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MOBILIZING AGAINST GENDER

A comparative study of how right-wing populist parties
in Europe utilize anti-gender discourse

Ida Marie Birket-Smith

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Supervision: Julia Zhukova Klausen

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Abstract

This thesis examines the rise of anti-gender mobilization in Europe and its connection to right-wing populist actors. While populism has gained vast scholarly attention in recent years, its relation to gender remains narrow and understudied. Nonetheless, gender seems to be an omnipresent feature in right-wing populist discourse, and the rise of anti-genderism is closely related to the rise of right-wing populism. The aim of this thesis is to study the intersection between anti-genderism and right-wing populism in Europe, and to contribute to the current gap in research within the field. Through a comparative case study of two populist parties in Europe, this study seeks to answer how right-wing populist parties are mobilizing anti-gender language and ideology in their political discourse. A comparative study of populist parties in Germany and Poland has been selected to investigate if anti-gender discourse occurs across borders and despite differing gender norms and political contexts, and to showcase the possible variety of this phenomenon across Europe. By conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis, this study analyses party material, and parliamentary debates of the Alternative für Deutschland party in Germany and the Law & Justice party in Poland to identify anti-gender discourse in their political communication, understand how it intersects with their populist discourse, and finally to explain, based on a theoretical framework, these discourses as a part of the broader social context. The theoretical framework includes contributions from discourse theory, gender theory and a conceptualization of ‘anti-gender’, and populism. This study concludes that anti-gender discourse is mobilized by the right-wing populist parties in both cases. The anti-gender discourse is linked to the parties’ populist discourse and incorporated as a part of the parties’ populist agendas. The parties construct issues related to anti-genderism such as the traditional heteronormative family, the biological binary understanding of gender, and a common enemy referred to as “gender ideology” and include them as a part of their populist discourse consisting of the antagonistic positioning between “the people” and “the elite”. Furthermore, the study finds a striking similarity between the cases and how the parties construct anti-gender in their discourse. Despite political and cultural differences, a strong anti-gender discourse with similar discursive features is present within both parties, which points towards anti-genderism as a transnational phenomenon manifesting in diverse settings. Based on these findings, I argue that anti-gender mobilization in Europe and beyond should be examined from a transnational perspective to understand its complex strategies and discourses, which travel across borders. Finally, I discuss which possible consequences the mobilization of anti-genderism by political parties can have for the progress made on gender equality in the region.

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1. Introduction

Over the last decade, Europe has experienced an unprecedented rise of populism, notably within the right-wing segment of the political spectrum (Mudde, 2007). Populism has taken root in most European societies, overturning party systems and changing the foundations of democracies (Lazar, 2021). Defined by its ethnonationalism, hostility towards elites, and anti-immigration stance (Dietze & Roth, 2020), right-wing populist parties and politicians have gained attention and support from the public by capitalizing on fears surrounding globalization, cultural change, and economic insecurity. Several right-wing populists have achieved significant electoral success in recent years across the entire region (Lazar, 2021). In European parliamentary elections, the populists' average share of votes has doubled since the 1960s from approximately 5.1% to 13.2%, at the expense of center parties (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). In 2022, almost one-third of Europeans (32%) voted for a populist, far-right, or far-left party. About half of these voters supported far-right populist parties, which is also the party category that has experienced the most rapidly increasing vote share (Rooduijn et al, 2023a). The number of right-wing populist parties with protectionist, anti-elitist, xenophobic, and anti-immigrant agendas has not only gained enormous popularity in Europe but has also managed to gain power and considerable political influence in several European countries, even in countries where they hold only a limited number of seats in parliament (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). 'Populism' has become a buzzword in the last years, heavily used by the media and politicians to describe a variety of unconventional right- and left-wing contenders.

In academia consequently, the notion of populism has also gained massive scholarly attention, trying to define what exactly characterizes these 'populist' parties and what has caused their popularity and influence to rise so drastically in the last decades (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018). While populism remains a contested concept, most agree that these 'new populists' are generally seen as a threat to liberal democracy with negative implications for equality, social justice, and human rights (Lombardo et al., 2021). Due to this oscillation of content and lack of a consistent definition, populism has been conceptualized as a 'thin centred ideology' (Mudde, 2004) to which diverse projects, attitudes and convictions can cling and connect. An often-overlooked feature of right-wing populism (RWP) is its intersection with gender. In all current versions of RWP, an obsession with gender and sexuality in different areas can be observed (Dietze & Roth, 2020). Populist actors across the region evoke the heteronormative nuclear family as the model of social organization, attack reproductive rights, question sex education, criticize a so-called "gender ideology", reject same-sex marriage and seek to

re-install biologically understood binary gender differences (Dietze & Roth, 2020). However, while gender seems to constitute an important aspect of RWP, it has been largely overlooked in research. As Dietze (2022, 278) states:

“Although this fixation on traditional family and gender-values has become an omnipresent feature in the right-wing discourse, established RWP-research has rarely addressed this aspect. Nor have RWP gender-discourses been considered as important for the attractiveness of populism.”

In populist discourse and regimes, a strong *anti-gender* sentiment is pervasive. Europe is currently witnessing rising mobilization of anti-gender actors opposing progressive gender and sexual equality policies under reference to a common enemy coined “gender ideology” or “genderism”. ‘Anti-genderism’ is an ideology based on a set of more or less coherent ideas, but the central element is that “gender” is an ideological warfare imposed by global elites aimed at collapsing natural gender differences, the traditional family and reproduction. Anti-genderism takes different forms depending on its context - from attacks on reproductive rights and preventing marriage equality to banning sex education and discrediting gender studies (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022, 20). Scholars refer to the current developments as an explicit *backlash* against gender and sexual equality taking place across the region. While opposition towards feminist politics and gender equality is not a new phenomenon, the current European context, including the rise of right-wing populist parties and backsliding of democratic values and practices, has opened up new avenues for opposition (Verloo, 2018). Anti-gender mobilization takes different forms depending on local and political dynamics, however one of these oppositional forces against gender are right-wing populist parties and politicians. The rise of anti-genderism is closely related to the rise of right-wing populism and forms what scholars refer to as an *opportunistic synergy*: populist right-wing parties have embraced anti-gender rhetoric in order to enhance their popular appeal and to appear as “defenders of the common people against the depraved elites”, while anti-gender movements gain visibility and political influence by allying with right-wing populist parties (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). In several countries, anti-gender actors overlap with actors on the populist right-wing, both as members of political parties and of civil society organizations (Kuhar & Patternotte, 2017). Anti-gender ideology is seen as an element of the current right-wing populist wave in Europe, which has contributed to the success of anti-gender campaigns, allowing them to grow and resonate more broadly in European societies (Patternotte & Kuhar, 2018, 12).

This thesis takes its starting point in the intersection between RWP and gender. The gender aspect of populism is heavily understudied and needs scholarly attention if we want to better understand right-wing populist tendencies, their discursive strategies, and recent rise in popularity. Focusing on the oppositional forces to gender equality, more specifically anti-genderism, adds an important dimension in the understanding of the current political landscape in Europe, including the rise of both right-wing populist parties and anti-gender mobilization. These two, often overlapping, tendencies form an interesting point of departure, as they are unprecedented in their scale and contribute to the broader political landscape in Europe characterized by processes of de-democratization, increasing polarization, neoliberalism and neonationalism, and growing anti-establishment and anti-elitism tendencies (Verloo, 2018). Furthermore, Europe is an interesting area to focus this study on because of its historical engagement with feminist projects initiated by the EU and its perceived role as a champion and promotor of gender equality (Verloo, 2018). It seems surprising that opposition against gender equality and mobilization of strong anti-gender movements are currently spreading and have been able to gain foothold. The contemporary European developments mentioned above seem to clash with the perception of Europe as a role model in terms of democracy, pluralism, gender equality and human rights.

1.1 Problem formulation

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the connection between right-wing populist parties in Europe and anti-genderism from a discursive perspective, and hereby contribute to the present gap in research within the field of populism and gender. More specifically, the study will focus on how these parties are making use of anti-gender rhetoric and ideology in their political communication. The study will depart from a discursive perspective and focus on analysing and interpreting the social phenomena through the lens of discourse. The study will consider how the populist parties use anti-gender language to construct meaning and reality and in creating, maintaining, and challenging social norms, identities, and ideologies. Accordingly, the problem formulation of this thesis asks:

How are right-wing populist parties in Germany and Poland mobilizing anti-gender language and ideology in their political discourse?

The study is designed as a comparative case study of populist parties in Germany and Poland to shed light on context-specific similarities and differences while employing a transnational perspective to investigate RWP and its intersection with gender as a transnational phenomenon taking place across

Europe. This allows me to investigate how anti-gender discourse and strategies are being mobilized by two populist parties while addressing this in the wider context of RWP and anti-gender tendencies in Europe. Germany and Poland have been chosen as case countries since both countries have seen a rise in populism as well as opposition towards gender equality in recent years. In both countries, the populist parties are also among the main drivers of anti-gender campaigns (Patternotte & Kuhar, 2018, 12ff). Furthermore, the two countries represent different political and sociocultural regimes in a European context, which allows me to grasp the variety in populist parties' use of gender issues in their political discourse and draw potential lines of broader anti-gender tendencies in the discourses of RWP-parties across Europe.

As my theoretical framework, discourse and critical discourse studies will be introduced at first to understand the departing point of this study. Following, gender theory will be presented in brief to then elaborate on the notion of 'anti-genderism' as discourse and ideology to help explain and characterize the resistance discourses applied by anti-gender actors, here populist parties, and politicians. Furthermore, theoretical conceptualizations of populism will be elaborated including the discursive notion of populism applied in this thesis. The theoretical framework will guide the analysis in the aim to answer the problem formulation.

Through a discursive framework founded in notions of critical discourse analysis by Fairclough, Wodak, and Van Dijk (1997; 2010; 1993) empirical data consisting of party material and parliamentary debates will be analysed to identify how anti-gender language and ideology are mobilized by the political parties. First, I will examine the texts from a linguistic-discursive perspective to identify discursive patterns and strategies in relation to anti-gender themes such as LGBT-rights, reproduction, family values and gender roles. Secondly, I will compare the findings of the two cases and explore the broader social and political contexts in which these discourses emerge and are constructed and constructing, in relation to the rising anti-gender sentiments and RWP in Europe, and how these play a role in the discursive struggles in terms of power relations, social norms, identities, and ideologies. Finally, I will discuss the main findings from my analysis in relation to current literature and highlight some of the implications for the current struggles over gender equality in Europe.

This thesis will contribute to better understanding the intersections between right-wing populism and anti-genderism, and hereby to closing part of the research gap in relation to RWP and gender. It will

contribute with knowledge on the rising influence of right-wing populism in Europe and how these populist parties are utilizing anti-gender rhetoric in their political discourse. In terms of gender theory and gender equality, the study will provide valuable insights into the employment of anti-genderism in political discourse, how the notion of gender and the broader struggle for gender equality currently are being challenged, and what it means that political parties are employing this discourse.

2. Literature review

The following section is a critical review of the literature from which this thesis takes its departure. The goal of this section is to present to most relevant and recent literature in the field. As this thesis focuses on the intersection between RWP and anti-genderism, and how this connection manifests discursively, it is relevant to look at the scholarly literature that covers and combine these topics.

2.1 Populism and gender

Over the last decades, studies of populism have gained vast scholarly attention, and the number of publications has expanded significantly. Even though studies on populism have increased, its relation to gender is narrow and almost absent in theoretical work, and research has only begun to emerge in recent years. (Spierings et al., 2015; Köttig et al. 2017; Graff et al., 2019; Dietze & Roth, 2020)

Spierings et al. (2015) is one of the earliest publications on gender and the radical right. The feminist literature on the one hand and the political science literature on the other reveals a gap in knowledge on the link between gender and populism. The issue focuses on the role that gender plays in relation to populist radical right parties in terms of ideology, voting patterns and political leaders. One of the main findings is that RWP-parties are relatively conservative and traditional when it comes to classic gender issues, in particular family policies. Some parties are more moderately traditional while others are neo-traditional in relation to gender equality issues (ibid: 167). They argue that the political and cultural context of countries impact the gender politics of the parties and how gender is adapted to fit the nativist agenda, which characterize all radical right parties. Finally, they find that the leadership of these parties is masculine, and they are supported disproportionately by men (ibid: 170).

Dietze (2022) argues that the ‘men’s-parties’-verdict of populist parties does not hold up any longer. Today, Western European right-wing parties are increasingly led by prominent female leaders such as Alice Weidel in Germany or Marine Le Pen in France. Dietze agrees that the field of RWP and its relation to gender is still narrow, despite a “populist obsession with gender and sexuality” (ibid: 278). RWP-parties attach great importance to statements about family, sexuality, womanhood, and the category of gender. Dietze argues that this fixation on gender and traditional family values have become omnipresent in the right-wing discourse, however it is rarely addressed in RWP-research. Neither has the use of gender-discourses been considered in relation to the rise and popularity of

populism globally (ibid). According to Dietze, gender should be placed at the centre of research on RWP. She underlines the striking fact that the family and women's politics of RWP-parties use 'feminist' frames, but such frames are emptied of their gender justice and transformed via 'frame co-optation' to fit other political agendas (ibid.). Furthermore, right-wing populists do not use gender only as an issue itself or because it aligns with their beliefs, but also as metalanguage for political manoeuvring, installing fears, popularizing world views, and negotiating different conditions in the current struggles over hegemony (ibid: 283).

Similar to Dietze, Kováts (2015) argues that gender functions as a "symbolic glue" that binds together various actors on the far-right across ideological stands. While many of these actors appear anti-gender at first sight, she claims that gender only functions as a cover up for fostering a deeper and profound change in the European political and value system. Thus, using gender rhetoric is a strategic question for far-right parties to enhance their political agenda and gain influence according to Kováts (ibid, 127). Graff et al. (2019) argue that gender conservatism has become the "lingua franca" of a diverse global trend that brings together right-wing actors from around the globe. Like previous scholars, they stress gender as a key in the rise of the global right and underline its complex and transnational nature that manifests in very diverse countries as a 'global anti-gender right' to roll back gender equality (ibid: 542.) Finally, in their case studies of the far-right in Europe and the discourse on gender, Köttig et al. (2017) find that in many European countries the far-right is taking on new forms and becoming stronger. Far-right parties in Europe are far from homogenous and while their book offers "*a first overview of some topics' relation to the theme of gender and the extreme right in Europe*" (ibid: 374), much more research is necessary to understand the far-right in relation to gender issues.

2.2 Anti-gender mobilization

Academic literature agrees that resistance towards gender equality is not a new phenomenon. However, recent structural changes and developments in Europe underpin the intensification of opposition and open new avenues for opposition, particularly for actors on the far-right (Verloo, 2018, 5). One of such oppositional forces is the current anti-gender mobilization in Europe, which is still a relatively new and understudied field, partly due to its recent character, which has mostly developed since the 2010s, and partly because of the general belief that Europe was on an unstoppable way towards 'full' gender equality (Kuhar & Patternotte, 2017, 3). Today, mobilization has spread in

different parts of the continent ranging from west to east (e.g. Korolczuk 2014; Kováts & Põim 2015; Krizsán and Roggeband 2019; Paternotte and Kuhar 2017). These campaigns all bear striking resemblance and share discourses, strategies, and modes of action across borders and are increasingly connected transnationally. They contest gender equality and LGBT-rights and invoke notions of “gender ideology” and “anti-genderism” (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017, 2).

Scholars across fields have pinpointed the striking resonance between right-wing populism and anti-gender mobilization (e.g. Graff & Korolczuk, 2022; Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018; Köttig et al., 2017). Paternotte and Kuhar (2018) claim that the current right-wing populist wave in Europe has contributed to the success of anti-gender campaigns and has allowed them to grow and resonate more broadly in European societies (ibid: 12). Anti-genderism binds together various actors and allow these to work together against a ‘common enemy’, while populism offers a springboard for the anti-gender cause to appeal to a much wider audience. Paternotte and Kuhar find that anti-gender campaigns resonate with right-wing populism in four different ways: 1) In some countries, right-wing populist parties are among the main drivers of anti-gender campaigns, turning to some extent the struggle against gender into a state policy, which is the case in countries like Germany, Austria, Russia, Poland, and Hungary, 2) Central elements of anti-gender and right-wing populist discourses look alike: skepticism on the European project, national and racial anxieties, and resistances to globalization, 3) The discourses employ similar rhetorical mechanisms including victim-perpetrator reversal, scapegoating, and the construction of conspiracy theories, all relying on politics of fear (Wodak, 2015), and 4) The repertoires of action resemble each other, e.g. the skillful use of social media, critique of traditional media and the use of referenda (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018, 12-13). Despite these resemblances, Paternotte & Kuhar stress that these two phenomena must not be treated as two faces of the same coin. “Gender ideology” was born out of a catholic project and originally not linked with the RWP-ideology. Furthermore, right-wing populists do not necessarily oppose gender and sexual equality, some are even advocating for women’s and LGBT rights, often used as a strategy to stigmatize specific populations like migrants or Muslims (ibid). Instead, they argue for an analysis that disentangle the two concepts to understand how they resonate and contribute to their mutual development. They argue for a transnational and comparative analytical approach highlighting cross-border similarities and differences while addressing the impact of national and local factors on the circulation of discourses, strategies, and actors (ibid: 14).

Graff & Korolczuk (2022) also point to the fact that opposition towards ‘gender’ has become a key element in the rise of RWP. They argue that the struggles over ‘gender’ between ultraconservative and progressive forces are part of a broader conflict, namely the future of democracy, and exemplifies a key aspect of the “populist Zeitgeist” (Mudde 2004; Mouffe 2018). This phenomenon is characterized by increasing anti-democratic tendencies and a destabilization of the dominant neoliberal hegemony by a variety of anti-establishment movements both from the right and the left claiming to give a voice back to “the people” and rejuvenate democracy. Graff and Korolczuk place gender at the centre of this political conflict and argue that analysing it from a gender perspective is a necessary step to properly grasp the logic behind the current global rise of the populist right and the crisis of democracy (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022, 4). The struggles over ‘gender’ have grown considerably more complex and alliances between actors have changed. The relationship between RWP and anti-gender movements forms an *opportunistic synergy*, in which RWP-parties embrace anti-gender rhetoric to enhance their popular appeal and act as “defenders of the common people against the depraved elites”, while anti-gender movements gain visibility and political influence with populist parties as their allies (ibid, 7).

2.3 Sub-conclusion

Research on RWP and gender is still an emerging field, and several scholars stress the need for more research on the intersections of these phenomena, currently presenting a gap in research. Most studies agree that gender is an omnipresent feature in right-wing populist discourse and act as a metalanguage binding together diverse global actors on the right-wing. This thesis is therefore a timely and relevant contribution to the field, as it will generate insights into RWP-parties and their use of anti-gender rhetoric in the European context. Scholars point out several similarities between anti-gender mobilization and right-wing populism, however there is a gap in research trying to grasp in detail how these parties are utilizing anti-gender language and ideology in their populist discourse. Thus, choosing to focus on anti-genderism allows for a focus on the growing resistance towards gender equality. Finally, a comparative approach will address the transnationality of these intersecting phenomena, detecting cross-border similarities and differences, while addressing the impact of national factors on the articulation of gendered populist discourses and the wider circulation of such discourses in Europe.

3. Theoretical framework

In the following, I will present the theoretical framework of this thesis. First, I will introduce the notion of Critical Discourse from which the thesis takes its starting point. Next, I will briefly introduce gender theory to be able to conceptualize ‘anti-genderism’, and lastly present the theoretical conceptualizations of populism and dive into the notion of ‘populism as discourse’ adopted in this thesis.

3.1 Critical Discourse

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a problem-oriented, interdisciplinary research programme with a variety of different approaches, each drawing on different epistemological assumptions, with different theoretical models and research methods. The uniting factor between different approaches within CDA is the shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice and political-economic, social, or cultural change (Wodak, 2001, xix). As Van Dijk states (2012):

“CDA is discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such *dissident research*, critical discourse analysts take an explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately challenge social inequality.”

CDA does not study linguistics per se, but rather social phenomena that are complex and require a multidisciplinary approach (Wodak, 2001, xxi). It is interested and motivated by pressing social issues, which it aims to better understand through discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1993, 252). ‘Critical’ refers to that any social phenomenon lends itself to critical investigation, to be challenged and not taken for granted (Wodak, 2001, xxii).

According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 217ff), CDA approaches rely on some common features:

- Discursive practices, involving the creation and interpretation of texts, play a significant role in the constitutions of the social world, including social identities and relations. These discursive practices contribute to both the continuity and evolution of society and culture. While some societal phenomena extend beyond linguistic-discursive realms, critical discourse analysis focuses on understanding the linguistic-discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomena, particularly within contemporary society.

- Discourse is regarded as a social practice which both constitutes the social world and is constituted by it. This dialectical relationship between discourse and other societal dimensions is central to critical discourse analysis. Unlike poststructuralist approaches, critical discourse analysis acknowledges the influence of societal forces beyond discourse alone, such as political and institutional structures, on discursive practices.
- Critical discourse analysis conducts empirical linguistic textual analyses within social contexts, distinguishing it from other approaches that focus solely on rhetoric or discourse theory. This methodological emphasis on concrete language use allows for a systematic examination of discourse within its social context.
- Discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social group. The focus is on the discursive construction of social subjects and relations, including power relations, and the role such discursive practices play in serving the interests of particular social groups.
- CDA is inherently politically committed to social change and emancipation and therefore not politically neutral. It aims to uncover the role of discourse in maintaining unequal power relations and advocates for radical social change.

3.1.1 Discourse, power, and ideology

The notion of *discourse* is contested and subject to several different usages, and it is necessary to outline what is meant by *discourse* in this study. According to Fairclough, discourse is commonly used in three senses including a) meaning making as an element of the social process, b) the language associated with a particular social field or practice e.g. ‘political discourse’ and c) a way of constructing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective e.g. ‘a feminist discourse’ or ‘a neoliberal discourse’. Discourse is seen as an element of the social process which is dialectically related to others. This dialectic relationship implies that discourse is shaped by the particular social setting in which it occurs, but also takes part in shaping it. It is thus both constitutive in the sense of sustaining, reproducing, and transforming the social status quo, while at the same time being socially conditioned by it (Fairclough, 2010). Since discourse is social, it relates to both *power* and *ideology*, namely the ideological effects of discourse in which discourse can produce and reproduce unequal power relations through its representation and positioning of things and people (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, 260). CDA is primarily interested in the functioning of ideologies in everyday life. This thesis applies Fairclough’s view of ideologies as “constructions of meaning that

contribute to the production, reproduction, and transformation of relations of power, domination, and exploitation” (Fairclough, 1992, 87). Ideologies are created in societies in which relations of domination are based on social structures such as class and gender. According to Fairclough, while discourses can be more or less ideological, it is the ideological discourses that contribute to the maintenance and transformation of power relations (ibid). Ideology is thus embedded in the discursive practice and in the production of meaning in everyday life, and this meaning production is important in the maintenance of power relations. CDA is interested in the way discourse (re)produces social domination and the struggles over different interpretations of meanings, that is the struggle for “semiotic hegemony” (Holzscheiter, 2005). According to Fairclough, people can be positioned within different and competing ideologies, which is a result of negotiations of meaning in which all social groups participate (Gramsci, 1991). Hegemony is not only dominance, but a process of negotiation of meaning out of which emerges a consensus concerning meaning. As a result, hegemony is never stable but changing and incomplete (Fairclough, 1992, 93). The concept of hegemony allows for an analysis of how the discursive practice is part of a larger social practice involving power relations: discursive practice is an aspect of a hegemonic struggle that contributes to the reproduction and transformation of the discursive order of which it is part and consequently of the existing power relations (ibid.).

3.1.2 Political discourse

Finally, it is relevant to introduce the notion of political discourse, since the focus in this thesis is on political parties. Political discourse is grounded in the principles of CDA and is therefore critical in its enterprise (Van Dijk, 1997) and relies on the same assumptions as presented above. The political (critical) discourse analysis (PDA) deals specifically with the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse. Such analysis deals with the discursive conditions and consequences of social and political inequality that results from this domination (Fairclough 1995; van Dijk, 1993). PDA is relevant for studying political issues and to answer political questions, making it particularly suitable for my analysis. Discourse is seen as a form of political action and hence as a form of social action and interaction (Van Dijk, 1997, 20). Political discourse is identified by its actors and recipients, which include all participants in the political process such politicians, citizens, voters, and social movements (ibid: 13). Context is an important element in PDA, and all political communicative events are context-dependent, in which text and context mutually define each

other (ibid: 14). To grasp the full meaning of discourse, a contextual analysis that considers the social, political, and cultural context is necessary (Van Dijk 1993; 2008).

3.2 Gender theory

To understand the notion of anti-genderism, it is necessary to begin with a brief conceptualization of gender theory and the concept of gender. Gender is a contested notion and has been under scholarly attention since around the 1950s. Overall, gender theory studies what is understood as masculine, feminine and queer behaviour in a given context. Over the years, the perception of gender has changed and developed from an essentialist view to a social constructionist and even deconstructionist view. Essentialism suggests that gender is the same as the biological sex and thus has a binary perspective on gender consisting of two categories: male and female. In this sense, gender is natural, stable, and cannot be changed (Changxue, 2008, 54). Today, most scholars rely on a social constructionist approach to gender, which suggest that gender is constructed in social and cultural interactions. In this notion, gender is constructed in and through discourse. Butler (1990) introduces the notion of ‘doing gender’ using the concept of performativity in relation to gender. Butler contests the idea of the biological, binary gender and of a natural masculinity and femininity (ibid). According to Butler, gender is not inscribed in a biological sense. On the other hand, it is discursively constructed and sustained. In this way, gender is not something you are, but something you do. Gender is performed by individuals on a daily basis, and this performance constructs gender within social and cultural discourse (Butler, 1990). She argues that even the biological sex is a social construction, and thus it does not make sense to talk about the distinction between a biological sex and gender. This constructionist notion of gender is attacked by the anti-gender mobilization, claiming it to be a dangerous ideology threatening to destroy families, local cultures, and civilization. They oppose “gender” as a concept because it denies biological sex and undermines the natural character of the heteronormative family (Butler, 2021), which will be elaborated in the following.

3.3 Anti-genderism

In recent years, countries across Europe have experienced growing resistance towards gender equality and the emergence of mobilizations against an enemy referred to as “gender ideology” or “genderism”. Under these labels, various issues are united and attacked by conservative groups; women’s rights, sexual and reproductive rights, LGBT-rights and same-sex marriage, gender policies, gender mainstreaming, and sexual education programmes and gender studies departments (Kováts,

2017, 175). These anti-gender campaigns form a specific type of conservative opposition to gender and sexual equality and consists of phenomena as diverse as populism, far-right parties, religious fundamentalism, nationalism, racism, and neoliberalism, and the specific triggers of mobilization vary across borders. However, the mobilizations share a common denominator, namely a critique of gender, labeled as “gender ideology” or “anti-genderism”. In these mobilizations, “gender” becomes an empty signifier (Laclau, 2005) that binds together different actors despite ideological stances allowing for a collective identification between a diverse set of issues within a single chain of equivalence (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022, 16). The focus of this thesis is not on the anti-gender movement itself, but on how RWP-parties are utilizing ‘anti-genderism’ as an ideology and discursive style in their political discourse. The characteristics of the ideological and discursive elements of ‘anti-genderism’ will be elaborated in the following.

‘Anti-genderism’ is an ideology based on a set of more or less coherent and flexible ideas. Certain elements are central and constant; the claim that “gender” is about collapsing natural differences, that it is a danger to children, reproduction, and family, and that it is an imposition of global elites (ibid: 20). However, how anti-genderism plays out on the ground varies greatly – from introducing a total ban on abortion in Poland or changing the sex education curriculum in Germany to discrediting gender studies in Sweden or preventing the introduction of marriage equality in France (ibid). “Gender ideology” is a term created by the anti-gender movement to “*oppose women’s and LGBT rights activism as well as the scholarship deconstructing essentialist and naturalistic assumptions about gender and sexuality*” (Patternotte & Kuhar, 2018, 8). Accordingly, “gender ideology” entails all the different reforms pertaining to intimate and sexual citizenship. It is regarded not only as an anthropological and epistemological threat, but as a covert political strategy and conspiracy, often imposed by international institutions like the EU, the UN and WHO, aiming to gain power and impose values and policies of minorities on the ‘average people’ (Kuhar & Patternotte, 2017, 6). Feminists, activists, and gender scholars are accused of manipulating and hiding their objectives behind a discourse of equality and human rights (Lopez Trujillo, 2005, 8). Anti-gender activists claim that the will of the people has been seized by a corrupt elite and that “gender ideology” is a new form of totalitarianism. Gabriele Kuby, regarded as one of the front figures of the movement, has stated that “*totalitarianism has made a costume change and now appears in the mantle of freedom, tolerance, justice, equality, anti-discrimination, and diversity*” (Kuby, 2016, 12).

Anti-genderism varies across countries and campaigns have combatted a diverse range of issues including LGBT rights, women's rights and reproductive rights, government gender policies such as gender-sensitive education in schools, gender itself (as meant in gender violence, gender studies and gender mainstreaming) and progressive sexual education programmes (Patternotte & Kuhar, 2018; Kováts, 2017). However, it is possible to define five areas of cross-national contention (ibid, 9ff):

1. **Same-sex marriage and civil partnership** appear as the most powerful trigger across Europe. Related issues such as second-parent, joint same-sex adoption, surrogacy, and reproductive technologies are also contended. Anti-gender activists claim to defend the interest of the child against “egoistic desires of adults” and that same-sex marriage denies motherhood and fatherhood, negates sexual differences, and destroys the anthropological basis of the family. LGBT-rights are therefore a key target of anti-genderism.
2. **Reproductive rights** have been at the roots of the discourse on “gender ideology” since its beginning, and issues like abortion, contraception, and reproductive technologies are contested. Reproduction rights are interpreted as being part of a “culture of death” and anti-genderists claim to be defending the right of the unborn children. This is exemplified by the 2016 proposal of the Polish Law and Justice party to ban abortion.
3. **Progressive sex and gender education** in schools are also attacked, discussing which content is allowed in modules of sexual education, in particular in relation to gender equality and homosexuality. In these cases, a figure of ‘the innocent child’ is invoked, claiming that “gender ideology” is damaging children's development and blurring out biological references about the sexes. Furthermore, sex education is said to encourage the hypersexualization of children.
4. **Gender itself** has also been under discussion. The notion of gender itself is challenged as well as related topics such as gender violence, gender mainstreaming and gender studies. Despite being very different issues, they are all accused of being covert strategies of “gender ideology”. In relation to gender violence, in particular the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Council of Europe, 2024) has been opposed in several countries including Poland. Anti-gender activists claim that the convention would turn “gender ideology” into the official ideology of the state. Also, EU's political strategy of gender mainstreaming, aimed at incorporating a gender perspective in all legislation and policy (EIGE, 2024), has been

claimed to be a totalitarian ideology and a non-democratic practice, imposed on European countries by feminist lobbies and elites from Brussels. Finally, gender studies and departments at universities are said to be ideological and non-scientific. Anti-gender campaigns seek to dismantle post-structural research as this does not fit with the unquestionable findings of natural sciences and the essential differences between the male and female sex.

5. **The character of “gender ideology”** is claimed to be undemocratic and a danger to democracy, as they claim it to be related to (new) Marxism and a communist political regime. In relation, anti-gender campaigns claim to be defenders of religious freedom and condemn the increasing “christianophobia” in Europe. International institutions like the EU or the UN are key vehicles of “gender ideology”, undermining the principles of national sovereignty and democratic deliberations (Kuhar & Patternotte, 2017, 7).

3.4 Populism

Populism has been studied from a variety of positions, and definitions of populism are widespread. This thesis will employ a discursive approach to populism, defining populism as a rhetorical style used by political actors (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016). In the following, I will account briefly for the theoretical contributions in the field of populism before turning to populism as a discursive style. Subsequently, I will introduce the concepts of “the people” and “the elite” relevant for my analysis.

While there has been less consensus on how populism should be conceptualized and analysed empirically, all approaches seem to follow the general idea of populism as a form of politics based on a distinction between ‘the corrupt elites’ and ‘the virtuous people’ (Mudde, 2004; 2007). Who the elites and the people are varies across contexts, but the binary structure of populist claims is invariant. There is a general agreement that populism is “confrontational, chameleonic, culture-bound and context-dependent” (Arter, 2010, 490), and is found in various forms across countries and regions. Furthermore, populist politics have emerged in different historical periods, and scholars distinguish between different waves of populism, currently in the fourth wave characterized by a mainstreaming and normalization of the radical right (Mudde, 2019, 20). Finally, it is important to stress that there is no common ideological denominator of populism. Populism is not bound to one type of ideology and can be found across the political spectrum from the extreme right to the far left. This thesis will focus specifically on right-wing populism, which is also the primary form of populism present in today’s Europe. It is possible to distinguish between three main conceptual approaches to populism:

populism as an ideology, as a political strategy and as a discursive style. Populism as an ideology has dominated the literature on European populism, and is highly influenced by the definition suggested by Cas Mudde:

”[populism is] a thin-centred 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” (Mudde 2004, 543).

Populism is first and foremost a set of ideas characterized by an antagonism between the people and the elite, placing the general will of the people in opposition to the moral corruption of elite actors (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, 6). Ideology in this sense is defined as an interconnected set of ideas that derive meaning from their relationship to one another (Freeden, 1996). By stressing this ideology as ‘thin-centred’, Mudde implies that populism is not a complete worldview that provides answers to all socio-political questions; instead, populism is compatible with other, more extensively developed belief systems such as socialism or nationalism. The ideological features attached to populism depend on the political context in which populist actors operate (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2011, 2).

A second approach to populism less concerned with ideology and more with the attributes of political leaders, is populism as a political strategy. In this approach, populist mobilization, and the relationship between leaders and their supporters are the issues under study. As Weyland (2001) states: “populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of unorganized followers”. Emphasis is placed on political organization and the relationship of political actors toward their constituents (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, 11). Scholars who employ this approach usually emphasize the importance of the identity of political leaders and their role in shaping populist mobilization. Often these parties are characterized by a centralized organizational structure headed by a strong charismatic leader.

The third approach to populism, which is the approach adopted in this thesis, is the discursive approach, which considers populism as a rhetorical style used by political actors of diverse ideologies based on the fundamental conflict between the corrupt elite and the people (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016, 9). The discursive tradition views populism as an attribute of the message and not the speaker, which makes it possible for political actors to use different degrees of populism under different circumstances. Laclau’s work (2005) has been particularly influential in shaping this approach, stating that the symbolic distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, which constitutes populist

discourse, is an instance of empty signifiers that can take on varied content depending on the social context. These categories take meaning through a process of classification, where specific social groups are constructed as ‘the people’ (us) against the oppressive ‘others’ (them) (Laclau, 2005). According to Bonikowski and Gidron, the discursive approach is best suited for comparative research and offers the most precise conceptualization of populism that can serve for any study of populism regardless of context or ideological orientation of the populist actors (2016, 9-10). This definition allows me to study the variations in levels and types of populist statements rather than a binary categorization of political actors. Moreover, the discursive approach views populism as a practice rather than a characteristic, which is carried out through speech acts (ibid.). In this way, it is possible to study the populist parties’ discursive style in the debates and party programmes.

3.4.1 The people

“The people” is a construction in populist discourse allowing for much flexibility and different meanings. Laclau argues that “the people” is an *empty signifier* which makes populism a powerful political phenomenon. Populists have the capacity to frame “the people” in ways that appeal to different communities and articulate their demands, and in this way create a shared identity between different groups and establish support for a common cause (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, 9). Most often, “the people” is used in three different meanings: the people as sovereign, as the common people, and as the nation (ibid). “The people as sovereign” refers to the modern democratic idea that the people is the ultimate source of political power and if not well represented by the elites, they will mobilize against the political establishment. This sets the stage for a populist narrative of “giving the government back to the people” (ibid, 10). The second meaning is the idea of “the common people”, which relies on a class concept combining socioeconomic status with specific cultural traditions and values. “The common people” refers to a critique of dominant culture and populists aim to address the interests and ideas of “the common people” in contrast to a defined enemy such as the cultural elite or the establishment. This anti-elitist attitude is often linked with a critique of institutions such as political parties and big organizations, who are accused of misrepresenting the people (ibid, 11). Finally, the notion of “the people as the nation” is used to refer to a national community, defined in ethnic terms, e.g. “the German people”. This implies that all those native to a particular country are included and form a community with a common life.

3.4.2 The elite

The crucial aspect of “the elite” is morality, which separates the pure people from the corrupt elite. The elite is defined on the basis of power, i.e., as the ruling class who holds leading positions within politics, economy, culture, and the media. All these groups are portrayed as one homogenous corrupt group that works against the general will of the people (ibid, 12). However, populists themselves are obviously excluded from the elite. Populists often defend a post-class world, arguing that class divisions are artificially created to maintain the elite in power and undermine the people (ibid, 13). Right-wing populists relate the battle between the people and the elite to economic power, arguing that the political elite are supporting the economic elite by putting “special interests” above the general interests of the people. Within the EU, many populist parties accuse the political elite of putting the interest of the EU over those of the country. While the key distinction between the people and the elite is moral, when merged with nationalism it becomes ethnic as well. Xenophobic populists in Europe often define the people in ethnic terms excluding “aliens” such as immigrants and minorities (ibid, 14). In this case, they argue that the elite favours the interests of the immigrants over those of the native people. Often populists will combine different interpretations of the elite and the people such as class, ethnicity, and morality, which provides them flexibility in framing the people and the elite according to the social context, as argued by Laclau (2005).

4. Methodological framework

In this chapter, I will introduce the overall methodology of the study, including its qualitative research strategy, iterative approach, and philosophical paradigm. Next, I will describe the research design including the comparative case study method and introduce the two cases. I will present the data collection process and introduce the empirical data used for analysis as well as elaborate on Norman's Fairclough's model for CDA. Ending the chapter, I will present the analytical framework as a transition to the findings of my analysis.

4.1 Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate how right-wing populist parties in Europe are mobilizing anti-gender discourse and ideology in their political discourse. The study will analyse textual and verbal data to detect discursive constructions of gender, which calls for a qualitative research strategy. A qualitative strategy aims to generate deep insights concerning particular topics and understand social phenomena and the meaning attributed to these in a social context (Bryman, 2021, 350), which fits the aim of this paper. The social context is important in qualitative research arguing that behaviour of a social group cannot be understood without appreciating the specific relations and environments in which they operate (ibid:355). This paper conducts research in more than one setting to demonstrate the significance of context and the ways in which it influences the discursive constructions.

4.1.1 Research approach

My overall approach to research is inductive, meaning that I will analyse data in an open and explorative manner. The inductive strategy is characterized by letting the data guide you in finding relevant theoretical contributions (Bryman, 2016, 23). However, I find it necessary to apply elements of deductive reasoning as well due to my problem area and its complexity. Since this study has a very particular focus, the intersection of anti-genderism and populism, I have used theoretical contributions presented earlier to guide me in my data collection and coding process. By searching for particular topics that is characterizing for anti-gender language and ideology, such as 'gender ideology', 'abortion' or 'LGBT', I was able to identify relevant political debates, where I expected to find anti-gender language. After pinpointing such debates, I once again applied an inductive approach, not looking for certain things, but staying open to all relevant passages in the dataset. The

research process can therefore be characterized as iterative, since I combined the inductive and deductive approach, going back and forth between theory and observations.

4.1.2 Philosophical paradigm

This paper departs from a social constructivist position, holding both ontological and epistemological assumptions about reality and how we know it. The ontological stance of social constructivism is that reality itself is socially constructed, while the epistemological stance states that knowledge about reality is a social construction (Collin, 1998). According to Burr (1995; 2015), a number of assumptions can be characterized as social constructivist:

- *Anti-essentialism*: Individuals and society are products of social processes and there are no ‘essences’ inside people that make them what they are. When the social world is a product of social processes, it follows that there cannot be any given nature to the world or people (Burr, 1995, 5).
- *Anti-realism*: Social constructivism denies that knowledge is a direct perception of reality. Instead, we construct our own versions of reality between us, and there is no such thing as objective fact or an objective reality (ibid, 6).
- *Historical and cultural specificity of knowledge*: Our knowledge and ways of understanding the world are not objective or absolute, but specific to the social and cultural context in which it exists. A notion of a specific concept can therefore change over time (ibid).
- *Language as a pre-condition for thought*: The categories and frameworks we apply are acquired by each person as they develop the use of language. This means that the categories that organise a framework of meaning are provided by the language we use, and language is thus a necessary pre-condition for thought (ibid; Burr, 2015, 10).
- *Language as social action*: Language is more than a way of expressing ourselves, it is a way of constructing the world. Our language use can therefore be seen as a form of social action that has practical consequences. (ibid, 11).
- *Focus on interaction and social practices*: Social processes are constituted through social practice and interaction. Explanations of these must be found not in social structures, but in the social interaction taking place between people (Burr, 1995, 7).
- *Focus on processes*: A focus in the analysis of social phenomena on the dynamic social processes instead of static structures (ibid, 8). Constructions of the world sustain some patterns

of actions and exclude others, meaning that they are bound up by power relations and set limits for what is legitimate for different actors.

This thesis departs from the central elements of social constructivism presented above, meaning that these assumptions constitute the basis for this thesis' approach to empirical data as well as the analysis hereof. When analysing right-wing populist parties' political discourse departing from a social constructivist perspective, it provides insights into the ways in which language reflects and reinforces the reality these parties are part of, including social norms, ideologies, and power structures. In relation to this, the central question here is how anti-genderism is socially constructed and negotiated in their discourse and how these constructions are part of a wider discursive and social practice. Furthermore, this has implications for my positions as a researcher since my account of the social world that is presented in this study is also a construction and presents a specific version of social reality.

4.2 Research design

4.2.1 Comparative case study

The study is designed as a comparative case study of two right-wing populist parties, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, and Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland and will analyse the parties' use of anti-gender language and ideology in their political discourse. A comparative case study allows for a better understanding of a social phenomenon and to compare and contrast the findings in the cases (Bryman, 2021, 62). Case studies provide context-based knowledge and will help develop a more nuanced understanding of 'reality' compared to a more general one (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 222f.). The comparative case study is particularly relevant, when examining issues in two or more countries with the intention of comparing their manifestations in different sociocultural settings using the same research instruments. This allows me to seek explanations for similarities and differences and to gain a deeper understanding of social reality in different national contexts (Hantais, 1996). The reason for choosing a comparative study is to better understand how right-wing populist parties construct anti-gender issues in their political discourse and to detect any similarities and differences in these discourses across the cases. Since I am dealing with two transnational phenomena, namely populism and anti-gender, I find the comparative method valuable to detect and compare discourses which are constructed and negotiated in a European context.

4.2.2 Case selection

The strategy for the selection of cases is inspired by the ‘most different system design’ (MDSD), where you choose units of research that are as different as possible with regards to extraneous variables (Anckar, 2008, 390). While this thesis does not follow a strict variable-oriented approach to measure the causality between the independent and dependent variables, its strategy for case selection is however inspired by this type of approach. The aim of this study is to investigate anti-gender discourses in populist parties in Europe, and to study this possible *variety*, it is necessary to choose cases that are different on relevant parameters including gender regimes, political landscape, historic and cultural developments, and societal norms. In this way, I am able to compare if the context of the cases has an influence on the anti-gender discourse employed. To investigate the issue under study, both cases should have one or several influential right-wing populist parties as well as rising anti-genderism.

The cases for this thesis were chosen to be Germany and Poland and the countries respectively right-wing populist parties, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and Law and Justice (PiS). Germany and Poland are different countries in a European context, representing different political systems, cultural contexts, and gender regimes, making them suitable for an MDSD-inspired approach. Germany represents a more “established” western democracy with a multi-party system, while Poland can be categorized as a “newer” democracy with right-wing parties dominating the political scene. In relation to gender, Germany represents a more liberal, progressive, and modern regime in terms of gender equality legislation, LGBT-rights, and sexuality, while Poland represents a more conservative regime dominated by traditional family values and social norms. In this way, the two countries are expected to represent different standpoints in terms of gender in a European context.

Despite these differences, both countries have seen a rise in populist parties as well as anti-gender tendencies in the last decades, which make them interesting cases. RWP-parties have gained popularity in both Germany and Poland in the last decades, and the AfD and PiS have gained large vote shares and high political influence. Furthermore, both countries have witnessed anti-gender tendencies in recent years, often intersecting with the far-right, meaning that in both countries the populist parties are some of the main actors promoting anti-gender ideology. This is essential for the selection of these countries as cases since I expect the two respective parties to be utilizing anti-

gender rhetoric in their political discourse and hence to be able to say something about the intersection between RWP and anti-gender.

4.2.3 Case description

In the following, I will provide a short description of the two countries, their gender regimes, relevant political developments, and an introduction to the political parties under study.

Poland

Poland's political landscape is characterized by its 'new' democratic institutions which took root at the start of its transition from communist rule in 1989. Rapid economic growth and societal change have benefited some segments of the population more than others, which have led to a deep divide between liberal, pro-European parties and those purporting to defend national interests and "traditional" Polish Catholic values (Freedom House, 2024a). Recent years have seen an increase in nationalist and discriminatory rhetoric. The populist, conservative party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice) has dominated the political scene since taking power in 2015, and enacted measures that have increased political influence over state institutions and set back Poland's democratic process (ibid). In 2023 elections, the PiS was defeated by an opposition coalition led by Donald Tusk, even though the party received the highest number of votes (35%) (Politico, 2024). Currently in opposition, the party remains one of Poland's most popular parties. The PiS was formed in 2001 under the leadership of the twin brothers Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński. The ideology of the party is characterized by national and social conservatism. PiS supports conservative notion of the nation, the family, and tradition, and advocates for traditional family values, morality, and gender roles. The party has strong ties with the Catholic Church, and its stance on moral issues is highly influenced by the church's teachings (Gwiazda, 2020, 585). Over the years, the party has gradually developed a more populist discourse characterized by dividing society into two antagonistic groups. According to the PopuList, PiS can be characterized as a *far-right* populist party that started out as conservative but has steered towards the far-right end of the ideological spectrum since the late 2000s (Rooduijn et al., 2023b).

Poland scores 61.9 in the European Gender Index, which is well below the EU average, and has shown very limited progress since 2010 (EIGE, 2023a). The collapse of communism has influenced the gender order in the country, and gender policy was seen as a remnant of the old regime. As a result, the traditional vision of women as mothers and wives were reinforced, women's participation

in the public sphere was marginalized, and anti-feminist discourses rose. Becoming a member of the European Union in 2004 was an important factor influencing the development of gender equality, but conservative voices from right-wing parties and the Catholic Church remained strong (Warat, 2014, 4). The gender regime in Poland is characterized by a strong influence of traditional Catholic values and conservative social norms, shaping the attitudes towards gender roles, women's rights, and LGBT. The Polish Catholic Church is a prestigious and influential force in Poland and holds very traditional views of women's role as mothers and wives and takes a strong conservative position on moral values in particular related to reproductive and sexual rights (Heinen & Portet, 2009, 3). Even though religion plays a more limited role today in the everyday life of Poles, religious arguments remain strong and have a central place in the public debate on moral values (ibid.). Poland has one of Europe's most restrictive abortion laws with access to abortion restricted to cases of rape, incest, fetal abnormalities, or risk to the woman's life. The gender regime is also strongly influenced by 'familism', in which the traditional, heteronormative family is emphasized, reinforcing traditional gender roles with women as caregivers and men as breadwinners. Furthermore, Poland has been a battleground for LGBT-rights, and in particular conservative forces have been pushing back against efforts to advance LGBT-equality (Szulc, 2019), e.g. by declaring parts of the country "LGBT-free zones".

Germany

Germany is a representative democracy with a vibrant political culture and civil society, in which civil and political rights are largely assured in law and practice. The political system is still influenced by the country's totalitarian past with safeguards to prevent authoritarian rule. Germany has in general been stable since mid-20th century, but in recent years political tensions have grown due to a large increase in asylum seekers and the growing popularity of right-wing populist movements (Freedom House, 2024b). Since 2010, anti-immigration and islamophobia have become defining features of the changing political landscape in Germany. In 2013, the AfD was founded mainly as a reaction to the EU politics of the German government. Initially consisting of a neoliberal, a national-conservative and an RWP-wing, the party agenda soon shifted remarkably to the right (Sprengholz, 2021). From 2015 onwards, the party presented itself as an anti-statal, anti-pluralist, ethno-nationalist, and anti-feminist party. The ideology of the AfD is a mix of different themes and combines elements of Euroscepticism, historical revisionism, German nationalism, xenophobia, and anti-Islam sentiments. The AfD has also emphasized its role as the defender of traditional conservative values (Keil, 2020). Since its foundation, the populist right-wing party has seen an almost unprecedented rise and has,

unlike other populist and far-right parties, managed to establish a stable electoral base and enter the federal parliament for the first time in 2017 with 12.6% of the vote, making it the third strongest party at national level (Arzheimer, 2015). The AfD is not only the first RWP-party in the Bundestag, but also the largest opposition party to the social democratic government. According to the PopuList, AfD has always been a populist party, but since 2015 the party has been classified as a *far-right* populist party (Rooduijn et al., 2023b).

Germany scores 70.8 in the European Gender Index, which is just above the EU average (EIGE, 2023b). Since 2010, the country score has increased in a steady manner, growing faster than the EU average. Germany has since the 2000s implemented several anti-discrimination and gender equality politics, such as the recognition of same-sex marriage in 2017 and a 30 percent gender quota for supervisory board. Also, a modernization of the conservative breadwinner model can be observed (Hajek & Dombrowski, 2022), and Germany has experienced a shift away from this family model towards a de-gendered understanding of care duties beyond biological definitions. This has enabled increasing employment rates and careers options for women. However, the normative ideal of women as mothers is still rather strong in the country. Germany has experienced increasing legal equality for gay and lesbian citizens and signed relevant international treaties. Also, an increasing visibility and cultural relevance of LGBT-people and demand for the recognition of rights is present. Related changes e.g. on sex education curricula, which reflects these cultural developments, have spurred much controversy, and served as a main mobilization issue for anti-genderist articulations (Villa, 2017, 101). While the country has seen several achievements on gender equality, mobilization against gender, sexual diversity and plural family forms have increased in recent years. Germany has also experienced a rather sudden rise and electoral success of a new populist right-wing, and anti-genderism has become a facet of organized politics (ibid, 108).

4.3 Empirical data

The dataset of this study consists of qualitative, written data and is comprised by two data types: party materials and parliamentary debates. Two different types of data were chosen to enhance the study's validity and shed light on the issue from different perspectives. The party materials are produced by the political parties and serve to communicate their standpoints on different policy issues. They are strategic and aimed to promote the party's interests and objectives. Parliamentary debates, on the other hand, involve the discussions among the MPs on proposed legislation and government policies.

They involve the participation from multiple political parties presenting their arguments in a formal setting. The debates typically follow a structured format with a moderator and designated times for the MPs to make statements. While the data types serve different functions within the political process, they are complementary since they provide valuable insights into the dynamics of political discourse and decision-making as well as the perspectives and priorities of the parties.

Both parliaments have written transcripts and video recordings from the parliamentary debates. I will be using the transcripts of the debates and will only be able to analyse the transcribed speech and not body language, emphasis, and other non-written elements of speech. The transcripts are in original language and translated into English by two different AI-machine translators (DeepL and Google). Furthermore, the relevant sections in the data that I wanted to use as text examples in the analysis were further translated word by word to obtain the most accurate translation and meaning on a sentence level. While this translation process was meticulous and time consuming, it is a limitation for this study, as it is not comparable to translation by a native speaker. Some meaning could get lost or be misinterpreted in this process, however I tried to minimize this by translating each document several times and translating on a word level for the relevant passages.

4.3.1 Data collection

To gain insight into the parties' position on policy issues in relation to anti-gender, I located relevant party materials on the parties' websites, including national and regional election programmes and party manifestos. To find relevant parliamentary debates, I used the websites of the German Parliament, The Bundestag, and the Polish Parliament, The Sejm. In the large databases, I found it necessary to create some search categories to locate debates with possible anti-gender discourse. I created four categories based on the anti-gender theory presented in the theoretical framework: 1) gender roles and family structure, 2) sexual and gender education, 3) reproductive rights and 4) LGBT-rights. Within each category, I defined relevant key words to use in the search engines. E.g. for 'Gender roles and family structure' I searched for words as 'family', 'women' and 'gender'. These four categories guided me in the searching process and functioned as a tool for *a priori coding* of the data into categories (Stemler, 2000, 2). However, once I had identified the data, I remained open to all passages relevant for the analysis through an *emergent coding* following the preliminary examination of the data, meaning that I will also look for categories in the data that do not necessarily match the established framework (ibid).

In terms of time frame, I wanted the data to be as recent as possible, because 1) anti-gender is a relatively new phenomenon, which have mostly developed since the 2010 and 2) the findings should be as recent as possible to contribute with insights to the current research gap in the field of RWP and gender. On the other hand, since the issue under study is quite specific, the time frame should not be too short to locate relevant debates. I decided to search in the two latest election periods of both countries. For Germany, the search period included the 19th and the current 20th term (since end 2017) and for Poland, it included the 9th and the current 10th term (since end 2019), and the last period of the 8th term to accommodate for the difference in the election periods of the countries. These conditions for the collection process were established to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. Applying the same search categories and a similar time frame will allow me to compare the findings of the cases on a reasonable ground.

Germany

The data for Germany consists of three AfD documents from their website (Appendix A-C). The first document is the party's basic programme "Programme for Germany" from 2016, which presents the party's political manifesto and general standpoint on policy issues. Furthermore, two election programmes were chosen. Their latest election programme for the Bundestag Election in 2021 "Germany, but normal", and their election programme "Rethink Europe" for the upcoming European Parliament election in June 2024. Furthermore, the data consists of eight parliamentary debates (Appendix D-K), which have all taken place in the German Bundestag in Berlin. The debates are on legislative proposals that are related to issues central to the anti-gender categories mentioned above, and the statements made by the MPs from AfD will be central in the analysis.

Poland

The data for Poland consists of two PiS documents from their website (Appendix 1-2). The first document is PiS's basic programme "Safe future of the Poles" last updated in September 2023, in which the party's political manifesto and key priorities can be found. The second document is the party's election programme from the parliamentary election in Poland in 2019. Additionally, the data for Poland consists of seven parliamentary debates (Appendix 3-9) taking place in the Polish Sejm in Warsaw. The debates are on legislative initiatives by the parliament and citizen bills also related to the anti-gender dimensions, and the statements made by the MPs from the PiS will be in focus in the analysis.

4.4 Data analysis

As its method for data analysis, this study takes inspiration in Fairclough's CDA model (1992), which will be introduced in the following. Fairclough's dialectical approach to discourse offers a concrete analytical framework in which both textual elements and social contextual elements are considered in the analysis, which fits well with the purpose of this thesis.

4.4.1 Fairclough's CDA

Fairclough has developed a dialectical theory of discourse and a transdisciplinary approach to social change in which he explores the discursive aspect of contemporary processes of social transformation. It is central to Fairclough's approach that discourse is a form of social practice, which both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities, and power relations, while at the same time is also shaped by social practices and structures (Fairclough, 1992, 63f). This implies a dialectic relationship between discourse and other social dimensions, which was elaborated in Section 3.1. Discourse contributes to the construction of social identities and subject positions, social relationships between people, and systems of knowledge and beliefs. These effects correspond to Fairclough's three functions of discourse – the identity, relational and ideational functions of language (ibid). The identity function relates to the ways in which social identities are set up in discourse, the relational function to how social relationships between discourse participants are enacted and negotiated, and the ideational function to ways in which texts signify the world and its processes, entities, and relations (ibid.).

According to Fairclough, textual analysis is not alone sufficient for discourse analysis, as it does not shed light on the links between texts and societal processes and structures. Therefore, an interdisciplinary perspective is needed in which one combines textual and social analysis. Every 'communicative event', that is the instance of language use such as a political speech, consists of three dimensions: 1) The text dimension which analyses the linguistic features of a text, 2) The discursive practice focusing on the production and consumption of text, and 3) The social practice to which the communicative event belongs (Fairclough, 1992, 73). Together these dimensions comprise Fairclough 'three-dimensional model' of discourse analysis.

The text dimension focuses on the formal features of the text from which discourses are realized. The linguistic and detailed analysis of the text will help determine the main characteristics of the discourse. Fairclough proposes several linguistic analysis tools, of which I have selected some combined with elements from Van Dijk's CDA according to their relevance for the analysis.

The discursive practice focuses on how authors of texts draw on already existing discourses and genres to create a text and how receivers also apply discourses and genres in the consumption and interpretation of these (Fairclough, 1992, 73). It is through the discursive practice that the relationship between the text and social practice is mediated (ibid, 71ff). My analysis will focus primarily on the authors' production of the text and how the parties draw upon already existing discourses, genres, and texts to create their discourse. Fairclough refers to this as *interdiscursivity*, which is a form of intertextuality that occurs when different discourses are articulated in a communicative event. Through new articulations and combinations of discourses, discursive and sociocultural change can take place (Fairclough, 1992). The concept of interdiscursivity is particularly relevant in this study since it focuses on anti-gender discourse being mobilized in the populist discourse of the parties. Therefore, it is relevant to look at how the political parties draw upon, mobilize, and combine these different discourses in the discursive practice.

The level of social practice is concerned with whether the discursive practice reproduces or restructures the existing order of discourse and about the consequences this has for the broader social practice. Fairclough highlights the need to include other social or cultural theories in this part of the analysis, as discourse alone is not sufficient to understand the wider social practice which encompasses both discursive and non-discursive elements. The level of social practice is also concerned with concepts as ideology and hegemony or put differently how the discursive practice contributes to the maintenance and transformation of power relations in society.

4.4.2 Analytical framework

The analysis will be structured in two parts and will take its inspiration in Fairclough's three-dimensional model. The analysis will be guided by the theoretical framework as well as the CDA-method to answer the problem formulation of this thesis. The first part of the analysis will combine Fairclough's textual and discursive dimensions and focus on the textual elements of the data and how these form the discursive practices. This choice was made since the two dimensions are closely interrelated, and because the analysis of linguistic features is limited due to language barriers in the translation process, making some linguistic elements irrelevant to analyse. This part of the analysis will be on a word level, analysing vocabulary, rhetorical devices, syntactic elements, and argumentation strategies, as inspired by Fairclough and Van Dijk (1992; 2010; 1997). Furthermore, I will examine if the parties draw on other discourses (interdiscursivity), particularly in relation to

populism and the concepts of “the people” and “the elite” to study how these populist characteristics participate and intertwine in the power struggle of the discursive construction of anti-gender.

The second part of the analysis will draw on the discourses found in the textual analysis and compare them in relation to the social context of the cases. More specifically, I will consider the wider context in which the discourses occur in terms of rising anti-genderism and RWP in Europe, and relevant social and political factors in Germany and Poland, which could play a role in how the discourses contribute to the maintenance and transformation of power relations. In this part of the analysis, the cases will be compared to detect similarities and differences in the discursive practices in relation to the social context, and which potential contextual elements could explain these possible findings.

5. Analysis

In the following chapter, I will present the findings of the critical discourse analysis conducted on the empirical dataset. First, the analysis of the two cases, Germany, and Poland, will be presented separately looking into textual and discursive features found in the political debates and party material in each case. Hereafter, a social practice analysis will follow comparing the findings from each case, looking into the relevant similarities and differences and their potential contextual and social explanations.

5.1 Germany

5.1.1 The German nuclear family

When looking through the AfD's party material, one particular discourse seems to be omnipresent: the traditional German family. The 'traditional family' is understood as the heterosexual married couple with children and consists of a mother, a father, and children. In their 2021 Election Programme, the party states:

(Ex. 1)

"The AfD is committed to the family as the nucleus of our society. It consists of father, mother, and children. Family means security, care, home, love, and happiness. This value and reference system is passed on from generation to generation (Appx. A, p. 104).

AfD refers to the family as "the nucleus of our society". In physics, the nucleus is the centre of an atom, and by constructing family as society's nucleus, they place family as the very core of society. The family constitutes the basis of society, and without it, like a nucleus, it would not exist. They also make it clear what this nucleus consists of: father, mother, and children. A family, according to the AfD, has a fixed structure containing traditional family patterns and gender roles. By specifically naming what a family consists of, they imply that other family models do not hold the same legitimacy and value in society, and untraditional family models, e.g. consisting of two mothers or a single parent are delegitimized. Family is also connotated with specific values: "security, care, home, love and happiness". These very positive values are directly linked to the AfD's construction of family, implying if you live in this type of family, you will get security, love, and happiness. Finally, this family model is "passed on from generation to generation", connoting the family not only with very positive values, but also values that are historically and culturally rooted. In this way, the 'traditional

family' is constructed as a historic phenomenon that has been practiced throughout generations, which makes it seem natural and self-evident.

To build its discourse around family, the AfD claims to be a “family-friendly” party that protects the traditional family with its politics (ibid). The party strives for an active family policy where family work is greater appreciated and protected by the fundamental law. They use the metaphor of an “anti-family zeitgeist” (ibid) that is currently dominating in German politics. This anti-family zeitgeist is driven by the government and other political parties, particularly the left-wing. In a parliamentary debate, MP Reichardt, states:

(Ex. 2)

“The Greens, SPD and the Left are constantly pretending to be family-friendly in order to shake the foundations of the traditional family. Let me tell you quite clearly: anyone who negates father, mother, and children as a family, is taking an axe to the foundation of our society (...) The former mainstream parties have allowed the anti-family ideology of the left-wing Greens to penetrate everything in society” (Appx. E, p. 12975).

The AfD clearly states that the promoters of such “anti-family” policies are the political left-wing parties, who are discrediting the institution of family for “ideological reasons” (Appx. A, 104). By using *pretending*, they initiate that these parties are only acting to be family-friendly, but their actual political aim is to destroy the foundation of the traditional family. When considering how the AfD frames the family as the basis of society, these parties do not only lie about being family-friendly, but they are also “taking an axe to the foundation of our society”, meaning they are destroying the entire German society. This is also implied in the word *penetrates* suggesting that their “anti-family ideology” is making its way into a core of society and destroying it. The AfD is constructing an enemy picture of anyone, who promotes other values than the traditional family values, here in particular the political left, as someone corrupt and lying, aiming to damage and ultimately destroy society. On the other hand, as a counterimage to this “anti-family zeitgeist” stands the AfD:

(Ex. 3)

“However, the institution of the family is being discredited by left-wing green parties for ideological reasons in order to replace it with other guiding principles. We, on the other hand, demand the restoration of the special protection of the family guaranteed by fundamental law.” (ibid).

The AfD constructs itself as the *real* fighter for the families and as a counterpart to the enemy, the left-wing green parties, who are discrediting the institution of the family. By using “We, on the other hand”, the AfD places itself as a clear opposite to such enemy. They construct a common identity with the German people using pronouns as “we” and “our society”, creating a sense of belongingness and group-feeling. Thus, the AfD uses a self-heroization strategy in which the party becomes the hero who can save German society from its destruction. By using the word “demand”, the AfD is portrayed as strong-willed and standing on its non-negotiable principles. They further build this position when referring to their claims as guaranteed in the “fundamental law”, and fighting for the traditional family becomes both the natural and most legally correct thing to do. Whereas those promoting different family structures are turned into “ideological fanatics”, trying to impose an “anti-family ideology” on the common population against its will.

5.1.2 Demographic catastrophe

The traditional family and the active family policy is connected to the AfD’s framing of a ‘demographic catastrophe’. The demographic challenges are portrayed by the AfD as a catastrophe and a collapse, emphasizing declining birth rates, an aging population, and a demographic fear of a shrinking population:

(Ex. 4)

“A continuation of the prevailing, family-destroying policy will further exacerbate the demographic catastrophe we have fallen into. The end result of this process will be the collapse of social security systems and ultimately our cultural identity” (Appx. A, p. 104).

What the AfD refers to as the ‘family-destroying policy’ is policies that since the 1970’s has kept Germany in a position with a low birth rate and thus a shrinking population. By using “family-destroying” as an adjective instead of an active verb, it becomes an attribute describing the policy. This takes out the action of the sentence, emphasizing “destruction” as an attribute rather than something being done. This underlines how the policy is family-destroying in essence, and the severity of the situation is made clear. Furthermore, the use of “collapse” and “catastrophe” are underscoring the dramatic, urgent, and encompassing situation. “Catastrophe” is a recurring word throughout this discourse, which is used to create a feeling of fear. The AfD argues that this demographic situation threatens Germany’s economic prosperity, cultural identity, and social cohesion: “Germany is ageing, and this has far-reaching consequences for our social systems, for our pension funds and therefore for social peace in Germany.” (Appx. F, p. 24591). According to the

AfD, if nothing is done about this catastrophe it will lead to a collapse of the social security system and the cultural identity of Germans in general. In this way, the AfD frames the declining birth rate as an existential threat to the nation and the German population. This taps into feelings of fears and anxieties about the future.

(Ex. 5)

“Germany is acutely threatened not by a climatic catastrophe, but by a demographic one, a catastrophe that will ensure that our pension, healthcare, and social security systems are on the verge of collapse. In Germany, having lots of children is now punished with poverty. Children have become a luxury good in wealthy Germany. Yet children are actually one thing above all: the most beautiful thing there is and the future of us all.” (ibid, p. 24600)

In this quote, MP Harder-Kühnel is enforcing the narrative of crisis and fear. She states that the climate is not the actual catastrophe, the demographic catastrophe is, and in this sense enlarging the issue stating that the demographic situation is worse than the climate crisis. Using words as ‘threatened’, ‘catastrophe’ and ‘verge of collapse’ creates a narrative of urgency and anxiety, highlighting the need for action to address this perceived threat. She is making use of interdiscursivity by tapping into a climate discourse and creates a clear discursive hierarchy claiming that this current demographic catastrophe is more threatening than climate change.

The solution proposed by the AfD is an “activating family policy” aimed at promoting the traditional family, supporting families financially and encouraging couples to have more children through financial benefits, making it both financially possible and morally acceptable to have more children (Appx. A, p. 105f.). The family is linked to reproduction, which is seen as the primary task of families: to have more children in order to ‘save’ Germany from a demographic decline, losing both economic competitiveness and cultural identity. ‘Children’ are used repeatedly in their political discourse and placed “at the heart of our family policy” (Appx. B, 2024), as “the most beautiful thing there is” and “our future” (Appx. F, p. 24600). Currently, children have become a “luxury good” creating a sense of scarcity in which children are not something everyone can have due to current economic and cultural restraints as mentioned. The AfD supports a “welcoming culture for newborns and unborn babies” (Appx. C, p. 44) and adopts a pro-life attitude where “abortion becomes the exception.” (Appx. B, p. 47). They frame “the right to life” as a human right and as a direct opposite to abortion, which consequently is rejected to be a human right (Appx. F, p. 24600). In this way, abortion is constructed as a violation of human rights, while the AfD becomes the protector of the defenceless, unborn children. By emphasizing children in their discourse and in particular unborn

children, they employ emotive rhetoric utilizing the innocence and vulnerability often associated with children.

The AfD is evoking the threat of a demographic catastrophe by relating it to “mass immigration”, especially from Muslim countries:

(Ex. 6)

“In order to counteract the effects of this striking demographic trend, the current governing parties are relying on continued mass immigration, mainly from Islamic countries (..) The fact that the birth rate among migrants, at more than 1.8 children, is significantly higher than among women of German descent, reinforces the ethno-cultural change in the population structure. The attempt to compensate for these developments through even more immigration harbors the risk of further parallel societies forming due to a lack of integration and chain migration, especially in the big cities. The spread of conflict-prone multi-minority societies is eroding social cohesion, mutual trust and public safety as indispensable elements of a stable community” (Appx. C, p. 42).

Accordingly, an “ethno-cultural change” in the population structure enforced by current governing parties is taking place. AfD argues that a higher birth rate among migrant women will lead to the ethnic replacement of “the native Germans”. They tap into a less dramatic discourse using words as “change” and “trend” compared to “catastrophe”. This way, they utilize an ‘expert-discourse’ in which they are referring to numbers appealing to logic and common-sense compared to emotions and which increases the credibility of the speaker. However, they turn back to utilizing a discourse driven by fear, when painting an image of dangerous “parallel societies”, which they describe as “conflict-prone multi-minority societies”. These societies are “spreading” like a disease and are a threat to social cohesion, trust, and safety as well as educational and employment standards. They employ feelings of patriotism and nationalism when constructing migrants as a threat to the ‘German identity’ and construct a clear ‘us versus them’-narrative, framing native-born Germans as ‘us’ juxtaposed to immigrants as ‘them’ and ‘the other’, who do not belong in Germany. This ethnonationalist discourse is emphasized in their family policy which must “ensure the birth rate of the native population finally rises again” (Appx. F, p. 24600). The demographic catastrophe that they construct should be solved by increasing the birth rate, however only amongst ‘native’ Germans.

5.1.3 “Feminism” and women’s rights

The AfD presents a complex and rather contradictory discourse on feminism and women’s rights, characterized by a mix of traditionalist values, anti-feminist rhetoric, and a selective engagement with

gender issues. In a debate on International Women's Day, MP Höchst, starts by thanking previous generations for the achieved women's rights:

(Ex. 7)

“Ladies and gentlemen, a reflection on World Women's Day, an achievement from times when feminism was still [politically] left – let's look back: our great-grandmothers' generation gave us the overdue right to vote as women. The generation of our grandmothers rebuilt Germany. They have given us back our homeland. They raised their children themselves, mostly on the side, without help or support.

The generation of our mothers has also made a big difference for us women. They have brought us the great freedom to be employed – without the permission of the man. They have brought us the self-determination and taught us to be master over our own bodies. They have truly enabled us to have equal rights as guaranteed by the constitution.

And our generation? Well, we will go down in the history books as smoke-blowers and women's-pseudo-liberators if we continue like this, because you bring intellectual stagnation and social paralysis through gender-equality-totalitarianism.” (Appx. D, p. 1386).

In her speech, she represents gender equality as something already achieved in Germany by past generations. She thanks her grandmothers' generation for giving women the right to vote and her mothers' generation for entering the labour market, indirectly stating that this is what gender equality entails. Describing the fight for equality as successfully concluded in the past, she uses in the following argument questioning “our generation's” participation. While initially she includes herself by using “we”, it is clearly “you” (the other political parties) which she sees as the supporters of “gender-equality-totalitarianism” and as “women's-pseudo-liberators”. She creates a “them” consisting of the political elite pretending to be liberators of women, but “they” actually promote a totalitarian idea of gender equality. Five years later, at the same occasion, MP Harder-Kühnel, similarly states that: “Women have equal rights. Women are entitled to vote and there is no structural discrimination against women” (Appx. G, p. 11069). Gender equality is constructed as a concept that entails equal rights between man and woman, while structural discrimination and gendered power imbalances in society as a part of equality are dismissed. The AfD even claims that structural discrimination of women is non-existent, like a “yeti that nobody has seriously seen” (Appx. D, p. 1387). By comparing discrimination to a mythical creature, discrimination of women is diminished and compared to something imaginary.

The AfD constructs a narrative around women being commodified by neoliberal forces and “a godless zeitgeist” (Appx. J, p. 20267) which blackmails and forces women into employment: “They celebrate women in the labour market as an achievement. This is no longer the case. Their policies are forcing women into employment.” (Appx. D, p. 1386). Using “forcing” underscores that it is not a free choice, but something “they” (the other political parties) are making women do against their will. “Zeitgeist” is used repeatedly in the discourse of AfD, invoked to highlight various negative notions of contemporary society, here in relation to neoliberalism. In the same line, the AfD opposes gender quotas, stating that:

(Ex. 8)

“Women don't want to be degraded to the status of ridiculed quota-women, and women don't need the state to patronize them in their personal lives either (Appx. J, p. 20262)

The party frames quotas as something “ridiculing” and “patronizing” women, while gender quotas are otherwise typically associated with increasing women’s representation. Quotas are, according to AfD, a political tool to mock and patronize women, keeping them in a structural disadvantageous position, and such tools promoted by “the state” allegedly fostering equal status are actually violating women and equal rights. Indirectly they state that women do not need quotas to be successful in their work life (if they want to work) and hereby with their anti-quota policy presents themselves as the *true* champion of women’s rights. Without directly stating to be feminist, the AfD creates what Sprengholz (2021) coins a ‘post-feminist heartland’, in which equal rights between “naturally different women and men” have long been achieved, and in which the AfD claims to be feminist and at the same time maintains its conservative stance on women and the family. This is also evident when Höchst states “You brought the quota and are destroying the reputation of millions of free, self-determined women (...) We don’t need your paternalism, we don’t need your relief, and we don’t need your extra encouragement. We can do it on our own” (Appx. D, p. 1386f). She creates the picture of a “you” destroying women’s reputation and self-sufficiency, and a “we”, the independent and free women, whom she herself is a part of and whom the AfD supports. By using “paternalism”, she emphasizes that “you” (the government) are utilizing their power to decide over women. Hereby, the AfD constructs a feminist identity, claiming to defend women’s rights.

However, this “feminist” position of the AfD contradicts with its notion of traditional family structures and heteronormative gender roles. While claiming to be promoters of free choice

and women's equal rights, they are also advocating for the 'natural' differences between woman and man, and women's 'natural' desire to be a mother, which is currently being undermined:

(Ex. 9)

“The zeitgeist corrupts women into beings who kill the grace of their ability to give life, to unite family and society, to create peace and love. As a result, women are increasingly alienated from their natural essence of seeking fulfilment in the role of mother in the first place. A scandal for humanity! The woman's meaningful longing for her identity as a mother is called into question.”

(Appx. J, p. 20267)

MP Höchst reasons that women's natural choice to be a mother and a housewife are discredited by current society and made economically impossible by government policies. She uses very positive phrases as “grace to give life”, “unite family” and “create peace and love” to frame women's position as mothers as the only natural thing and the only place for them to find fulfilment. However, society's “zeitgeist” is corrupting women away from their 'natural' identity and instead forcing them into employment. She constructs an identity of ‘women as mothers’ and other choices such as career are not only discredited, but directly unnatural to women. In this construction, being a woman means being a mother – “with a family, with children, in the classic, traditional way” (ibid, p. 20263). When AfD claims to defend women's free choice, they refer to the free choice of becoming a mother and starting a family. This portrayal of women is contradictory with the party's feminist claims, as the party on the one hand claims to fight for women and their free choice, but at the other remain solid in their construction of what a ‘real’ woman is (a mother). In this way, the party's feminist claims construct a reality that is mixed with their conservative view on women and traditional gender roles.

5.1.4 Gender ideology and the threat to the German people

The notion of “gender ideology” is central in the political discourse of AfD and is featured in several policy areas, most prominent in education and family policies. “Gender ideology” is constructed as a threat operating on different levels and appealing to different anxieties, which will be elaborated in the following. In the party's basic programme, it defines the concept of “gender ideology” as “marginalizing natural differences between the sexes and thus counteracting traditional values and specific gender roles in families” (Appx. C, p. 55). This reveals that the AfD views man and woman as naturally different with specific roles to fill in the family, and gender ideology aims to marginalize these differences. “Gender ideology” is also perceived as a threat to the ‘natural development’ of children (ibid.):

(Ex. 10)

“Children should grow up free from indoctrination (..) Political ideologies, such as gender mania and climate hysteria are already being introduced to children at pre-school age (..) Political influence is often accompanied by early sexualization in the sense of “diverse” gender roles. The “sexual education of diversity” attempts to unsettle children with regard to their sexual identity and to dissolve gender roles. This massively disrupts their development” (Appx. A, p. 113-14)

According to the AfD, introducing “gender ideology” in sex education, in terms of gender diversity and sexuality, leads to an early sexualization of children and inhibit the natural development of their own sexual identity. The party calls it “indoctrination” of children, which is a negatively loaded word in which children are brainwashed into believing a set of ideas relation to the “political ideology” of gender. They relate gender and climate to each other by stating that these are “political ideologies”, meaning a set of ideas that you can believe in or not. By using “mania” and “hysteria” to describe them, they are perceived as extreme and obsessive. Here, a notion of fear is constructed when placing emphasis on children, who are presented as victims of this deliberate policy to introduce education on gender diversity and promote non-heteronormative lifestyles.

(Ex. 11)

When you see pictures online today of young people who have had a sex change operation performed on them with a scalpel, these frightened, unhappy faces of mutilated children treated with puberty blockers, you are seeing modern human sacrifices offered up on the altar of gender ideology.” (Appx. H, p.16301)

This example underlines how the party is using emotive language to construct fear of “gender ideology”. MP Frömmerling presents a scenario of what happens if children are allowed to change their gender. By giving a concrete example of a sex change operation, he constructs an image with vivid details as the scalpel. Using “performed on them” in a passive voice creates focus on the subject in the sentence, the children, rather than the action, which underlines the importance of children in the sentence. The children are constructed as “frightened, “unhappy” and “mutilated”, and he is creating a strong picture of them as “human sacrifices offered up on the altar of gender ideology”, presenting children as innocent victims and someone who must be protected.

Furthermore, the party also advocates for a cut to the funding of gender studies in universities and the abolishment of gender equality officers, both of which they argue is based on this false and dangerous ideology (Appx. A, p. 154). In a motion presented by the AfD called “Gender Ideology – averting

dangers from education, science and culture “, MP Frömming makes a speech in which he constructs the notions of “gender ideology”.

(Ex. 12)

”For some years now, another pseudo-science has been on the rise at our universities. Today we are talking about so-called gender research, although in this context the word "research" is still a gross euphemism. (...) The entire gender ideology, ladies and gentlemen, is based on the thesis, first formulated by Judith Butler, that gender, including biological gender, can be freely chosen or - more precisely - constructed. (...) Gender ideology is one of the current masks of Marxism. You could also put it this way: It is the theology of wokeness. It has nothing to do with medicine or science, ladies and gentlemen.”

Scientists, ladies and gentlemen, are actually concerned with what is. Gender ideologists are only interested in what should be. (...) The gender ideologists don't care about the mental health of our children either. Biological facts are now even being distorted in school textbooks. Ladies and gentlemen, we have to put an end to this. Universities must return to ideology-free research and teaching. School education must return to value-neutral and age-appropriate knowledge transfer based on factual findings on human reproduction. Gender is dangerous, manipulative, unscientific nonsense.” (Appx. H, p. 16301-02)

First, he constructs a narrative of gender studies as a “pseudoscience”, and these university programmes as unscientific and a threat to scientific freedom. Gender research, which is a promotor of “gender ideology”, is consequently constructed as a political and ideological project, forcing certain ideologies and values onto the people, and in particular children. Gender ideologists are accordingly only interested in “what should be” and become juxtaposed to the notion of *real* science, which is concerned with “what is”, “medicine”, and “biological facts”. Judith Butler becomes the personification of this ideology, being the founder of the socially constructed gender, which AfD strongly opposes. The AfD states that “Gender is a biological fact. The human species consists of two sexes, the male, and the female” (Appx. A), and gender ideology is denying this basic fact. Stating that gender ideology is “the theology of wokeness”, the AfD underlines that it is a belief rather than a science, related to wokeness. “Woke” is originally understood as being aware of social inequality and injustice, however here it is used with negative connotations as an umbrella term for progressive values, changing the meaning of the word. Furthermore, “gender ideology” is framed as a “mask of Marxism”, implying that gender ideologists have a certain hidden agenda in their ‘political project’ ultimately trying to destroy the traditional family as the building block of society (Appx. H, p. 16302).

“Promoting” other sexualities in education is seen as a threat to the natural sexual order, the mental health of children, the biological notion of gender and the traditional family with the aim of producing children, as presented earlier in this chapter. They claim that the acceptance of non-heterosexual partnerships will lead to the automatic decline of family life, and in a broader sense to the German state, due to the demographic crisis and low birth rate of the German people. This scenario evokes the feeling of threat to the German culture and allows the AfD to present itself as the protector of “ordinary” people and the children against this dangerous ideology imposed by “woke leftists” and other elites. “Gender” itself as a concept becomes a threat, stating that it is “dangerous, manipulative, and unscientific”. This is also evident in several cases, when the AfD chooses to use the English word “gender” instead of “Geschlecht” in German, which underlines that it is foreign and unnatural as well as a term being imposed on the “the people” by external forces.

5.1.5 Anti-LGBT

The LGBT-movement and non-heteronormative gender roles are part of what the AfD constructs as “gender ideology”, aimed at demolishing traditional gender roles, the family, and ultimately the German nation. In particular, transsexual people are being ridiculed and portrayed as dangerous in the discourse of AfD. During a debate on the draft law on self-determination regarding sex registration, MP Reichardt, makes a statement:

(Ex. 13)

“Let us imagine that Chancellor Scholz was to wear a 19th century French Guards Grenadier uniform to his next government statement and declare that he is Napoleon and would like to be addressed as Chancellor Napoleon in future. (...) Nobody in this house would think that Mr. Scholz would have the right to change his papers to "Napoleon Scholz" on his birth certificate and be referred to as "Chancellor Napoleon" just because he imagines it and wears a uniform (..) But this is exactly what the so-called self- determination law wants to do in relation to gender. Your law would basically be unintentionally funny if it weren't so tragic, but above all dangerous. It would be funny because it basically shows the infantilisation of the current political mainstream.” (Appx. K, p. 21094)

In this statement, Reichardt narrates a story about Olaf Scholz, the German Chancellor, claiming to be Napoleon, because he wears a wig and a uniform. This story is compared to the proposed law that allows people to change their gender identity more easily. Reichardt uses storytelling appealing to people’s emotions and imagination. In this story, he is clearly making use of irony when creating a

story that seems absurd and ridiculous, indirectly referring to the proposed law as the same. Transsexuality is indirectly ridiculed, insulted and reduced to simply putting on a costume or wearing a wig. The word “imagines” implies that transsexuality and other non-heterosexual gender identities are only imaginary and not related to reality. Also, he uses a hyperbole “countless gender” to underline his point that various gender identities are unnecessary and ridiculous. Finally, he constructs a clear “you”, the promotor of this “funny yet dangerous” law, which is the political mainstream, which the AfD is *not* a part of.

(Ex. 14)

“A man does not become a woman when he puts on a wig and a clichéd low-cut dress (..) A woman doesn't become a man if she cuts her hair a little shorter, walks with her legs a little wider and says: "Well, now I'm a man. A man or a woman does not become something completely different when they declare themselves to belong to one of the newly invented countless genders. This is all ideological nonsense, ladies, and gentlemen.” (ibid)

According to Reichardt, it is not possible to change whether you are a man or a woman through your appearance. This reveals a notion of gender that is bound to biological terms and not to actions and appearance. He is creating an oversimplified and stereotypical picture of women with long hair and “low-cut dress” and of men with short hair and walking with their legs wide. This type of biased language indirectly discriminate transgender people, who have a gender identity that differs from their biological sex. MP von Storch compares gender to age and height stating that: “You can no more change your gender than you can change your age or height” (Appx. I, p. 17208). She aligns gender to age and height, which are bound in biological facts, and frame gender in the same notion, as a biological characteristic that cannot be changed. Overall, the complex decision leading up to changing your gender is here ridiculed and degraded into simply wearing a wig, a dress or cutting your hair, hereby strongly delegitimizing LGBT-issues. They are simplifying a very complex issue to which they offer simple solutions.

The self-determination law is framed as an “obligation to lie”, “absurd” “totalitarian”, and the “symbiosis of gender gaga and North Korea” by MP von Storch (ibid). The law is not only funny, but also tragic and dangerous, implying that the proposing parties are not only out of touch with reality, but also but also imposing a dangerous law on people and children. (ibid). Because biological gender is the truth, “they” (the proposing parties) are deniers of reality and lying, while the AfD tries to

protect the people from the “publicly funded translobby” (ibid). Children are also used in the discourse as someone that must be protected from this “normalization of transsexuality”.

(Ex. 15)

“Only around 400 people nationwide had registered as diverse by February 2021. This corresponds to 0.00047 percent of the population.” (Appx. H, p. 16302)

Also, the AfD is using a strategy of downplaying the issues in relation to transsexuality and LGBT. By stating the number of people who have registered as diverse and that it corresponds to only 0.00047% of the population, they are highlighting that this law only accommodates a very small part of the population. The other political parties, the “translobby”, represent a very small minority in the population with a dangerous and ridiculous law, while the AfD presents itself as the voice of the common people and the majority, advocating common-sense. Hereby, “they” are prioritizing a very small group at the expense of the majority of the population, whose mental health and gender identities they are endangering and jeopardizing. The AfD appears as the common-sense party who stands up for the general people against the out-of-touch liberal elites.

5.2 Interdiscursivity

The anti-gender discourse of the AfD is influenced by other hegemonic discourses within the social order, some of which are briefly mentioned above. In relation to the topic, it is particularly relevant to investigate deeper its intersection with populist discourse, which will be elaborated in the following.

5.2.1 Populist discourse

Several elements from a populist discourse are reproduced and included by the AfD. Populist discourse is characterized by the juxtaposing of “the people” and “the elite”, in which “the people” is constructed as a large powerless group in opposition to “the elite” conceived as a small and illegitimately powerful group that fails to represent the ordinary people (De Cleen & Stavarakis, 2017, 310). This juxtaposition is evident throughout the textual analysis of the data. First of all, in the use of pronouns such as “we” and “us” versus “you”, “they” and “them”, which creates a clear ‘us vs. them’-dichotomy. “We” is used to refer to the AfD itself and their policies, but also to the common people, whom the AfD stands up for.

“The elite” is portrayed as a detached and privileged group that holds disproportionate power and influence in society. The elite is depicted as a homogenous entity, composed of political,

cultural, and academic elites, all disconnected from the concerns of the ordinary citizens. The elite is defined in many different terms and is referred to as the government, as the EU, as the left-wing parties and as gender ideologists, but they are all grouped in the same 'elitist' entity, ignoring the will of the people and imposing ideological policies on the people against its will.

"The people" is constructed in ethnonationalist terms, referring to "the native population" and "we Germans" (Appx. F, p. 24600). The party appeals to nationalist sentiments and cultural identity, framing "the native Germans" as the rightful heirs to Germany's cultural heritage and traditions. "The people" are victims of the government's immigration policy, which allows immigrants, in particular with Muslims backgrounds, into the country together with "violence and misogyny" (ibid, p. 24591), "rape and murder" (Appx. G, p. 11069), "structural discrimination of women" and "an Islamized federal state of Germany" (Appx. D, p. 1387). The immigrants are portrayed as a threat to the German culture and the 'native' German population, and the government is constructed as the powerful actor whose answer to the alleged demographic crisis is "immigration instead of children" (Appx. F, p. 24591). The AfD on the other hand, with their family-friendly policy, presents itself as the protector of the German population and heritage.

"The people" is also constructed as 'the common people', in which an underlying critique of the dominant culture and the political elite is present. In this construction, the "elite" refers to "woke leftists with their identity politics" (Appx. G, p. 11069), "the translobby" (Appx. I, p. 17208) and "gender ideologists" who are trying to introduce "gender mania", gender mainstreaming and gender-neutral language as tools to undermine traditional family values, normative gender roles and national identity. Gender ideology is framed as emblematic of the elites' perceived detachment from the concerns of "ordinary citizens", and LGBT-rights and feminism are manifestations of this elitist agenda imposed on the people by politicians and cultural elites. The AfD portrays itself as the defender of traditional gender norms and the nuclear family against a radical and dangerous agenda of elitist gender ideologists.

5.2.2 Femonationalist discourse

A femonationalist discourse is also included and reproduced in AfD's discourse. Femonationalism refers to the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-Islam and anti-immigration campaigns under the banner of gender equality (Farris, 2017, 4). Feminist and nationalist arguments come together to call for anti-immigration, xenophobic, and assimilationist policies, often connected to the right-wing agenda. The AfD employs a femonationalist discourse, stating that

increased immigration, in particular from Muslim countries, has resulted in the lack of protection for women and girls in Germany. The party presents itself as the true defender of women's rights and uses feminist arguments to justify its anti-Islam and anti-immigration policies, which are framed as measures to protect women from a patriarchal and oppressive culture imported into the country.

(Ex.16)

“Instead, they should focus on what really threatens women: mass migration from culturally unfamiliar areas where women simply count for less. That is what threatens the freedom and safety of women in Germany (...) Deporting them, securing borders, punishing rapists with the full force of the law – that would be the best gift you could give women in Germany for Women's Day” (Appx. G, p. 11069-70)

In particular Muslim immigrants, is connotated with “rape”, “female genital mutilation” “child marriages”, and “honour killings” (Appx. D, p. 1387) and such feminist concerns are used to fuel fear about cultural “otherness” and an “Islamized federal state of Germany” (ibid) and to justify deportation of immigrants deemed as threat to women's freedom and safety. The party thus exploits gender equality and feminism as a legitimization for their xenophobic and Islamophobic agenda.

5.3 Poland

5.3.1 The traditional Polish family

‘The family’ in the Law and Justice Party's (PiS) discourse is constructed as the cornerstone of society and the Polish national identity. The family discourse is characterized by the party's traditionalist, conservative and nationalist social values, emphasizing the family based on the partnership between a man and a woman, as well as traditional gender roles with men as providers and women as caregivers. In the party's principal programme, it states:

(Ex. 17)

“The basic, most important social cell of which one is a member is the family. It is based on the permanent union of a man and a woman. The family is responsible for the upbringing of man, the formation of one's personhood, the transmission of values to them and the satisfaction of their particularly important needs. It is in it that children are born, through which the basic condition for the continuity of humanity - the continuity of generations - is realized. The family, in its monogamous and permanent form, is impossible to replace, and thus constitutes the foundation of our civilization.” (Appx. 2, p. 14)

The family is constructed as the most important “social cell” in society and as the basis of the Polish society. It is the primary institution who is responsible for the upbringing of children, including transmission of values and formation of the personality. In this regard, it is interesting to note the “transmission of values”, which implies a generational perspective on the notion of family; that a family is responsible for passing on certain values from generation to generation, and hence these values are long-standing and bound in tradition. The ‘traditional family’ is thus an institution rooted in historic and cultural values of Poland and this family-type is the natural way to structure a family. The PiS also constructs very clearly what ‘family’ means. First, it is the permanent union of man and woman, which reveals a binary understanding of gender consisting of only male and female, and a heteronormative understanding of partnerships and family. In this way, other forms of partnerships that are non-heterosexual are indirectly marginalized and delegitimized. ‘A union’ indicates marriage, which due to the party’s close ties to the Catholic church, implies a religious marriage. The religious framing is further strengthened, when the union is framed as “monogamous and permanent”, values of a partnership associated with religion that emphasizes the permanence of marriage and the discouragement of divorce. Finally, the family is also constructed in a civilizational sense, stating that it “constitutes the foundation of our civilization” and thus is necessary for the Polish society to persist. The traditional family is framed in a reproductive sense, in which children are born and thus a necessary condition for the ‘continuity of humanity’. Without ‘the family’, Poland would simply not withstand in the long term according to PiS.

(Ex. 18)

“Family is our home on earth. Family is the most precious gift one can experience in life. Family is our refuge in the storm, our safe haven. Family is where love begins and never ends. Three times yes to a family consisting of mom, dad, children. And if multigenerational families under one roof, with grandma and grandpa still returning, it would be complete happiness. Amen”
(Appx. 9, p. 264)

PiS employs strong emotive and figurative language in constructing the family and evoke sentiments of solidarity and pride around the idea of the family as a sacred institution. ‘Family’ is linked to words as ‘home’, ‘precious gift’, ‘refuge in the storm’, ‘safe haven’, ‘happiness’ and ‘love’, which are all very positive. If you live a traditional family life, you will be sure to have such positive values, according to PiS. This portrayal is romanticized and nostalgic, emphasizing the role of the family as the primary source of social stability, cohesion, and intergenerational continuity. Finally, by ending the speech with “Amen”, the religious undertones are underscored again.

In the political discourse of PiS, an image of the traditional family under threat is also constructed, referring to “the crisis of the family” (Appx. 7, p. 51) and “an object of political struggle” (Appx. 1, p. 11).

(Ex. 19)

“The Law and Justice Party will resolutely defend the natural family, in this shape and understanding, which has characterized Western civilization for centuries. Today's world promotes many ideologies aimed at destroying this basic social cell. We have opposed these efforts and will continue to do so, while at the same time taking steps to strengthen the family, defend parenthood, the special role of the mother and respect for motherhood.” (Appx. 2, p. 14)

The PiS uses “the natural family” throughout their discourse with the heteronormative family structure as presented above. Using “natural” implies that it lies within nature that man and woman constitute a family. Other forms of families are delegitimized and not part of ‘the family’ that PiS connotes with positive values or the family it wants to protect. The PiS constructs “the natural family” in a position that needs defence against what they refer to as “ideologies” destroying the family as the basis of society. What these ideologies entail is not further elaborated, but they are portrayed as something imposed by “today’s world”, and the threat is constructed as stemming from modern, external forces, undermining the stability of the traditional Polish family. Such ideologies aim to dismantle traditional gender roles, weaken family ties, and promote individualism. The notion of fear is installed, as the erosion of the traditional family will ultimately lead to social decay, moral degeneration, and the breakdown of social order, and as such it is an existential threat to Polish identity and cultural sovereignty. In this narrative, PiS is placing itself as the resolute defender of the family, fighting against efforts to erode it, through their family policies that aims to financially and morally strengthen families, parenthood, and mothers (Appx.1). In this way, they are creating a notion of an ‘ingroup’ consisting of Polish traditional families (and the PiS), which the party aims to protect against an external enemy, creating a sense of a shared identity with the Polish people. Since the family is the foundation for the continuation of Polish culture and society, the PiS, by defending the family, is ultimately defending Poland from “ideologies” being imposed by modern forces. The protection of families is bound in the Polish Constitution, and the PiS positions itself upholding and fighting for these constitutional rights (ibid, p. 212). Referring to Polish law brings a weight to their argumentation and strengthens the PiS’s legitimacy and position as a sender.

5.3.2 Reproductive rights

The discourse of PiS is also characterized by a strong focus on reproductive rights, in particular abortion. The discourse on abortion is built around the party's strong pro-life attitude, life protection from conception, and the dignity of people.

(Ex. 20)

“Life is a fundamental right of every human being. (...). This is the right that every human being deserves (...) Abortion is not a woman's right, it is a death penalty for non-guilty children. There is no consent to it. There are a lot of women, who regard motherhood as a gift and the child as a miracle from God” (Appx. 4, p. 73-74)

The pro-life discourse is constructed around the notion of the right to life as a fundamental human right. According to PiS, a child is a human being from conception, and the life formed in this moment is subject to protection under the Constitutional Law (Appx. 9, p. 157) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ibid, p. 192). The unborn child is portrayed as vulnerable and defenceless and are made human by describing it with human characteristics as eye colour and hair colour (ibid, p. 189) as well as “with its whole life ahead of it”. This child won't go to kindergarten, to school, know its friends or meet its first love” (ibid, p. 178). In this way, PiS is evoking strong feelings in relation to children when outlining a possible life story for them, which is taken away with abortion. Being pro-life equals to safeguarding human dignity and protecting the rights of the most vulnerable members of society. In contrast, abortion is pictured as “murder”, “pure evil”, “death and suffering” and “killing of another human” (ibid, p. 173;176). Abortion is portrayed as a grave moral and ethical issue, even being compared to “the death penalty of non-guilty children” and euthanasia (ibid, p. 157), and thus as incompatible with Polish culture and catholic tradition. Supporters of the legalization of abortion, referred to as ‘abortionists’ and ‘the liberal left’, are supporting “the spread of the civilization of death in Europe” (ibid, 196). Abortionists are even compared to Adolf Hitler and his eugenic policies during World War II (Appx. 9, p. 184). In Poland during Nazi occupation, forced abortions were part of the broader campaign of population control and racial engineering, where marginalized groups were victims of forced sterilizations and abortions to eliminate what they considered “undesirable” genetic traits in the population (David et al., 1988, 100ff.). By referring to Nazism, abortion is compared to one of the darkest periods in history, particularly in Poland, where millions of Poles, in particular Polish Jews, were killed in concentration camps. In this way, the PiS is constructing a fearmongering image by comparing legalizing abortion to Nazism occupation, and hereby constructing pro-abortion parties as horrible and immoral. They make use of a clear ‘us versus them’-rhetoric, in which ‘they’,

the ones in favour of abortion, are murdering unborn children, and ‘we’, PiS themselves and other pro-life actors, are positioned as guardians of moral principles, human dignity and the rights of unborn, vulnerable children. It is constructed in a ‘death vs. life’-dichotomy, in which PiS encourages everyone to take a stance and “stand up for death or for life” (Appx. 4, p. 67).

Furthermore, the PiS is strongly rejecting the notion of abortion as a woman’s right, which is a general argument invoked in abortion discussions typically by pro-abortion actors.

(Ex. 21)

“I do not agree as a woman to say that ladies who demand free access to abortion are fighting for women's rights. Killing another human being cannot be a right, and half of the aborted children are girls, they too are women. So we are talking about free access to killing other women (...) I think that you ladies are misusing the words: fighting for women's rights. You are not fighting for women's rights, you are fighting to kill them” (Appx. 9, p. 173)

In this example, female MP van Heukelom is using her position as a woman to argue that women who demand access to abortion are not fighting for women’s rights, they are killing them. By stating that she is a woman herself, she constructs her position as trustworthy and knowledgeable about women and what is best for them. She argues that when you kill an unborn child, girls are being killed too, meaning that those advocating for abortion are combatting women’s rights. “Women’s rights” are turned into the rights of the unborn children and not the living, pregnant women. In this way, PiS positions itself as the actual fighter for women’s rights, because they are fighting for unborn children. PiS is employing interdiscursivity by using a “human rights”-discourse, which is also present in the “right to life” as mentioned. Here, abortion is not a human right nor a woman’s right, because it equals to killing another human being. The right to life, on the other hand, is the most important human right there is. If it comes to a “conflict of goods” which relates to the welfare of the unborn child and the welfare of the woman, “the welfare of the developing child prevails” (ibid, 158). PiS positions itself on the side of the children. Even though, directly stating that an unborn child’s wellbeing is more important than the woman’s, the PiS still manages to construct a narrative in which they are fighting for women’s rights, because “women’s rights” relate to these innocent children and not to the pregnant women. In this way, they are distorting the original meaning of women’s rights and producing a new meaning of the term in their discourse.

5.3.3 Women and gender equality

In the political discourse of PiS, there is an interesting focus on women, their role in society and gender equality. Women are first and foremost viewed through the prism of the family. As mentioned

previously PiS emphasizes the importance of the traditional family with traditional gender roles and values. In this construction, women are primarily seen as mothers and caregivers, and as essential to maintaining social stability and morality. The PiS advocates for the protection of pregnant women and mothers and claim to be defenders of “the special role of the mother and respect for motherhood, which should be treated not as a burden, but as a distinction and privilege” (Appx. 1, p. 11).

(Ex. 22)

”I want to begin by thanking all women, mothers for welcoming each new life and raising the children born. Do we have an excess of births in Poland? No. Is one of the biggest problems facing Poland today and in the future a declining fertility rate? Yes.” (Appx. 9, p. 183)

In this statement, being a woman is equivalent to being a mother. By thanking “all women, mothers”, it implies that being a woman means being a mother, and it is in this role that a woman’s potential is fulfilled. The role of women is further strengthened, when MP Kurowski continues to thank women for welcoming new life and raising children, emphasizing that this is the primary function of women in society. She uses a reproduction-discourse, in which women are framed as the solution to the declining birth and fertility rate. She creates the notion of crisis by implying this as “one of the biggest problems facing Poland”, and women play a key role being responsible for welcoming new children. This construction of women reveals a notion of traditional gender roles, in which women are the primary caregivers and responsible for children.

However, while women are primarily viewed as mothers and caregivers, the PiS also pays attention to women’s empowerment in the workplace and in politics. In its 2019 election programme, the party spends almost three pages discussing gender equality in the workplace, paying particular attention to the elimination of the gender pay gap (Appx. 1, p. 62-64). PiS underlines the important role Polish women have had in the development and existence of Poland, both in terms of their pedagogical tasks at home, but also in the economic and political life. PiS is highlighting that “women and men have always been beautifully different and complementary at the same time. There are many biological, psychological, and social characteristics that account for the fundamental gender difference between men and women” (ibid), revealing the party’s notion of gender as a binary construction, consisting of two genders, male and female. According to PiS, there are natural and fundamental differences between the two genders, which should and could not be changed. However, they state that these “natural differences” should not translate into difference in earnings, and the party advocates that such gap in wages should be eliminated (ibid). “Gender equality” is first and foremost constructed in a binary notion as the equality between man and woman. Other genders are

therefore excluded. Furthermore, it is constructed as something to be achieved in the workplace by ensuring equal pay and does not include other notions of equality such as structural barriers or discriminatory practices in society. While the party presents liberal, feminist claims to eliminate the gender pay gap, at the same time it voices anti-feminist claims by dismissing the consequences of unequal power relations and systemic gender discrimination, which could hinder women's equal participation in the labour market, minimize the issue of gender equality to an issue of equal pay, and construct women primarily as mothers.

While advocating for equal pay and women's access to a professional career, PiS underlines that workplaces must take into consideration parents, in particular women, "who are most likely to take responsibility for family life", and mother's domestic work should be treated equally to professional work (ibid, p. 64). Also, the party has implemented several family programmes, in which families receive financial support for having several children and pension benefits are offered to mothers who raise four or more children. So, while the party constructs a narrative of women who should have equal opportunities in employment, they oppositely state that their primary role is within the family as mothers and caregivers, implying that this is where women truly belong. The construction of the PiS's 'feminist' position is a complex mix with its conservative and traditionalist views on women and gender roles, as well as implicit anti-feminist undertones.

5.3.4 Gender ideology

The concept of "gender ideology" is present in the discourse of PiS, and they employ the concept in debates concerning family, education, domestic violence, and LGBT. Overall, "gender ideology" is constructed as a threat to Polish society: family, children, parenthood, and the nation in general (Appx. 2, p. 14-15). "Gender ideology" is depicted as a foreign ideology which does not fit with Polish culture and values, and PiS claims that its promoters are the left-wing parties, LGBT-organizations, and the EU. Gender ideology is a "Western import" imposed by institutions as the EU and poses a threat to Poland's sovereignty and national identity.

(Ex. 23)

"The family has become an object of political struggle. Attempts are being made to radically change its nature (...) Also dangerous to the family and parenthood in Poland is the spread of gender ideology. Its spread is artificial, conditioned primarily by streams of funding, much of it external. Nevertheless, its influence is growing (...) and contributes to the growth of attitudes that are not conducive to starting a family and having children" (Appx. 1, p. 11)

In this statement, gender ideology is spreading as a dangerous threat to the family and parenthood. Using “the spread” implies an idea of a ‘disease spreading’ as well as an intentional action by someone, and gender ideology is thus constructed here as a disease that external forces are intentionally spreading in Poland, which evokes notions of fear and anxiety. Furthermore, PiS describes it as “artificial” as opposed to the “nature of the family” contributing an antagonistic relation between ‘gender ideology’ and ‘the family’. This is further underlined when PiS argues that it causes attitudes that are not encouraging starting a family”, underlining it as a clear opposite to the family.

According to PiS gender ideology manifests in different areas, one of the primary manifestations being The Istanbul Convention, which is the Council of Europe’s Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CoE, 2024). According to PiS, the convention is a product of gender ideology. They argue that the convention is founded in “ideological principles” aimed at undermining traditional family values and gender roles and promoting liberal social agendas such as LGBT and gender constructivism.

(Ex. 24)

“Today in the Sejm, citizens are saying "yes" to the family, "no" to the sick leftist ideologies that spoil the family, the social and constitutional order in Poland. And your manipulation is that you are pretending to fight domestic violence, because the Istanbul Convention does not protect victims of domestic violence (...) This is your manipulation, that you are trying to create the image that there is some violence in a traditional, normal Catholic family. This is your biggest lie (...) We have introduced an anti-violence law which really helps victims of violence (...) Because that is the most important thing. To help victims of violence, not to promote a sick ideology (Appx. 5, p. 244)

PiS refers to the citizens who signed a civic bill “yes to family, no to gender”, and creates a common identity with the people, in which the PiS is the voice of the people, who together are saying no to gender and its harm on Polish culture. Opposing the convention and its “sick left ideologies”, the PiS positions itself as a protector of the people and their interests. It is not evident how many citizens they are referring to but using “citizens” in a broad term makes it seem like a large number and therefore as a wish of the Polish citizens in general to oppose the convention. The convention is framed not only as spoiling the family but also the social and constitutional order in Poland. The PiS claims that the convention is not in accordance with Polish Constitutional Law, because it questions marriage as a union of man and woman as well as traditional gender roles, which are protected by Polish law (ibid, p. 236; 244). Furthermore, the PiS is constructing a clear enemy as an opposite to itself and ‘the people’. The pronouns “you” and “your” refer to the other political parties, in particular on the left,

who ratified the convention and brought “manipulation” and “lies”. PiS constructs an enemy picture in which these parties are lying and manipulating the people into believing that the convention protects victims of violence, while, according to the PiS, it does not. This implies that these parties do not have the best interest of the Poles at heart and are only interested in promoting a “sick ideology” and not protecting victims of violence. The supporters of the convention are also constructed as destroying faith and all aspects of Polish culture (ibid, p. 261).

Finally, they bring in a religious discourse, stating that other parties are claiming that violence takes place in catholic families. Once again, the convention and its supporters are framed as attacking the Polish traditional family and here in particular the catholic family. According to PiS, domestic violence does simply not take place in a catholic family, and both religion and the family is seen as a shield against violence. Finally, as a backing of their argumentation, PiS, referring to itself as “we” in contrast to ‘the enemy’, mentions the anti-violence law the party has introduced, which according to PiS actually helps the victims as opposed to the convention. PiS positions itself as someone who cares about these victims and is interested in combating violence, instead of promoting gender ideology, which they claim is the goal of ‘the others’. Furthermore, they delegitimize the convention by stating that Poland already has the highest standard of an anti-violence law, and the convention is thereby superfluous and unnecessary.

5.3.5 Sex education

Another aspect in which gender ideology manifests, according to PiS, is in sex education in schools. Here, LGBT-groups, NGOs and other ‘gender ideologists’ are trying to impose notions of socio-cultural gender and non-heterosexual orientations on innocent children. PiS argues that such topics are contrary to Polish cultural and religious norms, as well as demoralizing and disturbing towards children’s emotional and intellectual development (Appx. 4, p. 63).

(Ex. 25)

“In view of the strenuous attempts by some political forces and destructive social groups to introduce programs for the sexualization of children and adolescents into school classes and their free demoralization in public spaces, we invoke Article 5 of the Family Rights Charter: Parents, because they gave life to children, have the primary, inalienable right and priority to raise their offspring, and must therefore be recognized as the first and main educators of it.” (Appx. 3, p. 125)

PiS argues that “some political forces and destructive social groups” want to introduce permissive sex education programmes in school that will lead to demoralization and early sexualization of children. Sex education in ‘the wrong way’ will lead to inappropriate sexual behaviour of children such as “addiction to pornography”, “various compulsive behaviour” and in the worst case “rape” (Appx. 4, p. 62f), in which notions of fear in relation to innocent children are installed.

PiS refers to the Family Rights Charter (a local government charter adopted by several Polish communes) stating that it is a right of the parents to educate their children according to their values and beliefs. They appeal to logic reasoning, when referring to a law, in which this is stated. According to PiS, it is the right of parents to educate their children and not “some NGO”. Sex education is framed as a threat to parental rights, undermining the authority and role of parents. Parents have the “most sacred and inalienable right to decide on the upbringing of their children” (Appx. 6, p. 24), and this type of “liberal ideology” introduced in sex education are violating parents and the family’s role and rights in society.

(Ex. 26)

“Let us protect children. Let's protect against abortion on demand, let's protect against manipulation, when it comes to in vitro, genetic manipulation, let's protect against the rainbow revolution that is flooding the world. Let's protect against such a phenomenon as a naked man feeding a child as an example of the sexual revolution standing in front of the gender museum in Denmark? (...) Will we manage to protect the Polish family from such a revolution?” (ibid, p. 36-37)

The “destructive social groups”, PiS is referring to, are constructed using the notion of fear. These groups including “gays and transvestites” and “LGBT organizations” (ibid, 33;35) are portrayed as depraving, sexualizing, and demoralizing innocent children. Using children invokes a need for protection, and the PiS will protect children from such groups by giving the parents the right to decide. This fear image is emphasized when giving examples of what a sexual revolution of gender ideology entails; “abortion on demand”, “genetic manipulation”, “a rainbow revolution flooding the world like a tsunami” and a “naked man feeding a child”. “A rainbow revolution” is used as a metaphor to describe the rainbow flag of the LGBT-movement, which will “flood” the world and impose its dangerous ideology on innocent children. The naked man feeding a child is symbolizing how gender roles will change, the traditional family will diminish, and the important role of mothers vanish. In this quote, the PiS is creating an inflation of the issue, when bringing together all these perceived “threats” in one enemy – it is no longer just sex education that is a danger, but also abortion, LGBT and genetic manipulation, and these diverse topics are piled together in one single chain of

equivalence, jointly opposing this ‘other’ of gender ideology. In this way, the notion of gender ideology is a threat not only to children, but to the family, to women, to Polish culture and religion, and the entire foundation of Polish society.

5.4 Interdiscursivity

The PiS’s anti-gender discourse employs interdiscursivity by including other hegemonic discourses in their discourse, some of which are mentioned above. However, I find it particularly relevant to dive into its intersection with populist discourse, due to the topic of investigation.

5.4.1 Populist discourse

PiS political discourse clearly resembles that they are a populist party, and several traits of a populist discourse can be found in the data. At the core of PiS’s populist narrative is the portrayal of itself as the ‘true’ representative of the Polish people, standing up against the perceived threat to traditional values, cultural identity, and national sovereignty. They paint a picture of Poland being attacked by various external forces, including liberal institutions and elites. These external forces are framed as eroding Polish national identity and undermining the country’s sovereignty. In this narrative, PiS often portrays itself as the defender of “the common people” and their interest, and their policies are necessary measures to protect the nation and its people. The party refers to itself as “the voice of the citizens” (Appx. 7, p. 49) and as the only party who has the best intentions of the people at heart. They create a clear antagonism of “the people vs. the elite”, characteristic for populist discourse, in which ‘the people’ are framed as Poles who support traditional Polish values, morality and religious devotion. PiS itself is also included in this group, being the defender of these values of “the people”. In this way, they create a shared identity, in which they can establish support for a common cause. The people are referred to as “the nation” or “Poland” and as “a community of culture, language, historical experience, political tradition, and civilizational values” (Appx. 2, p. 15). The distinction between the people and the elite is thus primarily a moral distinction, in which the elite is imposing foreign, modern values on the Polish people, and not an ethnonationalist distinction. Furthermore, historical references are also part of shaping “the people”, referring to both the German and Soviet occupations during the twentieth century and the years of communism, in which “patriotism and Catholicism” were guiding Polish soldiers and opposition (ibid, p. 16). In this way, the Polish people are united through history, culture, and values, which is a part of their shared identity, more than ethnicity or race.

On the other hand, “the elite” consists of anti-PiS parties, in particular parties on the Left, communists, Prime Minister Donald Tusk, “gender ideologists”, the EU, and LGBT groups. They accuse the political left of “promoting gender ideology” (Appx. 5, p. 245), “enslaving and subjugating people”, and “forcing doctors to perform abortions” (Appx. 9, p. 156). These groups are constructed as immoral, manipulative, disconnected from the concerns of ordinary Poles, and serving either their own or foreign interests. “The left” is used throughout the discourse of PiS to refer to a group of political elitist parties (almost any party not in coalition with PiS), and this group is constructed as an enemy of the “common people”, imposing foreign and immoral values on Poles against their will. While the PiS in principle also is a political elite itself because it holds parliamentary power, the party is clearly not a part of this enemy-picture, but oppositely positioned on the side of “the people”, voicing their opinions, and protecting their values. The EU, and particularly the EU Council’s Istanbul Convention, is also portrayed as part of “the elite”. The convention is constructed as a manifestation of gender ideology infiltrating Poland and are seen as a threat to “the people” including the traditional Polish family and thus the entire foundation of society. The juxtaposition between the people, including PiS, and the elite, are emphasized by the party’s use of the ‘us vs. them’-dichotomy in their discourse. “We” is used to describe the people as an “in-group” while “they” refer to an “out-group” consisting of various actors. This dichotomic discourse contributes to the construction of two antagonistic groups in which a positive self-presentation and a negative other-representation is reproduced.

5.5 Social practice analysis

The following social practice analysis seeks to analyse and compare the discourses identified in textual and discursive analysis of the two cases above in a socio-cultural setting. Similarities and differences in the discursive practices identified in the two cases will be compared and related to their socio-cultural contexts. To understand how the discourses are constructed and take part in constructing the social context, I will bring in different contributions from the literature review, the theoretical framework in terms of anti-gender and populism, as well as the cultural and political contexts of Germany and Poland. This will help me analyse the discursive processes in which power relations are maintained, challenged, or transformed, and ultimately how these affect the intersection of populism and anti-gender ideology.

The discursive practices around anti-genderism of AfD and PiS are found to be similar in various areas, while also containing differences in terms of focus and discursive strategies. The discourses that characterize the discursive order of anti-genderism in Germany are: a family discourse, a demographic discourse, a feminist discourse, an anti-LGBT discourse and a discourse related to gender ideology. In Poland, the discourses found in relation to anti-genderism are: a family discourse, a reproductive rights-discourse, a women and gender equality-discourse, a sex education discourse, and finally a discourse related to gender ideology.

5.5.1 Protecting the traditional family

Both the AfD and the PiS employs a discourse on the traditional, heteronormative family or often referred to as the “natural family”. The family is constructed very similarly by the two parties in traditionalist terms based on the heterosexual marriage between a man and a woman, and a family of mother, father, and children. The heteronormative family is emphasized in both cases, and all other individuals (who differ in terms of gender, religion, race, social class, or sexual orientation) are thus conceptualized as ‘outside’ the family or not belonging to the family at all. Furthermore, the family is constructed as the core of society, and the basic social institution from which life happens. AfD calls it “the nucleus of our society” (Ex. 1) and PiS “the most important social cell” (Ex. 17). Both parties also frame the family in a generational discourse in terms of a value and reference system that are passed on from generation to generation (ibid). The family is in both cases constructed as in need of protection against external forces and leftist ideologies and by deploying a notion of fear, the parties create an image in which the decline of the traditional family ultimately will lead to the decay of society and social order.

The AfD and the PiS are taking part in the reproduction of a characteristic anti-gender discourse concerned with the traditional family and children in need of protection. As Kuhar & Patternotte point out, anti-gender campaigns worldwide have focused on the welfare of the families, children, and heterosexual marriage (2017, 269). In these campaigns, the real needs and grievances of families are addressed, and such anxieties are skilfully harnessed by claiming to defend the natural family against a corrupt elite. Invoking the image of children in danger, which is emphasized by both the AfD (Ex. 10-12) and PiS (Ex. 20; 25-26) in relation to gender ideology, sex education and abortion, harness the emotional dimensions of politics, particularly for parents, who wish to defend their children, and parents are an obvious potential electorate for these parties. The deeply felt family ties, roles and expectations hold huge political potential and these parties have managed to capture it

and use it in their discourse. Promising more generous social policies focused on the family are utilized by both the AfD and the PiS, who advocates to introduce several pro-family policies to defend the natural family. Promises of such welfare provisions are an effective way to recruit supporters who do not necessarily share their far-right world view otherwise (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022, 59). This strategy of “defending the family” and promoting public policies with a family perspective have become an important platform of cooperation between anti-gender organizations and right-wing populist parties (ibid.) Poland is an example of this, where the PiS positions itself as champion of generous social policies. Since 2015 the party has introduced several pro-family and pro-natalist policies focused on families with children, increasing the public spending on pro-family policy from 1.78% of Poland’s GDP in 2015 to 3.11% in 2017 (ibid, 117). While there is nothing inherently conservative about family and parenthood in general, the populist right has made this its focus, monopolizing issues as parental care, child welfare and the well-being of the family (in the conservative sense of nuclear, heterosexual and bound by marriage) (ibid, 116). They are invoking an image as themselves as the true defender of the natural family and are supporting this image by advocating and/or implementing various pro-family policies.

5.5.2 Politics of fear

One of the elements, in which anti-genderism and right-wing populism intersect, is in the employment of similar rhetorical mechanisms. Wodak (2015) identifies these primary rhetoric strategies, coined “Politics of fear”, which are victim-perpetrator reversal, scapegoating, and the construction of conspiracy theories. “Politics of fear” seeks to install the fear of real or imagined dangers while instrumentalizing minorities or other social groups to create scapegoats and play on emotional registers (Benveniste, Campani, & Lazaridis, 2016, 12). These rhetoric strategies are used by both the political parties in which fear of various dangers, not necessarily real ones, is installed and certain social groups are constructed as scapegoats. For the AfD, the enemy is constructed in ethnonationalist terms as ‘the foreigner’, in particular Muslim immigrants, who are breaking into the nation state, bringing with them misogyny, violence etc. (ex. 6; 16). In this construction, the AfD is installing fears of a declining nation state with the replacement of the ‘ethnic’ Germans, allowing multiculturalism and parallel societies to grow as well as the import of ‘non’-German values posing a fear to women and girls, but also to the cohesion of German culture and society. The secondary enemy is ‘the elites’, the mainstream and left-wing parties, responsible for liberal immigration policies. They are constructed as ‘on top’ because they have the power to allow immigration and foster multiculturalism.

According to Wodak, right-wing populist parties offer simple answers to the fear invoked, by constructing clear scapegoats and enemies – ‘others’ – to blame for current woes by creating collective stereotypes and images of the enemy (Wodak, 2015, 4). For decades Germany has experienced a high volume of immigration, leading to an ongoing anti-immigrant rhetoric in the country (Lehr, 2015, 113). This anti-immigrant discourse was particularly reinvigorated by the ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe in 2015, when Germany received over a million immigrants mainly from Muslim majority states (Sprengholz, 2021, 489). The AfD has been able to capitalize on the growing anti-Islam sentiment in Germany and has strongly adopted the anti-immigrant discourse in their own political discourse and are now also making use of this discourse in their anti-gender discourse. This will be further elaborated in Section 5.5.3.

PiS also uses these strategies of invoking fear and creating scapegoats, however not departing from ethnonationalism like the AfD. For the PiS, the fears are related to a sense of cultural and moral decay. As PiS claims in their manifesto; “we understand the nation as a community of culture, language, historical experience, political tradition, and civilizational values, as a community of destiny (...) Our nation has been shaped over centuries by the coming together as a community of ethnically diverse people” (Appx.2, p. 15). The party employs a national discourse, but instead of an ethnonational perspective, they see the cultural, social, and moral aspects as uniting for Polish society. The fear is invoked by a ‘foreign’ enemy in the sense of threatening the traditional and catholic values which bind together Polish society. ‘Foreign’ in terms of an ‘elite’ of e.g. left-wing parties that advocate liberal policies for gender equality, free abortion, and sex education, but also in terms of the EU and a globalist fear of EU imposing policies that threatens the moral and cultural values on which Poland is built (Ex. 24-26). Part of the reason for this difference between Germany and Poland could be found in the countries’ difference in religious affiliation. While religion is declining in most of Europe, Poland remains one of the most religious countries in the region with 87.7% of the population identify as Catholic in 2021 (Statista, 2021). In Germany, less than half of Germans identify as Christians (either Catholic or Protestant). Polish national identity is closely linked to Catholicism (Porter, 2001), and PiS supports ‘the universal teaching of the Catholic Church’ which provides the moral guidance for Poles. The Catholic Church is seen as a freedom support of Poles in their fight for independence over the late 18th to early 20th centuries, and from Nazi and communist rule. The term Pole-Catholic is part of the Polish identity, distinguishing Poles from Protestant Germans, and Orthodox Russians (Gwiazda, 2020). Thus, national identity in Poland is closely linked to

Catholicism, and the PiS are using this in the discursive strategy employing notions of fear towards a cultural and liberal elite, aimed at destroying such religious nationality.

To sum up, both parties employ ‘politics of fear’ in relation to the loss of national identity. For PiS it is in the sense of a moral decay of traditional, Catholic values and the traditional family, while it for the AfD is the ethnonationalist discourse and the fear of the ‘ethnic’ German population vanishing. The specific fears and scapegoating are different, but it is the same rhetoric strategy that they make use of.

5.5.3 Co-optation of feminist discourse

Both the AfD and the PiS has an interesting and complex focus on women, women’s rights, and equality in their political discourse. Some discursive elements are shared between the parties, while others differ. Both parties present both feminist and anti-feminist claims, creating a sort of ‘post-feminism’, in which these parties portray themselves as the real fighters for women’s rights, while the left-wing elites, traditionally associated with feminist policies, are claimed to be more interested in altering existing gender roles and norms. The AfD’s discourse is characterized by the idea that gender equality has already been achieved (Ex. 7). The party portrays equality as ‘equal treatment’, that women and men are equal for the law and has equal rights e.g. voting rights, and directly dismiss structural barriers and discrimination against women. Furthermore, they claim that liberal feminists are “pseudo-liberators of women” with the hidden goal of promoting a totalitarian idea of gender equality, and in contrast sees itself as the only real fighter for women. Finally, women are constructed in a commodification-discourse in which AfD claims that women are commodified and forced into the labour market, while the natural desires of women are in the home as mothers and caregivers (Ex. 7-9).

PiS shares this discourse on women as mothers, which is their main focus in the discourse surrounding women. Women are viewed primarily through the prism of the traditional family as mothers and caregivers (Ex. 22). The party focuses on traditional gender roles and women’s reproductive responsibility. PiS highlights the natural differences between men and women in biological, social, and psychological sense, underscoring their natural different positions in society. However, the party pays attention to gender equality in the workplace and in particular equal pay. While they present these liberal feminist claims, they are at the same time, similar to the AfD, dismissing structural barriers and discrimination which could impede women’s success in employment and beyond. In their “feminist” discourse, they maintain their conservative and

traditionalist view on women and gender roles with anti-feminist undertones in terms of dismissing structural inequality as well as claiming women's natural position to be at home taking care of the children. This conservative feminist position of the party is also visible in relation to abortion. The party is strongly pro-life and claim abortions are murdering of innocent children. Here, the traditional role of women as mothers are also emphasized. The party employs a human-rights discourse, juxtapositioning the right to life and the right of women, and the party portrays itself as fighting for women's rights.

In Poland, this conservative feminist discourse is reinforced by cultural and historical factors. Culturally, women in Poland have been assigned a specific gender role, characterized by the traditional figure of a "Polish mother" (*Matka Polka*), which is deeply ingrained in Polish culture. Moreover, the Catholic Church further reinforced such traditional gender roles in the post-communist era e.g. by introducing an abortion ban together with the newly elected government (Gwiadza, 2020, 586). The large influence of the Catholic Church continues to promote traditional attitudes towards women and their role as caregivers and mothers, and this identity of women are reproduced in the discourse of PiS.

The parties share this 'conservative feminism' in which women are seen as equal to men and in principle can do what they want – however both parties emphasize the "natural" position of women in the home, and this position deserves better recognition and praise in modern society. The feminist claims of the parties are interesting, since RWP-parties traditionally have held very conservative views on the role of women in society. According to Gwiadza (2020), such conservative feminism within RWP-parties can support certain aspects of liberal feminism, because it favours liberal individualism and the presupposition that women are equal to men. At the same time, it can dismiss systemic discrimination and claim commitment to women's traditional roles as mothers, which is framed as improving women's lives within traditional terms rather than in feminist ones, seeking to transform existing gender roles, which can be considered anti-feminist (Gwiadza, 2020, 583).

Despite their conservative stance on women, a growing tendency within RWP-parties in relation to gender and family politics is to use 'feminist'-frames, but these frames are emptied of their gender justice and transformed via 'frame co-optation' (Dietze, 2022). Right-wing actors are increasingly co-opting and subverting feminist issues, and instrumentalizing women's rights to push for other policies. This approach is evident within the AfD that strategically co-opts liberal and feminist discourses to push for Islamophobic anti-immigration and assimilationist policies (Ex. 16).

Their femonationalist discourse is characterized by the appropriation of feminist ideas such as women's rights to stigmatize migrants and ethnic minorities, in particular Muslim minorities. In this discourse, they call for the protection of women and women's empowerment, while underlining Muslim minorities' 'Otherness' and constructing them as enemies of such feminist agendas. They hereby participate in a hegemonic power struggle over the feminist discourse, transforming people's perception of society and what feminism entails. The AfD can portray themselves as a liberal democratic opposition party and promote a heroic self-image as the saviour of white women and Western civilization from the threat of Muslim migrants (Doerr, 2021). A similar strategy is visible within PiS, when they co-opt a women's rights discourse to advocate for their anti-abortion standpoint as well as the recognition of the role as mothers as women's primary and natural role in society (Ex. 20-22). In this co-optation, they claim to fight for women's rights in terms of (unborn) women's right to life as well as for the "natural" desire of women to become mothers. In this way, they appropriate feminist ideals as women's rights to legitimize their own political standpoints in relation to women, family, and abortion.

While women gain a lot of focus in the parties' political discourse, looking at the political representation within RWP-parties, women seem to be missing. Right-wing populist parties are often described as men's parties (Männerparteien), because they are predominantly led by and represented by men (Mudde, 2007). Gender gaps are also visible amongst their electorate with women making up a significantly smaller share of party supporters than men (Weeks et. al, 2023). Although male-dominated, RWP-parties are increasingly including women as MPs and leaders, e.g. the AfD has a female leader, Alice Weidel. The increase in women's representation is interesting due to these parties' traditionally conservative view on the role of women in society. Weeks et al. (2023) argue that a driving force behind the increasing number of women in these parties is the substantial gender imbalance among voters. Parties use an increase in women's descriptive representation (the number of women in office) as a tool to attract women voters instead of programmatic changes. In this way, electing more women MPs becomes a tactic to appeal to a broader set of voters without having to change their actual policies. Accordingly, this could be part of the explanation for the AfD's and the PiS's use of a "feminist" discourse. With more women in the parties (even though still a low percentage), comes a possibility for stronger (conservative) feminist voices in the party. However, another explanation could be that the parties utilize these "feminist" claims and focus on gender equality to attract more women voters to the parties. In this way, they can foster a feminist agenda without actually changing their political programmes, and hence the "feminist" discourse becomes a

strategic choice rather than an actual claim for gender equality. This could also be a part of the explanation for the parties' (conservative) feminist claims mixed with notes of anti-feminism and their conservative position on women.

5.5.4 Gender ideology

When comparing the political discourse of PiS and AfD, there is a striking resemblance in how the parties are mobilizing and using the idea of “gender ideology”. In this discourse, both parties are using the discursive strategy coined ‘politics of fear’ described earlier in this chapter. Gender ideology is constructed as a dangerous, foreign, and totalitarian ideology which various elitist forces are trying to impose on an innocent population. The parties construct a supposed collective threat of “gender ideology” posed by feminists, LGBT-people, left-wing parties, and other “progressive” forces presented as “Others” opposing the traditional gender order of the family (Ex. 10-14; 23-26). In this discourse, “gender” is antithetical to the “natural” family and traditional gender roles, and are connotated with confusion, instability, erosion of community, and in general chaos of modern life. As Wodak elaborates (2015), RWP-parties thrive on collective anxieties related to real and imagined threats, and “gender ideology” entail several of such threats, bound together in one common term. In this way, gender becomes this “symbolic glue” that the AfD and PiS uses to group together all the imagined fears in one common enemy, which allow for a collective identification between a diverse set of issues ranging from sex education, gender studies in universities, policy tools as gender mainstreaming and the Istanbul Convention to LGBT issues, erosion of the family and social cohesion as well as an exploitation of the people by the corrupt elites. The ‘Otherness’ of gender is underlined by both parties by using the English term of “gender” instead of translating it to their native languages, making the term sound ominous and alien in most contexts. Hereby, the underline that “gender” stems from external forces and are not a natural part of their cultures. Their mobilization against the ‘academic concept’ of gender is driven by the firm belief that women and men are biologically different and therefore intrinsically, ontologically different (Hark and Villa, 2017: 90). Policies aiming to establish gender equality are therefore understand as a state-imposed undermining these ‘natural’ differences. The AfD also calls out gender studies challenging the assumptions of binary gender to be unscientific and a product of ‘gender ideology’. Both parties reject the notion of socio-cultural gender and ‘doing gender’ as introduced by Butler, in which gender is something you *perform* and not something you *are*. Both parties use an antagonistic discourse, characteristic for populist parties, in which a powerful elite are imposing the “unnatural” notion of gender, which ultimately

will lead to societal and moral decay, on the common people. AfD and PiS are fighting against this powerful elite, creating a common identity with ‘the people’, and invoking the notion of the traditional family and gender roles as the only safeguard against this enemy. In this way, the parties construct a new antagonism, in which a new ‘Other’ related to gender ideology is constructed against the ‘morally pure common people’.

By the PiS, the construction gender ideology to a large extent evolves around the Istanbul Convention, which is not present in the discourse of AfD. This must be understood in relation to the political and cultural context of Poland. Debates in Poland has been heated regarding the ratification of the Istanbul Convention aimed at preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence. The legislative process began in 2014, when the PiS was an opposition party. All PiS deputies voted against the bill, but the government of Civic Platform and the Polish Peasant Party supported it, and the Convention was ultimately ratified in Poland in 2015 (Gwiadza, 2015). When the party came to power in 2015, it did not revoke the convention despite calls to do so. Several members of the PiS supported the revocation of the Convention, while others deemed it unnecessary. In the coming years, ultraconservative groups in Poland pressured the PiS government to withdraw from it, and in 2020 the then-prime minister Morawiecki filed a motion to the Constitutional Tribunal to analyse the convention’s compatibility with the Polish constitution, widely understood as a move to not take the drastic step of actually withdrawing Poland’s participation, but also not being seen by conservatives as accepting the document (Ciobanu & Eisenchteter, 2024). Although still in force, funding for organizations that help domestic violence victims was reduced (Human Rights Watch, 2019) and implementation efforts were hampered. The PiS maintains their narrative that the document is “ideological”, promoting “gender ideology” and denying the biological reality of gender, and maintaining that Poland is already doing enough to combat domestic violence. To this day, a hegemonic struggle over the Istanbul Convention remains in Polish society. In January this year, Poland’s new prime minister Tusk stated that his government is fully committed to respect the Convention and to reverse the process initiated under the PiS government that could have led to the country’s withdrawal from the international treaty. This example shows that while the discourse on gender ideology is very similar for AfD and PiS, the social context of the cases plays a role in constructing their anti-gender discourse. The PiS places a lot of focus on the Istanbul Convention, because it is a public debate that has spurred much controversy in the country. At the same time their discourse also take part in constructing the social reality, underscoring the dialectic relationship of discourse.

6. Discussion

In the following chapter, I will discuss the implications of my findings in the analysis as well as future extensions of the work. First, I will discuss how my findings contribute to the current literature in the field. This is followed by a discussion on theoretical and methodological implications of the study as well as possible future avenues of investigation. To finalize my discussion, I will relate my findings to the broader opposition to gender in Europe today and which possible implications it can have for the future of gender equality in the region.

6.1 Contribution to literature

This study was conducted to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the relationship between populism and gender. More specifically, it aimed to understand how RWP-parties in Europe are mobilizing anti-gender language and ideology in their political discourse. As mentioned in Section 2.1, a gap in research exists on the intersection between populism and gender. Gender is an often-overlooked category in relation to populism, even though scholars claim that gender plays a central role amongst populist parties. This study is an important contribution in closing this gap, and gaining insights into how gender plays a role and is utilized by right-wing populist parties. **One of the main findings of this thesis has been that the right-wing populist parties under study *are* mobilizing anti-gender rhetoric in their discourse.** The comparative case study of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany and Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland shows that both right-wing populist parties are mobilizing several themes related to the anti-gender discourse as well as different rhetoric strategies characteristic for both the populist and the anti-gender discourses. The study thus confirms the literature in the field stating that anti-gender is a central element of the populist right-wing wave in Europe and a clear intersection of these two phenomena (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022; Patternotte & Kuhar, 2018). Dietze states (2022) that issues related to family, womanhood, gender, and sexuality are central in RWP-parties, which is also visible in the findings of my discourse analysis. The parties construct the heteronormative family as the only model of social organization, question sex education and gender studies, reject LGBT-rights, seek to re-install the biological understanding of binary gender differences, attack reproductive rights, and mobilize against an enemy referred to as “gender ideology”. My study also shows that these anti-gender topics are mobilized in the parties’ discourse and intertwined and related to their populist ideology and discourse in various ways. This resonates with the findings of Patternotte and Kuhar, who state that right-wing populism and anti-gender campaigns are similar in several ways (2018). Firstly, they state that right-wing

populists in some countries are the main drivers of the anti-gender ideology. Since my study did not include other social and political actors, it is not possible to confirm whether the AfD and the PiS are the main drivers of anti-genderism. However, anti-gender rhetoric is clearly present in both cases, and it is thus possible to say that these parties are at least amongst the drivers of anti-genderism in the countries. Secondly, central elements of anti-gender and right-wing populist discourses look alike: Scepticism towards the European project, national and racial anxieties, and resistance to globalization. These elements are visible in my findings, in which populist and anti-gender intertwine. E.g. the PiS's scepticism towards the EU's Istanbul Convention, the anti-immigration and anti-Muslim discourse of AfD mixed with feminist claims, and in general the parties' nationalist discourse in which interference from external forces such as "gender ideology" are perceived as a threat to the nation. Finally, populist and anti-gender discourses employ similar rhetorical mechanisms, which is described in detail by Wodak as 'Politics of fear' (2015). Both AfD and PiS employ the notion of fear in their anti-gender discourse and construct a clear 'Other' as enemies of the traditional family and gender roles. **A second main finding of this thesis has been the striking resemblance between the cases and how they employ anti-gender rhetoric in their political discourse.** The findings of the comparative analysis show that despite differences in political and cultural contexts, the parties mobilize several of the same ideological anti-gender stances, build similar narratives, and take part in similar discursive struggles. By choosing two different countries (in a European context) to study the *variety* in their mobilization of anti-gender discourse, it could be expected to find more differences than the results show. The parties' anti-gender discourse differs in the amount of focus they put on different issues, which to a high degree is influenced by the social context of the countries. E.g. in Poland, a lot of focus in the anti-gender discourse is on abortion, which has a long and controversial history in the country, while in AfD's discourse abortion is nearly not present at all. Furthermore, the parties differ in their 'enemy'-construction, in which AfD constructs an ethnonationalist enemy in terms of immigration, while PiS focuses on an enemy in an ideological and moral sense. However, despite these differences, it is striking how many similarities are found between the cases. They employ very similar discursive strategies, evoking notions of fear, using antagonism, building a strong enemy-picture, using similar words, and refer to a common enemy termed "gender ideology". These findings clearly confirm the transnational perspective of these anti-gender tendencies in Europe. The study confirms that anti-gender discourse manifests in diverse countries, and "gender" becomes the common enemy that binds together these parties. As Kováts (2015) states, "gender" becomes the symbolic glue binding together actors on the far-right,

who do not necessarily share ideological stands. More research would be necessary to fully understand the transnational phenomenon of anti-gender mobilization in Europe and on a global scale. It is out of scope of this study to confirm a common tendency across Europe and if we can talk about a global right fighting against gender. However, my findings do point in the direction of a political movement that shares several discursive elements across borders. Thus, the findings of this study explicitly call for more research in the intersection of anti-gender and RWP to further investigate such transnational and global tendencies.

6.2 Theoretical and methodological implications

Theoretically, this study departs from a combination of gender studies, including the notion of anti-gender, and populism. This choice was made to be able to disentangle the two concepts of anti-gender and populism. While they hold many similarities, I found it necessary to have a clear indication of two distinct phenomena to understand the complex ways in which they intersect and converge in specific settings and contribute to each other's mutual development. Furthermore, the study applies a discursive perspective, which presupposes a dialectical relationship between discourse and other social dimensions. This perspective entails that anti-gender and populism are not treated as attributes or strategies of a certain actor, but rather as discourses that can be applied to a different degree under different circumstances and take part in the construction of the social world. Thus, these theoretical concepts can also take on different meaning in the discursive practice depending on the social context and act as empty signifiers. If I had chosen to approach the study from a different perspective, it would be possible to focus on e.g. the ideological aspects of the populist parties, and how the populist ideology is compatible with other belief systems such as anti-genderism. This would have allowed me to gain an understanding of the ways populist and anti-gender ideology intersect, however it would not permit the same "manoeuvring room" to study the varieties of these phenomena in practice. If populism had been approached as a strategy, it could have contributed with an interesting perspective on the relationship between the populist parties and their supporters. In this way, I would be able to ask *why* these populist parties are employing anti-gender discourse, and whether it poses as an opportunistic synergy for both the populist right and the anti-gender movement. This would be an interesting path for further investigation. Also, anti-gender mobilization does not only happen amongst political actors in official political arenas. It would be relevant to bring in theoretical contributions from social movements theory, in which 'anti-gender' would be approached as a social movement with a variety of actors and strategies. Since my study focuses on only one actor, the

political parties, I am not accounting for civil society actors and how these play a role in the mobilization and growing influence of the anti-gender cause. This would have allowed to better grasp the complexity of anti-genderism and how the populist right is just one actor out of many. Finally, the study was methodologically limited to a comparison of only two populist parties in two countries. The scope of the study could advantageously be expanded to include other populist parties and more countries to compare findings and further investigate the transitional tendencies of the anti-gender discourse.

6.3 The future of gender equality

Finally, I would like to briefly touch upon the implications of my findings for the broader project of gender equality in Europe. Opposition towards gender equality is not a new thing, however, the opposition we see today is taking new forms and utilizes new strategies. The contemporary European developments and structural settings underpin this current intensification of oppositional dynamics; a worrying decline of democracy, a reduction in government power and of the political space for civil society, the transition back to illiberalism, rising neoliberalism and neonationalism and intensifying political hierarchies and polarization (Verloo, 2018, 5). These structural changes open up many new avenues for opposition, in particular for actors linked to the far right. In the last decades, Europe has made several achievements in relation to gender equality, and scholars, politicians and other actors have generally been convinced that Europe was on an unstoppable way towards “full” gender equality and sexual citizenship. However, the development of anti-gender movements in recent years all across Europe has largely invalidated this understanding. My studies show that RWP-actors make use of this anti-gender discourse in party materials and parliamentary debates. What is worrying is that these parties have been on the rise in Europe for several years and are gaining popularity and real political influence in many European parties. As Mudde states (2019), the current wave of populism is characterized by a normalization and mainstreaming of the far-right. As these parties are moving into the mainstream political arena, it opens up for a normalization and mainstreaming of these anti-gender discourses as well, and ultimately pose a threat to change the discursive order in relation to gender equality and feminism. As these discourses are mainstreamed, gains made in relation to gender equality and rights of women and LGBT are at risk of being rolled back, as well as increased stigmatization and marginalization of sexual minorities, reinforcing social prejudices and discrimination. Furthermore, the feminist project is at risk of being undermined and emptied of its social justice, because RWP-actors are co-opting and transforming feminist frames in their discourse.

I argue that RWP-parties pose a real challenge to the efforts achieved in relation to gender equality and should be treated not as single, national phenomena, but as a global anti-gender right that can ultimately roll back decades of achievements for gender equality. Anti-genderism should be analysed as part of the larger political context of Europe and the processes of democratic backsliding and de-democratization in the region.

7. Conclusion

The starting point for this thesis has been to understand the intersection between RWP and gender. While these phenomena are seemingly distinct and unrelated, recent studies have highlighted the central role of gender in right-wing populist discourses and strategies. Notably, anti-genderism, a rising new form of opposition towards gender equality, and RWP are interrelated and overlap in several ways. Accordingly, this study has set out to investigate the resonance between RWP and anti-genderism and to answer the research question: *How are right-wing populist parties in Germany and Poland mobilizing anti-gender language and ideology in their political discourse?* To answer this question, the study was designed as a comparative case study of Germany and Poland and two dominant populist parties, the AfD in Germany, and the PiS in Poland. The comparative design was chosen to study the transnational character of anti-genderism and pinpoint similarities and differences between the cases in a wider European context. The theoretical framework of this thesis was developed to define anti-genderism and populism, and hereby better understand the phenomena under study. Critical discourse analysis has functioned both as a theoretical departure for this study as well as a methodological framework guiding the analysis. The discursive approach has allowed me to study how the discursive practices of populist parties play a role in the construction of social issues, here anti-genderism, and how such practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of ideology and power relations.

This study concludes that anti-gender discourse is mobilized by both populist parties in question despite different national contexts and gender regimes. Several themes related to anti-genderism are identified in both cases, including the construction of the traditional, heteronormative family as the only model of social organization, re-installing the biological understanding of gender, rejecting LGBT-rights, attacking reproductive rights, questioning sex education, and mobilizing against ‘gender ideology’. The study finds that anti-genderism is linked to the parties’ populist discourse and is mobilized as a part of their EU-scepticism, national and racial anxieties, and resistance to globalization. Anti-gender discourse utilizes populist rhetorical mechanisms, including the antagonistic relationship between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’, evoking notions of threat and fear, building a simple and strong enemy-picture and self-heroization to frame gender and sexuality issues. A new antagonism in the anti-gender discourse is present, in which the ‘we’ is a homogenous, morally pure and ethnicized people against a perceived ‘Other’, consisting of LGBT-people, feminists and ‘gender ideologists’. Furthermore, the study finds a striking resemblance between the cases and how

the parties mobilize anti-gender in their discourse. Despite political and cultural differences, a strong anti-gender discourse is present within both parties. These findings point towards anti-genderism as a transnational phenomenon that manifests in diverse countries and shares several discursive features and themes. However, more research is necessary to confirm this commonality and further investigate it from a transnational and global perspective. My findings are generally in line with the findings in existing literature, claiming that RWP and anti-genderism are closely connected. While populism has been studied thoroughly, its connection to anti-genderism continues to be vague, and my study is a timely contribution to filling this research gap. The discursive approach offers a relevant perspective as discourses shape social reality, meaning that it has a considerable impact on the political process and policymaking in relation to gender equality. Based on the findings in the thesis, I argue that RWP-parties' use of anti-gender discourse can have severe consequences for progress made on gender equality and these should be treated as a global anti-gender right. More research is needed to further investigate the intersection of RWP and anti-genderism and understand its complex, transnational dynamics in the efforts to ultimately avoid reversing and invalidating decades of achievements for gender equality in Europe.

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9. Appendices

9.1 Appendices overview - Germany

Appendix	Type of data	Pages/date/meeting	Description	Speakers from AfD
A	Election Programme	Pp. 104-115, 154	2021 AfD 20 th Bundestag Election Programme “Germany. But Normal”	-
B	Election Programme	Pp. 44, 46-49	2024 AfD European Parliament Election “Rethink Europe”	-
C	Party Programme	Pp. 40-44, 52, 55-56	AfD general party programme “Programme for Germany” 2016	-
D	Parliamentary debate, German Bundestag, Berlin, Germany	19 th Electoral term, 17 th session, Thursday, March 1, 2018 Plenary Protocol 19/017 pp. 1386-1388	Debate on International Women’s Day	p. 1386 Nicole Höcsht
E	Parliamentary debate, German Bundestag, Berlin, Germany	19 th Electoral term, 105 th session, Friday, June 7, 2019 Plenary Protocol 19/105 pp. 12975-12976	a) Consultation on the motion by The Alliance90/The Greens parliamentary group: “Living diversity – launching a nationwide action plan for sexual and gender diversity” b) Consultation on the motion by the FDP parliamentary group: “Protecting gender and sexual diversity in the European Union” c) Consultation on the motion by the AfD parliamentary group “Welcoming babies, living family life – nationwide action plan for family, marriage and children”	p.12975 Martin Reichardt
F	Parliamentary debate, German Bundestag, Berlin, Germany	19 th Electoral term, 195 th session, Thursday, November 26, 2020 Plenary Protocol 19/195 pp. 24590-91, 24599-00, 24607-08	Consultation on the motions by the AfD Parliamentary Group: a) “Active Family policy through baby welcome loans” b) “reduce sales tax on baby diapers” c) “Realizing the desire to have children – supporting the decision to have a third child” d) “Guaranteeing the right to life of the unborn – improving legal regulations on pregnancy conflict counseling” e) “Changing values in public broadcasting and public schools – emphasizing the importance of unborn life and new births for	p. 24590 Martin Reichardt p. 24599 Mariana Iris Harder-Kühnel p. 24607 Anton Friesen

			the constitution, state and society”	
G	Parliamentary debate, German Bundestag, Berlin, Germany	20th Electoral term, 92 nd session, Friday, March 17, 2023 Plenary Protocol 20/92 pp. 11069-70-11076-76	Debate on International Women’s Day	s. 11069 Mariana Iris Harder-Kühnel s. 11075 Nicole Hochst
H	Parliamentary debate, German Bundestag, Berlin, Germany	20th Electoral term, 130th session, Wednesday, October 18, 2023 Plenary Protocol 20/130 pp. 16301-02, 16310-11	Consultation on the motion by the AfD Parliamentary Group: “Gender Ideology – averting dangers from education, science and culture”	s. 16301 Götz Frömming s. 16310 Marc Jongen
I	Parliamentary debate, German Bundestag, Berlin, Germany	20th Electoral term, 136th session, Wednesday, November 15, 2023 Plenary Protocol 20/136 pp. 17207-09, 17211, 17215	a) First consultation on the Federal Government’s draft law on self-determination with regard to sex registration and mending other provisions b) consultation on the motion by the AfD Parliamentary Group: “Preserve the Transsexuals Act and improve the protection of people with gender dysphoria”	p. 17207 Beatrix von Storch p. 17211 Gereon Bollmann p. 17215 Martin Reichardt
J	Parliamentary debate, German Bundestag, Berlin, Germany	20 th Electoral term, 158 th session, Friday, March 15, 2024 Plenary Protocol 20/158 pp. 20262-63, 20267	Debate on International Women’s Day	p. 20262 Mariana Iris Harder-Kühnel p. 20267 Nicole Höchst
K	Parliamentary debate, German Bundestag, Berlin, Germany	20 th Electoral term, 164 th session, Friday, April 12, 2024 Plenary Protocol 20/164 pp. 21094-95, 21102	Item 14) Second and third consultation on the Federal Government’s draft law on self-determination with regard to sex registration and mending other provisions Item 15) consultation on the recommendation for a resolution and report of the Committee on Family Affairs Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, on the motion by the AfD Parliamentary Group	p. 21094 Martin Reichardt p. 21102 Beatrix von Storch

9.2 Appendices overview - Poland

Appendix	Type of data	Pages/date/meeting	Description	Speakers from PiS
1	Election programme	Pp. 6-11, 62-66, 211-212	Law and Justice Election Programme for the Polish Parliamentary Election in 2019 Last updated 14 September 2019	-
2	Party programme	Pp. 11-15	General party programme of Law & Justice "Safe future of the Poles" Last updated 9 September 2023	-
3	Parliamentary debate, The Polish Sejm, Warsaw, Poland	April 3, 2019 8 th term 79 th meeting of the Sejm p. 125	Unrelated statement at the end of a parliamentary debate	p. 125 Tadeusz Wozniak
4	Parliamentary debate, The Polish Sejm, Warsaw, Poland	April 15, 2020 9 th term 10 th meeting of the Sejm pp. 62-63, 66-78	Item 6) first reading of the citizen's bill amending the Act of June 6, 1997 – Penal Code Item 7) First reading of the citizen's bill amending the Act of January 7, 1993 on family planning, protection of the human fetus and conditions for the admissibility of termination of pregnancy	p. 62 Marcin Warchol p. 66 Boleslaw Pieacha p. 73 Dominika Chorosinka p. 74 Piotr Kaleta p. 74 Piotr Uściński p. 75 Przemyslaw Czarnek p. 76 Józefa Szczurek-Żelazko
5	Parliamentary debate, The Polish Sejm, Warsaw, Poland	March 17, 2021 9 th term 27 th meeting of the Sejm pp. 236-252	Item 22) First reading of the civilian bill "Yes to family, no to gender"	p. 236 Violetta Porowska p. 242 Michał Woź p. 244 Mariusz Każyński p. 245 Janusz Kowalski p. 247 Aleksandra Szczudło p. 248 Agnieszka Kórska p. 249 Agata Katarzyna p. 250 Dominika Chorośńska: p. 251 Beata Strzałka p. 251 Piotr Ustinski
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