

How do Danish politicians invoke sentiment of justice in parliamentary debates concerning sexual crimes? - A sentiment and thematic analysis on rape and non-consensual image distribution

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Abstract

This master's thesis investigates how Danish politicians invoke sentiments of justice in parliamentary debates on rape and non-consensual image distribution between 2014 and 2024.

Employing an *Explanatory Sequential Design*, the study combines quantitative sentiment analysis with qualitative thematic coding to examine both the presence and political use of justice-related emotion in legislative discourse.

In the first phase, a lexicon-based sentiment analysis conducted in Python reveals measurable differences in sentiment polarity across party lines, particularly during moments of legal reform and heightened public attention. Politicians from the red political party block more consistently express positive, victim-oriented sentiments to assert moral leadership, while politicians from the blue political party block display greater variation, often engaging in sceptical or punitive rhetoric.

The second phase involves a thematic analysis in MAXQDA, drawing on both theory-driven and exploratory coding. This analysis uncovers how rhetorical strategies differ across political party blocks: the red political party block emphasizes victim legitimacy and trauma, whereas the blue political party block foregrounds offender rights, legal certainty, and proportionality. Notably, the framing of digital sexual crimes reveals contested hierarchies of victimhood, with digital victims more often portrayed as less deserving. The findings highlight that sentiments of justice function as strategic, symbolic tools in political communication—used to shape public discourse, frame legal reforms, and assert issue ownership in a sensitive and evolving policy domain.

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1. Introduction

In the criminal justice system, sexual based offences are considered especially heinous. The Danish Penal Code dictates per §216 that rape is punishable by up to eight years in prison — twelve years if it involves non-consensual intercourse with a child under the age of twelve. Image sharing without consent, §226, is punishable by up to six years (Baumbach & Elholm, 2024). This master thesis will investigate how Danish politicians invoke the public's sentiments of justice as a way to influence criminal justice policy concerning two sexual crime: rape and the non-consensual image distribution.

1.1 Motivation

Over the past 20 years, the penal sentencing framework has been changed in a more punitive direction as a way to reflect the seriousness of the crime (POV International, 2025; Christensen, 2025; Justitsministeriet, 2025; Feldtmann et al., 2024). In order to understand the growing calls for harsher penalties as a reflection of the seriousness of the crime, it is critical to examine the underlying arguments driving this punitive turn, particularly the emotional responses related to victimhood and perceptions of deservingness. This master thesis will therefore provide an insight into the parliamentary debates that underpin these harsher penalties in Denmark.

As part of the Nordic research project on sentiment of justice (Olesen & Prieur, 2024-2025), this master thesis attempts to offer a scholarly contribution – as well as a temporal scope - to the existing research field by examining the past ten years of Danish parliamentary debates concerning rape and non-consensual image distribution. The master thesis will draw on literature on sex offenders and builds on the theoretical perspective of Christie (1986)'s Ideal Victim conceptualisation. This master thesis intends to explore how politicians might strategically frame perpetrators as victims and thereby challenge the otherwise dichotomic categories of offender and victim as a way to invoke public sentiments of justice. Furthermore, I find it intriguing to examine the discursive and normative distinctions between digital crimes (such as non-consensual image distribution) and “traditional” crimes (such as sexual assault) in the Danish parliamentary debates – especially how emotional and moral weight is attributed differently to each and how this affects the sentiment of justice. I also explore how left- and right-wing parties employ distinct rhetorical framings in the parliamentary debates in order to advance diverging penal objectives based on their ideological standings.

Finally, I am motivated to contribute to develop a framework for systematically capturing how political narratives around sentiment of justice change over time from a developmental and methodological perspective. To do so, I take on the Explanatory Sequential Design (Creswell & Clark, 2018: 147) combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. I use R to web-scrape the Danish parliamentary speeches and apply Python-based filtering techniques Jupyter Notebook to identify the relevant material using keyword lists. Then, I conduct a quantitative sentiment analysis utilising a text-as-data approach, followed by a qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 77-101) in which I manually code the debates in the data analysis software MAXQDA. The explanatory mixed-method approach I have chosen, offers a potentially valuable contribution to the study of sentiment of justice – particularly due to the scarcity of other studies that combines a computational text analysis with an in-depth qualitative coding analysis on this particular data material and specific context.

1.2 Research question

To explore how Danish politicians use sentiment of justice in order to shape legal policy on sexual crimes, this thesis will investigate the following research questions:

RQ1: *To what extent do Danish politicians invoke sentiment of justice in the parliamentary debates regarding rape and the non-consensual image distribution and how does the sentiment score vary across different political parties?*

RQ2: *What strategies do Danish politicians use to invoke sentiments of justice in the parliamentary debates in order to frame legal policy on rape and non-consensual image distribution?*

By looking at a ten-year span (2014-2024) the master thesis will attempt to answer both levels of the research question. Based on existing literature political actors may turn away from the idea of a technocracy and rely more on reference to emotional responses as well as use framing to create “a dangerous other” (Garland, 2001). Alternatively, they may also attempt to justify punitive turns in legal policy by invoking appeals to the public safety, the ideal victim framework (Christie, 1986), as well as the use of deservingness heuristics (Petersen et al., 2010). It is expected that the notion of deterrence to play a part as well. All these rationales are anticipated to be framed as expressions of the broader public sentiment of justice.

1.3 Literature review

An integral part of this master thesis is to get a closer look at what sentiment of justice is and how Danish politicians use this concept to get the shape legal policy on rape and non-consensual image distribution. In conducting this literature review, I utilised the snowball strategy (Harrits et al., 2020: 200-201) identifying relevant sources by tracing citations in key articles. Additionally, I employed the online tool Connected Papers to explore related academic work and thereby expand the scope of the review systematically.

Ryberg (2006) attempts to conceptualise sentiment of justice by dictating that “the sentiment of justice is not a clear and well-defined concept, but a common label for certain normative judgments concerning punishment. While the sentiment of justice is difficult to determine empirically and ethically, it does, however, have a clear rhetorical function in the party-political arena” (Ryberg, 2006: 15-19; Olesen, 2014: 268). This mean that according to Ryberg (2006), sentiment of justice is an elastic concept and that one should use the sentiment of justice as a tool rather than a concept. Another conceptualisation, slightly competing with the previous one, Balvig (2010) attempts to dictate a clear definition of sentiment of justice, and thereby distinguishes between the general sense of justice and the informed sense of justice. The general sense of justice refers to instant and often emotionally driven reactions to criminal cases which are often influenced by media coverage or political rhetoric. This type of sentiment of justice is often correlated with ideological and political beliefs. Opposed to the general sense of justice, the informed sense of justice appears when individuals are fully informed with the context of the case as well as legal context and is the more context-based and detailed-oriented type of sense of justice. This tends to cross ideological lines as individuals’ responses converge when given concrete information about a criminal case and therefore become less ideologically driven in the more reflective mode of judgement (Balvig et al., 2015b).

The study performed by Balvig, Gunnlaugsson, Jerre, Tham, and Kinnunen (2015a) illustrates that when individuals are asked general questions about crime and sentencing, they tend to favour more punitive measures, opposed to when presented with comprehensive information about the specific case, their attitudes are more lenient and nuanced. This suggests that a shift occurs in sense of justice from a general, uninformed sentiment of justice to a more informed and system-trusting perspective when given appropriate case and legal information and context. Another approach to sentiment of justice is through heuristics and motivational needs, as Petersen (2009) displays that category-based

morals heuristics, for instance the idea of a sexual predator, generates severe punitiveness in the individual's response (Petersen, 2009: 223-227). They later shows in Petersen et al. (2010) that individuals often reply on automatic, subconscious, spontaneous heuristics – specifically, deservingness cues – rather than on deliberate, ideological, value-based reasoning. These cues are control, identity, and reciprocity meaning the individual will evaluate whether the recipient in question is responsible for their own situation, whether the recipient in question is perceived as a part of the “in”-group social-wise, and lastly, whether the recipient in question is perceived to be contributing to society or – most importantly, making an effort to do so (Petersen et al., 2010: 114-120). Even though this research is based on a rather small sample size, and is concerning public support for welfare, one could argue that these mechanisms described are applicable to sentiment of justice in legal policy. Just as the public relies on heuristic cues when assessing welfare deservingness, as described by Petersen et al. (2010), similar cues are central to how the public assesses victims and offenders in criminal justice policy – especially emotionally charged crimes types as rape and non-consensual image distribution. Here deservingness logic can be argued to explain public and political perceptions of who is seen as a “true” victim, or as a “real” perpetrator.

Using a political communication approach opposed to the psychological approach by Petersen (2009), Entman (1993) shows through their frame amplification framework how politicians highlights these cues - rather than adding more information, they theorise that with just a few strategic phrases or statistics embedded in the politicians' speeches, strong reactions are evoked and politicians can thereby manipulate their speeches so they become the most salient elements the audiences absorbs (Entman, 1993: 52-56).

The concept of issue ownership provides a valuable lens to understand how politicians engage with and shape justice policy. Starting with Petrocik (1996)'s study, issue ownership refers to the public perception of the fact that certain parties are more competent on specific policy issues. This is traditionally rooted in ideological alignment, however, later on, Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2010) and Walgrave & Nuytemans (2009) has shown that issue ownership can also be strategically pursued through agenda-setting, rhetorical framing, as well as responsiveness to public sentiment. Especially when crime policy becomes politized, parties often compete for issue salience and legitimacy resulting in moral narratives as well as sentiment of justice becoming a crucial instrument to claim at least temporary ownership on justice-related matters. In this way, as Edelman (1988) puts it, politicians might amplify the public outrage, emphasise the innocence of victims, or invoke symbolic cases to align themselves with public demands for more punitive measures.

Building on the idea of framing as a political strategy as well as the idea of deservingness, Lynch (2002) demonstrates a disgust-framework using contamination metaphors to frame perpetrators as morally contaminated threats that pollutes, disgusts, and is seen as an invasion of the bodily sovereignty (Lynch, 2002: 17-21). Larcombe (2002) supplies the idea of deservingness as a political framing strategy by building on Christie (1986)'s ideal victim concept and in this way highlights how legal and political discourses tend to favour victims who fall under the "ideal" victim category. Those are victims who are morally innocent, fits societal expectations of what a victim ought to be, and lastly, have a clear, unknown perpetrator (Larcombe, 2002: 133-137). In this way, Larcombe (2002) adds to the idea that only victims who possess certain attributes are deserving of compensation or legal justice. In Sweden, Lundström (2016) advances the victimisation literature and adds the concept of a secondary victimisation of the collective identity. Lundström (2016) elucidates how victims are not only represented as individuals, but as a collective identity. This collective identity is shaped through cultural "scripts" about who "deserves" to be seen as a "real" victim. The reinforcement of deservingness-based distinctions as well as the framing of victims as not individuals but a broader collective identity seem to reinforce the victimisation whereas victims are re-victimised psychologically, socially, or even symbolically (Lundström, 2016: 27-31). In this regard, recent scholarship (Killean et al., 2022; Mckinlay & Lavis, 2020) has highlighted the shifting nature of sexual crimes in the digital age and the connected challenges this poses for societal recognition, legal classification, and victim legitimacy. Mckinlay & Lavis (2020) show that victims of image distribution without consent with a specific reference to revenge porn are routinely perceived as promiscuous and partly to blame, especially when their images contain a higher level of nudity, or when it is informed that the victims have voluntarily shared the images in the first place – not necessarily intending for further distribution (Mckinlay & Lavis, 2020: 386-390). The study illustrates how there is a strong correlation between endorsement of traditional gender roles and victim-blaming attitudes, demonstrating deservingness heuristics systematically disadvantage victims of digital sexual abuse – opposed to victims of traditional sexual abuse (Mckinlay & Lavis, 2020: 389-392). Supporting this, Killean et al. (2022) argues that digital forms of sexual crime such as non-consensual image distribution– and so-called revenge porn, do not only replicate traditional harms but augment them through permanence, visibility, and repetition without physical proximity. This creates a "cumulative and sustained" victimisation that is qualitatively distinct from traditional forms (Killean et al., 2022: 10-11). This is specifically due to four factors; permanence of harm, publicity and scale, repetition and loss of closure, and lastly, the

blurring of victimhood responsibility: digital sexual crime is more public, more enduring, and more socially complex, and often challenges normative understandings who might deserve justice.

While extensive research exists on both political framing as well as public sentiment of justice, studies specifically investigating how politicians mobilise such sentiments to shape legal policy are notably scarce. This master thesis attempts to fill in the literature gap by exploring the underlying rationales in parliamentary speeches during debates in the Danish Parliament, i.e., Folketinget.

1.4 Research context

In Denmark, rape was criminalised in 1866 by the 1866 Penal Code¹ punishing the perpetrator with a minimum sentence of four years of penal labour. Before this law, rape was addressed primarily as a violation against the honour of the victim's family. It was frequently assumed that the victim was a woman and the perpetrator a man. The death sentence as punishment for the rape could be altered in situations where the perpetrator married the victim or in other ways compensated her (Koefoed, 2025). In 1981, the Penal Code was altered to include sexual acts committed threats as well as including non-vaginal forced intercourse which in result expanded the law to be gender-neutral and same-sex rape inclusive (Olesen, 1980). By November 2020, the Danish Parliament passed The Consent Law² widely supported by a broad majority (Vestergaard, 2020) which redefined rape as a criminal offence as it focuses on the absence of consent – regardless of violence or coercion which has been a strong focal point previously in the Danish Penal Code. The legal amendment which was reformulated to reflect the individual's right to sexual self-determination came into effect 1st of January 2021 and was based on the Criminal Law Council³'s 2020 report on a consent-based definition of rape (Justitsministeriet, 2020b).

The legal framework addressing non-consensual image distribution has, over the past few years, struggled to adapt to the technological advances in society as well as the societal awareness in terms of the seriousness of the crime. For long, Denmark has not passed a law that specifically addresses the digital sharing of intimate material without consent. However, §264d, which criminalises unauthorised distribution of images and information in relation to individuals' private affairs, was already

¹ Almindelig Borgelig Straffelov

² Samtykkeloven

³ Straffelovsrådet

in place and could be used as a general provision, even if the content in question was not sexual in nature. In 2000, §226 was established which criminalises the act of recording sexual material, such as images or video of individuals under the age of 18 (the legal age in Denmark) with the intent to distribute or sell the material (Baumbach & Elholm, 2024). This offence was originally codified under §230 in the Danish Penal Code, but was changed in 2013 and again in 2023 to clarify that lawful pornographic material must involve consenting adults. These revisions aimed to eliminate any implication that minors could lawfully consent to the production of pornographic material (Vestergaard, 2024). While §226 reinforces the protection of children and adolescents from sexual exploitation, it does not explicitly protect adults for the non-consensual image distribution which is why such provisions are covered by §264d. In 2018, the Danish Penal Code embraced significant amendments which were aimed at strengthening the legal response to the intimate image distribution without consent also known as revenge porn⁴. This urges for a legal adaption to the rapid technological advances infiltrating the social lives of individuals was catalysed by the so-called “Umbrella case”, which over 1,000 young individuals were charged with distributing two sexually explicit videos and an image that were being circulated by social media users across Denmark (McGann & Mortensen, 2018).

⁴ Hævnporno

2. Theory

In the following subsections, the theoretical frameworks used throughout this research will be presented. The first theory presented is Garland (2001)'s theory on Culture of Control including a complementary part of (Pratt, 2007)'s theory of Penal Populism. Then, Christie (1986)'s ideal victim framework and Petersen (2009)'s deservingness heuristics will be presented.

All theories can be seen as complementary rather than competing theories as they offer different perspectives on the framing and legitimisation of punitive legal reforms as well as social construction of victim legitimacy in relation to sentencing. Especially, (Garland, 2001)'s theory on culture of control and (Pratt, 2007)'s theory on penal populism are similar, however they are still distinct analytically. While culture of control is beneficial to explaining macro-level structural and societal shifts in punishment and institutions, penal populism has its strength at explaining political rhetoric as well as political strategies that enable punitive penal change.

2.1 The Culture of control

The theory of Culture of Control by Garland (2001) is centred on why punishment has changed by tracing deep shifts in governance, institutions, and risk management in contemporary society. Garland (2001) presents a foundational theory for understanding how crime control and penal policy have evolved under the pressures of late modernity. Offering a macro-sociological theory that traces back in history, Garland (2001) identifies a historical rupture during the post-war penal welfare consensus – which had previously singled in on rehabilitation, social reintegration, and the handling of crime as a social problem rather than a public safety issue. By tracing back, it is discovered how the post-war penal welfare consensus began to unravel during the late 20th century. The causes of this shift were connected to the social, economic, and political changes leading to what is now known as “culture of control” (Garland, 2001: 1-3). According to this theory, contemporary society has entered a new phase of crime governance characterised by a dual logic: the responsabilisation strategy and the punitive strategy (Garland, 2001: 124-127).

“[T]he state now governs through crime both by responsabilising individuals and by isolating those who cannot be responsabilised” (Garland, 2001: 177–179).

This means that the responsibilisation strategy seeks to shift the responsibility for the prevention of crimes from the state to individuals as well as communities and in this way encourage individuals to manage their own risks, whereas the punitive strategy reflects the growing use of incarceration, a punitive turn on sentencing, as well as symbolic legislation aimed at controlling “the dangerous other” (Garland, 2001: 183). Garland (2001)’s punitive strategy is complementary to what Pratt (2007) terms as “penal populism”; a political approach in which criminal justice policy is shaped less by expert advice and empirical evidence, and more by appeals to public emotion and a general sentiment of justice often rooted deeply in fear, outrage, and a desire for punishment (Pratt, 2007: 3; Roberts et al., 2003). Penal populism often arises in response to high-profile media crimes or emotionally charged crimes where politicians invoke public sentiment to justify penal measures (Pratt, 2007: 3). Rather than aiming to reduce crime through effective policy, penal populism tends to prioritise popularity and symbolic alignment with public opinion, often relying on opinion polls to legitimise punitive action (Bottoms, 1995: 13; Newburn, 1997; Pratt, 2007: 13).

Garland (2001)’s two strategies, responsibilisation and the punitive strategy, work in tandem: for regular individuals in society, the state promotes responsibilisation through the responsibilisation strategy encouraging each individual to act cautiously and reduce their own risks. On the other hand, through the punitive strategy, the state invokes punitive exclusion stating that these “others” are dangerous and cannot be trusted and must be punished and incapacitated away from society. Garland (2001) points out that this new regime is deeply embedded in the structural conditions of late modernity, marked by increasing economic insecurity, fragmented social solidarities, as well as declining trust in institutions (Garland, 2001: 76-78). The conditions of contemporary society reinforce the anxieties in society about crime and disorder, meaning that individuals in society feel more afraid, uncertain, or unsafe, even if actual crime rates are stable or even declining.

While Garland (2001) focuses on institutional transformations and changes in governance, Pratt (2007) draws particular attention to the emotional and communicative dimensions of crime policy. Penal populism is not necessarily a strategic vote-seeking tool (Strom, 1990), but rather a broader political realignment in which expert-driven policymaking is displaced by emotional narratives that resonate with a public moral mood (Sparks, 2000). These narratives are not necessarily grounded in systematic assessments of crime, but express a general sense of societal decline and disorder (Girling et al., 2000). Penal populism flourishes on division rather than consensus, framing society as split between the morally righteous majority and an out-of-touch elite that is accused of failing to act (Bottoms, 1995). In both Garland (2001) and Pratt (2007)’s account, the symbolic role of the victim

becomes central. Victims are no longer seen as individual citizens harmed by crime but as collective figures of moral suffering, whose elevation legitimises a retributive turn in policy (Garland, 2001: 18; Pratt, 2007: 37-41).

According to Garland (2001) politicians might address growing public anxiety through a strategy called risk-based governance. This is a type of crime control that is more focused on identifying, managing, and minimising risk rather than addressing or understanding the underlying causes of crime. This referral to actuarial logic – the use of statistical techniques to assess and manage groups according to probabilities rather than factual realities – reflects a broader shift from diagnosing deviance to managing risk distributions (Garland, 2001: 170-172). Lastly, risk-based governance will also favour visible forms of punishment, prioritising penal practices that not only punish the “dangerous other” but also signal state control, reassure the public, and perform moral boundaries – not with deterrence in mind, but rather to serve symbolic and political functions.

Consequently, the theoretical work *Culture of Control* entails several expectations about how crime control functions in contemporary society. The theory predicts that criminal justice will no longer be based on experts and is no longer an insulated policy domain. Rather, criminal justice becomes highly visible and a politicised legal arena shaped by media, emotional narratives of the victim and the “dangerous other,” while dominated by populist demands (Garland, 2001: 10). They predict that the role of the victim will especially be significant, as by using populist rhetoric, victims gain symbolic power and are exploited by politicians as they can frame victims as the moral arbiters of justice who serve as justification for an increase in punitive measures (Garland, 2001: 142). In this way, the visibility of victims and the emotional resonance they elicit in the public could supersede procedural fairness based on judicial principles as well as perpetrator rehabilitation.

Garland (2001)’s theory of the culture of control offers a structural and institutional lens that highlights the significance of crime control as a cultural and political project – not just a legal or technical one. The symbolic use of penal policy with a distinct focus on invoking victims and “common sense” morality might have explanatory power when it comes to understanding when politicians do not merely respond to objective crime trends but also engage in public performance to justify punitive measures.

2.2 The ideal victim

The concept of the “ideal victim” plays a powerful role in how sexual crimes are constructed and responded to in both public discourse and legal policy. Christie (1986) describes the “ideal victim” as:

“[A] person or a category of individuals who – when hit by crime – most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim” (Christie, 1986: 18).

In this way, the narrative of the “classical rape” with the “ideal victim” falls under the “little red riding hood”-doctrine as it will be used as a cautionary tale to tell the morale of the story of the innocent, pure, morally upright, socially responsible, and blameless victim whose vulnerability got preyed on by the perpetrator – the “big bad wolf”.

Larcombe (2002) builds on Christie (1986)’s theory and presents this story of the “valorised victim” – a constructed figure with inherently stereotypical female traits and repeatedly referred to by the use of feminine pronouns:

“[T]he valourised victim speaks of a woman

as a sex and reproduces the generalised construct of the ‘natural’, biological woman vulnerable to, and physically weaker than, her male counterpart. Although the victim in this sense is everywoman, she’s not any woman. Being a liberal construct, she appreciates the risk of rape and takes all sensible and logical precautions to avoid creating the opportunity for such an attack. She modifies her behaviour to exhibit caution about entering sexual interactions; she exhibits a reasonable suspicion of all men until their true character can be observed; she fear being out of control” (Larcombe, 2002: 133)

Even Christie (1986) acknowledges that it is near impossible to find this ideal-typology of the “ideal victim” in reality as most of reported rapes, the cases do not fit the ideal victim description (Christie, 1986: 18-19). However, this gendered idea of a victim of rape still exists and might concurrently be reproduced by media outlets as well as by politicians as a rhetoric device. The “ideal victim” undermines the existence of any victim-perpetrator relations that diverges from the relatively narrow, heteronormative conceptualisation of rape presented. This includes but is not limited to cases of same-sex sexual violence, female perpetrators, male victims, victim-agency as well as perpetrator responsibility.

With the “ideal victim” theory, Christie (1986) attempts to explain why certain victims of rape are regarded as more legitimate and deserving than others based on a set of social and cultural requirements.

To obtain the status of an “ideal victim” in society and be a universal understanding of a heroine in a martyrion sense, one must fulfil the following criteria: First, the victim must be weak and unable to defend themselves from the tragic sexual assault. Secondly, at the time of the crime, the victim must be involved in an activity that reflects the behaviour of an innocent respectable citizen. Third, the victim must be situated at a location during the time of the crime, where they cannot be blamed for being at, as well as at a respectable and explainable time during the day. A fourth criterium is about the offender: the offender must be strong, large, and with clear bad intentions and morals as this creates a clear dichotomy between the weakness of the victim and the monster-like power of the perpetrator. Fifth, is that the offender and the victim must have no personal relation eliminating any possibility of a shared responsibility for the rape (Christie, 1986: 18-19).

The “ideal victim”-framework might be central to understanding how sentiment of justice is mobilised in contemporary criminal policy. In this way, politicians might strategically invoke victim narratives in order to shape legal policy concerning sexual crimes. By appealing to the image of the “ideal victim” or the “valorised victim”, politicians may strengthen their claims to represent “the people” and thereby assert control over an emotionally resonant political issue, even if the resulting policies are not grounded in the complexities of real-world victimisation.

2.3 Deservingness heuristics

The concept of heuristics encapsulates the idea that individuals use mental shortcuts in order to

“make decision rules that quickly produce social and moral judgement, based on limited information” (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992: 182; Petersen, 2009: 367).

It is suggested that these heuristics are deeply rooted in evolved psychological mechanisms which are designed to facilitate cooperation and resource sharing within groups in society – transferred into modern society context, these mechanisms manifest as snap judgements about who deserves help, often based on category-based inferences and typecasts (Petersen, 2009: 368-370)

A study done on public attitudes towards welfare policies, finds that individuals utilise certain cues to assess the worthiness of a welfare recipient (Petersen et al., 2010). In this way, the researchers

attempt to illustrate the influence of deservingness in public perception, and how this manipulates whether they think individuals are deserving of assistance. These cues include factors such as the recipient's control over their situation, the recipients' level of need as well as adherence to social norms. This heuristic operates automatically guiding individuals to make instant judgements about an individuals' deservingness status without extensive deliberation and are therefore more reflexes based on bias more than a reasoned evaluation. The study shows that when individuals are presented with certain information cues highlighting an recipient's deservingness, their support for, in this case, welfare policies increases – regardless of the individual's own ideological beliefs (Petersen et al., 2010: 42).

The theory of deservingness heuristics could provide a valuable framework for the understanding of how politicians might manipulate the public by framing victims to be more or less deserving in the debates on criminal justice policy. One might argue that the transferability between welfare policy and criminal justice policy is rather high: Just as individuals assess welfare recipients' deservingness, individuals may similarly evaluate crime victims based on the same cues. Much like Christie (1986)'s "ideal victim" it could be information cues about the victim's behaviour prior to the crime, the victim's relationship to the perpetrator – overall, cues that align with broader societal stereotypes.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design and strategy

This master thesis will be grounded in the research design called “The explanatory sequential design” (Creswell & Clark, 2018: 147). This approach is known for starting with a quantitative method to identify patterns or correlations, followed by a qualitative method to help explain or interpret the identified findings in greater depth (Creswell & Clark, 2018: 156-157).

The following methods are adopted to answer the research questions: The first research question will be answered using Python in Jupyter Notebook, where a sentiment analysis will be conducted. The second research question will be explored through a qualitative method, namely deductive thematic analysis in MAXQDA, where the Danish politicians’ rhetoric and framing will be analysed. The following section will delve into the methodological considerations and process behind this master thesis as well as provide a relevant empirical context to help readers understand the data and methodological choices made in this thesis. In details: In the first phase, a quantitative text-as-data method is used to conduct a lexicon-based sentiment analysis of a corpus of speeches from Danish parliamentary debates on rape and non-consensual image distribution. This allows for the identification of patterns in sentiment use, including frequency, polarity, and temporal trends across parties and legislative periods. These quantitative results may serve as the basis for investigating said debates in-depth qualitatively during the second phase.

The second phase of the explanatory sequential design consists of a qualitative analysis. This is conducted through the thematic coding analysis and allows for interpretation of how politicians might strategically use sentiment of justice to mobilise the public in the political debates. This phase draws on a mix of predefined codes from the theoretical frameworks; penal populism, the culture of control, and deservingness heuristics, as well as approach the thematic coding in an exploratory manner using open coding. This approach will enrich the master thesis with a nuanced understanding of the political and emotional narratives that underpin legal change.

To visualise this research design, a chart presenting the research flow can be seen below.

Figure 2: Research workflow

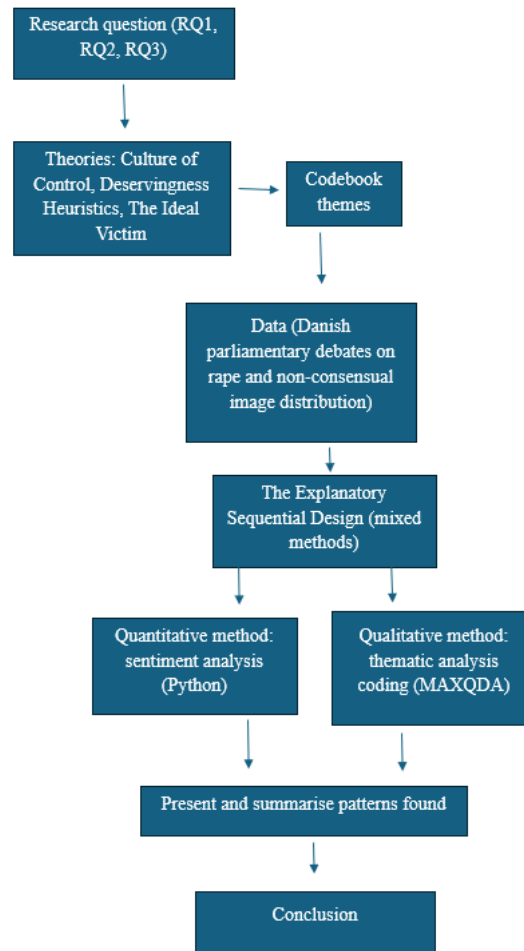


Figure 2 shows the workflow: Based on the presented research questions, the theories that are evaluated to be able to highlight and enrich the research questions best are chosen. Using the chosen theories, themes are identified and implemented in the codebook. Preprocessing the parliamentary data, subsequently, this leads to the use of the explanatory sequential design which unfolds two different analyses: the quantitative sentiment analysis, and the qualitative thematic analysis. This culminates in an analysis where results from both analyses are presented and summarised. Lastly, the findings of the thesis are synthesised in a concluding chapter that summarises the overall contributions of the study.

3.2 Measuring relevant concepts

The concept of sentiment of justice is inherently intangible. Ironically, this is the reason for the exact existence of this master thesis: to attempt to operationalise “sentiment of justice.” Yet it remains a phenomenon that is difficult to define with precision. Rather than treating it as a fixed or universally agreed-upon variable, this analysis approaches it as a fluid, politically constructed sentiment. This master thesis examines how politicians might invoke and shape this sentiment through speeches in Danish parliamentary debates —often strategically—to legitimise punitive legal reforms and to align themselves with perceived public opinion. In this way, the “sentiment of justice” is understood less as an objective measure of fairness, and more as a rhetorical and normative tool deployed in political discourse. Despite this, this master thesis will attempt to measure sentiment of justice through a quantitative approach where a sentiment analysis will be conducted. This will focus on a quantified measure for sentiment (a calculated sentiment score) capturing positive and negative word balances in speeches referring to justice, crime, punishment, and victims as well as identify emotionally charged rhetoric by politicians. While it will not manage to measure sentiment of justice directly, the sentiment analysis will measure sentiment of justice as a proxy constructed through language. Here, a positive sentiment score might indicate that the speaker perceives a law, policy, or legal outcome as fair, just, or morally appropriate—for example, by expressing support for legal reforms or affirming institutional legitimacy. Opposed to a negative sentiment score, which might indicate dissatisfaction, perceived injustice, or moral critique—such as accusations of unfair treatment, failure to protect rights, or condemnation of legal institutions.

To measure the politicians’ usage of strategic rhetoric, the master thesis will approach this through the qualitative approach a thematic coding analysis. This analysis will focus on different types of argumentations and appeal to emotions in various ways. This includes how sentiment is tied to policy justification; how sentiment is used to signal toughness or empathy; to delegitimise or support opponents; or to mobilise public support in different ways.

3.3 Empirical context

A clear understanding of the Danish parliamentary process is essential for analysing the parliamentary data and interpreting the results. Below is a list of relevant parties in the Danish Parliament including their abbreviation letter used in the parliamentary debates and in this master thesis.

Table 1: Parties in the Danish Parliament, Folketinget

PARTY	ORIGINAL PARTY NAME AND PARLIAMENTARY ABBREVIATION LETTER	
BLUE PARTY BLOCK		
	Left the Liberal Party	Venstre (V)
	The Moderates	Moderaterne (M)
	The Conservatives People’s Party	Det Konservative Folkeparti (KF)
	Liberal Alliance	Liberal Alliance (LA)
	The New Right	Nye Borgerlige (NB)
	The Danish People’s Party	Dansk Folkeparti (DF)
	The Denmark Democrats	Danmarks Demokraterne (DD)
RED PARTY BLOCK		
	The Social Democrats	Social Demokratiet (S)
	Socialist People’s Party	Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF)
	The Red-Green Alliance	Enhedslisten (EL)
	The Social Liberal Party	Radikale Venstre (RV)
	The Alternative	Alternativet (ALT)

The legislative process in Denmark is structured through a series of formal stages within Folketinget - the Danish Parliament. According to the Danish Constitution, the legislative power is held jointly by the Parliament and the government in Denmark. This means that a law must be passed by the Danish Parliament and subsequently be signed by a minister. Both ministers and members of Parliament can introduce a bill that can either propose a new law or, alternatively, suggest an alteration in an already existing law, but it is the governing parties that sets the agenda for the legislative processes. This is largely due to the ministries' greater access to legal expertise and other relevant subject-matter knowledge – resources that are more readily available through civil servants in the ministries than within the Parliament itself. Ministers in the Danish Parliament typically propose a little over 200 bills each year most of which are passed. Private bills – meaning bills that are introduced by Members of Parliament – are in contrast less common and are less often passed (Christiansen & Skjæveland, 2016: 106-107). For the most part, the parties that support the Danish government (by not ousting said government in question) are satisfied with the laws that the government propose, and several of the bills proposed consists of technical or structural changes that will not have greater significance for the political discourse.

In Danish Parliament, bills go through three readings in Parliament (Christiansen & Skjæveland, 2016: 109-114). During the first reading of the bill, which is the reading this master thesis focuses on,

the spokesperson for each party presents their perspective on the proposal for the parliamentary groups. The speeches are delivered in order of party size, meaning that parties with the most seats in Parliament speak first, while those with fewer seats present last. This presentation of the party's position on the proposal can either be countered or endorsed by other Members of Parliament through short and concise interjections. After the first reading debate, the proposal is typically referred to a committee, where there is an opportunity to send inquiries to the minister. During this period, the committee also receives input from citizens and interest groups, called deputations (Ibid.).

The second reading follows the first reading after the committee has issued report. Here, a vote may be held, and a final decision can be made on the resolution proposal – including any proposed amendments to the bill. Lastly, at the third reading the Parliament will perform a final consideration and consider any proposed amendments. Government amendments can serve as a way to address the substantive objections raised during the different readings in the legislative process. After this, a final vote on the bill as a whole will occur. This means, at this stage, the bill is either confirmed or rejected in its final form.

Motions⁵ on the other hand, are proposals for the Danish Parliament that includes a clear formulated political message encouraging the parliament to act on an issue by proposing a bill. Motions undergo the same debate process in Parliament as bills, but only go through two readings opposed to three. Motions are often introduced opposed to bills by Members of Parliament due to the fact that motions are less time consuming and less comprehensive to produce (Folketinget).

The empirical data for this master thesis consists of transcribed parliamentary speeches from the political debates of the first reading (both bills and motions) in the Danish Parliament, Folketinget.

Below is the political timeline for the documents investigated in this master thesis.

⁵ Behandlingsforslag

Table 2: Political timeline

Time period		Prime minister	Governing party/parties	Opposition parties	Date of government transition
Start	End				
Oct. 2011	June 2015	Helle Thorning-Schmidt (S)	S, RV (SF left government by Feb. 2014)	V, DF, EL, SF (post exit in Feb. 2014), K, LA	3 rd of Oct. 2011
Jun. 2015	Nov. 2016	Lars Løkke Rasmussen (V)	V (minority government)	S, RV, DF, EL, SF, K, LA	28 th of June 2015
Nov. 2016	June 2019	Lars Løkke Rasmussen (V)	V, LA, K	S, RV, EL, SF, DF, ALT	28 th of Nov. 2016
June 2019	Dec. 2022	Mette Frederiksen (S)	S (single-party minority government supported by other parties)	V, K, DF, LA, NB, ALT	27 th of June 2019
Dec. 2022	-	Mette Frederiksen (S)	S, V, M	EL, SF, RV, LA, K, DF	15 th of Dec. 2022

3.4 Data collection and processing

The data collection strategy was to use a combination of a pre-existing dataset and self-scraped data. The foundation for this thesis-project as well as the data structure is derived from the `parl_speech_v2` (Rauh & Schwalbach, 2020). This contains the full corpus of Danish parliamentary debates from 1997 to 2018. The `parl_speech_v2` dataset contained 772,180 speeches. I enriched the `parl_speech_v2` dataset by scraping XML-files using a R-script with parliamentary transcribed speeches from January 2019 to December 2024 from the Parliament of Denmark's website. Consequently, the full corpus of the dataset for used in this master thesis consists of 1,046,250 transcribed debate speeches from 2014-2024. As a methodological consideration I chose to remove all speeches by chairpersons, as these often do not offer plenty of information as they are mostly procedural and the frequency of chairperson speeches is high – therefore demands significant computing power.

After compiling the full dataset that will be used in the thesis-project, the data was processed in Jupyter Notebook using Python. The pre-processing included tokenizing, converting the text into lower case, lemmatisation, removal of stop words to the text string-variables, as well as filtering the text by frequency resulting in a Bag of Words numerical representation of the text (Grimmer et al., 2022a:

48-57). A Bag of Words is a way to visually represent the debate speeches converted into numerical vectors based on word frequencies disregarding grammar and word order but preserving multiplicity. As a part of the data processing, the dataframe was restructured to retain only the variables significant to this study's research objectives ["date", "agenda", "speaker", "party", "text", "speechnumber", and "chair"]. Subsequently, the dataframe was filtered to only include the transcribed parliamentary debates from the previous ten years (2014-2024) and only debates from the first reading in the Danish Parliament. As the primary focus of this master thesis is on legal policy in Danish context, all the North Atlantic seats in the Danish Parliament have been removed from the dataset as well as their debate speeches. This includes the following parties: Siumut (S), Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA), Javnaðarflokkurin (J), Sambandsflokkurin (U), and Tjóðveldi (E). Speeches held by independent members⁶ of the Danish Parliament have also been removed from the dataset together with their speeches.

A sub-dataset was created from the filtered dataset which is comprised of debates relevant to the two different thematic dictionaries (implemented as lists in Python). These dictionaries are developed based on vignettes from the NfSK research project "Sentiment on Justice in the Nordic Countries" (Olesen & Prieur, 2024-2025). This master thesis is part of said project where five types of crimes are investigated (rape, assault, narcotics, hate speech, and non-consensual image distribution), however after exploring the debate speeches in all five crime-categories, two categorised (rape and image distribution without consent) was singled out and is now the focus in this master thesis. Rape includes - but not limited to - aggravated sexual assault, statutory rape, marital rape, discussion of consent law, sexual child exploitation. Indecent exposure will not be considered within scope. non-consensual image distribution includes both distribution of sexual images and video material without consent.

Since this master thesis is part of a larger Nordic research project on sentiment of justice, the data processing has been done at the same time, whereas the scope of data relevant for this thesis was extracted. After the first round of extraction of parliamentary debates from the first reading in parliament, approximately 10,000 debates were extracted accumulated from both thematic dictionaries (rape and non-consensual image distribution). As I concluded that the amount of individual speeches was too large given the timeframe of the master thesis since I would have to manually code the speeches qualitatively, I reviewed the list of words in Python that determines which speeches are extracted. Through a long process of adding relevant words and removing words that do not extract a high frequency of speeches in order to reduce the amount of unique agenda points, I ended up with

⁶ Løgængere

the two lists of words below. The expansion of the list increases recall but typically reduces precision as it also captures more irrelevant or more loosely related debates (Goodfellow et al., 2016: 418-419).

Figure 1: Final overview of thematic lists for extracting parliamentary debates (translated)⁷

```
rape_vignette=["consent law", "rape", "to rape", "sexual assault", "sexual violence", "sexual offender",  
"sex offender", "sexual violation", "§216"]
```

```
non-cons_image_dist_vignette=["image sharing", "image sharing without consent", "illegal image  
sharing", "abuse material", "revenge porn", "doxxing", "intimate images", "nude images", "sharing of  
nude images", "digital violation", "sex images", "cyberbullying", "child sexual abuse material", "§264d",  
"§232", "Viborg folder", "Umbrella case", "child sexual abuse material", "child pornography"]
```

The above lists in Python resulted in 1,168 speeches from debates about rape and 116 speeches from debates about the image distribution. The disparity of the amount of debates on rape and debates on non-consensual image distribution might be because non-consensual image distribution is relatively new on the agenda in Denmark. While rape has a long history as a subject of legislative attention in Denmark, non-consensual image distribution only gained explosive formal recognition with the criminalisation of “revenge porn” in 2018 through the introduction of §264d in the Danish Penal Code. This regulation in the judicial legislation might originate from the political and public debate intensified and gained momentum from the Viborg Folder-case in 2015 as well as the Umbrella-case in 2018, which catalysed demands for legal reform.

The Viborg folder⁸ refers to a large-scale case of non-consensual image distribution involving a digital folder found on an USB stick of intimate photographic material of underage girls from the Viborg municipality in Denmark. The images within the folder was shared and sold among local boys which resulted in the folder growing over time to include hundreds of images often categorised by the names and schools of the underage girls depicted (Bjerregaard, 2016). Likewise, the Umbrella Case, two years later in 2018 involved over 1,000 Danish adolescents who were charged with distributing exploitation image material of children⁹ after sharing explicit videos depicting minors who engaged in sexual acts. The name of the case is derived from the police operation’s codename, and the scale of it was unprecedented which marked it as the largest case of non-consensual image distribution¹⁰ in

⁷ See original list in Danish in Appendix 1

⁸ Viborg-mappen

⁹ Called child pornography back in 2018

¹⁰ This crime category includes video material as well in this master thesis

Danish history (Lagoni, 2019; Geigenberger, 2018). Another reason as to why the image distribution list in Python accumulated less debates than rape in this master thesis might be because digital crimes such as digital image distribution remain more difficult to politicise in sustainable ways as they are often less visible, more diffuse, less researched, and lack the immediate physical violence that typically fuels long-term political mobilisation.

Regular expressions (Grimmer et al., 2022a) were employed on the lists in Python to match not only exact words from the list but also their morphological variants. This means that the word “voldtægt” (“rape”) was used to identify words that share the same stem such as “voldtægtsperson” (“rapist”), “voldtægtsoffer” (“rape victim”), “voldtægter” (“rapes” in plural). This function allows for the inclusion of various word forms sharing the same stem ensuring a more comprehensive capture of relevant terms in the text corpus.

As a methodical decision, each debate will be allowed to be extracted more than once as this reflects the structure and nuances of language – that language is not categorically structured. Therefore, a predominantly positive debate about the consent law may also contain words that are negatively coded, such as rape, for instance. Additionally, it is also possible to calculate a normalised word count sentiment score, which will account for the difference between long and short speeches and thus will help balance an overestimation of the frequency of certain words (as would occur when one debate is counted multiple times in different lists). Lastly, it will allow for an understanding of the linguistic nuance in the debates, as one will be able to show that different sentiment scores (a dichotomic variable that is either negative or positive) emerge in different contexts. Consequently, this means that both the word consent and rape can appear in the same debate, but depending on the context, the sentiment analysis will result in different sentiment scores.

3.5 Quantitative method: Sentiment analysis

The lexicon-based sentiment analysis was performed in Jupyter Notebook using Python on 1,284 speeches. This analysis is bounded in a word counting method in which the presence and frequency of words from a predefined list is used as a proxy to assess the overall emotional tone of each debate (Grimmer et al., 2022b: 178). First, it involved the use of two predefined lexicode and sentiment dictionaries from GitHub – one for positive words and one for negative words (Rask, 2023). Furthermore, using the previously generated Bag of Words (Grimmer et al., 2022a) representing all the

debates, words were matched against the positive and negative word lists. In case a word from the debate speech appeared in either list, it was extracted and recorded as a sentiment scoring.

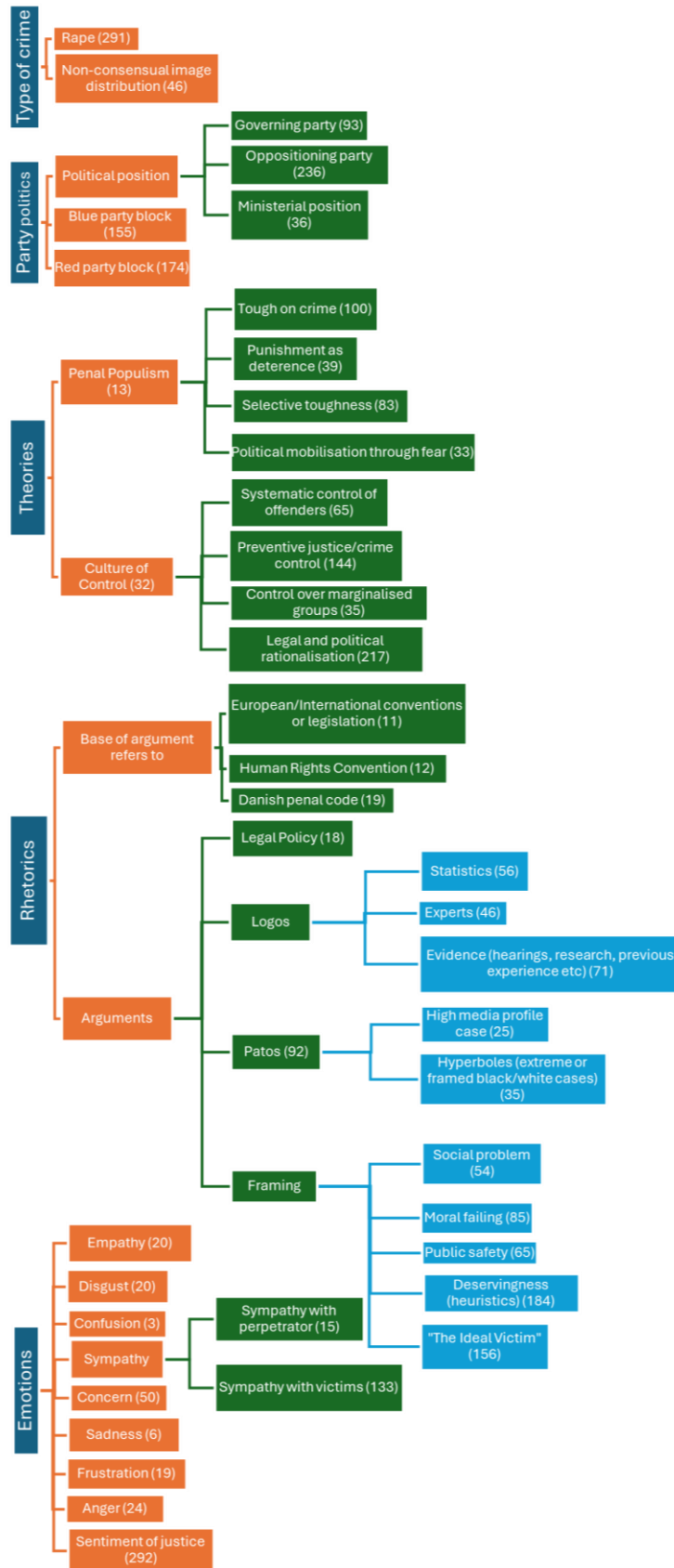
The sentiment score is calculated for each debate based on the relative count of positive words and negative words. A positive score indicates a speech with a predominance of positively charged words whereas, opposingly, a negative score indicates a speech with a predominance of negatively charged words. In case of a score of zero, the speech contains a balance between negatively and positively charged words. Only single words of sufficient length were included to ensure semantic clarity, and the sentiment score for each speech was calculated as the normalised difference between the frequency of positive and negative words. This makes it possible to compare sentiment across debates of varying lengths and intensities. Moreover, since the parliamentary debates consists of speeches with a large variety in lengths, it was necessary to ensure that speeches of varying lengths were weighed equally. Because of this, the sentiment scores were normalised by the total number of matched sentiment words. This prevents longer speeches from disproportionately influencing the sentiment distribution and allows for comparability across all speeches in the debates. The resulting score functions as an indicator of the degree to which political speech is emotionally charged in either a positive or negative direction when discussing legislation concerning the crimes-types rape and non-consensual image distribution.

3.6 Qualitative method: Thematic analysis

For the qualitative part of the master thesis, all speeches were manually coded in MAXQDA. They are all from debates either concerning a legal bill or motion during first reading on rape or image distribution legislation specifically (e.g. “L 85 – Bill to amend the Penal Code (consent-based definition of rape)”). Alternatively, they are from a mention of rape or image distribution as an example in debate with another legislation focus (e.g. immigration policy). The latter case is because sometimes, rape serves as a rhetoric instrument to support broader political arguments (e.g. “we don’t want those monsters who rape little girls in the country”¹¹) - which might be significant to the analysis. Figure 2 shows the list of codes and the frequency of each code. This is a product of a mixed open/deductive theory-driven coding. The methodology behind it will be explicated after the figure.

¹¹ A representational but not factual quote from the debates coded

Figure 2: List of codes



As a methodical approach, the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 77-101) was performed on the 1,284 transcribed speeches to identify themes from the parliamentary debates on rape and non-consensual image distribution. The analysis began a very brief and quick skim reading of all the transcripts to familiarise myself with the data. Through notetaking during the skim-reading, this resulted in several initial codes being identified throughout this process. These initial codes were produced through systematically coding interesting features of the data and were, for instance, “sides with victim”, “shows empathy towards victim”, or “describes traumatic part of rape focusing on victim”.

After the initial run-through, the initial codes were grouped into codes representing broader potential themes. For instance, the examples of the initial code became a broader code called “sympathy”. Furthermore, when reviewing the broader themes coded, some were altered and some discarded. The code “sympathy” was refined and sectioned into one broader code with two subcodes: “sympathy with victim” and “sympathy with perpetrator” as distinctions in sympathy were identified within the broader code. Lastly, codes for broader themes in correlation with theory were defined and named, attempting to clearly articulate what each theme captures and how it related to this master thesis. Some of the identified codes were, for instance, “selective toughness” and “systematic control of offenders”, the former categorised under the “penal populism” main code and the latter under the “culture of control” main code.

Table 3 shows an overview of the relevant highlighted codes describing what the code contains. For full table, see Appendix 2.

Table 3: Overview of Coding Scheme

Code	Scope of code
Theories	
Penal Populism	
Tough on crime	Populist rhetoric used by politicians to display seriousness about a punitive turn
Punishment as deterrence	The framing of punishment as a way to deter other potential deviants
Selective toughness	Legal punitiveness aimed to target particular groups (e.g. gang members, paedophiles, non-citizen offenders)
Political mobilisation through fear	Policymakers utilise public fear or dissatisfaction justify or legitimize punishments
Culture of Control	Based on the theory of the same name by Garland (2001)
Systematic control of offenders	Strategies and mechanisms – such as curfews, electronic monitoring, and strict parole conditions – designed to maintain ongoing control over known offenders
Preventive justice/crime control	Focusing on preventing crime through surveillance as well as regulation of individuals before any offences are committed
Control over marginalised groups	Controlling social groups that are seen as high risk for offending (e.g. known paedophiles, individuals from areas with high crime rates)
Legal and political rationalisation	Justifying control systems through the use of law and policy (based on the idea that punishment and control are necessary for social stability)
Rhetorics	
Basis of argument refers to	
European/International convention or legislation	The use of European or international conventions or legislation as part of the main argument
Human Rights Convention	Reference to the state's obligation to the Convention of Human Rights as an argument
Danish penal code	Reference back to the Danish Penal Code as an argument
Emotions	
Sentiment of justice	Reference to sentiment of justice (argument)

Based on both the qualitative and qualitative methodology as described above, a quantitative sentiment analysis as well as a qualitative thematic analysis will be conducted in the following section, presenting the findings thereof.

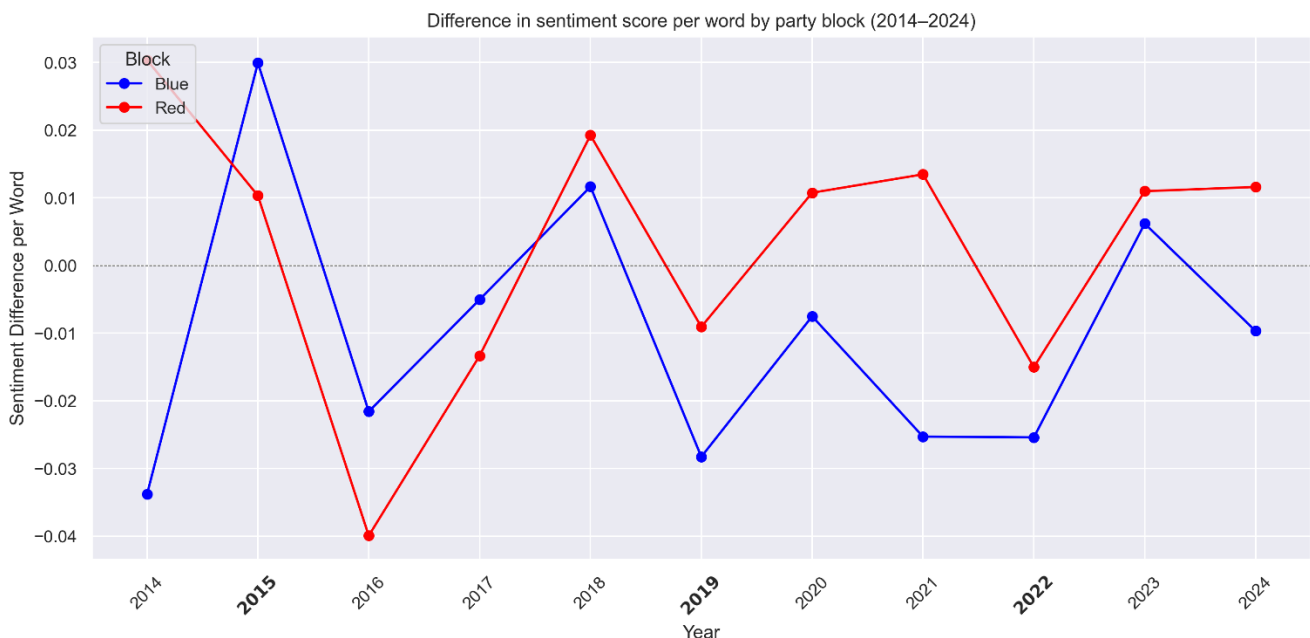
4. Analysis and results

4.1 Quantitative analysis: A sentiment analysis

To explore to which extent politicians invoke sentiment of justice in the parliamentary debates concerning rape and non-consensual image distribution, and how this sentiment score may vary across different political parties, a sentiment analysis was conducted on the filtered corpus of speeches.

After conducting the sentiment analysis, the yearly average sentiment score per word in Danish parliamentary speeches, grouped by political block from 2014-2014 from the analysis has been visualised in Figure 3 as seen below.

Figure 3: Sentiment score by political party block over time



As Figure 3 suggests, sentiment varies over time and across political parties. The blue graph depicts the political parties of the political right wing – also known as the blue block. Likewise, the red graph depicts the political parties of the political left wing – also known as red block. The figure visualises sentiment score on Danish parliamentary debates concerning rape and non-consensual image distribution in the time span of ten years between 2014 and 2024. A positive score indicates a speech with a predominance of positively charged words and a negative score indicates a speech with a predominance of negatively charged words. Sentiment scores equal to zero implies that the speech contains a balance between negatively and positively charged words.

The highlighted years on the x-axis are the election years within the period of the research scope. This has been done as it is theorised that election years influence how politicians communicate in the parliamentary debates – especially relevant in debates concerning rape and image distribution as they are symbolically salient and emotionally charged political issues. During these periods, political parties might intensify their use of rhetorics in order to assert issue ownership and appeal to the public as political competition in Denmark is not only shaped by party positions but also highly by a political party's ability to set the agenda and claim visibility on political issues they seek to “own” (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen, 2010: 250). The parliamentary debates on sexual crimes might therefore become an arena for symbolic communication in which strong emotional language is utilised to demonstrate moral commitment or political toughness towards certain issues.

In general, the figure illustrates that both political party blocks fluctuate in sentiment score over the chosen time period, however, the political red block tends to maintain a slightly more positive sentiment, especially in the recent years. This could reflect efforts to symbolically affirm victims, advance legal reforms, or perform moral clarity without necessarily abandoning possible punitive logic. The political blue party block on the other hand shows sharper dips in sentiment score indicating a higher frequency of the use of negatively charged words in their speeches on sexual crimes. This might signal a slightly higher frequent use of anger, fear, or outrage, potentially aligning with Garland (2001)'s idea of moral boundary-setting through punitive discourse. In this way, the blue party block might be more concerned with directing a punitive discourse focusing on the perpetrators of the crimes in question. In contrast, the red party block might be more focused on the victims of sexual crimes and ensuring they receive the justice the red party block believe said victims are morally entitled to.

Although the variation in sentiment score may appear numerically modest, these differences may be analytically significant in this context - parliamentary debates are quite formal and restrained in tone meaning that even small shifts in sentiment score can indicate rather notable changes in rhetorical strategy, emotional emphasis, or evaluative framing. Moreover, since the sentiment scores are normalised per word, even decimal-level variations represent consistent patterns across continuous speech passages in multiple debates. In this way, minor numerical changes might be significant in capturing meaningful shifts in political communication especially when it is aggregated across time and political parties when measured in political blocks.

4.1.1 (2013-) 2014-2015: Removal of marital exemption, ratification of the Istanbul Convention, and general election year

The figure starts out in the year 2014 with a pronounced divergence in sentiment score can be seen: The blue political party block at approximately -0.035 and the red political party block with a sentiment score at 0.03. Although 2013 is not included in the dataset. The trajectories of the sentiment scores in 2014 suggest that the two political party blocks in question might have already begun to diverge prior to that year as one could argue that the pronounced gap observed in 2014 looks like a continuation of a developing trend more than an isolating spike. In 2013, Denmark implemented fundamental amendments to the sexual offence legislation by removing the references to marital status (also called “wife-discount”¹², and thereby eliminating provisions that included mitigating circumstances or pardons in cases where the perpetrator was married to the victim. In addition, the legal definition of rape was expanded to include sexual acts performed on victims in a helpless state, such as when unconscious. This reform of the Danish Penal Code was grounded in earlier recommendations, including a recommendation report issues by (2011):

“To delete from the provisions of the Penal Code covering rape and sexual abuse (Article 218, 220, 221, 227) any reference to the marital relations between the victim and the alleged perpetrator, thus ensuring that the marriage of the perpetrator and the victim is not a mitigating factor in sentencing or leads to impunity for rape and sexual abuse[,...]” (Amnesty International, 2011: 6).

This significant legal change, which came into effect in July 2014, likely influenced the political discourse and may explain the sharp divergence in sentiment score between the two political blocks. Several of the political parties from the political blue party block - Left the Liberal Party (V), The Conservative People's Party (KF), and Liberal Alliance (LA) – all abstained from voting and expressed criticism due to the fact that the government did not send the final bill for public consultation through a hearing, and in overall articulated concern about the fact that the bill seemed to being rushed unnecessarily through Parliament (Jørgensen, 2013). This might explain the pronounced divergence in sentiment trajectories between the political party blocks in 2014 seeing as the legislative amendment to the Danish Penal Code aimed at abolishing the so called “marriage-discount” in rape cases appears to have been driven primarily, perhaps as a grassroot movement, by political parties typically aligned with the political red party block supported non-governmental organisations such as the Amnesty International. As such, the reform may have been perceived by some political parties in the blue

¹² Konerabat

party block as ideologically charged or insufficiently deliberated, potentially contributing to a more negative affective tone in their parliamentary speech responses. In 2014, Denmark also ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence also known as the Istanbul Convention in 2014 (Rasmussen, 2014). This is where Denmark's commitment began to meet the standard consent-based rape-definition by criminalising all non-consensual acts including rape, sexual assault, and any non-consensual act of sexual nature. While non-consensual image distribution was never explicitly named in the convention, the provisions collectively oblige states to criminalise and prevent emerging forms of gender-based violence, including online and technology-facilitated abuse, which means that non-consensual image distribution could be argued to be covered by extension.

The proposal to ratify the Istanbul Convention, like the proposal to remove the referral to marital status from the Danish Penal Code, was also introduced by a political party of the red political party block, Red-Green Alliance (EL) and pushed for swift ratification by another red political party, The Socialist People's Party (SF). While the red-party government consisting of The Socialdemocrats (S) and The Social Liberal Party (RV) supported its aims, they sought to delay ratification pending legal review. Several of the political parties of the blue political party block – meaning Left the Liberal Party (V), The Conservative People's Party (KF), and Liberal Alliance (LA) – called for postponement and The Danish People's Party expressed sovereignty-related concerns (Folketinget, 2013). This reinforces the idea that the blue political party block's negative sentiment score on parliamentary debates concerning rape and image distribution is due to concern about the rush of the bill, whereas the red political parties have been more positive in their speeches about the bills.

Concurrently, 2014 was the year before the election in 2015, and even though said general election was still a year away, it is plausible that the parties began to sharpen their rhetorical stance already in 2014. This sharp divergence in sentiment score between the red and blue political party blocks observed in 2014 may reflect an early an early phase of assertive rhetorical positioning, where political parties seek to claim issue ownership and shape the public discourse, in this case, around sexual crimes policy (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen, 2010: 251).

By contrast, in 2015, the sharp divergence gap in sentiment scores between the red and blue political party blocks narrows considerably, which suggests a shift towards the strategic moderation phase. Here, in election years, political parties often temper their rhetoric on valence issues – especially issues concerning moral or emotional sensitivity such as sexual crimes – in order to appeal to a

broader electorate and avoid polarising swing voters (Brug & Fennema, 2007). The blue political party block's sharp shift from a strongly negative sentiment score in 2014 to a highly positive one in 2015, suggests a deliberate rhetorical recalibration, likely aimed at maintaining political credibility in an election year. While the red political party block has softened its tone slightly toward neutral, the blue political party block's movement is more pronounced which indicates a strategic shift from polarisation to moderation, consistent with theories of valence issue convergences and pre-electoral image management as presented previously using Brug & Fennema (2007). In addition, the so-called Viborg-folder case, which emerged in late 2015, might have contributed to this cumulative momentum which seemed to drive cross-party acknowledgement of non-consensual image distribution as a growing societal threat with severe consequences for the victims.

4.1.2 2016: Introduction of “Rape Package”

The next spike in Figure 3 is in 2016 where both the red and blue political party block falls in sentiment score from positive to negative based on the previous year. The red political party block goes from 0.01 to -0.04, and the blue political party block from 0.03 to -0.02.

During this year, 2016, the Ministry of Justice led by Left the Liberal Party in a minority government introduced the political initiative known as the “rape package” but officially named “Respect for Rape Victims”¹³. This package was issued due to widespread criticism and therefore aimed at improving the treatment of rape victims and addressing the following shortcomings: low conviction rates concerning rape, barriers to reporting, as well as victim credibility assessments. Here, a central issue addressed in the initiative was the controversial 72-hour compensation rule: in order to qualify for state compensation a victim of rape must report said rape within a 72-hour deadline (Kristensen, 2016). A police report revealed that one-third of victims failed to report within this window which seemed to highlight the systemic barriers to obtain justice for the rape victims (Ibid.).

Many political parties from the red political party block - such as Socialist People's Party (SF), The Red-Green Alliance, and The Alternative (ALT) – advocated strongly for the removal or extension of the 72-hour reporting deadline, emphasising the detrimental effect on traumatised victims as well as the need for more empathetic legal frameworks (Erichsen, 2016). Of the blue political party block, The Danish People's Party (DF) supported the red political party block in eliminating the deadline.

¹³ Respekt for Voldtægts ofre

Even though Left the Liberal Party (V) as well as The Conservative People's Party (KF) were initially cautious, they still managed to endorse further investigation initiating a review of the rule in question. This means that this rape package issue produced a rare instance of cross-political party block alignment, which may explain the parallel downward trajectory in sentiment scores across both political blocks in Figure 3, suggesting that despite differing rhetorical valence, a growing institutional awareness of the justice system's limitations in supporting victims seemed to be achieved. Garland (2001) explains this with the responsabilisation strategy, as it seems that the bipartisan push for victim-focused reforms such as the 72-hour rule, represents an effort to improve the state's responsiveness rather than to extend punitive capacity. Moreover, Petersen (2009) might point out the fact that since the victims of rape – especially those disqualified from compensation due to the 72-hour rule – are framed as morally deserving of justice: The problem isn't with their deservingness but with the political system's failure to recognise trauma-induced reporting delays. Here, politicians across the political party blocks may have utilised language expressing critique of the state's procedures. This negatively charged wording - although not directed at the victims – results in a lower sentiment score despite the perhaps shared normative agreement, meaning that the emotional tone is theorised to be based on frustration rather than hostility.

4.1.3 2018: The Umbrella Case

In 2018, a spike in both political party blocks is observed, with both party blocks going from the use negatively charged words to an overweight of positively charged words: Specifically, the red political party block moves from approximately -0.0125 to 0.02, and the blue political party block from -0.005 to 0.01. This year, the Umbrella Case had a significant impact on the parliamentary debate, as the case and the extent of it seemed to trigger national debate on digital sexual crime which prompted for calls for stronger regulation. In general, this generated broad support in the Danish Parliament, and urgency of the case underscored cross-party consensus; The blue political party block showed positive support and acknowledgement of the severity of the case, initiating to tighten the legislation related to digital sexual offences led by Left the Liberal Party (V) in the minority government. The Danish People's Party (DF) known for its tough stance on law and order, called for an instalment of more punitive measures as well as measures to deter digital sexual crimes supporting the proposal. The red political party block also expressed positive supported the proposal. However, their motivation to implement more punitive legislation on digital sexual crimes was based on the importance of

protecting victims and advocating for clearer legal definitions and stricter penalties for digital sexual crimes. This was opposed to the focus of the blue political party, which seemed to be centred on the perpetrator. Only Red-Green Alliance (EL) voted against the proposal (Folketinget, 2018). This distinction between the red and blue political party blocks' approach can be argued to represent a situation where both (Garland, 2001)'s punitive and responsabilisation strategies are rhetorically activated: The blue political party block's emphasis on punishment and control is consistent with the punitive strategy, whereas the red political party block's focus on victim protection and justice as a motivation for a more punitive regulation on digital sexual crimes might be seen as a form of responsabilisation strategy aimed at bolstering institutional safeguards and rights of the victims. Moreover, the fact that the case is concerning the distribution of photographic video material without consent depicting young, underage girls whose role in the media has been framed as highly passive (Lynge, 2021), aligns closely with Christie (1986)'s criteria for the "ideal victim". This framing might have allowed politicians across political party blocks to express moral outrage, empathy, and a desire for justice using highly affirming and emotionally resonant language – thereby raising the sentiment score.

4.1.4 2019-2021: Consent-based rape law – the advocacy and adoption

Although a downward spike in 2019 – with the political blue party block situated at -0.03 and political red party block at -0.01 - can be seen in Figure 3, no major landmarks in terms of legal reforms or widely publicized sexual crimes cases happened in 2019, an election year. Despite this, Denmark witnessed a significant surge in advocacy for reforming its rape legislation in order to adopt to a consent-based definition aligning with the Convention of Istanbul (Rasmussen, 2014).

This was, for instance, pushed by the publication of Amnesty International's report in March 2019 (Amnesty International, 2019) highlighting systemic barriers faced by rape survivors in Denmark including the challenges in reporting assaults. Due to the political pressure following the report, politicians from both political party blocks would most likely have to respond to a discourse marked by frustration, sense of injustice, and calls for an urgent reform. This can easily prompt more emotionally and morally laden language even when supporting a reform opposed to being against it, as strong rhetorical expressions such as references to "systemic failure", "victim betrayal", or "lack of justice" would be registered in the sentiment analysis as a negative sentiment score despite the actual message being empathetic with the victims. In the lens of (Garland, 2001), this echoes the idea of the theorised

culture of control regime, where politicians respond to perceived failures in state protection with an urgent and morally charged discourse.

Following this, in the summer of 2020, the Consent-based rape law was proposed in Parliament through first reading. Here the proposal was supported mainly the red political party block consisting of votes in favour from Socialist People's Party (SF), The Social Liberal Party (RV), and from Red-Green Alliance (EL) (Justitsministeriet, 2020a). By December 2020 the Danish Parliament, passed the Consent-based rape reform - initiated by The Social Democrats (S) in government, and voted in with equivalent support from all parties. This officially aligned Danish law with the international human rights standards as described in the Istanbul Convention (Rasmussen, 2014).

The law entered into force at the very beginning of 2021. A distinct divergence in sentiment score emerges around the turn of the year between 2020 and 2021 when the bill was up for a vote. This means that a slight divergence appears between the political party blocks — the red political party block shifts toward more positive language (from 0.01 to approximately 0.015), while the blue political party block takes on a more negative tone (from approximately -0.01 to -0.025). This indicates that when the bill is actually being voted on, the blue political party block collectively diverges and uses significantly more negatively charged language, whereas the red political party block remains more stable, continuing to use positively charged words (Mygil, 2023). This indicates that although the Consent-based rape law ultimately was passed with cross-party support, it may have been primarily driven by the red political party block - both in terms of rhetorical commitment and political ownership.

4.1.5 2024: Implementation challenges of Consent-based rape law and deep-fakes

The significant divergence in sentiment scores once again in parliamentary debates between the red and blue political party blocks in 2024 – where the red political party block maintained a steady tone while the blue political party block's sentiment score dropped from nearly 0.01 to -0.01 - can be attributed to several developments in the Danish sexual offence legislation.

Although Denmark's Consent-based rape law came into effect in 2021, concerns about the practical implementations persisted in 2024. Here, some of the issues that has raised the most debate is the concerns about the legal certainty and safeguards of the accused rape perpetrator (Stidsen & Raabjerg,

2024). The new Consent-based rape law has been highly criticized for effectively introducing a reversal of the burden of evidence. Some of the political parties from the blue political party block seem to express concern about the potential due process implications of the consent law. Despite passing the law equivalently as a progressive measure against sexual violence such as rape non-consensual image distribution, the law's strong symbolic value makes any amendment politically sensitive.

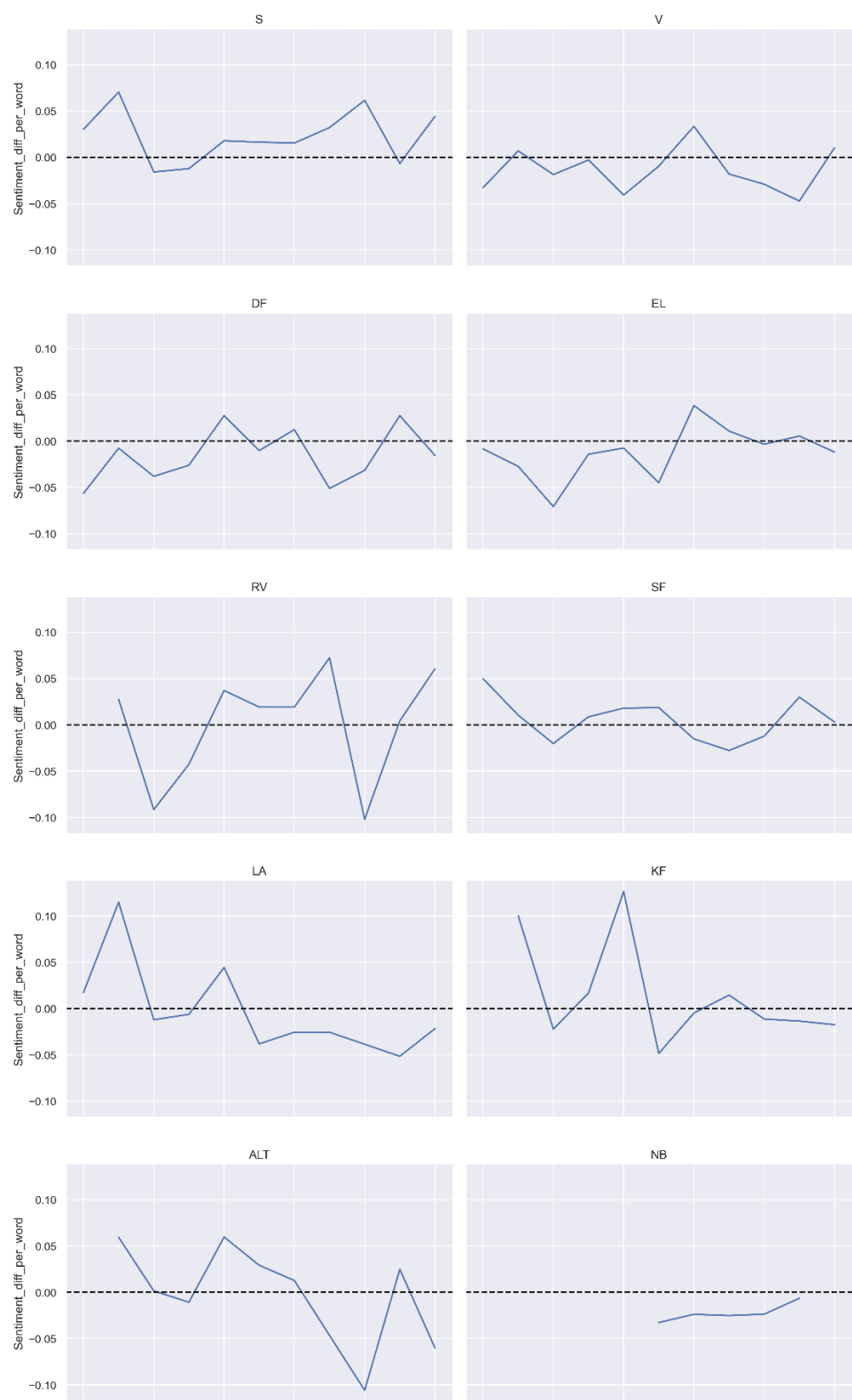
This might explain the negative shift in the blue political party block's sentiment score: Corresponding to around the time of the implementation of Consent-based rape law, the blue political party block demonstrates hesitance and reluctance to fully embrace the law's symbolic framing. This can be reflected in the divergence in sentiment score, since some of the parties of the blue political block express concern which can be founded in negatively charged words.

Another cause for the divergence in sentiment score between the red and blue political party blocks can be due to the emergence of non-consensual sexual content generated by artificial intelligence – also called deepfakes - in 2024. Although no regulations have been made yet in the legislation regarding deepfakes in relation to non-consensual image distribution as a sexual crime, the Danish Parliament did in June 2024 agree to a new rule governing the use of deepfake content within the political sphere (Folketinget, 2024). Notably, the parties of the blue political party block - Danish People's Party (DF) and Liberal Alliance (LA) – decided to decline the new rule proposed in June 2024. Despite this legislative initiative does not pertain directly to sexual crimes such as non-consensual image distribution, the divergence in how the political parties within the political party blocks positioned themselves remains analytically significant. The red political party block, comprising parties like The Social Democrats (S) and the Red-Green Alliance (EL), supported the agreement, emphasising the need to safeguard democratic processes and protect individuals from potential misuse of deepfakes. In contrast, the blue political party block's reservations reflect concerns about overregulation and the potential stifling of political expression. These differing perspectives might have contributed to the observed sentiment divergence, with the red political party block maintaining a positive tone in line with their proactive stance on digital regulation, while the blue political party block's increased negativity reflects apprehension about the implications of such regulatory measures.

4.1.6 Sentiment score across political parties

Figure 5 below, reflects the individual political parties' sentiment score across the timespan 2014-2024 regarding the Danish parliamentary speeches about non-consensual image distribution and rape.

Figure 4: Sentiment score by political party over time¹⁴



¹⁴ For full figure see Appendix 3

While most political parties fluctuate between positive and negative sentiment scores across the time period in question, several broader patterns emerge. Political parties typically associated with the red political party block – such as The Social Democrats (S), The Red-Green Alliance (EL), Socialist People's Party (SF) as well as The Social Liberal Party (RV) – tend to maintain a more consistently positive sentiment suggesting sustained rhetorical support for victim-centred reforms. In contrast, several blue political block parties – particularly Liberal Alliance (LA), The Conservative People's Party (KF), and Left the Liberal Party (V) - exhibit more dramatic fluctuations, including dips into negative sentiment, especially around key legislative moments. Together, these trends suggest that sentiment of justice is not uniformly distributed across the political spectrum but shaped by ideological alignment, issue ownership, and the framing of specific legislative moments.

4.2 Qualitative analysis: A thematic analysis

To explore the rhetorical strategies underlying the sentiment patterns identified in the quantitative analysis, this section will conduct a qualitative thematic examination of the Danish parliamentary debate content concerning rape and non-consensual image distribution. The focus of the following thematic analysis will be guided by this master thesis' second research question which is formulated as follows: *What strategies do Danish politicians use to invoke sentiments of justice in parliamentary debates in order to frame legal policy on rape and non-consensual image distribution?* By closely analysing selected speech excerpts based on the qualitative coding from the thematic analysis, the aim is to uncover what arguments politicians use to invoke sentiment of justice as a way to frame legal justice policy on the sexual crimes non-consensual image distribution as well as rape. As the data used in this master thesis is speeches from the Danish parliamentary debates and therefore in Danish, all quote excerpts will be translated into English for comprehension and fluency. The original quotes can be found in Appendix 4.

The qualitative analysis will begin at a macro-level towards a micro-level going through ideological positions, to discursive strategies observed to be used by Danish politicians, and then finally, to the symbolic use of ideal victimhood as well as the exploration of the conceptualisation. This structure does not only reflect the codes created in the qualitative coding process, but it hopefully also offers a strong analytical flow.

4.2.1 Macro ideological framings: party alignment and justice orientation

The following subsection will attempt to look at how the general ideological divide within the Danish parliamentary parties conceptualise justice. Through the manual coding of the 1,284 parliamentary speeches on debates regarding rape and non-consensual image distribution certain patterns in rhetoric and framing were observed. It should be noted that all dates referencing the different parliamentary debates in the following section are all by American date-standards, as this was an automatic adaption made by the data processing software programme used to qualitatively code the data manually.

One of them was the tendency for the red political party block – also referred to as the left wing or political party block – to speak about rape and image distribution as a grassroots movement they have created and owns. Here, it is notable how the red political block takes on the more emotional approach focusing on raising the awareness of justice for the victims of sexual crimes rather than the more rational and punitive approach to punishment.

A clear example of this, can be seen in the first excerpt:

“This proposal, if I may be so bold, has quite literally grown in our own backyard. We believe that the current legislation is too vaguely worded when the existing definition of rape states that it applies if there is coercion or use of physical force. It's plainly evident that this has posed a challenge for the courts, because, as many have already pointed out, it is far from a given that a victim is capable of resisting—whether it's a case of contact rape, assault rape, or situations where the victim and perpetrator knew each other beforehand. There are simply cases where a victim is not in a position to say either yes or no, and just because someone hasn't said no, that certainly doesn't mean they have said yes.” 2017-02-28, First reading of motion B 40 (Kirsten Normann Andersen, SF, red political party block)

Here, it is exemplified how there seems to be a broader tendency within the red political party block to frame legal reforms concerning sexual crimes as a part of a grassroots movement that is victim-centered which this political party block attempts claims ownership over. The speaker, Ms. Kirsten Norman Andersen from Socialist People's Party (SF) explicitly states that the proposal has “grown in our backyard” which signals both political ownership as well as moral investment. Furthermore, the statement also focuses on the lived experience of the victims of sexual crimes who may be unable to give consent. By centering in on this, the speaker attempts to invoke an emotional and empathetic framing of justice for the victims rather than emphasizing punitive measures or focusing on the offender. This is done by the speaker's appeal to a need for legislative sensitivity to the reality of

victims, which could be seen as characteristic of the political left's awareness-raising approach to sentiment of justice.

Another example of this tendency of the red political party block to speak about rape and image distribution as a grassroots movement they have created and owns is the following quote:

“Digital violations are something we in the Red-Green Alliance have been fighting against for a long time. We cannot accept the kind of abuse that the redistribution of images and videos constitutes, and with digital developments, we unfortunately see many situations where intimate images are shared with thousands of people without consent. [...] Because there are real consequences when people are subjected to digital violations. It has consequences that mean those who have been exposed to these crimes are left with psychological trauma — quite possibly for the rest of their lives. [...] Being violated is extremely serious, and when it comes to digital violations, it's about a type of harm that is repeated again and again by different individuals. The more times the material is shared, the more people have seen you exposed in vulnerable situations — and the harder it hits you as a result. There is nothing unreasonable about a victim receiving compensation for every single offense, rather than offering a discount to the perpetrator.” 2021-03-05, First reading of motion B 129 (Rosa Lund, EL, red political party block)

This excerpt from the speech by Rosa Lund from Red-Green Alliance further reinforces the pattern observed in red political party block's discourse characterised by a strong emphasis on emotional and long-term impact on the victims with a framing of sentiment of justice of with restorative intents rather than retributive. By accenting “we have been fighting against for a long time” Red-Green Alliance, the political party furthest to the left on the Danish political party spectrum, seems to assert ownership of the political agenda by portraying digital and sexual offences as a grassroots movement rooted in their own ideological social justice concerns. Moreover, the use of emotionally charged language such as “psychological trauma”, “vulnerable situations”, as well as “extremely serious” exemplifies the sentiment-based framing which seems to foreground victim experience over punitive demands. Instead of focusing on harsher punishment, the Lund advocates for individual compensation for each violation which reinforces the idea of justice as recognition and restoration rather than simply deterrence. Additionally, the metaphor “offering a discount to the perpetrator” is rhetorically powerful as it evokes moral indignation and appeals to fairness of the victim.

Together these excerpts illustrate a critical ambivalence in relation to Garland (2001)'s theory of Culture of Control: As observed through the excerpts, the red political party block reject the punitive

strategy, they still draw on the emotional and moral logics that is theorised to fuel the regime culture of control. Particularly, the drive for systematic recognition, victim protection, and most of all; the pre-emptive regulation.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, it has been observed through the qualitative manual coding, that the blue political party block – also referred to as the political right block – adopt the narrative with a focus on a punitive turn and, importantly, a particular focus on the perpetrator rather than the victim. This approach might also be noted as a more rational or pragmatic approach, focusing first and foremost on the administration of punishment.

An example of this can be seen in the excerpt below:

“Rape is a horrific crime, and rapists must be punished. That’s something we can all agree on” (2018-11-13, First reading of motion B 12 (Britt Bager, V, blue political party block)).

This quote is a rather clear example of how the blue political party block’s approach is instantly focused on the perpetrator and how they believe they should be punished. It is also evident in the next excerpt how a punitive line on punishment seems particularly important for the blue political party block, represented by Left the Liberal Party (V):

“We believe that rape, in and of itself, is so serious that it should be punished severely. Otherwise, you’d end up in a situation where a rapist who had committed a single rape would receive an 80 percent discount compared to a rapist who had committed five rapes — why should that be the case? I mean, it’s the crime itself we are punishing. We assess how serious the crime is, and then we impose harsher penalties if it is severe. Conversely, one could argue that a single rape isn’t all that serious, because it doesn’t result in a particularly harsh sentence — you only get that once you’ve committed five rapes. We believe rape is serious, and it should be punished severely, even if it’s just one single rape” 2021-04-27, First reading on motion B 160 (Jan E. Jørgensen, V, blue political party block)

The above quote exemplifies how the right wing political party block frames the issue of rape through the lens of punishment severity and proportional justice opposed to how the left wing political parties focus on the victim’s experience or broader emotional appeals. The speaker, Jan E. Jørgensen, argues that rape “in and of itself” warrants severe punishment, and expresses concern that sentencing structures might create unjust disparities between perpetrators based on the amount of rape offences. This underlines the fact that the underlying logic is one of penal consistency and fairness in sentencing which aligns with a rationalist, offender-centered view of justice. Furthermore, the rhetorical focus

on concepts such as “crime discounts”, “severity”, and “how serious the crime is” indicates that the arguments are based on the crime itself rather than the emotional or moral situation for the victim.

Both quotes by Left the Liberal Party (V) exemplify Garland (2001)’s punitive strategy - and partly Pratt (2007)’s penal populism - in which crime policy is shaped less by rehabilitation or victim support but more by demands for punitive, certain, and symbolic punishment. The quote reflects a logic where justice is measured by how forcefully the offender is punished as well as the universal condemnation of rape which reinforces a justice perspective focused on control, deterrence, and retribution just as Garland (2001) describes.

Another distinction in rhetorical framing between the two ideological political party blocks observed through the thematic qualitative coding process is the way the political far left-wing parties often frame sexual crimes as a moral failing (or alternatively, a social problem), whereas the political far right-wing parties frames the same sexual crimes as more of a public safety issue.

The former observation can be seen in several excerpts below. The first quote is from Karina Lorentzen Deinhardt from the left-wing political party Socialist People’s Party (SF):

“I’d like to give an example from this report. It concerns a young woman who has been diagnosed with a mild intellectual disability. She has been subjected to sexual abuse since the age of 12. According to her testimony in court, she tried to pursue education at an adult education centre (VUC), but had to give up. It also appears that she has been medicated, likely due to a mental illness. The court, and later the Compensation Board, awarded her 75,000 kroner in damages for pain and suffering — but nothing else. No additional compensation or damages were applied for. [...] But it is just as important for a victim with a disability to receive redress and to feel that justice has been done — both through the punishment of the perpetrator, but of course also by receiving compensation for the pain, suffering, and any lasting injuries they have been subjected to. And I find it politically a bit strange that we are often very quick to increase sentences and argue that we’re doing it for the victims’ sake — but when it comes to concrete initiatives that would help victims move on with their lives, things often move more slowly, and at times, I think we [morally] fail the victims” 2021-04-20, First reading of motion B 236 (Karina Lorentzen Deinhardt, SF, red political party block)

The above excerpt clearly reflects how the far left-wing political party frames sexual violence as a moral failure. The speaker highlights the vulnerability of the victim by describing the young woman with a mild intellectual disability and thereby draws attention to how the systemic neglect compounds

the suffering of the victim. This critique is not directly directed at the perpetrator but more at the political system and how it “fail the victims”. Although somewhat intertwined, Petersen (2009)’s deservingness heuristics theory as well as Christie (1986)’s the ideal victim might be able to cast a light over the above quote. The woman described in the excerpt fits Christie (1986)’s ideal victim archetype almost perfectly, yet the system – and politicians – fail to fully acknowledge her suffering beyond minimal compensation. This serves the point that even the “most deserving” - based on Petersen (2009)’s theoretical framework on deservingness - victims might be neglected by the system in regard to material justice and is therefore seen as a “moral failing” on the politicians’ part.

Opposed to the far left-wing, the political far right-wing parties are observed to frame the same sexual crimes as more of a public safety issue. This is exemplified by the following excerpts. The first excerpt is a speech by Mette Thiesen from the far right-wing political party The New Right (NB).

“We know that nearly one in four people convicted of rape in Denmark in 2020 was a foreigner — that is, someone without Danish citizenship. These are explosive overrepresentations, time and again. If we are to genuinely ensure justice for future victims, we must also address immigration policy at its root. An asylum freeze must be implemented; foreigners must be required to support themselves; and criminal foreigners must be stripped of any granted Danish citizenship and expelled. Danish citizenship should not be granted to foreigners from Muslim countries that are overrepresented in crime statistics. The penalties for violence, rape, and threats must be increased. The safety of Danes must take precedence over outdated conventions” 2021-04-20, First reading of motion B 236 (Mette Thiesen, NB, blue political party block)

This excerpt illustrates how the far right-wing political parties can frame sexual crimes as a public safety issue and how they tie it to an immigration and national security concern. This can exemplify the notion of Pratt (2007)’s doctrine of the “dangerous others”, where criminal justice discourse constructs certain groups as inherent threats to the public order and thereby safety. In line with this, is Garland (2001)’s punitive strategy in which criminal justice becomes a tool for reasserting control through harsh and symbolic punishment rather than structural reform. Another excerpt that demonstrates how the far right-wing political parties might frame sexual crimes as a public safety issue is the one below:

“This proposal should be understood as aiming to ensure that people can walk the streets and feel safe, that you can leave your home and feel safe, that you can send your 14-year-old daughter out and feel safe — that we have a system where we actually punish those who, for example, rape a 14-

year-old girl, commit repeated burglaries, steal multiple cars, or carry out numerous robberies. We want to punish those people severely; that's what we want with this proposal" 2021-04-27, First reading of motion B 160 (René Christensen, DF, blue political party block)

This excerpt, like the previous one, reinforces how the far right-wing frames sexual crimes as a public safety issue. The speaker, René Christensen, speaks on behalf of the Danish People's Party (DF) which is a far right-wing party with conservative and centre-right values. René Christensen emphasises fear, vulnerability, and the state's duty to protect "ordinary citizens" from dangerous offenders, which - like the previous excerpt also indicated – creates a moral distinction between the law-abiding Danish citizens and the criminal threats. While immigration is not explicitly mentioned in this excerpt, the repetition of high-severity crimes and the imagery of having to protect "your 14-year-old daughter" targets the same punitive and security-oriented logic as the other excerpt.

4.2.2 Rhetorical convergence despite ideological divergence: "rape is the most heinous crime"

Throughout the qualitative manual coding, a very particular rhetorical convergence was identified: the repeated assertion a lot of parties across political party blocks used is that "rape is the most heinous crime"¹⁵. This might function as a rhetorical free pass or a costless statement: it is a statement that garners agreement without political cost as no reasonable person will dispute the premise, so it is turned into a strategic emotional anchor that helps justify a potential punitive turn. In this way, the moral consensus surrounding the gravity of rape is rhetorically mobilised in a way that makes punitive legislation appear both inevitable and untouchable making it difficult to challenge the proposed regulation without appearing insensitive or dismissive of the severity of the crime or the traumatic consequences it has for the victims.

An excerpt that illustrates this perfectly, is an excerpt that is a counter to when parties do not support a proposed rape regulation:

"I must admit I'm actually a bit surprised that The Alternative isn't willing to do this. In that case, The Alternative would be the only party in the opposition that won't support improving the legal

¹⁵ Representative quote, however, no one has used this phrasing exactly

position of rape victims in this area” 2017-02-28, First reading of motion B 40 (Rune Lund, EL, red political party block)

The statement frames support for the proposal as if it is a matter of supporting the rape victims rather than the actual legislation motion proposed. This reduces the issue to a black-and-white moral position – this oversimplification is a rhetorical device, as any critique of the regulation can be portrayed as a failure or unwillingness to support victims.

Likewise, Morten Bødskov representing the Social Democratic Party (S), argues:

“There is no doubt that when it comes to sexual abuse of children, we are — as the proposers rightly pointed out during the questions — dealing with one of the most repugnant forms of crime. There can be no two opinions about that.” 2018-05-22, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 99 (Morten Bødskov, S, red political party block)

This is, again, a morally unassailable statement used to create this black-and-white framing that makes disagreement politically ethically difficult. It is not only the red political party block that uses this rhetoric – the following excerpt is from Left the Liberal Party (V), a party from the blue political party block.

“Rape is a terrible crime, and rapists must be punished. That’s something we can all agree on” 2018-11-13, First reading on motion B 12 (Britt Bager, V, blue political party block)

This can further be exemplified in this excerpt:

“In [Left the Liberal Party] we believe that rape and sexual abuse in general are among the most serious crimes against the individual — a violation of one’s freedom and the right to control one’s own body. Sexual abuse and rape can have long-lasting and severe negative consequences for the victims, both physically and psychologically, especially when it involves children. I think we can all agree on that here in the chamber, and I believe that all 179 [Members of Parliament] share the same goal: to stop the abuse of children to the greatest extent possible” 2021-11-26, First reading of proposal L 78 (Anne Rasmussen, V, blue political party block)

Both excerpts by Left the Liberal Party (V), as well as the Social Democratic Party (S), and Red-Green Alliance (EL) are rhetorical ways in which the politicians invoke sentiment of justice through framing. The last excerpt, from the speech held by Tobias Grotkjær Elmstrøm representing the Moderates (M) do not explicitly urge others to agree with the premise through phrases such as “we can all

agree on this”, or “no one could oppose this.” Instead, it presents the severity of the rape crime and the consequences as an assumed, self-evident truth and thereby, like the previous excerpts, shaping the proposal as something that should not reasonably be opposed:

“Next to homicide, rape is considered one of the most serious crimes a person can commit against another. Rape is a severe violation of sexual self-determination. Victims of rape must live with both physical and psychological scars for the rest of their lives. That is why we must work systematically to prevent rape, so that we can reverse the troubling trend of a rising number of such crimes.” 2024-01-16, First reading of motion B 88 (Tobias Grotkjær Elmstrøm, M, blue political party block)

Garland (2001)’s punitive strategy can be applied to these excerpts as it is theorised that in contemporary societies, emotive and symbolic punishment will become central to the criminal justice discourse. Here, the argument is that politicians will respond to public anxiety, moral panic and demand for certainty by adopting morally charged, consensus-based rhetoric, where punishment is not simply revolving around justice, but more about reaffirming shared values.

4.2.3 Strategic use of rape cases as extensions of moral outrage

Rape has also seen to be used as a worst case crime scenario in order to make an argument in other law regulations. The thematic qualitative analysis identified several speeches in which rape is invoked not to primarily address the issue of sexual violence, but rather as a worst-case reference. This is the case for when politicians wish to use rape to frame other crime legislation cases, using rape as a crime universally condemned and emotionally charged meaning it can be used to frae other offences or policy areas deserving a similar punitive response. Here, rape serves as a proportional benchmark in which the severity of the rape crime is mobilised rhetorically to justify a punitive turn in areas such as immigration control.

The first excerpt is from The Social Democratic Party (S) represented by Nick Hækkerup, Minister of Justice:

“Wouldn’t it offend our sentiment of justice if someone who commits many minor offences ends up being punished more harshly than someone who commits a serious offence? For example, if several shoplifting incidents are punished more severely than a single rape — wouldn’t that also strike at our sense of justice?” 2020-04-27, First reading of motion B 160 (Nick Hækkerup, S, red political party block)

This excerpt further illustrates how rape is used rhetorically as a worst-case crime to justify punitive shifts in unrelated areas of criminal policy. Here, rape is used as a moral yardstick to argue for proportionality implying that it would violate sentiment of justice if lesser offences were punished more severely. Left the Liberal Party (V) also utilises this rhetorical framing device:

“A sentencing range of six years in prison for stealing a dog or a hamster — or whatever it may be — is almost the same as the sentencing range for rape, which is eight years under § 216. So we should probably make sure there’s some proportionality here” 2018-05-15, First reading of motion B 124 (Preben Bang Henriksen, V, blue political party block)

In the above excerpt, rape serves as a symbolic hyperbole or extreme. This rhetorical move allows the speaker, Preben Bang Henriksen, to anchor the debate in a shared moral clarity, whereas the crime type rape’s sentencing range is used to argue for coherence and credibility in the broader Danish penal system.

In the following excerpt, rape is equated with homicide once again:

“When we have granted people the right to reside permanently in Denmark, it should take something very serious for us to revoke that residence permit. That could be something like rape or murder. But we shouldn’t start deporting people just because they’ve been unemployed — that’s not acceptable” 2018-04-26, First reading of motion B 86 (Mathias Tesfaye, S, red political party block)

In the above excerpt, by rhetorically placing rape and murder in the same category of moral and legal gravity, the statement in the excerpt reinforces rape as a crime type’s symbolic function as a threshold offence. This can also be seen in the excerpt below, where the argument is presented in a much more simplified — perhaps even banal — form:

“That means the Conservative People’s Party believes that a car thief who has stolen 50 cars should be punished more harshly than a rapist. Because that’s the consequence” 2021-04-27, First reading of motion B 160 (Jan E. Jørgensen, V, blue political party block)

This rhetorical use of rape as a “worst-case” crime aligns with both Garland (2001) and Pratt (2007)’s theoretical perspectives; Garland (2001) argues that in late modernity, criminal justice becomes highly symbolic, with emotionally charged crimes like rape used rhetorically to reassure the public and anchor moral order. Even when rape is not the legislative focus, it is invoked as a moral extreme to justify broader punitive agendas, like seen in the excerpts presented above, such as on the immigration policy, petty theft, or grand larceny.

4.2.4 Distinctions between digital and traditional sexual crime

Another pattern identified through the qualitative analysis was how the Danish politicians used different framing tactics when speaking about the two different crime types, rape and non-consensual image distribution, one being a digital crime and one being a more “traditional” crime. Generally put, it seems that the red political party block attempts to equalise the severeness and consequential outcome for the victim in both “traditional” rape cases as well as digital sexual offences, whereas the blue political party block might challenge this in terms of victim deservingness. This is attempted illustrated in the excerpt below.

“It is always serious when someone is subjected to a crime — an unprovoked violent assault, a digital violation, a sexual offence, and so on. One could go on. There is always at least one victim in such cases, and they must live with what they have been through for the rest of their lives” 2021-03-05, First reading of proposal L 154 (Rosa Lund, EL, red political party block)

This excerpt not only reflects a rhetorical strategy that centres the lived experience of the victims over legal formalism but also shows how the red political party block frames justice for victims of sexual crimes – both digital and “traditional” as part of a broader, emotionally grounded grassroots movement which they politically attempt to claim ownership of. Opposed to this, representative of Left the Liberal Party (V), Preben Bang Henriksen draws a clear distinction between the “traditional” sexual crime and the digital sexual crime:

“I still find it hard to explain to a rape victim that being subjected to a sexual offence involving [digital] images is twenty times worse than being raped. That’s really hard for me to justify” 2022-05-06, First reading of proposal L 184 (Preben Bang Henriksen, V, blue political party block)

This excerpt shows a clear reluctance at granting victims of digital sexual crimes the same deservingness victim-status as victims of “traditional” sexual crimes. This echoes the findings of Mckinlay & Lavis (2020) in which victim-blaming and credibility gaps are prevalent in cases digital sexual abuse (Mckinlay & Lavis, 2020: 386-390). Killean et al. (2022) also argue that digital sexual crimes are often misrecognized or dismissed (Killean et al., 2022: 10-11). This excerpt reflect in the perceived hierarchy of victimhood where physical violation seems to be treated as the ultimate trauma opposed to digital sexual violations which are perceived as lesser and less legitimate forms of sexual crimes.

4.2.5 Micro-level symbolic and moral framing: use of deservingness heuristics and the ideal victim

4.2.5.1 The evocation of the ideal victim and use of deservingness

There are several approaches to invoking the symbolic and moral framing shaping who is deserving of justice and how this archetype might be. As Christie (1986) describes in the ideal victim framework, the focus is on control, identity, and reciprocity: the victim must be passive and not responsible and not in control over the victimisation, the victim must fit the normative roles being a weak and respectable citizen, and lastly, the victim must be someone with whom the society can easily identify and invoke a social and moral obligation to help (Christie, 1986: 19-23). The last criteria can be argued to be tightly related with Petersen (2009)'s concept of deservingness.

This can be seen in the first quote which is an excerpt from Red-Green Alliance's parliamentary speech:

“This proposal concerns digital sexual violations in the form of sharing images or videos with sexual or pornographic content without the consent of the person depicted. Of course, this also constitutes a serious violation of the right to privacy, and it is often a serious violation of women's — as it often is — rights. It can leave the victim in a very distressing situation, and it can cause emotional scars and, in fact, lasting harm. [...] One could say that even with the current sentencing framework, it would likely be sufficient — if only the police pursued more cases. That is, if the young men — as it most often is — who share such images and upload them into folders understood that the risk of being caught was real, and that they would in fact be convicted when charges were brought, then those people might come to understand that one must respect women's rights and one must respect privacy. [...] After a number of convictions in this area, we would likely see more people realise that this is extremely serious” 2017-12-12, First reading of proposal L 115 (Rune Lund, EL, red political party block)

Here, it is clear that the political party utilises framing of victims of digital sexual crime in a way that closely aligns with deservingness heuristics theory as well as Christie (1986)'s ideal victim criteria. The victims are described as young women and are depicted as innocent, vulnerable, and psychologically harmed, which positions them as worthy of sympathy, legal protection, and public recognition as victims. The emphasis on “emotional scars” and “lasting harm” evokes emotional and long-term psychological consequences which reinforces the status as deeply harmed and blameless victims. Rune Lund then continues, strengthening this framing by contrasting it with the idea of male

perpetrators who knowingly disrespect privacy and women's rights. This moral dichotomy further frames the victims as helpless and without agency, which activates both public empathy and political justification, prosecution, and deterrence – all rooted in the framing that these victims are deserving of justice due to who they are and how they suffer.

Similarly, Mikkel Bjørn, a representative of Danish People's Party (DF), draws on the framing of victims as not in control, weak, and someone who is worthy of help due to the threat of an out-group individual:

“The point is that when a citizen is sitting and reading an article about, say, a young 14-year-old girl who has been gang-raped by two young boys, it should be completely obvious that it must, of course, be stated that these are two young boys of, for example, Somali or Afghan origin. Because we all know that it is those people who commit this type of crime.” 2024-01-16, First reading of motion B 19 (Mikkel Bjørn, DF, blue political party block)

This excerpt aligns the rhetorical structure by juxta positioning the innocent, young female with an unnamed, unknown foreign-born male perpetrators and in this way draws on Christie (1986)'s framework of the ideal victim. This further reinforces the deservingness asymmetries along lines of gender, race, and national belonging. The next excerpt explicitly articulates how the victim framework is shaped through language itself, using rhetorical and gendered choices to reinforce the notion that rape is a crime committed by men against women — thereby reasserting traditional victim–offender roles:

“Let me begin with a call to use precise language when we talk about rape. Let us use the correct terms rather than the politically correct ones. I've noticed that several members in the chamber today are using the gender-neutral term ‘perpetrators’¹⁶ instead of the original term ‘male perpetrators’¹⁷. It's unnecessary to be that politically correct. A perpetrator, broadly speaking, can of course be a woman, just like a policeman can be a woman — but in this particular case, it's not right to dilute the language and make it genderless, because it is men who rape. Men rape women, or men rape other men. Therefore, the precise term is ‘male perpetrators’, not ‘perpetrators’. Because when we reduce them to ‘perpetrators’, we open the door to the idea that women also rape, and that implies this type of crime is committed by both men and women. It isn't. It is men who rape women. So let's use the term that actually fits this specific type of crime; let's use the correct term instead of the politically

¹⁶ Gerningspersoner

¹⁷ Voldtægtsmand

correct one” 2024-01-16, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 88 (Mai Mercado, KF, blue political party block)

This excerpt also establishes some, potentially, dangerous assumptions about who can be a victim and who can be a perpetrator. Although the predominant perception – also supported by statistical evidence - of perpetrators of sexual crimes are mostly aligned with the idea of a masculine figure, one could argue, that it is imperative to recognize the existence of the female perpetrator (Hayes & Carpenter, 2013; Turchik et al., 2016). Despite their smaller representation both statistically in cases and in the media, female sexual perpetrators can be just as abhorrent and cold-blooded as their male counterparts. The dismissal of this as shown in the excerpt above, poses a harmful threat to male victims of sexual crimes – both digital and “traditional” – as, according to the ideal victim framework (Christie, 1986), victims of sexual crimes deserving of justice can only be female.

4.2.5.2 The challenging of the ideal victim

The above has been articulated in the Danish parliament by some of the political parties through the debates on rape and image distribution, and the following excerpts focus on how the framing of the ideal victim is differentiated through deservingness heuristics.

“Previously, the focus in rape cases was on whether there was coercion, violence, or threats. And many people likely held the perception that the ideal victim was someone who screamed, said no, and resisted. But later research shows that this is actually not the case. The vast majority of victims — 75 percent — freeze in the situation and, for various reasons, are not able to say no, for example due to fear or because the body simply doesn’t respond. And that means we need to be particularly attentive to passivity. That is also why, in my view, it is right that the initiating party must ensure there is consent — because if there isn’t, then it is rape. So, is the law a legal overreach, as some claim? I’m not so convinced [...] In fact, it’s still the case that around nine out of ten cases go nowhere. And that’s because it still has to be proven beyond any reasonable doubt that what occurred was rape” 2024-05-21, First reading of motion B 160 (Karina Lorenzen Deinhardt, SF, red political party block)

In this excerpt, the notion of the conventional notion of the ideal victim is challenged by the rejection of the expectation that a “real” deserving victim must resist the assault. Instead, a more evidence-based understanding of victim behaviour is introduced, which attempts to broaden the definition of legitimate victimhood. This is also communicated in an excerpt from an earlier parliamentary debate:

“[...] A rape is equally serious, regardless of who committed it. That means it should not result in a lesser sentence just because the rape was committed by someone the victim knows, rather than by a stranger jumping out from behind a bush” 2021-04-19, First reading of motion B 233 (Halime Oguz, SF, red political party block)

This also challenges the idea of the ideal victim blitz-rape offering the statistically probability of rape often occurring between people who have some type of relation.

Another excerpt that articulates the relation between the ideal victim archetype and the deservingness thereof, is from a parliamentary speech by Ole Birk Olesen representing Liberal Alliance (LA).

“If I understand the Conservative proposal correctly, isn't it saying that if a female gang member is raped by another gang member, then the female gang member should not be eligible for compensation for pain and suffering” 2021-04-19, First reading of motion B 235 (Ole Birk Olesen, LA, blue political party block)

In these excerpts above, the conventional ideal victim image is challenged by highlighting how certain victims — such as women involved in criminal or marginalised environments — are seen as less deserving of recognition as a victim, sympathy, or compensation. These examples illustrate how moral worth and social status shape who is granted victim legitimacy, and who is excluded from the protections typically extended to more culturally accepted victim profiles.

4.2.5.3 Sympathy with the perpetrator

In the ideal victim framework, the criteria rely on the victim being blameless, weak, passive, and a morally law-abiding citizen who others would want to help. However, a large part of what deems a victim as an “ideal victim” is also who their perpetrator is.

An interesting observation made specifically in the aftermath of the passed Consent-based rape law is that, despite the fact that the far right-wing parties, specifically Danish People's Party (DF), are typically known to be very liberal and in favour of harsher sentencing, those are the parties that seem to express their sympathies with the perpetrator when said perpetrator catalogue consists of young “misguided” men opposed to dangerous foreign-born men who jump out of bushes.

“Rape is an absolutely horrific crime. I think we can all agree on that. I believe it is one of the worst possible crimes you can commit against another person. But as was rightly said here from the podium,

being falsely accused of rape — and having to bear the guilt and shame of being falsely accused of such a serious crime — is also truly horrific.” 2024-01-16, First reading of motion B 88 (Mette Thiesen, DF, blue political party block)

This is followed by this excerpt:

“There should be no doubt that in the Danish People’s Party, we want to punish rape much more harshly. We want minimum sentences, and we very much want significantly tougher penalties in this area. But we also have to make sure that, as in some of the cases we hear about — those that fall under the consent provision — we’re not talking about young boys who genuinely didn’t even realise they had done something wrong” 2024-05-21, First reading of motion B 160 (Mette Thiesen, DF, blue political party block)

Here, the young male perpetrator is almost framed as the ideal victim, as they are rhetorically framed as clueless, blameless, not in control of their own actions, and most importantly, deservingly of justice. The excerpt below elaborates this idea of framing of a construction of the narrative where the perpetrator, the young man, is someone in need of guidance and protection rather than condemnation:

“I’d like to start by saying that rape is probably one of the worst crimes one can commit against another human being. It’s not just violence against the body; it’s also violence against the soul. [...] In the Danish People’s Party, we would very much like to see minimum sentences and significantly tougher penalties for rape, precisely because it is such a serious crime. [...] Still, I feel I’ve heard enough stories about young men in relation to this legislation to say that we should really stress: don’t spend the night there — stay somewhere else. I say that, just as I would say to my boys — and I really mean this: don’t trust her when she says she’s on the pill. Protect yourself to be absolutely sure. [...] When we’re seeing so many young men, boys, who are actually unsure about what this is really about — what consent means [...] Well, fundamentally, I also think that women are generally seen in a more positive light than men.” 2024-05-21, 2024-05-21, First reading of motion B 160 (Mette Thiesen, DF, blue political party block)

This rhetorical shift powered through with the Danish People’s Party (DF) in the lead, inverts the traditional victim-perpetrator dichotomy, positioning the male as morally deserving of empathy and justice whilst subtly implying that the women may be deceiving and manipulative – undeserving of justice and empathy. The Denmark Democrats (DD) also supports this rhetoric, framing the young

male perpetrators as gullible, confused, and overly careful now that the Consent-based rape law has been implemented:

“But we also have to say that there’s been some rather dismissive talk about young men — about the fact that 54% are concerned about this [getting accused of rape based on the Consent-based rape law]. I’ve been a young man myself, and sure, the brain might not be fully developed, but we’re not stupid just for the sake of being stupid when we’re young. There’s a reason why 54% of young men are afraid of this system — they don’t know how to navigate it. That’s why we in the Denmark Democrats think it would be worthwhile to investigate this. Let’s get some facts on the table; because if it turns out that there are even more false accusations now, then we have a serious problem with the consent law as it’s been designed, and we’ll need to correct that in Parliament” 2024-05-21, First reading of motion B 160 (Kim Edberg Andersen, DD, blue political party block)

While the red political party block does not adopt this rhetoric, they do bring up the premise of what the young-male-perpetrator debates is built on: the risk of false rape accusations.

“According to the 2023 annual victimisation survey, it is estimated that between 11,000 and 17,000 women each year experience rape or attempted rape. [...] It is often brought up in debates that we have a major problem with false rape reports. However, there is nothing to indicate that this is the case — apart from op-eds in Berlingske and Weekendavisen. The police states that only about 0.8% of cases involve a false report — that is, just a small handful of cases. Is that too many false reports? Yes, certainly — and that’s why it is a punishable offence to file a false report. [...] But let me just remind everyone that you cannot simply equate an acquittal in a rape case with a false accusation. One can easily be acquitted due to lack of evidence, even when there is no evidence that a false accusation was made. That’s why, in the Red-Green Alliance, we strongly support conducting a study on false reports. It’s precisely to show that there hasn’t suddenly been a flood of false accusations just because we introduced a consent law. Reports filed under § 216 before the consent law could have been just as false — or just as real — as those filed after [the Consent-based rape law’s] introduction” 2024-05-21, First reading of motion B 160 (Rosa Lund, EL, red political party block)

While several excerpts express sympathy with the (male) perpetrator by portraying him as confused, vulnerable, or at risk of being falsely accused, this final excerpt directly challenges the empirical foundation of that narrative. By citing victimisation data and police statistics, the speaker from the Red-Green Alliance (EL) attempts to refute the idea that false rape accusations are widespread, noting that such claims are largely sustained by media discourse rather than evidence. This intervention

seems to seek to re-centre the discussion on the actual prevalence of sexual violence, rather than hypothetical risks to accused men, and reminds the audience that acquittal does not equal a false accusation.

5. Discussion

5.1 The contribution of the quantitative analysis

To answer the research question for the quantitative analysis - *to what extent do Danish politicians invoke sentiment of justice in parliamentary debates concerning rape and non-consensual image distribution, and how does sentiment vary across political parties* - the quantitative sentiment analysis reveals several key patterns.

First, Danish politicians do invoke justice-related sentiment to a measurable and strategic extent, particularly during years marked by legislative change, public debate, or heightened political visibility. Sentiment scores, calculated on parliamentary speeches from 2014 to 2024, demonstrate that emotional language is not only present but also often varies by political party block and the context of the political landscape. The presence of consistently positive or negative sentiment scores — especially around symbolic legal reforms such as the removal of the marital exemption in 2014, the 2020 Consent-based rape law, and reactions to deepfake regulation in 2024 - suggests that sentiment is not incidental but part of how justice is framed rhetorically in debates about sexual crimes.

Moreover, the analysis shows that sentiment scores differ systematically across political party blocks. Parties associated with the red political party block - including The Social Democrats (S), Red-Green Alliance (EL), and Socialist People's Party (SF) - tend to use more positive emotional language, particularly in connection with victim-centred reforms. This rhetorical style likely reflects efforts to affirm moral commitment and construct victims as deserving of justice, aligning with Christie (1986)'s ideal victim theory and Garland (2001)'s responsibilisation strategy. In contrast, parties associating themselves with the blue political party block - such as Left the Liberal Party (V), Liberal Alliance (LA), and The Conservative People's Party (KF) - show more fluctuating and often negative sentiment, in particular around reforms that generate political disagreement and polarisation. These more negative tones suggest a focus on punitive strategies, concern for legal certainty, or scepticism towards reform processes, consistent with Garland (2001)'s theory of punitive strategy and Pratt (2007)'s complementary theory on penal populism.

In addition, the Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2010)'s theory of issue ownership has aided in explaining why Danish politicians invoke sentiment of justice differently across party lines. Parties of the red political party block often use consistently positive, victim-focused rhetoric to assert ownership of justice reforms and symbolically affirm their commitment to victims' rights. In contrast,

parties associated with the blue political party block parties show more negative sentiment during key debates, reflecting attempts to challenge that ownership by emphasising legal concerns or procedural scepticism. These patterns align with Green-Pedersen & Mortensen (2010)'s theory that parties strategically use emotional rhetoric to gain visibility on issues they seek to "own."

In sum, the quantitative analysis demonstrates that Danish politicians do invoke sentiment of justice. Even modest shifts in sentiment score appear to capture meaningful differences in how political actors frame justice. These findings support the idea that sentiment of justice can be seen as a strategic rhetorical tool in parliamentary debate, and that its expression is shaped by both ideological positioning and the symbolic nature of the legal issue at stake.

5.2 The contribution of the qualitative analysis

The qualitative part of the analysis aimed to answer the second research question: *What strategies do Danish politicians use to invoke sentiments of justice in parliamentary debates to frame legal policy on rape and non-consensual image distribution?* Based on the thematic qualitative analysis conducted, three main strategies that Danish politicians use to invoke the sentiment of justice among the public in parliamentary debates on rape and non-consensual image distribution are identified.

First, victim-centred strategies are especially common among left-wing (red political party block) parties. These speeches emphasise the trauma, vulnerability, and long-term harm experienced by victims - often framed using Christie (1986)'s ideal victim and Petersen (2009)'s deservingness heuristics. Politicians in this political party block often claim political and moral ownership of reforms, portraying them as grassroots victories for justice and rights.

Second, perpetrator-centred strategies dominate among right-wing (blue political party block) parties. Here, politicians focus on punishment, proportionality, and public safety - echoing Garland (2001)'s punitive strategy as well as complementary parts of Pratt (2007)'s penal populism. Rape is frequently invoked as a symbolic worst-case crime to legitimise tougher legislation across policy areas, such as immigration or sentencing reform.

Third, across the political spectrum, there is a shared use of symbolic and emotionally charged language, particularly the framing of rape as "the worst crime". This moral consensus is often used rhetorically to present proposals as beyond disagreement, making opposition appear morally questionable or insensitive. A notable theme, particularly in right-wing political discourse, is the sympathetic

framing of young male perpetrators in relation to the implementation of the Consent-based rape law. Some of the political parties in the blue political party block portray these men as confused or unaware, invoking a reversed form of ideal victimhood and shifting focus from victim to accused.

Lastly, when comparing digital and traditional sexual crimes, parties of the red political party block tend to emphasise equivalence in harm and victim legitimacy, while parties of the blue political party block challenge this, reflecting underlying hierarchies in perceived victimhood—paralleling insights from Killean et al. (2022) and McKinlay & Lavis (2020).

In sum, Danish politicians do use ideologically aligned yet emotionally resonant strategies to frame legal policy and shape public understanding of justice in debates on sexual crimes.

5.3 Methodical limitations and considerations

One methodological consideration to note throughout this master thesis is that political parties as well as party blocks are a subject to change over time. This is especially important when examining party debates on rape and non-consensual image distribution legislation over time.

This master thesis attempts to keep all other factors constant in order focus on how sentiment of justice is used in parliamentary debates through the last ten years – including political parties and party blocks. However, the assumption that political parties and party blocks are constants might not be entirely accurate. While none of the political parties changed from one political block to another during the master thesis' period of investigation, the analysis treats political parties as unchanging units. On the contrary, political parties are dynamic entities: a party's membership, political platform, core values, and voter base may change significantly over a ten-year period. This is something this master thesis' visualisations – which are presented later in the analysis section – cannot account for.

Additionally, while parliamentary speeches are done by individuals representing political parties, this analysis focuses on the political party or political party block and not the individual Member of Parliament. This creates a limitation since politicians are known to switch parties relatively often and with an increase in frequency over the years (Hansen & Munksgaard, 2022). This cannot be reflected in the dataset. However, it is likely, that a politician will maintain their rhetorical style during their speeches in parliamentary debates even after switching political party. Furthermore, each election cycle may bring in new elected politicians and see other leave, which might also affect the analysis in a way that cannot easily be observed nor traced (Mygil, 2023).

While it cannot be ruled out that some speeches may have been misclassified due to occasional manual errors (e.g., cursor slips leading to incorrect code assignment), such errors are assumed to be randomly distributed across the dataset. In line with the law of large numbers, these inaccuracies are unlikely to introduce systematic bias or significantly affect the overall findings

Inters of reliability, intercoding reliability (Andersen et al., 2020: 105) was not established, as the material was not coded independently by multiple coders. However, intracoding reliability (Andersen et al., 2020: 104) is supported by the fact that the same passages were coded in two separate projects – this master thesis and the research project “Sentiment of Justice in the Nordic Countries” - by the same researcher, yielding consistent coding outcomes.

5.2 Future implications

This thesis attempts to contribute to the development of public criminology in Denmark by empirically mapping how sentiment of justice is invoked in Danish parliamentary debates about the sexual crimes rape and non-consensual image distribution. As Loader & Sparks (2010) argue, public criminology seeks to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and political communication, aiming to foster more evidence-informed public discourse. By uncovering the rhetorical and emotional strategies Danish politicians use to frame rape and image-based sexual abuse, this thesis highlights how symbolic narratives can shape legal justice policy.

The findings also raise broader implications regarding the treatment of digital sexual crimes. (Goldsmith & Brewer, 2015; Dodge & Burruss, 2021) that traditional criminological theories—such as techniques of neutralization - are challenged in online contexts, where culpability and victimhood are more ambiguous. The observed rhetorical hesitation in granting full victim legitimacy to victims of digital sexual crimes reflects this ambiguity and signals a need for updated theoretical and legislative frameworks.

Moreover, the use of emotional rhetoric in the Danish Parliament aligns with concerns in Nordic criminology about the erosion of Scandinavian exceptionalism. While Denmark has historically favoured restrained and rehabilitative penal policy (Lappi-Seppälä, 2007), the increasing reliance on moral consensus, symbolic outrage, and politicised victimhood may indicate a shift toward penal populism. Future research should therefore critically assess whether rhetorical shifts translate into long-term changes in sentencing practice and legal design.

Finally, the work of Hinkkanen & Lappi-Seppälä (2011) suggests that public attitudes toward justice in Nordic contexts are more pragmatic and nuanced than politicians often assume. If political communication continues to rely on sentiment rather than evidence, there is a risk of misalignment between actual public values and enacted policy. This thesis thus supports calls for more robust empirical anchoring of political claims about justice and victimhood in Denmark's legal reforms.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates how Danish politicians invoke sentiments of justice in parliamentary debates on rape and non-consensual image distribution, using both quantitative sentiment analysis and qualitative thematic analysis. The findings show that such sentiments are not only present but are also strategically mobilized in line with political ideology, rhetorical goals, and issue ownership dynamics.

The quantitative analysis demonstrates that expressions of justice-related sentiment vary measurably across political party lines and over time, particularly in moments of legal reform and public scrutiny. Politicians of the red political party block tend to employ more positive, victim-centred sentiment to symbolically assert moral leadership on justice reforms. In contrast, the blue political party block shows more variation and negative sentiment, reflecting legal scepticism, punitive priorities, or attempts to challenge reform ownership.

The qualitative analysis complements this by unpacking the specific rhetorical strategies politicians use to frame justice. Parties from the red political party block emphasise victim-centered narratives grounded in deservingness and trauma consequences for the victim, while parties from the blue political party block lean on offender-focused rhetoric emphasising legal certainty, punishment, and proportionality. Both political party blocks draw on emotionally charged, symbolic language to shape public perceptions of justice - though often in divergent ways. Notably, differences in how digital and traditional sexual crimes are framed reveal deeper hierarchies of victim legitimacy, with digital victims more frequently seen as less deserving, particularly by the parties from the blue political party block.

These findings underscore that the invocation of justice sentiment in parliamentary debates is not incidental. It is a politically and symbolically charged tool used to shape public discourse, frame legal reforms, and assert issue ownership. Sentiment of justice thus emerges as a central mechanism through which political actors in Denmark negotiate meaning, legitimacy, and authority in the sensitive policy domain of sexual crime.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List in Python

```
rape_vignette=["samtykkelov", "voldtægt", "voldtage", "seksuelt overgreb", "seksuel vold",
"seksualforbryde", "sexforbryde", "seksuel krænkelse", "$216"]

non-cons_image_dist_vignette=["billeddeling", "billeddeling uden samtykke", "ulovlig billeddeling",
"overgrebsmateriale", "hævnporno", "doxing", "intimbilleder", "nøgenbilleder", "deling af
nøgenbilleder", "digital krænkelse", "sexbilleder", "cybermobning", "seksuelt overgrebsmateriale med
børn", "$264d", "$232", "viborg-mappe", "umbrella-sag", "seksuelt overgrebsmateriale med børn",
"børneporno"]
```

Appendix 2: Coding list including occurrence and scope of code

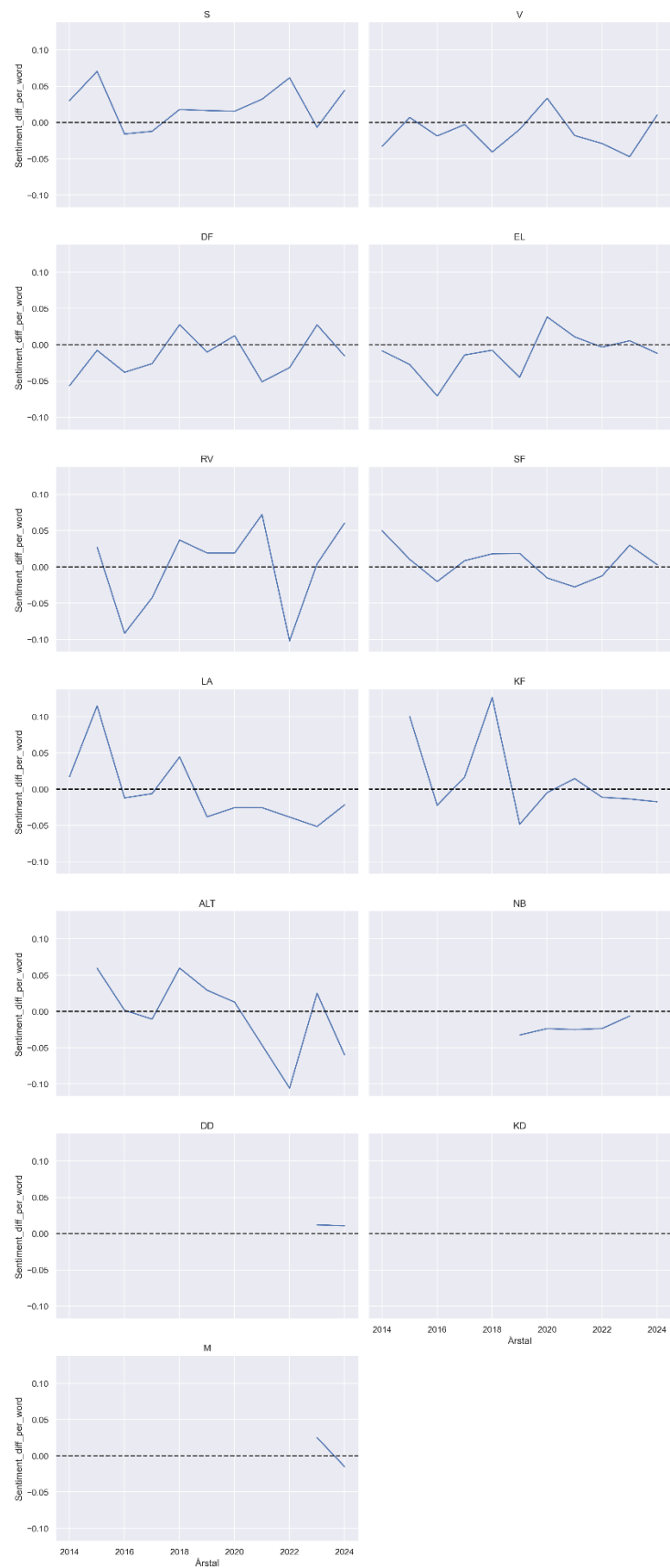
Code	Occur- rence	Scope of code
Type of crime		
Rape	291	Crime type includes but is not limited to aggravated sexual assault, statutory rape, marital rape, discussion of consent law, sexual child exploitation (indecent exposure is not within scope)
Non-consensual image distribution	46	Distribution of sexual images and video material without consent
Party politics		
Political position		
Governing party	93	Speaker is representing a party in office
Oppositioning party	236	Speaker is representing a party outside of office
Ministerial position	36	Speaker has a ministerial position
Blue party block		
Left the Liberal Party	50	Venstre (V)
The Moderates	2	Moderaterne (M)
The Conservatives People's Party	25	Det Konservative Folkeparti (KF)
The Denmark Democrats	4	Danmarks Demokraterne (DD)

	Liberal Alliance	21	Liberal Alliance (LA)
	The New Right	15	Nye Borgerlige (NB)
	The Danish People's Party	37	Dansk Folkeparti (DF)
	The Christian Democrats	1	Kristendemokraterne (KD)
Red party block			
	The Social Democrats	53	Social Demokratiet (S)
	Socialist People's Party	34	Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF)
	The Red-Green Alliance	52	Enhedslisten (EL)
	The Social Liberal Party	16	Radikale Venstre (RV)
	The Alternative	19	Alternativet (ALT)
Theories			
Penal Populism		13	
	Tough on crime	100	Populist rhetoric used by politicians to display seriousness about a punitive turn
	Punishment as deterrence	39	The framing of punishment as a way to deter other potential deviants
	Selective toughness	83	Legal punitiveness aimed to target particular groups (e.g. gang members, pedophiles, non-citizen offenders)
	Political mobilisation through fear	33	Policymakers utilize public fear or dissatisfaction justify or legitimize punishments
Culture of Control		32	Based on the theory of the same name by Garland (2001)
	Systematic control of offenders	65	Strategies and mechanisms – such as curfews, electronic monitoring, and strict parole conditions – designed to maintain ongoing control over known offenders
	Preventive justice/crime control	144	Focusing on preventing crime through surveillance as well as regulation of individuals before any offences are committed

	Control over marginalised groups	35	Controlling social groups that are seen as high risk for offending (e.g. known pedophiles, individuals from areas with high crime rates)
	Legal and political rationalisation	217	Justifying control systems through the use of law and policy (based on the idea that punishment and control are necessary for social stability)
Rhetorics			
	Basis of argument refers to		
	European/International convention or legislation	11	The use of European or international conventions or legislation as part of the main argument
	Human Rights Convention	12	Reference to the state's obligation to the Convention of Human Rights as an argument
	Danish penal code	19	Reference back to the Danish penal code as an argument
	Arguments		
	Legal Policy	18	Using legal policy as an argumentation form
	Logos		
	Statistics	56	The use of statistics as a way of argumentation
	Experts	46	Reference to experts as a way of argumentation
	Evidence	71	For instance, hearings, research, or reference to previous experience
	Patos	92	Reference to emotions as a way of argumentation
	High profile media case	25	Reference to a high-profile media case
	Hypberbole	35	Extreme cases or black/white framed cases
Framing			

	Social problem	54	Framing of the crime as a social problem
	Moral failing	85	Framing of the crime as a moral failing
	Public safety	65	Framing of the crime as a public safety issue
	Deservingness	184	Heuristics
	The Ideal Victim	156	Christie 1989
Emotions			
	Empathy	20	Expression of empathy in speech
	Disgust	20	Expression of disgust in speech
	Confusion	3	Expression of confusion in speech
	Sympathy		
	Sympathy with perpetrators	15	Expression of sympathy with the perpetrators in speech
	Sympathy with victims	133	Expression of sympathy with the victims in speech
	Concern	50	Expression of concern with the perpetrators in speech
	Sadness	6	Expression of sadness in speech
	Frustration	19	Expression of frustration in speech
	Anger	24	Expression of anger in speech
	Sentiment of justice	292	Reference to sentiment of justice (argument)

Appendix 3: Sentiment score by party over time



Appendix 4: Quote excerpts from qualitative analysis in original language

”det her forslag, om jeg må være så fri, er faktisk groet i vores baghave. vi mener, at det med den nuværende lovgivning er for vagt formuleret, når der i den eksisterende voldtægtsdefinition står, at det er voldtægt, hvis der er tvang eller brug af fysisk vold. det kan åbenlyst også ses, at det har været en udfordring for domstolene, for det er, som mange allerede har sagt, langt fra en selvfølge, at et offer er i stand til at kunne modsætte sig, hvad enten det er ved kontakt- eller overfaldsvoldtægt eller i tilfælde, hvor der er kendskab mellem offer og gerningsmand på forhånd. der er simpelt hen bare tilfælde, hvor et offer hverken er i stand til at sige ja eller nej, og blot fordi man ikke har sagt nej, er det altså heller ikke ensbetydende med, at man har sagt ja.” 2017-02-28, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag B 40 (Kirsten Normann Andersen, SF, venstrefløj)

”digitale krænkelser er noget, som vi i enhedslisten har kæmpet imod længe. vi kan ikke acceptere de overgreb, som videredeling af billeder og videoer udgør, og i takt med den digitale udvikling ser vi jo desværre mange situationer, hvor intime billeder deles med flere tusinde personer uden samtykke [...] for det har jo en konsekvens, når man udsætter andre mennesker for en digital krænkelse. det har en konsekvens, som betyder, at dem, der har været udsat for forbrydelsen, får psykiske men højst sandsynligt resten af livet [...] det er meget alvorligt at blive krænket, og når det handler om digitale krænkelser, handler det jo om, at det er den samme krænkelse, som bliver gentaget og gentaget af forskellige personer. jo flere gange det bliver delt, des flere mennesker har set dig udstillet i sårbare situationer, og des hårdere risikerer du derfor også selv at blive ramt. der er intet urimeligt i, at et offer får erstatning for hver enkelt forbrydelse, i stedet for at man giver rabat til gerningsmanden” 2021-03-05, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag B 129 (Rosa Lund, EL, vestrefløj)

”voldtægt er en forfærdelig forbrydelse, og voldtægtsforbrydere skal straffes. det kan vi alle sammen blive enige om.” 2018-11-13, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 12 (Britt Bager, V, højrefløj)

”vi synes, at voldtægt i sig selv er så alvorligt, at det skal straffes rigtig hårdt. og man ville jo komme i den situation, hvor man så havde en voldtægtsforbryder, som så havde begået én voldtægt, og som så ville få 80 pct.'s rabat i forhold til den voldtægtsforbryder, der havde begået fem voldtægter – hvorfor det? altså, forbrydelsen er det, vi straffer. så ser vi på, hvor alvorlig forbrydelsen er, og så straffer vi selvfølgelig hårdere, hvis den er alvorlig. omvendt kunne man jo argumentere for, at én voldtægt ikke er så alvorlig, fordi man ikke får så høj en straf. det får man først, når man har begået fem voldtægter. vi synes, voldtægt er alvorligt, og det skal straffes hårdt, også selv om der kun er tale

om én voldtægt.” 2021-04-27, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 160 (Jan E. Jørgensen, V, højrefløj)

”jeg vil gerne give et eksempel, som er i den her rapport. det handler om en ung kvinde, som har diagnosen retardering af lettere grad. hun er blevet seksuelt misbrugt siden 12-årsalderen. det fremgår af hendes forklaring i retten, at hun har forsøgt at uddanne sig på vuc, men at hun har måttet opgive det. det fremgår i øvrigt, at hun har været medicineret, formentlig på grund af psykisk sygdom. der er af retten og derefter erstatningsnævnet blevet tilkendt en godtgørelse for tort på 75.000 kr., men intet andet. der er ikke søgt om yderligere erstatning eller godtgørelse [...] det er jo bare lige så vigtigt for et offer med et handicap at få oprejsning og føle, at retfærdigheden sker fyldest – både ved at gerningsmanden bliver straffet, men selvfølgelig også ved at man får den erstatning for svie og smerte og de eventuelle varige men, som man er blevet påført. og jeg synes, at det politisk er en smule mærkeligt, at vi er meget hurtige til at sætte straffen op og argumentere for, at det her gør vi for ofrenes skyld, men at når det gælder konkrete initiativer, som skal hjælpe ofrene videre i deres liv, går det altså tit lidt langsommere, og nogle gange synes jeg, at vi svigter ofrene.” 2021-04-20, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 236 (Karina Lorentzen Deinhart, SF, venstrefløj)

”vi ved, at knap hver fjerde, der blev dømt for voldtægt i danmark i 2020, var udlænding, altså uden dansk statsborgerskab. det er eksplosive overrepræsentationer gang på gang. hvis vi reelt skal sikre kommende voldsofre retfærdighed, skal vi også sikre, at udlændingepolitikken løses fra bunden. der skal indføres et asylstop, udlændinge skal forsørge sig selv, og kriminelle udlændinge skal fratages deres tildelte danske statsborgerskab og udvises. dansk statsborgerskab skal ikke tildeles udlændinge fra muslimske lande, der er overrepræsenteret i kriminalitetsstatistikkerne. straffen for vold, voldtægt og trusler skal sættes op. hensynet til danskernes sikkerhed skal vægte højere end hensynet til forældede konventioner.” 2021-04-20, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 236 (Mette Thiesen, NB, venstrefløj)

”forslaget her skal forstås sådan, at det skal gøre, at man kan gå på gaden og føle sig tryk, at man kan tage hjemmefra at føle sig tryk, at man kan sende sin 14-årige datter ud på gaden og føle sig tryk, at vi har et system, hvor vi faktisk straffer dem, som eksempelvis voldtager en 14-årig pige, begår gentagne indbrud, stjæler masser af biler eller begår mange røverier. dem vil vi straffe hårdt; det er det, vi ønsker med forslaget.” 2021-04-27, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 160 (René Christensen, DF, højrefløj)

“det må jeg indrømme at jeg faktisk er lidt overrasket over at alternativet ikke kan gøre. alternativet vil i så fald være det eneste parti i oppositionen, som ikke vil være med til at forbedre voldtægtslovens retsstilling på dette område.” 2017-02-28, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag B 40 (Rune Lund, EL, venstrefløj)

”der er ingen tvivl om, at når det handler om seksuelle overgreb på børn, så har vi, som også forslagsstillerne jo rigtigt nok sagde også her under spørgsmålene, med noget af den mest modbydelige form for kriminalitet at gøre. det kan der ikke være to meninger om.” 2018-05-22, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 99 (Morten Bødskov, S, venstrefløj)

”voldtægt er en forfærdelig forbrydelse, og voldtægtsforbrydere skal straffes. det kan vi alle sammen blive enige om.” 2018-11-13, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 12 (Britt Bager, V, højrefløj)

”i venstre mener vi, at voldtægt og seksuelle overgreb generelt er nogle af de groveste forbrydelser mod individet og en krænkelse af individets frihed og ret til at bestemme over egen krop. seksuelle overgreb og voldtægt kan have langvarige og voldsomme negative konsekvenser for ofrene, både fysisk og psykisk, særlig når det gælder børn. det tror jeg vi alle her i salen kan blive enige om, og jeg tror, at samtlige 179 medlemmer har samme mål, nemlig at få misbrug af børn standset i det omfang, det overhovedet kan lade sig gøre.” 2021-11-26, 1. behandling af lovforslag nr. L 78 (Anne Rasmussen, V, højrefløj)

”næst efter drab betragtes voldtægt som en af de mest alvorlige forbrydelser, man kan begå mod et andet menneske. voldtægt er en grov krænkelse af den seksuelle selvbestemmelsesret. ofre for voldtægt skal leve med både de fysiske og psykiske ar på sjælen resten af livet. derfor skal vi arbejde målrettet mod at forebygge voldtægtsforbrydelser, så vi kan få så vendt den triste udvikling med et stigende antal forbrydelser.” 2024-01-16, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 88 (Tobias Grotkjær Elmstrøm, M, højrefløj)

”ville det ikke støde retsfølelsen, hvis man har nogle, der begår meget små forhold, men mange af dem, som så bliver straffet hårdere end nogle, som begår grove forhold, altså så flere butikstyverier skal straffes hårdere end f.eks. én voldtægt? mon ikke også det slår hårdt til retsfølelsen?” 2020-04-27, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 160 (Nick Hækkerup, S, venstrefløj)

”en strafferamme på 6 års fængsel for at stjæle hunden eller hamsteren, eller hvad det kan være, er næsten det samme som strafferammen for voldtægt. den er 8 år efter § 216. så vi skal nok lige sørge

for, at der kommer proportioner i det.” 2018-05-15, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 124 (Preben Bang Henriksen, V, højrefløj)

når vi har givet folk den her ret til at opholde sig permanent i danmark, så skal der noget meget alvorligt til, før vi skal inddrage den her opholdstilladelse. det kan f.eks. være voldtægt eller mord. men vi skal ikke begynde at smide folk ud, fordi de har været arbejdsløse – den går ikke” 2018-04-26, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 86 (Mathias Tesfaye, S, venstrefløj)

”det vil sige, at det konservative folkeparti mener, at en biltyv, der har stjålet 50 biler, skal straffes hårdere end en voldtægtsforbryder. for det er jo konsekvensen.” 2021-04-27, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 160 (Jan E. Jørgensen, V, hørefløj)

”det er jo altid alvorligt, når nogen udsættes for en forbrydelse – et umotiveret voldeligt overfald, en digital krænkelse, en seksualforbrydelse, og sådan kunne man jo blive ved. der er altid mindst ét offer i sådan nogle sager, og de skal leve med det, de har været udsat for, resten af livet.” 2021-03-05, 1. behandling af lovforslag nr. L 154 (Rosa Lund, EL, venstrefløj)

”stadigvæk får jeg svært ved at forklare voldtægtsofferet, at det er 20 gange så hårdt at blive udsat for sådan en seksualforbrydelse med billeder, end det er at blive voldtaget. det får jeg godt nok svært ved.” 2022-05-06, 1. behandling af lovforslag nr. L 184 (Preben Bang Henriksen, V, højrefløj)

”lovforslaget handler om digitale sexkrænkelser i form af deling af billeder eller videoer med et seksuelt eller pornografisk indhold uden samtykke fra den afbildede. det udgør selvfølgelig også en alvorlig krænkelse af privatlivets fred, og det er ofte en alvorlig krænkelse af kvinders – som det ofte er – rettigheder. det kan efterlade offeret i en meget ubehagelig situation, og det kan give ar på sjælen og i virkeligheden også varige men [...] man kan jo sige, at det selv med den nuværende strafferamme vil være sådan, at den sandsynligvis også ville være tilstrækkelig, hvis det dog var sådan, at politiet fik rejst nogle flere sager. altså hvis de unge mænd, som det jo oftest er, der deler sådanne billeder og lægger dem i mapper, forstod, at opdagelsesrisikoen var så reel, at de rent faktisk ville blive dømt, når der blev rejst sager, så ville de mennesker nok fatte, at man skal respektere kvinders rettigheder, og at man skal respektere privatlivets [...] så ville man nok efter en del domme på det område få en situation, hvor flere mennesker ville indse, at det her er hamrende alvorligt” 2017-12-12, 1. behandling af lovforslag L 115 (Rune Lund, EL, venstrefløj)

”det handler om, at det, når borgeren sidder og læser en artikel om en eller anden ung 14-årig pige, der er blevet gruppevoldtaget af to unge drenge, så ville være helt åbenlyst, at det selvfølgelig skal fortælles, at det her er to unge drenge med oprindelse i eksempelvis somalia eller afghanistan. for vi ved godt, at det er de mennesker, der begår den her type kriminalitet.” 2024-01-16, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 19 (Mikkel Bjørn, DF, højrefløjen)

”lad mig starte med en opfordring om at anvende et præcist sprogbrug, når vi taler om voldtægt. lad os bruge de betegnelser, der er de korrekte, frem for dem, der er de politisk korrekte. jeg har bemærket, hvordan flere i salen i dag bruger den kønsneutrale betegnelse gerningspersoner i stedet for det oprindelige ord gerningsmænd. det er unødvendigt at blive så politisk korrekt. en gerningsmand kan selvfølgelig i bredere forstand godt være en kvinde, ligesom en politimand også kan være en kvinde, men lige præcis i det her tilfælde, er det ikke rigtigt at udvande sproget og gøre det kønsløst, for det er mænd, der voldtager. mænd voldtager kvinder, eller mænd voldtager andre mænd. derfor er den præcise betegnelse også gerningsmænd og ikke gerningspersoner. for ved at reducere dem til gerningspersoner åbner man op for, at kvinder også voldtager, og det signalerer, at den kriminalitetsform begås af både mænd og kvinder. det gør den ikke. det er mænd, der voldtager kvinder. så lad os bruge det udtryk, som passer til lige præcis den her kriminalitetsform; lad os bruge betegnelsen korrekt, i stedet for at det bliver politisk korrekt.” 2024-01-16, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 88 (Mai Mercado, KF, højrefløjen)

”før var der jo et fokus på, om der var tvang, vold og trusler, når der var tale om en voldtægt. og mange har nok også haft sådan en opfattelse af, at det ideelle offer var sådan et, der skreg og sagde fra, sagde nej og gjorde modstand. senere viden viser, at sådan er det faktisk ikke. langt de fleste ofre, 75 pct., fryser i situationen og er af forskellige årsager ikke i stand til at sige fra, f.eks. på grund af frygt, eller fordi kroppen simpelt hen ikke reagerer. og det betyder jo, at man skal være særlig opmærksom ved passivitet. derfor er det også i min optik rigtigt, af den initiativtagende part skal sikre sig, at der er samtykke, for er der ikke det, så er der tale om en voldtægt. er loven så et retssikkerhedsskred, som nogle siger? det er jeg ikke så overbevist om [...] faktisk er det jo stadig væk sådan, at omkring ni ud af ti sager aldrig bliver til noget. og det er jo, fordi det stadig skal bevises ud over enhver rimelighed, at det, der er foregået, er en voldtægt.” 2024-05-21, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 160 (Karina Lorenzen Deinhardt, SF, venstrefløjen)

”[...] en voldtægt er lige alvorlig, uanset hvem der har begået den. det betyder, at det ikke skal give en mindre straf, bare fordi voldtægten er begået af en, man kender, frem for af en fremmed, der

springer ud af en busk.” 2021-04-19, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 233 (Halime Oguz, SF, venstrefløjen)

”hvis jeg forstår det konservative forslag korrekt, siger det så ikke, at såfremt et kvindeligt bandemedlem bliver voldtaget af et andet bandemedlem, skal der ikke kunne udbetales tortgodtgørelse til det kvindelige bandemedlem?” 2021-04-19, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 235 (Ole Birk Olesen, LA, højrefløjen)

”voldtægt er en fuldstændig frygtelig forbrydelse. det tror jeg sådan set vi alle sammen kan blive enige om. jeg tror, at det er en af de absolut værste forbrydelser, du kan udsætte et andet menneske for. men som der fuldstændig rigtigt bliver sagt heroppe fra talerstolen, er det at blive anmeldt falsk for en voldtægt og at blive udsat for den skyld og skam, det er at være falsk anklaget for en forbrydelse så grov, også helt horribelt.” 2024-01-16, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 88 (Mette Thiesen, DF, højrefløjen)

”der skal ikke herske nogen tvivl om, at vi i dansk folkeparti gerne vil straffe voldtægter meget hårdere. vi vil gerne have minimumsstraffe, og vi vil meget gerne have meget hårdere straffe på det område, men vi er jo også nødt til at sikre os, at det ikke som i nogle af de sager, som vi hører om, og som falder inden for samtykkebestemmelsen, handler om nogle unge drenge, som faktisk ikke engang har vidst, at de har gjort noget forkert.” 2024-05-21, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 160 (Mette Thiesen, DF, højrefløjen)

” jeg vil starte med at sige, at voldtægt nok er noget nær den værste forbrydelse, man kan begå mod et andet menneske. altså, det er ikke bare vold mod krop; det er også vold mod sjæl. [...] i dansk folkeparti så vi meget gerne, at man lavede minimumsstraffe, at man lavede meget højere straffe for voldtægt, fordi det netop er så alvorlig en forbrydelse. [...] jeg synes alligevel, at jeg har hørt nok historier om unge mænd i forhold til den her lovgivning til, at man i hvert fald skal indskærpe: lad være med at overnatte der. overnat et andet sted. det gør jeg, lige så vel som jeg vil sige til mine drenge, og det vil jeg virkelig sige: du skal ikke tro på, at hun siger, at hun tager p-piller. beskyt dig selv for at være hundrede procent sikker. [...] når vi skal se så mange unge mænd, drenge, som faktisk er usikre på reelt set, hvad det går ud på, hvad et samtykke er [...] altså, helt grundlæggende set tror jeg da også, at kvinder generelt bliver set på med lidt mere positive øjne end mænd.” 2024-05-21, 2024-05-21, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 160 (Mette Thiesen, DF, højrefløjen)

”men vi bliver også bare nødt til at sige, at der er blevet talt lidt om de unge mænd, sådan lidt negligerende, om at 54 pct. har en bekymring for det her. altså, jeg har jo selv været en ung mand, og det kan godt være, at hjernen ikke er færdigudviklet, men vi er jo ikke sådan dumme for at være dumme som unge. altså, der er jo en grund til, at 54 pct. af unge mænd er bange for det her system, altså ikke ved, hvordan de skal agere i det. derfor kunne det også være interessant, synes vi i danmarksdemokraterne, at få det undersøgt. lad os nu få noget fakta på bordet; for viser det sig, at der er endnu flere falske anmeldelser nu, så har vi jo et kæmpeproblem med samtykkeloven, som vi har lavet den, og så bliver vi jo nødt til at korrigere den i folketinget.” 2024-05-21, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 160 (Kim Edberg Andersen, NB, højrefløjen)

”ifølge den årlige offerundersøgelse fra 2023 anslås det, at mellem 11.000 og 17.000 kvinder årligt oplever at blive udsat for voldtægt eller forsøg på det. [...] det bliver ofte bragt op i debatten, at vi har et stort problem med falske anmeldelser i voldtægtssager. der er dog intet, der indikerer, at det skulle være sådan ud over debatspalterne i berlingske tidende og weekendavisen. politiet oplyser, at det kun er i ca. 0,8 pct. af sagerne, at der sker en falsk anmeldelse, altså en lille håndfuld sager. er det for mange sager, der sker falske anmeldelser i? ja, det er det helt bestemt, og derfor er det også strafbart at indgive falske anmeldelser. [...] men så jeg lige have lov til at huske alle på, at det ikke er sådan, at man bare kan sætte lighedstegn mellem frifindelse i en voldtægtssag og så en falsk anmeldelse. man kan sagtens blive frifundet på grund af manglende bevis, selv om der ikke samtidig er bevis for, at der skulle være indgivet en falsk anmeldelse. derfor vil vi i enhedslisten rigtig gerne have, at vi får lavet en undersøgelse af falske anmeldelser. det er netop for at vise, at der ikke pludselig er hundredvis af sager om falske anmeldelser, bare fordi vi har fået en samtykkelov. anmeldelser indgivet efter § 216 før samtykkeloven kunne jo være lige så falske, som de kan være det efter indførelsen” 2024-05-21, 1. behandling af beslutningsforslag nr. B 160 (Rosa Lund, EL, venstrefløjen)