariousness and thus social frustration across several strata of society. Similarly, the extreme politicisation of the ways

in which governments have dealt and are dealing with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine has further exacerbated inequalities and arguably contributed to the polarisation of societies in the so-called 'liberal West' (Allam et al., 2022). As resentment, political discontent and unrest grow, there is a risk of an upsurge in even more aggressive political campaigns and mobilisations. There is, therefore, an urgent need to deconstruct the workings of exclusionary political mobilisations and analyse both how they unfold at national and inter/transnational levels (Pleyers, 2020) and how this impacts everyday practices, experiences of exclusions of diversity, and practices of resistances.

Chapter Overview

With our intersectional borderings approach, we highlight how new social polarisations are created across dimensions of gender, sexuality, race, and/or national origin in different regional contexts—i.e., Europe and North America. We adopt a multidisciplinary perspective, drawing on different conceptual and methodological approaches from sociology, political science, social psychology, and social policy. The chapters mobilise a variety of theoretical frameworks, systematically highlighting their contribution to intersectional borderings in their introduction and/or conclusions. Reflecting the comparative scope of the issue, both the from-above and from-below parts of the volume are nourished by various case studies. This allows us to make sense of the interconnections of discourses and policies and how they are dealt with in everyday social life within what are normally understood as the bastion of (Western) liberal democracies – i.e., Europe and North America. While the geographic scope of our empirical cases is limited, we attempt to present varied perspectives, including EU member states from Western Europe (Germany), Southern Europe (Spain), and Central Eastern Europe (Poland). In North America, as well as the USA, we include the borderlands between the USA and Mexico. Furthermore, several chapters in this book approach their topic from a comparative perspective and, in one case, provide a specifically transnational analysis. Keeping in mind the transnational dynamics of anti-migrant and anti-gender mobilisations, the aim of such an approach is not only to reveal similarities and differences between the strategies of exclusionary political forces operating in different national and regional contexts, but also to identify the common transatlantic (and global) underlying intersectional logics of what are often presented as national(ist) mobilisations.

By presenting and discussing cases from North America and Europe, the book is structured around two different lenses that we bring together to reflect on the parallels, intersections, and implications of these contemporary forms of intersectional borderings. In Part I, we use the from-above lens, focusing on borderings in discourses and policy narratives, and the actual policies that emerge at the intersections of anti-migrant and anti-gender mobilisations. In Part II, we shift to the from-below lens of people dealing with such discourses and policies, examining how they experience—and adapt or resist—such borderings in their everyday lives. While each

chapter stands on its own, the various contributions to this book also generate a comparative dialogue about the normative constructions of family, gender, and sexuality, and seek to contribute a multifaceted analysis of contemporary forms of intersectional borderings.

Part I: Intersectional Borderings Across Political Discourses, Policy Narratives, and Actual Policies

The volume begins with an analysis of key patterns in political discourses and policy narratives that serve to (re)produce multiple forms of intersectional borderings. Importantly, in addition to discussing a number of European cases, we also include a study from across the Atlantic Ocean, in the USA—and the country's southern border with Mexico. Alongside these national cases, we also analyse how anti-gender and anti-migrant mobilisations, which are strongly rooted in nativist and nationalist narratives, now also *de facto* operate and organise transnationally. The section combines contributions from political science and sociology.

The first chapter in this section, by Sonja Blum, provides a conceptual framework for identifying the multiple entanglements between anti-gender and anti-migrant exclusionary narratives advanced by populist right wing parties. In particular, the author focuses on the discursive (re)production of a highly contested policy area—the reform of family policy—in Germany. With the aim of broadening and deepening the conceptualisation of what is commonly known as 'welfare chauvinism', Blum complements existing studies on racialised migrant groups by also considering the intersection with exclusionary narratives targeting gender and sexual minorities. Through qualitative analysis, the chapter reveals how the modernisation of German family policy, its (populist) protesters, and the family policy agenda of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) have served to construct different typologies of undeserving 'others' to be excluded from access to social policies. Thus, the author argues for the centrality of analysing policy narratives in order to identify how intersectional borderings can be mobilised within a European liberal democratic system.

The book continues with the chapter by Belén Fernández Suárez, which focuses on Spain and the relatively new political formation VOX. The chapter examines this party of the European radical right and its core political discourses and positions by analysing official documents (e.g., electoral programmes of the party manifesto) and parliamentary debates on migration on the one hand, and gender-related issues and LGBTQ+ rights on the other. By unravelling the convergences, divergences, and overlaps between the party's positions on these distinct, but intertwined issues, the author outlines how attacks on gender equality are primarily supported by mobilising a strong narrative centred on the traditional family model. Migration, on the other hand, is opposed on the basis of a nationalist, exclusionary vision—i.e., rights only for the nationals. The author highlights how, somewhat contradictorily, VOX also mobilises a narrative of defence of gender equality to oppose the arrival

of racialised migrant groups—who are thus projected in public discourse as carriers of traditional gender roles. As such, Fernández Suárez effectively shows us how borderings operate at the intersection of gender, race, and sexuality, through the use of varied—and sometimes mutually contradictory—political narratives.

Shifting the focus from policy narratives to policy design and implementation, the next chapter by Anna Safuta focuses on a well-researched country for the growing body of studies on illiberal populism. The author focuses on Poland in an innovative way, examining welfare and immigration policies together. Both policy domains remain central to the (re)production of illiberal populist parties' authority and their electoral success in the country. Based on interviews with experts and an analysis of official policy documents, the author problematises taken-for-granted views which oppose so-called 'liberal democratic' and 'illiberal populist' parties when it comes to policies regulating the availability of and access to social services. In fact, somewhat surprisingly, there seems to be much continuity between the policies introduced by these two types of political parties, while what changes is the intensity of restrictions and exclusions. As Safuta shows, going beyond political discourses to examine actual policies helps to show how, in the Polish case, the illiberal populist forces governing the country do not produce significant policy changes in welfare and migration policies these areas. On the contrary, familialism and racism were already central to policies in these areas introduced by the parties that governed the country before what is commonly known as 'the illiberal turn'. Linking this analysis to the concept of intersectional borderings, the author introduces the concept of 'nationalist familialism' as opposed to 'market familialism' to complement typologies of welfare regimes and identify key continuities and ruptures between liberal and illiberal modes of (re)producing inclusion and exclusion.

With the fourth chapter, the book moves away from Europe and across the Atlantic, exploring the highly controversial 'Zero Tolerance Policy' of the Trump's administration. Here, Alejandra Díaz de Léon and Guillermo Yrizar Barbosa focus on the systematic separation of families implemented at the Mexican border in 2018. The authors first contextualise the Zero Tolerance Policy within the long history of attempts by successive US administrations to build deterrence at and across the border in Mexico and the rest of Central and South America. They then go on to analyse the timeline and implementation of the Zero Tolerance Policy. Coupled with this policy-centred analysis is an examination of the discourses mobilised by the administration to justify its decisions. The authors thus show how the authorities shifted narratives on a daily basis in response to mounting contestations from the media, civil society, and the rest of the political spectrum. By offering such a detailed and multi-layered analysis, and linking it to current work on intersectional borderings, the authors show how the implementation of the policy and the public discourses that the administration mobilised to support it served to (re)produce migrant families as racialised criminal 'others'.

This section concludes with a transnational perspective. Focusing on the International Organisation for the Family, Timo Koch examines the ways in which religious and conservative far-right organisations strategically mobilise heteronormative understandings of the so-called 'traditional family' to promote exclusionary

policies—including those targeting racialised migrant minorities. More specifically, the author unravels the workings of the Organisation for the Family in four different countries—Moldova, Russia, Germany, and Hungary—as well as transnationally, in order to identify its key modes of operation. By forming identities, sharing resources and adopting the same mobilisation strategies, this umbrella organisation is able to transcend national boundaries and engage in collective activism in different protest and electoral settings. The Organisation for the Family thus strengthens the transnational coalition building and, with it, the global (re)production of intersectional borderings.

Part 2: Experiencing, Practicing, and Resisting Everyday Intersectional Borderings

In line with our broader approach of exploring everyday experiences of and resistances to intersectional borderings, in Part II we use our from-below lens to bring in the often-neglected perspective of people who deal with exclusionary politics and discourses in their everyday lives, either as their targets or as their intended audiences, drawing especially on anthropology, sociology, and social psychology.

It begins with the chapter by Pascaline Van Oost, Olivier Klein, and Vincent Yzerbyt on the use of anti-sexism discourse to justify individual anti-migrant and anti-Muslim views. Unlike other chapters in this collection, this is not an empirical study but an analysis that draws on the results of various social psychological studies in Europe and the USA to examine how ordinary people—the audiences of politicians and political movements—can simultaneously hold tolerant views and express prejudice against religious, racial and gender minorities. This chapter therefore provides a transition from the discourses and narratives presented in Part I to a different lens in Part II, where we look at the lived experiences of these discourses and narratives—which explains why we placed it at the beginning of this second section of the volume. Specifically, after looking at political discourses that mobilise feminist narratives to justify anti-immigration claims, Van Oost et al. explore what happens at the individual level: how and why these conflicting ideas are adopted and reproduced by the audiences of such discourses, and how do people cope with adopting publicly condemned prejudices, discriminations, and racist views. Mobilising social psychological concepts such as ‘modern racism’ and the ‘malleability of ideologies’, they explore the possibility that people rely on egalitarian ideologies (such as anti-sexism) as a justification, or virtuous validation, for expressing prejudice (in this case, linked to anti-immigration attitudes). They do so by bringing into dialogue similar patterns of malleability of other ideologies, namely colour-blindness, freedom of speech, liberty, diversity, and secularism, which are used to create an ‘us’ in confrontation with a ‘them’. With this contribution, Van Oost et al. provide a new understanding of bordering processes from the perspective of social psychology.

In chapter seven, Amy Brainer's study of queer marriage migration to the USA illuminates a pervasive systemic influence of exclusionary policies on migrants' lives and families. Drawing on data from in-depth interviews, online forums and migrants' and couples' videos, short films, and memories, she describes how LGBTQ+ and same-sex couples develop their relationships and navigate the presentation of these relationships within gendered, racialized, and classed borderings of the US immigration policy. Importantly, immigration officials' assessments of what constitutes a 'bona fide' marriage can grant certain immigrants the right to enter the USA via their fiancé or spouse. Brainer poignantly highlights the financial, personal, and relational costs that such intersectional policy and normative borderings inflict upon queer migrant families. However, her simultaneous exploration of migrants' mixed feelings towards the USA as an attractive destination for migration and the pressure to conform to (homo)normative relational structures also sharpens the often neglected focus on everyday resistance to such borderings.

In the penultimate chapter of this volume, Tanja Vuckovic Juros remains in the area of queer migration and families, but interestingly looks at how 'the stayers' are affected by exclusionary discourses and policies. In her case, 'the stayers' are the Central Eastern European parents of LGB migrants. While LGB people moved to countries with more inclusive LGBT policies, their parents remained in contexts where national belonging is framed in heteronormative terms. For these parents, everyday bordering thus happens along the line, or the frame, of national belonging. Vuckovic Juros analyses how parents navigate a double positionality of caring for their LGB migrant children (and in some cases, grandchildren) living abroad, and the tensions and hostilities that come with living in a context of state-sponsored homophobia. In doing so, her study highlights the macro structures that discursively border against non-heterosexual national belonging, particularly nurtured in the context of anti-gender mobilisations.

Our volume concludes with the chapter by Erica Busse and Veronica Montes, which also shows the high cost of exclusionary policies and discourses for migrants and their families. It highlights resistance to such borderings and analyses how such resistance has developed into a social movement. Busse and Montes' chapter focuses on a specific form of anti-migration discourse and its consequences: anti-deportation. They start from the everyday experiences of a group of migrant mothers who have been deported from the USA and live in Tijuana near the US-Mexico border. Looking at three specific 'maternal acts of public disclosure' (Orozco Mendoza, 2019)—vigils at the border, turning weddings into political statements, and occupying space in the media—the authors observe how these women embody and make visible their intersectional identities as deportees and as mothers. Deportation is usually associated with crime and danger, while motherhood is highly valued and protected in society. The deported mothers have ambiguous and conflicting identities, but these identities are used to promote their struggle for recognition, rights, and dignity. They oppose anti-migrant policies and discourses by engaging in resistance at both the individual and collective movement levels. Busse and Montes analyse this form of resistance, following Sørensen's (2016) framework.

Excluding Diversity by Erasing Intersectional Experiences of Family and Intimacy

This volume stems from a conference which we organised to bring together scholars whose work centred on analyses of anti-migrant and anti-gender mobilisations, and how these are reproduced, resisted, and experienced in society. Our overarching scope was to explore the main convergences, divergences, contradictions and intersections between these two exclusionary tendencies, and to discuss possible strategies to counter them. If originally we did not consider combining contributions under the intersectional bordering analytical lens, we soon realised that the different chapters composing this collection in fact offer a unique entry to the concept developed by Cassidy et al. (2018). By engaging simultaneously with political discourses, policies, their implementation, and how they are performed and/or resisted, the contributions to this book in fact make visible how central the construction and mobilisation of the 'proper' and/or the 'deserving' family is for the (re)production of intersectional borderings. Intersectional borderings allow us to engage with inclusion and exclusion by exposing the ubiquity of borders. In/Tangible and mobile lines of separation structure macro national and international politics, and shape the intimate lives of individuals and their families.

As shown through the different cases analysed in this volume, 'family norms are crucial to the drawing of national, cultural, and racialised boundaries' (Welfens & Bonjour, 2021, p. 215). These constructed boundaries are, in turn, fed back into the policies, discourse, and values on 'family', often by drawing further on gender, sexual, and racial hierarchies (Turner, 2020). Therefore, to investigate the working of intersectional borderings from a family perspective exposes how 'othering' and exclusion (Bonjour & Kraler, 2015) are distributed in society along the axes of race, gender, and sexuality—but also class (Powell, 2020). Studying intersectional borderings through a variety of societies and different categories of migrants (including white, middle-upper class) allows us to deepen and expand our understanding of how intersectional borderings operate strategically, by deflecting attention from their own logics of differentiation.

As seen from the discussion of the different cases examined through the from-above lens in this volume, the exclusionary political discourses, policies, and mobilisations which centre around the family attempt to erase intersectionality and the operation of multiple forms of intersectional discriminations. This projects the image of a certain type of family as 'the family'. This specific 'type' can be adjusted as needed, as seen, for instance, from the use of both heteronationalistic and homonationalistic narratives for similar types of exclusions. But, as a rule, 'undesirables' (be that migrant and/or other types of 'undesirables', such as gender and sexual minorities) are left out of 'the family' or labelled as a threat to it—and consequently a threat to the reproduction of the nation (Gottfried, 2008). This hinders social empathy (Segal, 2018) and, with it, intra-group solidarity and the possibility of building shared strategies of resistance (Santos, 2020).

However, the cases examined through the from-below lens demonstrate that it is precisely in these lived, embodied intersectional experiences that multiple forms of resistance lie. Private, individual questionings of 'the family' in the face of the diversity and complexities of one's own families and experiences, and strategic mobilisations of one's intersectional experiences to challenge the exclusionary political discourse, policies, and practices, build on an *intersectional consciousness* (Greenwood, 2008; Doetsch-Kidder, 2012; Tormos, 2017) to negotiate and deconstruct intersectional borderings. Intersectional consciousness refers to 'people's awareness of privileges and disadvantages associated with multiple intersecting identities that shape their experiences' (Nair & Vollhardt, 2020, p. 995), and contrasts with singular consciousness, which involves 'giving primacy to the impact of the shared social identity, thereby overlooking differences stemming from other intersecting identities' (Nair & Vollhardt, 2019: 995; building on Greenwood, 2008).

The mechanism of intersectional borderings rests strongly on the erasure of intersectionality, the suppression of intersectional consciousness, and the promotion of singular consciousness. Both our from-above and from-below lenses therefore highlight that intersectional consciousness thus appears in itself as a form of resistance. Intersectional consciousness can therefore help to expose the exclusionary logics of populist anti-migrant and anti-gender discourses, policies and mobilisations. It can be used to dismantle the borders constructed against migrants and their families across race, gender, and sexuality. This deeper understanding that the erasure of intersectionality is not only one of the ways in which intersectional borderings work, but rather its core principle, is one of the main propositions of this volume, made clear precisely by juxtaposing the from-above and the from-below levels of analysis.

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Part I
Intersectional Borderings Across Political Discourses, Policy Narratives and Actual Policies

Chapter 1
(Un)rightful Entitlements: Exploring the Populist Narratives of Welfare Chauvinism and Welfare Nostalgia

Sonja Blum

1.1 Introduction

Over the past years, we have witnessed an electoral rise of populist right-wing parties in Europe, where they have entered parliaments in most countries and governments in another few. Examples include the *Alternative für Deutschland* in Germany, the *Rassemblement National* in France, the Danish People Party, the Freedom Party of Austria, or Italian *Lega*. Thus, populist-radical right (PRR) parties have become important players in European countries, and they may influence social policies either indirectly through their effect on other parties' positions (Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016), or directly through participation in (coalition) governments (Fenger, 2018).

Until recently, scholarly attention has 'nearly exclusively focussed on the impact of PRR parties on what is considered their 'core issue', that is migration policy' (Röth et al., 2018: 325). Meanwhile, social policies, as well as the relationship of populism and 'feminist politics has remained conspicuously understudied' (Kantola & Lombardo, 2019: 1). Increasingly, scholarly attention has turned both to the social policy agendas (Fenger, 2018; Röth et al., 2018; Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016), and to gender and sexuality agendas of PRR parties (Kantola & Lombardo, 2019; Akkerman, 2015). Yet there is still much unknown about PRR parties' stances towards different groups, for whom access to or exclusion from social rights is constructed in terms of deservingness or undeservingness (van Oorschot, 2000). The term 'welfare chauvinism' (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990), which has proven useful to understand social policy agendas of PRR parties, is focused on their (un)deservingness constructions along the lines of native vs.

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non-native populations (Eick & Leruth, 2024). Meanwhile, deservingness and undeservingness constructions along the lines of gender, or traditional vs. non-traditional families have remained underexplored. This is crucial as, indeed: 'Rather than the effectiveness of redistribution, it is the identity of the welfare state and the *rightful entitlements* to it that the far-right is more concerned with' (Jawad et al., 2021: 277; own highlighting).

This chapter aims to contribute to conceptual debates through two arguments. First, that a broadened understanding of 'welfare chauvinism' enables a fuller investigation of exclusionary tendencies, e.g. along the lines of immigration, gender, and sexual orientation. Second, that welfare chauvinism goes along with specific (un) deservingness constructions, which can be captured by studying (populist) policy narratives.

The point of departure—discussed in Sect. 1.2—is a typology of social policy reform narratives (Blum & Kuhlmann, 2019), which distinguishes different narratives by how they draw on stories of control and helplessness (Stone, 2012), as well as the deservingness or undeservingness associated with different 'target populations' (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Sect. 1.3 builds on previous research on characteristics and social policy agendas of PRR parties in liberal democracies, in order to theorize on 'populist narratives' on material inclusion/exclusion, i.e. who should be given, not given, or taken from in terms of social rights. It summarizes the specific storylines and narrative elements which are characteristic of 'populist narratives'. To demonstrate its usefulness for empirical research, Section 1.4 applies this concept to the contested modernization of German family policy, its (populist) protesters and the family policy agenda of the *Alternative für Deutschland*. Section 1.5 draws a conclusion.

1.2 Narratives of Inclusion and Exclusion

Mudde (2004: 543) presented a minimal definition, which conceives of populism as '*a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the* volonté générale *(general will) of the people'*. The ideological contours and corresponding narrative features take more shape when different *types* of populism are distinguished. The most-widely used distinction builds on the 'left' and 'right' spectrum (and identifies corresponding populisms), but this distinction has proven difficult to delineate analytically. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013, 158) proposed that the 'probably most important question discussed in the scholarly debate' around populism is the issue of inclusion versus exclusion. While in some way, 'populism is always inclusionary and exclusionary at the same time' (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2011: 23), in their distinction, an 'inclusionary populism' focuses on the inclusion of (parts of) the in-group, whereas an 'exclusionary populism' focuses on the exclusion of outgroups.

1.2.1 Inclusion and Exclusion: The Material Dimension

Inclusion and exclusion have several dimensions. To delineate them, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013: 148) draw on Filc (2010), who identified a material, a symbolic, and a political dimension. As this chapter's interest is in how inclusion and exclusion is narrated in the case of social policy and social rights, the *material* dimension of inclusion and exclusion comes to the fore.[1] Namely, material inclusion and exclusion refer 'to the distribution of state resources, both monetary and non-monetary, to specific groups in society' (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013: 158). This happens, for instance, through 'the decrease of occupational segregation, the access to benefits in kind, and the implementation of policies aiming to improve the excluded group's situation' (Filc, 2010: 13) as well as economic policies.

Thus, studying the material dimension of inclusion/exclusion of different groups corresponds to investigating which social rights are granted to them (or not). Material exclusion may preclude specific groups from welfare benefit access, while material inclusion may specifically target certain groups to receive support (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013). Access to social rights can be understood as 'inclusive' when everyone affected by a certain risk category (e.g. everyone who becomes unemployed, everyone who becomes a parent etc.) is granted a (cash or in-kind) benefit (Dobrotić & Blum, 2020). More selective social rights, on the other hand, foresee 'distinct programs for different class and status groups' (Anttonen et al., 2012: 5), and certain 'categories' are excluded from benefit access, e.g. based on citizenship status. The question of inclusion and exclusion in (populist) narratives thus entails stories of who should be granted or denied certain rights, and under which conditions. When it comes to material inclusion or exclusion—e.g., who is granted eligibility in certain benefit programs and who is (implicitly or explicitly) denied this access—it is essential to remember that in most welfare states those target groups are 'predominantly based on categories of people' (Marchal & Van Lancker, 2018)—such as 'the elderly', 'single-parent families', 'the disabled', 'the asylum seekers', or 'the traditional family'. Therefore, target groups and the corresponding 'categories of people' that are constructed play a vital role in social policy.

1.2.2 How to Understand Inclusion/Exclusion Through Narratives?

Narrative stories are crucial when it comes to legitimizing the granting or denial of social rights, and thus the material dimension of inclusion and exclusion. Narratives are—often highly-simplified—stories about how (good or bad) things

[1] There may be interrelations with the other two dimensions, though. For instance, the use of rhetoric and symbols to construct boundaries between groups (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013) is relevant within narratives on material inclusion/exclusion.

happen. This makes them particularly prone for the case of populism, given that this has been described to 'thrive […] on emotive simplification of reality' (Jawad et al., 2021: 279). Generally, narratives often take the form of *stories of decline*[2] (Stone, 2012), which describe how things have got worse and can only be improved if this-and-that is done, or prospectively, how things *will* get worse if not this-and-that is done. Moreover, the narrative approach to public policy proposes that problem and policy definitions entail a narrative structure, and a number of recognizable narrative elements. Those core narrative elements include the *setting* (e.g. institutional context), *characters* (often distinguished into: victims, villains, or heroes), a *plot* and a *moral*, the latter often promoting a certain policy solution (see McBeth et al., 2014).

For the realm of social policy, we have presented a typology of policy narratives (Blum & Kuhlmann, 2019; Kuhlmann & Blum, 2021). It proposes, first, that narratives will systematically vary depending on whether they address old- or new-social-risks policies,[3] and whether they aim at legitimizing a policy expansion or retrenchment. And that, second, this variation shows in how the different narratives draw on stories of control and helplessness, as well as the deservingness or undeservingness associated with different target populations. These considerations are based on Schneider and Ingram's (1993) distinction of four target populations:

- *Advantaged*: powerful and deserving (e.g. the elderly, middle class)
- *Contenders*: powerful but undeserving (e.g. the rich, lobbyists)
- *Dependants*: weak but deserving (e.g. mothers, children)
- *Deviants*: weak and undeserving (e.g. welfare cheats, drug addicts)

For the typology, those groups are expected to form identifiable characters (heroes, villains, or victims) of the different narrative story types. Thereby, Blum and Kuhlmann (2019) arrive at four ideal reform cases and associated narrative stories.

For expanding old-social-risks policies, particularly (I) stories of *giving-to-give* are expected, which draw on the deservingness of the advantaged as (potential) welfare recipients, e.g. granting pensioners an increase in pension levels in acknowledgement of 'what they have earned'. For expansions of new-social-risks policies, (II) stories of *giving-to-promote* are expected, which also draw on the deservingness of affected groups (typically: dependents), but with a view to empowerment (e.g. enabling mothers to work through childcare investments).

For retrenchment (and therewith also increased exclusionary directions), undeservingness constructions gain importance. For retrenchment of (III) old-social-risks policies, constructions of undeservingness and self-responsibility may be used in narrative stories of *taking-to-take*—typically more openly for (weak) deviant groups, and more hidden for (powerful) contender groups. Where

[2] Stone (2012) identifies also other plots, such as *stories of rising*, which—in pure form—could e.g. tell a story of how the economy has improved and thus people should benefit through tax reliefs.

[3] Old-social-risks policies protect against the classical industrial risks (illness, unemployment, etc.), whereas new-social-risks policies provide for post-industrial risks such as single parenthood or low qualifications (Bonoli, 2005).

undeservingness constructions are not possible, stories *of taking-to-control* are expected, which employ helplessness constructions to justify retrenchment, but also partly transfer the power to control the situation to (powerful) groups (e.g. 'we all have to tighten our belts'). Finally, for retrenchment of new-social-risks policies, similarly undeservingness constructions are expected for weak and 'undeserving' groups in (IV) stories of *taking-to-take* or, in the case of 'deserving' groups, rather stories of *taking-out-of-helplessness*.

It is essential to highlight that the group delineations are socially constructed, and will thus also show variations over time, between countries, and between policy actors. Taking this into account, *populist* narratives should show certain specificities. The following section will distil what seems specific about *populist* narratives.

1.3 *Populist* Narratives of Inclusion and Exclusion

As being populist, PRR parties tend to present '*society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite"*' (Mudde, 2004: 543), and themselves as the proponents of the general will of the people:

> The elite is considered to be arrogant, selfish, incompetent and often also corrupt. This critique could be directed towards a political elite (the established political order, the political 'caste'), an economic elite (large companies, bankers in general) or a cultural elite (academics, writers, intellectuals). (Rooduijn, 2015: 4)

Typically, also the mass media are seen as part of that cultural elite, and discredited with terms such as 'mainstream media' or 'fake news'.

Compared to the 'corrupt elite', it has been described as 'often rather unclear who these parties consider to be 'the people'' (Rooduijn, 2015: 4). This is, however, crucial when we aim to understand PRR parties' stances on material inclusion or exclusion. PRR parties are associated with an exclusionary populism, where the 'prime focus lies on the exclusion of the outgroups rather than on the inclusion of (parts of) the ingroup' (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013: 160).[4] The following section deals with the question which target groups should be excluded from social rights, according to PRR parties' agendas, and why.

[4] Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) identified primarily an exclusionary populism in Europe (as opposed to Latin America), given that Europe's developed welfare states guarantee comparatively egalitarian, and generous welfare to their citizens. This conclusion is to be qualified, at least, as welfare generosity differs between European countries, and as austerity programs in several European countries haven given rise to more left-wing, inclusionary populist parties (Blum & Kuhlmann, 2021).

1.3.1 Welfare Chauvinism Broadly Conceived: Which Social Rights for Target Groups?

While the social policy agendas of PRR parties have changed over time and they have shown a tendency to 'act like chameleons' (Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016: 300), welfare chauvinism has today vastly replaced earlier notions of a neo-liberal anti-welfare position. PRR parties are thus neither welfare-hostile nor welfare-friendly per se, but rather stand for welfare selectivity (Blum & Kuhlmann, 2021; Rathgeb, 2020).[5] Welfare chauvinism depicts a set of ideas which hold that welfare services and expenditure 'should be restricted to "our own"' (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990: 212). But who *are* 'our own' people ('us'), and who are the out-groups ('them')?

Welfare chauvinism overwhelmingly focuses on the characterization of PRR parties as *nativist*.[6] This foregrounds the idea of immigrants being less entitled to social rights than native populations, often combined with blaming the elite 'for cutting the welfare rights of deserving 'natives'' (Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016: 302). (Un)deservingness constructions of non-natives are crucial therein.

Yet welfare chauvinism may also follow a *broader* understanding, which comprises the exclusionary tendencies along gender, family and sexuality lines that have more recently come to the fore in studies on populism. When formerly weaker groups are granted new entitlements—who can be migrants, but also e.g. same-sex parents being granted benefit access, or women through introduction of women's quota—this can open the way for other groups' 'feeling of being pushed to the back of the queue by these groups' (Greve, 2019: 155), and blaming them for deterioration in their standard of living. In fact, this meaning is very much captured in the term chauvinism.

With regard to gender and sexuality, the defining lines of PRR parties may be less clear than with regard to welfare rights of immigrants. This seems particularly the case for sexual orientation, as attitudes towards homosexuality differ between PRR parties (Rooduijn, 2015; Fenger, 2018).[7] When it comes to gender, Akkerman (2015: 56) states that almost all PRR parties 'are conservative when they address issues related to the family, such as opportunities for women on the labor market, childcare, abortion or the status of marriage'. As Engeli (2019: 226) shows, 'gender and sexuality research has become contested, attacked and elevated to the status of the bête noire of the populist and radical right' (e.g., in Hungary). Behind this is also a narrative that, in the consequence, serves to delegitimize corresponding social

[5] The 'in-groups' of the PRR parties' 'pure people' relate to their (changing) core clientele: voters from 'the anti-state petite bourgeoisie' and, increasingly, the working class (Röth et al., 2018).

[6] Nativism is defined as 'an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ("the nation") and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state' (Mudde, 2007: 19).

[7] Besides, some PRR party leaders have been homosexual (Weidel/AfD), sometimes allegedly (Haider/FPÖ).

rights. Namely, gender research is then blamed for societal and social changes (Engeli, 2019; Grzebalska et al., 2017); the narrative running how an elitist gender and sexuality research actively seeks to establish 'alternative' family forms as the 'new normal' and undermine 'the traditional family'.

Fenger (2018: 191) refers to 'welfare nostalgia' as 'policy positions that are aimed at securing or reinforcing the social position of the modernization losers based on traditional economic and family patterns' and which aim at restoring 'traditional' social rights. For instance, Fenger (2018) describes how the French Front National proposed to restore the free distribution of parental leave between both parents, thereby refraining from leave policies that would encourage a more gender-equal share of family responsibilities. More generally, the 'freedom of choice' discourse, which used to be typical of many conservative parties until the early 2000s, is now occupied by PRR parties. Kantola and Lombardo (2019: 9) describe this for the True Finns party, which stresses in its program the importance of 'equally to respect those parents who stay home to care for their children'.

Finally, it is important that exclusionary tendencies along migration, gender, and sexuality categories are not just studied additively, but in their *interrelations*.[8] In the PRR, these interrelations e.g. show in the 'Great Replacement' conspiracy, according to which parts of the 'corrupt elite' would strategically replace the native population (with its changing family forms and decreasing fertility rates) with non-European, in particular Muslim population. Another example is a typical 'reversal' of PRR programmatic, namely when gender-equality discourse is used instrumentally against immigration, by decrying how 'young Muslim men' bring to 'us' anachronistic ideas about family and gender roles. Those examples indicate recurring narrative strategies, whose populist features shall be summarized in the next section more systematically.

1.3.2 Populism and the Narrative Elements

What do the characteristics of PRR parties and their policy positions imply for their narrative stories in social policy, i.e. the material inclusion or exclusion from social rights based on different 'categories'?

According to Afonso (2015: 275), the PRR parties' electorate 'tends to be constituted by social groups who are typically protected by classical social insurance schemes in Bismarckian welfare systems, and who may be afraid to extend these rights to outsider groups, such as immigrants and women'. In terms of Schneider and Ingram's (1993) target groups, they belong partly to the group of advantaged (e.g. classical 'workers'), and partly to the group of dependents (e.g. long-term

[8] See e.g. Sainsbury (2018), who explored gender differentiations in immigrants' as well as native populations' entitlements to parental leave and childcare services.

unemployed, low qualified).[9] Rathgeb (2020) introduced the notion of 'makers' and 'takers', showing for the Austrian FPÖ how it supports benefits for those portrayed as 'makers' (e.g. traditional male workforce), while opposing them for 'takers' (e.g. immigrants). In terms of gender and sexual orientations, the deserving figure per se is the (traditional) family (Engeli, 2019), and also here outsider groups—to which social rights could be or have been extended—often underly undeservingness constructions (e.g., same-sex parents, single parents, patchwork families).

As outlined above, narrative stories are marked by certain structural elements, particularly setting, characters, plot, and moral (McBeth et al., 2014; Stone, 2012).

From the literature on PRR parties, the *characters* of their narrative stories get particularly clear. Typical *victims* are 'the pure people', who are betrayed by the system and whose will is being ignored. Who is included or excluded from those 'pure people' can be understood in terms of the four types of target populations (Schneider & Ingram, 1993): Included is the (dependent or advantaged) native population when affected by a certain social risk (e.g. 'the elderly'), and 'the traditional family'. Groups constructed as 'deviants' are excluded, such as non-native immigrants, deviant family forms (e.g. same-sex families)—partly also ('lazy') unemployed (see Ennser-Jedenastik, 2016). *Villains* are the 'corrupt elite', either political, economic, or cultural (e.g. science, media) establishment (Rooduijn, 2015). Also the excluded categories of people may be villains in individual stories (see Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016[10]). The typical *heroes* of populist narratives are the PRR parties themselves (often also: with a charismatic leader), presented as defenders of the 'real' will of the people, and as putting an end to dirty, self-serving politics (see Reinfeldt, 2000). Also other representatives of 'the people' may be depicted as heroes.[11]

The *setting* and *plot* build on these characters to—most-typically—tell a *story of decline*, according to which things have got worse than they used to be in the 'golden past':

> This core narrative built on recent significant structural changes around globalisation, migration and disappointments of the post-industrial era. As such, the narrative aspires a return to the 'golden past' of the 1960s and 1970s, and conjures up an image of a nation whose difficulties can be explained by weakening of its core cultural identity through […] globalisation and multiculturalism. (Ketola & Nordensvard, 2018: 6)

[9] Fenger (2018) identified three groups that were explicitly highlighted as 'deserving' by PRR parties in six countries, namely veterans, elderly, and 'ordinary citizens'.

[10] 'Populist parties embrace a pro-welfare stance in an attempt to pit the people (victims of retrenchment) against the elite (those who attack the established welfare rights of the people), occasionally also blaming others (immigrants) for the welfare state's trouble.' (Schumacher & van Kersbergen, 2016: 309).

[11] Also a change in character could be at play in the narratives, e.g. stories of decline, which portray how the 'pure people' were turned from hero into victim by the 'corrupt elite'. Or, contrariwise, the 'pure people' being turned from victim to hero through the PRR's resolute action (story of rising).

This also includes the 'traditional family' and male-breadwinner system as elements of that golden past. Some stories may include much more specific settings than this general context, such as typical places of the 'pure people' (e.g. the village, the pub), or the 'corrupt elite' (e.g. cities that host the government, or the financial industry). When it comes to the *moral* of the story, policy positions depend on the respective issue and vary, but can generally be characterized as welfare-chauvinist and/or welfare-nostalgic in social policy terms. There may be standalone welfare-nostalgic stories, or those that are combined with welfare-chauvinist counterparts.

To now characterize a 'populist narrative' more specifically in terms of the social policy reform narratives distinguished by Blum and Kuhlmann (2019), I should summarize PRR parties' stance towards old- and new-social-risks policies, and towards different target populations. As described, both if PRR parties follow a welfare-chauvinist and/or a welfare-nostalgic agenda, they are not expected to support new-social-risks policies, as those indeed mean *support* for the transformation of labor and family forms. Rather, they should support old-social-risks policies, which imply 'a return to the golden age of the welfare state' (Fenger, 2018: 192), and possibly reverse previous 'modernization' reforms. As regards material inclusion/exclusion, narratives can be expected which advocate to 'safeguard the position of deserving groups and/or undermine the rights of non-deserving groups' (ibid.).

Table 1.1 summarizes the expectations for populist narratives of social policy reform. In line with the considerations above, it assumes that expansionary efforts

Table 1.1 Right-wing populist narratives of social policy reform

Context	Reforms	
	Expansionary	*Retrenching*
Old-social-risks policies	(I) Welfare-nostalgic and/or welfare-chauvinist stories of giving-to-give Deservingness and acknowledgement (Advantaged; Dependants)	(III) Welfare-chauvinist stories of taking-to-take or taking-to-control • Undeservingness and Self-Responsibility (Deviants; Contenders) • Helplessness and control (Advantaged)
New-social-risks policies	(II) Stories of giving-to-promote • Deservingness and empowerment (Dependents)	(IV) Welfare-chauvinist stories of taking-to-take or taking-out-of-helplessness • Undeservingness (Deviants; Contenders) • Helplessness (Dependents)

Note: ↔ linkage
Source: Adapted table from Blum & Kuhlmann, 2019

lie mostly in the field of old-social-risks policies, and corresponding stories of *giving-to-give* typically take a welfare-nostalgic tone, sometimes also a purely welfare-chauvinist tone. Contrariwise, narratives to legitimize material exclusion of individual groups and retrenchment of their social rights typically tell welfare-chauvinist stories of *taking-to-take*. The stories of helplessness and control are greyed in Table 1.1, because they are expected to be rarer for PRR parties: As Röth et al. (2018) showed, PRR parties are no proponents of retrenchment *as such* in redistribution issues, but rather of welfare-chauvinist retrenchment for certain groups. Moreover, populist narratives often *link* between two target groups, and thereby different types or aspects of policy. Namely, welfare-nostalgic stories of *giving-to-give* may be *linked* with welfare-chauvinist-stories of *taking-to-take*. Welfare chauvinism and welfare nostalgia are therefore not competing, but rather often complementary. This is related to the general plot of the stories, where the rights of 'deserving' protégés of old-social risk policies—insider groups and their counterpart of the welfare state 'golden age', namely the 'traditional family'—are endangered. Correspondingly, from whom shall be taken are the 'threatening' outsiders—non-native immigrants or non-traditional families. This reflects the inextricable linkages of inclusionary and exclusionary tendencies in populism (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2011).

To sum up the results of applying the typology to PRR narratives, the (un)deservingness dimension is crucial (corresponding to the predominance of welfare chauvinism). Those narratives are concentrated on certain groups and categories, while others are muted (in particular, it can be expected that expansion of new-social-risks policies is absent in those populist narratives). Having developed this characterization, the next section sets out to demonstrate the usefulness of the concept of populist policy narratives for empirical research through a case illustration.

1.4 Case Illustration: German Family Policy Reform and Populist Narratives

As regards policy preferences of PRR parties, family policy exemplifies not only their welfare-chauvinist, but also *welfare-nostalgic* positions. The German case is particularly interesting in this regard: Was its family policy long associated with support for the 'traditional family' and gendered work share, it has become a prime example of significant reform—which, in turn, has not remained uncontested, but gave rise to protest, e.g. through the so-called 'family network' (see below). Later, also the social and family policy agenda of the PRR *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) has been associated with antecedent family policy reforms. The case can therefore be used to see how populist opposition to welfare policy works (cf. Eick & Leruth, 2024). It is well-suited to demonstrate the analytical usefulness of populist narratives. In particular, I will focus on how linkages between welfare-nostalgic stories of inclusion, and welfare-chauvinist stories of exclusion are constructed. The case illustration presented in this section is based on a semi-structured expert

interview conducted in 2009,[12] on media articles, and the AfD's, 2016 party manifesto. A qualitative content analysis of the material was conducted, with the coding scheme build deductively on the conceptual foundations laid in Sect. 1.2 (populist narratives with their distinct elements).

1.4.1 Contested 'Modernization' of German Family Policy

Far-reaching changes have been implemented in German family policy since the mid-2000s. Those reforms were implemented by a grand coalition of conservative CDU/CSU and social-democratic SPD (2005–2009) under Chancellor Merkel and family minister von der Leyen (both CDU). In particular, an income-dependent parental-leave benefit (*Elterngeld*) was introduced, and public childcare was expanded—including a new right to a childcare place from age one. Coming from a conservative, familialist tradition (Leitner, 2003), those changes were significant, as family policy was redirected towards supporting women with high income and/or wish for quick return to work after giving birth to a child, and a more gender-equal division of work, incentivizing fathers to take leave.

Those changes concerned some core measures (next to parental leave and childcare e.g. also alimony law), while other measures—most notably the married-couples tax splitting—showed continuity (Blum, 2012). But while the latter exhibited continuity in terms of gender categories, major shifts occurred in terms of *sexuality* categories. Namely, Germany's Federal Constitutional Court ruled in 2013 that excluding registered same-sex partnerships from access to the married-couples tax splitting is unconstitutional. And in the run-up to the 2017 general election, Chancellor Merkel surprisingly declared the question of opening marriage to same-sex couples a 'question of conscience', thereby opening it up for debate. Thereafter parliament voted in favor of 'same-sex marriage' with the votes of the Green party, the Social Democrats, and about a quarter of the conservative CDU/CSU members of parliament.

While those policy changes cannot be studied in detail here, and have been relatively comprehensively researched, three points stand out. First, German family policy 'modernization' has been related to a Nixon-goes-to-China strategy, i.e. only as being a Christian-democrat might von der Leyen have been able to push the reform through against conservative resistances, which was not possible for her social-democratic predecessor (Henninger & von Wahl, 2010). Second, although finally politically agreed upon, there were strong conflicts around the reforms inside the conservative parties, and in society at large. Third, the family policy reforms have been—together with a number of other 'modernization' reforms under Merkel's leadership—diagnosed to have opened electoral space at the right, and contributed to the rise of the PRR party *Alternative für Deutschland* (Henninger & von Wahl, 2019).

[12] See also Blum (2012; there interview number 23_D_L).

Out of protest and discontent with the government's 'new family policy', a new interest organization was founded in 2005, named *Familiennetzwerk* (family network; the family network was dissolved in 2014). Network members and 'friends' contained a number of smaller associations, foundations and some prominent individual members. Many of them were former supporters of conservative CDU/CSU. It has been pointed out how anti-feminism can act as a 'symbolic glue' between different actors (Grzebalska et al., 2017). Indeed, the turn in family policy coincided with the beginning of a public 'genderism' debate in Germany. Its origin is often dated to an article published 2006 in the quality newspaper FAZ (Henninger, 2019), which protested against gender mainstreaming and the family policy reforms as a fight against the traditional family and German mothers' 'real' wishes and needs (FAZ, 2006). The anti-gender debate gained traction and visibility since then, and has been increasingly incorporated by AfD since its entry in county councils and federal state parliaments (Henninger, 2019). The next section will take a closer look at the earlier narratives told by protesters of the family policy reforms, and whether they already showed features of 'populist narratives' as characterized above.

1.4.2 Counter-Narratives to the Family Policy Reforms

In the interview I conducted with a person involved in the protest groups in 2009, s/he agreed with the finding that German family policy had seen a 'paradigmatic change', but disapproved of this. What is lost, s/he stressed, is parents' 'freedom of choice', which would be guaranteed if mothers 'could really choose to stay at home for the first three years, which is best in terms of the interest of the child'. While the latter may be described as a familialist, welfare-nostalgic narrative of policies supporting the 'traditional' post-war family, it is intermingled with issues of sexual orientation and family diversity:

> I even see a further deterioration for the family, simply because the married-couples tax splitting is, well, not annulled, but relativized. Since, and this is the discussion at the moment, since it should also be paid to registered partnerships. For this they suddenly have money, which has so far not been the case. (…) Of course, we all know that this is a heartfelt wish of people like [names gay politician], who…well, and of politics in general. Which doesn't have much fondness for the traditional family. (Interview)

This quotation illustrates the linkage described above, setting groups against one another: a welfare-nostalgic story of giving-to-give 'the family', contrasted to a welfare-chauvinist story of undeserving same-sex couples, who are excluded from the definition of 'family'. Linguistically, it is significant how the term '*the* family' is used here, as the singular indicates a homogenous group and interest instead of a plurality of lifestyles. Labelling the policy as the 'heartfelt wish' of an individual politician insinuates self-serving politics as the villain of this story. Yet there are other villains, too:

> There is an anti-mood in the establishment in politics and media, which is against the family, the traditional family. And therefore, the published opinion is completely different from

> the real public opinion. This gets crystal-clear in the case of the cash-for-care benefit, and therefore the media are the allies of the state-thinking, of the ideologists. (…) But there is a new phenomenon now (…), namely since a few years parallel publics are emerging in the internet. (…) And we try to break through these walls of silence and ideology. And over time we will succeed. (Interview)

The narrative told here bears characteristics of a populist narrative, as a story is told of 'the pure people' (the public whose opinion and voice cannot get through) against the corrupt elite, namely the ideologized establishment in politics and media.[13] The reform protesters on the opposite are presented as the hero of the story, who fight for the general will of the people, and will restore order ('we will succeed').

The German weekly *Junge Freiheit*—described as the organ of the 'new right' (Die Zeit, 2017)—frequently reported about the family network, and protesters of the family policy reforms also published articles in *Junge Freiheit*. As in the interviewee's narrative above, there is typically a linkage between the 'official family policy', which is described as misaligned with the 'real needs' of families (children in particular). Exemplary of this is the following report of a *Junge Freiheit* article from a conference organized by *Familiennetzwerk*:

> It would be important that parents are informed about the mental and physical risks of early-childhood alienated care,[14] no matter how they decide in the end. At the moment, however, the government acts as if childcare was good for children [said the family network chair; author]. 'Since months, there is a tendency in politics to openly withdraw rights from parents – and, strangely enough, most media remain uncritical allies of this', said the child doctor and psychiatrist Johannes Pechstein in his conference talk. 'That's why we have to encourage parents to remain suspicious and wakeful vis-à-vis the actions of the state'. (Junge Freiheit, 2007a)

Again, above the familialist notion, the narratives of both speakers here exhibit the populist element of the 'pure' families on the one hand, and elitist, untrustworthy politics and media on the other. Regularly, also science is already named as a villain of the 'establishment' (cf. Engeli, 2019). For instance, when the Bertelsmann Foundation, in 2008, published a report which identified educational gains from visiting childcare facilities, the study was refused as a 'scientifically untenable, unreliable propaganda study' (Junge Freiheit, 2008). It has been shown how the 'demographic argument' was used to win political support for the family policy modernization reforms (Blum, 2012). Yet also a demographic 'story of decline' has been told, by linking issues of fertility and immigration, and therewith fertile ground for linking different exclusionary tendencies. The term used for that was that of a 'demographic catastrophe', since 'Germany is the most rapidly ageing society in the

[13] An associated narrative element is the setting, when the interviewee describes how 'the establishment has distanced itself from the people, from real life, and this has grown much stronger in Berlin than in Bonn'. Berlin here represents 'the 'metropolis' as a classical figure in populist narratives (see the 'drain the swamp' metaphor used against the Washington DC elite and bureaucracy).

[14] The German word *Fremdbetreuung* is difficult to translate: It could be translated as 'external care' but the word *fremd* as such means 'alien' and therefore alludes to the idea of 'the other', something which does not belong to 'us' (i.e. the core family) and bears a negative connotation.

world, has most childless households, and the proportionately highest immigration rate' (Junge Freiheit, 2007b).

To conclude, with the family policy reforms, counter narratives were developed, which showed not only familialist and strongly conservative positions, but features of populist narratives, including welfare chauvinism and welfare nostalgia as the story's moral. Next, the AfD's family policy narratives serve as a further demonstration case.[15]

1.4.3 Alternative für Deutschland

The AfD was founded in 2013, the founders' main motive being dissatisfaction with the Euro, and the Eurocrisis policy of the German government (Zeitmagazin, 2017). In 2017, only four of the 18 founding fathers were still party members, none of them in a leading position. While Euro- and EU-skepticism is still characteristic of the party, its different streams have successively developed towards a national-conservative PRR party.

This section looks at the AfD's, 2016 party manifesto to illustrate how narrative stories are spun in family policy,[16] and which constructions and categories of '(un) deservingness' they entail. Not surprisingly, the main deserving character is the 'traditional family':

> Appreciation of the traditional family is increasingly lost in Germany. It has once again to become the main focus of family policy to meet the needs of children and parents. The increasing transfer of educational tasks to public institutions such as nurseries and all-day schools, the implementation of the 'gender mainstreaming' project and the general emphasis on the individual undermine the family (…). It has to be once again desirable to get married, raise children, and spend as much time with them as possible. (AfD, 2016: 80)

This story alludes to several narrative elements: One classical element is that of the 'real needs' of parents and children, of '*the* traditional family' (also here used solely in the singular), which are currently not met. It involves a welfare-nostalgic narrative of *giving-to-give*, linguistically grasped in using twice the expression of how 'once again' things should become. The 'traditional family' is 'positively' defined as married couples with shared gender roles, where the mother takes care of the child instead of public institutions—which also alludes to a 'negative' definition of 'non-traditional' family, but it is not yet spelled out who falls under those. The AfD presents itself as the hero, who fights for the appreciation and needs of the

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[15] It has been argued that there are several personal connections between the early protesters of the family policy reforms and today's AfD (Lühmann, 2016).

[16] A brief example from another social policy area is the debate around the introduction of a minimum pension in 2019. As AfD-leader Weidel then criticized plans to pay pensions to EU citizens: 'The people cannot understand that in Germany pensioners have to collect deposit bottles to make ends meet, while at the same time millions and millions of euros are supposed to be paid abroad. Germany first and foremost has to care for its own citizens' (AfD, 2019).

traditional family. Its counterpart, the villain responsible for the alleged 'stigmatization of traditional gender roles', is not yet named. Both narrative elements are further filled in the following:

> The *Alternative für Deutschland* wants to correct the financial burdens for single parents, and those liable for alimony payments. (…) We emphatically turn against any attempts of organizations, media, and politics to propagate one-parent-families as a progressive or even desirable way of living. (AfD, 2016: 86)

Here, single-parent families shift between a construction as dependents (whom should be given-to-promote by weakening financial burdens, but not without also naming the financial burdens of alimony payers), and a construction as deviants, who are at least 'undeserving' of depicting their ways of living as desirable. The villains of such propagation are also blamed, namely the 'corrupt elite' media and politics. Politics are concretized as 'current governing parties' in the following villain characterization:

> To counteract the striking demographic trends, the current governing parties rely on a continued (…) mass immigration from mainly Islamic countries. Previous years have shown that in particular Muslim migrants in Germany only reach below-average educational and employment levels. That the fertility rates of migrants (with 1.8 children per woman) lie significantly higher than that of women from German origin, intensifies the ethnic-cultural changes in population structure. (AfD, 2016: 82)

This narrative tells a twofold story-of-decline: through demographic shifts (with decreasing fertility rates and population ageing), and 'mass immigration from mainly Islamic countries'. Drivers for the demographic shifts are not portrayed as structural or external pressures, but an internal strategy of 'current governing parties'—with the far-right conspiracy of a planned 'great replacement' looming in the background. A linkage of 'deserving native families' versus 'undeserving Muslim families' is spun between the lines. A final quotation serves to demonstrate another villain:

> We reject the one-sided emphasis on homo- and transsexuality in school instruction, as well as ideological manipulation through 'gender mainstreaming'. The traditional family image must not be destroyed through his. Our school children must not become hostages of the sexual orientation of a loud minority. (…) The gender-ideology and the associated early-sexualization, public expenses for pseudo-scientific 'gender studies', gender quota, and the deformation of the German language must be stopped. (…) Many of the opinions advocated in the area of 'gender mainstreaming' contradict the results of natural sciences, developmental psychology, and common sense. We thus turn against any public funding of 'gender studies'. (AfD, 2016: 109)

This narrative contains an exclusionary construction of 'homo- and transsexuals' (who are set against the ubiquitous image of the traditional family), but also depicts the last of the three main villains forming the 'corrupt elite', namely science. This is not extended to all sciences, as natural sciences and developmental psychology are set up against gender studies. Yet not only are the latter discredited as 'pseudo-scientific'; moreover, an anti-science notion is involved in putting forward 'common sense' knowledge (such as own experiences and emotions; note that the AfD calls itself 'party of common sense' in the manifesto) to 'trump' scientific knowledge (see also Kuhar, 2015).

1.5 Conclusions

This chapter argued that a focus on populist narratives and their characteristics helps to illuminate the material inclusion/exclusion of ‘categories of people’ involved. This can be combined with a broadened understanding of welfare chauvinism (and, relatedly, of welfare nostalgia). The outgroups (‘them’) are not restricted to non-natives, as research into gender and sexuality agendas of PRR has shown, but extends to other categories. For instance, already Reinfeldt (2000) showed how Austrian FPÖ ‘othered’ lazy benefit scroungers (vis-à-vis ‘us’, the strenuous Austrians)—a category that seems to have lost importance with the turn of PRR parties from an anti-welfare to a welfare-chauvinist course (see Ennser-Jedenastik, 2016 for FPÖ). ‘Populist narratives’ can thus capture how deserving and undeserving ‘categories of people’ (Marchal & van Lancker, 2018) are distinguished not only along immigration, but also e.g. along gender and sexuality lines (e.g. non-traditional families, divergent sexual orientations). Set in a book that advances understanding of bordering/othering processes through intersectional analyses (see Vuckovic Juros et al., in this volume), this chapter thus contributes on how the narrative constructions of these processes work, and how they can be empirically investigated.

Typical storylines of these narrative stories are welfare-chauvinist stories of *taking-to-take*, and welfare-nostalgic stories of *giving-to-give*. Linkages between these stories are often used, when the extension of social rights to outgroups is described as threatening for in-groups—the traditional ‘golden age’ protégés of the welfare state, which have become main voter groups of PRR parties (Afonso, 2015). In the case illustration, this e.g. showed in the interview quotation, where ‘for this’ (i.e. granting benefits to ‘undeserving’ registered partnerships) ‘they’ (i.e. the corrupt elite) suddenly ‘have money, which has so far not been the case’ (i.e. for the ‘deserving’ traditional family). Thus, the linkages between inclusionary and exclusionary directions are important, but so are the linkages between different possible categories of exclusion. In the case illustration, this e.g. showed in the AfD’s (2016: 82) narrative, whereto ‘the current governing parties’ (i.e. corrupt elite as villain) would rely on a continued ‘mass immigration from mainly Islamic countries’, these families in Germany then reaching ‘below-average education and employment’, but high fertility rates. Several ‘undeservingness’ categories are interlinked in this narrative: *non-native status* (Islamic), *social behavior* (not-working/contributing), and *family form* (extended families as ‘deviant’ form).

‘Policy narratives’ and their structural elements are clearly conceptualized and measurable, which may give them analytical advantage vis-à-vis broad, and arguably often ambiguous concepts such as policy paradigms (Blum & Kuhlmann, 2019, 2023). The proposed concept of ‘populist narratives’ thus offers a systematic and measurable approach to the rhetoric around inclusion and exclusion. It can be applied to speech and text, but also e.g. to visual images (compare, for the latter, e.g. Freistein & Gadinger, 2020; Bonansinga, 2024). This chapter focused on the context of European liberal democracies, where PRR parties are prevalent. Future work would

need to extend this to other contexts, e.g. with view to populist-radical left parties, and to settings where the old-social-risks vs. new-social-risks divide is historically absent. Exact storylines, or character portrayals can be expected to vary in other contexts. Yet the storylines (such as *giving-to-give*, or *taking-to-take*) and structural narrative elements are applicable to analyze such different patterns across contexts.

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Chapter 2
The Rhetoric of Reaction in Spain: Radical Right, Gender, and Immigration

Belén Fernández-Suárez

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to contribute with empirical evidence to the academic debate around the emergence of VOX, a new radical right-wing party, especially with regard to issues such as gender equality and immigration. The contribution of the present research to the academic literature lies in its systematic analysis of the discourse of this political force, so recently incorporated into the Spanish party system, on migration and gender equality. From the framework of gender and migration studies in Spain, this chapter seeks to establish an academic arena at the European level that identifies the intersection that exists between the anti-immigration and anti-gender equality stances of radical right-wing political forces. A case study into VOX in Spain, will permit a comparison between this political force with other similar ones in Europe.

This chapter's contribution to the book focuses on the study of the discourse of VOX, a Spanish political force of the radical right. This political party and its discourse can serve to illustrate the exclusionary mobilization of certain parties to undermine the rights acquired in terms of gender equality by women, the rights of recognition of sexual diversity, and finally, it illustrates the positions against the presence of immigrants and questions the social rights that this group receives. Specifically, in VOX's positions we can find a use of the normative construction of gender, family and sexuality that is strongly conservative. This nativist vision of the family and gender relations is used to draw borders against migrants, especially altering Muslim immigrants. VOX, like other forces of the European radical right, uses premises that reinforce the mechanism of intersectional exclusion against migrants' and women's rights. At the same time, these forces seek to maintain subaltern positions for women and migrants. The theoretical approach of situated

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intersectionality and borders, specifically intersectional bordering (Cassidy, Yuval-Davis and Wenyss, 2018), applied to the analysis of VOX's political discourse, allows us to scrutinize how different social stratifications—such as gender and nationality—are transferred to political discourse, loaded with messages of exclusion towards these groups, and of inclusion towards men, Spaniards, Catholics, and traditional families. Finally, it should be noted that the chapter is located at the section on "Bordering across political discourses and mobilizations" where it analyses how political parties develop exclusionary discourses that link gender, sexuality and family constructions to migration.

VOX is a radical right-wing party with the following characteristics: a strong nationalist ideology, a liberal economic discourse, authoritarian conservatism, opposition to what they call "*gender ideology*" and the rights of LGBTQI+ communities, and finally, a policy of nativism that places them in direct opposition to immigration (Ferreira, 2019; Turnbull-Duarte et al., 2020). VOX was created in 2013 by former members of the Popular Party, the main conservative party in Spain (Gil Flores, 2019; Mendes & Dennison, 2021). This party remained without parliamentary political representation until the regional elections in Andalusia in 2018, and their electoral success was confirmed in the 2019 general elections (Marcos-Marne et al., 2021; Garrido Rubia et al., 2022).

The political context of the birth of VOX is related to two important political processes. The first is the triumph of a motion of censure that brought about a change in the state government from conservative hands to a left-wing government, led by the Socialist Party alone. This change was consolidated in 2019 in the elections that resulted in Spain's first coalition government between the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and Podemos. It is the most left-leaning government since the beginning of democracy in Spain. The second issue, and central to the process of VOX's emergence, is the territorial crisis experienced in Spain as a result of the Catalan conflict and Catalonia's declaration of independence in 2017. The most recent studies point to the political crisis related to the Catalan conflict as central to the emergence of VOX, and the resurgence of a Spanish nationalist identity sentiment (Arroyo Menéndez, 2020; Garrido Rubia et al., 2022). Moreover, the VOX' electoral success took place in the context of a favorable economy, in a Spain dominated by the debate about where Catalonia fits in the territorial and political landscape, the mobilization and show of force of organized feminism, and finally, the so-called "refugee crisis" in the Mediterranean and the increase in the numbers of immigrants (Mendes & Dennison, 2021). The arrival of immigrants and the perception of Spanish public opinion on immigration is closely linked to its media impact, and how the entry of foreigners into Spain is depicted. In the years prior to the electoral rise of VOX, there was a growth in the arrival of foreigners[1] by sea

[1] Data from the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) on registered foreign nationals born abroad as of 1 January 2019 show that 4.8 million people of foreign nationality reside in Spain. Compared to a year earlier, there is an increase of 277 thousand foreigners, which in the following year 2019 is 386 thousand foreigners. The years prior to the covid crisis, 2018 and 2019, are those in which the greatest increases in the foreign population have occurred in the last 5 years.

(around 55,000 entries), an increase in entries at the Melilla fence, and finally, government support for the reception of refugees in Spain. This change in government stance did not translate into solidarity in accordance with the circumstances due to the Spanish state being one of the least generous in Europe in the reception of refugees. However, the social perception of immigration as a problem, as the media presence of immigration multiplied, provoked this greater polarization around the migratory issue associated with media representation (Gálvez-Iniesta & Groizard, 2021; González-Enríquez & Rinken, 2021).

This chapter is structured into the following four sections. The first is the theoretical framework used to address the characteristics of radical right-wing forces in Europe, and specifically, it studies how VOX fits into this political trend. I will then focus on explaining the main academic contributions that analyze the discourse of the European radical right forces in subjects such as gender equality and immigration. In the second section, I briefly explain the methodology used. In the third section, the main results of the content analysis of VOX parliamentary discourses are presented. To briefly highlight the main results, we can find on the one hand, the strong connection between the attacks on gender equality in VOX are strongly linked to a defense of a traditional family model. On the other hand, the analysis of VOX's political discourse shows that VOX's rejection of immigration is linked to nativist positions and a strong nationalist ideology, which seeks to reinforce the hegemony of the rights and privileges of Spanish nationals. Finally, some brief conclusions are presented that include reflections on future developments in this line of research.

2.2 Vox: A New Radical Right-Wing Party in Spain

The parties that make up the European populist radical right are characterized by their formal defense of the liberal democratic regime in opposition to extreme right parties that are steeped in a legacy of fascist ideology, as political forces characterized by their outright rejection of the constitutional order, and may seek to subvert the democratic status quo (Pirro, 2022). As it may represent for the Spanish case, "Falange Española de las JONS" which would advocate an authoritarian political regime. However, within the family of the European radical populist right, there are political forces that openly defend anti-democratic positions and are more closely linked to neo-fascism (Akkerman, 2003; Minkenberg, 2015), such as the *Alternative für Deutschland* in Germany party (Blum, in this volume). Also, we can find political forces such as Fidesz -led by Viktor Orbán -in Hungary that are characterized by authoritarian traits that may demonstrate a governmental practice typical of a competitive authoritarian regime, where the political elite organizes the state rules and the political scene for electoral and political advantages unbefitting of a liberal democratic regime (Bozóki & Cueva, 2021).

In overall terms, these organizations defend the following positions: (a) a mononational and monocultural vision of nation, rooted in a definition of the people as

culturally homogenous; (b) nativism as an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited by members of the native group, therefore, "*foreigners*" (including regional nationalistic movements and immigrants) are considered enemies of the homogeneous nation; and (c) authoritarianism and the imposition of the rule of law and order, accompanied by security as an essential element of the state; (d) these parties are forces characterized by a conservative ideology and that promote the maintenance of the current social structure, and their proposals are also identified by a strong attachment to tradition and authority (Mudde, 2007; Ferreira, 2019; Climent & Montaner, 2020; Wodak, 2020). The family and its protection out of concern for its disintegration occupies a central place in the discourses of this European political family (Grzebalska & Petö, 2018). The centrality of the family and their conservative view of it gives way to positions contrary to what they pejoratively call "gender ideology"[2] (Kováts, 2017; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017).

The uniqueness of VOX within the European radical right space in relation to migration issues and gender equality is that this party resembles the mainstream European populist radical right—as is the case in France and Sweden—while it is closer to the positions of Eastern European parties in its strategy of fighting what these conservative forces call "gender ideology". I will now turn to the positions of the parties of the radical populist right family—and specifically the positions of VOX—on immigration, gender equality and the relationship between immigration and gender equality.

One of the recurrent themes of the populist extreme right is its anti-immigration discourse, which is explicitly anti-Muslim. Attitudes held by Europeans towards Muslim immigrants are considered most hostile in countries where political elites are more exclusive, and more tolerant where such elites are more inclusive (Czymara, 2019). Additionally, electoral support for radical right-wing parties with a strong nativist discourse, ergo anti-immigration, is related to pre-existing positions rooted in conservative values that activate an anti-immigration sentiment, such as law and order and traditional values (Dennison & Geddes, 2019).

The academic literature distinguishes three characteristics within the anti-immigration arguments put forward by the forces of the European radical right: (a) they are directed at an electorate that is easily identifiable based on aspects of their national identity, although this national identity may harbor ethnic and religious components—in the case of VOX, it targets Spanish nationals, white ethnicity and Catholic beliefs, i.e. these identity elements overlap; (b) they stigmatize the target group by explicitly or implicitly attributing to them qualities considered to be undesirable; and (c) as a result of these perceived negative traits, immigrants are viewed as an unwelcome and hostile presence (Skenderovic, 2007; Parekh, 2012;

[2] The conservative rhetoric of gender ideology emerged in the 1990s as a response to the advances of the feminist and LGBTQI+ movement on issues such as reproductive rights, gender mainstreaming in international politics, and finally, the achievement of sexual rights. For conservative forces, the struggle against "gender ideology" generates a political consensus to fight against the liberal agenda and its destructive consequences for society. Opposition to gender ideology provokes adherence of religious actors, conservatives and far-right groups (Grzebalska & Petö, 2021).

Ackerman, 2018). This political family of parties also feeds the concept of "welfare chauvinism", by which is meant the fear that some less-privileged social groups harbor towards the immigrant population, whom they perceive as their competitors for limited social welfare resources. Therefore, this fear transforms into a demand for the separation of social groups into levels that would limit the foreign-born population's access to the welfare state to make it easier for the native population to have access to this right (Kymlicka, 2015). Moreover, many of these parties support the concept of a less interventionist state, although the academic literature points to the fact that the family of radical right populist parties in Western Europe is characterized by more neoliberal economic proposals (Otjes et alia, 2018). For example, VOX is in favor of imposing greater restrictions on access to residence permits for immigrants in an irregular situation, as well as stressing the requirement for foreign residents to make an effort to "integrate" into Spanish society. They also propose to match the entry of immigrant flows to the requirements of the Spanish economy. Finally, they are staunch defenders of greater border control, just as they are committed to increasing security measures, expelling, and implementing tougher penalties for immigrants in an irregular situation (VOX, 2019 and 2021). In line with Trump's program to erect a wall at the US border with Mexico, they support the building of a wall[3] in Ceuta and Melilla to guarantee national sovereignty (Barrio, 2020). Such political parties consider Muslim foreign residents to be a threat to security, leading to a call for the closure of "fundamentalist mosques", and the exclusion of Islam from public education (Ferreira, 2019; Rubio-Pueyo, 2019).

Extreme right-wing forces are opposed to gender equality in Europe, they are characterized by their defense of a biological construction of sexual difference, and therefore are committed to traditional gender roles. These forces regard the family, rather than individuals, as the elementary repository of rights and duties (Safuta, in this volume). This support for the traditional family results in opposition to women's sexual and reproductive rights (Spierings & Zaslove, 2015; Alabao, 2019; Kantola & Lombardo, 2019). In her classic work *Gender and Nation*, Yuval-Davis (2004) points out that nationalist projects begin from the assumption that women are the nation's biological reproducers and its repositories of culture and national identity. Far right-wing parties have an antifeminist agenda, often labelled as "anti-gender ideology" by proponents. This term that stems from attempts made by religious sectors to defend their vision of the ontological difference between and the complementarity of the sexes (Kováts, 2017; Dancygier, 2020). In its treatment of gender issues VOX is closer to the stance of Eastern European parties, than to that

[3] VOX's concrete proposal is to build a thick, high concrete wall to replace the current barbed wire and concertinas that currently exist at the fence between Ceuta and Melilla. At first it proposed that the cost of erecting this wall be financed by Morocco, but now it is proposing that it be paid for with Spanish funds but with the economic collaboration of the European Union, as it is the southern European border. See news item entitled "Vox proposes in Congress to build a wall in Ceuta and Melilla against "the migratory invasion". Published in the newspaper *El Mundo* (12/09/2019). Link to the news item: https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2019/09/12/5d7a192ffc6c83426d8b4646.html. Revised on 8 January 2023.

of France or Sweden's neo right-wing. VOX defends the relevance of the traditional family, denies the discrimination faced by women, and opposes gender ideology, a fight personalized in their opposition to the feminist movement, for which they demand the ending of state financing of feminist organizations (Alabao, 2019; Rubio-Pueyo, 2019). In relation to VOX's discourse on gender equality, Alonso and Espinosa-Fajardo point to the existence of two strategies they use in their parliamentary discourses in the region of Andalusia: a) framing gender inequality as a non-existent problem, and b) framing gender equality policies as part of "totalitarian" feminist project (Alonso & Espinosa-Fajardo, 2021).

For VOX, equality between men and women in Spain is a fact, therefore, a policy aimed at achieving this goal is unnecessary. Moreover, they consider that the current gender equality policy promoted by the institutions and based on feminist ideology is a threat to society, because it weakens institutions such as the family and the sexual division of labor. Moreover, for VOX, this political force constantly points to immigration as a threat to Spanish women, and this threat would translate into gender-based or sexual violence (Fernández-Suárez, 2021; Bernardez-Rodal et al., 2022). Therefore, the link between anti-gender equality and anti-immigration discourse of the European radical right is made by means of the instrumentalization of foreigners, who are perceived as enemies of the gender equality achieved by Western civilization (Kantola & Lombardo, 2019). Moreover, it is common in the discourses of this family of parties to accuse immigrants of putting women's safety at risk, more specifically, the free presence of women in the public space and their physical and psychological integrity in the private space. The association they make between immigration and women's insecurity is linked to crimes of gender violence, sexual violence, harassment in public space, etc. (Sager & Mulinari, 2018). Anti-immigration parties emphasize the cultural dimension of globalisation to highlight the danger posed by immigrants, specifically, how they threaten the freedoms acquired in the West, mainly those rights won by women. This relationship between gender and immigration appears to be conditioned by the different cultures of gender equality in Europe, with it being much more rooted in the Nordic countries than in Southern Europe. An example of this relationship between gender and immigration can be seen in the application of what have been called "new assimilation policies". Immigrant integration contracts place an emphasis on "gender equality" as a national cultural symbol and as a core Western value, in comparison to the patriarchal cultures of migrant communities (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2017; Scrinzi, 2017). This connection is evident in the case of France, through the application of the "republican" model of immigrant integration based on individualism, universality, and secularism. State feminism in France tends to racialize sexism, presenting migrants as a threat to "sexual democracy", thus making the sexism present in wider French society invisible (Fassin, 2006; Scrinzi, 2017). This debate played out in the prohibition of wearing a veil in public, with the resulting controversy dividing French feminist activists into two dichotomous positions. Pro-equality stances are exploited by radical right-wing parties in some European countries

(France, the Netherlands, and Sweden) to frame anti-immigration strategy in the political arena. The racialization of sexism consists of instrumentally mobilizing pseudo-feminist discourse to gain electoral support and legitimize opposition to immigration (Scrinzi, 2014). How VOX makes this association between immigration and the position of women in Spain in its parliamentary speeches is the key question addressed in this chapter.

2.3 Methodology

This chapter has a qualitative methodological approach based on the application of two techniques: documentary analysis and content analysis of political discourse.

Concerning the document analysis, I examined existing VOX policy documents: the party statutes and the policy measures proposed by VOX in the document "*Agenda España*" [Spain Agenda] in 2021. I also examined the VOX electoral programs for the 2019 general elections called "*100 medidas para la España Viva*" [100 measures for a Living Spain].

The discursive construction of the relationship between gender and immigration in VOX discourse is analyzed through the parliamentary speeches taken from the Parliamentary Record of the Congress of Deputies during the XIII legislature, from May 21st, 2019, to September 24th, 2019, and the XIV legislature, beginning on December third, 2019, with the analysis being carried out until April third, 2020. In short, I have carried out a 1-year monitoring of the parliamentary interventions of this political force.

These data -VOX's official documents and discourses made by representatives of VOX taken from the Parliamentary Record of the Congress of Deputies- were selected and classified using the ATLAS.ti. Discourses referring to immigrants (and migration policies) and women (and gender equality policies) were selected. These specific data were then categorized using a previously selected coding system based on the research objectives. For instance, I approached the content analysis deductively according to Krippendorf (1990), through the systematic analysis of content by making inferences (deductions) through the identification of characteristics of a text considering the social context in which it is produced. Specifically, in my research I have started from some previous categories that have helped me to carry out a thematic description of VOX's positions on gender equality and the presence of immigrants in Spain. Tesch (1990) points out that in social science research it is common to use some form of prior indexing, or that it is an a posteriori process that emerges during the work of processing the textual corpus. In the case of the present research, the previously chosen codes are related to political positions about immigration and women/gender equality, and from these broad categories, subcategories were created to facilitate the subsequent analysis of the research results. Text extracts from documents and speeches were classified according to this system.

2.4 Vox, the Conservative Reaction Against Gender Equality and Immigration

The analysis of results presented below will be divided into three parts. First, the characteristics of VOX's parliamentary discourse and policy proposals on immigration will be presented. Secondly, the analysis will focus on the positions of this force in relation to gender equality in Spain. Finally, it will analyze the existing connections in VOX's discourse and proposals on immigration and gender, as a mechanism that reinforces the intersectional bordering against migrants and women.

2.4.1 VOX's Anti-immigration Discourse: When the Enemy Is a Foreigner

In relation to VOX's position on immigration, four main strands of discourse stand out. First, an increase in border controls and greater priority given to migrants from Latin America, with legal entry being conditional on the needs of the labour market. Second, the criminalization of immigrants in an irregular administrative situation that entails an increase in penalties, with this irregularity being considered a felony associated with an increase in crime and greater insecurity in Spain. The third argument is the demand for a greater effort to be made by immigrants in a regular situation to integrate, accompanied by claims of Welfare State abuse, to which they call for access to be regulated, with priority given to nationals. And fourthly, a fight against Islam, personalized in its opposition to immigrants from countries of the Maghreb residing in Spain. The following positions will be discussed in more detail below.

VOX is a political organization that, according to its internal documents, has among its goals the protection of the union of the Spanish nation, the sovereignty of which resides in the whole of the Spanish people, the custody of the equality of all Spaniards before the law, the protection of private property and the free market economy, the defense of individual freedoms and the democratic system and the preservation of the right to life and traditional family values. In its 2019 manifesto, for both general elections held that year, VOX called for "100 measures for *España Viva*" [Living Spain], including two sections outlining measures for immigration and for border security and control. 15 measures out of a total of 100 proposals on these topics are developed for both sections, indicating the relevance afforded to them. In general terms, the proposals relate to the criminalization of irregular immigration, support for greater immigration control measures, increased penalties to combat irregular immigration, the refusal to regularize immigrants in irregular administrative situations, the criminalization and punishment of street vending, greater integration effort required to gain access to Spanish nationality, a preference for so-called "Ibero-American immigration", a reduction in social welfare rights such as free health care for immigrants in an irregular administrative situation,

anti-Islam measures (such as, for example, the exclusion of Islam from the educational system,[4] and the prohibition and closure of mosques), the demand for data on nationality and origin in crime statistics to be published and, finally, the proposal to build a wall to protect Ceuta and Melilla. In VOX's 2021 document "*Agenda España*" [Agenda Spain] this party relates immigration as a failed policy to counteract the demographic winter, while "imposing anti-family policies" (VOX, 2021: 25).

VOX's central anti-immigration arguments, that can be seen by analyzing the discourses they give in the Congress of Deputies, are related to their ideas regarding loss of cultural identity, and demonstrate that they are, in short, opposed to a multicultural society. VOX considers the entry and residence of immigrants in an irregular administrative situation in Spain to be a crime. They are staunch defenders of the tightening of policies to control immigration, and of only allowing entry to Spain of people with a regular migration status who meet the demands of the labour market. They also prefer the cultural and linguistic similarity of so-called "Ibero-American migrants" above those from the Maghreb. Finally, they associate irregular immigration with greater crime and insecurity in Spain, even associating this immigration with an increase in sexual crimes against women (VOX, 2022).

The association between foreigners and crime has strong connections to VOX's ideology of reinforcing internal and external security, and of the defense of law and order as pillars of society. The criminalization of irregular immigration is a constant in VOX speeches, taking the position that orderly immigration is the only entry option, while additionally supporting an increase in punitive penalties for immigrants in an irregular situation. It is especially here where women are used to foment opposition to immigration (Kantola & Lombardo, 2019, Spierings & Zaslove, 2015), particularly associated with accusations of sexual crimes against foreigners.

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[4] Spain is a non-confessional country, but the constitution recognizes ideological, and religious freedom, and furthermore, that the public authorities must guarantee the right of parents for their children to receive the moral and religious education that is in accordance with their own convictions. In order to exercise this right, Organic Law 7/1980 of 5 July 1980 on Freedom of Religion and Worship was passed, recognizing the right to religious plurality throughout the State. Within the framework of this law, agreements with the different religious denominations, including the Spanish Islamic Commission, are implemented. As a result of this dialogue, Law 26/1992 was passed, through which the State recognizes the right of Muslim families to allow their children to learn their religion in public, private or state-subsidized schools. This right is not fulfilled in all autonomous communities (Semmami, 2019). The religion of Moroccan pupils is a cultural marker that is present in the teachers' own discourse, which associates it with a potentially greater source of intercultural conflict in schools with a significant presence of pupils of this origin in Spain (Capote Lama, Nieto Calmaestra & Martin Ruiz, 2020).

In addition, in Spain, Moroccan and Spanish students can attend Arabic classes once a week in some public schools where there is a significant number of students of Moroccan origin who demand these classes. This Arabic class is part of the Arabic Language and Moroccan Culture Teaching Program (LACM), an educational initiative introduced in the 1985–6 school year and funded jointly by the Spanish and Moroccan governments. The participation of Spanish schools in this program is voluntary. In the 2021–22 academic year, a total of 345 schools in Spain participated and a total of 6700 students received these classes. More information: https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/mc/lengua-arabe-cultura-marroqui/programa.html (Last access: 8 January 2023)

The women who suffer these sexual assaults are presented as being ignored by proponents of "gender ideology" and "feminism", who would conceal reports of such crimes to avoid growing xenophobia, while publicly denouncing sexual assaults committed by male nationals, thus belying the assumption of equal treatment. Associations between increased sexual violence and immigration in working-class suburbs were common in the media during the conservative government of Nicolas Sarkozy in France, resulting in a racialization of sexism by attributing it to immigrants, thus making the sexism present in wider French society invisible (Fassin, 2006; Scrinzi, 2017). These statements are contextualized in the following declaration made by representatives of VOX in the Congress of Deputies.

> This very week we have learned of new packs of savages attempting to rape women, but, as the perpetrators are foreigners, their crimes are conveniently silenced by feminism (…). Do you really think you are capable of convincing Spaniards that the dozens of illegal immigrants, mostly Muslims, have nothing to do with this new type of aggression, with the increase in assaults against women, against homosexuals?
>
> [Parliamentary Record of the Congress of Deputies, 29th August 2019]

With regard to immigration, VOX has a vision of religious diversity that aligns them closer to the parties of the radical right in Eastern Europe than to similar forces present in France or in the Nordic countries. Specifically, VOX's conservative ideology considers Catholicism to be national cultural heritage worthy of preservation. Faced with the threat of Islam, they uphold "*Christian civilization"* as the foundation of Europe. Their hobbyhorse centers around the demonization of Islam as a belief that is harmful to Western society. As previously mentioned, VOX's general election manifesto contained several proposals to deport imams who "spread jihad, fundamentalism, and contempt for women", eliminate the teaching of Islam from the public education system, and ban mosques that promote fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. An association is made in VOX's discourse about immigration, radical Islamic beliefs, and terrorism. The "cowardly little right wing" and the "progressive dictatorship", common terms used by the leaders of VOX to refer to their political adversaries on the right and the left, are, they claim, incapable of halting the onslaught of the Islamization of Europe due to their deep-rooted multicultural and liberal creed. In this extract from a speech by Abascal, the leader of VOX in the Congress of Deputies, it can be seen how the arrival of refugees in Europe is associated with terrorist attacks, problems of coexistence, security, and the economy. The connection felt by Abascal and his admiration for the Hungarian Prime Minister Víktor Orbán of the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union party is also evident.

> When he defended the will of the Hungarian people and warned that these avalanches pose a real danger, VOX alone supported Mr. Orbán, whose diagnosis we share, including the diagnosis of terrorist infiltration that you systematically conceal. (…) Mr. Orbán, who, of course, was accused of the same thing that I am going to be accused of: of racism, of xenophobia, of a lack of solidarity, and so on. (…). You know, although you keep quiet about it, you must know that in many European cities there are neighborhoods where Islamic law, and not civil law, prevails.
>
> [Parliamentary Record of the Congress of Deputies, 29th de August 2019]

The third anti-immigration argument is aimed at combating liberal stances taken by political forces favorable to immigration, such as: in addition to meeting the needs of the Spanish labour market for foreign labour, immigrants contribute to a slowing down of the aging of the population. VOX's nativist foundations, and the European extreme right's concern that an ethnic substitution of nationals by foreigners does not take place, is founded in conservative positions at the core of the demographic. Recurrent calls are made to reverse the pressing European population problem, the "*demographic winter*" caused by a fall in the birth rate and an increasingly aging population, with proposals supporting traditional families with dependent children. In its document "*Agenda España*" [Agenda Spain] VOX states: "Open border policies and multicultural societies have failed in the West and countries such as Belgium, France and the United Kingdom are the most obvious example. Despite this, the globalist elites are betting on the arrival of millions of illegal immigrants in the coming years with the aim of reversing the demographic winter while imposing anti-family policies" (VOX, 2021: 25). The nativist agenda is at the center of the identity of European radical right parties (Spierings & Zaslove, 2015), with VOX also fully assuming this political trait. The preference for Spanish nationals would serve to preserve the integrity of the traditional family, as this forms the fundamental basis of the social order of the nation.

Finally, a recurring anti-immigration (especially immigrants in an irregular administrative situation) argument that VOX makes links them to welfare state abuse. Once again, VOX would apply a principle of nationals first in accessing welfare state benefits, which in turn would be depleted by their defense of the free market. VOX speeches constantly affirm that Spanish nationals are deprived of social assistance in favor of foreigners, in short, activating the arguments of "*welfare chauvinism*". In its policy document "*Agenda España*" (Agenda Spain) this force defends the national priority in social benefits: "Promotion of the necessary legal mechanisms to guarantee the priority of Spanish citizens in access to social benefits". Another example of this type of statement can be seen below, in a VOX speech given in the Congress of Deputies.

> You probably know and don't care, so, Madam Vice President, answer me if you can: how much does illegal immigration cost to Spaniards, how much does it cost to maintain the centres for unaccompanied minors—you said 14,000€—how much money, how much crime, how many problems of coexistence, so that you can continue to comply with orders from Brussels?
>
> [Parliamentary Record of the Congress of Deputies, 29th August 2019]

VOX's discourse, as well as recurrently focusing on positions against the entry of immigrants, also has among its central arguments the defense of the traditional family, the fight against gender equality, and especially, its constant criticism of the feminist movement and its postulates, as we can see in the following section.

2.4.2 *VOX and Its Argument Against "Gender Ideology"*

The research carried out into the discourse of VOX in relation to the role of women in Spanish society highlights the following arguments: the family and traditional gender roles, especially that of the mother, are central to its ideology; Feminism is an ideology believed to be capable of destroying the institution of the family, thus it is necessary to eliminate the network of organizations that receive financial support to implement their idea of gender equality; and, finally, the affirmation that men are discriminated against and denied equal treatment to women, for which their defense in litigation for gender violence, divorce, etc. is necessary.

VOX's general election manifestos contain a series of proposals directly or indirectly related to gender equality policies. In the section on health, promises are made to abolish public funding for abortions and gender affirmation surgery. The section on education contains promises to establish a requirement to seek parental consent for school activities with ethical, social, moral, or sexual content. In the section on "Life and Family", a call to repeal the law on gender violence, and any regulations that discriminate between the sexes is made, support for opposition to enacting a domestic violence law, and the "abolition of subsidies for radical feminist organizations" is voiced, the prosecution of false reporting of gender violence, and the protection of the minor in divorce proceedings through joint custody, greater family work-life balance achieved by means of the promotion of teleworking and part-time jobs, and finally, an increase in maternity leave to 180 days.

VOX's central arguments opposing what they consider "gender ideology" and the feminist movement, put forward in their appearances in the Congress of Deputies center on the defense of the "natural family" as the basis for the reproduction of society, the division of gender roles, and the staunch defense of nativism that situate them in opposition to reproductive rights (for example, abortion) that deprive the nation of new members. In addition, they claim that so-called "gender ideology" would seek to impose its principles on the educational system, and to demonize men, just because they are men, and by refusing them the same right as women to report violent situations in family settings. They are also opposed to the public aid system that grants resources to third-sector entities espousing feminist ideology and specializing in gender equality issues. These arguments are accompanied by an uncompromising defense of the institution of the family, supported by family friendly policies which lead to the reconstruction of the figure of the mother as the main caregiver, such as an increase in maternity leave, economic support for families with dependent children, and benefits for large families.

For VOX, feminism is an ideology that stands in opposition to the family, the cornerstone of society and part of the natural and biological order of things. The defense of the traditional family implies the assumption of gender roles and the sexual division of labour (Spierings & Zaslove, 2015; Alabao, 2019; Kantola & Lombardo, 2019). For VOX, women are the biological and social reproducers of the nation, that is, they are potential mothers within its nationalist vision. VOX's conservatism leads them to affirm that left-wing parties are in favor of the destruction

of the traditional family, that by facilitating the right to abortion they fail to advocate the protection of life. Moreover, for this political force "being a woman" is a biological fact. In their positions and speeches, we can see how they criticize the idea that gender is a social and cultural construction. This defense of the biological and of what they call 'human nature' leads them to attack not only feminist theory, but also queer theory and the rights of transgender people. Below is an excerpt from a speech made by a representative of VOX making a case for the traditional gender roles associated with women and defending the institution of the traditional family.

> We have a State that invests more in death than in life and thus, of course, with a birth rate that is lower than replacement-level, along with the 2.5 million unborn children since 1985, which would have greatly alleviated this lack of generational replacement. (…) But you don't just want to abolish the family, ladies and gentlemen, you clearly want to abolish the family: by abolishing women. For this reason, we at VOX, want to denounce this monopoly of the left, the left that tells us what a woman should think and be in order to be a woman.
>
> [Parliamentary Record of the Congress of Deputies, 18th February 2020]

VOX accuses organizations that promote the implementation of "state feminism policies" of being part of a privileged elite that stand to obtain substantial resources from the Welfare State. This is one of the standard arguments of the radical right, the plundering of the people's resources by the liberal elite. Moreover, as Blum (in this volume) points out, in the populist narratives of the radical right the question of the exclusion of certain social groups from access to certain rights is very present. And, as this scholar shows, issues of gender and sexuality are a good example of "welfare-nostalgic" positions, as well as welfare-chauvinist ones, which seek to reinforce social rights associated with old social risks and based on traditional economic and conservative family forms. This formulation perceives both third sector organizations that work towards gender equality, and NGOs that serve the foreign resident population, as ideological entities that therefore should not be subsidized by the public treasury. In addition to the premise that such pro-equality organizations are ideologically driven, it is also argued that gender violence policies discriminate against men by not granting them the same rights in the event of a report of domestic violence, once again questioning the structural disadvantage of women compared to men. VOX in its program and in its speeches calls for the abolition of the current law against gender violence in Spain, to be replaced by a law on domestic violence. This proposal would seek to protect the integrity of the family and all its members, because for them the woman is not the only victim. Finally, VOX defends the increase of prison sentences—permanent revisable prison—for cases of sexual violence and murders within the family of exceptional gravity. This punitive populism serves to proclaim themselves defenders of (Spanish) women, as opposed to left-wing forces that would reduce prison sentences for these crimes. In this measure, one can see a commitment to security that is associated with a harsh and martial vision of masculinity and the role of the state (Álvarez-Benavides & Jiménez Aguilar, 2021). Moreover, in their statements VOX leaders point to immigrants as being responsible for most cases of gender violence, just as they accuse them of being responsible for most cases of sexual assault. The following excerpt refers to

these arguments. This punitive populism serves to proclaim themselves defenders of women, in the face of liberal forces that would reduce prison sentences for these crimes. In the extract below, reference is made to these arguments.

> The total dedicated to gender violence will be almost 285 million. The budget is being increased for an oversized problem that has an average of 60 victims a year, when there are causes of death in Spain that produce a much higher number of victims and for which not a single euro is allocated. This expenditure of 285 million euros ends up in associations, political quangos and only a tiny part goes to the victims, who are the ones who really need it. The EUR 285 million is earmarked for a discriminatory purpose that goes against the principle of equality, as it only goes to women who are victims of a white heterosexual man. Nothing for elderly men, minors or homosexuals.
>
> 285 million euros for a plan that has proved to be ineffective, as it has not reduced the number of victims. 285 million to impose their totalitarian ideology, which only responds to sectarian and propagandistic intentions. Publicizing feminism, victimizing women and demonizing men. As the current law against gender violence does not work and has not reduced the number of victims, investing more money in a plan that is ineffective is suicidal. What this money is going towards is campaigns to spread the idea that men are violent by nature and women are victims just because they are women. This money goes to indoctrinating companies and all public authorities. It goes to interfere in the education of our children to indoctrinate them according to feminist rules, it is invested in a telephone hotline and reinforcement of telematic means of monitoring, instead of increasing the penalties against aggressors and applying permanent imprisonment, as proposed by VOX.
>
> [Parliamentary Record of the Congress of Deputies, 26th October 2021]

In addition to the importance of immigration and gender equality in VOX speeches, in the next section, we will see how this political argumentation towards these two issues connects with each other, and feeds back on each other.

2.4.3 The Reactionary Rhizome: The Association Between Immigration and Gender Equality in VOX Discourse

The results of the data analyzed show that VOX makes an association between irregular immigration, mainly that of Muslims, and an increase in crime, specifically sexual violence against women. As with other European radical right-wing parties, Catholicism is praised as a cultural element rooted in Western civilization in contrast to Muslim societies where women enjoy fewer freedoms.

Gender discourse is racialized to demonize the multicultural model associated with liberal values. In VOX we find a vision of women as potential victims of the foreign "other", which is justified by a representation of women as being oppressed by the primitive culture of the foreigner, and the need for them to be freed from this threat by native men, since their agency as social actors is withdrawn. Ultimately, the burden of cultural representation weighs on women, as they are viewed as the symbolic carriers of the identity and honor of the community (Yuval-Davis, 2004).

As mentioned at the start of this section, in their parliamentary speeches, VOX makes an association between so-called "immigration in an irregular administrative situation", mainly that of Muslims and (sexual) violence against native Spanish women. In its defense of Christianity as the essence of European civilization and its opposition to immigration from Muslim countries, due to such immigrants not holding liberal values, VOX is in line with European radical right-wing parties. But far from performing the "rhetorical U-turn" made by Marine Le Pen, leader of the *Rassemblement National*, where she assumed a position that is more favorable to gender equality, VOX tactically uses women in its discourse to set an anti-immigration agenda, promote an anti-multicultural model and demonstrate its aversion to the Muslim immigrant community. Women and the family are represented as potential victims at the hands of foreigners, so it will be native men who must protect women, and in turn, defend the nation. VOX accuses the other political parties of failing in their attempts to protect women from such attacks and offers an increase in sentences associated with these crimes as a solution. The last extract in the previous section [VOX and its argument against "gender ideology"] can be used to support the assertions made in this paragraph.

VOX's political ideology can be defined by its strong conservatism, its centralist nationalism, and its defense of nativism as fundamental foundational principles. These elements will undoubtedly make a change of discourse around immigration and gender equality unlikely. However, a discursive shift in relation to the acceptance of certain measures in support of equality between men and women would be more likely than a change in tone around certain types of immigration. VOX's manifesto and parliamentary speeches place greater emphasis on increasing immigration controls and hardening Spanish immigration policies than on issues derived from the fight against feminism as an ideology, although such issues are also present, associated with a defense of the traditional family and nationalist concern for the reproduction of the nation in demographic and cultural terms.

Immigration—especially those in an irregular administrative situation and who practice the Muslim faith—and gender equality policies are two of the most recurrent themes against which VOX's political discourse is positioned. The arrival of immigrants causes the disintegration of a homogenous Spanish national identity capable of destroying the nation's ethos. Foreigners as external enemies would be the alter ego of peripheral nationalism in Spain. The questioning by women of their position of subalternity with respect to men, and gender equality policies are seen by VOX as a threat to the family, the fundamental pillar of Spanish society. VOX has been able to recover the social imaginary of Francoism when it comes to making a political proposal based on Spanish national identity, family policies as an element to be promoted, and the defense of conservative and Catholic values in its vision of gender relations. Faced with a globalizing agenda, VOX's migratory response would be the closing of borders, and the vision of the "other" as a potential threat. The foreigner as anthropological fear would threaten and violate communities through violence towards women, "*mother-women*" are seen by this force in their passive and reproductive roles through the institution of the family.

2.5 Conclusions

The present chapter leaves the door open to further research into the role of VOX in relation to the topics investigated. A line of research that could be developed in the future consists of an analysis of the extent to which VOX's incorporation into the establishment might result in an abandonment of its extremist positions, and a greater focus on positions related to gender equality and immigration And finally, further research into the impact or influence of the presence of VOX on the other parliamentary forces of the Spanish political spectrum would be beneficial, along with an investigation into the extent to which a political force like VOX is able to strengthen immigration policies and modify or reduce support for gender equality policies by means of their speeches and proposals. Furthermore, as for other forces from the far-right in Europe, VOX's public discourse presents a series of contradictions with respect to gender, sexual and racist/anti-migrant discrimination. A number of paradoxical stances—e.g., mobilizing the threat of migrants against gender equality, while undermining gender equality through the promotion of "traditional" gender relations—which can and will most likely translate into a complex interplay of intersectional bordering(s).

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Chapter 3
The Right Kind of Family, the Right Kind of Migrant: Welfare and Immigration in Poland Before and After the Populist Turn

Anna Safuta

3.1 Introduction[1]

Several countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are currently undergoing a transformation from 'new' to 'illiberal' democracies. Illiberalism is a variety of populism, which in turn is most commonly defined as an "ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people." (Mudde, 2004: 543). Because populism lacks core values, it can be both right- or left-wing and, in order to give itself ideological substance, it nests into more established host ideologies (Mudde, 2004). Illiberal populism is a right-wing variety of populism based on "a nativist concept of belonging, linked to a chauvinist and racialized concept of 'the people' and 'the nation'" (Wodak, 2015: 47). According to Grzebalska and Pető, illiberal populism can be compared to a polypore — a parasitic fungus that feeds on a rotten tree while contributing to its decay, producing a fully dependent organism in return (Grzebalska & Pető, 2018). In this analogy, the rotten tree is neoliberalism.

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[1] Data collection and analysis, as well as the write up of the chapter occurred before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022 and the parliamentary elections in October 2023 in Poland, which resulted in the victory of the democratic opposition to illiberal populism. The analysis does not consider these changes, which impacted policy-making in the welfare and migration domains in Poland.

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Scholars and commentators alike identify illiberal populism in CEE as a nationalist response to the excesses of neoliberalism (Grzebalska & Pető, 2018; Korolczuk & Graff, 2018). In most CEE countries, the 1990s and early 2000s were characterized by a strong neoliberal consensus. Political parties from across the spectrum were committed to a brand of privatization that came with the marginalization of trade unions, increasing unemployment, wealth disparities and poverty (Ost, 2005). Illiberalism is said to be a reactionary response to a liberal democratic project that failed to keep neoliberalism in check (Grzebalska & Pető, 2018).

In this chapter, I show that, although populism is indeed a reaction to previous liberal policies, it rests on similar ideological foundations. Using welfare and immigration as case studies, I show that, in CEE, there are significant continuities between liberal democratic and illiberal populist policies. Familialism and racist understandings of national interest remained core paradigms of welfare and immigration policies in Poland after the electoral victories of illiberal populists.

Family policy is the privileged area of right-wing populist intervention into the welfare domain (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018). Populist governments in CEE have used large-scale child benefit programs as an electoral and legitimation tool. As a consequence, research into illiberal family policies in CEE has been flourishing (Bartha et al., 2020; Lendvai-Bainton & Szelewa, 2020; Szelewa, 2017). In this chapter I opt for a broader focus on care. Such a wider outlook enables to examine a wide array of social policies concerning not only children, but also senior citizens and people with disabilities. Immigration is another "core issue" for populist radical-right parties (Röth et al., 2018: 325). Their opposition to immigration occurs at a time when care needs in many countries around the world are increasingly fulfilled by migrant workers (Safuta et al., 2022). In Poland, families are privately hiring migrant women (mostly from Ukraine) who provide home care to older dependent people (Safuta, 2017). This 'functional equivalent' to family care alleviates needs while enabling policy-makers to eschew substantial reforms of Poland's familialist care regime (Safuta, 2021). As a result, migrant care work is an issue with low political salience in Poland (Matuszczyk, 2020).

The two main players of the Polish polity are the populist nationalist Law and Justice party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość,* PiS in Polish) and its biggest rival, the liberal conservative Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO). Created in 2001, PiS first came to power in 2005. In 2007, PiS's minority government resigned, prompting anticipated parliamentary elections. Founded in 2001, PO governed for two consecutive terms between 2007 and 2015, in coalition with the Polish Peasant Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, PSL). In those years, PiS was the largest opposition party in parliament. In May 2015, PiS candidate Andrzej Duda won the presidential election, followed the same year by the party's victory in the parliamentary elections. In 2019, PiS won the legislatives for the second time and established a majority government with small right-wing parties Agreement (*Porozumienie*), United Poland (*Solidarna Polska*) and The Republicans (*Republikanie*). The following year Duda was re-elected for a second 5-year mandate.

3.2 How PiS Fits the Illiberal Populist Mould

Populist policy-making has strong discursive features: it makes extensive use of adversarial narratives, Manichean language, strategic metaphors and crisis frames (Bartha et al., 2020: 74). PiS's politics fit this definition of populism as an ideology separating society into an 'us' and a 'them'. The party constantly targets social groups that it singles out as enemies of 'the Polish people' – alternately the opposition, 'elites from Brussels', Germany, refugees, LGBTQI+ people (Gdula & Sutowski, 2017; Yermakova, 2019). LGBTQI+ people became the designated enemy during the 2019 legislative and European campaigns, as well as in the 2020 presidential election (Yermakova, 2021). Despite considerable inflows from Ukraine, immigration was a low-salience issue in Poland until 2015, when PiS made it the center of its electoral campaign by forcefully protesting the idea that Poland would host refugees as part of the relocation quotas negotiated at EU-level by the previous PO government (Łodziński & Szonert, 2017).

PiS leverages the accusation of anti-Polishness against social groups, but also phenomena (such as abortion or sex education in schools) or ideas (feminism or 'gender ideology') (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022; Korolczuk & Graff, 2018). Populists are also critical of technocratic governance, in which the legitimacy of political decisions rests on technical, scientific or administrative expertise (Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017; Caramani, 2017). PiS's rhetoric is premised on the populist claim that the party represents the popular will, contrary to former political elites representing only their own interests. This claim is however contested by various social groups who took the streets to manifest their dissent with PiS policies (Kubisa & Rakowska, 2018; Ramme & Snochowska-Gonzalez, 2019). One such group were family carers providing care to children with disabilities, who occupied the Polish parliament in a series of high-profile protests in 2018. Another such group were women, who took part in several mass-scale feminist demonstrations in 2016 and 2020, coordinated by the initially informal organization 'Women's Strike'.

According to Bill and Stanley, social policy is the third domain after institutional change and traditionalist backlash, in which PiS governments have had the biggest impact (Bill & Stanley, 2020). Public support for families with children, especially those at risk of poverty, was limited before PiS came to power. Family and social assistance benefits remained highly selective despite modest broadening efforts (Polakowski et al., 2017). PiS introduced the child benefits program Family 500+ (previously just 500+), its most prominent social policy measure. Most studies discussing PiS's welfare policies focus on this program, which introduced universal monthly child-rearing benefits of 500 PLN per child, payable until the child's majority. A flagship promise of PiS's 2015 electoral campaign, the benefit was initially only aimed at second, third and subsequent children and means-tested. In July 2019, 3 months before the October 2019 parliamentary elections, PiS made it universal for all children.

The adjective 'illiberal' in illiberal populism refers to the fact that this type of populism deteriorates democracy by stripping it of its liberal qualities – chiefly the

separation of powers, the rule of law and the protection of minorities. In Poland, PiS has been "at the vanguard of creating a new political system; one which preserves the procedural vestiges of democracy while hollowing out its liberal content" (Pirro & Stanley, 2021: 13). PiS policies have notably resulted in a breakdown of the Constitutional Tribunal (Sadurski, 2019) and attacks on reproductive and LGBTQI+ rights (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Krizsan & Roggeband, 2018). The party uses welfare to legitimize these increasingly authoritarian measures. The Family 500+ program of child benefits was for example repeatedly mentioned during the dismantling of the Polish Constitutional Court, suggesting that the court might "block a program that benefits millions of Poles" (Polakowski et al., 2017, p. 16).

3.3 Data and Methods

The chapter is based on 17 semi-structured interviews conducted in Poland between September 2019 and January 2020 with academics, policy-makers, and practitioners with expertise in social policy. Only a minority of respondents asked to remain anonymous. The study initially aimed to understand why several attempts at reforming long-term care policy failed. As I did not ask interviewees if they consented to be quoted beyond the original study, all citations in this chapter were anonymized. The interviews were complemented by an analysis of legislation and official documents produced by the parliament, government, and political parties.

Given the ongoing polarization of Polish society after populists came to power, I initially avoided asking respondents direct questions about party politics. Those however came up very quickly in interviewees' answers. My first respondent for example, a care expert linked to PiS, told me that, contrary to PO, PiS "*understands poverty*":

> PiS, they deal with the poor, the sick, they take care of all those people who have failed, whereas here [for PO], it's more of a business thing — every złoty is supposed to bring in three złotys, one for the taxes, and two for me. And if something doesn't [make a profit], that means you shouldn't go into it and invest in it.

Thematic coding of interview data revealed recurring themes that went beyond questions pertaining to long-term care reforms. All respondents spontaneously produced (sometimes very sophisticated) comparisons of liberal and illiberal policy-making, but some also insisted on legacies and continuities between the two factions.

3.4 Discursive Shifts and Stable Policy Orientations

The prevailing narrative characterizing PiS discourse is that no welfare reforms happened before PiS came to power in November 2015. Interviewed social policy experts not connected to the party contest this:

> The claim that it was PiS that initiated social policy changes [in Poland] is a discursive manipulation. In the first decade [of the 21st century] there were many, many actions, admittedly not as spectacular as 500+, but altogether they marked a change in relation to the previous decade. […] To be more precise, things started to accelerate very quickly from 2012 onwards. That's when new senior citizen policies, but most of all family policies, started to appear. […] Even before PiS arrived in power, parental leaves were extended, pre-school care was reformed, nursery care started to develop slowly, parental leave benefits for uninsured parents were introduced […]

Interviewed academics that served as experts for the opposition speak of a discursive appropriation of welfare by populists: *"[Social policy] has been appropriated [by PiS] to such an extent that PiS de facto owns the discourse on welfare and everything else is almost reactive, other actors have to prove their credibility [to talk about social issues]"*. During its pre-electoral convention in September 2019, the party's president Jarosław Kaczyński announced that PiS was *"building the Polish version of a welfare state"*, which was also the title of PiS's official party program – *A Polish Welfare State Model*, (PiS, 2019). Among other promises, the document announced free medicines for senior citizens, a raise of the statutory minimum hourly wage and a thirteenth and fourteenth yearly payment for all pension beneficiaries. Such electoral promises were then used to justify policy inertia in other welfare domains. As pointed out by an academic expert closely following disability policy in Poland:

> When the 500+ program was launched, [family] carers wrote letters [to the Ministry of the Family, Labour and Social Policy] to have their case heard and they received [answers] like 'Yes, we do remember about you, but right now we have a lot of expenses and we are busy preparing the programs we promised people in the electoral campaign, mainly 500+, so your case will have to wait'. Not in those words, but that was the message, […]. And then a term in office passed and other very costly programs are introduced all the time [but nothing happens in the disability domain].

The same academic expert explained that PiS provoked other political parties to develop extensive welfare programs:

> Social policy is now rather in a developmental phase […], as a matter of fact in these elections [legislative elections in October 2019] nearly all parties have various social policies that ten years ago no one would have dreamt of […]. [PO] even said that [if they win,] they are not going to abolish what was introduced by PiS but will add their own programs.

Those quotes illustrate the discursive victory of illiberal populists in CEE, who successfully challenged the (neo)liberal post-transition consensus. In Poland as in most CEE countries, political parties from across the spectrum were committed to cutting public welfare spending and privatizing responsibility for most social risks. PiS discursively challenged this stance, although policy reform did not follow, and the ideological underpinnings of welfare governance remained roughly the same.

3.4.1 Familialist Continuities

Familialism is an orientation characterizing, to varying degrees, most welfare states across the world. It considers that the family is the most appropriate site of provision, organization and financing of care for children and dependent adults. A rich social policy literature conceptualized different varieties of familialism, depending on the intensity and type of state support for the caring capacity of the family (Le Bihan et al., 2019; Leitner, 2003, 2014; Saraceno, 2016). Research usually distinguishes between unsupported and supported familialism: "In both cases, families are considered responsible for care and expected to provide it. Under unsupported familialism, policies do not recognize families' need for support. Under supported familialism, families are helped in taking care" (Le Bihan et al., 2019: 581). Unsupported familialism occurs when public policies do not support the provision of care by family members and do not offer any alternative in the form of care services; supported familialism promotes family care (via monetary benefits and/or leave policies), but similarly does not offer alternatives (Le Bihan et al., 2019).

Family 500+ is said to be a paradigm shift in Poland's social policy – a transition from unsupported familialism towards its supported form (Szelewa, 2017). Widening the scope of analysis from a focus on child benefits towards other social policy domains reveals however that not much else changed when PiS came to power. Unsupported familialism still dominated social policy in Poland: the family was expected to fulfil most caring functions without much support from the state. Long-term care has been characterized by relative policy inertia (Safuta, 2021), while the demands for more state support expressed by people with disabilities and their caring relatives largely ignored (Bakalarczyk, 2018; Kubisa & Rakowska, 2018).

After the 1989 transformation, all political parties in Poland adopted a familialist stance towards social policy. However, their familialism was fueled by different beliefs, and those variations explain differences in adopted policies. In order to account for the continued prevalence of familialism in Poland, while simultaneously taking stock of its changing ideological underpinnings, I introduce the two real-types of *market familialism* and *nationalist familialism*. *Nationalist familialism* is a form of biopolitics which views the heteropatriarchal family as the foundation of the nation. This type of familialism uses family policies to pursue nationalist natalist objectives. It subjugates the individual self-determination and reproductive rights of women and LGBTQI+ people to the normative imperative of the reproduction and survival of the nation (Grzebalska & Pető, 2018). PiS's *nationalist familialism* explicitly excludes carers considered ideologically undesirable, such as single parents (who until July 2019 had no right to the 500+ benefit if they were not perceiving alimony from the other parent) or queer families (Polish administrations and courts routinely refuse to recognise foreign birth certificates listing same sex parents) (Knut et al., 2017, p. 16). *Market familialism*, for its part, is critical of state interventions in citizens' welfare, as it wants a radical break with the state socialist past. This type of familialism taps into the caring and financial capacity of families to avoid public spending on social matters. When families are unable to fulfil

welfare functions, their tasks should be taken over by the market. This type of familialism characterized PO's social policies.

The differences between those two types of familialism are best illustrated using a concrete example. Poland has witnessed a series of proposed but never-adopted long-term care reforms, each party authoring projects aligning with the type of familialism it defended. The first proposal was put forward by an expert working group set up under the auspices of PiS in 2007. The document planned to introduce a social insurance against the risk of dependence on long-term care, but never went beyond the stage of a draft submitted to the Health Ministry (Safuta, 2021). When PO came to power, another expert group worked on a reform of long-term care from 2008 onwards. Finished in 2015 and later revised, this draft law planned to introduce publicly-financed vouchers allowing to pay for care services. The aim was to stimulate the development of a market of care services by increasing users' purchasing power (Safuta, 2021).

The voucher proposal is an excellent illustration of PO's *market familialism* and its perception of the desired interactions between state, market and families. After revision in 2017–2018 (in preparation of the 2019 parliamentary election), the new draft made the vouchers available only to care receivers without caring relatives or whose caring relatives were professionally active. The proposal did not intend to challenge the care system's reliance on unpaid labour by female relatives. In the words of a PO politician who co-authored the proposal:

> The voucher will go to those who want to combine work and care. Or those who can't care because, for example, they are disabled themselves. […] However, if a wife takes care of a disabled son, husband, then there is no need for a voucher, what would we pay that spouse for.

The family was to remain the main provider of care, closely followed by the market. The state only stepped in to financially support the development of care markets via publicly-subsidized care vouchers. Confronted with criticism from social workers questioning authorities' ability to monitor such private care markets, authors clarified that the proposal did not intend to introduce market oversight by the state. Those markets were supposed to self-regulate through demand and control from families:

> Social workers were distrustful of care markets. […] They said we wouldn't be able to oversee them, but I said that it's not up to us to do it, it's the families' job. Families will be the ones spending the voucher on this nursing home or that other nursing home.

Originating from PO's camp, the draft law on care vouchers was abruptly rejected by the parliament during PiS's second term in power.

However, PO's previously fierce opposition to public welfare started to thaw already in the 2010s, way before PiS arrival in power. The second PO coalition government (2011–2015) initiated a transition from unsupported familialism to 'optional familialism through the market' – a family policy regime combining public support for family care (via benefits or leave rights) with support for care provision via the market (Le Bihan et al., 2019). A scheme encouraging the development of private crèches and other care structures for children under the age of 3 ("Maluch")

was introduced in 2011, and a parental leave benefit for uninsured parents (the so-called "Kosiniakowe") in 2015. According to an interviewed PO politician, this policy illustrates the ideological change undergone by party leader Donald Tusk himself:

> The leader, Donald Tusk, clearly said that he completely changed his view on social issues since he took over responsibility for the state. [...] For the first two, almost three years [of PO rule], there were no family policy proposals, and then came the care leave, and so on. There was more and more of that.

– And why? Did Donald Tusk have an epiphany?
– No, [...] he was getting rid of the illusion that the market would solve everything. When you read his texts from the old days, he believed that there should be as little state intervention as possible, that the market would [take care of] everything.

3.4.2 Racist Continuities

Contemporary political, social, and cultural developments in CEE are often explained with reference to the shared legacy of state socialism. However, beyond this historically short-term heritage, the region shares a *longue durée* legacy of (semi)peripherality. From the development of capitalism in the sixteenth century, Western states have dominated Eastern Europe politically, economically and culturally. Poland alone has successively been a periphery of the Prussian, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires (from the eighteenth century to the Second World War) and a semi-periphery of the USSR (from the end of the Second World War to the fall of communism) (Pawłuszko, 2017). It has now re-gained the status of a political and economic semi-periphery of the centres of globalized capitalism located in the Global North. In the domain of race and interethnic relations, this (semi)peripherality manifests as 'peripheral whiteness' – a condition of simultaneous privilege and subordination characterizing ethnic groups from the peripheries and semi-peripheries of global capitalism, which could phenotypically belong to hegemonic Western whiteness, but are often symbolically denied full access to its privileges (Safuta, 2018).

In 2006, during its first period in government, PiS introduced a simplified procedure enabling citizens of neighboring Ukraine, Belarus and Russia to work in Poland without a work permit, based solely on a 'declaration of intent to hire a foreigner', easy to register by an employer. Initially free of charge, such a declaration cost 30 PLN (about 7 €) until July 2022 and since then 100 PLN (around 25€). The aim was to encourage short-term inflows from neighboring post-Soviet countries to remedy labor shortages in agriculture and services. Over 95% of migrants who benefit yearly from this simplified procedure are Ukrainian citizens (Krajewska et al., 2015). PO-led governments maintained this policy and even extended it in 2011 to citizens of Armenia, Georgia and Moldova.

More generally, successive PO governments did not scrap the labor migration schemes introduced by PiS during its first term in power. Poland's immigration policy denotes a stable preference for 'peripherally white' labor migrants from the former USSR. Besides the simplified procedure, peripherally white migrants benefit from privileges such as the work permit exemption available to holders of a 'Card of the Pole'. Introduced in 2007 by the first PiS government, this document attests of the Polish roots of another country's citizen. It comes with the right to a long-term visa and to work in Poland without a permit. Around 70% of all long-term stay permits issued by Polish authorities are granted on the basis of such a document (Leska-Ślęzak & Ślęzak, 2019).

PO's migration policy has been described as technocratic, while PiS's as ideological (Łodziński & Szonert, 2017). The ideological character of PiS's immigration policy manifested in discursive manipulations, such as the deliberate semantic confusion between 'migrants' and 'refugees'. During a debate in the European Parliament in January 2016, PiS Prime Minister Beata Szydło for example declared that "Poland has accepted around a million refugees from Ukraine, people whom nobody wanted to help." (Reuters, 2016). Conflating labor migrants and refugees, this declaration was part of PiS's opposition to hosting refugees from war-torn regions in the Middle East and Africa, in the framework of EU-wide relocation quotas negotiated in September 2015 by the previous PO government. Despite such declarations, until Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, there were no possibilities for Ukrainian citizens to obtain asylum in Poland, despite the Russo-Ukrainian war ongoing since February 2014. Possibilities for obtaining asylum in Poland opened only in February 2022, for Ukrainian war refugees fleeing the full-scale Russian invasion.

3.5 Conclusions

The literature commonly presents illiberal populism in CEE as a reaction to the perceived excesses of (neo)liberalism. Until populists came to power in Poland, political parties from across the spectrum were committed to cutting public welfare spending and privatizing responsibility for most social risks. PiS discursively challenged this stance, although policy reform in the welfare and migration domains did not follow, and the ideological underpinnings of welfare and migration governance remained roughly the same. I show however that illiberal populism is not simply a counter-thesis to a (neo)liberal thesis. Instead, it is a reactionary intensification of the unexamined ideological underpinnings of previous policy choices. Familialism and racism characterized social and immigration policies in Poland well before the illiberal turn. Welfare policies in Poland were familialist before PiS came to power. PiS introduced the racist preference for peripherally white immigration during its first stint in government, but PO did not abrogate it.

The literature on populism shows that populist radical-right parties view the (heteronormative) family as a key site of reproduction of the nation. The adoption by

PiS of a large-scale child benefit program fits this observation. However, familialism is not the exclusive domain of illiberal populists. PO's liberal conservative governments shared a similar familialist outlook, although their 'brand' of familialism focused more on the family's role as the site of reproduction of workers/capitalist subjects. Liberals' unquestioned commitment to the family as main provider and payer of care facilitated the later instrumentalization of familialist policies by populists. I introduce a distinction between 'market familialism' and 'nationalist familialism', useful to account for continuities and differences in the varieties of familialism represented by liberals and illiberals, respectively.

The standard assumption in most studies of the populist radical-right is that those parties oppose immigration. The Polish case highlights however that illiberal populists in CEE are not necessary hostile to all migrant inflows. Instead, they distinguish between undesirable, 'culturally alien' non-white (especially Muslim) migrants and 'culturally close' post-Soviet 'neighbors'. Polish populists perceive peripherally white migration as a valued source of cheap labour and in this they do not differ from liberals.

This chapter makes an important contribution to the study of bordering practices presented in the book introduction (Vuckovic Juros et al., this volume). It details discursive moves used by illiberal populists to identify families worth of state support (the 'right kind of family' in the title) and migrants welcome within national borders (the 'right kind of migrant'). The chapter shows that those bordering practices rely on distinctions predating the populist turn. This begs the question of liberals' responsibility in the democratic backsliding of CEE.

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Chapter 4
The "Zero Tolerance Policy" to Separate Migrant Families: Context and Discursive Strategies to Foster Exclusion

Alejandra Díaz de León and Guillermo Yrizar Barbosa

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we focus on one of the most visible deterrence strategies implemented by the Trump administration, the Zero Tolerance Policy (ZTP), a policy that separated migrant families arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border without papers by prosecuting the parents and putting the children into the care of the state. The ZTP is one of the multiple border control practices implemented by the United States which was designed to exclude migrants along racial, class, or gender lines, among other criteria. Through a detailed analysis of the timeline of the policy and the White House's statements about and reactions to news reporting around the ZTP, we examine how the implementation of family separation and the discourses surrounding it attempted to exclude migrant families by transforming them into racialized criminal others. We show how the Trump administration politicized intimacy by targeting families through its border control practices.

In this paper we are interested in establishing how and when the White House and other government agencies in the United States talked about the Zero Tolerance Policy. In order to address this aim, our research team carried out a search for documents, articles, tweets, research studies, and academic articles that "show the Trump administration presenting, reacting to, defending, or rejecting statements about 'Zero tolerance policy' or 'family separation'". We gathered 130 relevant documents including videos, tweets, newspaper articles, and long-form articles.

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We then analyzed a random subsample of articles to identify the distinct stages of the communication strategy employed by the White House that the documents supported. We classified the strategies and decided on preliminary codes (which became the different stages of ZTP messaging). We then codified the rest of the strategies following these codes, allowing for new codes if they emerged. We collected the data between January and March 2021, some time after the policy had formally ended.

In the first section we discuss the role of deterrence in relation to a State's border control practices, including the ZTP. Next, we provide a brief timeline of the policy and describe its deterrent effects and the consequences for migrants and for the right to be part of a family unit. In the next section, we present our methodology. The following section analyses the discourses used by the Trump administration to talk about the policy when it was in operation. We suggest that the administration oscillated between three different types of discursive strategies: (1) secrecy and denial; (2) owning up; and (3) defensiveness and blame shifting. By analyzing their responses within these frameworks, we aim to make sense of the way in which the administration swung back and forth between these strategies. Finally, we conclude by underlining the urgent need to adopt a human rights perspective when referring to highly vulnerable migrant families subjected to harsh policies that separate mothers and fathers from their children and other relatives while on the move.

4.2 Deterrence Policies on the U.S.-Mexico Border

Deterrence policies are a type of border control practice that the United States has deployed since at least 1994 (Campos-Delgado, 2021; FitzGerald, 2020). The objective of these policies is to make undocumented migration more difficult and dangerous, thus dissuading potential migrants from leaving their home countries. The "prevention through deterrence" strategy was introduced in 1994 and involved the U.S. government reinforcing the border through the use of fences, officers, and helicopters. Since then, the policy has extended much further. In 2001, the PATRIOT Act expanded the "zone of security" around Mexico (Mittelstadt et al., 2011) and, in 2005 the Secure Border Initiative (SBI) saw new fencing, ground surveillance radar, infrared cameras, and laser range finders added to the arsenal (Shaw-Taylor, 2011). In the same year, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act (HR 4437) made it a felony to be an undocumented person in the United States (Guttentag, 2021).

The United States has also expanded the border both within and outside of its territories, through the use of Border Patrol checkpoints that extend far into the interior of the country, and beyond it towards the southern border of Mexico. The Southern Border Plan, implemented in 2014 by the Mexican government -using U.S. funding from the Mérida Initiative- attempted to catch undocumented migrants heading for the United States while they were crossing Mexico. Similarly to the

United States, the Mexican government attempted to do this by establishing roadblocks in the southern states, increasing the capacity of detention centres (in terms of numbers, locations and powers), and making it difficult for migrants to ride on top of the freight trains, and hide in tractor-trailers, trucks or buses (thus forcing them to walk and take more secluded routes).

Each of these policy changes made undocumented migration more difficult and dangerous. The obstacles that Mexico and the United States have put in place have the effect of sending migrants into more dangerous areas where they are vulnerable to criminal and institutional violence and to environmental or natural hazards. Thousands of migrants have died in the more inhospitable areas of the Sonoran Desert while attempting to overcome the physical and technological barriers that the United States has imposed (see Spener, 2009; Slack et al., 2016). Likewise, in Mexico, hundreds of thousands of migrants have died or gone missing while attempting to find a way past the roadblocks and the power and influence of the cartels and Mexican police officers and immigration officials.

Although several rigorous academic studies have shown that deterrence policies are not effective in dissuading migrants from leaving their home countries in the first place (Massey et al., 2003), the United States and Mexico persist in implementing new ways of making the journey more difficult for undocumented migrants. The Trump administration followed this tradition by ratifying over 1064 immigration policies over a 4 year period (Guttentag, 2021). These have increased the obstacles for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, often banning them outright from the country. Among the chief examples of the policies implemented by the government to prevent migrants and asylum seekers from entering U.S. territory are: the travel ban; the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) or Remain in Mexico (Kocher, 2021), particularly around the time of the first migrant 'caravans' (see París Pombo & Montes, 2020); the lowered cap on refugee admissions (Boghani, 2019); and the Asylum Cooperation Agreement (ACA). Other visible deterrence strategies have involved fixing or building new segments of the border wall, reinforcing the detection technology deployed and increasing the number of Border Agents patrolling the border area (Garrett, 2020).

The effects of these policies have been catastrophic for migrants and asylum seekers. The MPP forced thousands of asylum seekers to wait to be processed in the border towns of Mexico, surrounded by rampant violence and having to live in very insecure and unhygienic conditions. Some stayed in migrant shelters while many had to make do with the crowed camps, where clean water, sanitation, and protection are not guaranteed. Migrants have been victims of violent attacks, rape, trafficking, and murder, with 1554 documented cases of such abuses recorded by 2021 in Mexico (Human Rights First, 2021). The ACA has expedited the removal of asylum seekers to Guatemala, even if they originally come from other countries in Central America. Many of those who are sent back abandon their claims and choose to return to their countries of origin. In the following section, we focus on one of the most visible and mediatized deterrence strategies implemented by the Trump administration, the Zero Tolerance Policy or ZTP.

4.3 Trump's Migrant Family Separation Policy

The "Zero Tolerance Policy" officially came into force on 6 April 2018, when Jeff Sessions, the then U.S. Attorney General (9 February 2017 to 7 November 2018) released a memo stating that all people caught crossing the border between Mexico and the United States without documents would be prosecuted as criminals, instead of facing civil or administrative charges. The policy meant that parents and children would be separated because the law requires parents to be separated from their children if they are facing criminal charges.

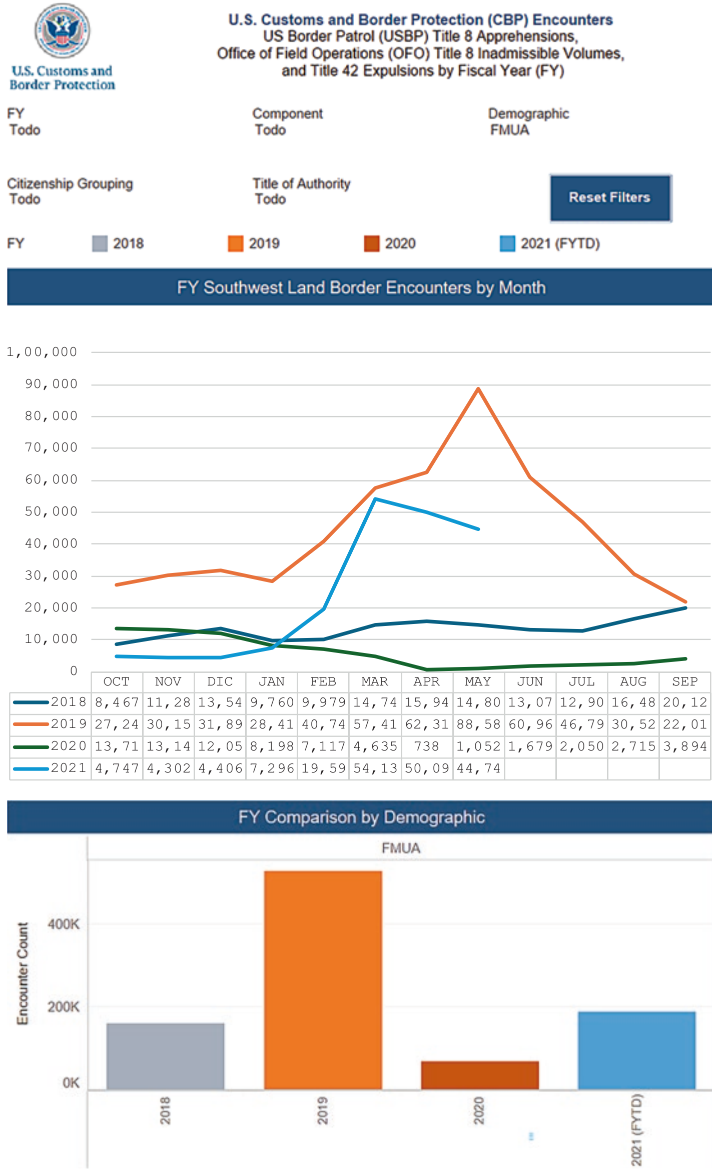
The ZTP has explicitly dissuasive goals. The U.S. government wanted would-be migrants to know that if they attempted to cross the border irregularly and if they were caught, they would be prosecuted and *separated from their children*. The federal authorities ensured that they announced this via public forums, such as in press conferences and interviews. By making the consequences of migrating irregularly more severe, they hoped that families would decide to remain in their home countries or perhaps stay in Mexico. However, according to a report by the MPI, the policy did not deter families; the number of family arrests held steady in June 2018, after the policy had been in operation for a full month (Pierce et al., 2018). Deterrence had a negligible effect in this context.

Recent illustrations of how ineffective these policies against family migration are can be identified not only in official statistics but also in testimonies and fieldwork observations collected along the Central American transit routes in Mexico. According to U.S. Custom and Border Protection (CBP) data, in the fiscal year (FY) 2018 a total of 161,113 'Family Unit Aliens' encounters on the 'Southwest Land Border' were recorded, while in FY 2019 a record high of 527,112 of these migrant family encounters were reported.[1] The FY 2020 witnessed a significant reduction probably due to the COVID-19 pandemic (70,994 encounters), but the data up to May 2021 showed a significant increase (189,185 encounters), already surpassing the figure for FY 2018 (see Fig. 4.1).

During 2021 and to date in 2022, in the Southern-Central Mexican city of Puebla, multiple cases have been recorded of Central American families being detained and separated by Mexican immigration authorities under the guise of a pseudo-humanitarian discourse.[2] We have observed and documented that these families are aware of the potential family separation actions carried out by the Mexican government, usually involving detaining and deporting adult males while mothers and their children are sent to other improvised spaces or to migrant shelters (Yrizar

[1] According to the CBP, a "Family Unit represents the number of individuals (either a child under 18 years old, parents or legal guardian) apprehended with a family member by the U.S. Border Patrol." Data retrieved on 15 June 2012. Available at: https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters

[2] This empirical work and parts of the last section on "Family separation from a human rights perspective" were made possible thanks to funding from Dirección de Investigación y Posgrado at Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla and a collaborative project with Jeremy Slack and Oscar Misael Hernández supported by a ConTex Collaborative Research Grant since September 2020.



	OCT	NOV	DIC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
2018	8,467	11,28	13,54	9,760	9,979	14,74	15,94	14,80	13,07	12,90	16,48	20,12
2019	27,24	30,15	31,89	28,41	40,74	57,41	62,31	88,58	60,96	46,79	30,52	22,01
2020	13,71	13,14	12,05	8,198	7,117	4,635	738	1,052	1,679	2,050	2,715	3,894
2021	4,747	4,302	4,406	7,296	19,59	54,13	50,09	44,74				

Fig. 4.1 U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Encounters. Source: USBP and OFO official year end reporting for FY18-FY20; USBP and OFO month end reporting for FY21 to date. Data is current as of 6/3/2021

Barbosa et al., 2022). However, these formal and informal policies of family separation have failed to deter parents from trying to cross the border. Knowing the risks, some families opted to wait in Mexico City or Monterrey in the hope of achieving reunification by themselves.

Migrant family unity, or the right to family unity during international migration, has not been a priority of the U.S. and Mexican governments in recent years, at least not beyond the hollow rhetoric in tangible policy terms. Donald Trump and his team at the White House were aware of that, most notably among them his senior adviser, Stephen Miller. As noted by scholars conducting research work before the Trump administration came to power, on Latinx immigrant families in general, but particularly on Mexican ones (Abrego, 2014; Yrizar Barbosa & Alarcón, 2015; Cárdenas Montaño & Alarcón Acosta, 2017; Dreby, 2010; Menjívar et al., 2016; Sigona et al., 2019), the use of family separation practices by U.S. immigration authorities was a constant feature as well as a somewhat invisible consequence of what Goodman (2020) calls the long history of the "deportation machine".[3] More precisely, according to Wayne Cornelius (2020), the Trump administration used Section 1325 of U.S. Immigration law, which defined unauthorized entry to the country as a criminal offence, to separate migrant parents from their children.

More than 2600 children ended up being separated from their parents at the border during the period when the ZTP was officially in operation (Shahoulian et al., 2020). The American Academy of Paediatrics (Einbinder, 2018) stated that the toxic stress caused by the separation could lead to lifelong trauma for the children. Parents who have experienced the separation also commonly display symptoms of depression, heightened anxiety, and inability to sleep. For example, a Honduran man who intended to apply for asylum killed himself at a detention centre after being separated from his wife and son during ZTP (Einbinder, 2018).

4.4 Migrant Family Separation from a Human Rights Perspective

International transit migrants in Mexico, as well as Mexican emigrants, returnees, and immigrants in the United States, are extremely vulnerable due to restrictive policies that adversely affect their dignity and human rights, including their right to family life. These policies could be said to form part of what Menjívar and Abrego (2012) identified approximately a decade ago as "legal violence". International migrants, especially those who are irregular or unauthorized, are in a disadvantaged position with regard to their basic human rights, compared to non-migrants, relative to the power of the state (Bustamante, 2002). Transit migrants who are travelling

[3] In fact, Goodman reminds us that a "zero tolerance" policy discourse was also used when the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) implemented Operation Streamline, which criminalized undocumented immigrants and reduced the number of voluntary departures (Goodman, 2020: 181).

with more than one family member, particularly those travelling with younger women and children are likely to have a higher level of vulnerability than more experienced single-adult males undertaking their journey without relatives or alone.

The increase in numbers of women and children among the transit migrant flows from Central America in recent decades is another signal that people attempting to cross borders have become more vulnerable (Rodríguez Chávez, 2016). Migrant shelters run by civil society organizations at both Mexican borders—with the United States but also with Guatemala—have been documenting the growing diversity in terms of national origins and family units, as well as the human rights' violations they all face along the route, even in 'medium to low-risk' places like Puebla and Tlaxcala (REDODEM, 2021).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the American Convention on Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as other instruments, treaties and organizations recognize both the right to family life and the importance of protecting families, regardless of whether or not they are migrant families. In addition to Articles 25 and 26, Article 16 of the UDHR recognizes that "The family is the natural and fundamental element of society and has the right to the protection of society and the State". However, the right to family life stems from Articles 11.2 and 17.1 (this is similar to Art. 16 of the UDHR) of the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR), by establishing that: "No one may be the object of arbitrary or abusive interference with his private life, his family, his home, or his correspondence, or of unlawful attacks on his honour or reputation".

Regional or national institutions such as ECLAC (more commonly known in Spanish as CEPAL) and the CNDH (National Human Rights Commission) in Mexico have referred to different types of families, such as nuclear families without children (two people), homo-parental (parents of the same sex) or coexistence societies, to name but a few. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, a UN multilateral treaty, defines "members of the family" as "persons married to migrant workers or who maintain a relationship with them that (…) produces effects equivalent to marriage, as well as to the dependent children and other dependents recognized as family members". This same Convention also refers indirectly to the right to family life for migrants in Article 14, specifically in terms of protection by the state to attacks or unlawful interferences. In addition, Article 44 mentions that "State Parties (…) shall take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of the unity of the families of migrant workers" and facilitate reunification only with immediate relatives (spouses and "minor dependent unmarried children"), but there are no explicit references to potential family separation policies or other relatives, nor to different family configurations. It seems that, not just in places of destination but also of origin, transit or return, international human mobilities pose political and social challenges for the protection and configuration of family units and relatives, especially in terms of avoiding separation and promoting family unity despite harsh deterrence policies and fortified borders.

Recently, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACH, 2015) published a report that includes a chapter which openly focuses on the right to family life in immigration proceedings. This report includes several key aspects that should be highlighted in order to promote the adoption of a human rights perspective when dealing with draconian governmental actions such as the ZTP during the Trump administration. These aspects could also be highly relevant in other infamous cases in the region dealing with unauthorized migration flows, such as in Mexico under the López Obrador administration where *de facto* deterrence and contention migration policies negatively affect the human rights of international migrants and their relatives from Central American countries (and beyond the Americas). One key aspect relates to the importance of "recognizing a wide range of family forms", and it is acknowledged that "the existence of a family relationship is a question of fact, which must be analyzed on a case by case basis" (IACH, 2015: 161–162). A second important feature concerns evidence received by the IACH, "alleging that the right to family life is not sufficiently taken into account in removal proceedings, particularly where the removal of long-term permanent residents is at issue". A third aspect, invoking the Convention on the Rights of the Child, refers to measures that separate parents and children, which, it specifies, "should be extremely exceptional and be subject to judicial review" (IACH, 2015: 162–-163). Chapter 8 of this IACH report constitutes a major contribution to advancing the human rights perspective for all migrants, but also encourages the use of a critical perspective to challenge inhuman policies that directly or indirectly (formally or informally) separate migrant families.

Although the right to family life is embedded in most human rights conventions and pacts, states not only disregard and violate this right, but also weaponize family separation to deter and push back migrants and asylum seekers. This provides yet another illustrative example of the fact that, especially in the case of vulnerable, racialized, and undocumented people, human rights are not respected.

4.5 Three Stages of ZTP Messaging

An analysis of newspaper articles, tweets, and press conferences by the White House allows us to see how the White House under the Trump Administration changed the way they justified and talked about the ZTP on an almost daily basis, in response to how the media, politicians, and the public reacted to the news articles and the images of children in cages. The reactions of the White House swing from owning up to and taking responsibility for the policy and acknowledging its deterrent aims, to denying that they implemented it and blaming the Democrats for doing so during Barack Obama's presidency. We suggest that the actions of the White House can be categorized into three main discursive strategies or stages of ZTP messaging: (1) secrecy and denial; (2) owning up; and (3) defensiveness and blame shifting. These three strategies were not employed in a linear fashion, but rather, in the form of a spiral which sometimes involved jumping from stage three (defensiveness and blame shifting) back to stage one (secrecy and denial) within a single day.

Often, staff members from the White House adopted different positions on the same day. In the following section, we use this framework to analyze how the justifications changed and even became contradictory.

Separating these interlinked strategies allows us to see how the government attempts to “construct” perceptions about a given policy with regards to a national and (sometimes) international audience.

4.5.1 Secrecy and Denial

Secrecy and denial have been part of the U.S. government’s strategy from its inception, and within certain agencies, secrecy is the standard operating procedure (Leonard, 2011). Governments can maintain secrecy to protect national security, to engage in international operations (Gibbs, 1995), to guard technological and scientific information (Relyea, 2003) or to avoid being “a slave of public opinion” (Gibbs, 1995: 216). Based on our analysis, the Trump administration initially pursued a strategy of secrecy to carry out a trial run of the Zero Tolerance Policy. However, as will be shown in this section, the government later reverted to the strategy of *secrecy* to keep the program running even after its formal cancellation.

Secrecy therefore characterizes the beginning and the formal end of the family separation policy saga. Although the policy officially started in 2018, a report by the Majority Staff Subcommittee on Immigration and Safety of the House of Representatives showed that, since 2017, the Trump administration had been planning this policy and that they had begun to ramp up the number of family separations unofficially. According to the Washington Post, in a classified memo, issued a month before the policy was implemented, some immigration and border officials told the then Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen that the “most effective way” to deter undocumented migration would be to prosecute migrants including parents traveling with children (Horwitz & Sacchetti, 2018).

The trial for the program started quietly in July 2017 in El Paso, Texas, and ran until October 2017. There was no official announcement. “This was happening before it was news, people didn’t believe it,” commented Lida Rivas, executive director of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center (Riordan Seville & Rappleye, 2018). Families that were caught on the border were separated. While the mother and father were prosecuted, the children were reclassified as “unaccompanied” and were put into the care of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Interestingly, secrecy extended to other government offices too. For example, officers from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the institution responsible for caring for the children, were not warned about the pilot program, and nor were they told to expect a higher influx of children than usual. Officers from this institution deduced that something had changed when they unexpectedly started receiving more “unaccompanied” minors than would have normally been the case for the time of the year (Shahoulian et al., 2020). Staff at the DHS were also surprised by the program. DHS officials stated that the order was so abruptly issued

that it bypassed official reviews. Consequently, the agency was not prepared to gather accurate data on the separations that would allow them to reunite children with their parents (Pelley, 2018). This shows that the policy of secrecy included not only public opinion but also other branches of U.S. bureaucracy.

In an attempt to maintain an image of competency, governments can use the tactic of "selective information dissemination" (Gibbs, 1995, which sometimes even involves deliberate misrepresentation (Morgenthau, 1967) including *denial*. This strategy acknowledges that public opinion is dynamic, constantly changing, and that it can be created and re-created by the government. In many cases, secrecy and denial complement each other. In the case of the ZTP, the *secrecy* was maintained with *denial.* When organizations that represented immigrants in El Paso started noticing that adult immigrants were worried about where their children had been taken, they realized that there had been some sort of policy change. They held a meeting with officers from the DHS in which they asked them what was going on. The officers denied that anything new or different was happening and the meeting ended. Days later, the pilot ended.

Although the policy officially ended on 20 June 2018, researchers and advocacy groups have documented instances of *de facto* family separations dating back for several years. Migrants were sometimes pushed back from the border line to Mexico and prevented from applying for asylum in the United States. They were forced to wait in dangerous border towns on the Mexican side, often living in makeshift camps and with the constant threat of cartel violence hanging over them. Many eventually gave up and tried to cross via an illegal crossing point, earning a misdemeanour. When these families are caught, the children are still separated from their parents and sent to different detention centers. The parents are usually swiftly deported while the children remain in detention (Garrett, 2020). Even after ZTP had formally ended, if parents who are caught with children have an outstanding warrant for non-violent offences like illegal re-entry, the child(ren) can still be taken away. Children are also separated from their main caregivers on the grounds that the authorities are tackling trafficking and separating "fake families". These caregivers are often the only guardians the children have ever known and separating them from their relations is traumatic for the children (Villagran, 2019).

During the pilot program, officials realized they were unable to track the families in a way that would eventually lead to family reunification. However, despite knowing this, they still pushed ahead with the national ZTP in May 2018. During this pilot period and the informal stage of ramping up family separations, around 800 children were separated from their parents, 26% of whom were under 5 years old (Shahoulian et al., 2020).

After the outcry about the ZTP diminished, families were still being separated under the Trump administration's migration control policies. However, as the "official" program had been scrapped, the news cycle moved on and secrecy was instituted once again. After the ZTP, families end up being separated through different mechanisms: criminal violence and institutional family separation. The former happens when families are sent back to Mexico under Title 42 and their asylum application is refused. In this case, many families stay in the border towns and live in

makeshift camps, on the streets, in migrant houses. Because of the insecurity and the seemingly never-ending wait in Mexico, some families choose to send their children and teenagers by themselves (or with a smuggler) to the United States to apply for asylum. Finally, the Trump administration was still directly separating families long after the ZTP had officially been abandoned (Delgado, 2019). Instead of prosecuting the parents and sending the children into the care of protective services, the DHS was rapidly deporting the parents and leaving the children in the United States (Garrett, 2020). We classify this stage as *secrecy and denial* as the media and politicians' attention shifted elsewhere and the policy was rarely mentioned again outside of civil society organizations.

4.5.2 Owning Up

The strategy of *owning up* was more visible before the pilot program started in El Paso and during the early days of the ZTP. The aim of this strategy seems to be threefold. First, the policy was explicitly intended to deter migrants from crossing the border. Secondly, the Trump administration used the visibility of the policy and the outcry it generated to try to leverage the Democrats to agree to an immigration policy. Finally, owning up to the policy might have been a vote winning strategy aimed at conservative groups that favour stricter border control policies inside U.S. territory.

Following the rulebook of deterrence policies, the ZTP intended to discourage migrant families from entering the United States clandestinely and from claiming asylum (Garrett, 2020). Immigration and border officials had suggested that the "most effective way" to deter undocumented migration would be to prosecute migrants including parents travelling with children (Horwitz & Sacchetti, 2018). The policy not only made undocumented migration harder, but it also further criminalized clandestine migration by associating the families apprehended at the border with crime. In speeches and/or public discourses delivered in Southern California and Arizona, Jeff Sessions declared:

> If you're smuggling a child, then we're going to prosecute you, and that child will be separated from you, probably, as required by law. If you don't want your child separated, then don't bring them across the border illegally. It's not our fault that somebody does that (Horwitz & Sacchetti, 2018).

In February 2017, at a Town Hall for Citizen and Immigration Services Asylum Officers, the asylum chief, John Lafferty told officers that they might need to "hold mothers longer" and "hold children" in different facilities. A month later, the DHS Secretary at the time, John Kelly, told CNN they were considering separating the families that they caught "to deter more movement along this terribly dangerous network" (Riordan Seville & Rappleye, 2018). On 7 May 2018, in another explicit statement intended to *deter*, Jeff Sessions, the Attorney General, claimed that "100 percent of illegal southwest crossings" would be prosecuted, thus triggering a law

that separates parents involved in criminal cases from their children. He stated that they did not want to separate families but that they would nonetheless do so, as "this is just the way works" (Griffiths, 2018). *Owning up* to the policy and communicating it to potential migrant families furthered the dissuasive objectives of the government.

According to the journalist Jonathan Blitzer (2020), Stephen Miller seized upon the idea of "separating parents and children once they reached the border, in the hope of deterring other families from travelling north". Blitzer further argues that the 'immigrant family separation idea' was suggested by an official employed at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) back in 2013, and that Miller "forcefully defended family separation" for electoral purposes, thereby cementing his role as "the true driving force" behind Trump's agenda on immigration policies.

The Trump administration probably intended that the ZTP—or the "horrible law"[4] as President Trump called it—would force the Democrats to negotiate with him on immigration issues. It is not clear from the reports and the news articles if this strategy was formulated before the policy was implemented or if it was an opportunistic way of using the separated migrant families as 'political' pawns, as one activist described it (Griffiths, 2018). In addition to building the border wall, the deal would give deportation officers more authority to remove people, it would curb immigration based on family ties, and would eliminate the diversity visa lottery (Bennett, 2018). Sometimes, when talking about the policy, Trump would switch from *owning up* to *blame shifting* (the next strategy we discuss) while trying to achieve the same objective: forcing the Democrats to approve a restrictive immigration bill. Just hours before signing the executive order that (officially) stopped family separation, the White House was effectively telling the Democrats: "you need to fix this, our hands are tied" (Chillizza, 2018). In late June 2018, president Trump blamed his own administration's policy on the Democrats (who had a minority in both chambers of Congress) by explaining to reporters in the White House: "I hate the children being taken away, the Democrats have to change their law — that's their law" (Rhodan, 2018). This strategy is part of the negotiating stance that Trump was famous for taking. However, in this case, the people caught in the crossfire were children and their parents whose suffering was widely documented. Although the Trump Administration often reverted to defending the policy, they quickly started shifting the blame and denying their actions.

[4] Full original tweet read: "Put pressure on the Democrats to end the horrible law that separates children from their parents once they cross the Border into the U.S. Catch and Release, Lottery and Chain must also go with it and we MUST continue building the WALL! DEMOCRATS ARE PROTECTING MS-13 THUGS".

4.5.3 Defensiveness and Blame Shifting

The strategies of defensiveness and blame shifting appeared -often alongside denial- throughout the 3 months when the policy was officially in operation. During this time, several actors from the White House denied either the existence of the policy or its deterrent intentions. In a stark illustration of how convoluted the White House’s messaging was during the ZTP, often while one member of the White House team was denying the policy, another person close to the administration was defending it. Sometimes, members of the White House staff contradicted themselves in the same statement. For example, after pictures of children held in detention centres covered only by mylar blankets had been published (Higgins, 2018), Krisjten Nielsen, Secretary of the DHS during that time defended the policy at a White House press briefing on 18 June 2018. She denied that the ZTP was a family separation policy, and asked: “Why would I ever create a policy that purposely does this?”. “This administration did not create a policy of separating families at the border,” Nielsen told reporters. However, NBC reported that she did acknowledge that the Trump administration would separate those “who claim to be parent and child if we cannot determine that a familial or custodial relationship exists.” (Wilkie, 2018).

At various points during the ZTP, the Trump administration claimed both that they were not responsible for the policy (*denial)* and that they could not stop it (*defensiveness*). Only the Democrats could do so (*blame shifting*). On 15 June, Trump tweeted:

> The Democrats are forcing the breakup of families at the Border with their horrible and cruel legislative agenda. Any Immigration Bill MUST HAVE full funding for the Wall, end Catch & Release, Visa Lottery and Chain, and go to Merit Based Immigration. Go for it! WIN! (tweet by Trump on 6/15/2018).

The next day, Nielsen stated that Congress had created the problem of migrant family separation and that only Congress could fix it. In this statement, Nielsen completely disowns the idea of the policy being dissuasive, arguing instead that the government was using loopholes caused by the Obama administration (Bennett, 2018; Re, 2018). This again demonstrates the use of *blame shifting* onto previous administrations for creating the loophole that allowed migrants to come into the United States and forcing the Trump administration to do something about it.

When we discussed the *owning up* strategy, we showed that during the policy’s planning and implementation stages, it had explicit dissuasive aims, contrary to Nielsen’s statement. This inconsistency became evident almost immediately, when, on the same day, Jeff Sessions appeared on Fox News stating that the policy was meant to separate children from their families as a warning to other potential migrants: “Yes, hopefully people will get the message and come through the border at the port of entry and not [come] across the border unlawfully”. He admitted that fewer border crossings would be ideal from the administration’s point of view (Re, 2018). A week earlier, in early June 2018, Trump had declared: “The United States will not be a migrant camp and it will not be a refugee holding facility. … Not on

my watch," (Bennett, 2018) sending a clear message that he wanted people to stop crossing without papers.

Following bi-partisan pressure and facing a huge public backlash, President Trump signed an executive order on 20 June 2018, to officially end the policy of family separation. When they were asked to reunite the children with their parents, ICE staff revealed that they were unable to locate the parents of most children. The reunification was chaotic and disorganized, with children being sent to the wrong place or made to wait for hours on buses while their parents were found. Reunification with the parents of around 600 children was complicated because the parents had been deported. To this date, not everyone has been reunified and an official report made to the House of Representatives states that many children might never be reunited with their parents (Shahoulian et al., 2020). In June 2021, under the Biden administration, the Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families, in collaboration with civil society organizations, identified 3913 children who were separated from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border between 1 July 2017, and 20 January 2021 (DHS Press Release, June 8).

4.6 Conclusion

Trump's Zero Tolerance policy (ZTP) of separating immigrant families after 2018 belongs to a much older and longer list of border control efforts to politically exclude people based on their skin colour, nationality, language, or other distinct cultural traits perceived as a threat mostly by white politicians, and by their constituencies, including powerful supporters and donors. This deterrent policy affected families from Central America and beyond. The ZTP under the Trump administration underscores the urgency and importance of promoting a wider and more robust human rights perspective in destination countries and societies, particularly when 'citizens or native people' in these places are unable to see how most international migrants are by no means a security threat and are in fact desperately needed by their local and national economies and societies. Family migrants, and especially people who have been forcefully displaced and are travelling with relatives across borders without authorization, are among the groups most vulnerable to human rights violations by the authorities and other state or non-state agents (including organized crime). While on the move, these migrants and their relatives deserve not only attention but also strong protection by all governments, institutions, communities and societies.

This chapter also shows how policies that are designed and implemented to violate human rights and weaponize violence and suffering against the most vulnerable populations are communicated to the press, citizens, and the migrants themselves. We showed how, despite the deterrent objective being clearly signalled by the administration since the initial memos, the way the wider population reacted affected how the Trump administration responded using the three discursive strategies. Although violent policies had already been in operation -and still are- on the

U.S.-Mexico border, this policy suddenly became visible, and was widely reported, and criticized because families and children were suffering. The powerful images of children held in cage-like detention centres stirred people into action. During a three-month period in 2018 there was sufficient public outcry to force President Trump to publicly recant the policy (even if family separations continue). As we have shown, the ZTP is just one of a long list of policies that aim to punish "politically undesired but economically needed" migrants and dissuade them from attempting to enter the United States. It is telling that the policy that became more heavily criticized and more swiftly repealed than any other was the one that affected people perceived as innocent while other policies that affected less "deserving" undocumented migrants have been in operation for decades.

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Chapter 5
The Action Repertoires of the International Organization for the Family—Transnationalizing Far-Right Family Politics

Timo Koch

5.1 Introduction

Migration and far-right social movement studies have explored exclusionary politics in different national contexts. These works have explained many of the factors contributing to the hostility against minorities on the grounds of religion, race, gender, and sexual identity. Employing the concept of intersectional bordering (Cassidy et al., 2018), the present analysis dissects how religious, conservative, and far-right organizations employ the concept of the family to promote exclusionary politics. To achieve this, the chapter focuses on the International Organization for the Family (IOF), one of the most prominent representatives of this emerging phenomenon (Kalm & Meeuwisse, 2020). The IOF has garnered media attention in Europe over the years through their annual main conference. Its predecessor organization, The World Congress of Families (WCF), promotes a family model consisting of a father, mother, and child as a reference point for traditional values to unite Christian, far-right and conservative grassroots movements and elites. However, despite growing awareness about the organization's goals and international expansions over the years, little is known about the IOF's strategic developments in the transnational political arena. This transnational perspective is the focus of this chapter, which extends the previous research on social movements opposing gender and sexual diversity, that has often focused on the institutional context (see for European Union (EU) eg. (Mos, 2022a, b) or United Nations (UN) (Buss & Herman, 2003; Bob, 2012; Haynes, 2014). In this analysis, I highlight the mobilization that takes place outside the confined structures of the supranational political system.

The IOF's predecessor organization, the WCF, was established in 1995 (Uzlaner & Stoeckl, 2018) and was initially studied in connection to the Christian Right in the United States (Haynes, 2008; Flowers, 2019). Christian Right scholars

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recognised its transnational dimension in the promotion of family politics (Buss & Herman, 2003; Butler, 2006), and these lines were further developed with the conceptualization of the "global right wing" (Bob, 2012). Still, the work of the IOF preserves this emphasis on the links with the US Christian Right, with only recently more attention given to the role of Russian intellectuals and businessmen in the IOF (Stroop, 2016; Stoeckl, 2020), and transnational activism among Russian and American elites (Trimble, 2014; Moss, 2017; Bluhm & Brand, 2018; Shekhovtsov, 2018). While there has been an increasing number of studies addressing the IOF, explicitly pointing to the importance of the WCF (Stoeckl, 2018; Kalm & Meeuwisse, 2020), there has been less attention given to the processes that facilitate activism transnationally from an organizational perspective. However, the study of transnational collective activism of the IOF reaches beyond regional contexts and political institutions. The organization's international conferences provide a platform to discuss strategies and tactics promoting far-right family politics. Focusing on the transnational dimension of exclusionary politics explains how the IOF is engaging in collective activism in different protest and electoral settings, and the interaction between these arenas. Addressing this gap, the chapter contributes to the ongoing research on transnational far-right movements, the Christian Right, and global conservative networks in terms of their action repertoires. In this context repertoires are defined as a strategy to create new forms of exclusion, creating division between a constructed core group- "the family"- and outsiders.

5.2 Conceptualizing the Transnationalization of Far-Right Politics Through Contentious Politics and Intersectional Bordering

In this chapter, I approach the IOF's transnationalization of far-right politics based on two main theoretical developments, synthesizing contentious politics (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015) and intersectional bordering (Cassidy et al., 2018). To engage with the discursive and mobilization strategies of the IOF, I look at conservative, religious, and far-right organizations to highlight the conditions for collaboration beyond ideological differences. Building on a common ground for collective action, I introduce a model for coalition building among actors involved in the IOF and conceptualize how transnational mobilization promotes contentious politics.

5.2.1 Defining the 'Far-Right'

Conceptualizations of the far-right, conservatism, and religious activism refer to a variety of intellectual traditions and are therefore not only hard to define, but are—to a degree—context-dependent. However, the nationalism of the far-right as a thin

ideology (Mudde, 2017) allows different political actors to overcome ideological differences to create broader networks along the political spectrum. This development has not only led to the emergence of new right-wing networks but has also fueled the radicalization and mainstreaming of far-right ideas (Pirro, 2023). Therefore, I employ the term "far-right" to mean the collaboration among far-right, conservative, and religious groups; I understand it as an inclusive category for different forms of transnational right-wing mobilization. The idea of the traditional family functions in this context as a springboard for the collaboration among religious and far-right organizations introducing the dimensions of gender and sexuality.

5.2.2 Constructing a Common Enemy: Mobilizing Against Gender

Research on anti-gender movements addresses how far-right family politics promote exclusionary politics through discursive and mobilization strategies. The concept of gender as a symbolic glue was the first prominent example, describing the mushrooming of anti-EU, anti-liberal, anti-communist, and homo- and transphobic sentiments leading to voting gains for right-wing parties (Kováts & Põim, 2015). In similar fashion Mayer and Sauer introduced gender as an empty signifier to explain Austrian far-right parties' discursive strategies (Mayer & Sauer, 2017). Highlighting the opportunity of network building to oppose family diversity policies and gender equality, the authors stress how gender studies research, policies related to sexuality, and sex education became a new mobilization strategy. Early studies of anti-gender movements have focused on the micro-level to study how organizations on the local level engage in collective action to oppose gender and sexual diversity. Recognizing patterns of interaction and communalities, the studies highlight how conservative, far-right, and religious organizations engage in anti-gender campaigns (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017).

Studies on anti-gender campaigns in various regional contexts illustrate similarities among the actors' discursive strategies. Gender thereby becomes tied to the idea of an imagined liberal elite that allows the organizations to position themselves as counter-movements, illustrating how thin-ideology (Mudde, 2017) creates a precursor for collective action among right-wing organizations. Building on this form of opposition as a group identity or common ground, the minimal consensus becomes a foundation for collaboration. This process has been also described in several conceptualizations of anti-gender research with a broader scope (Hennig, 2018; Verloo, 2018), shifting the attention towards a more macro-oriented analysis and creating dividing lines about the relevance of factors that mobilize anti-gender movements. This most fundamentally concerns the relationship between cultural and economic hegemony. Proceeding from the literature of anti-gender movements, religious fundamentalism, and far-right research in Europe, the concept of political genderphobia (Hennig, 2018) stresses ideological and strategic features among organizations

opposing gender diversity. However, this broader conceptualization faced criticism for neglecting economic inequalities and the artificiality of movement-countermovement dynamics of the debate (Roggeband, 2018). In the context of this debate, proponents of this approach argue for a stronger analytical focus on economic justice to understand the collaboration in opposition to gender and sexual diversity (Kováts, 2019: 77).

5.2.3 *Transnational Coalition Building*

To go beyond the analytical focus on discursive strategies of anti-gender movements, I introduce the concept of transnational coalition building. Focusing on the actors participating in collective action highlights how the IOF employs strategies and tactics that consider both the cultural factors of discursive strategies and the economic dimension of mobilization strategies as a foundation to conceptualize transnational coalition building. Contributing to the ongoing debate regarding social movements that oppose gender and sexual diversity, the study of IOF action repertoires emphasizes international collaboration among different political groups and organizations.

Coalition building is usually defined as transnational activism (Bob, 2018), highlighting the mutual effort of mobilization among different organizations with distinct goals, actors, and frames. However, to reflect on the concept of far-right family politics, this interpretation of activism is of limited use, as theories on transnational social movement focus on liberal actors (McCammon & Van Dyke, 2010; Kriesi et al., 2016). One explanation for this is that, in the past, far-right social movements were conceptualized as reactive and therefore interpretations focused on the ways organizations respond to threats instead of investigating the agency in using resource mobilization structures (RMS) and political opportunity structures (POS) (McCammon & Van Dyke, 2010, p. XIV). A more practical issue at hand concerns the empirical challenges of access and ethics (Blee & Latif, 2021) that have been limiting theory-building among transnational far-right coalitions.

5.2.4 *Expanding the Spectrum of Action Repertoires: Strategies and Tactics of the Far-Right*

Transnational far-right coalitions like the IOF engage in contentious politics employing a variety of strategies to promote ideas about family politics (Koch, 2024). The repertoire of the organizations can be broadly differentiated between two modes of change: the rapid innovation in repertoires and the successive change involving both action and reaction in the context of new protagonists and antagonists in conflicts (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 19). Incrementally changing structural

factors are defined by meaning-making and everyday social organizations, commutative creation of signaling systems by contentions itself, and operations of the system as such.

Although Tilly and Tarrow (2015) compare different social movements such as the slave abolition movement in the UK, Maidan protests in Ukraine, and the women's movement in the USA as case studies, the research is limited to liberal activism and does not include conservative and far-right organizations. To address this gap, the study of the IOF's repertoires takes a closer look at the way the theory can be applied to the study of far-right coalitions. Repertoires are defined as a strategy to create new forms of exclusion, creating division between a constructed core group-"the family"- and outsiders. The family is the centre of this core group, and forms of deviation related to a person's gender identity, sexuality, racialization, or religious belief can become markers of exclusion. This process of bordering is facilitated through a person's gender identity, sexuality, racialization, or religious belief. Belonging to the outsider group means transgressing norms of heterosexuality, gender, whiteness, and/or religion, which poses a threat to the core group. The coherence to this value system is negotiated through strategies of intersectional bordering that simplify belonging (Cassidy et al., 2018), as organizations popularize ideas about the family as a repertoire through campaigns, policies, demonstrations, and conferences.

In this context, the IOF becomes an actor that promotes exclusion through contentious politics. Engaging with the concept of process tracing (Ritter, 2014), the strategies and tactics of the IOF are constructed as dynamics that develop over time, changing their forms and meaning. Action repertoires describe how the IOF employs strategic action and makes tactical decisions based on common forms of collective actions such as the creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, and statements to and in public media.

5.3 Methodological Approach

This chapter lays out how the IOF uses action repertoires to promote the transnationalization of far-right family politics, with a focus on coalition building and changes in coalition building over time. As the organization employs various strategies and tactics to oppose gender and sexual diversity, the analysis is limited to three key features of coalition building, considering (1) how conferences contribute to identity formation, (2) how resources are shared through demonstrations, and (3) how the IOF is transferring knowledge through public media. Engaging with the organizational structures and the different means to expand the network, coalition building focuses on the strategic employment of repertoires to develop discursive and mobilization strategies. The evaluation of factors that promote coalition building is dependent on the level of cooperation or conflict among the organizations involved (Bandy & Smith, 2005). Considering the IOF's action repertoires over

time, process tracing allows the study of change among the organizations involved in the expansion of the network (Ritter, 2014). For this reason, the analysis focuses on action repertoires between 2014–2020, highlighting the role of major conferences in Russia, Moldova, and Hungary as well as the anti-same-sex marriage movement *Demo für Alle* in Germany. The research draws on a variety of examples, aiming to demonstrate how different transnational coalition building efforts contribute to the promotion of exclusionary politics in local and global contexts. Coalition building thereby becomes a mechanism for transnationalizing far-right family politics.

For the data collection process, the study of IOF action repertoires relies on a variety of sources, including speeches, policies, interviews, websites, and protests from 2014–2020 and is complemented by reports from NGOs, think tanks, foreign policy centers (Blue, 2013; HCR, 2015; Chitanava & Sartania, 2018; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015, 2018; Stoeckl, 2018), and journalists (Dornblüth, 2019; Kane, 2009; Levintova, 2014; War is Boring, 2014; Gessen, 2017; Parke, 2015; Shekhovtsov, 2014). I use qualitative analysis to consider the discursive and mobilization strategies relevant to coalition building processes.

Reflecting on the theoretical implications concerning the factors of coalition building to promote far-right family politics, the next section dissects how the IOF's coalition builds new forms of exclusion. The research draws on various speeches from the World Congress of Families IX - XIII, discussing the relationship of transnational and local repertoires in opposition to LGBT+ family politics in Hungary, Moldova, and Russia and the demonstration *Demo für Alle* in Germany. Evaluating how organizational structures contribute to and limit mobilization and discursive strategies over time, the chapter situates the study of local repertoires within a broader perspective of social movement outcomes.

5.4 Analysis—Discursive and Mobilization Strategies of the IOF

Studying the coalition building process of the IOF, the analysis of discursive and mobilization strategies engages with various action repertoires to promote far-right family politics transnationally. For feasibility, the investigation focuses on three central factors that promote the success and failure of coalition building: identity formation to create shared values, sharing of various resources among partner organizations, and knowledge transfer to wider audiences. The section is thus structured into three main parts representing different IOF strategies. The first part considers how the World Congress of Families and other regional conferences of the IOF contribute to identity formation among organizations. In the following part, I focus on the role of demonstrations and petition drives as a strategy to share resources. Lastly, I analyze how the IOF is transferring knowledge through public media.

Fig. 5.1 Action repertoires of the IOF 2009–2020

The IOF has a wide spectrum of strategic actions to advance far-right family politics. While this analysis does not assert the claim of completeness, the discussion of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, regional and international congresses, demonstrations, petition drives, and associational statements to and in public media provides a first overview of the organization's action repertoires. The timeline of events structures the main dynamics in the four focus areas in Hungary, Russia, Moldova, and Germany (see Fig. 5.1). This includes the annual international main Conference, the World Congress of Families, regional IOF meetings, book and movie releases, and website and social media page launches.

5.4.1 Development of Common Mobilization Strategies

The following section dissects the IOF's World Congress of Families as a platform for opposition towards gender and sexual diversity in Europe. Connecting with a wide variety of political actors ranging from conservative Christian groups to far-right activists, the IOF developed a shared set of values and created a strong group identity. Starting as an interfaith coalition in the first place (Stroop, 2016), religious ideas have been central to constructing unity among the participating organizations. As part of the IOF's mobilization strategy, the organization started to collaborate with organizations based in the United States and featured mostly speakers and organizations from that country during the World Congress of Families (Trimble, 2014). Since 2014, there have been only four organizations from Russia and one from Germany participating at the IOF main event; no Hungarian or Moldavan organizations were present. This data suggests that organizations from Russia, Germany, Hungary, and Moldova were not involved in the early phase, but started participating at the conferences more recently (since 2011). The same goes for

speakers at the conferences. The World Congress of Families featured eight speakers from Russia, three from Germany, one from Hungary, and none from Moldova until 2014 (Trimble, 2014). While the main conferences are organized by the IOF, the member organizations host regional events (WCF, 2017). From the foundation of the organization in 1997 to 2014, twenty-four regional conferences have taken place (Trimble, 2014). A prominent country in this list is Russia. From 2011 until 2013, four events took place that directly linked the IOF with politicians, activists, scholars and NGOs: the Demographic Summit in Moscow in June 2011, the Demographic Summit in Ulyanovsk in September 2012, the Regional Meeting in February 2013 in Moscow, and the Planning Committee Meeting in October 2013 in Moscow (HCR, 2015).

However, since the mid-2010s the IOF started to shift its mobilization strategy toward political radicalization, by collaborating with authoritarian and nationalist leaders such as Viktor Orbán, Matteo Salvini, and Vladimir Putin through events like the annual World Congress of Families (WCF). Together they have formed a mutual discursive strategy that incorporates ideas from various geographical settings into an adaptable concept of the natural family to promote far-right family politics. Therefore, the analysis highlights conferences of the IOF as a repertoire to build common strategies demonstrating how the organizations collaborated.

The IOF features a vast group of organizations involved, including parties, activists, think tanks, foundations, and lawyer associations. To promote far-right family politics, the organization shares ideas about policy proposals and activities that mobilize social movements and civil society groups, leading to the formation of new coalitions. During the early 2010s, the WCF established strong relationships with Russian political and economic elites that led to the hosting of the World Congress of Families VIII. Although it was supposed to take place in Moscow in 2014, the IOF faced several unforeseeable diplomatic issues because of the annexation of the Crimea region in Ukraine. Given the danger of sanctions from the US government, a number of US organizations did not want to be associated with the organizers. In response, the organizers set up a new event that circumvented the sanctions. The title of the conference was renamed to “International Festival For Life”, the sponsors changed and the participants represented different organizations than previously announced (Dornblüth, 2019).

For the new event, the organizers featured several high-ranking political figures that need some further attention to understand the relationship of the IOF with Russian actors. Central to this collaboration is the Russian representative of the organization, Alexey Komov. As an intermediary, Komov has been associated with the Russian billionaire Konstantin Malofeev and Vladimir Yakunin and the politician Elena Mizulina (Levintova, 2014). In this way, the conference served as a space for the exchange of ideas, and to develop a broader network of like-minded organizations to promote far-right family politics. The repression towards the US-based organizations challenged neither the values nor the goals that the IOF set out. As the IOF‘s strategical long-term goal is to influence governmental decision making and movements building, such as the introduction of the Russian gay propaganda law in

2013 (Kondakov, 2022), changes among collaborating groups do not necessarily limit the success of the organization.

Considering the coalition building that the IOF has been involved in, the organization is not concerned with introducing new laws, but rather gives impulses for governmental officials and other policymakers. To increase its influence, the IOF started to gradually expand its network of collaborators targeting governmental officials in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) through the World Congress Families XI which took place in 2017 in Hungary. President and party leader of the Fidesz party Victor Orbán held the opening speech at the event and has been very outspoken about his support for the IOF (Sanders, 2018). After the congress took place, the Hungarian government revoked the gender studies program at Central European University (CEU) (Pető, 2021). The event shows that there are few disagreements about the discursive strategies and that the main focus of the IOF is on the building of a mutual mobilization strategy. Similarly to the gay propaganda law, the strategy behind the ban on the gender studies program is to limit the influence of their opponents.

In a similar vein, the World Congress of Families XII in Moldova expressed interest in the same strategy by expanding the network to Central and Eastern Europe. Moldovan President at the time, Igor Dodon had already made several efforts to introduce new laws to restrict the distribution of information concerning sexual and gender diversity in the country (Civil Rights Defender, 2017). These bills shared a number of commonalities with the Russian gay propaganda law. His opening speech at the conference illustrates the IOF's effort to develop a common mobilization strategy. Other Moldavan speakers from the conference included the leader of the Moldavan Orthodox Church Metropolitan Vladimir, the scholar Lavric Aurelian, and the Chairman of the Commission on Interethnic Relations of the Council of Civil Society Elena Beleacova. Before the international conferences, Dodon had already organized a family festival in collaboration with the Socialist Party of Moldova in opposition to the pride march (Vlas, 2017). Over time, the mobilization efforts expanded the network of party representatives, churches, and civil society groups, building on the innovation in mobilization strategies involving both grassroots activists and political elites.

Although less publicly visible, regional conferences are also an important strategy for the IOF to recruit new member organizations, and this has become an increasingly common practice of theirs since 2010, when they began targeting key locations such as Australia, Kenya, and Serbia and reflecting on its central issues including euthanasia, sex education, and family values (Velasco, 2022). As social movements gather to decide strategies and goals, establish new networks, and align priorities (Alimi, 2015), the regional conferences of the IOF fulfill various functions, including media exposure, activist training, and networking opportunities for member organizations (WCF, 2017).

5.4.2 Distributing Organizational Resources

Having developed a common group identity over time and building trust among organizations, the IOF started to distribute organizational resources among their collaborators through demonstrations. Reaching out to relevant movement brokers, the coalition of *Demo für Alle* presents a prime example to demonstrate a point of intersection for transnational movement mobilization, since it was able to bring together demonstrators with different confessional backgrounds who are part of the Christian fundamentalist spectrum, *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) members, and the ex-parliamentary German far right (Teidelbaum, 2015; Schmincke, 2015). Additionally, this new coalition was a way to counter anti-Russian sentiments in the movement (Moss, 2017).

Demo für Alle, the German offshoot of the anti-same-sex marriage organization *Manif pour tous* has been relying on the networks of the IOF to promote far-right family politics as a collaborator. In response to reforms of sex education, *Demo für Alle* developed a large followership in particular in Hamburg, Saxony, Hesse, and Baden-Wurttemberg (Fedders, 2016). At the front of support, the German far-right party AfD and far-right publisher Jürgen Elsässer aligned themselves with the protests. The presence of the IOF became apparent when Elsässer organized the *Zukunft für die Familie* (future for the family) conference in Leipzig in 2013. One of the speakers was the well-known IOF associate and politician Elena Mizulina, who became famous around the world as one of the initiators of the Russian gay propaganda law. Elsässer, a public figure and editor of the far-right magazine "Compact" that has been closely associated with both the AfD and the anti-muslim ex-parliamentary far-right movements such as *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (PEGIDA), is linking different political groups of the German spectrum on the political right.

The collaboration between the IOF and *Demo für Alle* is strongly linked to the campaign organization CitizenGo, providing both media expertise and financial resources to promote far-right family values. CitizenGo, which presents itself on its website as an NGO in defense of life, family, and liberty (CitizenGo, 2021), also features president of the IOF Brian Brown and Russian IOF representative Alexey Komov. The organization is not only listed as an ally on the website of *Demo für Alle* (Demo für Alle, 2021), but also organized a petition against the revision of sex education in schools in Bavaria and financed several of their campaigns (Hecht & Nabert, 2019). Initiator of *Demo für Alle* Hedwig von Boervoerde has been closely related to the AfD. Before she started the organization, she had been part of the campaign network *Zivile Koalition* (civil coalition), a conservative association taking up responsibility for the division *Initiative Familienschutz* (initiative family protection) located in the office space of German AfD parliamentary member Beatrix von Storch. As the examples of collaboration between *Demo für Alle* and IOF demonstrate, both organizations have been playing a crucial role in the coalition building process to promote far-right family politics in Germany, because they brought in experienced organizers from other counties and connected activists, conservative

Christians, and political elites. This also led to the transnationalization of the movement as members of the network became involved with other international organizations, and contributed to the innovation of action repertoires, exchanging ideas with leaders from around the world.

The sharing of resources as a strategy to promote far-right family politics was not limited to political elites, but also includes grassroots mobilization. The IOF 's support for demonstrations became a common action in their repertoire. As organizers of the "March for the family" or in collaboration with *Demo für Alle* in Germany, the IOF successfully mobilized a few thousand people on the streets in support of far-right family politics (Kalm & Meeuwisse, 2020). The introduction of large-scale demonstrations has been a novelty for the IOF, but also for the conservative, far-right, and Christian organizations and parties they collaborated with in Russia, Hungary, Moldova, and Germany. Pioneered by the French *La Manif pour tous* movement against same-sex marriage in France which was able to bring together conservative, far-right, and Christian groups in the first place (Stambolis-Ruhstorfer & Tricou, 2017), the addition of demonstrations to the action repertoires of the IOF have been a recent innovation.

The increasing use of demonstrations as an IOF action repertoire in support of far-right family politics can also be observed in Moldova. As these demonstrations illustrate, the former Moldavan president Igor Dodon and the IOF were able to rely on a solid conservative social movement base to mobilize for protests. Aside from conferences like the World Congress of Families in Chisinau in 2018, several other demonstrations have taken place. A prominent example was the "March for Life", which took place in many areas across Moldova in 2018 and 2019 according to the event's organizers (Association for Life Moldova, 2021). Another annual demonstration is the Moldavan Orthodox Church's march for the traditional family (Orthodox Christian, 2019). Relying on the organizational resources from both the government and the church, organizers were able to mobilize for events like the Moldavan family festival in response to the pride march in Moldova (Barry, 2019) as they united participants relying on merging images of the nuclear family and Christian faith.

Demonstrations provide important discursive and mobilization strategies for the IOF. The coalition building progress and expansion toward CEE also helped the mobilization strategies, including the sharing of resources to further promote far-right family politics. Organizations like CitizenGo present an important point of intersection as they provide important organizational and financial resources for both local elites and grassroots organizations.

5.4.3 Knowledge Transfer

The third major feature of the transnationalization process that the IOF engages in is the transfer of knowledge to wider audiences. Petition drives and statements to and in public media allow the organization to introduce far-right politics to potential

allies and supporters. Since the 2010s the IOF and its member organizations CititzenGo use petition drives as a repertoire to mobilize civil society and popularize far-right family politics in social media. Ignacio Arsuaga, the founder of the organization, has worked closely with the IOF and participated regularly at the World Congress of Families since 2009 (Trimble, 2014). The main focus of CitizenGo is the coordination and preparation of online campaigns and their distribution via their networks. Even though CitizenGo has only existed since 2013, the link between the organization and the IOF has been established since way earlier. Ignacio Arsuaga founded not only CitizenGo, but also the Spanish right-wing organization *Hazte Oir* (Political Research Associates, 2018). Although CitizenGo is still the main outlet for online petition drives of the IOF, the organization's news website IFamNews also covers a petition section (IFamNewsDE, 2021). Until now, there exist no similar Russian, Hungarian, or Moldovan language online petition websites by the IOF. However, the IOF member organization CitizenGo offered several online petitions in Russian (CitizenGoRu., 2021) and German (CitizenGoGer, 2021) which also covered far-right family politics. CitizenGo claims that since the beginning of the Ukrainian war in 2022, it is not collaborating with Russian organizations anymore (CitizenGo, 2022). Therefore, the section on petition drives is focused on the German website of CitizenGo, as it is the only one that has been consistently sustained.

Petition drives present a discursive strategy for the IOF to popularize far-right family politics among German language-speaking audiences. The topics of the petition on the IOF website feature mostly international and European issues and transnational media companies such as Netflix and HBO (iFamNewsDE, 2021). The petitions on the website are titled: "Thank Hungary and Poland; "Stop Viewpoint Discrimination by Stripe Against Conservatives"; "Say NO to Netflix"; "Demand HBO Max Cancel "Unpregnant" and Review Leadership Choices"; "Reappoint Ján Figel in his important role as supporter of religious freedom"; "Demand apology for the censorship of the life-Savers of the movie unplanned"; "Support Franklin Grahams UK-Tour against anti-Christian discrimination." The number of signatures on the German language petition website are relatively low in comparison to the English website. Nonetheless, the IOF repertoire creates a space to reach out to new German speaking audiences. Thereby CititzenGo is able to mobilize new allies and supporters as a discursive strategy on alternative media platforms. While the effort to mobilize people in Germany for far-right family politics through online petitions has been less successful, the petitions can provide some indication of how the IOF is trying to introduce new supporters and opponents of their agenda to German-speaking audiences. This includes, in particular, the positive impact of conservative, Christian, and far-right politicians from Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia to advance the goals of the IOF, but also demonstrates the organization's efforts to present actors and directors from Netflix and HBO as a threat to far-right family politics.

As a tool to develop a discursive strategy, the IOF mobilizes new audiences online through petitions on social network platforms. In 2020, the organization introduced an online petition feature on its website (IFAM, 2021) in English, German, French, and Spanish. Even though many of the petitions have the same

content, each language has its own writers who translate and adjust the content to the specific region. For the German language section, most of the articles have been written and edited by Jan Bentz, a German journalist, writing for media outlets including *Inside the Vatican*, *Catholic Herald*, *Catholic News Agency* and *Jüdische Rundschau* (IFAM, 2020). Since the IOF decided to build its own online petition website, this strategy presents an innovation in the organization's action repertoire.

The IOF further expanded its audience through social media. The organization publishes and live streams speeches from the World Congress of Families, interviews, blog posts, and articles; distributes newsletters; and runs its own news website and various social media accounts on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and VKontakte. These statements to and in public media serve several functions such as invoking moral rage, pride, honor, courage, and other emotions; and are linked to past memories and histories that serve as a pool to draw from in order to further consolidate collective identity, justify specific actions, and define adversaries (Gould, 2009; Jasper, 2001; Viterna, 2013; Johnston, 2015 as cited in Alimi, 2015). Through the use of different social media platforms, the IOF is able to expand its audiences as its statements are often perceived as contentious, which leads to higher visibility on online platforms as they prioritize this form of content.

A central strategy for the IOF to expand their online presence is alternative news coverage, through the organization's own news website International Family News. The website introduces a new YouTube playlist, features articles from other newspapers, and also has its own petition section. Furthermore, the website provides information on several topics including reproductive rights, gender and sexual diversity, and leaders of the Catholic church, Russian Orthodox Church, and a variety of conservative and far-right leaders that are associated with the IOF. Launched in 2020, the news network IfamNews went online in five languages and was soon extended with a Russian version (Brown, 2020). The release note was published on another news website called Russian Insider run by American expats who live in Russia. The chief editor of the website is Charles Bausman, who has received money for the website by the Russian billionaire Konstantin Malofeev through a request by Russian representative of the IOF Alexey Komov (Shekhovtsov, 2015).

The IOF's strategy to transfer knowledge involves two main strategies via online platforms, and then, it promotes far-right family politics through alternative reporting. In the wider context of right-wing social movements and far-right parties, outreach via alternative media outlets is a common phenomenon (Heft et al., 2020). In this regard, the IOF follows a wider development to reach new audiences as a mobilization strategy. In terms of the IOF's repertoires, the organization engages through statements to and in public media in advocacy networking, but also creates information campaigns. Previous analysis of IOF statements to and in public media have highlighted the new way of framing gender and sexual diversity as gender ideology to scare people (Moss, 2017), or to revisit the concept by appealing to different audiences (Parke, 2015).

5.5 Conclusion

The IOF employs a wide variety of discursive and mobilization strategies to transnationalise far-right family politics. Analyzing the action repertoires of the IOF in Russia, Hungary, Moldova, and Germany, the organization expanded its range of strategies to form a coherent set of values that shifted from religious beliefs to a project of political radicalization. Involving government officials and movement brokers of grassroots organizations, the IOF contributed to the development of common ideas on transnational family politics, the sharing of resources, and the distribution of knowledge through social media. The concept of the family thereby becomes an adaptable repertoire allowing for the creation of new intersectional borders that mark an outsider group through contentious politics. Demonstrations like *Demo für Alle* exclude people that do not conform with the heteronormative ideas of gender and sexuality. In Moldova, the family festival organizers highlight elements of nationalism and Christianity to demarcate an outsider group. As these examples demonstrate, discursive and strategic mobilization for far-right family politics is adapted to local contexts.

Evaluating the repertoires of the IOF‘s strategy, the organization focused on incremental structural change through the expansion of its network in Central and Eastern Europe, the collaboration with new organizations, and the development of a transnational group identity that contributed to an increase of trust among actors. Exchanging both financial and organizational resources through demonstrations and the sharing of media expertise, the coalition has solidified itself over the years. In an effort to reach new audiences, the IOF has further expanded and innovated its repertoires, investing in online campaigns, petition websites, and alternative news coverage. By offering audiences a broader and most notably transnational perspective on far-right family politics, the organization has been popularizing exclusionary politics internationally.

A diversification strategy drawing from different supporters increased the IOF’s ability to refine their knowledge and experience, which led to more successful mobilization and discursive strategies. Collaboration of the IOF in Russia, Hungary, Moldova, and Germany involved a wide spectrum of actors encompassing Catholic Christian organizations such as *Demo für Alle*, far-right party leaders like Victor Orbán, but also Russian billionaires and members of the Moldovan Orthodox Church. To engage in contentious politics, the organization reached out to the groups that promote exclusionary politics in a way that relates to conflicts in the regional context. This collective action draws on the knowledge and expertise of different actors, but the visibility and success of right-wing parties and radical right movements made them a more likely partner and led to the radicalization of family politics. The homogeneity of Christian faith groups differs in the four regions, and the success of the IOF campaigns was dependent on the organization’s ability to involve religious elites. Collaboration with conservatives, far-right, and economic elites also guarantees the IOF‘s survival.

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Part II
Experiencing, Practising and Resisting Everyday Intersectional Borderings

Chapter 6
Anti-Sexism as Weaponized Discourse Against Muslim Immigration: A View from Social Psychology

Pascaline Van Oost, Olivier Klein, and Vincent Yzerbyt

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we are extending the meaning of the notion of intersectional bordering, as coined by Cassidy et al. (2018), whereby discourses and practices that marginalize migrants intersect with those targeting gender and LGBTQIA+ rights. Notably, although conservative and far-right political factions predominantly leverage traditional female gender roles within their anti-immigration rhetoric, our chapter illuminates how a discourse advocating for gender equality can serve the same anti-migrant purpose. Specifically, we offer a social-psychological perspective on this phenomenon.

In October 2010, a woman went on trial on the accusation that she attacked and teared a niqab off the face of a Middle-Eastern woman in Paris. At the time, the niqab was still legal in France. The attacker explained her anger and her behavior by her motivation to defend women's rights. More recently, in November 2019, at the march against sexist and sexual violence in Paris, a group of women from the *Nemésis* collective attracted the attention of the media with such slogans as 'foreign rapists are still there' or '52% of rapes in the Paris region are committed by foreigners' (Le Parisien, 2019). This collective supposedly aims to 'denounce the dangerous impact of mass immigration on Western women' (Collectif Nemésis, 2019) and imputes a direct link between immigration and sexual aggressions and violation of women's rights. This group claims to be feminist, apolitical, and denies being racist. Nevertheless, they were excluded from the feminist demonstration that day (Le Parisien, 2019). This collective openly targets migration policies and immigrants as

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the key problems in women's oppression. Much like these individuals, across different European countries, examples abound of citizens, journalists, or politicians drawing on gender-friendly arguments to support their anti-immigration stances. Research carried out in the US shows that outgroup males are perceived as a sexual threat in comparison to ingroup males (Navarrete et al., 2010). In a series of experiment conducted in Belgium, Kuppens and Yzerbyt (2012) found that young women reported feeling more anger, fear, and disgust toward Muslims when their identity as women had been made salient (i.e., by asking how much they identified with women), in comparison with various control conditions where their identity as young adults, as social sciences students, their personal identity, or no identity had been made salient. In the US, Islam was found to be perceived as distinctly threatening when it comes to gender rights, especially in comparison with other religions. Interestingly, this perception is associated with higher levels of prejudice against Muslims (Moss et al., 2019). According to Howard (2012, p.148), 'this argument that (Islamic) veils go against equality of the sexes and, thus, against one of the fundamental values of Western states, is probably the most widely used – not only by politicians, but also by the media and in general popular discussion – to defend bans on hijabs, burqas and/or niqabs'.

It will not come as a surprise, that this association between immigration and the issue of women's rights penetrates political speeches. Leaders have recognized the potential of such rhetoric and are making use of it to further their own political agenda. During the 2017 French presidential campaign, one of Marine Le Pen's policies was to 'fight against Islamism which reduces women's fundamental rights' (Rassemblement National, 2016). This may sound paradoxical when Front National representatives are predominantly voting against policies that would favor gender equality. In Italy, Matteo Salvini stated in an interview 'In the literal interpretation of the Koran (..), women are worth less that men and Islamic law is worth more than Italian law. And therefore, I don't want people who believe women are worth less than men to come to Italy' (ANSA, 2018). Remarkably, his party wants to revive old-fashioned gender roles and supports the ultra-conservative International Conference of the World Congress of Families, a coalition that promotes anti-abortion positions and opposes same-sex marriage. Similarly, the far-right *Partij voor de Vrijheid*, led by Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, displays a file named 'violence against women in Islam' (Van Klaveren & Wilders, 2013). In Belgium, Theo Francken, the former Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration, and a member of the Flemish nationalist (albeit not extreme-right) party 'N-VA', declared that the 2020-elected female mayor of Molenbeek was not welcomed by women because 'they all had to stay at home' (Le Soir, 2018). He was accused by feminists who claimed that 'women will not be an excuse for racism' (RTBF, 2016). This use of feminist discourse for nationalistic purposes is hardly new. As Lyons (2014) suggests, the strategic use of European feminism amongst British colonial administrators helped supporting colonial policies.

As is apparent in the other chapters of this volume, and also worth noting, this link between gender and immigration discourses takes various forms across European countries. While in some European countries, migrants are portrayed as a

group threatening a liberal and emancipated vision of women, in others, these migrants are construed as threatening the willingness to go back to traditional family relations and gender roles, or as threatening to women whom men should protect (see, e.g. Akkerman, 2015; Köttig et al., 2017). In both cases, one witnesses the construction of a symbolic border between them and us, an othering/bordering (Said, 1978), on the basis of gender issues, in a form of intersectional bordering.

How is it possible that people use an anti-sexist (or feminist) discourse and, at the same time, express anti-egalitarian attitudes towards immigrants? By perceiving—or constructing—Islam as a sexist, paternalistic religion, anti-immigration politicians simultaneously endorse feminist ideology[1] in one of its guises and serve their agenda. This process of 'othering' emerges in the political discourse, but is also received and reproduced by the audience. Clearly, a fascinating question thus concerns the mechanisms that may be at work at the psychological level to account for this posture not so much among political leaders but, more importantly so, among the population. Can social psychology shed light on this issue? In this chapter, we consider a series of social psychological perspectives developed to address this paradox. In particular, we focus on the concept of 'malleability of ideologies', first introduced by Knowles et al. (2009) in order to understand how one can weaponize an egalitarian ideology to serve an anti-immigration agenda. Indeed, an intriguing possibility is that egalitarian ideologies, and more specifically, anti-sexism, can serve the purpose of providing people the necessary justification for expressing prejudice.[2]

6.1.1 From Blatant Racism to Malleable Ideologies

Over the course of a century, blatant expressions of prejudice have decreased dramatically in the USA (Whitley & Kite, 2013). In Europe too, although we are not aware of any empirical study conducted to monitor the changes of stereotypes across the century, a cursory look at the evolution since World War II reveals the growing emergence of norms against blatant prejudice, most clearly materialized in anti-discrimination laws (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Zick et al., 2008). Despite the fact that the last 20 years witnessed an escalation of hate crimes against Muslims, a rise of Far-Right Anti-Immigration Parties since the 1980 (Pettigrew, 1998; Jackson et al., 2001; Mudde, 2013), prejudice continues to be largely perceived as politically incorrect, if not immoral. Research indicates that most people wish to regulate their expression of prejudice and experience a negative self-directed affect

[1] by ideology, we mean a set of interconnected beliefs pertaining to a social issue

[2] In social psychology, prejudice refers to the 'affect or emotion that a person feels when thinking or interacting with a member of an outgroup' (Whitley & Kite, 2013, p.15) and stems from the categorization of the target as a social group member. In this perspective, some individuals are seen as more intolerant than others with respect to certain social groups (this posture being caused mainly by a series of personality factors). (Whitley & Kite, 2013, p.16)

when they are reminded of a prejudiced behavior they showed in the past (Monteith et al., 2010). Indeed, manifestations of racism or sexism not only come across as problematic but they are also illegal. At the same time, it is obvious that bigotry is far from having disappeared. Rooted in centuries of cultural and individual representations that impinge on everyday habits, racism and sexism perpetuate through a host of factors that reside in structural relations as well as psychological biases.

To address this surprising discrepancy between the public condemnation of prejudiced opinions and discriminatory behavior and the perpetuation of racist views, social psychologists have called upon the notion of modern racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Henry & Sears, 2002; McConahay, 1986). Modern racism is a recent form of racism that replaces blatant racism. Old-fashioned, blatant racism is expressed directly and includes a bare and open rejection of minorities, based on alleged biological differences (e.g. 'Black people are generally not as smart as whites'). It implies that Whites are inherently superior to other races, and that it is legitimate to use political and social power to keep minorities at bay and protect white people (Whitley & Kite, 2013). In contrast, modern racism is the result of a significant shift in social norms. Because stereotypes and racism persist in the culture and current system, individuals continue to be exposed to them on a daily basis. At the same time, people are often unaware of this, and (like to) think that they are devoid of bias (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), seeing that racism is considered as immoral. Modern racism offers more socially acceptable forms of racial prejudice by upholding such beliefs as the idea that racism no longer exists today (the problem was solved thanks to legislation), that minorities are accountable for their undesirable social situation, and that minorities are too demanding in their push for equal rights (McConahay et al., 1981). Thus, according to researchers working on modern racism, many people claiming to support egalitarian principles and values, and thinking of themselves as non-prejudiced, continue to harbor negative feelings and beliefs about historically disadvantaged and otherwise stigmatized groups.

Building on the abundant empirical work dealing with modern racism, Crandall and Eshleman (2003) suggested that people try to satisfy two competing motivations simultaneously: firstly, expressing their deeply ingrained unflattering attitudes towards outgroups; secondly, maintaining a self-image as non-prejudiced, to themselves and to others. In order to resolve this dilemma, prejudiced people are more likely to express prejudice or to discriminate outgroup members when they can legitimize their attitudes in ways that seem socially acceptable. Whether it concerns their behavior, their opinions, or at a more elaborate level, their worldviews and ideologies, many prejudiced people are therefore likely to experience some level of discomfort when expressing anti-egalitarian stances. As a consequence, they will only do so when they can provide a convincing justification for their behavior.

An experiment by Snyder et al. (1979) illustrates this mechanism in relation to the discrimination of disabled people. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In the first condition, participants were informed that their task was to watch and evaluate a short movie. They had to do so in company of another person and, to this end, had to choose between one of two alleged participants (actually, two confederates), one of whom was a disabled person. Interestingly, in the

condition in which participants were told that both would see the same film, participants decided to sit next to the disabled person about as often as they selected the other person. In sharp contrast, when participants thought that the two movies would be different, they opted for the disabled person significantly less than for the other person. Additional findings suggest that these results emerge because the participants could use the justification of the film to avoid sitting next to the disabled person. In other words, participants discriminated against the disabled person, but only when they could identify an acceptable reason to do so, that is, when the situation was sufficiently ambiguous to avoid exposing the prejudice driving their behavior.

Besides physical behavior, discourse can also be adapted to justify one's prejudice. As a case in point, Sindic et al. (2018) found that participants who are motivated to justify their stance on immigration in front of an audience modify the content of stereotypes about immigrants. To show this, the authors focused on the contradiction residing in the anti-immigrant discourse: host populations blame immigrants for taking away jobs as well as for being lazy and taking advantage of the health care benefits. Exploring what the authors call a 'politicized use of immigrant stereotypes', they show that stereotypes can be shaped in a strategic manner to mobilize the audience and reach political goals (e.g. convince an audience with respect to immigration restrictions).

In their experiment, Sindic et al. (2018) made salient the fact that immigrants were a threat for either job availability ('job availability condition') or for social security resources ('social security threat') and measured participants' support for immigration restrictions. They then provided half of the participants with the opportunity to express their arguments about immigration and mobilize an audience, whereas the other half did not have this opportunity. Finally, participants had to evaluate immigrants on a series of stereotypical traits. The results show that participants who favored more stringent immigration policies changed the content of the stereotypes that they expressed as a function of their experimental condition. Indeed, anti-immigration participants in the 'social security threat' condition described immigrants as less hardworking when they faced an audience than whey they did not, thereby justifying the threat immigrants presumably pose for social security. In contrast, participants who opposed greater restrictions of immigration depicted immigrants as more hardworking when they faced an audience than when they did not. In the 'job availability threat' condition, the opposite pattern emerged. Specifically, participants who favored increased restrictions on immigration described the immigrants as more hardworking when they faced an audience than to when they did not. Conversely, participants who opposed increased restrictions on immigration described immigrants as less hardworking when facing an audience than whey they did not. In conclusion, participants who had the opportunity to mobilize an audience promoted a psychological representation of immigrants compatible with their political views and goals.

In an attempt to understand the psychological mechanisms at work behind the expression of subtle discriminatory behavior, Delroisse et al. (2012) examined whether people justified their decision by selecting specific information to make

their decision. The authors suggested that, when individuals end up manifesting discrimination, they not only use information that is relevant to the situation of interest, but also 'neutral' information, i.e., information that is not or only slightly relevant to the decision-making process. These authors looked at the hiring situation, a situation known to allow for discrimination against minority groups. Their findings suggest that the person evaluating a résumé first looks to see whether the relevant information (education, job experience) favors their preferred group. If not, they turn to less relevant information (hobbies, interests) to defend the exclusion of a candidate from the stigmatized group, at least as long as this information can be shaped convincingly enough to come across as unbiased evidence. In a similar vein, White and Crandall (2023 show that authenticity serves as a justification for prejudice: participants with higher levels of prejudice tended to label others' expressions of prejudice as authentic whenever they agreed with it.

Going a step further, Knowles et al. (2009) propose that participants not only adapt their behavior or their discourse to serve their goals but also assert different ideological positions. This major theoretical development holds that ideologies are less fixed than generally assumed. Rather, people alter their ideological beliefs depending on the situation they face and their current motivations. Building on the work on modern racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Henry & Sears, 2002), they suggest that, next to capitalizing on situational ambiguity, individuals can also take advantage of ambiguity in ideologies. For instance, diversity, which refers to heterogeneity in groups, can be construed in terms of race, age or gender, or other categories (Unzueta et al., 2012). According to these authors, the concept of 'malleability of ideologies' refers to the fact that people endorse ideologies in ways that benefit their personal (or own group) situation in order to achieve three goals. First, to appear non-prejudiced in their own eyes. Indeed, several studies show that people are aware of their struggle to be non-prejudiced (Devine et al., 1991; Plant & Devine, 1998) and are sometimes internally motivated to act in a non-prejudiced way and consciously commit to do so, although such self-regulation is costly (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Devine & Monteith, 1993). Second, malleable ideologies can allow one to appear unprejudiced in other people's eyes, serving self-presentation goals. Social psychology work has been able to uncover and measure the extrinsic desire of individuals to present themselves as unbiased, and researchers developed several techniques to bypass participant's strategic effort to conceal their prejudice (Plant et al., 2003). Third, as illustrated by politicians, ideologies have a rallying power. Expressing how the ideology is core to a common group identity and appealing to this group ideology to reject others allows one to mobilize others in the pursuit their specific political projects (Klein et al., 2007).

All this raises the question of the genuineness of individuals who temporarily tamper ideologies to serve their goals. When juggling between different interpretations of an ideology, do individuals change their endorsement of a value knowingly? Knowles et al. (2009, p.860) suggest that individuals need to be actually convinced of the ideology to endorse it. As they put it,

> It is important to note that for individuals to satisfy their intergroup motives, it is not sufficient for them merely to note the existence of a legitimizing ideology. Rather, they must also endorse it: Ideologies gain force when individuals come to believe in them.

Doing so protects the need for cognitive consistency, a concept recruited in a variety of psychological theories and referring to the fact that individuals have an inner drive to seek coherence between their attitudes and behavior (e.g., Festinger, 1957). For instance, studies show that participants will produce negative evaluations of an unknown or unfamiliar social group if they underwent earlier negative subliminal or supraliminal conditioning involving this group. Doing so allows making their description of the group congruent with their negative feelings derived from the conditioning phase (Crandall et al., 2011). At the same time, it may well be that individuals *knowingly* distort ideologies in pursuit of their goals. To address this question, researchers call upon various indirect measures that limit the control participants exert over their responses and offer a more truthful picture of participants' degree of endorsement of specific viewpoints (Moors, 2016).

Having introducing the concept of malleable ideologies at a theoretical level, we next review a series of empirical efforts conducted both in the U.S. and in Europe that rely on this approach. We examine its application to different types of ideologies.

6.2 Empirical Demonstrations

Since its initial presentation by Knowles and colleagues, researchers relied on the concept of malleable ideologies to account for this shift of attitudes using colorblind ideology (Knowles et al., 2009), freedom of speech (White & Crandall, 2017), freedom (Verkuyten, 2013), diversity (Unzueta et al., 2012) and secularism or *laïcité* (Roebroeck & Guimond, 2018). Interestingly enough, these various themes do not have a fundamental ideological connection to prejudice but prejudiced individuals 'tailor' them in order to fit the context. This is exactly what we hypothesize is happening with anti-sexism. Before we turn to anti-sexism, however, we provide a quick overview of the empirical evidence collected on five ideologies known as colorblindness, freedom of speech, freedom, diversity, and secularism.

6.2.1 Colorblindness

In his 1963 'I have a dream' speech, Martin Luther King (2010) expressed his faith in the ideology of colorblindness. According to this ideology, people should be treated as individuals rather than as exemplars of racial categories (Chow & Knowles, 2016). Not seeing a person's race appears as a means to achieve equality. Indeed, research confirms that a colorblind ideology has positive implications with regard to reducing stereotypes and prejudice towards other groups (Wolsko et al.,

2000). Still, Knowles et al. (2009) showed that this very same notion can be recruited to achieve the exact opposing result. These authors note that it is possible to construe colorblindness in terms of distributive justice (i.e. principles governing the division of outcomes across individuals and groups) or in terms of procedural justice (i.e., principles governing the process through which the distribution is decided, independently of its outcomes). Depending on how one defines colorblindness, both egalitarian and anti-egalitarian Whites may endorse it. Individuals focused on distributive justice are likely to favor differences in treatment across individuals, so long as these differences help eliminate unjust disparities in outcomes (e.g., affirmative action). In contrast, individuals focused on procedural justice are likely to favor equal treatment across individuals, even if such treatment entrenches existing inequalities.

To test this hypothesis, Knowles et al. (2009; study 3b) exposed half their north-American white participants to an 'intergroup threat' in order to induce the idea that the outgroup (in this case, Blacks) was in a position to harm them. To this end, participants learned that 'contrary to popular opinion, recent research has found that affirmative action policies have resulted in fewer economic opportunities for Whites.' Following this manipulation of intergroup threat, participants completed a questionnaire which assessed their egalitarian preferences, their views about colorblindness, and their desire for procedural justice. Results show that after the ingroup threat manipulation, participants holding egalitarian preferences did not modify their views on colorblindness. More interestingly, and in line with predictions, individuals holding anti-egalitarian preferences modified their attitudes on colorblindness in two ways. First, anti-egalitarian participants shifted their construal of colorblindness from an ideology of distributive justice to one of procedural justice. Second, their support for colorblind ideology increased, in comparison to the control condition, to the point that they endorsed it equally strongly as the egalitarian participants. Taken together, these results suggest that white people may support procedural colorblindness in order to deal with a threat to the racial hierarchy. In a nutshell, they use colorblindness as a malleable ideology. Additional evidence shows that colorblind ideology can serve to deprioritize racial discourse and racial agenda setting. Indeed, Chow and Knowles (2016) found that anti-egalitarian participants used this ideology to justify their refusal to add race as a topic the 2016 U.S. presidential debate. This quote by Martin Luther King, in his 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' written in 1964, (pp. 84–109, 2010) is eloquent in this regard:

> First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council-er or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action;' who paternalistically feels he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a 'more convenient season.

It is worth noting, however, that these results did not replicate in a European replication attempt. In their 2018 study, Roebroeck and Guimond tested the hypothesis of the malleable colorblind ideology in France. Republicanism, the core French principle, asserts that the citizen constitutes the very basis of the republic, which does not recognize group memberships (whether based on race, religion or others), and thus parallels the colorblind ideology. In three studies, the authors failed to find support for a malleability of colorblindness in France. As we will see below, however, they were able to show that a similar pattern was at work with the more specific ideology of *laïcité* (secularism).

6.2.2 Freedom of Speech

The US stands as a culture that prides itself on its profound appreciation of speech rights. At the same time, numerous controversies arise from the tension between the desire to ensure freedom of speech and the desire to restrict offensive views (Washington Post, 2022). White and Crandall (2017) examined whether prejudiced people would strategically use freedom of speech as a justification for, or in defense against, punishments for racism addressed to someone else. In their study, the authors presented participants with a fictitious case in which a man had made hateful comments towards the police (control group) or Blacks (experimental group) before measuring participants' endorsement of free speech and their level of anti-black prejudice. Results show that among participants who were assigned to the control, i.e., anti-police, condition, participants' prejudice scores were unrelated to their free-speech endorsement. In contrast, in the experimental, anti-Black, condition, participants' prejudice correlated with a stronger endorsement of free speech. In other words, anti-Black prejudice determined how likely experimental participants were to claim that punishing someone for anti-Black prejudice violated this person's rights to freedom of speech. Interestingly enough, low-prejudice people showed the opposite effect as they moved away from endorsing freedom of speech in racialized contexts. This pattern not only supports the hypothesis that freedom of speech is used to justify racist stances among anti-egalitarians but it also suggests that egalitarian participants may well sense that the endorsement of free speech tends to justify racist speech. Turning to a European context, Pettersson (2019) also examined discourses of three Finnish populist radical right politicians convicted of hate-speech, using a critical discursive psychological approach. Pettersson argues that these politicians managed to portray their hate-speech against Muslims as everything from trivial mistakes ('I'm only human') to acts of virtue, using the value of free speech (protecting freedom of speech when criticizing Islam).

6.2.3 Freedom

The more general idea of freedom can also serve as justification for discriminatory measures. Verkuyten (2013) examined Geert Wilders' contributions to four parliamentary debates and newspaper articles in the Netherlands. The leader of the far-right Party for Freedom has gained popularity since its creation in 2006. The party is known for its harsh standpoint on Islam (ban on building of mosques, shutting down Islamic schools, putting an end to immigration from Islamic countries, enforcing ethnic registration, etc). Echoing the work by Snyder et al. (1979), Verkuyten stresses the context favoring the emergence of justification. During parliamentary debates, which are covered in the media, representatives are required to answer questions from other representatives. Verkuyten conducted a discursive analysis of these debates and his research highlights three steps. First, Wilders creates a distinction between the 'in-group', that is, us, the Western World, Europe, or the Netherlands, defined as a culture of freedom, tolerance, and democracy, and the 'outgroup, them, that is, a monolithic version of Islam, a 'barbaric', 'uncivilized', 'ideology'—rather than religion -, incompatible with 'us'. Second, Wilders emphasizes how Islam is a threat to our culture and way of life, to the point of using the metaphor of war and depicts a stark contrast between values of freedom and tolerance, inherent to his cultural community, and the values of Islam. Freedom, in particular, is said to be at the core of Wilders' ingroup identity and clashing with an ideological and political Islam. Third, by rejecting Islam, Wilders posits himself as a defender of 'our' key value, i.e., freedom. In this respect, prejudiced behavior towards Muslims is not in any way the expression of one's own intolerance but rather the ultimate manifestation of the commitment to the duty to protect the moral values of our society.

6.2.4 Diversity

Diversity, in its broad definition, refers to the existence of differences, and can point to a wide range of categories. Although its exact meaning often remains somewhat unclear, diversity in the context of organizations typically refers to such features as gender, race, culture or religion, sexual orientation, and ability. Unzueta et al. (2012) examined how people embrace distinct definitions of diversity depending on their social agendas. In these authors' experiment, participants had to read different descriptions of fictitious organizations, varying on two criteria. Organizations were either high or low in racial heterogeneity and either high or low in occupational heterogeneity (with a roughly equal or unequal proportion of different types of professions in the organization). Then, participants had to evaluate whether the organization had a high or low diversity. Results suggest that when confronted to a low racial heterogeneity organization, a higher occupational heterogeneity increased the

perception of diversity but only among anti-egalitarian participants. This means that anti-egalitarian participants expanded their construals of diversity so as to include occupational diversity, allowing them to legitimize their negative stance on affirmative action policies in the context of the organization. This research suggests that people can shape diversity, as an ideology, in a manner that satisfies their political goals.

*6.2.5 Secularism (***laïcité***)*

In France, controversies surrounding the Muslim headscarf, and more specifically the ban of the veil, have been commonplace since the late 1980's. Muslim women are not allowed to wear the veil in a number of settings, particularly in the school context. According to many politicians and thinkers, the veil conflicts with the ideology of *laïcité (secularism)*. Some go so far as to say that Islam itself is seen as inherently incompatible with secularism, since it is portrayed as a fundamentalist proselytizing and backward principled religion, less discrete and inclusive than Judaism or Christianity (Allievi, 2012; Sibertin-Blanc & Boqui-Queni, 2015). Recent research by Roebroeck and Guimond (2016) highlights the existence of two conceptions of *laïcité* in France. The first conception derives from its original definition in France and holds that the Republic ensures freedom of conscience and the free exercise of religion while it does not recognize, pay or subsidize any religious movement (the neutrality principle) (Baubérot, 2012; Lindner, 2018). This conception of *laïcité* is associated with greater tolerance towards diversity. The second conception has been emerging since the late 1980's and parallels the debate regarding the headscarf. In this conception, neutrality applies not only to the Republic and its representatives but also to individuals in that the latter should refrain from wearing any religious symbols or expressing religious convictions in public, notably in schools, companies, kindergarten (Hennette-Vauchez, 2016). This second form of *laïcité*, called 'new *laïcité*', is associated with lower tolerance towards diversity. Being neutral with regard to religion becomes a goal in and of itself rather than a means to achieve equality. Clearly, secularism, which was once emblematic of left-wing organisations and opposing the power of the Catholic Church, is now also claimed by right-wing political leaders as an antidote to the separatism (*'communautarisme'*) imputed to immigrant populations. Thus, when announcing the future 'Law against separatism and 'aiming at reinforcing secularism', the French Minister of the Interior, Gerald Darmanin (La Voix du Nord, 2020), said:

> When you are ill, either you consider that you are not ill and your life expectancy is limited, or you become aware of it and you have to put a name on the illness and find a medication. The country is sick of its separatism and now of a political Islam that wants to overturn the values of the Republic.

As can be seen, *laïcité* is associated with a higher or a lower tolerance with regard to cultural and religious diversity and, consequently, can appeal to individuals with various political views depending on how it is defined. One may therefore wonder whether *laïcité* qualifies as a malleable ideology. If so, prejudiced individuals should modify their understanding of the ideology as a function of the specifics of the situation. Roebroeck and Guimond (2018) tested this hypothesis in several studies conducted in France. In one of their experiments, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In the control condition, participants simply read an introductory text about the aim of the study and a brief history of the European Union. In the second condition, participants read an introductory text with an additional section presenting negative economic consequences of Turkey's entry in the European Union (lower salaries, extra cost for the social security system, etc.). In the third condition, the additional paragraph about Turkey provided negative information regarding cultural compatibility (emphasizing cultural and religious differences and jeopardy for the EU cultural identity). Participants harboring anti-egalitarian preferences became stronger supporters of *laïcité* in the third condition, that is, when exposed to what has been defined in the intergroup relations literature as symbolic threat (for a review, see Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010, 2019). In stark contrast, egalitarian participants (i.e. individuals with low 'social dominance orientation', 'SDO', scores) did not endorse *laïcité* differently as a function of the condition (Fig. 6.1). These results show that the intergroup ideology known as *laïcité* in France is not inherently tolerant or not but that the form that is has taken in recent years can be seen as a sign of growing intolerance towards Muslims.

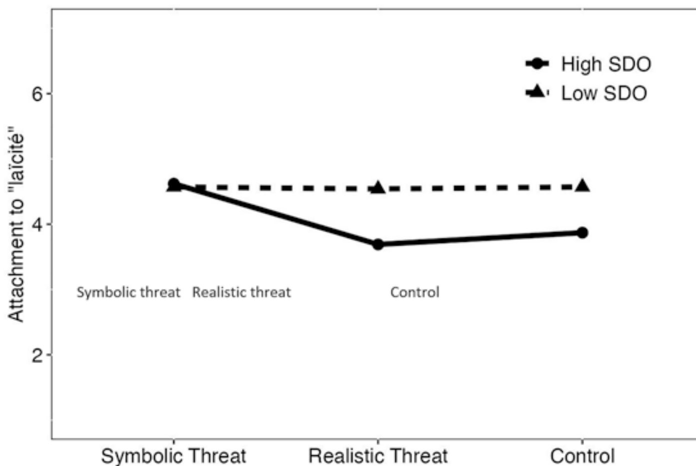

Fig. 6.1 Attachment to *laïcité* as a function of type of threat and social dominance orientation

6.2.6 *Anti-sexism*

Having examined the phenomenon of malleable ideologies through different examples, the question arises as to whether the anti-sexism that surfaces in the public debate ought to be seen as a manifestation of malleability. Research efforts in sociology and law already seems to give us clues in this direction. Several scholars suggest that feminism is instrumentalized to cover prejudice, particularly among far-right politicians, in Europe (Al-Saji, 2018; Benelli et al., 2006; Bentouhami, 2018; Delphy, 2006; Duits & van Zoonen, 2006; Roux et al., 2006), as well as in the USA (Volpp, 2001) and in Canada (O'Neill et al., 2015). Both among feminists and in the general population, the position adopted in relation to religion, particularly Islam, is a source of controversy. Regarding the Muslim headscarf in particular, the regulations and bans generate a lot of conflict. In the public debate, women's rights are presented as a core western value and the argument of women's oppression is often brought up. Many are prompt to see the headscarf as a violation of the dignity of women, based on the assumption that women who wear headscarves are always pressured to do so (Howard, 2012), and point to the oppression of women in other cultures while simultaneously ignoring the oppression of women within the (own) dominant culture (Fernandez, 2009). This viewpoint overlooks the testimonies of women who report a wide variety of reasons for this clothing choice. Whether it is an act of modesty and devotion, or whether it is to protect oneself from the male gaze, to resist sexual objectification and take control of one's own body, to affirm one's Muslim identity and combat assimilation, the reasons are many (Afshar, 2008; Delphy, 2006; Djelloul, 2013; Howard, 2012; O'Neill et al., 2015; Roux et al., 2006; Ruby, 2006). In a study conducted in Belgium, right-wing and anti-egalitarian participants asked to describe European lifestyle values brought up the issue of women's status significantly more than other participants (Van Oost et al., 2023), despite the fact that a large body of literature shows that anti-egalitarianism and right-wing political orientation correlates negatively with such concerns (Pratto et al., 2000).

In a similar vein, Muslims are often perceived to hold negative attitudes towards the LGBT community. Research suggests that a link between Islam and anti-gay attitudes exists but that it is largely dependent upon individuals' religions orientations and fundamentalism level (Anderson & Koc, 2015). Nevertheless, much like in the case of femonationalism (Farris, 2017), 'pink-washing' or 'homonationalism' (Puar, 2007) would consist in the construction of a dichotomy between the LGBTQ-friendly West and the homophobic non-West, especially by Western politicians who wish to glorify the West and exclude the East. Although Puar (2007) originally situates homonationalism in the United States, the phenomenon also develops in Europe (Ammaturo, 2015). For instance, Marine Le Pen, a far-right French politician, declared: 'The homophobia that is developing in our country is mainly due to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Am I going to be the only one who dares to say this again? Let us give the names of the aggressors!' (Le Pen, 2018). In Belgium, a major LGBT+ rights association has issued a press release to declare its opposition to the presence of the NVA, a Belgian Flemish right-wing party, at the Pride parade

(Rainbow House, 2019). The association denounces the intolerant immigration policies of the party as well as the transphobic statements by some party members, while the party is attending the Pride parade and claiming to promote values of tolerance. In the Netherlands, a comparable debate took place after an imam made homophobic comments, which were quickly condemned by the political establishment, while various ethnic minority voices argued that homophobic comments made by Catholics never cause such a stir (Hekma, 2002). Nevertheless, Ammaturo (2015) acknowledges the 'existence of a thin demarcation line between genuine commitment to human rights and subtle instrumentalization of these same issues for political purposes' (p.1154). Clearly, these matters call for further research.

6.3 Conclusion

In spite of a recent resurgence of derogatory speech, the general trend in Europe and in the US over the last decades has been one of lower acceptance of blatant prejudice. This evolution shows not only in the message underlying a series of important legal decisions, but also in the trend observed in public discourse. At the same time, various examples in the public discussion and the stances taken by citizens, organizations and extreme right-wing leaders in parts of the Western world reveal a surprising combination of anti-migrant and indeed anti-sexist views. The present chapter sought to dig into recent theoretical and empirical efforts in social psychological research in order to account for this paradox.

We started by building on the notion of modern racism whereby people can be simultaneously holding tolerant opinions while nurturing prejudiced beliefs and emotions against religious, racial, and gender minorities. We reviewed a series of efforts showing that prejudiced people only manifest their opposition to stigmatized groups, either in their judgment or in their behavior, in a context where they can justify their position and make it impervious to criticism. Next, we explored the work on the malleability of ideologies. This line of research proposes that prejudiced people recruit commonly accepted ideologies but turn them to their advantage. We presented evidence of this strategy with respect to the ideology of colorblindness, freedom of speech, freedom, diversity as well as secularism (*laïcité*). Building on these efforts, we conjectured that anti-sexist views could similarly serve an anti-migrant and nationalist agenda. Several scholars point to a weaponization of gender equality to promote an anti-immigration or anti-islam agenda. In parallel, recent results seem to indicate that the population deploys similar processes (Van Oost et al., 2023). Importantly, this normative view of women and feminism not only marginalizes migrants, especially Muslims, but effectively excludes Muslim women, in particular those wearing a headscarf, from public society. Their intersectional identity as Muslim women entails facing obstacles as both a gender minority and as members of a cultural and religious minority.

In recent years, it has become more and more difficult to associate some ideologies with clearly defined positions on the political spectrum, on key issues as

prejudice against outgroups, particularly those related to Arabic-Muslim communities. The concept of malleable ideologies, as it has emerged in social psychology, offers some interesting possibilities for conceptualizing the complexity of the attitudes. This chapter aimed to present the efforts available to this point and to outline a series of avenues for future research.

Because these ideologies, whether they revolve around issues of justice, freedom or *laicïté*, are widely seen as moral truths or common sense (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2004; White & Crandall, 2017), they are particularly tricky to deconstruct. Therefore, they provide efficient tools to prejudiced people because they allow covering up for, and indeed legitimizing, what would otherwise come across as unmistakable manifestations of prejudice or discrimination. As Reicher et al. (2008) argue, 'Where 'they' are defined as not being of 'us' and as being against 'us', and where, in addition, we create a Manichean view of the world in which we represent good and they represent evil, then their defeat—if necessary, their destruction—becomes a matter of preserving virtue' (p.1336). This reminds us of the very mobilizing yet treacherous and complex character of malleable ideologies, an effective means of creating and perpetuating boundaries between us and them, whom we want to exclude.

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Chapter 7
'To Have Security, to Have Access to Life': Queer Ambivalence at the Borders of Marriage and the Nation

Amy Brainer

7.1 Introduction

Mehdi is among the small number of people I managed to interview in person, before the COVID-19 pandemic moved my research mostly online.[1] We sat across from one another in a small office space, both cradling cups of hot tea. Gradually the cups emptied and were forgotten; the sun set, and the conversation warmed and became more intimate. Mehdi stopped apologizing for his more critical statements—something I had to earn, may never fully earn, and that has to be said up front (I am White and a US citizen; my experience with the family immigration system is not as a migrant but as a petitioning spouse). The critical statements ranged from observations about our respective governments, the web of laws designed to demoralize and dissuade; to the toll of concealing his relationship in an unsupportive workplace; to concerns about his marriage itself. The last were offered the most carefully, the most apologetically, and I reassured him many times that I knew and believed he loved his husband.

Mehdi pulled out his phone to show me their photos, beautiful men smiling into each other's eyes. There was delight in this gesture—mine in the photos, his in my responses to them. Yet the moment begs a question: to what extent did people experience the interview itself as another test of their love? I remember printing my text messages, pages upon pages of daily intimacies, and handing these over to the immigration official who would decide whether my marriage was real or fraudulent. Did my interview trigger the same performativity that is demanded of such couples at every turn?

[1] All names and screennames in this article are pseudonyms.

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There is no place in this process for reservations. This is why it took such trust for Mehdi to tell me that he is, in fact, too young to be married. This is his first relationship, after all. He said, laughing but also in seriousness, that this feels like some kind of traditional arrangement, marrying without experience. In truth, his husband, Dominic, has all the qualities he desires. Dominic is attentive, committed, and family-oriented; he worries over Mehdi's safety and health in a way that makes Mehdi feel treasured; he is a good cook; he has a close relationship with Mehdi's parents in the role of a 'friend' and has never pressured Mehdi to come out to them. The relationship itself is not the problem. But marriage is another matter. Ideally, Mehdi would have waited. Maybe a year or two, maybe longer. He worries about rushing in.

It is impossible to say, from this study, whether the rushing in damaged an otherwise healthy relationship in some way. But the question is there. And Mehdi is not exceptional among my interviewees. Others expressed similar things: whatever their feelings about marriage, they would have preferred not to entangle it with immigration status. However, this became the only way forward.

Mehdi's story and others like it are the inspiration for this chapter. Through a generosity of time and personal disclosure, they have made it possible for me to delineate some of the costs of constructing a 'bona fide' marriage for immigration purposes. Many of these costs are shared with heterosexuals, while others are unique to or intensified for queers. All occur in the context of a system that enjoys broad public support, described, for instance, as 'one of the most generous approaches to family-based immigration in the world' (Abrams, 2013: 7), the cornerstone of [US] immigration policy (cited critically in Lee, 2013; see especially Chap. 1), and 'the right way' to enter the United States.[2]

Van Oost et al. (this volume) argue that ideologies widely seen as moral truths conceal prejudices that people would otherwise be loath to express. The narrative of there being a 'right way' to immigrate is widely regarded as a moral truth and can operate as such a cover. That is, people feel comfortable expressing anti-immigrant views by couching their prejudices in an endorsement of 'legal' immigration and (alleged) support for those who enter the country in this manner. Many people in

[2] References to coming 'the right way' are prolific in US culture and politics. For example, in a 2014 Address to the Nation on Immigration, then President Barak Obama said: 'But today, our immigration system is broken, and everybody knows it. Families who enter our country the right way and play by the rules watch others flout the rules' <https://intranet.detfri.dk/uvm/STX/Engelsk/2016/maj/30/files/51479_transcript.pdf>. Before 2013, some binational lesbian and gay couples used this concept to advocate for changes in the law to include their families. For example, a lesbian woman separated by law from her partner shared, 'a few [same-sex] binational couples I met… either couldn't make it… or are flying under the wire, and I don't want to do either of those things. I want to do it right' (Rickard, 2011: 70). Critics of this concept emphasize its ahistoricity, inaccuracy, and how it is weaponized against immigrants. Chomsky writes, for instance, 'Most of the citizens who brag that their ancestors came here "the right way" are making assumptions based on ignorance. They assume that their ancestors "went through the process" and obtained visas, as people are required to do today. In fact, most of them came before any legal process existed—before the concept of "illegality" existed' (2014: 1).

this study were sensitive to the endorsement and privileging of migration through marriage to a US citizen or permanent resident. They witnessed how such endorsements were used against other migrants, immigrants, and families, and this deepened the ambivalence they felt about having to rely on it for their own security. This ambivalence, knotted up with the many financial, personal, and relational costs of the marriage immigration system, was a persistent theme in our conversations and one I explore in this chapter.

I approach this topic as a family scholar. My research has pulled me into many realms, and I am grateful to the legal scholars and historians who have helped me to contextualize this work. My own contributions are in the ways that these macro shifts manifest in our closest relationships. Namely: How do the normative and normalizing systems of marriage and immigration impact the individual and couple? What conflicts arise, and how do people deal with them? What is the day to day experience of becoming a 'bona fide' married couple in the eyes of the State?

7.2 Embodying Marriage and Fiancé Visas

The process of getting a spousal or fiancé visa can seep into the bones of a relationship. It touches everything, from life-altering decisions—is it the right time to marry? should we come out to our families?—to mundane daily tasks, like whether someone's name is on the electric bill and who is picking up the kid when mom goes for her biometrics appointment. Writing about the UK family visa, Turner and Espinoza (2021) describe this as 'intimate labor' and 'intimate archiving' of our lives together. Their autoethnography and conversations with couples register the emotional tenor of this labor: an obsessive need to record everything; increased fights; deeper bonding; an impending sense of unease—'like someone was squeezing my heart,' a participant said (ibid: 9).

The archive, Turner and Espinoza argue, is not just documenting forms of intimacy in our relationships, but producing them. The story of us is a part of the 'us' we become. Tran (2021) illustrates a similar principle through interviews with women who are in marriages that the Canadian government would describe as 'fraudulent'—that is, legal marriages that enable the women to settle in Canada without romance or reproduction/permanent family formation as their goal. While doing the intimate labor of immigration that Turner and Espinoza describe, some of these marriages transformed into lasting romantic unions. Tran's study joins others in exposing the artificial borders between 'fake' or 'fraudulent' and 'real' or 'bona fide' intimacy.

The fallacies of the real/fake marriage dichotomy are by now well documented in the literature. Scholars have shown with piercing clarity the harm inflicted on couples who are categorized and surveilled in this way—a part of the glue binding marriage migration regimes to larger projects of national identity and purity (e.g., D'Aoust, 2018; Chang, 2020; Groes & Fernandez, 2018, see especially chapters by Bofulin, Constable, Maskens, and Fernandez; Hamano, 2019; Ishii, 2016, see

especially chapters by Kudo, Grillot, and Chetsumon; Lan, 2008; Lee-An, 2020; Longo, 2018; Myrdahl, 2010; Pellander, 2021; Wemyss et al., 2018—this is a representative list, not an exhaustive one). These projects are not 'out there' somewhere but felt and fought in our daily lives and most intimate relations.

A majority of this scholarship centers heterosexual marriages. There are good reasons for this. Access to marriage migration is new and still limited to a small number of countries for same-sex couples. LGBTQ+ people who migrate in the context of different-sex (heterosexual-appearing) marriages are largely invisible to the research community and public. As laws have changed and awareness has grown, a new body of work is emerging on how gender and sexually diverse couples navigate this immigration pathway (e.g., Chauvin et al., 2021; Vuckovic Juros, 2021, this volume; Kassan & Nakamura, 2013; Luibhéid, 2018, 2022; Mathur, 2021; White, 2013; Yue, 2008). This is not merely an issue of representation and inclusion—although it is that, too. Beginning from a queer point of view is also an analytic shift, one that can freshly illuminate the ways that borders and bordering practices are mutually constituted and shaped (see Cassidy et al., 2018; Vuckovic Juros et al., this volume). Queer communities are—like many other minoritized communities—deeply familiar with state intrusion into their/our sexual and intimate lives, as well as insistence by others that their/our relationships are not real or worthy of protection. The work of becoming a 'bona fide' couple for US immigration is situated in the multitude of histories that people carry within them: the violence to which a queer relationship or person was already subjected; modes of survival practiced individually and as a couple; entanglements of love with class, caste, race, national origin, and other axes of power and distribution; to name a few.

It is here, with these intersecting histories in mind, that I invite readers to meet the interlocutors who will walk with you through the chapter.

7.3 Methodology

I began this study interested in how LGBTQ+ people construct and tell their own stories of marriage migration to the United States. To explore this, I conducted 30 in-depth interviews; collected and coded just over 3000 posts in three online forums devoted to spousal and fiancé immigration; and analyzed migrants' and couples' public narratives in the form of videos, short films, and memoirs. In all cases, I focused on LGBTQ+ identified individuals and/or same-sex couples. This work flowed into a second stream of inquiry into the cultural toolkits available to couples as they prepare their petitions. Oriented by what couples themselves had shared, I analyzed governmental and non-governmental texts advising LGBTQ+ people about marriage immigration, including self-help books, websites, and podcasts; reports and directives published by immigration agencies; and materials provided to couples by law firms and embassies. These texts reflect and reproduce discourses of love, marriage, family, and immigration that structure officials' assessment of couples and couples' identity work to appear 'bona fide.' Often these discourses clash

with applicants' own cultural scripts around marriage and family, as well as their/our personal values and desires.

7.3.1 My Path to the Research

The themes of this chapter touched my life some years before I began to read and think about them as a scholar. My own binder of immigration materials tells this story: numbered plastic sleeves corresponding to an elaborate table of contents; originals and copies of every document; a cover photo of me and my then-partner, T., on New Year's Eve in Taipei. This was the photo I chose to represent us (pushing, maybe, against the bureaucratized version of us inside): me in a red dress leaning into her arms; she tall and masculine and handsome, her hands firmly around my hips; the polaroid giving us a vintage sheen. I remember texting a photo of the polaroid to T. the morning after it was taken. 'That's great,' she wrote back. 'I look euphoric about grabbing your ass XD.' Beside the binder with its polaroid cover is an envelope holding our divorce papers. I hate that they say Amy Brainer (Plaintiff) *v.* T. T. (Defendant). Neither of us was ever *v.* the other; I am still *for* T. in every inch of my spirit. Although she initiated the divorce, we both felt it was safer to file after her planned move to Hong Kong, as her status in the US was tied to our marriage. Agreeing to do this was my final and, I think, most loving act of our marriage. And so the papers, the photo, the binder and everything inside congealed into an archive, a curated timeline of the life we created together and then gradually took apart.

This experience opened something in me—a mental pathway toward this research. Experience can also be a mental block, opening one path while closing others. Like every story I write about, mine is neither replicable nor generalizable; its value is not in what it reveals about other couples, but in what it reveals about the particular relations of ruling (Smith, 1990) that shape my life and work. The challenge is not to get stuck inside our own stories. On a practical level, for me, this includes temporarily suspending my training to look for patterns. Of course, patterns emerge and some become important. But patterns and categories can quickly become vehicles for the biases we bring to our projects—cultural, linguistic, social, personal—as well as biases from our disciplines and expertise. With this in mind, I have tried to engage each narrative as a whole and on its own terms before bringing it into conversation with theories and concepts gleaned from other interviews and texts.

7.3.2 In-Depth Interviews: Who is Included? Who is Missing?

To launch the interview portion of the study, I distributed flyers in Arabic, Chinese, English, and Spanish through immigrant-serving organizations, LGBTQ-serving organizations, and listservs for immigration lawyers and advocates. Some

organizations and listservs were national in scope, while others focused on a particular city or region. Reflecting this, the preliminary interviewees are spread across the US South (40%), Midwest (30%), and East and West Coasts (30%). Nearly everyone entered the study because a trusted person shared it with them. In Mehdi's case, for instance, a Pakistani neighbor texted him a photo of the flyer on the wall of a local community center and urged him to participate. He felt touched that she, a heterosexual woman, had noticed the study and taken the time to share it with him. The flyer was on the wall in the first place because a former student of mine worked at the center and vouched for my study. It is through such chains of relationships—rather than cold calls from public posts—that a majority of interviews came about.

I conducted the interviews in people's preferred languages, arranging for interpreters to be present as needed.[3] The politics of language and interpretation is something I examine more deeply in the larger study. Most interviewees are in what appears, on paper, to be a 'same-sex' marriage. This of course is complicated as people's legal sex markers, and how they present to immigration officials, do not always reflect their genders or how they personally experience the relationship. Six are LGBTQ+ identified and in what is or appears to be a 'heterosexual' marriage.[4] Among the 30 interviewees, birth years range from the 1960s to the 1990s, with 70% born in the 1970s and 1980s, placing them in their 30 s and 40 s at the time of this research. The interview sample is gender diverse and educationally privileged. Forty percent hold graduate degrees, another 44% hold bachelor's or associate's degrees, and 16% have a high school diploma. This—and the fact that immigrants and naturalized citizens in the study have, on average, slightly higher education than their US-born spouses—reflect the class selectivity of the system they have had to navigate (on class and family immigration, see Bonjour & Chauvin, 2018; Chauvin et al., 2021; Engzell & Ichou, 2020; López, 2017; Pellander, 2021).

I entered the immigration forums, in a large part, to locate more class-diverse voices than those I had managed to interview. People who could not afford lawyers relied heavily on the forums as they worked through their applications. Financial concerns were common. At times, they deterred couples from completing or even beginning the process. In this regard, a selection of voices missing from the interview portion of the study—those who could not afford to proceed—comprise the starting point for this analysis.

[3] Interviewees' places of birth include (for those migrating) Brazil, Canada, China, El Salvador, Guatemala, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, South Africa, Syria, Taiwan, Venezuela, and the United Kingdom; and (for those petitioning or both migrating and petitioning) India, Mexico, Taiwan, and the United States.

[4] It was especially important to me to include this group. Among LGBTQ+ people, fluid sexualities are more common than fixed lesbian or gay identities, and people in both same- and different-sex relationships are a part of our communities. Monosexual queers also at times enter heterosexual marriages for family, social, religious, or other reasons. Thus, focusing only on families that include an identifiable 'same-sex' couple limits what we can learn about LGBTQ+ marital and family experiences.

7.4 Financial Costs of a 'Bona Fide' Marriage

CAUTION

> There will be other expenses. If you're trying to figure out how much to budget for this process, don't forget the costs of required items other than the fees, such as photos, the medical exam, and having documents translated or notarized.
>
> – Ilona Bray, ed. (2019) *Fiancé and Marriage Visas: A Couple's Guide to US Immigration:* p. 13[5]
>
> Omg. That is way out of reach for me.
>
> (Forum member hoping to sponsor his transgender fiancée, responding to a $10k cost estimate provided by another couple)

Marriage immigration to the United States is prohibitively expensive. Some of the costs are immediately visible, like the ever-increasing filing fees and the strict income requirements to file at all. The US citizen partner must prove that they can support the couple at 125% of the poverty line (this one stopped T. and me from applying before I got my faculty job and had my new, middle class paycheck direct deposited for several months). Income and assets belonging to the non-citizen partner do not count toward this affidavit of support. Hidden costs, like those in the cautionary epigraph, can further strain the couple's budget. For instance, couples have no say in when their many appointments will be held. This may entail taking time off work for one or both partners and arranging for childcare. Lengthy travel may be required. One of my interviewees, Renato, traveled from his home in northern Brazil to Rio de Janeiro for his consular interview, adding upwards of one thousand US dollars (around six thousand Brazilian dollars) in hotel and airfare to the ballooning price tag of his application. 'You have to have *a lot* of money,' he said. 'Otherwise how are you going to pay for all that stuff?'

Couples living apart have to show evidence of frequent meetings to prove that their relationships are real. How many visits and for how long are common questions put to the immigration forums by new applicants. The consensus is usually that more visits are better. Expenses like these can quickly drain any savings that a person has managed to put away. It can tip the power dynamic between a couple, creating dependency where there was none before. It depletes the resources that individuals have to leave if the relationship sours.

People whose immigration papers are tied to marriage are among those deemed inadmissible (meaning they can be denied status or deported) if they receive public cash assistance, are institutionalized for long-term care, *or are likely to be in the*

[5] The Nolo guide is well reviewed in a crowded field of books, websites, podcasts, and other 'how-to' resources for couples seeking fiancé and spousal visas. This reference is from the tenth edition, edited by Ilona Bray.

future.[6] It is up to immigration officials—many of whom have personal biases in addition to the institutionally mandated biases of the immigration system—to consider a person's 'totality of circumstances' in order to predict whether this will happen (see Faber, 2020 on the interpretation, application, and broad discriminatory reach of this policy). The Trump administration added many more benefits to the catalogue of those that make someone inadmissible, including, but not limited to, housing, rental, and food assistance and federally funded health coverage for people with low incomes. While the Biden administration rolled back the Trump era expansion, the 'chilling effect' is lasting. Many people are afraid to receive assistance of any kind, including, during the core field period, COVID-19 relief and health care, for fear that it will jeopardize their immigration status (Makhlouf & Sandhu, 2020).

Class selectivity colors the process in other ways as well. One couple shared that they were advised to have 'friends who are doctors or lawyers, friends with titles' write the required letters affirming their relationship as real. The friends who really knew them as a couple did not have advanced degrees; most were not US citizens and thus could not write letters at all. Instead, they relied on people they only tangentially knew—and yet whose words about them carried more weight purely based on national origin and profession.

Marriage and fiancé visas filter people by socioeconomic status. While ostensibly uniting families, they are in fact uniting only families with means—families who can meet the income requirements and jump through every financial hoop. This is a hardship for people of every sexual orientation and gender. Compounding this is the fact that LGBTQ+ people are overrepresented among the poor. In the United States, LGBQ+ people are more likely than similarly situated heterosexuals to be unemployed or underemployed, to be housing insecure or homeless, and to lack health insurance, among many other indicators of poverty; the rates of poverty and extreme poverty (making $10 k or less per year) among trans people are higher still (see DeFilippis, 2016 for a review of this literature; James et al., 2016 for national statistics; Glick et al., 2019 for a qualitative study/deeper dive). Family-based means for sharing costs, such as co-sponsorship of the affidavit of support, are less available to queer and trans people whose families may not support their relationships or know about them. Poverty and withdrawal of family support are high among sexually and gender nonconforming populations in other parts of the world as well (see, among many examples, Bhagat, 2018; Connell, 2021; Shah, 2014). The combined conditions of LGBTQ+ poverty, withdrawal of traditional support structures, and costs of migration to the US through marriage make this pathway steep if not impassable for many couples.

In one particularly heart-wrenching story in the immigration forums, a couple tried to decide whether to put the money toward their petition and the visits required

[6] At the time of writing, US Citizenship and Immigration Services is using the 1999 Field Guidance on Deportability and Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-1999-05-26/pdf/99-13202.pdf>. The vacated Public Charge Final Rule was also in effect for a portion of my field period <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/08/14/2019-17142/inadmissibility-on-public-charge-grounds>.

to get a fiancé visa, or toward the transgender partner’s surgery. Lacking the money to do both, their choice became one between the creation of their family and life-changing (for many life-saving) healthcare. They chose her life. The last time the couple posted, they still had not found a way to be together.

7.5 Personal and Relational Costs

> Home > Forums >> How can I move to be with my girlfriend??[7]
>
> outropurple: I’m lost about where to start and what to do to be honest. I’m too young to get married now. It feels like unless I get married there is no way for me to move [to the US to be with my partner] and I’m really sad about it. I will appreciate any help from you guys!
>
> Lenaswife: How old are you? Do you mean legally too young or just that you are not ready for marriage?
>
> outropurple: I’m 23 and I’m not ready for that
>
> Lenaswife: Ah. The US doesn’t have any partner visas, unfortunately. All roads lead to marriage. You could try alternative things, like work visas, or look at a third country. Good luck.
>
> hrabarishere: Problem is, billions of people would claim they’re moving to be with their partner if there was a way to do it.

Reading posts and comments, we supply the tone. I first read ‘good luck’ as a shrug. Dismissive. Then as gentle and genuine. A period reads like a closed door. But, *Lenaswife* stuck around in the chat. *Hrabarishere* posted once, dropping in to say only this. No one replied, and my mind went to work on tone again. Matter of fact. The user is repeating what he understands to be an unfortunate but necessary rule, in language that is normal to him. Maybe he sees in these ‘billions’ of potential claimants the ‘invading hordes’ conjured by nativist politicians. Maybe, like many people who continue to live in the countries where they were born, he condemns the ‘invading hordes’ imagery as racist, yet accepts its underlying premises: that immigration must be strictly controlled and contained; that it makes sense to stratify newcomers based on state-sanctioned romantic attachments to permanent residents and citizens; that non-marital reasons for wanting to move are somehow less trustworthy. However *hrabarishere* intended for it to land, this watered down version of a deeper anti-immigrant message went unchecked in the forum.

Users sympathized with *outropurple*, but, as I found across the platform, people were quick to point out that ‘everyone’ experiences such challenges and this is simply a part of the process. *Actually, as far as the US and its visa requirements are concerned, you are a normal international couple,* someone wrote. *There is no easy way to simply pick up and move to the US.* (I thought of my own family: my White US citizen parents picked up and moved to China in the eighties and again in the

[7] Like names and usernames, forum titles have been changed. I have tried to retain the spirit and general message of the title while protecting users’ privacy.

nineties, living there for 20 years in total; I left our family home in China for college, then returned for a year simply because I missed it; I also picked up and moved to Taiwan in 2011 to do my fieldwork. In none of these instances did anyone question my/our right to 'simply pick up and move.') *Outropurple* thanked everyone sincerely for their comments. Her final post reiterated her hope of finding a way to migrate without getting married.

Back in the office—in the scene that opened this chapter—Mehdi walked me through his decision to marry his partner Dominic. He made a list on paper, pros and cons. He spoke to the neighbor who later gave him the research flyer and to his elder brother. He listened to Dominic's fears about their future together and to his own heart.

> 'My brother told me, why not? He's the best person to be with. And it's better for you, you can travel. I want to see my sister so badly. I haven't seen her since 2013. And I have a really close relationship with my sister. I just miss my sister and family a lot. And I have not seen my new nephew. Just…' he gestured toward the cell phone in his lap.
>
> 'Just on the phone,' I said.
>
> 'Yeah. Just, you know …'
>
> 'It's totally different.'
>
> 'I feel like I'm missing out on all the things I could do with my family. All of this, you know, insecurity made me do this. Cuz I feel I'm insecure. Nothing will change in the American laws that will allow me to travel as a Syrian, with the Syrian ban. And the green card process is getting so hard through work. Like even if I am working, I need like six, seven, eight years in a *really good* position. And I'm not sure if I'm going to get a management position within six, seven years… I want to actually enjoy my life. I don't want to lose my life. I'm now 31. I have friends in Brazil, I want to go see them; I want to go to Lebanon [to see my family there]. This is part of it. To have security. To have access to life.'

Access to life. The phrase stuck with me, not just in my fieldnotes but in my spirit. Mehdi later texted to tell me that his green card had been approved and he was going to visit his sister and nephew. The text was brimming with exclamation points and with joy. Security is not just a legal matter; it is psychological, emotional, relational. I could feel Mehdi's lightness, and I responded in kind. I still feel happiness when I think about that text. And yet, why should Mehdi's freedom to see his sister and nephew be legally tied to his relationship with Dominic? In their case, the system worked smoothly; theirs is a 'success' story. But the system predicates so much—access to life—on a single romantic union. How does a young relationship absorb such pressure?

Enriquez (2020) devotes a chapter of her book, *On Love and Papers*, to formerly undocumented young adults who have legalized their status through marriage. These young people and their US citizen spouses faced not only legal and financial hurtles, but emotional and relational ones as well. Many resisted entangling marriage and immigration, not wanting to open such a personal and precious part of their lives to a fractured and discriminatory system. Others described ways that immigration pressures wore on their relationships, forced them to pause or fast-forward their lives, and extracted an emotional toll that lasted for years after the

process itself had ended. Enriquez argues that tying love to immigration status 'complicates marriage as the next step in family formation — discouraging it in some cases, encouraging it in others, and infusing all relationships with emotional baggage' (ibid: 120–121). She finds that this baggage exists even in cases that are relatively straightforward.

My interviewees described similar baggage—a weight shared across sexual orientation and gender. They also described personal and relational costs that they connected more directly to being queer. To be sure, the 'normalizing' I describe next is something straight people also struggle with; they, too, feel pressure to perform 'traditional' marriage and family in ways that are inauthentic. For many LGBTQ+ people, there is an additional layer in that these pressures impinge on sexual cultures and identities that are often hard fought and cherished.

7.5.1 Homonormalizing?

Starting the process to obtain her green card, T. and I were told it would be best if we had 'a mortgage and kids' (we had neither). Around the same time, a queer friend asked me whether I thought our open marriages would harm our respective cases, as she scrubbed all traces of non-monogamy from social media and other places that immigration officials could freely invade. An interviewee in an open relationship anticipated scrutiny because he is taking PrEP, an HIV prevention method, which he is required to report along with other medications as part of the mandated medical exam that is part of the application process. A bisexual interviewee, Desiree, made an extra effort to embody 'the typical heterosexual relationship' when she petitioned for her husband: 'I made sure that I concealed any relationships that I had with women in the past because I didn't want it to be seen as—I don't know—noncommittal. Because I feel like that's the way that all bisexuals get looked at, like, "You're noncommittal. You're all over the place. You like everyone."' Her concerns are well founded; research shows that state suspicion toward bisexuality does create obstacles for queer women in other immigration proceedings (see, for example, Lewis, 2013; Rehaag, 2008; Sin, 2014), and there is no reason to think that marriage cases will be the exception. On top of this, Desiree predicted (also with good reason) that immigration officials would find it inconceivable that her husband, who is Muslim, would want to marry a bisexual woman because of their stereotypes about his culture and faith. The possibility of these interlocking assumptions about bisexuality and Muslim identity, in a person with such power over their lives, was a risk she could not afford to take.

As I was analyzing these data, my colleague Shuzhen Huang published an analysis of her own experience with marriage-based migration to the US:

> A more accurate statement would be that I *had to* rather than decided to get married. To sustain our queer relationship [in the US], I was put in a position where performing the heteropatriarchal tradition of marriage seemed the only viable choice… Access to permanent residency demands assimilation to white cisheteronormativity. The rhetoric of

> acceptance, therefore, entraps the queer migrant — acceptance requires compliance to a set of normative ideals, a contradiction to the spirit of queerness, which is about resistance and a refusal to be contained. The rhetoric of acceptance regulates queerness and yet demands transnational queers of color be 'grateful immigrants' (Huang, 2020: 85 & 87).

Passing as monogamous, as monosexual, as 'grateful immigrants,' as seeking normal and non-disruptive lives, is not without personal and relational costs. The negation of queerness that Huang describes is a cost as well. This is perhaps less visible to a society that constructs queer people, like immigrants, as jealous of what the dominant group imagines itself to possess. Traces of this mindset emerge even among well-meaning allies (and some gay people themselves) who say, 'it's not a choice; who would *choose* to be gay?' That gay people might prefer our lives to those of heterosexuals is still, for many, unimaginable.

There is an urge, including on the political left, to treat structural conditions as personal characteristics—in this case, compliance and refusal as individual expressions of critical consciousness or lack thereof. But, my interlocutors are not 'homonormative' as a matter of taste or preference. Many have complicated relationships to the state and to marriage, and are ambivalent about entangling these things. Put another way, it is not that homonormative *people* seek to be married and immigrate, but that marriage and immigration *systems* produce homonormativity and enforce it. For the individual and couple, this can create ambivalence and at times conflict.

Ambivalence showed up in other parts of people's narratives as well. The push to marry was, for some, followed by a push to naturalize—another step they would not necessarily have chosen, or would have delayed if not for the immense pressure placed on them by the US government. Becoming a 'bona fide' married couple involves a certain narrative: monogamous, monosexual, lifelong, financially dependent or interdependent, desiring of children and a home together. As Desiree put it, 'they want to know that my dream is to marry this man and have his children.' Becoming a US citizen involves a parallel narrative, the fabrication of a dream, suppressing the ambivalence and conflict that for many are a part of this experience.

7.6 Ambivalence and Citizenship

In the dreamland, immigrants' imagined longing for US citizenship affirms the colonial project: 'America' as a promised land, bequeathed to some, coveted by all. The narrative is so embraced that it is difficult for many US citizens to conceptualize immigration in any other way. Dina Nayeri recalls, in her memoir, a conversation from her childhood: 'Once in an Oklahoma church, a woman said, "Well, I sure do get it. You came for a better life." I thought I'd pass out… life in Iran was a fairytale. In Oklahoma, we lived in an apartment complex for the destitute and the disenfranchised… A better life? The words lodged in my ear like grit' (2019: 7). At my kitchen table, my friend and interlocutor Yan, now a dual US-Taiwanese citizen, shared with me why she had naturalized:

> Everyone I told congratulated me about becoming a citizen. I probably wouldn't say this to most Americans, but I don't feel really positive about becoming a citizen, or feel proud of it, or feel that it's something I need to be congratulated for. Even though it made my life so much easier. According to Xiomara [Yan's partner, who naturalized some years earlier] now I can go protest without being, like… Even if I get arrested [for protesting], I won't get kicked out of the country. Maybe there is a little bit of relief because once Trump became the president, even some permanent residents were worried. They can still be deported and their status can be taken away. That's why we sped up the process. If he was not elected I probably would still be a permanent resident now. And I have heard that from my colleague, she's from Mexico and she's a permanent resident. Her husband is also from Mexico. They have three children who are Americans. So they also have to speed up their process because they're worried that they may be separated. Yeah, I guess that's part of why I became a citizen. It really was Xio who kept pushing me – oh, you should put in your application now, you shouldn't wait. You don't want to risk it, blah blah blah.

From her side eye at all the congratulations to her concluding 'blah blah blah,' Yan smoothly sidestepped the smoke and mirrors of the naturalization narrative. The decision to become a citizen was, for her, a pragmatic one, accelerated by the actions of the US electorate and the administration they put into power, political tremors that threatened her personal security. Of course, emotions around these processes vary, as do the stakes attached to them. In contrast to Yan's 'little bit of relief,' another interviewee described the flood of relief she felt in moving, in her case, from unrecognized status to DACA to permanent residency through marriage; 'like being born again,' she said. But, it was still *relief*, as the US government eased its own severe restrictions on her mobility and life, the constant, stomach churning stress of deportability. In this, as in so many of its benevolent postures, the state is solving a problem of its own making.

The marriage and immigration systems in which these choices are entangled distribute life chances unevenly through the population by design. Exclusion of queers based on sexuality and gender has, in relatively recent history, given way to stratification along other lines: financial means; the ability to perform love and commitment in ways that appear 'bona fide' to immigration officials; mode of entry to the United States, determining who is eligible to regularize their status through marriage. People in this study did not view their new relationship to the state uncritically. Security necessitated that they capitulate to its demands: get married; not only get married, but normalize and traditionalize the marriage as much as possible; not only normalize, but naturalize and (appear to) assimilate. In their homes and hearts, however, desires were more complex—the freedom to go and come, the right to protest—a spider web of cracks in the structures imposed on their lives.

7.7 Conclusion: Against Gratitude

we are not grateful… we are not in this together.

– José Guadalupe Herrera Soto (2020) *Queer and Trans Migrations*: 202

Talk of immigration has become, in Nayeri's words, 'hostile, even unhinged' (2019: 12). Yet, the critique that unfolds in her book is not of the people and politicians who wear their xenophobia on their sleeves. Rather, it is of men and women who are kindly and politely discriminating, moved by stories of suffering, suspicious of interests and dreams that they cultivate in their own children but deem 'opportunistic' in individuals whose papers and passports differ from theirs. To really change this will require much more than protecting or unblocking the narrow and precarious routes to legal permanent residency and citizenship, systems that trade what Mehdi called 'access to life' for compliance, gratitude, and assimilation.

People in this study described financial, personal, and relational costs while emphasizing how small they were in comparison to what others had to pay. Someone spoke of 'survivor's guilt' having had an easier route through US immigration compared to compatriots who were not married to citizens. Another anticipated the response from her family: would they be angry that, after naturalization, she had sponsored her partner and not one of them? A third person took pains to remind me, with each critique of the process that our conversation unearthed, 'it hasn't been so bad for me; others have experienced worse.' Interviewees were knowledgeable about the immigration system, drenched as it is in human rights abuses, family separations, detentions and deportations. Their statements were acts of solidarity with other migrants. They were also, at times, a part of the emotional labor of gratitude.

Ambivalence is a major artery through this chapter: mixed feelings about the pressure to marry; about sanitizing the archives of our relationships; about the pressure to naturalize; about the celebrations that follow; about the power of the state to tell people what to dream, to congratulate them for it, to expect their thanks; about the stress, indignities, and privileges that simultaneously characterize this experience. I have rewritten this penultimate paragraph many times. I do not want to conclude by telling readers how to think about all this. That would, I think, do a disservice to what my interlocutors have shared. Instead, I hope the ambivalence is palpable and sticky, clinging to readers who have never thought about these things before; bearing witness for those who know them intimately. I am comfortable letting the chapter end uneasily.

In the same office where I interviewed Mehdi, a student stopped by a few weeks ago to ask me whether marriage to a US citizen is the best way to get a green card, or whether he should focus on getting one through work. Or should he try for asylum status? As a young student he had neither a long-term partner nor a career, and all possible roads—toward and away from the United States—racked him with anxiety. He asked me not because of my research but because I am the only adult who knows that he is bisexual, that he is afraid. And so we sat, again with tea, in the painful space at the borders of sexuality, intimacy, family, and nation, while I searched for words and he searched for ways, as Mehdi put it seasons before, to have security, to have access to life.

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Chapter 8
"It Is Not the Netherlands Here." How Parents of LGB Migrants Experience Everyday Bordering Against Nonheterosexual Belonging in CEE

Tanja Vuckovic Juros

8.1 Introduction

> "I didn't really say, you know, 'I'm lesbian'," Paula recalls coming out to her parents, long before moving to Belgium from her Central Eastern European (CEE) country. Instead, she talked about wanting to move in with her same-sex partner: "We are a couple, […] we just wanna live our life together. And that's why we wanted to buy an apartment together." But this was not acceptable to Paula's father: "It is not the Netherlands here." "That was his comment," clarifies Paula, "Like, people would talk about it." Another CEE father, Ladislav, also worried about the reactions his migrant daughter might receive while visiting her home country with her wife, and said, "Sometimes I say to myself that there is no point in creating, like, stressful situations that could be resulting from this kind of wondering looks. […] In Belgium, it is natural […] and then they come here and think it is Belgium. And it is not Belgium."

Parents' unease about how others will react to their children's nonheterosexuality[1] is a familiar theme in the coming-out studies (Kuhar, 2007; Vasquez del Aguila, 2012). Particularly in contexts where a homophobic response is expected from a wider community, some parents do not acknowledge their children's nonheterosexuality or keep it a secret (Švab & Kuhar, 2014; Jhang, 2018). While strategic

[1] With a few specific exceptions, in this chapter I use the term "nonheterosexuality" instead of the more common "LGBT", or some of its more inclusive variants (e.g., LGBTQI+) as a compromise to the fact that individuals in heteronormative communities often use different language, including the term "homosexuality", regardless of its too limited focus on gays and lesbians, and also its medicalized connotations. Although I acknowledge that "nonheterosexuality" is problematic because it implies that all other sexualities are defined in contrast to "heterosexuality", I consider it a more appropriate term for the context I am describing, while also being more general and inclusive than "homosexuality", which I use only when it is the most precise term.

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family silences can also provide LGB individuals with grey areas to fully participate in kinship and family structures (Brainer, 2018), the parents' concern with the reactions of others can be hurtful to their nonheterosexual children (Kuhar, 2007; Reczek, 2020).

However, these types of parental reactions are more than individual responses to nonheterosexuality. They are also reactions embedded in socio-institutional contexts defining the political process of belonging (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019; Anthias, 2020) in heteronormative terms. In such contexts, not only do the parents have to reconcile the affective ties to their children with the wider views on nonheterosexuality—often shaped by stereotypes, misinformation and homophobic public discourse (van Velzen, 2007; Švab & Kuhar, 2014)—but they also face stigma by association (Goffman, 1963; Kuhar, 2007). As a result of these "nonheterosexual associations" the parents may find themselves teetering on the symbolic borders of "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1991) within which they otherwise belong, most frequently by the virtue of their nationality, ethnicity/race, or religion. So, when the parents from the opening paragraph say that their home countries are not the Netherlands or Belgium, what they are articulating is their experience of everyday bordering against nonheterosexual (national) belonging.

In this chapter, I explore everyday bordering against nonheterosexual belonging in the case of CEE parents of LGB migrants who emigrated to Belgium or the Netherlands—two countries reputed for their "LGBT-friendliness"—from five countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland) characterized by a homonegative public opinion (e.g. Takács & Szalma, 2020), exclusionary LGBT legal framework (ILGA World et al., 2020), and recent anti-gender mobilizations (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017).

My analytic lenses of "everyday bordering" are derived from the concept of "intersectional bordering" (Cassidy et al., 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019) which emphasizes the micro level of everyday negotiations of "us" and "them". These are both experienced differently by differently positioned individuals (intersectionality) and embedded in wider socio-institutional contexts (macro level). As the present analysis is more concerned with "everyday" than "intersectional", I have adapted the term accordingly—especially as I do not examine bordering against (im) migrants, but instead look at "stayers" with a peculiar perspective to illuminate the tensions and fluidity of everyday borderings. The "stayers" are the CEE parents of LGB migrants, and their peculiar perspective is grounded in their in-between position. On the one hand, these parents sustain transnational family and caregiving practices (Baldassar et al., 2014; Morgan, 2020) with their children living in Belgium and the Netherlands. This exposes them to different social and institutional models of families and sexualities that may not lead to nonbelonging elsewhere. On the other hand, the parents also remain situated in the CEE contexts in which challenging the dominant heteronormative order may carry social costs. This double positionality, then, makes parents sensitive to different ways sexuality and belonging are constructed in different contexts.

In the next section, I present the theoretical framework of this chapter, building on the concepts of state-sponsored/political homophobia and intersectional/

everyday bordering. Then I elaborate on the case and methods, which is followed by a contextualization of the parents’ lives in five participating CEE countries, from the socialist period to anti-gender mobilizations. The main analysis focuses on the parents’ narratives about their experiences and expectations of others’ reactions to nonheterosexuality. In the conclusion, I connect these expectations and experiences to everyday borderings against nonheterosexual belonging in CEE.

8.2 State-Sponsored Homophobia, Everyday Bordering and Nonheterosexual Belonging

By the title of its annually published Report on State-Sponsored Homophobia, which surveys LGBT laws in various countries, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World) drives home the point that homophobia is more than an individual response. It is a structural, state-sponsored socio-legal framework that shapes the experiences of nonheterosexual individuals at both macro and micro levels.

At the macro level, state-sponsored or strategic “political homophobia” (Bosia & Weiss, 2013) shapes the experiences of nonheterosexual individuals primarily by regulating their status as citizens. In most countries worldwide (ILGA World et al., 2020), nonheterosexual individuals are still excluded from full, intimate (Plummer, 2003) citizenship. Even though they might “belong” otherwise, their nonheterosexuality creates a new (internal) border that separates them, differently in various countries, from their co-nationals on a whole continuum of rights: from the very right to life, through non-discrimination, to entering into marriage and having children. This is partially linked to the fact that, although sexuality is not typically listed as one of the main criteria for national belonging (unlike ethnicity/race or religion), it is nevertheless embedded into the modern nation-states which came into being via heteronormative, homophobic and patriarchal nationalisms, i.e. heteronationalisms (Nagel, 1998; Slootmaeckers, 2019). In light of homophobia’s function as a political tool (Bosia & Weiss, 2013), nationalisms do not necessarily remain intertwined with homophobia, as testified by the emergence of homonationalisms (Puar, 2007), where nonheterosexuality is protected at the expense of marginalized (e.g. racialized) sexualities (Slootmaeckers, 2019). But, heteronationalism is still a dominant bordering mechanism of national belonging in CEE since, as I detail later, it feeds off the 1990s national resurgences and bolsters the political project of anti-gender movements in the region.

At the micro-level, the legal frameworks of the state provide individuals—its citizens—with cues to what are “appropriate”, or socially acceptable, responses to nonheterosexuality. In the context of state-sponsored homophobia, the message of repressive measures or restrictive laws is the message of bordering (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019) against nonheterosexual belonging. State-sponsored homophobia announces clearly that the nation-state’s politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019) positions nonheterosexual individuals outside this particular collectivity. The

consequences of such a symbolic bordering are then reflected in the everyday experiences of nonheterosexual individuals—but not only them. As I also present in this chapter, the parents of nonheterosexual individuals face stigma by association (Goffman, 1963; Kuhar, 2007) and experience the social cost of being the parents of those who are symbolically on the outside. As a result, the parents' concern with what "others will say" is a concern stemming from their (anticipated and experienced) sense that the borders of belonging have just shifted—and parents' positions have become less certain.

Taking advantage of the in-between perspective this may provide, this study focuses on how the parents of LGB migrants, embedded in the contexts of their CEE states, but also part of transnational social fields exposing them to multiple sets of norms and laws (Levitt & Schiller, 2004)—experience everyday bordering against nonheterosexual belonging in their communities.

8.2.1 Methodological Framework

This chapter draws from the 2018 interviews with eight parents of CEE LGB migrants. The parents were recruited via their sons and daughters who were married or raising children with same-sex partners in Belgium and the Netherlands and whom I interviewed in the study's first stage.[2] The parents formed a relatively homogenous group in terms of age and class background: they were between their early 60 s and mid-70 s, most had a university education and were retired. All parents were living in five CEE countries—Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland—that critically differed from Belgium and the Netherlands in terms of LGBT social climate and institutional and legal framework.

This critical difference is observable in, for instance, the persistent divergence in social attitudes towards gays and lesbians between CEE countries and Western European countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands (Takács & Szalma, 2020). It is also signalled, symbolically and legally, by both the constitutional protection of heterosexual marriage in all five participating CEE countries and their recent mobilizations against gender and sexual equality that particularly vocally targeted LGBT individuals and same-sex families (Darakchi, 2019; Korolczuk, 2020; Kováts, 2021; Mos, 2020; Tektas & Keysan, 2021; Vuckovic Juros et al., 2020). In contrast, same-sex couples have had the right to marry and have legally protected families for about two decades now in both Belgium and the Netherlands (ILGA World et al., 2020). Furthermore, the public image of "LGBT-friendliness" has become so central to these societies that even otherwise socially conservative far-right actors use the

[2] All data were collected within the TransNorm/TOFNITW project that received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement No 702650. The contents of this chapter are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

(homonationalist) discourse of the protection of LGBT rights to pursue their other, most frequently anti-immigrant, political agendas (Dudink, 2017; Dhoest, 2020).

At the same time, as a sociologist sensitive to a sometimes overly simplified narrative of the (European) East–West divide in terms of LGBT rights and homophobic attitudes (see also Kulpa & Mizielińska, 2016; Takács & Szalma, 2020), I must also point out that Belgian and Dutch societies are hardly ideal when it comes to the state of LGBT rights (see, for example, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020), regardless of their high scores on the rankings of LGBTI equality laws and policies (ILGA-Europe, 2021). Equally importantly, both the participating and other CEE countries differ, sometimes to a great extent, in terms of the state of LGBT rights in the socialist period and in the developments that have followed since the 1990s (ILGA World et al., 2020; ILGA-Europe, 2021).

Nevertheless, one should not ignore an important difference between the participating CEE countries and Belgium and the Netherlands in terms of general social climate and legal and institutional contexts. It serves as useful heuristics for this study, which situates parents' narratives on their children's nonheterosexuality into the context of the parents' lives in socialist states, the subsequent post-socialist transitions and the ongoing anti-gender mobilizations in their CEE countries. This contextualization is presented in the next section.

8.2.2 Contextualization: From Socialism through Post-Socialist Transformations to Anti-gender Mobilizations

Gradskova et al. (2020) note that, despite the early decriminalization of homosexuality in many socialist CEE countries[3] and very varied paths in the development of LGB rights and activism during the socialist period across the region,[4] sexual revolutions in CEE were not happening in the public sphere, as they did in the West. Instead, the public sphere was occupied by the Communist Party, so the individuals were transforming intimacies in various ways in the private sphere (Gradskova et al., 2020), and the LGB communities and support networks were developing underground (O'Dwyer, 2012). Public invisibility, however, carries its consequences by breeding misrepresentation and stereotypes among the general public with little (known) contact or little knowledge about nonheterosexuality. This is the context in which the parents in this study—as heterosexual individuals born in the late 1940s and the 1950s—came of age.

[3] Poland decriminalized consensual same-sex activities in the 1930s and the other four participating countries did so in the 1960s and the 1970s (ILGA World et al., 2020).

[4] See, for example, the accounts of LGBT activism and gay and lesbian histories in different CEE countries during socialism, such as Vuletić (2003), Kurimay and Takács (2017), or Szulc (2018).

Coming out of socialism, the public spheres of CEE societies in the 1990s were taken over by the growing nationalism and religious re-traditionalization, which jointly subscribed to a heteronormative order that designed homosexuality as a threat to family, tradition and the nation-state (Sremac & Ganzevoort, 2015). Moving to the 2000s, many of these countries turned their eye toward the EU, which was, directly and indirectly, pushing for the institutionalization of LGBT rights, and thus also supporting local (and transnational) LGBT activism (Ayoub & Paternotte, 2014; Slootmaeckers & Touquet, 2016). While activists' successes (and failures) across the five participating CEE countries differed considerably in nature and timing, these developments nevertheless contributed to a growing public awareness of homosexuality, although in many cases public attention (around the emerging Pride marches, for example) was also drawn to the attacks on homosexuality as immoral, sinful and unnatural (e.g. Renkin, 2009; Roseneil & Stoilova, 2011; O'Dwyer, 2012; Vuckovic Juros et al., 2020).

During the 2000s, pushed by the soft and hard pressure from the EU, the five participating countries experienced some strengthening of the LGB rights and/or activism compared to the previous period, although these developments were very uneven across different countries (see Roseneil & Stoilova, 2011; Kahlina, 2015; O'Dwyer, 2018). However, in 2018, when the interviews with the parents were conducted, the five CEE countries in this study were already experiencing or were about to witness a surge in anti-gender campaigns, in which lesbians and gays and their families were often set up as enemy figures endangering (traditional) families and children.

For example, triggered partly by the new same-sex life partnership bill under preparation, such a discourse was the focus of the Croatian 2013 campaign for a constitutional amendment to define marriage as a union between a woman and a man (Vuckovic Juros et al., 2020). It was revisited in 2018 during the debate about same-sex couples' access to foster care (Tektas & Keysan, 2021). Similar campaigns took place in Slovakia during the 2015 referendum asking for even stricter limitations on same-sex families' rights after the constitutional amendment to protect heterosexual marriage had already been passed by the Parliament the previous year (Maďarová, 2015). In Hungary, the constitutional protection of heterosexual marriage quietly became part of the New Fundamental Law already in 2012, pushed by Fidesz and their coalition partners after the previous government had recognized same-sex partnerships. However, it was only after the 2017 mobilizations against the Istanbul Convention that the anti-LGBT discourse (mostly in the form of attacks on "gender ideology") gained real momentum as part of the Fidesz populist political agenda (Kováts, 2021; Mos, 2020). Attacks on nonheterosexual individuals and same-sex families' rights were similarly used in Poland, especially since the Law and Justice came into power in 2015, and have intensified particularly since 2019 with the targeted attacks against the so-called "LGBT ideology" (Korolczuk, 2020; Kováts, 2021). In Bulgaria, the anti-gender developments were not clearly identifiable before the 2018 mobilizations against the Istanbul Convention, which attacked the "gender ideology" that supposedly promoted "homosexuality" and "transgenderism" (Darakchi, 2019). But even in that case, the frames of the protection of the

traditional family were used to promote the anti-LGBT discourse going as far back as 2012 (Darakchi, 2019).

While the main actors of the above developments were religious-conservative activists of anti-gender (transnational) movements (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018), much of their success is also linked to opportunistic alliances with nationalistic and right-wing political groups (Kováts & Põim, 2015; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). These allied anti-gender activities were frequently presented as acts of sovereignty and defiance against the EU and the Western European "ideological" impositions (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Kováts, 2021). This was especially so in Poland and Hungary, where the state instrumentally took on the leading role in the anti-gender mobilizations in the service of their illiberal transformations (Grzebalska & Pető, 2018). But this was also happening in countries such as Croatia, where alliances with nationalistic and right-wing actors were more *ad hoc*, serving particular political purposes (Vuckovic Juros et al., 2020). Across all five countries of this study, the political project of the anti-gender mobilizations was strongly linked to the heteronationalist project of belonging. This is the context in which the parents' experiences of bordering against nonheterosexual belonging in CEE are situated.

8.3 Parents' Experiences and Expectations of Bordering Against Nonheterosexual Belonging

8.3.1 Legacy of Socialist Silences and Misrepresentations

In the context of coming of age in the framework of socialist silencing and misrepresentations of nonheterosexuality, the narratives of CEE parents—mostly university-educated individuals—testify to a lack of contact and information before their children came out. Among the parents who reflected on their earliest views, homosexuality is presented as almost unimaginable. Ladislav,[5] for example, attributes this to his conservative and religious[6] upbringing in Slovakia where "there was no other option" than heterosexuality. Others confess a similar lack of awareness as nonheterosexuality was removed from their everyday experiences and public discourse. Ivanka admits, "I didn't know that such a thing existed. I'm completely honest. I didn't know this could happen to someone." Then she reflects on why this was so in Bulgaria: "It wasn't talked about. During our time, during the communist regime. These things weren't talked about. They were forbidden, banned. Nobody talked."

[5] All the names are pseudonyms, although not the same ones that were used in other publications from the project.

[6] Religion, like sexuality, was also a matter of private sphere in state-atheist socialist societies.

8.3.2 *Parents' Reactions to Nonheterosexuality in the Context of Post-Socialist Re-traditionalization*

With the post-socialist transformation going hand-in-hand with the heteronationalist project and societal re-traditionalization, nonheterosexuality moved from the space of public invisibility to one of political controversy and polarized perspectives. That was the context surrounding the initial reactions of the five CEE parents in this study, who first learned of their LGB children's nonheterosexuality while the children were still living in their home countries, in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

These parents first responded with shock or even angry disbelief as the only representations that were easily available in their cultural repertoires (Swidler, 2000) at the time were based on stereotypes and the perceptions of homosexuality as an illness or abnormality. "I was very much surprised," Ivanka recalls, "because the boy had a fighting spirit, he took things in a very manly manner. […] I didn't know there were people like that […] and I started crying. I started crying from the surprise. At first, I thought that this was some sort of illness." "I was horrified," Jelena from Croatia similarly recounts her first reaction. "I was also angry, and unhappy, and sad, a lot of things. […] and I called [*an LGBT organization*] to ask if there is something to do, if this could be cured."

While many parents in this study changed their perspective with self-education and/or prolonged conversations with their children, another type of concern that also formed part of their first reaction was less easily relieved. This was the fear for their LGB children arising from the expectation that their society would react negatively (for similar reactions in other CEE countries, see Kuhar, 2007; van Velzen, 2007). For example, Marta, who says she had no problem with her daughter's nonheterosexuality because she loved her, goes on to specify the worries about being gay in Slovakian society she had nonetheless, "worries that someone might hurt her, because I have a feeling, or rather back then I had a feeling that our society is not ready for this yet. That the society will not accept this like me, as a mother."

Notably, the fear of social reaction also encompasses the parents personally, as they find themselves without readily available tools to process what this means for their children and them. The parents may thus worry that their communities will extend the hostility and the blame on them. Ivanka admits that she has not yet:

> "told anyone, save the relatives. The closest ones there are. […] The problem is that I can hear somebody say something or… to turn around and say something. And then you can feel uncomfortable when you are sharing, from the reactions of the opposite side, you know. […] I don't want to talk, because I don't know what the reaction and the attitude of the people will be towards this problem, here."

Ladislav, similarly, recounts people telling him:

> "It is in upbringing, you must have made a mistake," and reacting like he was being punished by his daughter's nonheterosexuality, "'Oh my poor, what did God do to you that you are punished this way, that your child does not behave normally.' It is still taken in a way as a punishment for something (laughter). […] It is God's punishment. […] And 'Jesus, Holy Mary, how have you survived that? Oh my God, that is dreadful. How have you survived that?' So it is not spoken loudly but in a way of feeling sorry for me."

In the context of such reactions, parents can come to perceive their LGB children's migration as a relief since it provides a solution to their presumably difficult future in the CEE community.

> "I said that I accepted things," confesses Ivanka, "while deep inside me, I was very much afraid. […] If he had stayed in Bulgaria, I think his life wouldn't have added up like that. […] There, all the doors are open. Do you understand? There, it seems these cases are more often like that […] So, things are looked upon differently. This deviation as well. The same way. That's why I think people there show an understanding and perhaps they are ahead. Society is more developed. And that is why the attitudes are more different than in Bulgaria towards these things."

I observed similar sentiments among the second group of parents as well, those who learned of their children's nonheterosexuality only after they had already migrated, in the mid- and late 2000s. These parents' initial fears were weaker because they could immediately see their children already living in societies where nonheterosexuality and same-sex families were accepted. Still, the fear that they would be stigmatized for their children's nonheterosexuality was strong nevertheless. Barbara from Poland remembers initially feeling very isolated and alone in her anxiety:

> "I hid it at the beginning because I was afraid of the reaction. […] I was afraid of the milieu, how people would see me. […] What people would say. Maybe they would turn their backs on us. […] I was scared of the reaction, what they would think of me as a mother. 'Your son is gay?' A bit of a shame, I thought."

Even Teresa, a well-travelled Polish woman and the only parent in this study who had previously had closer contact with nonheterosexual individuals, talks about the reaction of others in what is otherwise a narrative of personal acceptance:

> "Unfortunately, I didn't say the truth even to my closest colleague. […] She knows that my daughter lives in Brussels, that she's with someone, that she has children. […] She says I have cool grandchildren. I don't want to go into details because it won't really change my situation for the better, it could only make it worse. […] I can already see how people think, what stories they tell each other. I prefer to let it go and not hold the grudge against people I know for many years. […] People like to judge, 'How does this affect her character? And why did she allow it? Why did she raise her this way?' There would be such questions without answers."

8.3.3 Anti-Gender Mobilizations and Renewed Strength of Heteronationalism

Many parents in this study changed their patterns of disclosure within the extended family at some point, especially after the LGB migrants had their children abroad (for more details, see Vuckovic Juros, 2020). Nevertheless, looking beyond the confines of extended families, the parents' negotiations of their children's nonheterosexuality must also be situated in the context of anti-gender mobilizations, most forcefully targeting LGBT rights, that began in the participating CEE countries in the 2010s. In this context, the parents in this study frequently compared the current

social climates in their home countries with their perceptions of social attitudes in Belgium and the Netherlands as different.

Ivanka thus considers the messages that the politicians are sending and the public discourse in her CEE country as actively obstructing the development of the "consciousness" she attributes to the Netherlands. "I think that for the Netherlands these matters don't stand the way they do here in Bulgaria. Every time the question is brought up we hear politicians, public personas, who… they judge. In Bulgaria, things are very, very far away from… a growth in consciousness about everything related to these matters." Ladislav, similarly, considers how homophobic discourse shapes attitudes in his country:

> "And you know, when – the chairman of the parliament says that, or I don't know, that he would rather kill himself than, or – I am making it up – than he would have homosexuals, or something like that. […] (T)his is what makes me sad, that there are …um, people who say: 'I, these people, I don't like homosexuals,' it is only for one and only reason – that they heard about it, they read about it somewhere on the blog, they read some reactions that are there. […] According to my own opinion, if I did not perceive or did not have the influence of society, and there would be homosexual couples, just like there are heterosexual couples, they would live absolutely alright, without any disrupting moments. But because we, from early childhood, and often on the Internet you see those hateful blogs, literally, hateful blogs. And today, you cannot prevent one from being influenced…"

In the opening paragraph of this chapter, Ladislav notes how "it's not Belgium [here]." In Slovakia, he believes, "someone would come and slap them [a same-sex couple] on their ears," while in Belgium "it is natural." It is painful for him to imagine his daughter's life in such circumstances: "It hurts me to think that this country … looks at the… looks at my daughter through some glasses, right? […] I mind that here, the glasses for viewing are, like, simply that it is not normal." Therefore, unlike in Belgium, LGB individuals and same-sex couples must hide themselves to avoid threats, and that is why he never thinks "about them coming back to Slovakia." Jelena, similarly, notes how in Belgium "nobody is pointing a finger at him [son] […] he is living well," while she is certain that her son would not be able to find a job in Croatia as an openly gay man, his expertise regardless. For this reason, although his absence hurts her very much, Jelena has reconciled herself to the fact that he would "never come back. […] He has it good there […] There is no reason to come back here."

When same-sex marriage and families are brought up, the differences in life chances and opportunities for LGB migrants are even more strongly highlighted. Barbara also cannot imagine that her son, married to another man, would ever be able to return to Poland "with this mentality, with this government, with these right-wing people obsessed with husband, wife and family, family, family-, woman and man. It would probably be hard to live. Especially as married. We don't have marriages yet." When the (grand)children are involved, it is especially difficult for parents of LGB migrants to ease their fears, as they expect that the children raised by same-sex parent families would be stigmatized in their CEE communities. Ivanka, for example, explains that her son and his children are better off living abroad, rather than coming back to Bulgaria where she does not think they would be accepted, even though this "solution" comes with a personal cost for her: "Oh, I'm

very sad. I'm very sad he is not here. That the children, I can't even touch them, you know. Only photos."

The personal hurt created by the environment that perceives their LGB children as abnormal or ill, that threatens the LGB individuals' futures and families and pushes them to live far from home is thus part of the parents' ambivalent stance towards their children's migration to Belgium or the Netherlands. On its positive side, this migration opened up opportunities for a different kind of life for LGB migrants, the life some parents themselves found initially difficult to imagine, situated as they were in the context of their CEE communities. For example, Eszter was not at first certain that the reactions in Belgium would differ from those expected in her home country but was then reassured by her daughter that Belgium is indeed different.

> "I was coming to the wedding from Hungary, but beforehand I asked my daughter if- if- … there could be someone who would offend them, someone to go to the city hall, and I don't know, there- [laughs] I don't say that they would protest, but there are mobs that are causing trouble, or- or I was thinking of something like that, so I asked her, but she said, 'Oh no, something like that won't happen here. That's a completely accepted thing here.' So, that I didn't need to worry about that, it's highly improbable to happen there."

Some parents also had to confront their own (heteronormative) understandings of family in contexts of this new option for their migrant LGB children that was so vehemently opposed in many of these CEE communities. Barbara, for example, explicitly considers how "(w)e were raised, not only in Poland, in the traditional family model: a man and a woman." However, later comparisons to "how it is in the world" made her realize that this is not the only model, and that it is only that "(w)e [in Poland] didn't allow this thought that something is different, even though it's been different for a long time." Likewise, Eszter also emphasizes that "(h)ere [in Hungary], with us, you can only hear that [clap of hands] marriage can only happen between a man and a woman." She then goes on to repeat her husband's verbalized opposition to their daughter marrying, stemming from the same stance: "Okay, you can get married in Belgium, but you don't have to follow this trend by any means." In a similar vein, Ladislav specifies that "for the majority," and "for me too," "if you say marriage, it is a woman and a man." Nonetheless, witnessing intimately the acceptance of same-sex marriage in his daughter's host country helps him reflect on the role of institutional and legal frameworks in defining "normality": "That, classic Belgians, when they are there, and these kinds of weddings are absolutely common there. That means that there is legislation for that. And whether you want it or not, only by the fact that the law allows it, it is without any problems. And it does not divide society."

But, in an interesting twist to his perspective considering that the CEE heteronationalist public discourse typically paints LGBT rights as "imposed" by Brussels (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Grzebalska & Pető, 2018), Ladislav also verbalizes a similar type of argument that the Belgian and Dutch conservative far-right actors use to associate homonegativity with immigrant/Muslim non-Belgian and non-Dutch values. Thus, Ladislav goes on to specify that he does not see "the danger from the Belgian- because, right next to them, a Belgian woman is living there [in

the daughter's neighborhood], the Belgians live there. Absolutely friendly." But, when he considers the possibility of Muslims moving into the neighborhood, he is less at ease about his daughter's life in Belgium.

> "I rather see the danger from… from… from the other side – Muslim side. That means, I don't even know if there is some kind of dealing with homosexuality there. I … I am not claiming that they must automatically be against in some way, right? But there- […] I am not afraid because of the side of the Belgians but rather the fact that it is nonhomogeneous-, you cannot have any expectations."

Going back to a more general discussion of Belgium or the Netherlands and their CEE countries, the parents typically fall back on the supposed divide between the two in terms of attitudes and acceptance of LGB individuals and same-sex families. Some parents explain this divide within the framework of progress, where CEE is lagging behind, "still at this stage of evolution," as Teresa phrases it. Consequently, some parents, like Teresa, also express hope that "the next generation will change it." Ivanka provides a similar generational argument, although she is more pessimistic about the time needed to affect this change:

> "(O)ur generation doesn't accept them. To say it outright, it doesn't accept these things as normal […] because we're conservative people, coming from an old time (w)hile young people are freer. They are more open. Perhaps there are those, among the young ones… that will have a rude attitude. But in the end. And that's how it is supposed to be. And I think it will take generations until things settle down in Bulgaria. And are accepted in the normal way. Not going to be soon. No."

Whether the cause of homonegativity is attributed to the values of older generations or to some other reason (Eszter, for example, specifically considers individual characteristics such as education and religiosity), the parents in this study tend to think in terms of an underlying difference between their CEE societies and societies such as Belgian and Dutch. In the process, the parents also reinforce the discourse that is used both in the European East and in the West to sustain this divide. In this discourse, popular among the (liberal) political elites in the East (Kováts, 2021) and the political actors and LGBT activists in the West assuming a homonationalist perspective (Kulpa, 2016), CEE is less developed in terms of civilizational values and is (forever) trying to catch up. However, rather than "encouraging" the new CEE generations to complete their catching up, this discourse, in its assumption of Western superiority, feeds the illiberal right-wing actors in CEE in their opposition to the Western "imperialism" and LGBT rights, that is fueling the current anti-gender mobilizations (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Kováts, 2021).

8.4 Conclusion

In the analysis of this chapter, I focused on how the "others"—representing the wider imagined community of their CEE societies—were inserted in the narratives of parents discussing the nonheterosexuality of their migrant children. The purpose of such an analysis was to reveal everyday bordering against nonheterosexual

(national) belonging as experienced by the parents situated in a transnational social field. Following their children’s migration to the Netherlands or Belgium, these parents became more intimately aware of the contrast between the perceived “normalization” of nonheterosexuality and same-sex families in their children’s host countries (see also in Vuckovic Juros, 2020) as opposed to their experiences and expectations of the social climate in their CEE communities, especially in the circumstances of rising anti-gender mobilizations that frequently targeted specifically nonheterosexual individuals and their families.

The parents’ reflections on the “others” thus revealed the deep personal cost of societal homonegativity, as they expressed their concerns both for their children and for themselves. Regarding their children and their same-sex families formed in the Netherlands and Belgium, the parents feared a negative reaction from the social circles beyond the (extended) family. This expectation reinforced their conviction that their migrant children would never return home, because they cannot belong “here” as they can in the “LGBT-friendly” Netherlands and Belgium. Regarding themselves, the parents also feared (or experienced) negative social consequences—e.g., pity, blame or rejection—of their “nonheterosexual association.” These types of (experienced or expected) reactions were explained by nonheterosexuality (or its acceptance) belonging “somewhere else” (to Belgium or the Netherlands, for example), and not being part of their home country’s “tradition” or national identity.

These are precisely the types of arguments embedded in the heteronationalist framework of collective identification (Sremac & Ganzevoort, 2015) and systematically reinforced and amplified by the anti-gender actors and their nationalistic, right-wing allies in CEE (see, for example, Ćeriman & Vuckovic Juros, 2023), especially as these groups strategically use homophobia to sharpen the borders between the European West and East (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Kováts, 2021). Thus, while the European West–East divide is a construct, it is fed by the heteronationalist discourses of the European East—and also by the discourses presenting the European East as always lagging behind in “civilizational values” (Kováts, 2021; Kulpa, 2016). In consequence, the perception of this divide then becomes an element of everyday bordering of belonging (Cassidy et al., 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019)—experienced and then repeated by the parents themselves—that positions nonheteroxual belonging outside these CEE collectivities.

The conclusions presented above must be placed within the limitations of a very small sample of certainly self-selected (more supportive) parents. In addition, my analysis privileges the identification of interpretative patterns without specifying the prevalence or frequency of such patterns, as I consider that the latter is not meaningful in the analysis of data from such specific and small qualitative samples. Nonetheless, I have also examined the data for negative cases contradicting or complicating the identified patterns, and while their absence here does not mean they would not be found in different data, the patterns identified in this chapter still provide an illuminating picture of experiences of supportive parents of LGB children in CEE. Furthermore, this “critical case” (Patton, 1990) highlights the extraordinary experiences of supportive parents of LGB migrants who must negotiate their presumably homonegative environments with the new societal expectations and norms

witnessed in their children's lives in Belgium and the Netherlands. This specificity strengthens the epistemological value of identified patterns in the pursuit of theoretical generalization (Gobo, 2008), concerned primarily with the contribution of findings to the understanding of a deeper (but never decontextualized) mechanism at work—in this case, the embeddedness of the personal (micro) in the social (macro). The main contribution of this chapter is, therefore, reflected in spotlighting how the experience of everyday bordering against nonheterosexual belonging is embedded in a wider socio-institutional context.

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Chapter 9
Dreamers Moms and Their Struggle for Legal Reunification: Maternal Acts of Public Disclosure as a Form of Constructive Resistance

Erika Busse and Veronica Montes

9.1 Introduction

The opening quote is from Emma Sanchez, a deported mother and member of Dreamers Moms USA-Tijuana,[1] who made the statement in a short documentary created by Aljazeera in 2016. Dreamers Moms is a civil society organisation consisting of deported migrant mothers living in the border city of Tijuana, Mexico. This organisation was founded in May 2014 by Yolanda Varona, a Mexican migrant mother who, after living 16 years in the U.S., was deported to Mexico in December 2010, leaving behind two teenagers—ages 15 and 18—in California.

Initially, Dreamers Moms (DM hereafter) provided a space where deported women could find emotional support. As time passed, it became an organisation that provides legal and psychological support for deported mothers living in Tijuana and newly deported mothers. The organisation welcomes any mother who has been deported from the U.S. regardless of her country of origin, ethnicity, age, or migration history. After their deportation, most of these women settle in Tijuana to remain close to their families, as most of their children remain in the U.S. Therefore, the likelihood that their children will visit them is higher if these mothers live closer to

"What I want is that no other family experienced the pain my family and I have lived due to my deportation. I do not want more children to grow up without their mom".

[1] This is the official name of the organisation; hence, we are using it as such though it is grammatically incorrect.

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where their families live. Yet, visits to these families are possible only if their children or other family members are either American citizens or authorized migrants, which in either case would allow them to legally return to the U.S.

This chapter examines the origins of DM and its transformation into a civil society organisation. It also looks at the members' individual and collective actions to achieve DM's main goals—supporting deported mothers in legally reuniting with their families in the U.S. and making visible the impact that family separation due to deportation has on migrant families. These actions are part of what scholars have begun referring to as constructive resistance, in which people seek "to build, organize and construct the social relations and society they want, rather than attempts to tear down and destroy what they object to and confront" (Sørensen & Wiksell, 2020: 254). In this sense, the main argument in this chapter is that DM, as the opening quote vividly illustrates, does not seek to transform or change the world, but engage in a form of constructive resistance. Their actions, which include vigils, peaceful protests, talks at universities, interviews with both national and international media outlets, and participation in local artistic projects. Appeal to the literature on maternal activism and, in particular, to Orozco Mendoza's (2019) concept of "maternal acts of public disclosures". While maternal activism refers to the use of the identity of motherhood to call attention to the state for violent acts, maternal acts of public disclosures expose the mothers' personal stories to question the state's direct role in the production of violence and its negligence and abandonment. Both—maternal activism and maternal acts of public disclosures—are part of the repertoire that these women utilise to exercise a kind of constructive resistance, which seeks to achieve two goals: first, to fight against being stripped of their humanity and dignity as they were violently expelled from the U.S. and, second, to avoid the invisibility and otherization of their subjectivity once they become deported mothers. Thus, the guiding questions for this chapter are: What explains the creation of DM, and why do deported mothers join the organisation? More importantly, what are these women resisting and what are they creating in that process? How and why do they resist? What can these women's maternal public disclosures teach us about constructive resistance? Finally, and related to the theme of this volume, what could DM teach us about the intersection between everyday experiences, border politics, and exclusion?

Throughout our examination of DM's maternal acts of public disclosure, we expand the literature on resistance in general (Vinthagen & Lilja, 2007; Piñeros Shields, 2018); in particular, utilizing these acts as a showcase, we contribute to the incipient literature on constructive resistance (Sørensen & Wiksell, 2020; Lilja, 2020; Sørensen, 2016). Our work also contributes to the literature on the intersection of deportation and maternal activism. Thus, drawing on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Tijuana, Mexico that began in January 2019, this study advances the understanding of the interplay between deportation, maternal activism, and constructive resistance.

What follows is the research context, Tijuana. Subsequently, we introduce the theoretical foundations outlining how DM's collective mobilisation can be understood through the lens of maternal activism and how this activism speaks to the

intersectional identity of deported mothers and how such an identity is at the core of the maternal acts that these women engage in as part of a form of constructive resistance. We then describe the year-long ethnographic work and how we adapted in response to the pandemic. In the empirical section, we articulate three key preliminary findings and their implications. We conclude this chapter by discussing the significance of this study.

9.2 Research Context

Known as the farthest west corner of Latin America, Tijuana, Mexico is the most populated and most transited border city on the U.S.-Mexico border. By 2010, Tijuana's population reached 1,210,820 residents (Chávez, 2016). As a border city, Tijuana has a history marked by two main phenomena: migration and the transborder lives of its inhabitants. One turning point in the migration history of Tijuana took place in the 1940s with the implementation of the Bracero Program (1942–1964). This was a binational program between the Mexican and U.S. governments to recruit Mexican labourers to work in the U.S. as farm workers. During this guest worker program, nearly two million Mexican men, known as braceros, worked in U.S. agricultural fields. Many of these workers brought their families to border cities to establish their homes closer to their places of work (Zenteno, 1995). This led to the beginning of a dynamic transborder life between Tijuana and border counties in Southern California.

By 1965, the bracero program had been cancelled by the U.S. government. As a measure to accommodate the thousands of Braceros who would be returning to Mexico after losing their jobs in the U.S., the Mexican government launched the Border Industrialization Program (BIP), which created an export-processing area that helped maintain the economic vitality of Tijuana (París Pombo & Montes, 2021). Between the 1970s and mid-1990s, the strong demand for workers in the American economy and recurrent economic crises in Mexico gave rise to a continuous increase in the recruitment of irregular Mexican migrants in the U.S. Tijuana was the main border crossing point into the U.S., and California was the destination for most Mexican and Central American migrants (París Pombo et al., 2017).

In the mid-1990s, the U.S. government began to secure its southern border by implementing a series of operations seeking to deter people from surreptitiously entering its territory. However, this did not have the desired effect; people not only continued crossing but did so at the risk of losing their lives, as they were pushed eastward, where they faced inhospitable and isolated regions. Simultaneously, the number of deportations to Mexico dramatically increased after 1996, when the U.S. Congress passed several laws expanding the power of federal agencies to detain and deport non-citizens (Hagan et al., 2008). During the Obama administration (2008–2016), around 280,000 Mexican citizens were deported each year. The number of removals decreased at the beginning of the Trump administration,

with nearly 185,000 removals of Mexican citizens in 2017 and 218,000 in 2018 (Guo & Baugh, 2019). More than 90% of deported Latin American migrant people arrived at Mexico's northern border cities (París Pombo & Montes, 2021), where they either waited with the hope of returning to the U.S., returned to their communities of origin, or settled so that they could be close to their families left behind in the U.S., engaging in what García and Martin (2019) refers to as *arreglos familiares transfronterizos* (transborder family arrangements), a series of economic and social arrangements seeking to maintain family bonds despite physical separation due to deportation.

Life is not easy for deported people who stay in Tijuana. They experience systematic harassment by local police, as well as arbitrary arrests, extortion, and robbery (París Pombo & Montes, 2021). In their study of the stigmatization of deportees in Tijuana, Albicker and Velasco (2016) argue that this process of stigmatization has served as fertilizer for the anti-immigrant sentiment that, in recent years, has increased and led to an ideology of transborder criminalization. For these authors, the anti-immigrant discourse "has a particular vitality in the (Mexican) border region due to the intensity of transborder interactions, as well as the density of infrastructure and institutions associated with border control as part of the local national security policies of the United States" (Albicker & Velasco, 2016: 123). This kind of xenophobic discourse found its high point in November of 2018 with the arrival, in Tijuana, of thousands of Central American asylum seekers. Exacerbated by the xenophobic and nativist sentiments that prevailed in the U.S. during the Trump administration (2016–2020), the local media outlets and social media in Tijuana disseminated a discourse that warned local people about the dangers that deportees posed to public safety, depicting them as dangerous and "undesired, distrustful, and criminal" (París Pombo & Montes, 2021:231).

Despite the anti-migrant and anti-deportee climate, multiple civil society organizations (CSOs) provide services to deported individuals or migrants in transit who stay in Tijuana. Most of these organizations have established temporary or long-term alliances with Mexican and U.S. political organizations, and they receive funds and donations from both sides of the border. Most shelters are part of Catholic or Protestant missions and have an assistance-oriented approach (París Pombo & Montes, 2021). Other CSOs, founded in the last 10 years, have a more radical and less institutionalised profile. They promote demonstrations, host political and cultural events, participate in social networks, and articulate demands together with other social movements for human rights (París & Müller, 2016). DM is part of this robust network of CSOs. Thus, considering this anti-migrant and anti-deportee environment in Tijuana, not only does DM seek to achieve its own goals—supporting deported mothers in legally reuniting with their families in the U.S. and making visible the impact of family separation—but, more importantly, alongside the dozens of CSOs working in Tijuana, DM's work helps to deconstruct prejudices and stereotypes against deported people, helping to prevent the invisibility and otherization of deported people's subjectivity.

9.3 Expanding the Literature: Resistance, Deportation and Maternal Activism

To understand the experiences of more than 300,000 deported mothers, particularly those who engage in activism to legally reunite with their children in the U.S., we draw on the maternal activism literature and focus on constructive resistance (Sørensen, 2016; Lilja, 2020, 2021; Sørensen & Wiksell, 2020) to make sense of DM's activism as deported mothers residing in their own country with the expectation to reunite with their children in the country that expelled them.

Social movements in Latin America have used the identity of motherhood to mobilise their demands. Maternal activism, as it is called, emphasises the identity of motherhood, as a morally superior and virtuous identity, to call attention to the state, whether to demand the location of their disappeared children under dictatorial regimes (e.g., Blaustein & Patillo, 1985; Navarro, 1989; Bejarano, 2002; Maier & Lebon, 2010) or to point a finger at a state that fails to protect its citizens (e.g., Wright, 2005, 2009; Staudt, 2008). In all these cases, the mothers did not participate in party politics but felt compelled to take to the streets to make visible their claims against the state.

One way that these women take to the streets is by engaging in what Orozco Mendoza (2019) calls "maternal acts of public disclosures". In her analysis of Las Madres de Chihuahua, Orozco Mendoza contends that these acts "expose the mothers' personal stories to enable a critical view of the state's role in the production of disposable life through a combination of neglect, criminalization, and abandonment" (2019: 214). Hence, acts of public disclosure show the piercing pain of physically losing a child by turning mothers' bodies into walking billboards to interpellate the state and the citizenry (Taylor, 2001). In this sense, the literature on maternal activism helps create an understanding of motherhood as a political identity within the nation-state where women reside. In the case of DM, not only does the analytical lens of maternal acts of public disclosure help us understand the kind of maternal activism that these women display but more importantly, these acts transcend geographical borders as they make claims to the U.S., which is the state that expelled them.

Similar to other social organizations that draw on motherhood as the central identity for mobilization in Latin America, DM operates within the mothers' country of origin, but differs from other groups with regard to two contextual elements: the experience of forced removal and social stigma. First, deportees experience being deracinated from their homes despite being back in their homeland; they experience estrangement even if they understand the language and the rules (Bohem, 2012; Golash-Boza, 2015; Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013). Second, a stigma is associated with deportation and follows individuals long after they have been removed from a given country (Cautin, 2015; Guarnizo, 1994; Gerlash, 2018). The stigma, according to De Genova (2018), stems from a link to criminality and, therefore, danger (e.g., Brotherton & Barrios, 2009), which in turn motivates deported individuals to avoid visibility out of shame. Their shame is exacerbated

when they lose their social role (Schuster & Majidi, 2015; Brotherton & Barrios, 2009). Hence, deportees exhibit a low profile so that they remain socially undetected. Accordingly, while the existing literature indicates that, for the deportee, visibility is something to avoid, the deportee's identity as a mother, which is socially valued to the extent that it is used to make claims to the state, is an identity to rally. In this context in which deported mothers embrace contradictory identities, i.e., as deportees and mothers, how can we understand DM's work?

Let us turn to the literature on migration and resistance produced on both sides of the Atlantic. It focuses on mobilization by unauthorized migrants in the context of the securitization of borders. This work highlights the collaborations across borders, focusing on what Stierl (2019) calls "migrant resistance," but also how distinct social identities might help to forge coalitions across groups (e.g., Escudero, 2020). Immigrant activists demand freedom of movement and visibility in places where they are rendered invisible, as many of them lack immigration status and are subject to being deported. However, what about those who were unauthorised migrants and whose identities revolved around their gender roles as mothers?

To explain DM's work, we draw on the literature of resistance, specifically on constructive resistance, as it "…occurs when people start to build the society they desire independently of structures of power… To be considered 'constructive resistance', they necessarily have to be both constructive and provide a form of resistance… Resistance can be either an implicit or explicitly outspoken critique of structures of power or patriarchy… The construction element can be either concrete or symbolic, and ranges from initiatives that aim to inspire others to actions that partly replace or lead to the collapse of the dominant way of behaving and thinking…" (Sørensen, 2016: 57). Another important characteristic of constructive resistance is that it may refer to attempts to build the social relations and society those resisting want rather than destroy the state (Sørensen & Wiksell, 2019).

We build on these bodies of literature and extend them in two ways. First, this activism unites two polarised social identities: the tainted and disposable deportee and the morally valued mother seeking legal reunification with her children in the country that deported her. These opposing identities, when merged in activism, will help us extend the concept of intersectional identity. Second, DM's activism is conducted outside the geographical limits of the US state and creates a transnational forum to appeal to civil society at large in the U.S. Its goal is to make the injustice of the U.S. deportation regime visible. In doing so, DM constructs new social relations and a new narrative.

9.4 Methods and Data

The Deported Mothers project, an ongoing collaborative ethnographic research project, explores the effects of deportation on Latina mothers, their family structures, and the resulting activism of those seeking legal reunification in the U.S. For our strategic positionality and reflexivity during the recruitment, in-person, and

virtual portions of our field work and analysis, we draw on what Reyes (2018) calls an "ethnographic toolkit". As feminist ethnographers, we make women's experiences visible, including the way DM navigates dynamics of power in its activism as a group of deported mothers (Davis & Craven, 2016). The ethnographic methods we employ do not view deported mothers as passively accepting their experience of removal from the U.S., but as actively constructing their own strategies to legally reunite with their families. To do so, we conducted open-ended interviews, participant observation, and analysis of digital and printed material produced by and about the organisation. In this chapter, we examine DM's repertoire of collective mobilisation, which has developed over the years as the group promotes its goal of legal family reunification in the U.S.

The explorative ethnographic fieldwork began in January 2019. In this chapter, we focus our analysis on the actions of DM through the experiences of two mothers, Yolanda Varona and Emma Sánchez. These cases show their activist work with respect to reuniting with their families in the U.S., as Sánchez was able to do in December 2018. Thus, we focused our analysis on their activism, paying particular attention to the message conveyed, the venue where it happened, and the content of the message. Ultimately, we pay attention to their resistance and what they constructed in their activism.

We conducted seven in-person, in-depth interviews and five follow-up online interviews. All interviews were conducted in Spanish. With permission from the interviewees, the interviews were voice-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Each interview lasted 1 to 2 h. The questions involved four topics: (a) demographic information; (b) migration history within Mexico, crossing the border, and deportation and relocation to Tijuana; (c) family in Mexico and in the U.S. and perceptions of their own motherhood; and (d) the role the organisation plays in their lives. We supplemented our data by conducting four semi-structured interviews with staff members working at organisations that serve the migrant community in Tijuana. During our initial collaborative fieldwork in January 2020, we accompanied women to their activist work, whether it was meeting at the restaurant La Antigüita, the de facto space for meetings, running activities such as Three Kings Day, or visiting a deportee refuge for women. Additionally, we spent time at core places where women carry out acts of public disclosure, such as the San Ysidro checkpoint and Playas de Tijuana. The third source of data consists of the organisation's Facebook account and 199 news media reports that include short documentaries on, and interviews with, DM. We also drew on the women's own photo albums of their activism, which is closely connected to their lives. This digital database was shared by Varona, who saved all this material since the founding of the organisation.

Our analytical strategy followed women's trajectories from their first migration, which in all cases was internal migration in Mexico, until their time in Tijuana as deported mothers. We read the interviews separately and conducted open coding. Next, we developed a coding schema and proceeded to work on focused coding together. Our individual memos provided contextual information that helped us interpret the interviews and the conversations we had with DM members. Here, we focus on three forms of activism: (a) Taking the border with vigils: The San Ysidro

border, the busiest checkpoint along the Mexico-U.S. border, represents a classic case of an act of public disclosure; (b) Shifting from personal to political, e.g., weddings and feeding migrants; and (c) Making visible their intersectional identity afforded by news media reports.

9.5 Analysis of Maternal Acts of Public Disclosure as a Form of Constructive Resistance

In the theoretical section, we argued that the acts displayed by DM are part of an ample repertoire of what Orozco Mendoza (2019) refers to as "maternal acts of public disclosures" through which these women engage in a form of constructive resistance. Rather than trying to change the world order and, particularly, the unjust U.S. migration policy, these women, by performing these acts, seek to achieve two goals: to fight against being stripped of their humanity and dignity as they were violently expelled from the U.S. due to their deportation; and to avoid the invisibility and otherization of their subjectivity once they become deported mothers. In this sense, the act of creating DM as a civil organisation was the initial step to engaging in the production of maternal acts of public disclosure. In this physical place, these women realize their intersectional identity as deported mothers, identify their cause, and, more importantly, engage in a form of constructive resistance. Therefore, the support system that these women create in this collective space is one of the reasons why other deported women, like Emma Sánchez, whose quote opens this chapter, join this organisation.

In the following sections, we discuss acts displayed by DM, in which the embodiment of members' intersectional identity as deportees and mothers is at the core of their maternal acts of public disclosure.

9.5.1 Taking the Border with Vigils

In May 2014, Yolanda Varona, the founder of DM, held the first vigil at the San Ysidro Port of Entry in Tijuana. This was a symbolic location for many reasons. First, it is the busiest port of entry along the Mexico-U.S. border; furthermore, all members of the organisation had been deported through this port. Many stayed in Tijuana to be close to their children; some, upon deportation to their towns of origin, moved to Tijuana for this very reason. Vigils take place on Sundays, when more visitors are returning to the U.S. after having spent the weekend with family in Mexico. Members of DM stand alongside the cars that wait to cross the border. Mothers engage in conversation with the drivers, taking advantage of the time that the drivers need to wait.

Initially, members called these acts "vigils" to highlight the importance of staying alert at the border and peacefully waiting to be seen by those going to the U.S. They took this action to be at the most iconic place representing their situation, which also allowed them to let people entering the U.S. know that they were separated from their families by deportation. In engaging in public space, Varona was cognizant of not disturbing the public order: "We don't want to be seen as rebellious. We want to follow the rules" (Interview on January 6, 2020). Ultimately, the goal has been to be visible in the city of transit, to be recognized by others, and to be identified as peaceful demonstrators by U.S. citizens (or authorized residents) commuting back to the U.S.

The first vigil took place soon after DM was founded in May 2014. Varona and a few other women (and a couple of men) stood by the car lanes near the checkpoint. They held homemade banners and signs. They also pinned vibrant pink heart-shaped symbols to their chests, as if their hearts were outside their bodies. Some held signs that read, "Have you seen my son?" Varona shared with us that the phrase was meant to get the attention of the drivers lined up to cross the border in order to then share members' stories of family separation. She and the other members certainly captured the attention of those at the border; unintentionally, they also captured the attention of radio and television news outlets. Interest from journalists was unexpected but welcomed. Varona described this unexpected result:

> I was carrying a sign with the question: 'Have you seen my son?' We thought it was just to get people's attention. All of a sudden, I turned and saw many people waiting in line to cross the border. I don't know how, but I approached them and shared my experience as a deported mother and that I hadn't seen my children for four years. I told my story, showing all the pain that I was feeling at that moment. I didn't know that my story was reaching the hearts of those listening to me; I didn't plan that, but it happened. Apparently, at that point, the U.S. migration and customs officers thought I wanted to cross the border or cause trouble. Therefore, the officers closed the border for a few minutes. This attracted the attention of journalists who happened to be there. Shortly thereafter, I realised I had mics and cameras in front of me. That was my first interview as the founder of Dreamers Moms (Interview in January 2020).

The journalists took DM's contact information and started calling the organisation to learn more about members' stories. According to Varona, that vigil was one of the first moments when DM became visible in Tijuana. Ever since, she has painstakingly recorded the contact information of every reporter with whom she has interacted.

As vigils continued, mothers included other messages on their signs, such as: "No more fear, no more hiding". They also directly addressed the stigma of deported people, which assumes criminality. They carried signs reading, "Workers are not criminals", "Mothers are not criminals", and "Migration is not a crime". In doing so, they used their bodies as walking billboards. By doing this, members of DM not only made their presence visible, but also reclaimed their dignity and humanity.

Vigils were the first public acts in which DM members disclosed their status as deported people, as mothers, and as being separated from their children due to U.S. immigration laws. Vigils are a low-budget activity; members craft a concrete

written message. One thing that started at that time was wearing a vibrant pink t-shirt with a white dove (peace), monarch butterflies (migration), and diplomas and graduation caps (studious children); DM members have worn this at every public event since. Vigils have provided visibility locally (and transnationally, given their location) while showing that DM embraces members' intersecting identities as deported individuals and as mothers. Thus, DM members are humanizing those who have been, by force, removed from the U.S.

9.5.2 *Shifting from Personal to Political*

"The personal is political" is a phrase popularised by the feminist movement in the 1970s in the U.S. While DM members do not use this phrase in their praxis, they embody it in their activism. They determined that several personal events made them political, such as weddings at the Mexico-U.S. border or meeting at Friendship Park located at the US-Mexican border during Mother's Day. We chose one of these events to represent the intentionality of their acts: the religious wedding of a DM member, Emma Sánchez.

Sánchez became a DM member in 2015. She migrated to the U.S. in the early 2000s without documentation. At that time, her mother was working in Southern California. Shortly after migrating, Sánchez met her husband, a U.S. Marine veteran, and soon they had three children. In the hopes of regularising Sánchez's papers, her husband filed a petition to regularise her immigration status. After her husband completed the long and tedious process, Sánchez received notification that she had to go to the U.S. immigration office in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Expecting that the appointment meant that she would become a green-card holder, the family made plans to celebrate. The result was the opposite of what they had dreamed: Sánchez was barred from entering the U.S. for 10 years. In that time of disorientation, Sánchez's father travelled from Guadalajara to Ciudad Juárez to be with her and help with her three toddlers, as her husband had to return to work in Southern California. This outcome changed Sánchez's and her family's lives for the next 12 years.

The description Sánchez shared with us about her religious wedding follows:

> My wedding was on July 17, 2015. My wedding had activist meaning. It all started in a meeting with my fellow Dreamers Moms. We were sharing our stories with visitors from the U.S., and I mentioned my dream of having a religious wedding in Guadalajara with my family and friends. My deportation had truncated my dream. When my godmother [Yolanda Varona, founder of DM] heard that, she said if I wanted to have it, I should tell her and the group when and where, and they would support me. At first, I thought she was kidding, but very soon I realised she was serious about the offer. At this point, I said I wanted to have my wedding in July, by the [border] wall. My godmother was not that convinced because there had been another wedding before [of a deported couple]. I knew my wedding was not going to be the first to be celebrated right next to the wall. Still, I wanted to celebrate it there. I wanted my husband to wear his Marine uniform…I wanted to send a message to the world. We got married by the Friendship Park in Playas de Tijuana. We had Father Delmond

> officiating our wedding [in Spanish], and Pastor Fanestri translated it into English [for] the American side. My three children brought the rings. My father came from Guadalajara to walk [me down the aisle] and give me to my husband at the altar. We refashioned the open space as if it were a church. At the end of the wedding, many news media outlets approached us because they wanted to hear our story. The following day, my phone didn't stop ringing, with journalists wanting to interview me (Interview on June 24, 2020).

The above vignette shows a new phase in DM activism. What started as a personal dream of having a religious wedding became a political act of public disclosure. We analyse at least three moments: the decision, the preparation, and the actual wedding. For the first two moments, we rely on Sánchez's and other DM chronicles of the events. For the third moment, we rely on Sánchez's narrative and the photos she posted on her Facebook account.

As Sánchez shared in the above quote, the reference to having the wedding by the wall indicates that both she and her godmother knew that the wedding would be symbolic of their cause. Though neither Sánchez nor Varona had a clear idea of what they wanted to convey with the celebration, they knew it would have a public purpose.

As the days passed, Sánchez formed an idea of what she wanted her celebration to convey. First, the location was important for various reasons. She wanted her father and siblings in Mexico to attend as well as her mother, who lives in Southern California and could stand on the other side of the wall. Sánchez's wedding enabled her immediate family to be united in more ways than just the religious celebration. It also allowed her to unite her extended family, which was divided by the wall. Once the location was chosen, the celebration itself was carefully designed.

Sánchez was determined to have a traditional wedding and from the outside, it appeared to be just that. However, each element was planned. For example, she was determined to have her husband wear his Marine uniform. Because he had been discharged from the Marines many years previously, his uniform no longer fit, but Sánchez had him obtain a new one. She wanted a white dress and formal attire for her children. To defray the cost of the wedding, she sold a second-hand car her husband had bought for her. DM members helped decorate the area around the obelisk in Playas de Tijuana, which is itself a U.S.-Mexico boundary monument. At the end of the wedding, a radio journalist approached her and asked why they had celebrated the wedding at that particular location. Without thinking twice, she said, "The wall separates families but never the sentiment". After narrating her wedding story, Sánchez took a minute and said:

> We are the perfect poster family despite deportation. We are a mixed-race couple; we profess different religions; we have been separated for nine years; and yet we are still together. Our children are good kids with excellent grades (Interview on June 24, 2020).

Sánchez indicated that she, her family, and deported mothers deserved to be reunited with their families in the U.S. and "to be back home", as Varona says.

When viewing pictures on Sánchez's Facebook account, at first glance, one might perceive it as a regular wedding. She wore a traditional white wedding gown, and her husband wore his Marine uniform. Their children wore matching white shirts and black slacks. Nevertheless, the photos show the wall as the backdrop of

their lives. Yet, despite their separation, they are united. Sánchez's mother was on the other side of the wall but was able to touch Sánchez's pinkie finger through the mesh covering the U.S. side of the wall and gave her blessing to Sánchez. Additionally, there are photos of the guests, showing the bride and groom surrounded by friends and family. One photo includes two details that highlight the symbolism: Varona, the godmother and founder of DM, was wearing the organisation's fuchsia t-shirt, and everyone in the photo, on both sides of the wall, were carrying signs with the message #YESTOFRIENDSHIP. This example is evidence that the most personal aspect of these people's lives is also political.

In the end, the wedding, as an act of public disclosure, highlights several aspects of DM's resistance to being othered by the U.S. immigration system and by society. DM members show that they are united despite the border wall that divides their families and negatively shapes their lives after deportation. The wedding, as a rite of passage, is as important to them as it is to anyone who wants to have a family. In other words, this act shows the human side of these women. Put together, these elements show how women resist the invisibility of being deported and make evident the costs of deportation to their families.

9.5.3 Engaging with News Media

How do DM's constructive resistance practices occupy space in the media? We claim that DM uses distinct media formats—interviews, short documentaries, reports, and so on—to shed light on their activism and struggle to elucidate the injustice of family separation due to deportation. By so doing, DM members seek the viewer's empathy with the mothers' and their children's pain of separation. Further, the visual aesthetic in many of these works bring viewers into the emotional intimacy of these women's lives. Rather than rendering these mothers as victims who suffer alone, all these written and visual works elucidate the agency of the DM members who transform their pain into a source of activism to embrace their intersectional identity as both mothers and deportees.

The growing interest in the intersection of deportation and families at the Mexico--U.S. border has attracted the attention of both national and international media. This has allowed DM to shift its public disclosure from a physical public space to a virtual space. As previously mentioned, DM has centred its mobilisation on denouncing the family separation resulting from the U.S. deportation regime. Specifically, DM has developed a concrete and persuasive theme for its struggle: family reunification and legal re-entrance into the U.S. for those who qualify. DM's work has attracted media attention from countries as far as China, the Netherlands, and Sweden, and many journalists have gone to Tijuana to interview them. While DM has little control of the narrative that the news media outlets use, it does exert some autonomy in the way it posts material on social media. To maintain momentum, DM utilises the material produced about the group to spread its message beyond the Tijuana-San Diego area. In doing so, these media formats further amplify their being mothers and deportees, or their intersectional identity.

Worth noting is that 40% of the titles in the 199-news-report database refer to both identities: mothers and deportees. To date, 64 YouTube releases have been created by diverse users including international news outlets. DM has posted these reports on its social media platforms. Four works in particular have been reposted frequently and were referenced in our interviews and conversations with DM members.[2] The four YouTube reports were released between 2016 and 2019, and the media outlets are the *University of Southern California*, *Aljazeera News*, *The Pear*, and *Now This* (part of the *Group Nine Media* conglomerate).

The visual reports follow similar sequence, and we have identified three moments. They all start with the face and words of one mother. Second, the camera shadows the women's lives in intimate spaces, whether it is their kitchens or their bedrooms when they are communicating with their children over a video platform. The viewers witness the pain that separation from their children has inflicted on these mothers. Third, the viewers see the deported mothers' activism in strategic locations in Tijuana, such as the San Ysidro Port of Entry or in Playas de Tijuana, where the wall is located. Not only does this sequence reveal how heart-wrenching the mothers' plight is, but the reports, like those presented here, shed light on DM members' intersectional identity as mothers and deportees. We analyse each moment as follows.

First moment. This section presents the setting and the individuals, zooming out to provide the context.

> The first image is Tijuana accompanied by acoustic guitars strumming a Mexican rhythm. For the first 22 seconds of the documentary, we see the symbols of the border: a close-up of the wall and the barbed wire that tops it. The camera zooms out to show how the wall blends into the landscape of the San Diego-Tijuana border. We briefly see Sánchez waiting in Tijuana and her husband driving from San Diego to Tijuana. Sánchez then relates her family separation, while images show her following her daily routine (The Pear 2016).

Second moment. The reports provide viewers with access to the intimacy of the mothers' emotional lives by showing close-ups of the mothers' eyes, family photos, and how their children experience the separation. The following excerpt illustrates this point:

> In the background, one can see Sánchez's family portrait with her husband and three children. Her voice cracks with emotion while she describes how difficult it has been for her and her children to be separated due to her deportation. While she narrates different events of her ten years of waiting in Tijuana, she shares family pictures, putting names and faces to her experience. The report introduces Alex, Sánchez's 14-year-old son at the time, talking about how difficult it was for him to take care of his younger siblings while she was in Tijuana. Sánchez highlights how her children are good kids and outstanding students. She talks about her motivation to do the work she does at DM. Her motivation is to return to the U.S. with her family (USC 2016).

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[2] These are: Dreamer Mums: Divided by U.S. Deportation (Aljazeera, Oct. 30 2016); Independent Report (The Pear, Nov. 6, 2016); Mamas Deportadas (USC School of Social Work, Aug 21, 2016); What It's Like to Be Deported and Separate From Your Children – Life After Deportation (Now This, Jan 8, 2018)

> The camera zooms in. Varona is sitting on her bed facing a small table where her computer and cell phone are. It is dark and we can only see her face illuminated by the screen of her laptop. She is calling her children on Skype using her cell phone, which sits on her laptop. Her children answer, and we learn that two of her children now have children of their own. The call is short, and she wishes them good night. During the call Varona is smiling and blowing kisses to her children and grandchildren. It is after she hangs up that we see and feel her pain. She wipes her teary eyes and covers her face with her hands (Aljazeera 2016).

Third moment. While the above excerpts of the mothers' lives show the sorrow of the injustice of living apart from their children, the reports end with these mothers as DM members. Here, we see the mothers wearing their vibrant pink t-shirts bearing the organisation's phrase: *Have you seen my kids?* Here, we realise that they have been wearing this all along, as if their activism promoting family reunification in the U.S. is part and parcel of their being mothers. In other words, their identities as deportees and mothers are interlocked and, therefore, impossible to separate. The following fragment shows their activism as mothers and deportees:

> Wearing the vibrant pink DM t-shirt, each mother poignantly recounted [her] deportation and how difficult the separation from [her] children has been. There are several close-ups into their eyes, as though they want … to make us feel their pain. Each woman shows photos to introduce [her] children's histories. Varona and Monserrat were victims of domestic violence, while Sánchez, although married to a U.S. veteran citizen, was denied return to the U.S. when she and her family went to the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico to fix her migration status. From the painful deportation experience of these three mothers, the video narrative shifts by introducing how DM was created. Varona describes how DM provides a space for deported mothers arriving in Tijuana where they can share their stories and find support. The video ends by highlighting [not only] how DM has become an organisation where these three women found support and transformed their own lives, but also how this organisation today can provide legal and emotional support to other migrant women who have been deported to Mexic[o] and feel disoriented due to family separation (Now This 2018).

Finally, DM has strategically utilised media attention and coverage of family separation caused by deportation to efficiently and widely disseminate the organisation's aim and members' struggle to legally reunite with their loved ones in the U.S. The usefulness of media outlets in amplifying the cultural resonance of discourse in a society is crystal clear to Varona. In a Facebook post from January 28, 2020, concerning an interview about a Mexican migrant who was deported after more than 30 years of living in the U.S. despite being the mother of a U.S. Army officer, Varona commented, "You reporters help us raise awareness about the dire consequences of family separations". We add that the media attention and the reports about DM also validate their intersectional identities as mothers and deportees. This validation, in turn, humanizes them as casualties of the dramatic repercussions of deportation for families and the need to end this brutal policy.

The repertoire of "maternal acts of public disclosure" presented above demonstrates DM engaging in a form of constructive resistance that makes members visible, humanizes mothers' reality as a result of deportation, and finds ways to reconstruct social relations with family members, with other organisations in Tijuana, and with U.S. civil society.

9.6 Conclusions

Throughout this research, we examined the work of DM. For this chapter, we analysed three types of maternal acts of public disclosure (Orozco Mendoza, 2019) to illustrate how these women engage in a form of constructive resistance. Building on Sørensen and Wiksell's (2020) work, we define, in this study, the form of constructive resistance displayed by DM as one that does not seek to change or transform the world; rather, it is based on small concrete and symbolic acts that aim to achieve two goals: to fight against being stripped of their humanity and dignity as they were violently expelled from the U.S. and to avoid the invisibility and otherization of their subjectivity once they became deported mothers.

In analysing DM's maternal acts of public disclosure at different stages of this organisation, we observe progress in the form and content of its messages, which allows members to articulate more concise and persuasive discursive strategies against family separation. By looking at the interplay between deportation, maternal activism, and constructive resistance, this study contributes to these literatures in the following ways.

First, DM, as a civil organisation, provided a space and place where these women began a process of individual recognition of their status as deported mothers, which later allowed them to collectively realize that many other women have gone through the same experience. In this context, the collective awareness of their intersectional identity as deportees and mothers allowed these women to create a different set of social relations in which solidarity and dignity prevail over the dehumanization, stigmatization, and invisibility of their subjectivities. Thus, members of DM reclaim their humanity and fight against becoming mere numbers and losing themselves in the anonymity of the U.S. deportation machine (Goodman, 2020), which at its core displays an anti-immigrant discourse and legal structure excluding certain racialized groups of people. Thus, the repertoire of maternal acts of public disclosure displayed by DM shows us the praxis of a form of constructive resistance through which these women resist the U.S. migration apparatus that violently expelled them and separated them from their families.

Second, one of the contributions of the literature on constructive resistance is that there is no need for people to engage in big mobilizations to inspire others to engage in small acts that create a more just world. In the case of DM, although this applies, what one can learn from its type of constructive resistance is that members' maternal acts would not be possible if not for the creation of alliances to support their cause. As a border city with dozens of civil society organisations focusing on supporting migrants, deportees, and asylum seekers, Tijuana is an ideal place to build alliances not only locally but also internationally. DM has been able to build alliances with local groups that fight for similar causes and that operate in Tijuana. These alliances have become crucial to displaying maternal acts such as vigils at strategic points including the Port of Entry in San Ysidro. Working with other organisations and displaying their maternal acts at these locations have helped these women catch the attention of local, national, and international news agencies.

DM utilises such attention as a sounding board for its cause. As Yolanda Varona says, “The media are the best sounding board for our cause to cross [national] borders”.

Finally, and related to the theme of this volume, what could DM teach us about the intersection between everyday experiences, border politics, and exclusions? Our work contributes to this discussion in two ways. First, the maternal acts displayed by DM allow us to see the consequences and impacts that the exclusionary border policies regarding the U.S. and Mexico border have on the bodies of those marked as “other”. More importantly, DM shows us the capacity to resist of a group of deported women and their capacity to construct a different set of social relations for themselves and their families. Second, the maternal acts of public disclosure, in particular, show us that DM not only resists the U.S. migration policy but also, by displaying such maternal acts in Mexico, resists members’ exclusion due to their gender, class, and stigmatization as deportees in their own country of origin.

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