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The employment of gender and sexuality in the anti-immigration discourse of the right-wing populist party Forum for Democracy (FvD)

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Gendering and Sexing “the Self” and “the Other”

The employment of gender and sexuality in the anti-immigration discourses of
the right-wing populist party Forum for Democracy (FvD)

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Table of contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Literature review on populism and gender	4
2.1.	<i>Defining populism and its relation to gender and sexuality</i>	4
2.2.	<i>Gendered and sexed discourses in right-wing populism</i>	5
3.	Theoretical framework and methodology.....	8
3.1.	<i>Theoretical framework: postcolonialism and intersectional feminism</i>	8
3.2.	<i>Methodology</i>	10
3.2.1.	<i>Critical Discourse Analysis</i>	11
3.2.2.	<i>Case Study Analysis.....</i>	11
3.2.3.	<i>Data selection.....</i>	12
3.2.4.	<i>Method</i>	12
3.2.5.	<i>Limitations</i>	13
4.	Analysis	14
4.1.	<i>Dutch context.....</i>	14
4.2.	<i>Biopolitical discourse</i>	15
4.3.	<i>Homonationalist and femonationalist discourses</i>	18
4.4.	<i>Anti-feminist discourse.....</i>	23
5.	Discussion and Conclusions.....	27
6.	Bibliography	31
7.	Appendix 1: Translations of original quotes	39

1. Introduction

Today, we are witnessing a gendered and sexed backlash against progressive values, changed attitudes towards gender and sexuality, and feminism. This opposition can be seen more broadly as part of a backlash against changes related to globalization and multiculturalism. Right-wing populism has mobilized “angry white men” in Europe and the United States, but also “angry brown men” in Turkey, the Philippines and India to mention only a few countries (Moghadam 2018). They are all dissatisfied with the establishment, hostile towards minorities, immigrants and refugees and resort to traditional values and norms. Their traditional notions of gender and sexuality resonates with some parts of the female population, and in Europe particularly “angry white women” have risen to leadership roles in right-wing populist parties.

In order to address these backlashes, I will study the use of gender and sexuality in the anti-immigration discourse of the Dutch party Forum voor Democratie (Forum for Democracy, FvD) led by Thierry Baudet. Baudet is presented in the media as an attractive, charming and young “alpha male”; a “dandy” who holds a PhD in judicial law and started his maiden speech in Latin; theatrical, emerging in a military vest during a debate on defense; a comedian who likes to provoke (Jong and Leeuwen 2018). Not all of his statements have been appreciated, however. The party has received plenty of media attention, being accused of sexism, racism, homophobia and anti-Semitism. Leaked anti-Semitic and racist WhatsApp chats between the members of the FvD’s youth division (JFvD) caused internal turbulence and eventually led to the falling apart of the party in November 2020.

The FvD was first a think tank established in 2015, mostly known for successfully campaigning a referendum on a trade association with Ukraine. It can be classified as a conservative populist party that focuses on direct democracy and national sovereignty. The party is against the establishment, or what Baudet refers to as “cartel parties”, immigration, climate change, the EU, and the Dutch Corona policy. They won two seats after the national elections of 2017, thus only having a small presence in Parliament. But shortly after, they won most of the votes in the Dutch provincial elections of 2019, which allowed them to obtain twelve seats in the 75-seat Senate. During the provincial elections, the FvD mainly campaigned on two points: to eliminate the Climate law and to stop mass-immigration (Van der Wel 2019). For that reason, it is interesting to study in what ways gender and sexuality are employed (or not) in their anti-immigration stance, a topic that played a major role in the campaign’s success.

I was inspired to write about this topic after doing research on a halaqa group for female Muslim students at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam.¹ During an interview with one of the participants, we discussed Geert Wilders, party leader of the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), his critique of the gendered segregation at the Islamic Student Association Amsterdam (ISA) at the VU. Wilders referred to ISA as: “men and women separated. Sharia in the Netherlands” (2017).² The participant expressed her frustration with his one-sided portrayal of Muslim students, leaving out positive representations, them being well-educated for instance, stating that “we are judged for not integrating enough, yet the VU is filled with Muslim students” (Taspinar 2019). It seems that no matter how well they integrate, it is never considered to be complete. This interview triggered my interest in the gendered and sexed anti-immigration discourses of the far-right and also showed me the impact such selective representations can have on the people that are being excluded and discriminated against.

Within academia on Dutch right-wing populism, most research has been conducted on the gendered anti-immigration discourse of the PVV led by Wilders, whereas the FvD has received considerably less attention. This can partly be explained by the fact that the party is relatively new and academics have stressed that it was “a bit too early for a serious assessment” of the gendered discourses (Verloo 2018). Yet, as this thesis will demonstrate, including social media discourse in addition to the official political discourse of the party will provide very rich data. This focus also has to do with the fact that the FvD has been less associated with Islamophobia than the PVV. Wilders directly propagates an anti-Islam stance, campaigning to ban the Quran and “send Moroccans back”, whereas Baudet’s language is more indirect and complex and the discourse of the FvD is thus considered more ambiguous (Talay 2019). Baudet has been able to “steal Wilders votes” as he comes across as a more moderate alternative (ibid.). Although the two politicians might differ in the way they deliver the message, the content and meaning are very much the same, and it thus becomes even more relevant to decode the more indirect exclusionary discourses of the FvD.

While gender dimensions have been studied extensively in right-wing populist discourse, research on sexuality has been limited, with the exception of several studies on homosexuality and homophobia (Sauer et al. 2017). By including sexuality, I intend to fill this gap in research by analyzing both gender *and* sexuality. Furthermore, the majority of work has

¹ A halaqa group is a religious gathering to study the Islam or the Quran.

² Translations of original quotes from Dutch are my own, unless otherwise stated. Given that my thesis works with translated quotes, I have provided the original quotes alongside the translations in an appendix.

focused predominantly on gay rights and women emancipation (Fiers Muis 2020). In this thesis, however, a wider range of issues related to gender and sexuality will be examined, including transgenderism and diverse gender identities. I will also adopt a more inclusive conceptualization, which means that “gender and sexuality” is taken as shorthand for diverse forms of sexuality, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) rights, more diverse gender identities, and feminist values such as gender equality.

My thesis examines the employment of gender and sexuality in the anti-immigration discourses of the FvD as strategies of intersectionality. More particularly, my thesis responds to the following research question: *How does the FvD employ gender and sexuality in their anti-immigration discourse?* To answer this question, I will first examine the well-known definitions of populism by Cas Mudde and Ernest Laclau and the feminist critique of both. I will then explore the existing literature on gendered and sexed right-wing discourses. In the third chapter, the theoretical framework and methodology will be outlined. First, theories of post-colonialism and intersectional feminism will be explored which will together form the lens through which I conduct my analysis. Second, the methodologies of Critical Discourse Analysis and Case Study Analysis will be justified after which I will provide my research design. In the fourth chapter, the discourses of the FvD will be analyzed, categorized along the themes of biopolitical discourses, homo- and femonationalist discourses and anti-feminist discourses. In the final chapter, conclusions will be drawn about the intersecting exclusions in the FvD’s discourse, the implications of gendered and sexed discourses will be discussed and suggestions for further research will be made.

2. Literature review on populism and gender

2.1. Defining populism and its relation to gender and sexuality

There has been little agreement on the definition of populism among academics. The prevailing conceptions can be divided in two camps: the ideological camp and the discursive camp. The first has been pioneered by political scientist Cas Mudde. In his work “The Populist Zeitgeist” (2004), he offers one of the most often quoted definitions of populism that reads as follows:

“Populism is best defined as a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* (general will) of the people” (543).

In his conception, the purity of “the people” and the corruptness of “the elite” are defined in moral terms. It is a righteous rebellion led by a charismatic leader who stands up for the well-being of the people that has been hampered by the interests of the ruling elite, be they the EU, mainstream media, universities and so on. Populism is thus “a monist and moralist ideology”, denying that there are different interests and opinions within “the people” and rejecting the legitimacy of political opponents (Maiguashca 2019, 773).

The most influential scholar in the discursive camp is Ernesto Laclau (2005), who defines populism as a political logic rather than an ideology, more specifically, the logic of “the people” (117). According to him, the category of “the people” is “an empty signifier”, that can be filled with any content that unites differing demands and differentiates the common enemy. Thus, similar to Mudde, populism is viewed as antagonistic. However, for Laclau it is a mode of articulation rather than about the content that is articulated. More importantly, he argues that populism is a discursive construct. In contrast to Mudde who presupposes an already existing unit of people, he argues that “the people” is constituted through discursive strategies and rhetorical devices (*ibid.*). The “us” is constructed through “creative acts” of a charismatic leader who incites his/her followers to “affectively invest” in his words (Maiguashca 2019, 774). Laclau thus links populism to “affective politics”, as it is a mode of identification that creates a sense of unity for the community (Panico 2021). This is relevant because populists tend to focus on emotions such as fear, shame, pride, a sense of belonging (*ibid.*).

While populism remains a highly contested concept, so is its relation to gender. According to Mudde, and his co-author Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (2015) populism “does not hold a specific position on gender issues and roles” since the category of “the people” includes both men and women (18). He calls gender “secondary [to the anti-elite struggle] if not irrelevant” to populism (ibid., 17). While mainstream approaches have paid little attention to gender dimensions of populism, feminists have argued on the contrary that the “obsession with gender and sexuality” is “a common feature in all current versions of right-wing populism” and can help explain the attractiveness and success of these parties (Dietze and Roth 2020, 7).

Feminists have added a “second antagonism” to Mudde’s definition of populism and argue that the dichotomization between “us” and “them” is not only vertical between “the people” and “the elite” but also horizontal between “the people” and “the others” who are defended by “the elite” (Norocel et al. 2018, 428). Within this second antagonism, “the others” include immigrants, asylum seekers, Muslims, feminists and LGBTQ+ people. The distinction between “us” and “them” not only moral but based on identity categories. From this perspective, populism is not so gender-neutral as it might seem at firsthand.

Similar to the critique on the work of Mudde, feminists have criticized Laclau for not engaging enough with power, ignoring categories such as gender, race, and class as both oppressive power relations and identities that constitute the populist antagonism (Maignashca 2019). Nevertheless, Laclau’s discursive approach is better equipped to identify different practices of differentiation through which subjectivities are constituted. Laclau’s conception will be expanded in the next chapter, by classifying right-wing populist parties depending on whether they include or exclude individuals from the category of “the people” through articulating various identity complexes. This way, the feminist critique on populism will be considered by grounding the analysis in power relations as they emerge in discourses about gender, race, class and so on.

2.2. Gendered and sexed discourses in right-wing populism

The literature on populism and gender can be categorized in three different categories: gendered voting behavior, leadership (including masculinities of charismatic leaders and the role of female leaders), and gendered discourses of the populist right (Dona 2020, 287-288). This thesis mostly draws from the literature that is concerned with the last category in order to analyze the gendered and sexualized representations of “self” and “other”. This focus is also motivated by

the fact that gendered discourses in right-wing populist rhetoric remain understudied (Wodak 2015).

While feminists have only started to write on the relation between gender and sexuality and populism more recently, they have written extensively on gendered narratives of nationhood. The nation is imagined as a “natural” extension of the family which involves specific notions of “manhood” and “womanhood”. The homeland is constructed as feminine, being “weak” and “vulnerable”, and the female body of the nation thus requires a strong protector against its “decline” or “invasion” (Yuval-Davis 1997). The boundaries of the nation are marked through the confinement of women to traditional gender roles.

The hierarchical and traditional views on gender are also apparent in the imagining of the nuclear family: women are “mothers” of the family and are given the passive role as biological producers, whereas men are “normal”. Within this family, both men and women usually identify as white, middle class, heterosexual, cisgender and Christian (Khrebtan-Hörhager 2019). All other individuals are placed “outside” of the family (e.g. on the basis of their gender, ethnicity/race, religion and sexual orientation).

“The national family” is not only imagined as preserving the patriarchal order of sexes but also to keep the nation’s body “pure”. Academics have argued that populist rhetoric can also be viewed through a bio-political perspective. Biopolitics, as developed by Michel Foucault (1978), refers to “the managing of life and reproduction” of individuals and the population at large to ensure “the health” of the nation, which is a form of what Foucault calls “governmentality” or “the rational strategy to conduct conducts” (as cited in Bracke and Hernandez Aguilar 2020b, 358). Biopolitical power does not only depend on keeping the nation ethnically “pure” in racial terms, but equally operates through “sex” and “sex differentiation” on the basis of essentialist ideas of “natural” gender and sex roles (ibid., 356). Homosexuals, for instance, are excluded from the people within the nation for being biologically “defect” and mentally “ill”.

Furthermore, a lot of research has highlighted contradictions within the populist right as they generally hold more traditional views on gender issues, but adopt more liberal views with regards to migration emphasizing women’s and gays’ rights. It is precisely the tension between remaining gendered and sexual hierarchies on the one hand, and the promotion of gender and sexual equality on the other that makes this rhetoric “pseudo-emancipatory” (Wodak 2015, 22). These strategies have also been conceptualized as “homonationalism” or “femonationalism”, which require further elaboration.

Jasbir Puar (2007), who coined the term homonationalism, defines it as the “acceptance” and “tolerance” for LGBTQ+ subjects as a measurement for “the right and capacity to national sovereignty” (4). Homonationalism manifests itself in the neo-colonial narrative of saving gays from homophobic outsiders (Bracke 2012), which is similar to the older colonial rescue narrative of “white men are saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak 1988, 297). Puar used the concept of homonationalism to explain the fusion of homosexuality with pro-war and pro-imperialist agendas in the United States.

Borrowing from Puar, Sarah Farris (2012) developed the concept “femonationalism”, which she defines as the mobilization of gender equality discourse by right-wing parties against so-called patriarchal immigrant groups (187). Femonationalism is expressed in both the appropriation of feminism and the cooption of white/Western feminists with narrow gender equality agendas (Sager and Mulinari 2018). The femonationalist discourse is apparent in the countless debates about the unveiling of Muslim women, which right-wing actors and Western feminists regard as a symbol of sexual oppression.

What has been less discussed in the literature on gendered and sexed populist discourses, however, are the anti-feminist and anti-gender discourses (Agius et al. 2020) targeting gender equality, women’s and LGBTQ+ persons’ rights, gender studies, gender mainstreaming, as well as feminist or LGBTQ+ activism. It is a complex situation in which feminism is being attacked by both conservative movements and feminist movements. Right-wing populists incorporate feminist positions in their discourse and turn them into nationalist projects of in/exclusion, sometimes with the support of feminist actors or LGBTQ+ activists. Consequently, boundaries between antifeminism and feminist concepts have become blurred.

Within the context of the feminist backlash, one very popular rhetorical weapon is the accusing of feminists for developing “gender ideology” that “seeks to destroy the scientific and biblical basis for differences between the sexes” (Bojanic et al. 2021, 121). In Latin America and Eastern Europe, for instance, gender ideology is represented as “Western imperialism” and in other Catholic European countries as “ideological colonization” by international institutions (Dietze and Roth 2020, 8).

In short, based on the existing literature we can conclude that the populist right constructs the nation as gendered, re-centers the heteronormative nuclear family, defends the natural gender/sex differences, seeks to control reproduction and criticizes feminists or the so-called “gender ideology”. All these different factors demonstrate the omnipresence of gender and sexuality in right-wing populist discourse.

3. Theoretical framework and methodology

3.1. Theoretical framework: postcolonialism and intersectional feminism

In order to explain the exclusionary rhetoric in the sexed and gendered anti-immigration discourses of the populist right, I will build on the insights from the post-colonial theory of othering and the feminist theory of intersectionality. These perspectives can help in understanding right-wing populist discourses in terms of power relations.

As has been established in the previous section, populists construct “the people”, through group boundaries between “us” and “them”. This has also been conceptualized as the process of “othering”, which was first systematically used by post-colonial theorist Gayatri Spivak (1985). Although she refers specifically to the production of imperial discourse by the colonizer that constructs the colonized as “the other”, it can also be applied to other forms of dominance. It is important to understand that this construction is as much about “the self” as “the other” and is grounded in Hegel’s philosophical thought that “there can be no self without other” (as cited in Hagren 2021, 2). It thus involves the valuation of the identity of “the self” and the devaluation of that of “the other”.

The concept of othering is discursive, to borrow from Gramsci and Foucault, which implies that its power does not merely lie in physical coercion, but in the ability to (re-)produce knowledge of “the other” through representation (Hall 1997, 259). The power relations in othering are always hierarchical, in that the group identity of the dominant group is established through the construction of group boundaries that exclude the marginalized group. It thus contributes to the establishment of power relations through linguistic representation. One of the most well-known forms of othering in the study of colonial discourse has been Orientalism, as developed by Edward Said (1979). He argued that the West was able to hold power over the Orient through knowing and representing “the other”.

Feminist literature has already demonstrated that the process of othering is inherently gendered and relies on gender relations of patriarchy. In her work *The Second Sex* (1949), the influential feminist Simone de Beauvoir used the concept to theorize structural hierarchies based on gender. She has argued that women are framed by men as “the other” and the object while men are “the self” and the subject. Men oppress women by defining themselves as positive and the norm and by defining women as opposite and relative to themselves.

It is important to note that in the framework of postcolonial feminism, the process of othering is understood touching upon different power asymmetries. According to Spivak (1985), the process of othering can be classed, gendered and racialized (258). It is not, however, an alternative for racism, sexism or class, but is concerned with “the consequences of racism, sexism, class (or a combination hereof) in terms of symbolic degradation as well as processes of identity formation related to this degradation” (Jensen 2011, 65). The multidimensionality of this concept is essential to this research because it captures how articulations of different group identities intersect. Alternative terms such “Islamophobia” or “anti-Muslimism” would limit the analysis to discourses on Islam and Muslims in particular, whereas discursive exclusions of immigrants go beyond religious dimensions. The process of othering is closely related to what has later been defined as intersectionality, to which we will turn now.

The theory of intersectionality builds on Black feminism and Critical Race Studies (Dietze and Roth 2020, 252). It was first coined by African-American feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who describes it as the intersection of gender and sexuality with other categorizations such as religion and race. According to Crenshaw, the intersection of racism and sexism is often overlooked in anti-racist and non-discriminatory approaches, as sexism tends to be based on the experience of white women and racism on the experience of black men (ibid). The discrimination against black women is thus excluded from both understandings.

While maintaining the feminist focus on gender issues, the theory has been broadened by including additional marginalized identity categories (such as religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability etc.). The theory of intersectionality travelled to Europe and beyond. Most academics in the European context have focused on the intersectional discrimination of Muslims in the European context (Keskinen 2013; Sauer et al. 2017; Krehbtan-Hörhager 2019; Norocel et al. 2020). It should be mentioned, however, that Black feminists have criticized the appropriation of US black feminist theory and for downplaying the experiences of black women (Davis 2020).

While acknowledging that the theory is grounded in the individual lived experiences of black women in the United states, I will apply intersectionality to “the symbolic” and “discursive level” (Lutz 2015, 40), focusing on how populists represent “the self” and “the other” and how they construct meaning across various identity categories based on Laclau’s understanding of “the people” as an empty signifier through which these identity categories are articulated.

The strategic function of gender and sexuality within right-wing populist discourse has been defined by scholars as “intersectionality from above” (Mayer et al. 2014), “exclusive

intersectionality” (Sauer et al. 2017), or “intersectional othering” (Krehbtan-Hörhager 2019). It essentially involves the analysis of:

“superordinate axes of social structuring such as masculinities (gendered hierarchies), heterosexuality (sexual hierarchies), elites (for class systems) and whiteness (for racialized and ethnic structuring)” (Norocel et al. 2018, 428).

From this perspective, intersectionality is a strategy of right-wing populists to deny the equality and rights of “others” and attack all minorities and emancipatory projects (Dietze and Roth 2020). Different from Crenshaw’s conceptualization of intersectionality, who criticizes overlapping exclusions, strategic intersectionality critically looks at the use of intersecting differences by political actors in their rhetoric to create specific in- and out-groups in society. In addition, the deployment of overlapping identity categories is understood as performative. Performativity, as conceptualized by Judith Butler, is “the constant reiteration of expressions that constitute and confirm one’s identity” (Norocel et al. 2020, 6), and can be used as a tool to deconstruct gendered, classed, racialized etc., political performances.

Academics that study populism through an intersectional lens, have reflected on the lack of an intersectional perspective in mainstream feminisms and how this has opened up space for new gendered strategies from the right. Intersectional feminism is a perspective that challenges Western feminisms, as expressed by Gabriele Dietze and Julia Roth (2020): “intersectional constellations of feminisms practice a variety of forms of resistance against white mainstream feminisms, who often side with right-wingers in their anti-migration stance” (10).

An intersectional analysis on the process of othering in right-wing populist discourse looks at the interactions between categories of differentiation and how they generate definitions of hegemonic subjectivities. This perspective will allow for the study of the strategic use of gender and sexuality in relation to other identity categories in anti-migration discourses. The lense of intersectionality can offer new insights to the populist right’s articulations of identity categories that include or exclude individuals from “the people”.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a field that was established since the late 1980s, is a strand in discourse analysis that critically analyzes the relation between language and society. It aims to better understand how text and talk establish, maintain or resist certain power relations (van Dijk 1993, 249). Dominance or power abuse by elite groups and institutions is (re)enacted, legitimated and (re)produced through discourse which ultimately results in social inequality (ibid, 250). CDA is about analyzing text in context (Wodak and Meyer 2008, 3). The contextual analysis is multi-layered, looking at “the immediate language, the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship, the current context and the broader sociopolitical and historical context” (ibid.). It is not so much descriptive, but rather focusses on why and how discursive practices are produced and what ideological goals they might serve. CDA is a problem-oriented or issue-oriented approach, often targeting racism, colonialism, sexism and other forms of social inequality. Given that my research is focused on right-wing populist discourse and looks at the discursive intersections of exclusion, this form of discourse analysis is best suited to my research.

3.2.2. Case Study Analysis

Within the field of IR, discussions on case study method have been dominated by positivist approaches (Lai and Roccu 2019). These approaches usually emphasize the comparative functions of case studies and/or their causality. However, since my research is part of critical IR scholarship, as I draw from post-structuralism and seek to deconstruct dominant discourses using a feminist and postcolonial lense, I will adopt a non-positivist case study methodology. Different from case studies in positivist research that are either an “instance” or “counter-instance” of theory, an interpretative case study “emerges during the research process, through the constant relation of observation and theory and international and global forces and processes by which it is shaped and on which it reacts back” (ibid., 81). To put it differently, it is an interactive and dynamic approach that acknowledges the value of context-specific in-depth research. Generating knowledge from a single case study allows for the reconstruction of theory which in turn “alters the conditions of other instances of the phenomenon” (ibid., 82). My case study of the gendered and sexed discourse of the FvD is thus not necessarily relevant because it is “representative” or “deviant”, but because it helps to understand the phenomenon of populism and its relation to gender and sexuality in a contextually rich way.

3.2.3. Data selection

The data was collected from 25 September 2016, when the FvD was officially established until 24 November 2020, when Baudet stepped down as leader and as frontrunner of the elections after the youth division of the FvD (JFvD) was accused of racism and anti-Semitism in their WhatsApp groups. One day later, the FvD hold a binding referendum about Baudet's leadership and more than two thirds of the party members re-elected him. As a result of his re-election, some candidates left the party whereas others jumped ship and started their own party called JA21, under which Annabel Nanninga and Joost Eerdmans. Therefore, I will consider the textual discourses of the FvD before the party fell apart. These four years are also roughly the time period of FvD's first political term, just before the national elections that were hold in March 2021.

For this research, I have analyzed materials produced by the FvD such as traditional political documents, including speeches, op-eds in newspapers, official site content, interviews, as well as social media and campaigning videos. I have deliberately chosen not to include the party program of 2016-2021, because academics before me have already pointed out that "sex and gender is a non-issue in their official program" but that the FvD is, however, "very active outside of parliament" and predominantly frames their knowledge production inside the public debate (Verloo 2018, 26). I also include social media because demarcations of "self" and "other" not only take place in statecraft but also in online discourses and popular culture. This research is thus primarily concerned with "micro-politics" or the constructing of "ideologies and exclusionary agenda's in everyday politics" (Wodak 2015, 5). While it should be acknowledged that each utterance is performed voluntarily and intentionally by the speaker (Skinner 2002, 105), I will demonstrate the embedded broader discourses by deconstructing the individual statements by the leader and the party members.

3.2.4. Method

In order to respond to my research question, I had to confirm first that the FvD did indeed employ gender and sexuality in their anti-immigration discourse. I performed key word searches to find instances where issues around gender and sexuality were invoked. Statements were selected by looking at the strategic intersections of gender and sexuality with race, ethnicity, class, religion etc., in the construction of "the other" in populist discourse. In other

words, specific attention was paid to how gender and sexual orientation are articulated (or not) in relation to other identity categories. After finding explicit links I began to order my data thematically, so I could identify the main discourses that will be discussed in my analysis below. According to discourse analysts, an analysis is “valid” when new data that were not originally part of the empirical base constantly fit within the themes one has already identified (Milliken 1999). I found that the themes I had identified from my initial research accounted for the new data I collected.

3.2.5. Limitations

The research on populism has been, mostly Western-centric focusing on the populist right in the United States and in Europe (apart from the research on the longer tradition of populism in Latin America). I am aware that by doing research on a case study in the Netherlands, I contribute to the already extensive literature on Western Europe and thus to the imbalance between research on populism in the Global North and the Global South (Moghadam 2018). I hope to make up for this imbalance by including knowledge production on populism focused on and coming from the Global South. It should be stressed that this case study is to a certain extent determined by the fact that my native tongue is Dutch, which makes sources more accessible.

Before continuing, it is important to make my own positionality and interests explicit and to be self-reflexive about my research process. With regards to my position as a white, heterosexual, cisgender, middle class woman, there are also power relations at play in my study of the representations of “self” and “others”. While I have experienced gender discrimination as a woman in my life, I luckily never experienced discrimination on the basis of my religion, race, class, or sexual orientation and can thus never fully understand the experiences of those who did. I am thus aware of the situatedness of my point of view and the power asymmetries that are present in my research.

Furthermore, since I look at the discursive practices of a political party, I have to admit that my research is partial because I focus more on top-down relations of dominance rather than bottom up relations of resistance (van Dijk 1993, 250). In that sense, I contribute to the status quo by excluding marginalized voices from my critical discourse analysis. The aim of my research, however, is to lay bare hierarchical power relations that are manifested in dominant discourses. In this way, I do hope to contribute to a more equal society.

4. Analysis

4.1. Dutch context

The Netherlands became more culturally diverse in the second-half of the twentieth century when guest workers arrived from Turkey, Morocco along with the migration of Indonesian and Surinamese people from the Dutch former colonies (Talay 2019). With their arrival came the debate on multiculturalism, Islam and national identity. The debate can be divided into two camps: the pluralist discourse, advocating for a multi-cultural society and the pro-assimilation discourse, promoting a monocultural society (Vellenga 2008).

The debate came to the forefront in the early 1990s when former VVD leader Frist Bolkestein reproduced “the Clash of Civilizations”³ narrative contrasting the West to Islam, and used the Rushdie Affair in 1989 as an example for his argument (Uitermark et al. 2013). The debate further polarized between the two camps after a Dutch Moroccan Imam named Khalil Al-Moumni called homosexuality “a disease” in 2001; the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and the War on Terror; populist politician Pim Fortuyn was killed by an animal activist in 2002; and the film-maker Theo van Gogh was murdered by Dutch Moroccan Mohammed Bouyeri in 2004 (ibid.).

The anti-immigration discourse has roots in the 1960s, when the Netherlands changed from one of the most religious countries to one of the most secular countries in the world during the historical process of de-pillarization. Pillars were “hierarchically organized religious and socialist subcultures” that constituted of their own institutions (Mepschen et al. 2010). The Dutch experienced and perceived secularization as breaking away from paternalism and Christian conservatism (ibid.). Islam then, is compared to the Dutch past and presented as incompatible with the secular Dutch culture through themes such as “individual freedom, separation of church and state and free speech” (Kesic and Duyvendak 2019, 447).

Sexual freedom played a large role in these transformations in the 1960s leading to liberal policies such as abortion and gay rights. This development has contributed greatly to the Dutch self-image as “sexually progressive” and “tolerant” (Mcneal and Brennan 2021). This self-image has also been strengthened by the more recent reputation of the Netherlands

³ While Samuel Huntington’s article was only published in 1996 and the discourse gained more prominence after 9/11, he borrowed from the work of Bernard Lewis who spoke of “the clash between civilizations” four decades earlier in a speech at John Hopkins University in 1957 (Haynes 2018).

becoming the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001 and Amsterdam being regarded as “the gay capital of the world” (ibid).

Pim Fortuyn played a crucial role in the entanglement between sexual freedom and antipathy towards Islam as he presented himself as a “liberated” gay man who was threatened by Muslims and the immigration policies of the main-stream parties (Mepschen et al. 2010). In close relation to the Dutch secular culture, Islam is compared to the moral traditionalism of the past and seen as incompatible with Dutch liberal values.

Wilders has been labeled as Fortuyn’s “successor” and further intensified the moral panic around the “Islamization” of the Netherlands, campaigning to “send Moroccans back” and to ban the Quran (Mcneal and Brennan 2021). While many people consider both of them to be “far-right extremists”, their messages have had profound impact in shaping the public discourse in that they normalized the public debate on multiculturalism, Islam and national identity (ibid.).

4.2. Biopolitical discourse

The first theme that has been established can be labeled as the biopolitical discourse. The biopolitical discourse is centered around the reproduction of life but also of race. An obvious example of this strategy is when Baudet himself used a metaphor of body politics and its illness-cure logic as he stated that “the West suffers from an auto-immune disease” and “our immune system has turned itself against us” (2017a). The West is represented as the people’s body and the elite as the immune-system that failed the body and is being held responsible for mass immigration. Immigrants are linguistically represented as alien to the body or as Baudet puts it: “malicious aggressive elements are led into our societal body in unheard numbers” (ibid.). Baudet constructs them as polluting or contaminating the nation’s body that must be purified. While the metaphor of disease has a very long history, it has been widely used as legitimization of genocidal policies in Nazi discourse that ended in the Holocaust (Musolff 2010).

The division in the social body between “those that may live” and “those that have to die” is manifested in “the replacement narrative” or “the demographic war”. Baudet expressed his fear of replacement saying that “I do not want Europe to Africanize. [...] I want Europe to stay dominantly white and remain culturally the way it is.” (2015). The fear of being “replaced” creates a sense of crisis that Dutch people are dying out and are being outnumbered, making them a demographic minority. It is also linked to the fear for high birth and fertility rates

amongst immigrants. The idea of replacement comes from the Nazi theory of *Umwolking* which played an important role in the terrorist attacks of white supremacists Breivik and Tarrant (Bracke and Hernandez Aguilar 2020).

Baudet also made use of other terms associated with racism, stating in his victory address of the provincial elections that “our country is part of a civilizational family. But just as those countries of our boreal world, we are destroyed by the people that are supposed to protect us” (2019a). He borrows from the speeches of former far-right French politician Jean-Marie Le Pen (Talay 2019, 54). The term “boreal” can be translated as “of the north” but also has “connotations of Aryanism” and has been perceived as “a dog whistle to white supremacists” (ibid.). It has roots in Nazi mythology, and the belief that Aryans are the superior Nordic race. By using this term, he constructs the in-group as Aryans and leaves it up to the audience to imagine the “inferior races” as the out-group.

During a party congress in the run up to the parliamentary elections, Baudet referred to the process of demographic decline as “homeopathic dilution of the Netherlands with all peoples of the world until there will never be a Dutchman again” (2017b). After receiving a lot of backlash in the media, he defended his statement arguing that what he “really” meant was that: “all kinds of cultures that come here do not integrate into the Dutch culture and we risk losing our values and freedoms as a result” (2017c). Here we see that Baudet moves away from race by referring to Dutch culture and values. The FvD propagates Christianity as a cultural identity and conflates Christianity with secular values (Kesic and Duyvendak 2019). Racial notions of whiteness are being replaced with cultural homogeneity. While racist intent is being denied, culture is turned into “a close-to biological trait” dividing “us” and “them” in cultures that cannot be mixed (De Cesari and Kaya 2020, 12).

In close relation to the ethnicized/racialized “other” that poses a threat to the preservation of the nation, gender equality claims are perceived as a threat too. In an essay on Michel Houellebecq’s novel *Sérotonine*, Baudet validates the author’s critique on neoliberal Western society when considering the emancipation of women arguing that the “liberation” of women has led women to pursue a career at the expense of reproducing children and “an inevitable result (...) is the demographic decline of Europe” (2019b). Following his argument, women thus cannot become mothers due to their (forced) participation in the labour market. Gender and sexual roles are thus seen as natural and fundamental to the existence of the nation-state.

Similarly, he blames the reproductive right to abortion for the relatively lower birth rates stating that in the Netherlands “new life in the womb” is “extinguished” and “suicide is

facilitated” in the name of individualism (ibid.). Women are thus seen first and foremost as “wombs of the nation”. Individualism, according to him, has led to “an unwillingness to reproduce” and as a result “our society shall regress and regenerate or it will be replaced” (ibid.). Thus, individual decisions become public matters and it is the right and duty of native men to control their women. Sex, as a technology of reproduction, is essential to bio-politics and for that reason reproductive issues are crucial in right-wing populist debates.

The biopolitical discourse goes beyond the governing over the female body, however, and also includes the disciplining of (heterosexual) white male bodies for reproductive purposes. For example, Baudet mentioned in an interview that he refrains from masturbation (2018). Abstinence became a standard of sexual respectability in the 19th century and became a nationalist imaginary of proper women and men (Sauer et al. 2017). It is considered to be masculine and respectable to resist “the male sexual drive” in contrast to sexualized “others” including Muslim men who are the antithesis of respectability and represented as “hypersexual” “Islamic testosterone bombs” (Wilders as cited in Bracke and Hernandez Aguilar 2020, 13). Abstinence has been linked to white supremacy as it is often based on the worry that masturbation is “a threat to Western civilization” (Burnett 2021, 4).

The bodies of “others” are also governed. As a response to accusations of Baudet being racist after his comments on “homeopathic dilution”, member of Parliament Theo Hiddema, defended him in a radio interview arguing that the FvD is the opposite of racist, advocating for racial mixing instead, shifting the focus away from immigrants being excluded from the nation to demanding “integration under the sheets”:

The best integration occurs through miscegenation. If all those Moroccans would mix with Dutch females – the best integration takes place under the sheets – there is nothing else wrong. Then you do not need integration committees or experts. [...] There simply needs to be more sex and there is only one category of people that does not let them be liberated (“bevrijen”).⁴ And that is the Islam. They do not want to be liberated. They focus on their religion (Hiddema 2017a).”

⁴ My translation of “bevrijen” does not do justice to the Dutch word since it is wordplay and can also be translated as “to have intercourse”.

Here, Hiddema conveys the idea that integration has failed and problematizes Islamization as the cause. He also considers racial mixing to be an indicator of successful integration and suggests the governing of Moroccans/Muslim men⁵ through sex. Furthermore, he refers solely to men, reproducing the image of immigrants as predominantly male. By expressing their alleged unwillingness to have sex with Dutch women, which goes against the usual representation of Muslim men as “hypersexual”, Hiddema represents Muslim men as “unintegratable” and as being isolated from society and its values. Furthermore, sex is represented as a taboo in Islam and is contrasted to sexual liberty and secularism, thus excluding Muslim men as sexually conservative “others”. Hiddema frames himself and Baudet as being “the opposite of racist” by promoting miscegenation, yet he simultaneously excludes Islam as inferior and argues for the liberation from Islam through intercourse, thus moving away from biological to cultural racism. His denial of racism be understood in the larger Dutch context of “white innocence” and the Dutch self-image as “tolerant” and “post-racial” (Wekker 2016).

Baudet and Hiddema seem to disagree on the issue of miscegenation, however, as earlier this year WhatsApp group chats of the FvD leaked in which Baudet asked other party members whether they wanted their “sister to come home with a Negro” (2020b). His racist message can be traced back to the resurfacing colonial discourses on miscegenation in the Dutch debate from the 1930s to 1960s that problematized the mixed relationships between black Surinamese men with white women (Jones 2016). The highly selective emphasis on either racial or cultural grounds of discrimination within the FvD not only depends on the person that is being addressed, but is thus also context dependent, determined by whether they are private or public statements and whether they are statements on their own or responses to accusations.

4.3. Homonationalist and femonationalist discourses

4.3.1. Homonationalism

In the homonationalist discourses of the FvD, homosexuality is constructed as “under threat” and sexual equality is defended against immigrants by constructing sexual liberty as part of the Dutch “self”. Gay emancipation is thus primarily discussed in association with mass immigration and integration problems. After a gay couple was abused by what they thought

⁵ The terms Moroccan, Muslim and allochthone have been used interchangeably in Dutch Islamophobic discourse since the 2000s (Aouragh 2014).

were four Moroccan youth in Arnhem in 2017, Baudet argued during a radio show that “the intolerance towards gay people is a problem of Muslim youth” that could be solved when “dealing with integration problems” (2017). He represents Muslims as a homogenous group and stereotypes them as homophobic, reinforcing their backwardness and inferiority.

Out of protest to this event and in solidarity with the gay couple, Baudet and Hiddema walked hand-in-hand on the street as can be seen in *figure 1*. According to Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal, the power of this symbol lies in the ambiguity between “the normal” and “the abnormal”, the two distinguished gentlemen in suit in contrast to the aggressive Muslim youth (2017). Through this act of holding hands, “inclusive” or “non-homophobic masculinity”, is being performed by the two politicians, which allows men to be amongst others “physically tactile” (Ging 2017, 4). Gay rights are incorporated as Dutch “native” achievements which reinforces the representation of “the self” as “sexually progressive” and “tolerant”. Furthermore, gays are victimized as being afraid to walk on the street which legitimizes their claims about Muslim aggressiveness and intolerance and constructs Muslims as a security threat.



Figure 1: Baudet and Hiddema walking hand in hand out of solidarity for the gay couple that was abused in Arnhem (Jumelet 2017).

Despite the fact that the FvD views itself as gay friendly, the party has faced numerous accusations of being homophobic. Former party member Yernaz Ramautarsing stepped down in 2018 after his WhatsApp chats were leaked in which he argued that gay rights have lowered the average national IQ in the Netherlands because men have higher IQ’s and gay people tend to reproduce less (2017). He posed gay rights as a threat to the reproduction of the Dutch

“superior” people. It serves as a justification for heterosexuality by arguing that same-sex couples do not fit into “the traditional family” and do not contribute to “the health” of the population and its growth.

More recently, Baudet also faced accusations of being homophobic for name calling a journalist “homo” and for arguing at a party congress in run up to the municipal elections of 2022 that “AIDS does not exist for white straight people” thus framing AIDS as a disease amongst homosexuals and people of color (Baudet 2021), again engaging in the bio-political discourse that constructs “the people”, white heterosexuals, as “healthy” in contrast to internal and external “others”, homosexuals and people of color, who are “ill”.

While they pride themselves for being tolerant towards homosexuality, they exclude others from the LHBTQIA+ community in their language:

“Every day we are being overwhelmed with the most absurd stories, a trend blown over from America: transgenders of 8 years old and [...] discussions about gender neutrality. It is the morality of a weak population.” (Jansen 2019).

This citation is from Freek Jansen, former leader of the JFvD and currently member of Parliament for the FvD, who criticized progressive gender issues at a JFvD congress. He places “gender ideology” as an external imposition, coming from America, and as the source of family crisis and moral decline which threatens children. He rejects the fluidity and diversity of gender identities by claiming they are “absurd”. It also fits into the broader discourse of the FvD, as the party aims to maintain the traditional binary and heterosexual/-normative gender order that sees gender differences as biologic/natural and thus not as socially constructed. The FvD thus remains very traditional and hostile towards transgenders and non-binary people.

Another group of people that is excluded from the FvD’s discourse on tolerance are queer Muslims. Being Muslim and being gay are presumed to be mutually exclusive because Muslims are viewed as “oppressive” and “intolerant” of queer sexualities (Jivrag and de Jong 2011). As argued earlier, Muslim gays need to be rescued from “Islam” which leaves no room for queer Muslim subjects that do not serve this narrative (Bracke 2012). “Homonormativity” refers to the popular representations of gayness that shifted from homosexuals being “the deviant other” to “the mirror image of the ideal heterosexual” (Mepshen et al 2010, 971). The normalization of gay identity as “white” and “secular” marginalizes the complexity of non-

white sexuality, including religious and cultural experiences. Through their anti-immigration discourse, the FvD thus separates religious subjectivities from sexual ones and consequently “silences the diversity of queer of color sexualities” (Jivraj and de Jong 2011).

4.3.2. Femonationalism

Femonationalist discourses often manifest themselves in the sexual violence towards white women. An infamous example is the “Marokkanen-tweet” in which Baudet accused four Dutch men of Moroccan descent for assaulting two Dutch women – not knowing that these men were three ticket inspectors and one police officer – and that has received a lot of backlash in the mainstream media for spreading fake news. The tweet reads as follows:

Tonight, two of my dear female friends have been seriously harassed by four Moroccans in the train. Pressing charges is completely useless. Oh dear, childish naïve Dutchmen! Finally vote for change. Break away from politically correct bullshit! Save this country! (Baudet 2020).

In this tweet, Baudet employs dichotomous confrontation in his narrative, creating two opposing gendered and ethnicized groups. His two female friends are indirectly represented as “native” and embody the nation, whereas the men harassing the women are depicted as outsiders that attack the national body. Migrant men are framed as “hypersexual” and inclined to sexually harass women (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001, 55). Their representation of being violent is self-evident without any further explanation other than it being an inevitable consequence of their presence. These portrayals of sex offenders based on their non-Western background result in the ethnicization/racialization of sexual violence. Sexism and gender inequality are thus projected on “others” and Moroccan men thus become antagonists by default legitimizing their exclusion from Dutch society.

The problematization of Dutch people from Moroccans descent is nothing new, as the Parliament hold a debate on “the Moroccan problem” as requested by the PVV in 2013 and Wilders was convicted for his question whether the Dutch people want more or less Moroccans in 2014. Similar to Wilders, who called on the freedom of speech, Baudet denies accusations of hate speech by asserting his freedom of speech, which is considered to be a quintessential

Dutch democratic value. He reverses responsibility by accusing those who impose political correctness on him and silence him.

The victimization of the Dutch population is embedded in the white savior narrative and the image of women as victims of immigrant male violence. An imperial relation is constructed between the sexually progressive civilized white man who protects women's rights in contrast to sexually oppressive Moroccan men (Uitermark et al. 2013, 236). They are characterized as "hyper sexual" while Baudet performs the alpha male protector. The women are given an object rather than subject position. They become "subalterns" because Baudet undermines their agency through victimization and they end up being represented or being spoken of and for by a man (Spivak 1988).

In addition to the racialization of sexual perpetrators, the victims of harassment are also racialized. Nanninga states for instance that "Islamophobia does not exist. In our big cities you are more often intimidated in a short skirt than with a headscarf on (Nanninga 2020b)." Nanninga compares street intimidation faced by Dutch "native" women to that of Muslim women and frames the issue as a problem primarily faced by women who are "uncovered" in opposition to women that are "covered". The "short skirt" issue is commonly referred to in the Dutch public debate and builds upon the assumption of uncontrollable migrant male sexuality (Hart 2017). The experiences of Muslim women as victims of both sexual intimidation and religious discrimination and the intersections thereof are downplayed by Nanninga. Research on Islamophobia has shown that there has been an increase of harassment and street attacks against Muslim women wearing headscarves after the implementation of the niqab and burqa ban in 2019 (Abaaziz 2020). Nanninga prioritizes the "native" women's rights at the expense of Muslim women's rights.

Apart from sexual violence against native women, The FvD also employs the femonationalist narrative of saving Muslim women from the sexual oppression of Muslim men. Armita Taheri, a member of the provincial council in Gelderland, spoke on a national FvD congress and shared her story as an Iranian immigrant living in the Netherlands:

"I was born in Iran and fled to the Netherlands from the oppression of Islam [...] Here in the Netherlands, we have been freed. Here in the Netherlands I have been given the freedom to be a woman, to develop myself, for which I am grateful" (2019).

In this citation, Islam is essentialized and the specific context of Iran is omitted. Islam is constructed as “oppressive” in opposition to the Netherlands that “liberates” women, thus reinforcing the white savior narrative and externalizing sexual oppression and gender inequality as essential characteristics to Islam. Taheri embodies the ideal image of an immigrant who has renounced Islam, successfully integrated into the Dutch society and who is grateful. Different from “bad” immigrants who do not integrate, she is a “good” immigrant who embraces the Dutch values and norms and has thus become “one of us” (Benveniste et al. 2016).

The FvD stated that Taheri’s speech is a “warning” for those who “give in to Islam” arguing that “she can know it, because she escaped from what we allow and led in” (FvD 2019a). Thus, while Taheri is represented as “one of us” she is simultaneously represented as “the exotic other”, “the insider” with “authentic” knowledge, and as a “victim” to Islam. The narrative reproduces Spivak’s concept of “the native informant” and how native experiences are appropriated and co-opted in dominant discourses (1999). Saba Mahmood also refers to this narrative as the “feminist native testimony” or the employment of the suffering of Muslim women in the War on Terror discourse (2009).

This is not the first time this narrative has been utilized for political ends in the Dutch context, as former politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who was born in Somalia and obtained asylum in 1992, wrote about her liberation of Islam and threats to Dutch society in her biography (2006). Both the political figures of Taheri and Hirsi Ali have complicated the imperial narrative as they rely on the rhetoric of “a brown woman saving brown women from brown men” (Bracke 2012, 242).

4.4. Anti-feminist discourse

The third and last theme that has been identified in the gendered discourse of the FvD that is linked to the party’s anti-immigration stance is the anti-feminist discourse. Feminists are differentiated on the basis of their presumed social class, being part of “the left-wing elite” also referred to as “cultural Marxists”. Paul Cliteur, professor at the Law Faculty in Leiden university, FvD’s former leader of the Dutch Senate and director FvD’s Renaissance Institute, regards cultural Marxism as “an internal threat” that is “continually finding new groups of oppressed people and that depicts anyone who questions this as a racist or Nazi” (as cited in Verloo 2018, 27). Cliteur delegitimizes the struggle for social justice as a top-down cultural

Marxist conspiracy. He also reverses responsibility by accusing those who accuse the FvD of being racist of silencing them “by imposing political correctness” (Benveniste et al. 2016).

Cultural Marxism is in close relation to Baudet’s conceptualization of “oikophobia”, as developed in his book “Oikophobia. The fear of the home” (2013) which he defines as the fear of “the national self”. The “true” self, then, is imagined as the return to the 19th century nation-state that has been destroyed by cultural Marxism, feminism and immigration (Kleinpaste 2018). The post-truth politics and nation-state nostalgia of the FvD leaders are used to discursively attack feminists and their project to social justice (Verloo 2018).

Women in general are not excluded from the national “we” but feminists specifically are constructed as antagonists to “real” women. In an interview with the magazine *Quote*, that publishes a list with the 500 richest people of the Netherlands every year, Baudet argued that women appear less on this list because “in general excel less in a lot of professions and have less ambitions. Often, they have more interests in family and suchlike” (2017d). He then continues by saying that women are usually more leftwing until they meet a man who is right wing and “tells her how it really is” (ibid.). Besides the fact that Baudet represents women as incompetent to become successful and performs toxic masculinity by arguing that women need to be corrected by men, he constructs the “common” women as mothers, in contrast to the feminists who are part of the left-wing elite.

Hiddema defended Baudet after being labeled “sexist” in the media, in response to Baudet’s statement that women excel less and are less ambitious, saying that: “maybe that’s the case, women who matter have never wanted to convert to feminism. They are all slobs who seek explanation for their own misery” (2017b). He evaluates feminists in a blatant and negative manner, representing them as irrelevant, dirty, manipulative and resentful women. He also represents them solely as women, leaving out the possibility that feminists can be male too.

Feminists are also constructed as antagonists to men, as they have “an obsessive aversion to the white man” (FvD 2019b). Party member and legal philosopher Eva Vlaardingerbroek speaks of “a paradox” in feminism in her speech at an FvD congress:

“Do you see the paradox? The Western man is the enemy but the mass immigration of hundreds of thousand single men from very patriarchal societies is no problem for our feminists. While in the meantime, ladies and gentlemen, in the multicultural paradise Sweden one third of young women have to deal with sexual intimidation” (Vlaardingerbroek 2019).

Here, the paradox of feminism lies in the construction of the Western man as “the enemy” and the “single” and “patriarchal” immigrant men as “the victims” while they are “the real perpetrators”. According to Vlaardingerbroek feminists ignore the real threat to gender equality: immigration and multiculturalism. Feminists are thus blamed for encouraging mass immigration and for indirectly causing sexual intimidation against women. Both the internal “other” – the feminists – and the external “other” – the immigrants – are thus excluded from the national “we”. What is also interesting here, is the mentioning of multi-ethnic Sweden as “an example par excellence” of white women being raped by non-Western immigrants which is also a common discourse in Nordic countries such as Finland (Keskinen 2013, 228).

Feminism is characterized as “gender equality gone too far”, as anti-feminist view women’s emancipation as already achieved and in need of protection instead. The employment of sexual liberty in anti-feminist discourse is visible in the selective support of women’s marches. In her tweet, Nanninga criticizes Dutch feminists for being “busy knitting pussy hats against Donald Trump”, but praises women that protest in the city of Scheveningen against sexual intimidation (2020a). During the Washington D.C. Women’s March in in 2017, women wore pink hats as symbol of support and solidarity for women’s rights and a statement to reclaim the term “pussy” after Trump’s sexist comment: “grab them by the pussy” (2005). Nanninga’s statement fits into the “pro women, against feminists” contradiction (Gutsche as cited in Dietze and Roth 2020). This has to do with the larger far-right discourse that criticizes feminism for selectively focusing on gender and not enough on victims of violence (Santos and Roque 2021). Feminism and the LGBTQ+ agenda are thus not seen at the service of women and Dutch femininity is constructed as under threat by these agendas.

The anti-feminist sentiment is closely linked to “the crisis in masculinity”, as feminists are described as dominating the public sphere while white heterosexual men are victimized and seen as the weaker sex. Anti-feminists hold feminists responsible for the “feminization” of society (Fiers and Muis 2020). Before becoming a politician, Baudet already expressed his ideas on Dutch politics in an interview stating that “we lose our masculinity, we go for consensus, a feminine value. We are scared” (2015a). He thus views the elite as “feminized” and the Dutch polder model of consensus-based decision-making as “feminine” causing the failure to protect their historically masculine culture from feminism and migration. The emasculated majority of men is thus “in crisis”, unable to fulfill the functions as breadwinner, leader and protector. Baudet, in contrast, performs the ideal typical masculine strongman style of leadership.

Because the majority of white men are emasculated as a result of feminism, there is also a need for “women-mothers” to help their men save the nation (Santos and Roque 2021). As depicted by Taheri in her speech on “escaping Islam”, the anti-feminist position is strategically used to center the heteronormative nuclear family with essentialized gender conservative roles: “We need men. The Dutchman with all his charms, confidence, respectfulness and male talents. To raise our children together and run the society. Not men *versus* women but men *and* women (emphasis added)” (Taheri 2019). Vlaardingerbroek, Nanninga, and Taheri all embody female leaders who are part of “a men’s party” that positions women at the center of the family and the nation. This partly explains why right-wing populism is appealing to many women too (Santos and Roque 2021).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Transformations in Dutch society and in the world more broadly have led to the (re)production of biopolitical, homo- and femonationalist, and anti-feminist strategies. An intersectional approach to anti-immigration discourses of the FvD has shed light on the strategic functions of gender and sexuality in the processes of othering. The antagonistic relation between “the people” and “the others” is constructed through discursive intersections of gender and sexuality with other identity categories such as race, ethnicity, culture, religion and social class.

The first discursive theme that has been established is the biopolitical discourse. Dutch citizens with a non-Western background are excluded as “others” from the “pure” people and framed as a “threat”. The bodies of Moroccan and Muslim men are sexualized for being both “hypersexual” and “sexually conservative” at the same time. Simultaneously “native” women are “internal others” in that they are being blamed for emancipating which has caused the demographic decline of the “white” nation. The biopolitical discourse involves the policing of women and men for reproductive purposes, ranging from disapproving abortion and abstaining from masturbation to racial mixing.

While academics have noticed a shift from biological to cultural racism (Kaya and De Cesari 2020), this research has shown, however, that racial and cultural dimensions of differences are often conflated in the FvD’s discourse as they refer both to racial and ethnic identity as well as cultural identity. The construction of a cultural identity and the appeal to values and morals, instead of evoking bio-political ideas, can be viewed as a strategy to deny biological racism. Cultural racism has become more normative than biological racism, and because anti-(biological) racism is the norm, the FvD needs legitimation and they thus constantly reframe their positions, allowing for an uninterrupted flow of argumentation that masks their conceptions about human nature.

The second identified discursive theme are the homo- and femonationalist discourses. They reduce “native” women, Muslim women and gays to passive victims of non-Western male violence, and violence thus becomes gendered as well as racialized/ethnicized. My study confirms to the observations of academics that these seemingly progressive discourses ignore the struggle for sexual and gender equality over the past century, which is unrelated to any Muslim presence or absence, as well as the persistence of sexism and homophobia today (Kestic and Duyvendak 2019, 448). These discursive strategies of exclusion obscure the emancipation deficits of the FvD as they conceal the sexist and homophobic views of the party themselves.

In contrast to the argument that there has been a shift from the colonial narrative of saving white women to saving gays and brown women (Bracke 2012), I found that there has been an increasing re-articulation of protecting white/native women, which dates back to the Orientalist colonial civilizing mission (Said 1979). This can be understood as part of the FvD's strategy in constructing a clash of civilizations between the superior Occidental sexual and gender regimes and the inferior "backward" Oriental regimes. Furthermore, I found that the white savior narrative not only obscures sexism and homophobia, but also tries to conceal that Muslim women are often victims of Islamophobic violence which fits into the Dutch context of "white innocence".

Furthermore, while Puar noted a shift from homosexuals being deviant "others" to being included into the sexual definition of the nation (2007), biopolitical discourses on reproduction have demonstrated that homosexuals are still being othered and heterosexuality remains the norm in right-wing populism. Furthermore, in the homonationalist discourses not all LGBTQ+ people are included to the nation, leaving out others such as transgenders and non-binary people. Additionally, only those homosexuals that confirm to norm are included, that is being cisgender and white, excluding queer Muslims amongst others.

Apart from being a strategy, the homo-nationalist discourse can also be viewed as conformation to the norm, as same-sex marriage was already normalized in the Dutch gender regime. Since transgenderism and gender neutrality are only becoming mainstream more recently, it would be interesting to see in the future if attitudes towards transgenders and gender fluidity change and will be co-opted in the right-wing populist discourse too. This is probably less likely, however, as homonormative homosexuality does not challenge natural gender differences, whereas transgenderism and gender fluidity do.

The last discursive theme that has been pointed out is the anti-feminist discourse. Feminists (or "gender ideologists") are excluded as "internal others" in opposition to "real" men and women. They are held responsible for the political correctness and the mass immigration in the country. While previous research has shown that feminists are constructed as horizontal "others" (Norocel et al. 2018), this research has revealed that they are also constructed as hierarchical "others" as part of "the left-wing elite". A distinction is being made between the masculinities of the right-wing "people" and the "femininities" of the left-wing elite. They blame feminists for the "emasculatation" of the elite, whereas they themselves perform the "ideal" form of masculinity through strongman leadership, which also includes the performances of female leaders of the FvD.

Within these discursive themes, there are positive and negative forms of exclusion. While the “real” women of the nation are being othered through objectifying them as “mothers or as “vulnerable” and “in need of protection”, feminists are being othered in a more hostile way by framing them as an internal “threat” to the nation. Similarly, a distinction is being made between “good” and “bad” immigrants, or those that are willing to “to be freed” and assimilate and those who choose not to as we saw in the native informant narrative. Nevertheless, the “good” immigrant will always remain partially “other” as well, as they will never become truly “Dutch”.

When analyzing these discourses separately they seem highly contradictory at first, such as the use of progressive women’s rights and the emphasis on conservative gender roles. When viewing them in their totality, however, it comes to light that the discursive themes are interwoven. The biopolitical discourse overlaps with the homo- and femonationalist discourses in that both emphasize “a clash of civilizations”, whether this is a racial or cultural clash, between the West and the Rest. The narrative on reproduction in the biopolitical discourse is closely related to the narrative of “gender ideology” in the anti-feminist discourse in that both assert binary gender and sex differences. The homo- and femonationalist discourses are concerned with racialized/ethnicized sexual violence, which is simultaneously a point of critique of feminists in the anti-feminist discourse who are blamed for neglecting this issue in their social justice project. Since all these discourses are employed as strategies of exclusive intersectionality, they are very difficult to disentangle.

While this thesis is concerned with discourses in the public debate, it would also be interesting to compare these discourses to the parliamentary voting behavior of the FvD to strengthen my case as their rhetoric is often not reflected in Parliament. The party voted, for instance, against the law to make conversion therapy punishable and the law to protect LHBTQIA+ citizens on hate crimes and gender neutrality in public transport. This can partly be explained by the idea that gender and sexual equality and emancipations are considered to be already established Dutch values, and thus cease to be political aims.

Since I focused primarily on the dynamics between gender and sexuality with other categories of difference, I have not paid much attention to the exclusion on the basis of isolated identity categories or other intersecting ones. I had to leave out the racialization of anti-racist movements such as the Black Lives Matter and the anti-Black Pete movement. While I assume that it is likely that the racialization of these movements is most probably gendered and sexed as well, I have not found any evidence in my data to put forth this argument. What I did come

across very often is the reversal of racism as a strategy in denying racism which would definitely be interesting to explore when looking at discourses on race in particular.⁶

This thesis included top-down textual discourses, thus neglecting both visual and bottom-up discourses. Further research on online populist discourses could be an interesting field for this. Baudet has been characterized as the most “meme-able” politician in the Netherlands (think of the Pepe the Frog memes). The discursive themes I have identified are very much present in the “manosphere” where masculinities are being performed and feminism is opposed. It would be interesting to conduct further research on the (re)production of gendered and racialized hierarchies in online (visual) discourses. This would also allow for the study of the demand side of populism and why people support right-wing populist parties.

The discursive themes I have identified in relation to strategies of exclusive intersectionality are by no means limited to the case study of the FvD nor are they limited to the Dutch context. As we have seen in the analysis, the gendered and sexed anti-immigration discourses of the FvD often overlap with those of the PVV. Moreover, they are used by mainstream political parties as well, on both the left and right sides of the political spectrum, as the employment of gender and sexuality by the populist right has played a crucial role in the normalization of anti-immigration discourses. The antagonistic vision of right-wing populists poses a challenge for liberal democracies and beyond as these politicians define those who belong to “the people” on the basis of identity instead of citizenship and naturalize the hegemony of that collectivity. I hope my thesis is a meaningful contribution to the growing field of literature on the role of gender and sexuality in right-wing populist politics.

⁶ Take for instance Freek Jansen his comment on BLM being “a racist movement that gives rise to anti-white sentiment and violence” (2020).

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7. Appendix 1: Translations of original quotes

The following table contains the original versions of all references translated quotes:

Original	Translation	Reference
We verliezen onze mannelijkheid, we gaan voor consensus, een vrouwelijke waarde. We zijn bang.	We lose our masculinity, we go for consensus, a feminine value. We are scared.	Baudet 2015a
Ik wil niet dat Europa Afrikaniseert. [...] Ik wil graag dat Europa dominant blank en cultureel blijft zoals het is.	I do not want Europe to Africanize. [...] I want Europe to stay dominantly white and remain culturally the way it is.	Baudet 2015b
Het Westen lijdt aan een auto-immuunziekte [...] ons afweersysteem, datgene wat ons zou moeten beschermen, heeft zich tegen ons gekeerd. [...] Kwaadwillende, agressieve elementen worden ons maatschappelijk lichaam in ongehoorde aantallen binnengeloodst.	The West suffers from an auto-immune disease [...] our immune system, which ought to protect us, has turned itself against us. [...] Malicious, aggressive elements are led into our societal body in unheard numbers.	Baudet 2017a
Die zelfhaat die we proberen te ontstijgen door Nederland homeopathisch te verdunnen met alle volkeren van de wereld, totdat er nooit meer een Nederlander zal bestaan.	The self-hatred that we try to transcend by the homeopathic dilution of the Netherlands with all the peoples in the world, until there will be never be a Dutchman again.	Baudet 2017b
(...) allerlei culturen hier naartoe komen die niet integreren in de Nederlandse cultuur en dat we daardoor onze waarden en vrijheden dreigen te verliezen.	All kinds of cultures that come here do no integrate into the Dutch culture and we risk losing our values and freedoms as a result.	Baudet 2017c
Ik weet wel dat vrouwen over het algemeen minder excelleren in een heleboel beroepen en minder ambities hebben. Vaak ook meer interesse hebben in gewoon meer familie-achtige dingen enz.	I know that women in general excel less in a lot of professions and have less ambitions. Often, they have more interests in family and such like.	Baudet 2017d

<p>Ons land maakt deel uit van die beschavingsfamilie. Maar net als die landen van onze boreale wereld, worden wij kapot gemaakt door mensen die ons zouden moeten beschermen.</p>	<p>Our country is part of a civilizational family. But just as those countries of our boreal world, we are destroyed by the people that are supposed to protect us.</p>	<p>Baudet 2019a</p>
<p>Vanavond zijn twee dierbare vriendinnen ernstig lastiggevalen door vier Marokkanen in een trein. Aangifte doen natuurlijk volstrekt zinloos. Oh lieve, kinderlijke naïeve Nederlanders! Stem nou toch eindelijk voor verandering. Breek los van politiek correct gelul! Red dit land!</p>	<p>Tonight, two of my dear female friends have been seriously harassed by four Moroccans in the train. Pressing charges is completely useless. Oh dear, childish naïve Dutchmen! Finally vote for change. Break away from politically correct bullshit! Save this country!</p>	<p>Baudet 2020</p>
<p>Eigenlijk bestaat aids, in principe niet, voor blanke hetero's.</p>	<p>Actually, AIDS does not exist, in principle, for white straight people.</p>	<p>Baudet 2021</p>
<p>Armita waarschuwt: houd op met toegeven aan de islam. Zij kan het weten, want ze is weggevlucht voor wat wij toestaan en binnenlaten</p>	<p>Armita warns: stop with giving in to the Islam. She can know it, because she escaped from what we allow and led in.</p>	<p>FvD 2019a</p>
<p>Hedendaags feminisme (...) heeft een obsessieve afkeer van de blanke man.</p>	<p>Today's feminism (...) has an obsessive aversion to the white man.</p>	<p>FvD 2019b</p>
<p>De beste integratie vindt plaats door rassenvermenging. Als al die Marokkanen zich gingen vermengen met Hollandse vrouwtjes, onder de lakens vindt de beste integratie plaats, is er verder niks aan de hand. Dan heb je geen integratieclubjes en deskundigen nodig. [...] Er moet simpel weg meer gevreeën worden maar er is 'één categorie mensen laat zich niet 'bevrijen'. En dat is de Islam. Die willen niet "bevrijd" worden. Die richten zich op hun geloof.</p>	<p>The best integration occurs through miscegenation. If all those Moroccans would mix with Dutch females, the best integration takes place under the sheets, there is nothing else wrong. Then you do not need integration clubs or experts. [...] There simply needs to be more sex and there is only one category of people that does not let them be "fucked". And that is the Islam. They do not want to be "fucked". They focus on their religion.</p>	<p>Hiddema 2017a</p>

Vrouwen die ertoe doen hebben zich nooit tot het feminisme willen bekeren. Feministen zijn allemaal slonsjes die een verklaring zoeken voor hun eigen armzaligheid.	Maybe that's the case. Women who matter have never wanted to convert to feminism. Feminists are all slobs who search an explanation for their own misery.	Hiddema 2017b
Iedere dag worden we doodgegooid met de meest absurdistische verhalen, een trend die komt overwaaien uit Amerika: de transgenders van 8 jaar oud en [...], discussies over genderneutraliteit. Het is de moraal van een zwakke bevolking.	Every day we are being overwhelmed with the most absurd stories, a trend blown over from America: transgenders of 8 years old and empathy classes at schools, discussions about wrong street names, and gender neutrality. It is the morality of a weak population.	Jansen 2019
Zet m op meiden. "Feministisch" Nederland heft het te druk met pussy hats breien tegen Donald Trump, goed dat jullie de echte problemen benoemen en aanpakken. – Scheveningse vrouwen zijn intimidatie zat.	Go get them girls. The "Feminist" Netherlands is too busy with knitting pussy hats against Donald Trump, good that you name and tackle the real problems. – Women from Scheveningen are done with intimidation.	Nanninga 2020a
"Islamofobie" bestaat niet. (...) In onze grote steden word je in een kort rokje meer en vaker geïntimideerd dan met n doek om.	Islamophobia does not exist. (...) In our big cities you are more often intimidated in a short skirt than with a headscarf on.	Nanninga 2020b
Ik ben in Iran geboren en met m'n gezin naar Nederland gevlucht van de onderdrukking van de Islam. (...) Hier in Nederland, zijn we bevrijd. Hier in Nederland heb ik veiligheid gekregen om vrouw te zijn, me te ontwikkelen, daar ben ik zo dankbaar voor.	I was born in Iran and fled to the Netherlands from the oppression of Islam (...) Here in the Netherlands, we have been freed. Here in the Netherlands I have been given the freedom to be a woman, to develop myself, for which I am grateful.	Taheri 2019
We hebben mannen nodig. De Nederlandse man, met al z'n charmes, zelfverzekerd, respectvol, met zijn mannelijke talenten. Om samen onze kinderen op te voeden, de maatschappij te runnen. Niet mannen <i>versus</i> vrouwen maar mannen <i>en</i> vrouwen.	We need men. The Dutchman with all his charms, confidence, respectfulness and male talents. To raise our children together and run the society. Not men <i>versus</i> women but men <i>and</i> women.	Taheri 2019

<p>Ziet u de paradox? De westerse man is de aartsvijand maar de massa-immigratie van honderdduizenden alleenstaande mannen uit zéér patriarchale samenlevingen, dat is voor onze feministen geen enkel probleem. En dat, dames en heren, terwijl in het multiculturele paradijs Zweden inmiddels een derde van de jonge vrouwen te maken heeft met seksuele intimidatie.</p>	<p>Do you see the paradox? The Western man is the enemy but the mass immigration of hundreds of thousand single men from very patriarchal societies is no problem for our feminists. While in the meantime, ladies and gentlemen, in the multicultural paradise Sweden one third of young women have to deal with sexual intimidation.</p>	<p>Vlaardingerbroek 2019</p>
<p>Mannen en vrouwen gescheiden. Sharia in Nederland.</p>	<p>Men and women separated. Sharia in the Netherlands.</p>	<p>Wilders 2017</p>