

OXFAM
RESEARCH BACKGROUNDER

Masculinities and the Rise of the Far-Right

Implications for Oxfam's Work on Gender Justice

Alan Greig



OXFAM

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Series editor: Kimberly Pfeifer

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Author information and acknowledgments

Alan Greig is a writer, trainer and activist working on issues of gender and violence as part of struggles for social justice. He wishes to acknowledge the key informants who provided guidance on the literature review, and to the Oxfam staff who participated in the interviews.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The rise of far-right parties in many parts of the world threatens the work of human rights and social justice NGOs. In 2016, Oxfam first analyzed the electoral ascendancy of far-right populist political parties, and the charismatic leaders representing far-right movements.¹ This analysis concluded that civil society organizations working on human rights and social justice issues, both domestically and in the fields of international development and humanitarian response, must prioritize understanding the narratives and discourses the far-right uses to attract supporters and advance its political agenda. That far-right messaging and movements are polarizing political debates is clear; there is less clarity about the affective appeals and cognitive frames deployed to engineer this polarization.

This report was commissioned to examine the ways in which varying narratives and tropes of masculinity and femininity have both shaped and been used by the far-right in its mobilization of support and polarization of debate. It follows the academic literature in identifying ethnonationalism as the unifying ideology of a heterogeneous political tendency that can be collectively referred to as the “far-right”. The use of the descriptor “far-right” also serves to designate those parties and formations which have engineered the entry of extremism into the mainstream, by rejecting both the traditional center-right establishment in politics and the violent extremism of openly anti-democratic groups and individuals. The nativism and authoritarianism of the far-right should be regarded as a “pathological normalcy” and a “radicalisation of mainstream values.”²

The analyses and recommendations presented in this report are based on a review of the available anglophone literature on the far-right, as referred to above. This was supplemented with a review of recent documentation of Oxfam’s work on gender justice and its programming with men and boys in particular, and key informant interviews with Oxfam staff involved with gender programming to identify their concerns about the rise of the far-right, and what this might mean for Oxfam’s work on issues of masculinities.

¹ Galasso, N., G. N. Feroci, K. Pfeifer & M. Walsh. (2017) *The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs*. Washington DC.

² Mudde, C. (2010) "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy." *West European Politics* 33(6): 1167–1186. p1181

EXCLUDED MEN?

Studies of the rise of the far-right in the wake of the 2008 economic recession often invoke the significance of a crisis that is experienced in gendered terms, claiming that the rise of the far-right can be attributed to the anger and resentments of economically distressed men. But analyses of electoral data suggest that the effects of globalization and economic recession are not adequate for explaining the gendered character of support for the far-right. More compelling is research on the significance of gender conservatism and attachment to authoritarian values, rather than purely economic circumstances and grievances, as explaining voters' support for far-right parties.

The appeal of gender conservatism and authoritarianism should, however, be understood in the context of longer term changes in the political economy of gender and, relatedly, the rise of feminism as a social movement. While feminism has challenged naturalized male authority, deindustrialization (in the global North) and the growing feminization of waged labor (especially in the global South) have undermined some traditional bases of male gender identity. "For men, the symbiotic satisfactions of providing and being provided for have declined in tandem, and it's hard to say which loss is more traumatic", Willis insisted two decades ago.³

Narratives of masculinity in crisis, widespread in many societies, constitute a discursive opportunity for the far-right. Social movement theory, and in particular the concept of "normative frames", has proven useful in explaining the links between the conditions in which the socially conservative and ethnonationalist ideology of the far-right has growing appeal (demand-side) and far-right responses to these conditions in ways which have advanced their appeal and agenda (supply-side). The normative frame of (White/majority) masculinity in crisis has proven particularly effective, with feelings of aggrieved male entitlement becoming the ambient affect of much of the discourse of masculinity in crisis, which the far-right exploits. Research on far-right movements and messaging has found that the "discourse around masculinity in crisis is very much anchored in far-right ideology; it strengthens the idea of the male fighting for the nation and its nuclear component, the heterosexual family."⁴ Central to the far-right's symbolic practice of crisis masculinities is the figure of the emasculated male.

If the social conservatism and authoritarian values of the far-right represent a cultural backlash against cosmopolitan social liberalism, then this backlash has found an emblematic hero in the emasculated male. In this trope are condensed

³ Willis, E. (1999) How Now, Iron Johns? *The Nation*.

⁴ Träbert, A. (2017) "At the Mercy of Femocracy? Networks and Ideological Links Between Far-Right Movements and the Antifeminist Men's Rights Movement." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Pető, 273-288. p280-281

many of the anxieties and resentments about the perceived threats to faith, family and nation that drive support for the far-right. In far-right memes and messaging, the theme of societal decline is metonymically expressed in the wounded masculinities of the majority male. This wounding of masculinity is linked, variously, to the economic and cultural threat of 'globalism', condensed in the figure of the immigrant/refugee, and to the challenges to the 'natural' gender and racial order posed by feminism, LGBTI struggles and movements for racial justice.

The far-right focus on male emasculation draws heavily on a long-standing strain of anti-feminism in many societies. This anti-feminism fuses family, nation and faith in the far-right's ethnonationalist imaginary of the 'natural' social order in crisis. Research suggests that anti-feminist movements have been an entry point into the far-right. Reflecting on the rise of the 'manosphere', the online ecology of sites, memes and message-boards focused on male insecurities and resentments whose content is frequently deeply misogynistic, Murdoch makes clear that "[m]anosphere ideas have snowballed into an ideology that has taken on a life of its own, and for some it has served as a route into wider far-right politics."⁵

DANGEROUS MEN!

The terrain of the nation is central to the far-right vision of a naturalized social order, based on racialized exclusions and essentialized gender hierarchies. In its self-declared 'culture war', the far-right's hegemonic struggle is being waged in the linked projects of racial and gender formation. Complementing the far-right's use of narratives of victimized and excluded White/majority men, then, is their invocation of another masculine crisis: **the threat posed by the dangerous masculinity of the racialized Other**. The dangers of this racialized masculinity, together with the emasculation of the White/majority male, embody the threats to faith, family and nation in the far-right's ethnonationalist imaginary. Racialization renders its targets hypervisible, to be subject to social concern and social control. It is this hypervisibility of racialized masculinities that the far-right foments.

The 'traditional' family, and its functions in reproducing, literally and ideologically, the naturalized hierarchies of the gender/racial order, has become a central site of social and sexual anxiety about the threat of the racialized male Other in far-right narratives. These narratives make the dangerous masculinities of the racialized Other hypervisible in the discursive frames of the national 'family' and the cultural community, both defined by their naturalized gender roles and hierarchies and their racialized conceptions of home and belonging. This hypervisibility depends for its affective force on the intimate nature of the threat

⁵ Murdoch, S. (2019) "Why Understanding The UK Anti-Feminist Movement Is Vital To Countering The Far Right." *Huffington Post* [Online] [Accessed February 26]. p2

posed by racialized masculinities; this threat is often portrayed in personal, familial terms.

In turn, such hypervisibility centers attention on the male protective role, long central to the “patriarchal bargain”: that in exchange for their patriarchal privileges, it is men’s role, whether as fathers, husbands or other family members, to protect ‘their’ women and girls.⁶ For the far-right, men’s duty and ability to fulfill this bargain is at stake. Examining white supremacist discourse in the USA, Ferber observes that the “protection of white womanhood comes to symbolize the protection of the race; thus, gender relations occupy a central place in the discourse.”⁷ Metaphors of purity and pollution recur in far-right discourse. The far-right’s emphasis on the cleansing and purification of the national ‘family’, and the significance of the male protective function in this ethnonationalist hygiene, emphasizes a concern about borders and boundaries, linked to notions of ‘home’ and ‘culture’.

What is striking, then, across differing national and cultural settings is the use made by far-right parties of the figure of the sexually predatory male Other to legitimize their ethnonationalist ideology. Underpinning this legitimization is the racialization of masculinities, which serves to frame a set of concerns (about economic precarity, crime, immigration, national security) as manifestations of a threatened ‘natural’ social order (both gendered and racialized), finding normative expression in the nation-as-family and the cultural community of Euro-American Christianity. This racialization of masculinities, however, also serves another purpose in the far-right’s discursive struggle for hegemony; this use of masculinities has also enabled a far-right maneuver on the terrain of gender equality politics. The misogyny and anti-feminism of the far-right co-exist, then, with the far-right’s deployment, at least in some countries, of gender equality as a marker of ethno-national modernity set against the ‘primitive’ gender practices of the Other and their dangerous masculinities.

Variation in far-right gender politics is evident from the changing gender dynamics of far-right organizations. For many years, far-right formations were seen as and assumed to be ‘men’s parties’, but recent studies suggest this is no longer the case, with women increasingly visible in leadership positions. At the same time, this growing visibility of women in leadership, and flexibility of women’s roles as members, of far-right parties is contained within an overall conservative gender logic of the masculine/feminine binary.

FAMILY VALUES

At the heart of this conservative gender logic of the masculine/feminine binary is the heteronormative family, with its ‘traditional’ division of labor and leadership

⁶ Kandiyoti, D. (1988) "Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender and Society* 2(3): 274-290.

⁷ Ferber, A. L. (2000) "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors." *Men and Masculinities* 3(1): 30-56. p36

structure. The familial bonds that unify the ‘traditional’ family metonymically express the social harmony envisioned in the far-right’s ethnonationalist imaginary. The emasculated (White/majority) male, no longer able to fulfill his roles within and for ‘his’ family, is a central figure in far-right narratives of national decline. In waging its self-declared ‘culture war’, the far-right frames the danger of the racialized male Other in terms of intimate violence and perverse sexuality, both understood as a threat to the heteronormative family.

The far-right’s politics of ‘family values’ has involved a racialization of femininity. The vulnerable and oppressed Muslim woman has become, for some far-right parties at least, a useful figure in their ethnonationalist culture war. But if the vulnerability of the racialized female Other is one aspect of their hypervisibility, another is her dangerous fecundity.

This is evident in the “great replacement” meme, which has featured prominently in far-right campaigns, from Europe to North America and most recently in the attacks on two mosques in New Zealand. A reproductive anxiety, then, has come to characterize far-right discourse on the White/majority family and its place and functions in the far-right’s ethnonationalist vision. Strengthening this family in the face of the demographic threat posed by the racialized Other has become a significant concern.

Even in contexts where far-right parties have favored a discourse of gender equality as a racialized marker of cultural ‘difference’ legitimizing their ethnonationalist project, an anti-feminist commitment is clear; the family needs to be protected from feminism. “Gender ideology”, as the source of family crisis and national/moral decline, has become a transnational meme for the far-right. The impacts of far-right anti-feminism, linked to its ‘family values’ discourse, are already evident, ranging from policy efforts to roll-back reproductive rights, denial of LGBTI rights, changes to government gender policies, attacks on gender mainstreaming and restrictions imposed on progressive sexual education programs in schools and university gender studies departments and their financing. This reactionary ‘family values’ anti-feminism, so characteristic of far-right gender politics, has gathered mainstream momentum in recent years.

In the polarizing logic of far-right discourse, the enemy is clear: the dangerous masculinities of the racialized Other. But there also is another threat the far-right insists: the enervated condition of the masculinities of the majority, unable or unwilling to defeat the enemy. Heterosexual anxiety animates the far-right, from the online communities of ‘betas’ and ‘incels’ and their fascination with male heterosexual inadequacy to calls for a restoration of virility to ward off the existential threat of the racialized male Other.

It is important to note the different vectors of far-right gender politics generated by this discourse of heterosexual anxiety: one tending to look back to a lost gender order of stable families and distinct roles, the other looking ahead to the

border battles to come in defense of the nation and its racialized, gendered values. Where the former favors a model of gender relations framed in terms of a necessary complementarity between women and men, even if in effect this constitutes an exercise of male control over female bodies and lives, the latter can be much more explicitly misogynistic, constructing gender relations as necessarily antagonistic.

CENTERING ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN GENDER JUSTICE WORK

To counter this militant conservatism of far-right gender ideology, it will be important to expose the fault lines of crisis in the neoliberal political and economic order against which it is constructed, and articulate a feminist vision of social justice that rejects the exclusions and hierarchies of the far-right's social organicism in favor of collective and equitable "life-making."⁸ Masculinities work can play a critical role in this effort, and in re-centering attention on the political economy of injustice, but only if such work examines the ideological uses and institutional effects of hetero-patriarchal, racialized masculinities. In terms of specific work on masculinities, this suggests a need to:

- **Explicitly link gender justice programming with economic justice struggles.** The experiences of economic injustice that many men share with women in their communities are an opportunity for education about and mobilization against the systemic causes and gendered effects of this injustice, toward building the social solidarity required for collective and gender equitable life-making. Men who are already active within economic justice struggles are an important target group for gender justice consciousness-raising and skills-building work.
- **Disaggregate the category 'work with men and boys'.** It is clear from the analysis presented in this report that very different kinds of work and expertise will be needed for different constituencies and target groups of men and boys, based on their differential experiences of and positions within hierarchies of power. The task for any gender justice strategy that is committed to highlighting its 'work with men and boys' is to articulate the different kinds of male-focused work that will respond to the linked crises of gender injustice and social inequality, counter the conservatism and social organicism of the far-right and foster the social solidarity necessary for collective and gender equitable life-making.

⁸ Arruzza, C., T. Bhattacharya & N. Fraser (2018) "Notes for a Feminist Manifesto." *New Left Review* 114(November-December): 113-134.

CENTERING RACIAL JUSTICE IN GENDER JUSTICE WORK

Countering the far-right's ethnonationalism must begin with recognizing its racialized gender politics. This highlights the limitations of framing male engagement work in terms of attitudinal and behavioral change at the individual level, for masculinities are also an ideological repertoire of images of and ideas about power and subordination that are institutionally embedded and politically deployed. The foregoing has implications for masculinities work, both by Oxfam and its partners, in gender justice programming and within Oxfam as an organization. It highlights the importance of basing programmatic theories of change on analyses of power that articulate the connections between misogyny and other forces of social stratification, and the spectrum of their operations from the personal to the structural level. In relation to work on masculinities, this suggests a need to:

- **Design gender justice and racial justice programming to be mutually reinforcing:** This will include addressing the specific ways in which the racialization of masculinities and femininities is used by the far-right to promote its ethnonationalist ideology, as well as developing services and campaigns for racially oppressed communities that address the gender issues they face. Work with men and boys within these communities needs to take account of their complex and linked experiences of gender privilege and racial subordination.
- **Strengthen capacity to counter the far-right's affective intensification of racialized gender:** Fostering the social solidarities that can challenge the hierarchies and exclusions of the far-right's ethnonationalist ideology and its social organicist vision will require a capacity to communicate affectively as well as cognitively; evidence-based programming must also be values-based and emotionally resonant. A vision of families and communities and, by extension, nations organized around the values of inclusive, sustainable and gender equitable life-making is needed to counter the racialized 'family values' of the far-right.
- **Strengthen capacity for practices of solidarity, ally-ship and accountability within internal operations and external partnerships:** To be an effective advocate for a vision of gender justice in response to the far-right, Oxfam and its partners must transform aspects of their own deep structures and 'cultures' that reinforce or collude with the ideology of white, male supremacy underpinning the rise of the far-right.

At the heart of far-right gender politics is the effort to control women within the heteronormative family and to exclude/punish those whose sexual orientation and gender identity and expression do not conform to heteronormative, cisgendered norms. Challenging this double gender binary (which oppresses

women and those people with non-conforming genders and sexualities) must be central to efforts to resist the rise of the far-right. In practice, this means that any effort to deepen work on masculinities must focus analytic and programmatic attention on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

At its most basic level, this involves recognizing that work on masculinities does not equate to gender work with men only, and that gender work with men is not only confined to work on their heteronormative relations with women. It is also clear from the research cited in this report that gender justice programming in response to the far-right must also address its misogynistic masculinism, directed at cisgendered and transgendered women.

In terms of what this means for work on masculinities, this suggests a need to:

- **Ensure that campaign messages and training materials on masculinities and for work with men and boys problematize the double gender binary:**

This will include addressing the ways in which patriarchal violence targets both women and girls and people with non-conforming genders and sexualities, and highlighting the multiplicity of masculinities and femininities in terms of a diversity of genders and sexualities.

- **Make sexual and reproductive rights, including rights in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, central to a vision of inclusive, equitable and democratic societies:** Control over sexuality and reproduction is at the heart of the far-right's patriarchal gender politics; challenging such a politics requires a rights-based agenda responding to the interests and needs of people of different gender identities and sexual orientations.

- **Strengthen capacity to build networked publics in support of gender justice:** Organizations on the progressive Left, and perhaps development NGOs in particular, have been slow to recognize and respond to the pernicious effects of the manosphere, and its normalization of extreme misogyny. Strengthening capacity to counter this normalization is an urgent priority, requiring more attention to online campaigns targeting young men.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

“We are currently witnessing a tidal change in global politics,” notes a 2018 study.⁹ “The far right, which seemed to be on the retreat for decades, has staged a huge comeback.” “Europe is shifting to the right” is the conclusion reached by a 2017 edited volume on *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*.¹⁰ The rise of the far-right is evident in “the explosion of electorally successful radical right-wing political parties and movements in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe”,¹¹ with such parties joining coalition governments in Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.¹² The far-right is newly visible in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, with the victory of the Republican party in the 2016 U.S. election, in the USA most clearly. In the view of some scholars, “[w]hile much of the west has witnessed a resurgence of the far right since the end of the 2000s, 2016 marked a new step in the mainstreaming of reactionary and particularly racist, Islamophobic and xenophobic political movements, agendas and discourses.”¹³ There are successful radical right-wing parties in countries as diverse as India, Israel, Japan, Russia, and Turkey; Jair Bolsonaro’s 2018 election victory in Brazil appears to mark a step-change in the right-wing reversal of Latin America’s ‘pink tide’.

In 2017, an Oxfam Research Backgrounder on *The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs* took stock of the nature, causes and impacts of the rise of right-wing populism in the democracies of the developed world.¹⁴ It emphasized a growing polarization of political debate and electoral politics, with center-right parties shifting to the right in response to populist pressure, and a corresponding weakening of the political center and sense of ‘democracy fatigue’ in many western democracies. The report noted the influence of far-right movements and messaging, helping to shape public opinion and policy debate on a range of issues, from immigration and reproductive rights to social protection and constitutional reform. The report cautioned against reductive economic explanations for growing support for the far-right, in terms of the ‘losers’ of economic globalization. Such explanations miss the array of

⁹ Ehmsen, S. & A. Scharenberg. (2018) "Introduction: The Rise of the Radical Right." In *The Far Right in Government: Six Cases from Across Europe*, edited by S. Ehmsen & A. Scharenberg, 1-8. New York: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. p1

¹⁰ Köttig, M. & A. Blum. (2017) "Introduction." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Pető, 1-10. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. p1

¹¹ Bar-On, T. (2018) "The Radical Right and Nationalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p2

¹² de Lange, S. L. (2012) "Radical Right-Wing Parties in Office: A Cross-National Comparison." In *The Extreme Right in Europe: Current Trends and Perspectives*, edited by U. Backes & P. Moreau, 171-194. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

¹³ Mondon, A. & A. Winter (2018) "Whiteness, populism and the racialisation of the working class in the United Kingdom and the United States." *Identities*: 1-19. p1

¹⁴ Galasso, N., G. N. Feroci, K. Pfeifer & M. Walsh 2017. *The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs*. Washington DC: Oxfam America.

'supply side' factors, notably the power of charismatic demagogues and their far-right narratives to attribute a range of complex political, economic, and social problems to clearly defined 'enemies' (such as immigrants, foreigners, 'globalized elites') with clearly defined once-and-for-all 'solutions' (from border walls to rejection of international institutions.)

The report identified a range of implications for NGOs working on international development. "The rise of right-wing populism in western democracies poses a serious threat to the global order in ways that go against the vision and efforts of organizations like Oxfam," the report concluded.¹⁵ The xenophobic authoritarianism of the far-right challenges the most basic commitments to human rights and equitable development enshrined in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030.¹⁶ It threatens the values and practices of pluralist democratic governance, including the functions of civil society organizations such as Oxfam and its partners in upholding the rights and amplifying the voices of the most vulnerable. Most strikingly, the report urged the need to understand the emotional force of far-right narratives:

Using well-researched evidence to debunk the myths and assumptions that underlie such narratives must be a priority. But evidence is not sufficient. As a complement, NGOs should consider whether they give sufficient attention to understanding the drivers behind multiple beliefs and cognitive frames which embrace narratives counter to their values and principles.¹⁷

The extremism of the far-right lies in their rejection of pluralist values. Their formal acceptance of procedural democracy is shadowed by their vision of the ideal society as an "ethnocracy, which in many ways runs counter to the pluralistic values of liberal democracy".¹⁸ But the narratives and tropes deployed in this rejection of pluralist values and sharpening of sociocultural conflict warrant closer attention, if they are to be both better understood and contested. That far-right messaging and movements are polarizing political debates is clear; there is less clarity about the affective appeals and cognitive frames deployed to engineer this polarization. Wodak makes clear that "[r]ight-wing populist parties successfully create fear and legitimize their policy proposals (usually related to restricting immigration and so forth [...]) with an appeal to the necessities of security." Invoking a crisis of security, "both politics and media tend to reduce complex historical processes to snap-shots which allow constructing and triggering Manichean dichotomies – friends and foes, perpetrators and victims, and so forth."¹⁹

¹⁵ Ibid. p9

¹⁶ United Nations 2015. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York: United Nations.

¹⁷ Galasso, N., G. N. Feroci, K. Pfeifer & M. Walsh 2017. The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs. Washington DC: Oxfam America. p10

¹⁸ Rydgren, J. (2018) "The Radical Right: An Introduction." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-16. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p3

¹⁹ Wodak, R. (2015) *The Politics of Fear. What Right-wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London, UK: Sage. p5

By definition, polarization relies on a reinforcement of binary difference, an implicit or explicit dichotomous hierarchy. One of the most prevalent, persistent and consequential organizations of binary difference remains that of the male/masculine vs. female/feminine gender binary, at once so intimately connected to personal identity and yet so structurally determining of social inequality. But relatively little attention has been given to the significance of gender narratives and tropes in far-right messaging and organizing. Only two years ago, scholars were acknowledging that “[r]esearch dedicated to gender constructions, gender conceptions and lived gender realities in the far right, on the national and the European level, is only just beginning,” even though “a variety of different gender constructions can be observed, so that it can no longer be taken for granted that the far right embodies traditional, one-sided conceptions of gender.”²⁰ Uncovering the ways in which varying narratives and tropes of masculinity and femininity have both shaped and been used by the far-right in its project of polarization is an urgent task facing development NGOs and the progressive Left more generally in their efforts to confront the nativism, authoritarianism and populism of the far-right.

1.2 DEFINING THE FAR-RIGHT

There is a large and rapidly growing literature, both academic and journalistic, on what is variously described as right-wing populism, the radical right, the extreme right, and the far right. This terminological variation notwithstanding, there is now widespread agreement among scholars and researchers about the unifying concerns and ideological commitments of the far-right resurgence noted above. Over a decade ago, it was noted that there was a “growing consensus in the literature that distinguishes nationalism as the single characteristic that all radical right parties share,” a consensus which has only deepened since then.²¹ A 2018 survey of research on the far-right concluded that “without ethnic nationalism, the master concept of the radical right, its thinkers, its political parties, and its movements would lack a stable anchor.”²² As Bar-On makes clear:

the radical right’s nationalism is different from that of the mainstream right in its radicalism (or far-reaching and fundamental nature), its obsession with the dominance of the main ethnic group, and its longing for the erection of homogeneous nations and states.²³

²⁰ Blum, A. & M. Köttig. (2017) "Postscript." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 369-375. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. p370

²¹ Ellinas, A. A. (2008) "Review of Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe. By Cas Mudde." *Journal of Politics* 70(2): 561–562. p561

²² Bar-On, T. (2018) "The Radical Right and Nationalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p2

²³ Ibid. p2

Other scholars have refined this understanding of the centrality of ethnonationalism to far-right parties and formations. For Mudde and Kaltwasser, these parties and formations share a commitment to “nativism, authoritarianism and populism.”²⁴ As they explain, “[w]hereas nativism is a combination of nationalism and xenophobia, and strives for a monocultural state hostile to ‘alien’ influences, authoritarianism is the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are severely punished.”²⁵ Rydgren, in his introductory essay for *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, emphasizes the importance of an ideology concerned with “strengthening the nation by making it more ethnically homogeneous and—for most radical right-wing parties and movements—by returning to traditional values.”²⁶ For ethnonationalism to succeed, as he explains, the sociocultural must be privileged over the socioeconomic as the axis of political contestation. Oxfam’s analysis of right-wing populism similarly notes the far-right’s “strengthening of culture wars.”²⁷

This emphasis on ethnonationalism as defining of a heterogeneous political tendency that can nevertheless be collectively and usefully referred to as the “far-right” has not gone without challenge. Lucardie has questioned Mudde’s characterization of avowedly populist and nativist parties in terms of a Left-Right axis of political taxonomy, in that it is the conflicting values of equality versus hierarchy that organize this axis, rather than nationalism or nativism.²⁸ Mudde notes this critique that the radical right cannot be defined exclusively on the basis of nationalism, agreeing that for the radical or far-right, “the defining feature is natural inequality or hierarchy, not nationalism.”²⁹ Political developments in Europe, the USA and parts of Asia (in Modi’s India and Duterte’s Philippines) suggest, however, that hierarchy and nationalism, far from distinct political logics, are deeply entangled. After all, the Left-Right political axis birthed by the French Revolution was, from the beginning, steeped in a colonial imaginary: the natural hierarchy of the ‘white’ over the ‘darker nations.’³⁰

If the “far-reaching and fundamental nature” of the far-right’s ethnonationalism distinguishes it from mainstream right-wing and conservative parties, many scholars are quick to note that this distinction is less a rupture with, but more a radicalization of, the mainstream. Keskinen notes that anxieties about the nation and “claiming multiculturalism as a “failed” experience [...] are characteristics of

²⁴ Mudde, C. & C. R. Kaltwasser (2015) “Vox Populi or Vox Masculini? Populism and Gender in Northern Europe and South America.” *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 16–36. p20

²⁵ *Ibid.* p20

²⁶ Rydgren, J. (2018) “The Radical Right: An Introduction.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-16. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p2

²⁷ Galasso, N., G. N. Feroci, K. Pfeifer & M. Walsh 2017. *The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs*. Washington DC: Oxfam America. p9

²⁸ Lucardie, P. (2009) “Populism: Some Conceptual Problems.” *Political Studies Review* 7(3): 319–21.

²⁹ Mudde, C. (2009) “Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe Redux.” *Political Studies Review* 7(3): 330-337. p331

³⁰ Prashad, V. (2008) *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World*. New York: The New Press.

European politics of the last decade, involving not only radical right-wing populists but also large sections of mainstream parties.”³¹

Similarly, the strident nativism and overt racism that have marked the Trump presidency have deep roots in the Republican party’s strategic deployment of anti-black racism in Nixon’s “southern strategy” of the early 1970s, to increase political support among white voters in the South by appealing to racism against African Americans.³² The spike in immigrant detention and deportation under the Obama presidency also suggests a degree of bipartisan consensus in the mainstream of U.S. politics regarding the immigrant ‘threat’. Given this, Mudde emphasizes that the nativism and authoritarianism of the far-right should be regarded as a “pathological normalcy” and a “radicalisation of mainstream values.”³³ In other words, the far-right “is not extreme or abnormal, but an extreme (or radical) typicality”.³⁴

This paper’s choice of the term “far-right” to refer to the parties and political formations that elsewhere are variously termed the “radical right” or “populist radical right” or the “extreme right” is intended to highlight this quality of “pathological normalcy.” The far-right takes further the ethnonationalist sentiments and legacies that already scar mainstream political life in many countries. Indeed, as this paper will explore, the legacy of racist histories and racialized hierarchies of Euro-American colonialism and imperialism loom large in far-right imaginaries of the nation and its ‘rightful people’ (or *ethnos*.) That explicit appeals to such hierarchies have returned to mainstream political discourse in many countries in the form of ethnonationalism and its “culture wars” is what constitutes the threat of the far-right.

If the term “far-right” is a useful descriptor for the “extreme typicality” of parties and formations whose ethnonationalist politics are not a departure from but rather a deepening of mainstream right-wing racism and xenophobia, it also serves to mark the difference between such parties and formations and self-identified fascist organizations which seek the overthrow of existing democratic systems.³⁵ “While some radical right outfits are more critical and dismissive of democracy, most of the radical right today is not against democracy per se”, as Bar-On explains.³⁶ Instead, “they are against liberal variants of democracy, which

³¹ Keskinen, S. (2013) “Anti-feminism and white identity politics: Political antagonisms in radical rightwing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland.” *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4): 225–232. p226

³² Aistrup, J. A. (2015) *The southern strategy revisited: Republican top-down advancement in the South*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.

³³ Mudde, C. (2010) “The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy.” *West European Politics* 33(6): 1167–1186. p1181

³⁴ Spierings, N. & A. Zaslove (2015) “Conclusion: dividing the populist radical right between ‘liberal nativism’ and traditional conceptions of gender.” *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 163-173. p170

³⁵ Traverso, E. (2019) *The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right*. Translated by D. Broder. London and New York: Verso.

³⁶ Bar-On, T. (2018) “The Radical Right and Nationalism.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p10

hinder the emergence of the “true democracy” wedded to the homogeneous nation.”³⁷

In this sense, “far-right” is useful as a term for those parties and formations which have engineered the entry of extremism into the mainstream, by rejecting both the traditional center-right establishment in politics and the violent extremism of openly anti-democratic groups and individuals. Right-wing populist parties were quick to distance themselves publicly from horrific hate crimes such as that committed by Anders Breivik in July 2011 in Norway.³⁸ As Rydgren explains, using “radical right” for what this paper will refer to as the far-right:

The radical right does not usually oppose democracy per se, although they are typically hostile to the way existing democratic institutions actually work. In fact, radical right-wing parties argue that they represent true democracy (in contrast to the sham democracy that they believe characterizes contemporary societies).³⁹

Aside from this unifying commitment to ethnonationalism, the far-right is a variegated ecology of “political parties, social movements, Internet sites, radio stations, intellectuals, and think tanks”.⁴⁰ For Caiani, the far-right “in Europe as in the United States, is a “plural family,” including various types of organizations that have different ideological tendencies and that mobilize around different issues.”⁴¹ As de Lange and Mügge suggest, “despite ideological similarities, right-wing populist parties differ considerably when it comes to their issue profiles and programmes.”⁴² Far-right formations “draw on and combine different political imaginaries and different traditions, evoke (and construct) different nationalist pasts in the form of identity narratives, and emphasize a range of different issues in everyday politics.”⁴³ These differences can be significant:

While some are openly neoliberal, e.g., the Swiss SVP, others criticize many aspects of neoliberalism, for instance the French National Front or the Danish People’s Party. Some are socially liberal, such as the Dutch PVV, while others, including the Polish Law and Justice party (PiS), are socially reactionary.⁴⁴

³⁷ Ibid. p10

³⁸ Wodak, R. (2015) *The Politics of Fear. What Right-wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London, UK: Sage.

³⁹ Rydgren, J. (2018) “The Radical Right: An Introduction.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-16. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p3

⁴⁰ Bar-On, T. (2018) “The Radical Right and Nationalism.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p2

⁴¹ Caiani, M. & D. della Porta. (2018) “The Radical Right as Social Movement Organizations.” In *The Radical Right: An Introduction*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-26. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p14

⁴² de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) “Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time.” *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. p62

⁴³ Wodak, R. (2015) *The Politics of Fear. What Right-wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London, UK: Sage. p2

⁴⁴ Ehmsen, S. & A. Scharenberg. (2018) “Introduction: The Rise of the Radical Right.” In *The Far Right in Government: Six Cases from Across Europe*, edited by S. Ehmsen & A. Scharenberg, 1-8. New York: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. p4

Blee's examination of far-right formations and parties in Europe and the USA concludes that:

Today's far right is quite diverse. Some groups are highly organized, with a firm sense of membership and identifiable leaders and spokespersons. Others are fluid and only minimally organized, so it is difficult to determine who constitutes members or leaders.⁴⁵

In public discourse, the figure of the 'strongman' leader has emerged in recent years as emblematic of the rise of the far-right. But even at the level of the personal deportment and presentational style of its most visible leadership, the far-right is varied rather than uniform. The 'tough guy' persona of Duterte, Erdoğan, Modi or Trump himself might be said to represent only one mode of masculine performance on the far-right, alongside the openly gay Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch far-right Party for Freedom, or the apparent respectability of Jörg Haider, former leader of the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich or FPÖ.) Indeed, in Wodak's view, there is a "salient shift [...] occurring in the forms and styles of political rhetoric of 'soft' right-wing populist parties which could be labelled as 'the *Haiderization* of politics'," in that "Haider's performance, style, rhetoric and ideologies have become the metonymic symbol of such parties' success across Europe."⁴⁶ The growing number of female far-right political leaders further complicates analysis of their gendered character.

Indeed, as this paper will discuss, the gender politics of the far-right is both diverse and coherent, being at once the scene of its heterogeneity and among the most significant dramas of its singular ideological struggle. Research is beginning to examine this paradox, whose findings and conclusions this paper will review, by looking at the ways in which gender has been used to normalize ethnonationalist ideologies and authoritarian governance.

1.3 RESEARCHING THE FAR-RIGHT

The last decade has witnessed an explosion of scholarly interest in, and public debate about, the rise of the far-right.⁴⁷ In surveying this literature, Bar-On notes its geographical bias, commenting that "the radical right populist party literature is rather Eurocentric, focusing on parties in Europe and especially Western

⁴⁵ Blee, K. (2017) "Similarities/Differences in Gender and Far-Right Politics in Europe and the USA." In Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 191-204. p193

⁴⁶ Wodak, R. (2015) *The Politics of Fear. What Right-wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London, UK: Sage. p2

⁴⁷ Wodak, R. (2015) *The Politics of Fear. What Right-wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London, UK: Sage. Mudde, C. (2017) "Introduction to the populist radical right." In The Populist Radical Right: A Reader, edited by C. Mudde, 1-10. London and New York: Routledge. Ehmsen, S. & A. Scharenberg. (2018) "Introduction: The Rise of the Radical Right." In The Far Right in Government: Six Cases from Across Europe, edited by S. Ehmsen & A. Scharenberg, 1-8. New York: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. Rydgren, J. (2018) "The Radical Right: An Introduction." In The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-16. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Europe.⁴⁸ A growing research interest in the far-right in Central and Eastern Europe has, in the view of some scholars, not always been “sufficiently sensitive to these contextual differences between regions and types of political economies”.⁴⁹ Elsewhere, Trump’s rise to power has prompted renewed interest in the influence of white nationalist formations and nativist ideologies on mainstream U.S. politics.⁵⁰

Scholarly work examining the continuities and disjunctures between the far-right in Europe and the USA has also been undertaken,⁵¹ with growing attention also being given to the “alt-right” and other online outlets for far-right discourse and messaging.⁵² Whether its focus is online or offline, however, such research remains overwhelmingly Euro-American in its orientation, with little comparative work connecting studies of far-right parties outside of Europe and North America (e.g. the far-right turn of Modi’s BJP in India, or Netanyahu’s Likud party in Israel) with Euro-American experiences. Although Bolsonaro’s election may prompt further studies,⁵³ there has been relatively little research on the far-right in Latin America.⁵⁴ Bar-On comments that “Latin American intellectuals err in not studying the right because of its importance and resilience in the region, including its connections to the military, conservative and neoliberal parties, ultra-Catholic circles, business elites, and even drug cartels.”⁵⁵

In addition to its geographical emphases, much of the scholarly literature on the far-right has been concerned with delineating the links between its “nativism, authoritarianism and populism” and the origins and impacts of far-right ethnonationalism in differing contexts.⁵⁶ Relatively little attention has been given to assessing and explaining the gender dimensions of the rise of the far-right. In 2010, Norocel commented that “[m]ost scholarship dealing with radical right populism in Europe brushes aside the gender aspect, only acknowledging the overwhelming presence of men amongst party members and leadership.”⁵⁷ By

⁴⁸ Bar-On, T. (2018) "The Radical Right and Nationalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p9

⁴⁹ Kitschelt, H. (2007) "Growth and Persistence of the Radical Right in Postindustrial Democracies: Advances and Challenges in Comparative Research." *West European Politics* 30(5): 1176–1207. p1198

⁵⁰ Page, S. & J. Dittmer (2016) "Donald Trump and the white-male dissonance machine." *Political Geography* 54: 76-78. Kelly, A. (2017) "The alt-right: reactionary rehabilitation for white masculinity: US alt-right extremism is a logical consequence of mainstream neo-conservatism." *Soundings: A Journal of politics and culture* 66(Summer): 68-78. Jones, S. G. 2018. *The Rise of Far-Right Extremism in the United States. CSIS Briefs*. Washington DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies.

⁵¹ Blee, K. (2017) "Similarities/Differences in Gender and Far-Right Politics in Europe and the USA." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 191-204. Norris, P. & R. Inglehart. (2019) *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵² Statzel, R. S. (2008) "Cybersupremacy: The new face and form of white supremacist activism." In *Tactics in Hard Times: Practices and Spaces of New Media*, edited by M. Boler, 405-428. Boston: The MIT Press. Daniels, J. (2018) "The Algorithmic Rise of the 'Alt-Right'." *Contexts* 17 (1): 60-65. Lyons, M. N. 2018. CTRL-ALT-DELETE: The origins and ideology of the Alternative Right. Boston, MA: Political Research Associates.

⁵³ Anderson, P. (2019) "Bolsonaro's Brazil." *London Review of Books* 41(3): 11-22.

⁵⁴ Luna, J.-P. & C. R. Kaltwasser. (2014) *The Resilience of the Latin American Right*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁵⁵ Bar-On, T. (2018) "The Radical Right and Nationalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p9

⁵⁶ Mudde, C. & C. R. Kaltwasser (2015) "Vox Populi or Vox Masculini? Populism and Gender in Northern Europe and South America." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 16–36. p20

⁵⁷ Norocel, O. C. (2010) "Constructing radical right populist resistance: Metaphors of heterosexist masculinities and the family question in Sweden." *NORMA: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies* 5(2): 169–183. p172

2017, little progress appeared to have been made, with one scholar noting that “the question of the role that gender plays in radical right politics has received little scholarly attention.”⁵⁸ Reflecting on studies of white nationalism in the USA, Ferber lamented the fact that “[s]cholars studying the movement have explored its racist and anti-Semitic ideologies, but there has been little discussion of the role of gender in its ideology.”⁵⁹

This is beginning to change, with an emergent body of discursive and ethnographic analysis of far-right gender politics, albeit largely confined to the Euro-American context described above.⁶⁰ In Blee’s account, research on the gender dimensions of far-right discourse and organization has evolved. The “[f]irst wave of feminist work charted the ways in which extreme-right parties and movements were themselves gendered”,⁶¹ while the next wave looked more closely at the “general association of far-right politics with ideologies of gender essentialism and a stark divide between the public world (mostly men’s) and the private world (mostly women’s).⁶² Current research is examining “how far-right ideas, practices, and plans circulate across national borders and the extent to which women are agents of that circulation,” as well as the “fissures and breakdowns in the public/private dichotomy that has traditionally established women as lesser members of far-right groups”.⁶³

Amid this flourishing of scholarly interest in the gender dimensions of the far-right, however, relatively little research attention has been given to issues of masculinities specifically. The male/masculine character of far-right organizations and their discourses is, it seems, so normalized that it has largely eluded critical attention. As has been noted:

Men, or rather “masculinities”, in the extreme right have received very little attention. One reason for this could be that for a long time the extreme right was considered as “male” practically by definition; in other words “masculinity” was one of its constitutive elements.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Erzeel, S. & E. Rashkova (2017) "Still Men's Parties? Gender and the Radical Right in Comparative Perspective." *West European Politics* 40(4): 812–820. p812

⁵⁹ Ferber, A. L. (2000) "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors." *Men and Masculinities* 3(1): 30-56. p32

⁶⁰ Keskinen, S. (2013) "Anti-feminism and white identity politics: Political antagonisms in radical rightwing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4): 225–232. de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) "Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. Köttig, M. & A. Blum. (2017) "Introduction." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 1-10. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. Scrinzi, F. (2017) "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 127-140. Norocel, O. C. (2015) "The Panoptic Performance of Masculinity for the Romanian Ethno-Nationalist Project: Disciplinary Intersections in Populist Radical Right Print Media." *Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* 2(1-2): 143-156.

⁶¹ Blee, K. (2017) "Similarities/Differences in Gender and Far-Right Politics in Europe and the USA." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 191-204. p199

⁶² *Ibid.* p200

⁶³ *Ibid.* p200

⁶⁴ Blum, A. (2017) "Men in the Battle for the Brains: Constructions of Masculinity Within the "Identitary Generation"." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 321-334. p322

Not only have issues of masculinities eluded scholarly attention; they have also been largely invisible within far-right formations themselves, given that:

regardless of the era in which these parties were founded or their ideological roots, men and masculinity are not explicitly mentioned. The party manifestos studied were written by men, for men. Their architects probably see no need to address explicitly their own needs or roles: men are the norm. It is for future research to reveal the implicit meanings of right-wing populist policy proposals for men and masculinity, and to what extent these vary across parties and time.⁶⁵

Blee concurs, urging that “[a]dditional work on men and masculinity is needed as well, in order to fully understand the gendered nature of the far right.”⁶⁶ In particular, she calls for more research on the variety and complexity of far-right masculinities. While drawing attention to the “studies that point out the masculinist quality of much of the extreme right, noting the common expressions of conventional masculinity through anger, aggression, domination of women, other men, and nature, assertions of leadership, and violence,” she also notes that “masculinity exists in other forms in some parts of the far right, in the form of male expressions of close bonding with other men, fear, performative displays, and submission.”⁶⁷ In similar vein, other scholars have urged attention to “the complex discursive interdependence between concepts of gender and sexuality; social class, culture, and language; race and migration”,⁶⁸ and called for an “intersectional analysis along such superordinate axes of social structuring as: masculinities (for gendered hierarchies), heterosexuality (for sexual hierarchies), elites (for class systems), and whitenesses (for racialized and ethnic structuring).”⁶⁹

Research on the far-right looking specifically at issues of masculinities has, broadly speaking, taken two main forms: ethnographic studies of men’s and women’s gendered experiences as members or supporters of far-right parties and discursive analyses of the use of narratives and tropes of masculinity in far-right texts, messaging and policy platforms. Several studies of voting patterns for far-right parties have also used social survey data on gender attitudes (e.g. in relation to attitudes towards masculinity, femininity, sexuality and family life) in order to understand such patterns through a gender analysis. There is also a growing body of scholarship on the links between the far-right and the ‘manosphere’, an online ecology of sites, memes and message-boards focused

⁶⁵ de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) "Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. p80

⁶⁶ Blee, K. (2017) "Similarities/Differences in Gender and Far-Right Politics in Europe and the USA." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 191-204. p201

⁶⁷ Ibid. p201

⁶⁸ Norocel, O. C., T. Saresma, T. Lähdesmäki & M. Ruotsalainen (2018) "Discursive Constructions of White Nordic Masculinities in Right-wing Populist Media." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-22. p3

⁶⁹ Ibid. p4

on male insecurities and resentments whose content is frequently deeply misogynistic,⁷⁰ and Men's Rights Activism as a gateway into the far-right.⁷¹

This paper reviews this research literature, in order to draw out its implications for Oxfam, both in terms of the gender dimensions of the threat posed by the rise of the far-right and what this means for Oxfam's campaigning, programming and policy advocacy on gender justice. But before doing so, it is important to reflect on the conceptual and political challenges inherent within research on masculinity/ies, especially in relation to using such research to re-conceive the gender politics of the far-right. Research is never innocent; the making of knowledge is the exercise of power. The history of masculinity studies, dominated by the Euro-American academy as it is, seems especially marked by the relations of power which it purports to merely study. "Masculinity studies, until today, remains haunted by the needs to problematize deviant, working-class, youth, colonized and racialized masculinities", Amar warns.⁷² What this warning might mean for conceptualizing and addressing far-right masculinities is discussed next.

1.4 CONCEPTUALIZING FAR-RIGHT MASCULINITIES

1.4.1 The concept of political masculinities

Ideas about masculinity have long been implicit within discourses of the political. The polis of the Ancient Greek world was peopled and led by men; political power was and was assumed to be masculine.⁷³ But academic disciplines concerned with theorizing the political have rarely considered masculinity/ies a useful concept with which to work. "Due to the assumed normativity and normality of the masculine," write Starck and Sauer there is an "invisibility of masculinity" which "holds particularly true for public spheres such as politics."⁷⁴

As already noted, the masculinities of the far-right have until very recently been largely neglected by research, in part because political players themselves have assumed this "normativity and normality of the masculine." A 2015 study of far-right populist parties and their election manifestos in Belgium and the

⁷⁰ Ging, D. (2017) "Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20.

Van Valkenburgh, S. P. (2018) "Digesting the Red Pill: Masculinity and Neoliberalism in the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20. Murdoch, S. (2019) "Societal Misogyny and the Manosphere: Understanding the UK Anti-Feminist Movement." In *State of Hate 2019: People vs The Elite?*, edited by N. Lowles, 38-41. London: HOPE not hate.

⁷¹ Schmitz, R. & E. Kazyak (2016) "Masculinities in cyberspace: An analysis of portrayals of manhood in men's rights activist websites." *Social Sciences* 5(2): 1-16. Dibranco, A. 2017. *Mobilizing Misogyny*. Boston, MA: Political Research Associates.

⁷² Amar, P. (2011) "Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of 'Men in Crisis', Industries of Gender in Revolution." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 7(3): 36-70. p45

⁷³ Beard, M. (2017) *Women & Power: A Manifesto*. London: Profile Books.

⁷⁴ Starck, K. & B. Sauer. (2014) "Political Masculinities: Introduction." In *A Man's World? Political Masculinities in Literature and Culture*, edited by K. Starck & B. Sauer, 3-10. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. p3

Netherlands emphasizes that “regardless of the era in which these parties were founded or their ideological roots, men and masculinity are not explicitly mentioned.”⁷⁵ An “ever-expanding body of literature on masculinities in the political arena” is beginning to emerge, however. As Starck and Sauer report:

These studies explore the interdependence of the construction of masculinities on the one hand and the emerging, maintenance, and modification of concepts such as the state, citizenship, nationality, democracy, militarism and policing on the other. As a result, masculinity has been made visible in the domain of politics and is now open to critique and questioning.⁷⁶

The term “political masculinities” is increasingly used to conceptualize the ways in which masculinities are “constructed around, ascribed to and/or claimed by ‘political players’.”⁷⁷ More recently, it has been emphasized that “the concept of political masculinities can usefully be applied in instances in which power is explicitly either being (re)produced or challenged.”⁷⁸

But before examining the gender dimensions of the far-right through this lens of political masculinities, it is important to consider the premises and perspectives which have informed the concept of “political masculinities” itself, in order to see more clearly what such a concept may reveal and obscure. In their introduction to the concept, Starck and Sauer catalog the proliferating interest in masculinities in a range of academic disciplines concerned with various aspects of political life, from international relations⁷⁹ to histories of war and empire⁸⁰ to political science.⁸¹

But a longer lineage of sociological conceptions of masculinity, in which studies of “political masculinities” need to be situated, goes unmentioned. In their *Toward a new sociology of masculinity*, Carrigan, Connell and Lee developed an original and influential synthesis of theoretical work from socialist feminist and Gay Liberation perspectives to provide a social constructionist account of gender hierarchies not only between men and women but also between different groups of men.⁸² The target of their critique was sex role theory, whose social psychological perspectives on the “male sex role”, and its attendant pressures

⁷⁵ de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) “Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time.” *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. p80

⁷⁶ Starck, K. & B. Sauer. (2014) “Political Masculinities: Introduction.” In *A Man’s World? Political Masculinities in Literature and Culture*, edited by K. Starck & B. Sauer, 3-10. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. p4

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p6

⁷⁸ Starck, K. & R. Luyt (2018) “Political Masculinities, Crisis Tendencies, and Social Transition: Toward an Understanding of Change.” *Men and Masculinities*: 1-13. p5

⁷⁹ Hooper, C. (2001) *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Zalewski, M. & J. L. Parpart. (2008) “Introduction: rethinking the man question.” In *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations*, edited by J. L. Parpart & M. Zalewski, 1-22. London and New York: Zed Books.

⁸⁰ Enloe, C. (2017) *The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging the Persistence of Patriarchy*. Oakland: University of California Press.

⁸¹ McClintock, A. (1995) *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. 1st ed. New York and London: Routledge.

⁸² Goldstein, J. S. (2001) *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁸¹ Carver, T. (2004) *Men in Political Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Messerschmidt, J. W. (2016)

Hegemonic Masculinities and Camouflaged Politics. New York: Routledge.

⁸² Carrigan, T., B. Connell & J. Lee (1985) “Toward a new sociology of masculinity.” *Theory and Society* 14(5): 551-604.

and harms, had dominated theoretical attempts to 'gender' men from the 1970s onwards. As Carrigan *et al* made clear, the effort to explain men's heterogeneous experiences of and attitudes towards gender identity, expression and relations, let alone the androcentric division of labor and the gendered organization of power, in terms of a reductive contrast between the male and female "sex role" was ahistorical in approach and depoliticizing in effect:

The result of using the role framework is an abstract view of the differences between the sexes and their situations, not a concrete one of the relations between them. [...] The political effect is to highlight the attitudes and pressures that create an artificially rigid distinction between men and women and to play down the power that men exercise over women.⁸³

Instead, they urged attention to "the historical production of social categories" and to "large-scale structures as both the objects and effects of collective practice," including "the sexual division of labor, the sexual politics of workplaces, and the interplay of gender relations with class dynamics."⁸⁴ They insisted that the "relations between heterosexual and homosexual men have to be studied to understand the constitution of masculinity as a political order, and the question of what forms of masculinity are socially dominant or hegemonic has to be explored."⁸⁵

The conceptualization of masculinities outlined by Carrigan *et al*, and the research questions to which it gave rise, has been hugely influential, not least in relation to studies of political masculinities. This includes an attention to the relationship between large-scale structures and collective practice, an interest in the political economy of gender relations and hierarchies as well as a curiosity about the significance of heteronormativity for the functioning of patriarchal power. Their insistence on regarding masculinity as a construction, "a social struggle going on in a complex ideological and political field, in which there is a continuing process of mobilization, marginalization, contestation, resistance, and subordination," has been a wellspring not only for efforts to understand but also to transform masculinity.⁸⁶ Above all, their view that this "marginalization, contestation, resistance, and subordination" characterizes intra-gender as well as inter-gender relations has helped to inspire what is now commonly referred to as gender transformative work with men and boys, which has flourished over the last 30 years in many parts of the world.⁸⁷

⁸³ Ibid. p580

⁸⁴ Ibid. p552-3

⁸⁵ Ibid. p552

⁸⁶ Ibid. p589

⁸⁷ Ricardo, C. 2014. Men, Masculinities, and Changing Power: A Discussion Paper on Engaging Men in Gender Equality From Beijing 1995 to 2015. MenEngage Alliance and UN Women. Casey, E., J. Carlson, S. Two Bulls & A. Yager (2016) "Gender Transformative Approaches to Engaging Men in Gender-Based Violence Prevention: A Review and Conceptual Model." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*: 1-16.

1.4.2 The concept of hegemony in relation to political masculinities

To theorize the contestations and subordinations of intra-gender relations, Carrigan *et al* introduced the term “socially dominant or hegemonic” masculinity,⁸⁸ a concept more fully developed a decade later in Connell’s seminal *Masculinities*.⁸⁹ In doing so, they drew on the work of Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci and his account of hegemony, as the mechanisms by which elites maintain their authority, not merely by the coercive exercise of state power but also through the ‘cultural’ operations of “civil society,” and their engineering of consent to hierarchy and domination.⁹⁰

Applied to questions of gender hierarchies, “hegemonic masculinity” served as a tool to think through the operations of patriarchal authority, relying as it does not only on the coercion of many forms of gender-based violence but also on the naturalization and normalization of male/masculine domination and female/feminine subordination. In Connell’s formulation, hegemonic masculinity “can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.”⁹¹

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has proven particularly influential, not only shaping research agendas on “men and masculinities” but also programmatic action on gender transformative work with men and boys in relation to gender-based violence,⁹² sexual and reproductive health and rights,⁹³ parenting and the care economy,⁹⁴ peace and security⁹⁵ and gender equality more generally.⁹⁶ In its survey of what it describes as the “nearly 40-year-old male engagement field” and the lessons that can be drawn to guide the funding, design, and implementation of programming that engages men and boys in transforming gender norms, the International Center for Research on Women defines the “process of gender transformation” as “seeking to dismantle hegemonic masculinities.”⁹⁷ Oxfam’s own pioneering work with men and boys on gender equality, first surveyed in its 2004 publication *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, outlined its framework for understanding contemporary

⁸⁸ Carrigan, T., B. Connell & J. Lee (1985) "Toward a new sociology of masculinity." *Theory and Society* 14(5): 551-604. p552

⁸⁹ Connell, R. W. (1995) *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁹⁰ Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from The Prison Notebooks*. Translated by Q. Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith. Edited by Q. Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

⁹¹ Connell, R. W. (1995) *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p77

⁹² Jewkes, R. & R. Morrell (2017) "Hegemonic Masculinity, Violence, and Gender Equality." *Men and Masculinities* 21(4): 547-571.

⁹³ Dworkin, S. L., P. J. Fleming & C. J. Colvin (2015) "The promises and limitations of gender-transformative health programming with men: critical reflections from the field." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 17(sup2): 128-143.

⁹⁴ van der Gaag, N., B. Heilman, T. Gupta, C. Nembhard & G. Barker 2019. *State of the World’s Fathers: Unlocking the Power of Men’s Care*. Washington, DC: Promundo-US.

⁹⁵ Higate, P. (2007) "Peacekeepers, Masculinities, and Sexual Exploitation." *Men and Masculinities* 10(1): 99-119.

⁹⁶ Peacock, D. & G. Barker (2014) "Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-based Violence: Principles, Lessons Learned, and Ways Forward." *Men and Masculinities* 17(5): 578–599.

⁹⁷ ICRW 2018. *Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It Only Works When Everyone Plays*. Washington DC: International Center for Research on Women. p89

masculinities in terms of Connell's work on hegemonic masculinity, which it noted is "often based on economic success, racial superiority, and overt heterosexuality."⁹⁸

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is foregrounded in the emerging scholarship on political masculinities. Starck and Sauer's thesis that "global neoliberal restructuring created an arena for re-negotiation of political masculinity" focuses on the "transformation of hegemonic masculinity in Western post-industrial societies since the 1990s."⁹⁹ This, they argue, "resulted in the reconstruction of a "neoliberal masculinity" and an unequal gender order."¹⁰⁰

Studies focusing directly on far-right masculinities make explicit use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity; in their work on *Discursive Constructions of White Nordic Masculinities in Right-wing Populist Media*, Norocel *et al* note that "we find the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" useful for our purposes here."¹⁰¹ Referencing the gender politics of far-right populist leaders "from Trump in the United States to Duterte in the Philippines," Pease makes clear that their rhetoric is "grounded in an ideology of masculinism and hegemonic masculinity."¹⁰²

1.4.3 Conceptualizing masculinities in far-right struggles for hegemony

The far-right's emphasis on waging a 'culture war' makes it all the more important to conceptualize the links between masculinities and hegemony. After all, the far-right movements under consideration in this paper are involved in a hegemonic struggle in terms that Gramsci would have recognized; they seek not the violent overthrow of the state but the normalization and naturalization of an ethnonationalist 'common sense', wherein extremist racism becomes mainstream. "Politics is downstream from culture" declared Andrew Breitbart, founder of the far-right syndicated news, opinion and commentary website Breitbart News Network which, under the management of former executive chairman Steve Bannon, became the self-declared platform of the alt-right. Analyzing the far-right's use of discourses and tropes of masculinity in this hegemonic struggle remains an urgent task, on which this paper focuses.

To do so, this paper conceptualizes far-right masculinities in two significant ways, themselves related to the evolution and critiques of concepts of masculinities and hegemonic masculinity over the last 30 years. The first is to emphasize masculinity as a symbolic practice, being the use of ideas, narratives and tropes

⁹⁸ Ruxton, S. (2004) "Introduction." In *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, edited by S. Ruxton, 1-18. Oxford, UK: Oxfam GB. p9

⁹⁹ Starck, K. & B. Sauer. (2014) "Political Masculinities: Introduction." In *A Man's World? Political Masculinities in Literature and Culture*, edited by K. Starck & B. Sauer, 3-10. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. p7

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p7

¹⁰¹ Norocel, O. C., T. Saresma, T. Lähdesmäki & M. Ruotsalainen (2018) "Discursive Constructions of White Nordic Masculinities in Right-wing Populist Media." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-22. p4

¹⁰² Pease, B. (2019) "The Rise of Angry White Men: Resisting Populist Masculinity and the Backlash Against Gender Equality." In *The Challenge of Nationalist Populism for Social Work*, edited by C. Noble & G. Ottomann. London: Routledge. p2

about gender difference and gender hierarchy based on the male/female gender binary. In Connell's formulation, great emphasis was laid on masculinity as a "configuration of gender practice" and on the collective/institutional as well as personal/individual nature of such practice.¹⁰³ Over time, however, the concept of masculinity-as-practice has defaulted to a conception of masculinity as the interpersonal behavioral expression of maleness, usually based on a cisnormative view of masculinity and maleness being the property of cisgendered men. "This is why life-history studies have become a characteristic genre of work on hegemonic masculinity," as has been noted.¹⁰⁴

In an article published on the 20 year anniversary of the release of *Masculinities*, Connell and Messerschmidt acknowledged that this emphasis on masculinity as personal practice has limited its analytical and political utility, writing that the "notion of masculinity as an assemblage of traits opened the path to that treatment of hegemonic masculinity as a fixed character type that has given so much trouble and is rightly criticized in recent psychological writing."¹⁰⁵ This emphasis has adversely affected gender equality programming with men and boys, too. There is a longstanding critique of gender justice work with men and boys, not least by some of its own practitioners, concerned with this framing. A 2018 study by the International Center for Research on Women of male engagement programming for gender justice, based on key informant interviews with researchers, practitioners, and funders who are working in the field of male engagement across the world concludes that "[m]ost male engagement programming focuses at the individual level—with some work also being done at the community level—without addressing the broader structures of patriarchy within which individuals and relationships operate".¹⁰⁶ The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM) agrees: "Unfortunately, the framing of much male involvement work focuses solely on the individual and relational aspects of masculinity rather than engaging in more transformative work that challenges the fundamental assumptions upon which masculinities are constructed."¹⁰⁷

Reflecting this commitment to "more transformative work", especially in relation to challenging the hegemonic project of the far-right, this paper pays particular attention to the political uses of ideas, narratives and representations of masculinity in far-right discourse. This is not to downplay the importance of close-grained life-histories and ethnographic studies of men on the far-right and 'their' masculinities. But it is to recognize that confronting the 'culture war' of the far-right requires an urgent understanding of its discursive strategies, and not least its symbolic practice of masculinities.

¹⁰³ Connell, R. W. (1995) *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p77

¹⁰⁴ Connell, R. W. & J. W. Messerschmidt (2005) "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 19(6): 829-859. p844

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p848

¹⁰⁶ ICRW 2018. *Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It Only Works When Everyone Plays*. Washington DC: International Center for Research on Women. p92

¹⁰⁷ COFEM 2017. *How a lack of accountability undermines work to address violence against women and girls. Feminist Perspectives on Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls Paper No. 1*. Coalition of Feminists for Social Change. p6

The second way in which this paper conceptualizes far-right masculinities, linked to the emphasis on symbolic practice, is to articulate gender, as a structuring of social difference and hierarchy, always in relation to multiple and interlocking histories and forces of oppression. While advanced as a theoretical move to locate masculinity in relation to a “theory of power as a central focus to ensure a more thorough account and explanation for the intricacies of gender relations and the nature of intramasculine domination”, the ways in which the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been used has risked obscuring rather than clarifying gender as a relation and operation of power interlocking with other forces of oppression.¹⁰⁸

The confusion was present at the beginning. Carrigan *et al*, in the same page, defined hegemonic masculinity as both a “culturally exalted form of masculinity” and the means by which “particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance.”¹⁰⁹ This conflation of different ways of being a man (“culturally exalted”) with different positions in hierarchies of power (materially privileged in “positions of power and wealth”) has long undermined the term’s analytical acuity and political utility. As Howson notes, “hegemonic masculinity slides in meaning between a political mechanism that is tied to hegemony and the manifestation of the dominant version of manhood.”¹¹⁰

This paper is explicitly interested in the uses to which masculinity is put in the service of the far-right’s hegemonic project: the symbolic practices of masculinity deployed in the far-right’s struggle for hegemony. As a result, it pays particular attention to articulating gender in relation to multiple and interlocking histories and forces of oppression. The far-rights’ practice of masculinities must be understood in the context of the specific geopolitical conditions and postcolonial histories within which different far-right formations operate: economic injustice, mass migration, racialized border control and racist violence. Any analysis of the gender politics of the far-right must examine the political uses of masculinities in the service of hierarchies inherent within nativism, authoritarianism and populism. To this end, and given the centrality of ethnonationalism to far-right ideology, this paper explores the racialization of gender at the heart of the far-right’s political uses of masculinity.

¹⁰⁸ Roberts, S. (2014) "Introduction: Masculinities in Crisis? Opening the Debate." In Debating Modern Masculinities: Change, Continuity, Crisis?, edited by S. Roberts, 1-16. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p2

¹⁰⁹ Carrigan, T., B. Connell & J. Lee (1985) "Toward a new sociology of masculinity." *Theory and Society* 14(5): 551-604. p592

¹¹⁰ Howson, R. (2008) "Hegemonic Masculinity in the Theory of Hegemony: A Brief Response to Christine Beasley's "Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity in a Globalizing World"." *Men and Masculinities* 11(1): 109-113. p109

1.5 STUDY AIMS, METHODS AND REPORT STRUCTURE

This report was commissioned to review the current research literature on the gender dimensions of far-right messaging and movement-building, paying particular attention to the influence of differing ideas about and representations of the gender category of maleness (whose heterogeneity is expressed in the pluralized term ‘masculinities’) on far-right discourse and strategy. Time and resource constraints confined this literature review to anglophone sources, overwhelmingly focused on Europe, where concern about the electoral insurgency of far-right parties and ideology has been most pronounced; research on the gender dimensions of white nationalist movements, especially as they intersect with men’s rights activism in the USA, and their impact on mainstream politics in the wake of the 2016 U.S. presidential election is also discussed. The literature was sourced from a search of academic databases, as well as recommendations from leading academics in the field.

This literature review informs the definition of far-right parties and formations discussed in this introduction, as well as the overview presented of the scholarship on gender dimensions of far-right messaging and movement-building. The extensive literature on ‘men and masculinities’ was also consulted in order to clarify the gender concepts on which this report draws in order to examine these dimensions. These include the concepts of “political masculinities” and “symbolic practice”, as well as conceptualizing the links between masculinities and hegemony in order to better understand the gender aspects of far-right ‘culture wars’.

Based on all of the above, Section Two reviews the narratives of male exclusion associated with the rise of the far-right, and discusses the ways in which the far-right has deployed a discourse of masculinity in crisis to frame its ethnonationalism and anti-feminist social conservatism. Section Three looks more closely at the racialization of masculinities in far-right narratives of the national ‘family’ and the ‘cultural community’, which sanction their racist vision of an ethnically ‘pure’ nation, often buttressed by an islamophobic fusing of Christian supremacism with White ethnonationalism. The implications of this fusion for the variety and complexity of far-right gender politics is also discussed, noting the ways in which some far-right parties have foregrounded concerns about gender equality as a marker of both their mainstream appeal and their discursive framing of Euro-American modernity (racialized White) in contrast to the patriarchal primitivism of the Other (racialized as non-White). Section Four examines the centrality of narratives of ‘family values’ to the far-right project of gender conservatism and racist ethnonationalism, discussing the memes of reproductive and heterosexual anxiety that animate such narratives. This section considers the fundamental importance of the hetero-patriarchal gender binary to far-right visions of family and nation, and the impacts of this on both the far-right’s heteronormative social conservatism and its anti-feminist misogyny, amplified by the digital networks through which its symbolic practice of masculinities circulates.

This report also draws on a set of key informant interviews with Oxfam staff engaged, in different ways, on gender justice work. These interviews explored

staff's perceptions of and experiences with Oxfam's current work on masculinities issues, and discussed with them the opportunities and directions for Oxfam's future work in light of the findings from research on far-right masculinities. Section Five reflects on Oxfam's current framing of and work on masculinities, based on these staff interviews and a review of relevant Oxfam documentation, concluding with a set of recommendations for developing masculinities work that can contribute to the broader effort of resisting the rise of the far-right.

2. EXCLUDED MEN? FAR-RIGHT USES OF CRISIS MASCULINITIES

2.1 NARRATIVES OF MALE EXCLUSION AND THE RISE OF THE FAR-RIGHT

Studies of the rise of the far-right in the wake of the 2008 economic recession often invoke the significance of a crisis that is experienced in gendered terms. For Balakrishnan, the "fallout of a mounting global economic turbulence has more recently led to breakthroughs of right-wing populism across Europe and the US."¹¹¹ As Kováts makes clear, "the English, French, German and Hungarian literature" suggests "that more and more scholars are seeing a link between these movements and the crisis of the socio-economic order."¹¹² This crisis, as Roose among others sees it, is linked to "a new 'crisis of masculinity' amongst male members of the working class and underclass across the Western contexts."¹¹³ He warns that "the state and political status quo are battling to counter the emotionally manipulative narratives of populist movements that capture the alienation, anxiety, anger, humiliation and resentment of marginalised young men."¹¹⁴ For Pease:

Right-wing sub-cultures, such as skinheads, represent one example of men's response to the perceived crisis in masculinity. Much populist action by white men can thus be understood, as mentioned earlier, as an attempt to reinstate a dominant form of masculinity.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Balakrishnan, G. (2017) "Counterstrike West: The Alternate Modernity of the Inter-War Right." *New Left Review* 104(Mar-APR): 19-43. p43

¹¹² Kováts, E. (2017) "The Emergence of Powerful Anti-Gender Movements in Europe and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 175-189. p183

¹¹³ Roose, J. (2017) "Citizenship, Masculinities and Political Populism. Preliminary Considerations in the Context of Contemporary Social Challenges." In *The Transformation of Citizenship (vol. 3): Struggle, Resistance and Violence*, edited by J. Mackert & B. Turner, 56-76. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. p63

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p58

¹¹⁵ Pease, B. (2019) "The Rise of Angry White Men: Resisting Populist Masculinity and the Backlash Against Gender Equality." In *The Challenge of Nationalist Populism for Social Work*, edited by C. Noble & G. Ottomann. London: Routledge. p12

Originally published in 2013, longtime masculinities scholar Michael Kimmel updated his Preface for the 2017 edition of *Angry White Men* to take account of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, writing that “[t]his is not a book about Donald Trump. It’s a book about his followers.” He continues:

The downwardly mobile lower middle class bought into the American Dream. [...] But as I learned interviewing many of these men, that dream became a nightmare of downsizing, job loss, outsourcing, plant closings, shutting down the ma-and-pa store when Walmart moved in, losing the family farm. These men feel like they are seen as failures; they are humiliated - and that humiliation is the source of their rage.¹¹⁶

The claim that the rise of the far-right can be attributed to the anger and resentments of economically distressed men can be unpacked in several ways. The first is to review the evidence on the links between gender, economic recession and far-right voting patterns. The second is to look at debates about the nature of the crisis being invoked in narratives of a “crisis of masculinity” and the implications of these debates for conceptualizing the relationship between masculinity, crisis and the far-right. Finally, it is important to consider the political functions and affective force of “crisis masculinity” narratives, with reference to the far-right in particular.

2.2 GENDER, ECONOMIC RECESSION AND SUPPORT FOR THE FAR-RIGHT

Close-grained accounts of voting patterns in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election and the Brexit referendum, both taken as emblematic of the eruption of the far-right into the political mainstream, have called into question simplistic readings of these as an expression of white, male working-class discontent. Dorling’s review of the evidence on voting patterns for the UK 2016 referendum on membership of the European Union found that 52 percent of people who voted Leave lived in the southern half of England, and 59 percent were middle class, while the proportion of Leave voters in the lowest two social classes was 24 percent.¹¹⁷

In the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, exit poll data indicates that Trump got the majority of white professional males with a college education and over 40 percent of white professional females with a college education,¹¹⁸ while the poorest Americans, those with yearly incomes below \$50,000, voted for Clinton.¹¹⁹ The

¹¹⁶ Kimmel, M. S. (2017) *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Nation Books. p ix

¹¹⁷ Dorling, D. (2016) "Brexit: the decision of a divided country." *BMJ* 354(i3697).

¹¹⁸ Henley, J. (2016) "White and wealthy voters gave victory to Donald Trump, exit polls show." *The Guardian*, Nov 9.

¹¹⁹ Draut, T. (2016) "This Wasn't a Working Class Revolt, It was a White Revolt." *Alternet* [Online] Available: <http://www.alternet.org/election-2016/trumps-election-was-white-revolt> [Accessed June 17, 2019].

narrative that unemployment, and in particular male unemployment, explains Trump's election victory is not supported by the evidence; electoral data analyzed by USA Today show that Trump won twice the number of votes where unemployment has improved.¹²⁰ Davis challenges the view, frequently expressed by the candidate himself, that the Trump campaign echoed the European far-right's rejection of globalization in defense of forgotten workers and small businesses. He notes that "[e]ndlessly cited have been exit polls that demonstrate Trump's extraordinary popularity among non-college white men, although the same polls indicate that he ran up his highest margins in middle-class Republican constituencies."¹²¹ Economically distressed males did vote for Trump, but as Davis emphasizes, this was:

largely limited to a score or so of troubled Rust Belt counties from Iowa to New York where a new wave of plant closure or relocation has coincided with growing immigrant and refugee populations. Election punditry has consistently conflated blue-collar votes long captured by Republican presidential candidates with the more modest and localized defection of working-class Democrats to Trump.¹²²

Research on voting patterns for far-right parties in Europe similarly challenges a reductive view of their gender and class composition. Surveying the available studies, Coffé acknowledges that "[o]ne of the most consistent findings in the research on radical right voting has been the gender-specific profile of the radical right electorate," with women "significantly underrepresented among radical right voters compared with men."¹²³ However, she also insists that there remains no clear understanding of why this is so. As she concludes, "despite the available empirical studies focusing on gender and radical right voting, an encompassing theory for the radical right gender gap is still missing."¹²⁴

The thesis that men are more likely to support the far-right because they are more likely to have suffered from the effects of neoliberal economic restructuring and the post-2008 recession remains often cited. Caiani and della Porta note that "[e]xplanations for the electoral success of the populist right have stressed frustration in response to economic distress, massive migration, and economic globalization."¹²⁵ The "so-called deprivation school, which relates right-wing extremism to anomie and poverty", considers:

¹²⁰ Andersen, R. (2017) "Weaponizing Social Media: "The Alt-Right," the Election of Donald J. Trump, and the Rise of Ethno-Nationalism in the United States." In The Routledge Companion To Media and Humanitarian Action, edited by R. Andersen & P. L. d. Silva, 487-500. New York: Routledge.

¹²¹ Davis, M. (2017) "The Great God Trump and the White Working Class." *Catalyst* 1(1).

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Coffé, H. (2018) "Gender and the Radical Right." In The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-11. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p2

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p11

¹²⁵ Caiani, M. & D. della Porta. (2018) "The Radical Right as Social Movement Organizations." In The Radical Right: An Introduction, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-26. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p16

the sense of insecurity arising from the breakdown of traditional social structures (social class, family, religion) and the grievances generated in critical economic, social, or political conditions brought about by processes of globalization and modernization [as] “precipitant” factors favoring right-wing extremism and the emergence of violent behavior.¹²⁶

In this view, it is men’s concentration in the sectors and industries most affected by “economic distress, massive migration, and economic globalization” that accounts for their gravitation to far-right parties; the far-right is “a successful social movement of ‘losers of globalization’.”¹²⁷

But as Caiani and della Porta remind us, “there is also evidence that places in question the positive correlation between right-wing extremism and (low) economic status.”¹²⁸ There are studies to show that right-wing extremist sentiments can be unrelated to socioeconomic variables,¹²⁹ and that economically comfortable individual circumstances may be more conducive to radical right party affinity than job insecurity and deprivation.¹³⁰ Mudde concludes that “populist radical right parties are supported by people who want to hold on to what they have in the face of the perceived threats of globalization (i.e. mass immigration and the post-industrial society).”¹³¹

At the same time, the deleterious effects of globalization are being felt by low-income women as well as men in many economies. Research looking at a large sample of far-right voters in seventeen Western and Eastern European countries concluded that “[s]ocio-structural differences between men and women exist, but the extent to which they explain the gender gap is limited, and primarily restricted to post-Communist countries.”¹³² The feminized low-wage service sector can be just as insecure as that of the manual blue-collar sector, making many working class women vulnerable to becoming ‘losers of globalization’.¹³³ Indeed, as Coffé points out, “the limited number of studies taking a cross-national perspective have revealed that differences in the size of the gender gap do exist.”¹³⁴ Studies of polling data suggest that this gender gap is shrinking in Denmark and France, for example.¹³⁵

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p5

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p16

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* p5

¹²⁹ Canetti, D. & A. Pedahzur (2002) "The Effects of Contextual and Psychological Variables on Extreme Right-Wing Sentiments." *Social Behavior and Personality* 30(4): 317–334.

¹³⁰ De Weerd, Y., H. D. Witte, P. Catellani & P. Milesi. (2004) *Turning Right? Socio-Economic Change and the Receptiveness of European Workers to the Extreme Right: Report on the Survey Analysis and Results*. Leuven: Hoger Instituut voor de Arbeid (HIVA).

¹³¹ Mudde, C. (2007) *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹³² Hartevelde, E., W. Van Der Brug, S. Dahlberg & A. Kokkonen (2015) "The gender gap in populist radical-right voting: examining the demand side in Western and Eastern Europe." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 103-134. p103

¹³³ Mayer, N. (2013) "From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right." *Parliamentary Affairs* 66(1): 160–178.

¹³⁴ Coffé, H. (2018) "Gender and the Radical Right." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-11. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p7

¹³⁵ Scrinzi, F. (2017) "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 127-140.

If the effects of globalization and economic recession are not adequate for explaining the gendered character of support for the far-right, what other factors might be important? In their detailed study of what they refer to as the populist-authoritarian challenge of the radical right, which examines voting patterns for parties falling under this rubric in both Europe and the USA between 2000-2017, Norris and Inglehart suggest that gender conservatism and attachment to authoritarian values, rather than economic circumstances and grievances, account most accurately for voters' support for far-right parties.¹³⁶ They conclude that older, non-college educated, rural areas with more authoritarian values drive voting for populist-authoritarian parties, and that they do so as a result of long-term trends in rising social liberalism in the population (but a slower shift in the electorate) which threatens socially conservative authoritarian voters and their identities around faith, family and nation. In the short term, deteriorating economic conditions in the wake of the 2008 recession and the humanitarian crises resulting from conflicts in Syria and elsewhere have produced a tipping point for voters to express their longer-term cultural backlash, which in turn has been opportunistically exploited by far-right parties and political entrepreneurs.¹³⁷

2.3 CRISES OF MASCULINITY AND THEIR MEANINGS FOR THE FAR-RIGHT

2.3.1 Changing gender orders and the meanings of 'masculinity in crisis'

If the rise of the far-right is better explained in terms of longer term cultural trends threatening social conservatism rather than the more immediate economic effects of globalization and recession, these trends themselves should be understood in relation to profound changes in the political economy of gender and their cultural consequences. Such an understanding is useful for two reasons; it refuses too neat a distinction between the political economy and socio-cultural dimensions of the prevailing gender order at the same time as revealing why the idiom of masculine crisis is so available to the far-right in its framing and fomenting of the "cultural backlash" described by Norris and Inglehart.¹³⁸

There is no doubt that the last 30 years have witnessed profound changes in gender orders in many parts of the world, as a result of economic restructuring under the rubric of neoliberal globalization and the social transformations wrought by the growing voice and visibility of domestic and transnational

¹³⁶ Norris, P. & R. Inglehart. (2019) *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

women's movements. Deindustrialization and the consequent loss of the family wage across the global North together with the growing feminization of manufacturing in the global South have dramatically altered the androcentric division of labor in many societies, even as the burdens of the care economy continue to be borne overwhelmingly by women.¹³⁹ In Watkins' synoptic global overview, the domains of "work, reproduction, culture and politics" have undergone significant changes in deeply gendered and often contradictory ways:

In the realm of production, 'masculine' rustbelt manufacturing has been automated or downgraded and outsourced, feminized in sun-belt Special Economic Zones. In the expanding service sector, intensified economic pressures reinforce the competitive advantages of ultra-femininity, of women's traditional experience in the domestic sphere.¹⁴⁰

Writing in 2005, leading theorist of masculinities Raewyn Connell drew attention to "a growing polarization among men on a world scale," with "a privileged minority reaching astonishing heights of wealth and power while much larger numbers face poverty, cultural dislocation, disruption of family relationships, and forced renegotiation of the meanings of masculinity."¹⁴¹ As McDowell noted at the time, "[o]ne of the most interesting urban phenomena at present is the appearance of a so-called crisis of masculinity in cities in advanced industrial nations," with "widespread popular and academic agreement that something is troubling men."¹⁴² Willis concurred, observing that "[f]or the past few years, the idea that American men are angry, troubled and socially dysfunctional has been an insistent theme of the popular media."¹⁴³ Indeed, the 1990s had seen an explosion of academic and journalistic interest in, and anxiety about, the state of masculinity in the anglophone global North. From rising male unemployment¹⁴⁴ to boys' academic underachievement¹⁴⁵ to men's emotional distress,¹⁴⁶ crises of masculinity appeared to proliferate.¹⁴⁷

In the last 20 years, narratives of masculine crisis have also become more prevalent in international development policy and programming on men and 'their' masculinities. In his 2005 *Dying to be Men: Youth, masculinity and social exclusion*, Barker emphasizes that in much of the world, "young men die earlier

¹³⁹ Fraser, N. (2009) "Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History." *New Left Review* 56(March-April): 1-12. UN Women. (2018) *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: UN Women.

¹⁴⁰ Watkins, S. (2018) "Which Feminisms?" *New Left Review* 109(January-February): 5-76. p7

¹⁴¹ Connell, R. W. (2005) "Change among the Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3): 1801-1825. p1805

¹⁴² McDowell, L. (2000) "The Trouble with Men? Young People, Gender Transformations and the Crisis of Masculinity." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24(1): 201-209. p201

¹⁴³ Willis, E. 1999. How Now, Iron Johns? *The Nation*.

¹⁴⁴ Segal, L. (1997) *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*. London: Virago.

¹⁴⁵ Mac an Ghail, M. (1996) "What about the boys?: schooling, class and crisis masculinity." *The Sociological Review* 44(3): 381-397.

¹⁴⁶ Horrocks, R. (1994) *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies, and Realities*. London: St. Martin's Press. McQueen, C. & K. Henwood (2002) "Young men in 'crisis': attending to the language of teenage boys' distress." *Social Science & Medicine* 55: 1493-1509.

¹⁴⁷ Roberts, S. (2014) "Introduction: Masculinities in Crisis? Opening the Debate." In *Debating Modern Masculinities: Change, Continuity, Crisis?*, edited by S. Roberts, 1-16. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

than young women and die more often than older men largely because they are trying to live up to certain models of manhood—they are dying to prove that they are ‘real men’.”¹⁴⁸ He highlights the “contexts of structural disadvantage, life circumstances and gender socialization” that thwart young men’s achievement of manhood.¹⁴⁹ He notes the impacts of “unequal access to education, employment and income” in settings where “young men live in consumer-oriented economies in which young people are the deliberate targets of mass marketers” but “too often lack legitimate means to acquire those very goods they are bombarded into wanting”.¹⁵⁰

Research on men’s thwarted masculinities in societies undergoing profound social and economic change or experiencing endemic conflict has ramified in recent years.¹⁵¹ But the meanings and purposes of crisis narratives in relation to masculinity have been contested. Amar contends that “vernacular discourses of “masculinity in crisis” play crucial roles in misrecognizing, racializing, moralistically-depoliticizing, and class-displacing emergent social forces.”¹⁵² In his aptly titled *There is No Masculinity Crisis*, Heartfield discerned a similar dynamic at work, wherein narratives of masculine crisis serve to displace attention from the real crisis of neoliberal capitalism:

Masculinity theories do appear to be telling us something about a loss of power that matches [men’s] real condition. But it is wrong to see this loss of power as a loss in relation to women. Rather it is in relation to capital that men and women alike have lost authority. [...] The crisis is not one of masculinity, but one of the working class.¹⁵³

Similarly, McDowell insisted that “a fundamental transformation in the relationships between waged work, gender and class is underway”, which is “revealing the new shape of an old pattern, that is, class-based inequalities, in which members of the working class — both male and female — currently are finding their standards of living being threatened in a service-based economy.”¹⁵⁴ Rather than a specific crisis of masculinity, “the ‘trouble with men’ is trouble for most women too, and for all low-paid households.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ Barker, G. (2005) *Dying to be Men: Youth, masculinity and social exclusion*. London and New York: Routledge. p1-2

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p5

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p6

¹⁵¹ Vess, J., G. Barker, S. Naraghi-Anderlini & A. Hassink. (2013) *The Other Side of Gender: Men as Critical Agents of Change*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace.

Kelbert, A. & N. Hossain (2014) “Poor Man’s Patriarchy: Gender Roles and Global Crises.” *IDS Bulletin* 45(1): 20-28. Shahrokh, T., O. David, C. Dolan, J. Edström, A. Greig, S. Kumar-Singh & P. E. Otieno 2015. *From Dakar to Delhi: Influencing Policy Discourse on Men and Masculinities*. Brighton, UK: Institute for Development Studies.

Walker, C. (2016) “In search of ‘stability’: working-class men, masculinity and wellbeing in contemporary Russia.” In *Masculinities Under Neoliberalism*, edited by A. Cornwall, F. G. Karioris & N. Lindisfarne, 51-65. London: Zed Books.

¹⁵² Amar, P. (2011) “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of “Men in Crisis”, Industries of Gender in Revolution.” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 7(3): 36–70. p39

¹⁵³ Heartfield, J. (2002) “There is no masculinity crisis.” *Genders* 35: 1-14.

¹⁵⁴ McDowell, L. (2000) “The Trouble with Men? Young People, Gender Transformations and the Crisis of Masculinity.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24(1): 201-209. p201

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p207

But the insistence on denying the gendered impacts of economic transformation, and how these might be experienced as a crisis with gendered meanings, seems misplaced, not least because of the centrality of waged labor to masculine gender identity in so many societies and of the male 'breadwinner' to the organization of productive and socially reproductive labor under industrial capitalism.¹⁵⁶ Gender and class forces co-articulate the lived experience of gender and class relations. The landmark study by Willis of working class boys in the industrial economy of a town in the English Midlands in the late 1970s revealed the extent to which their identification with a 'blue collar', laboring masculinity compensated for their blocked educational paths to middle class status and jobs, whose sedentary habits they derided as effete.¹⁵⁷ The collection of essays brought together to mark the 25th anniversary of Willis' work reinforced this need to think gender and class together.¹⁵⁸ They make clear the ways in which the deindustrialization that has marked the intervening period has destroyed not only the economic foundations of life in many working class communities, but also deprived men of the psychological and material compensations of unionized, manual labor and its masculine identifications.

2.3.2 The rise of feminism and its challenge to male privilege

If men's loss of, or exclusion from, formerly settled modes of masculine identification constitutes a crisis, then what this crisis means for conceptions of gender and class power relations has been interpreted differently. Understanding this interpretive variation is important for clarifying the meanings that the far-right attaches to such narratives of a crisis of masculinity. In *Stiffed*, Faludi's¹⁵⁹ celebrated account of the crisis in American manhood at the end of the 1990s, deindustrialization has deprived men of the work so central to their male identity, reducing men to "women's familiar status as ornaments and objects of consumer culture."¹⁶⁰ Economic transformation is rendering men passive, and thereby feminine. "Masculinity has become defined by those who sell the products necessary to live up to the image--everything from leather to Viagra--and the popular entertainment that validates and celebrates it", as Willis summarizes Faludi's thesis.¹⁶¹

Less than a decade earlier, Faludi had charted the reassertions of male power resisting feminist claims for gender equality and justice in *Backlash*.¹⁶² By the end

¹⁵⁶ Delphy, C. (1984) *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*. Translated by D. Leonard. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press. Engels, F. (2012) *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. London: Pantianos Classics. Original edition, First published in 1884. Cooper, M. (2019) *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism*. New York: Zone Books.

¹⁵⁷ Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to Labour*. Farnborough: Saxon House.

¹⁵⁸ Dolby, N. & G. Dimitriadis. (2004) "Learning To Labor In New Times: An Introduction." In *Learning To Labor In New Times*, edited by N. Dolby & G. Dimitriadis, 1-14. New York and London: Routledge.

¹⁵⁹ Faludi, S. (1999) *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*. New York: Harper Collins.

¹⁶⁰ Willis, E. (1999) How Now, Iron Johns? *The Nation*.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Faludi, S. (1991) *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, *The Undeclared War Against American Women*. New York: Crown.

of the 1990s, it was men's emasculation that seemed to mark the problem of gender relations. In her compelling critique of *Stiffed*, Willis accepts that Faludi "is right, I suspect, that in their jobs, their relationships with women and their overall experience of the world, most American men most of the time do not feel especially powerful."¹⁶³ But as she notes, social anxieties about the emasculation of men have been a recurring feature of periods of profound economic, political and social change.¹⁶⁴ "Masculinity has also regularly been subject to 'crisis talk' as a result of changes to the nature and availability of work over the last 100 years", Roberts reminds us.¹⁶⁵ What marks contemporary concerns about masculine crisis, Willis emphasizes, is not the effect of economic change *per se* but the new forces unleashed by feminism:

Anxiety about the loss of a masculinity organically connected to useful work [...] is as old as industrialism itself and tends to resurface with every major shift in the way capital organizes the economy. What is distinctive about our time is that such a shift has followed the great social upheaval that was second-wave feminism. [...] Where once men who were wounded in their work-based masculinity might have found some compensation in their dominance at home, now they are likely to feel unmanned in both public and private spheres.¹⁶⁶

The meanings that are attached to narratives of a 'crisis of masculinity' must be understood in relation to the "great social upheaval" that is feminism. And not only the meanings; this upheaval has an emotional charge. "For men, the symbiotic satisfactions of providing and being provided for have declined in tandem, and it's hard to say which loss is more traumatic", Willis insisted two decades ago.¹⁶⁷ The far-right understands the political utility of this emotional upheaval. One study of young men affiliated with, or supportive of, white nationalist groups in both the USA and several Scandinavian countries found that:

All deploy 'masculinity' as symbolic capital, as an ideological resource (1) to understand and explicate their plight; (2) as a rhetorical device to problematize the identities of those against whom they believe themselves fighting; and (3) as a recruitment device to entice other, similarly situated young men, to join them.¹⁶⁸

The ways in which the far-right has framed and exploited masculinity as both "symbolic capital" and "ideological resource" is discussed next.

¹⁶³ Willis, E. (1999) How Now, Iron Johns? *The Nation*.

¹⁶⁴ Rotundo, A. E. (1993) *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*. New York: Basic Books. Clare, A. (2001) *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis*. London: Arrow. Tosh, J. (2005) *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-century Britain*. Harlow, UK: Longman. Kimmel, M. S. (2017) *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Nation Books.

¹⁶⁵ Roberts, S. (2014) "Introduction: Masculinities in Crisis? Opening the Debate." In *Debating Modern Masculinities: Change, Continuity, Crisis?*, edited by S. Roberts, 1-16. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p5

¹⁶⁶ Willis, E. (1999) How Now, Iron Johns? *The Nation*.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Kimmel, M. (2003) "Globalization and Its Mal(e)contents: The Gendered Moral and Political Economy of Terrorism." *International Sociology* 18(3): 603-620. p603

2.4 THE USE OF CRISIS MASCULINITIES BY THE FAR-RIGHT

2.4.1 Masculine crises and discursive frames

This paper examines the meanings and functions of masculinities in the rise of the far-right, and specifically in its hegemonic struggle to normalize racist ethnonationalism. As discussed above, this struggle must be understood in relation to long term trends in the reorganization of gender relations under neoliberal globalization and the social transformations wrought by the growing voice and visibility of feminism and by other emancipatory movements. Writing with reference to the USA context, but with broader implications, Walzer observes that “rapid globalization of the past 30 years” has “brought increased economic competition, changes in the nature of work brought about by the shift from a production to a service and information based economy, and the rise of a transnational business elite.”¹⁶⁹ But he insists that:

[G]lobalization has also displaced white men culturally, resulting in a profound crisis of authority. Historically, this group of men has based their cultural authority on their ability to imagine themselves as representative of all virtuous citizens of the nation, a form of imagining—and also a discourse—that excluded women and people of color.¹⁷⁰

It is this white male imaginary that is now under threat. As Walzer continues, “in the post World War II period, this “imagined community” of the nation has been under siege by a variety of historically marginalized groups.”¹⁷¹ It is in this context that narratives of majoritarian male exclusion have taken hold in public discourse in many societies. In the view of many observers, these narratives carry an emotional charge, with feelings of aggrieved male entitlement becoming the ambient affect of much of the discourse of masculinity in crisis, which the far-right exploits.¹⁷²

Scholarly work on the rise of the far-right has, broadly speaking, been interested in the relationship between, and relative explanatory value of, demand-side and supply-side factors. If the contexts described above have created conditions in which the socially conservative and ethnonationalist ideology of the far-right has growing appeal (demand-side), how has the far-right responded to these conditions in ways which have advanced their appeal and agenda (supply-side)?

¹⁶⁹ Walzer, A. (2002) "Narratives of Contemporary Male Crisis: The (Re)production of a National Discourse." *Journal of Men's Studies* 10(2): 209–223. p210

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p210

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p210

¹⁷² Kimmel, M. (2003) "Globalization and Its Mal(e)contents: The Gendered Moral and Political Economy of Terrorism." *International Sociology* 18(3): 603–620. Ferber, A. L. (2004) "Introduction." In Home-Grown Hate: Gender and Organized Racism, edited by A. L. Ferber, 1-18. New York: Routledge. Träbert, A. (2017) "At the Mercy of Femocracy? Networks and Ideological Links Between Far-Right Movements and the Antifeminist Men's Rights Movement." In Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petó, 273-288.

Social movement theory, and in particular the concept of “normative frames”, has proven useful in answering this question. As Caiani and della Porta explain:

The concept of “frame” was developed in social movement research to address the symbolic construction of external reality. Frames can be defined as the dominant worldviews that guide the behavior of social movement groups. They are very often produced by the organization’s leadership, which provides the necessary ideological background within which individual activists can locate their actions.¹⁷³

If “we consider the frames through which the collective actors involved in the radical right construct and communicate their (internal and external) reality”, it is striking the extent to which the narrative of masculinity in crisis, of excluded and wounded men, has been deployed.¹⁷⁴ Research on far-right movements and messaging in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the UK found that the “discourse around masculinity in crisis is very much anchored in far-right ideology; it strengthens the idea of the male fighting for the nation and its nuclear component, the heterosexual family.”¹⁷⁵ Similarly, a study of far-right parties in Finland and Romania suggests that the “masculinities acclaimed by [far-right] parties find a fertile ground in the insecurities experienced by men in the face of an ever more intricately connected world.”¹⁷⁶ Reflecting on the overlaps between the calls for a renewal of “deep” and “authentic” masculinity made by men’s movements in the U.S. and the fears of racial threat expressed by white supremacist ideology, Ferber sees in both a reaction against a sense of loss and dislocation:

Central to this backlash is a sense of confusion over the meanings of both masculinity and whiteness, triggered by the perceived loss of white, male privilege. Both the contemporary white supremacist movement and the mythopoetic movement have been able to attract some of these disillusioned white males, who now believe that their interests are not being represented.¹⁷⁷

For the far-right, as for many in the mythopoetic men’s movement, “all of society is threatened when masculinity is lost,” which means that “[s]ociety can only be saved if men reclaim their authority and reassert their masculinity.”¹⁷⁸

As Caiani and della Porta make clear, drawing on social movement theory, “grievances alone are not sufficient to explain either the radical right mobilization

¹⁷³ Caiani, M. & D. della Porta. (2018) “The Radical Right as Social Movement Organizations.” In The Radical Right: An Introduction, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-26. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p13

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p4

¹⁷⁵ Träbert, A. (2017) “At the Mercy of Femocracy? Networks and Ideological Links Between Far-Right Movements and the Antifeminist Men’s Rights Movement.” In Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 273-288. p280-281

¹⁷⁶ Norocel, O. C. (2009) “Globalisation and its male contenders? The question of conservative masculinities within the radical right populist discourses across the EU.” In Globalisation – Challenges to Research and Governance, edited by J. Kultalahti, I. Karppi, O. Kultalahti & E. Todisco, 237–250. Helsinki: East–West Books Helsinki. p237

¹⁷⁷ Ferber, A. L. (2000) “Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors.” *Men and Masculinities* 3(1): 30-56. p31

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p50

or its characteristics;” any adequate explanation “requires us to consider the availability of resources to be mobilized and of actors that mobilize them, as well as the opening of political and discursive opportunities.”¹⁷⁹ They highlight the importance of the “discursive opportunity structure (DOS)” which “plays a significant role in influencing the potential acceptance of social movement claims within a broader culture.”¹⁸⁰ Narratives of masculinity in crisis, as noted above, have been a feature of Euro-American public discourse for the past 30 years or more; such narratives constitute a discursive opportunity for political actors. The far-right’s use of such narratives reflects and responds to this opportunity. Its discursive strategies draw heavily on a symbolic practice of crisis masculinities.

2.4.2 Male victimhood and crisis masculinities in far-right discourse

The characteristic figure of this symbolic practice is the emasculated male: wounded, victimized, excluded. In this trope are condensed many of the anxieties and resentments about the perceived threats to faith, family and nation discussed by Norris and Inglehart in their detailed study of voting patterns for far-right parties in both Europe and the USA between 2000-2017.¹⁸¹ If the social conservatism and authoritarian values of the far-right represent a cultural backlash against cosmopolitan social liberalism, then this backlash has found an emblematic hero in the wounded male.

Such a hero, and the anti-feminist men’s movement whose gender politics he embodies, is a well-established presence in Euro-American culture. In *Iron John: A Book About Men*, which helped launch the mythopoetic men’s movement, Bly popularized this figure, insisting that men had become “passive,” “tamed” and “domesticated” by the dislocation of established and essentialized gender roles, with men increasingly feminized.¹⁸² Kipnis, in his response to pro-feminist men’s critique of the mythopoetic movement, urged attention to men’s “gender-specific wounds.”¹⁸³ Ging emphasizes that “the discourse of white male suffering has become a dominant trope in American culture and is a deliberate strategy to reinstate the normalcy of white male privilege through the articulation of its loss.”¹⁸⁴ When Michael Douglas, playing divorced and unemployed former defense engineer Bill Foster in the 1993 movie *Falling Down*, asks in disbelief “I’m the bad guy?” in the course of his murderous rampage across Los Angeles,

¹⁷⁹ Caiani, M. & D. della Porta. (2018) “The Radical Right as Social Movement Organizations.” In *The Radical Right: An Introduction*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-26. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p17

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p3

¹⁸¹ Norris, P. & R. Inglehart. (2019) *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁸² Bly, R. (1990) *Iron John: A Book About Men*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press. p61

¹⁸³ Kipnis, A. (1995) “The Postfeminist Men’s Movement.” In *The Politics of Manhood: Profeminist Men Respond to the Mythopoetic Men’s Movement (And the Mythopoetic Leaders Answer)* edited by M. Kimmel, 275-286. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. p280

¹⁸⁴ Ging, D. (2017) “Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere.” *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20. p11

he caught and memetically distilled this mood of aggrieved confusion and male victimhood.

Deploying the same metaphor, Ferber's *White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy*, published in 1999, explored the significance of narratives of masculinity in crisis for the growing visibility of white nationalist movements in the USA.¹⁸⁵ Examining the overlaps between the anti-feminism of the mythopoetic men's movement and the ethnonationalism of U.S. white supremacist groups, she makes clear that what they share is a discursive deployment of crisis masculinities. "The women's movement is blamed for distorting the natural gender order and, according to both discourses, this has led to the demasculinization of men," Ferber notes.¹⁸⁶ As she continues, for "both movements, restoring what they see as the natural gender order is the key to solving what they see as our most pressing social problems."¹⁸⁷ The shared worldview of anti-feminist men's movements and ethnonationalist formations is clear:

Both movements argue that men can no longer stand up and protect women and the community (for white supremacists, the racial community), and so chaos and social disorder prevail. Both movements offer themselves as alternatives to help men rediscover their masculinity and save the community.¹⁸⁸

Research on the ideological links between antifeminist men's rights movements and the far-right in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the UK, referred to above, similarly concluded that the "importance of the antifeminist stance for right-wing and neo-fascist circles cannot be emphasized enough."¹⁸⁹ Crisis masculinities loom large in this account. Träbert emphasizes that the "most prominent idea introduced by antifeminists is the trope of male or masculine victimhood: the assumption that all men are victimized by feminism," which "assumes not merely a crisis of masculine identity that is manifest in certain constellations of dependency but rather a structural oppression of men in all areas of life."¹⁹⁰ In far-right memes and messaging, the theme of societal decline is metonymically expressed in the wounded masculinities of the majority male. This wounding of masculinity is linked, variously, to the economic and cultural threat of 'globalism', condensed in the figure of the immigrant/refugee, and to the challenges to the 'natural' gender and racial order posed by feminism, LGBTI struggles and movements for racial justice.

¹⁸⁵ Ferber, A. L. (1999) *White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

¹⁸⁶ Ferber, A. L. (2000) "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors." *Men and Masculinities* 3(1): 30-56. p46

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p52

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p52

¹⁸⁹ Träbert, A. (2017) "At the Mercy of Femocracy? Networks and Ideological Links Between Far-Right Movements and the Antifeminist Men's Rights Movement." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 273-288. p280

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p276

2.4.3 Anti-feminism as mobilization tool for the far-right

Anti-feminism fuses family, nation and faith in the far-right's ethnonationalist imaginary of the 'natural' social order. In this imaginary, the emasculated (White/majority) male, no longer able to fulfill his functions as leader, protector and breadwinner, constitutes an existential crisis not merely for men themselves, but also for the heteronormative family and the 'family' of the (Christian/majority faith) nation. For Kelly, at "the core of this understanding - which sees the vital role of traditional patriarchal masculinity as having been subverted, not just demeaned, thereby seriously weakening the nation-state - is the far right concept of degeneracy."¹⁹¹ In much far-right discourse, this degeneration of majority masculinity, its wounded nature, is indicative of a broader societal disorder and decline. As Kelly notes, the "prospect of a generation of weak and girlish millennial men became a particular threat when it was contrasted to the figure of the Muslim invader that haunted the American news cycle after 2001."¹⁹² The War on Terror has provided a continuing context for far-right messaging on masculine crisis and the need for patriarchal renewal:

Crises of national masculinity are a dominant and recurring feature of mainstream political discourse in the United States, but their political utility for jingoistic and authoritarian campaigns bears particular relevance in the modern day. 9/11, and the subsequent war on terror, enshrined a very particular version of masculine crisis into a narrative that had been centred on the supposed safety of strictly delineated borders of both gender and nation.¹⁹³

Such crisis masculinities have become fertile ground for far-right mobilization. "The most vehement and explicit attempt to protect a masculinist world-view is the contemporary loose coalition of social and political movements around men's rights and father's rights, with shared roots and overlaps with the alt-right, in the Anglosphere and Europe," observes Nicholas and Agius.¹⁹⁴ Reflecting on the rise of the 'manosphere', the online ecology of sites, memes and message-boards focused on male insecurities and resentments whose content is frequently deeply misogynistic, Murdoch makes clear that "[m]anosphere ideas have snowballed into an ideology that has taken on a life of its own, and for some it has served as a route into wider far-right politics."¹⁹⁵ The misogyny of the manosphere and its on/off-line spokesmen, the Men's Rights Activists (MRAs), appear to have played

¹⁹¹ Kelly, A. (2017) "The alt-right: reactionary rehabilitation for white masculinity: US alt-right extremism is a logical consequence of mainstream neo-conservatism." *Soundings: A journal of politics and culture* 66(Summer): 68-78. p72

¹⁹² *Ibid.* p71

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* p70

¹⁹⁴ Nicholas, L. & C. Agius. (2018) *The Persistence of Global Masculinism: Discourse, Gender and Neo-Colonial Re-Articulations of Violence*. Chan, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. p34

¹⁹⁵ Murdoch, S. (2019) "Why Understanding The UK Anti-Feminist Movement Is Vital To Countering The Far Right." *Huffington Post* [Online] [Accessed February 26]. p2

an important role in the far-right project of legitimizing racist ethnonationalism. In his call to action to resist the far-right, Murdoch insists:

Not only is it essential that we fight for the feminist cause for its own end, but as we are increasingly seeing, anti-feminism is acting as a prominent route into the wider far right for many, making it core to the mission of fighting hate and restoring hope in society more widely.¹⁹⁶

With reference to the proliferation of far-right messaging and memes online under the rubric of the “alt right”, Dibranco notes that “misogyny is not only a significant part of the Alt Right, it’s the ‘gateway drug’ for the recruitment of disaffected White men into racist communities.”¹⁹⁷ In her study of the antifeminist men’s rights movement and its ideological connections with far-right formations in Germany, Träbert cautions however against a too simplistic equating of anti-feminism with the far-right, not least because of the pervasive misogyny in mainstream public discourse. Writing of antifeminist ideologies and strategies, she notes that their “danger lies precisely in the fact that they are not merely connected to transparently far-right groups,” while recognizing that “there is a real danger that the links between the two may grow.”¹⁹⁸ She concludes that “future research should focus on antifeminist sentiments within the political and cultural mainstream”, not only to “counter the antifeminist men’s rights movement” but also the “heterosexism and misogyny where it affects vast numbers of diverse individuals, namely, in mainstream culture.”¹⁹⁹

Other scholars studying the far-right also caution that its anti-feminism must be set in context; anti-feminism, especially in relation to limiting women’s reproductive rights, have been central to mainstream conservatism and center-right parties in many countries for many years. Even so, a study of far-right parties in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland has concluded that “[c]ompared to mainstream right-wing parties, which are consistently more liberal than their radical-right counterparts, conservatism on issues relating to the family sets the radical parties clearly apart.”²⁰⁰

The feeling that (White/majority) masculinity is in crisis continues to be a powerful “discursive opportunity structure” through which the far-right can fuse its racist ethnonationalism with a broader anti-feminism and gender conservatism. In the figure of the victimized (White/majority) male are condensed a set of resentments and anxieties about the economic and social transformations undermining established racial and gender orders. Through its symbolic practice of crisis

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p3

¹⁹⁷ Dibranco, A. 2017. *Mobilizing Misogyny*. Boston, MA: Political Research Associates. p15

¹⁹⁸ Träbert, A. (2017) “At the Mercy of Femocracy? Networks and Ideological Links Between Far-Right Movements and the Antifeminist Men’s Rights Movement.” In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 273-288. p281

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p282

²⁰⁰ Akkerman, T. (2015) “Gender and the radical right in Western Europe: a comparative analysis of policy agendas.” *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 37-60. p37

masculinities, the far-right heightens the affect of aggrieved entitlement and anxious anger on which it relies for its appeal.

In her study of far-right discourse in Finland, Keskinen notes the significance of a superordinate identity politics organized around white male victimhood.²⁰¹ She identifies an explicit and strategic appeal to such a politics; for anti-feminist men's rights blogger Henry Laasanen, to "gain political and material resources from the state, a group needs to identify as an innocent and worthy victim" but this "victim position, according to Laasanen, is a form of power denied from [sic] white heterosexual men."²⁰²

Subsequent sections of this report look more closely at the far-right's discursive use of narratives of masculinity in relation to the nation (section 3) and the family (section 4,) together constituting the foundations of its vision of a naturalized social order, based on racialized exclusions and essentialized gender hierarchies. The hegemonic struggle in which the far-right is explicitly engaged, its self-declared 'culture war', is being waged in the linked projects of racial and gender formation. Omi and Winant have defined "racial formation" as "the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings."²⁰³ Subsequent scholarship has emphasized that such structures and processes are always not only racial but also gendered; projects of racial formation interlock with gender formation.²⁰⁴ The terrain of the nation is central to struggles over racial and gender formation; the complexities of the racialized gender politics to which these struggles give rise are discussed next.

²⁰¹ Leek, C. & M. Kimmel. (2015) "Conceptualizing Intersectionality in Superordination: Masculinities, Whitenesses, and Dominant Classes." In *Routledge International Handbook of Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by S. Jackson, 3-9. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

²⁰² Keskinen, S. (2013) "Anti-feminism and white identity politics: Political antagonisms in radical rightwing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4): 225–232. p230

²⁰³ Omi, M. & H. Winant. (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. 2nd ed. New York and London: Routledge, p61

²⁰⁴ Kandaswamy, P. (2012) "Gendering Racial Formation." In *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by D. M. HoSang, O. LaBennett & L. Pulido, 23-43. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

3. DANGEROUS MEN! FAR-RIGHT USES OF RACIALIZED MASCULINITIES

3.1 RACIALIZED MASCULINITIES AND FAR-RIGHT ETHNONATIONALISM

Complementing the far-right's use of narratives of victimized and excluded White/majority men is their invocation of another masculine crisis: the threat posed by the dangerous masculinity of the racialized Other. Norocel's 2010 study of the radical right populist party, the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, or SD), and articles published by its leader Jimmie Åkesson, affirms this far-right focus on "masculine Others."²⁰⁵ A recurring theme of Åkesson's writing is the depiction of "immigrant Others as sexual predators raping Swedish women."²⁰⁶ The male immigrant is presented as "backward and unable to break free from a dated morality, centred on Sharia law that they brought from 'Africa and the Middle East' and which they wanted to force upon native Swedes."²⁰⁷ A 2015 study of the six most successful populist radical-right parties in Western Europe at the time of writing, comprising quantitative and qualitative analyses of external and internal party documents, concluded that "[t]hese parties tend to regard gender relations among immigrants as illustrative of the 'backwardness' of non-western cultures."²⁰⁸

The dangerous masculinity of the racialized Other, together with the emasculation of the White/majority male, embody the threats to faith, family and nation in the far-right's ethnonationalist imaginary. Writing of the French National Front (NF), re-branded in June 2018 as National Rally (Rassemblement National,) Scrinzi emphasizes that the "importance of the linkage between family and nation in the NF ideology required the hypervisibility of the racialised man, represented as a sexual and cultural threat to female citizens."²⁰⁹ Trump's electoral strategy, from his very first press conference announcing his bid for President, was to accentuate this hypervisibility, inciting a moral panic about

²⁰⁵ Norocel, O. C. (2010) "Constructing radical right populist resistance: Metaphors of heterosexist masculinities and the family question in Sweden." *NORMA: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies* 5(2): 169–183.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p175

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p175

²⁰⁸ Akkerman, T. (2015) "Gender and the radical right in Western Europe: a comparative analysis of policy agendas." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 37-60. p40. The parties studied were: the French Front national (National Front, FN - subsequently renamed National Rally); Vlaams Blok/ Vlaams Belang (Flemish Bloc/ Interest, VB); the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ); the Schweizerische Volkspartei (Swiss People's Party, SVP); the Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party, DF); and the Dutch Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom, PVV).

²⁰⁹ Scrinzi, F. (2017) "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Pető, 127-140. p136

immigration from Central and South America, which he characterized as an invasion, bringing with it drugs, crime and sexual violence.

When 2016 began with reports of mass sexual assaults in Cologne and other German cities at New Year's Eve celebrations, involving at least 2,000 men of 'Arab or North African appearance' according to police, echoes of Trump's racist rhetoric were heard from politicians and public figures across Europe calling for an end to current policy on asylum seekers and refugees. This "same period was characterised by the intense mediatisation of acts of sexual violence committed in the suburbs inhabited by working-class racialised French and migrants (banlieues)."²¹⁰ The far-right has amplified this mediatization through making an "explicit association between sexual violence and migrant/racialised men."²¹¹

Similarly, the emphasis given to the 'primitive' masculinity and 'predatory' sexuality of the men involved in what were referred to as "Asian grooming gangs" in the media coverage of recent child sexual abuse scandals in the UK relied on and reinforced this hypervisibility of the racialized male Other.²¹² Racialization works on and through the gendered body. Omi and Winant's definition of racial formation as "the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings" is intimately connected to the gender categories and associated behavioral and symbolic practices of masculinity and femininity.²¹³ In *The Muslims Are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War On Terror*, Kundnani details the "racialization of Muslimness," noting that "since all racisms are socially and politically constructed [...] it is perfectly possible for cultural markers associated with Muslimness (forms of dress, rituals, languages, etc.) to be turned into racial signifiers."²¹⁴ That this racialization relies on tropes of violent muslim masculinities is clear from the above.

Such tropes have a long history on which the far-right can draw. Trump's racism, and its apparent appeal to a significant portion of the U.S. electorate, is yet another indication of how readily white fear of the non-white male, and especially this male's sexual threat, is mobilized, from the founding of the republic until today. Thirty years ago, Trump took out newspaper advertisements calling for the return of the death penalty, in the immediate aftermath of the brutal rape of a white woman in Central Park, for which five men of color were wrongfully

²¹⁰ Ibid. p129

²¹¹ Ibid. p132

²¹² Alexander, C. (2017) "Raceing Islamophobia." In *Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all*, edited by F. Elahi & O. Khan, 13-15. London: Runnymede. Intense media scrutiny of the failure of child protection services and criminal justice agencies to deal with organized child sexual abuse in Rochdale (Greater Manchester) and Rotherham (South Yorkshire) focused on the ethnic identity (British-Pakistani) and religious faith (muslim) of the majority of the men involved. Far-right formations such as the English Defence League used the trials and associated press coverage to foment anti-immigrant and islamophobic sentiment.

²¹³ Omi, M. & H. Winant. (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. 2nd ed. New York and London: Routledge. p61

²¹⁴ Kundnani, A. (2015) *The Muslims are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War on Terror*. London and New York: Verso. p11

convicted and imprisoned. These ads deployed the figure of the black male sexual predator from which white femininity must be protected, drawing on tropes of racialized masculinities that have been so central to histories of slavery and the genocide of indigenous communities in the Americas.²¹⁵ Ferber's study of contemporary popular representations of Black male athletes in the USA noted the persistence of such tropes in the "continued emphasis on Black bodies as inherently aggressive, hypersexual, and violent."²¹⁶ As she has concluded, "white supremacist discourse is not as extremist as we like to assume."²¹⁷

Similarly, the barbarity and depravity of the colonized male was a staple of European colonial discourse. That British rule in India was justified in terms of "white men saving brown women from brown men" provided a legitimization for 'civilizing' conquest, which continues to be deployed in imperial invasions.²¹⁸ The U.S. attack on Afghanistan in 2002 similarly invoked the need to 'liberate' Afghan women from their oppression by Afghan men. White fears of the sexual violence and perversion of muslim masculinity have deep roots in orientalist imaginaries, which remain readily mobilized across a range of policy concerns, from counter-terrorism to immigration control to domestic 'law and order'.²¹⁹ As has been noted:

Muslim men are the modern day folk devils, ever at risk of radicalisation and regarded as culturally predisposed to commit sexual violence. State interventions combined with inflammatory media depictions of Muslim differentiate between the victimhood of Muslim women and the unique patriarchy of Muslim men.²²⁰

The narrative of the "unique patriarchy of Muslim men" has been significant in the racialization of Muslim communities as the unassimilable Other, whether being the 'enemy within' or the 'foreign invader'.²²¹ A 2016 analysis of the hashtag #refugeesnotwelcome highlighted the frequent and explicit depiction of refugees as racial and cultural threats to the community, almost exclusively gendering them masculine as violent invaders or sexual predators.²²²

To be sure, there is a complex colonial legacy of racialized masculinities on which the far-right can draw. Studies of colonial gender orders highlight the ways in which colonialism imposed masculine hierarchies on colonized communities

²¹⁵ hooks, b. (1994) *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*. New York: Routledge. Churchill, W. (2001) *A Little Matter of Genocide*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.

²¹⁶ Ferber, A. L. (2007) "The Construction of Black Masculinity: White Supremacy Now and Then." *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 31(1): 11-24. p11

²¹⁷ Ferber, A. L. (2000) "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors." *Men and Masculinities* 3(1): 30-56. p34

²¹⁸ Spivak, G. (1988) "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by C. Nelson & L. Grossberg, 271-316: University of Illinois Press.

²¹⁹ Puar, J. K. (2007) *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

²²⁰ Ali, N., N. Rashid & W. Tufail. (2017) "Gendered Orientalism: Counter-Terrorism and the Gendering of Anti-Muslim Racism." 2017 University of East London.

²²¹ Kundnani, A. (2015) *The Muslims are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War on Terror*. London and New York: Verso.

²²² Ingulfsen, I. H. (2016) #RefugeesNotWelcome: Making Gendered Sense of Transnational Asylum Politics on Twitter. Master of Science in Global Affairs, New York University.

and societies, linked to a racist imaginary of racial difference based on gendered traits and values (e.g. virility, martial strength).²²³ Colonized men were both hyper-sexualized (as threat, and thus in need of subjugation) and hypo-sexualized (as infantile, and thus in need of administration.) Ambivalent designations of racialized masculinities continue to the present-day. In the context of the unending War on Terror, Puar contends that the “depictions of masculinity most rapidly disseminated and globalized at this historical juncture are terrorist masculinities,” implicitly or explicitly associated with ‘Islam’, itself a potent signifier of racialized Otherness.²²⁴ As she continues, “during the aftermath of the release of the Abu Ghraib photos in May 2004, I maintain that Muslim masculinity is simultaneously pathologically excessive yet repressive, perverse yet homophobic, virile yet emasculated, monstrous yet flaccid.”²²⁵

Whether ambivalent or unequivocal in its designations, racialization renders its targets hypervisible, to be subject to social concern and social control. It is this hypervisibility of racialized masculinities that the far-right foments. As Amar clarifies, “hypervisible subjects” are “fetishized figures that preoccupy public discourse and representations but are not actually recognizable or legible as social formations and cannot speak on their own terms as autonomous subjects rather than as problems to solve.”²²⁶ Reflecting once again on the contemporary context of the U.S. War on Terror, Amar emphasizes that:

Moralized, criminalized, racialized, colonized masculinities in the Middle East are some of the most popular subjects of modern geopolitical hypervisibility, twinned with their fetishized Others or victims—the supposedly suppressed traditionalized veiled woman and the supposedly Occidentally-identified modernized gay man.²²⁷

The ways in which the far-right has deployed this hypervisibility of racialized masculinities in demarcating and policing the borders of both nation and faith in the service of their ethnonationalist project are discussed next.

²²³ McClintock, A. (1995) *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. 1st ed. New York and London: Routledge.

²²⁴ Puar, J. K. (2007) *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p xxxi

²²⁵ *Ibid.* p xxxiii

²²⁶ Amar, P. (2011) "Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of "Men in Crisis", Industries of Gender in Revolution." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 7(3): 36–70. p40

²²⁷ *Ibid.* p40

3.2 FUSING FAITH AND NATION THROUGH RACIALIZED MASCULINITIES

3.2.1 The frame of the national ‘family’ and border guard masculinities

The far-right’s hegemonic project of rendering mainstream its racist ethnonationalism, making of it a new ‘national’ common sense, deploys narratives of masculinity in crisis, of excluded and victimized White/majority men. In such narratives, these men embody societal dislocation and decline, their ‘natural’ roles and authority undermined by economic forces (‘globalism’), social movements (feminism) and public policy (e.g. on immigration, ‘multiculturalism’). If feminism has emasculated White/majority men, it is ‘multiculturalism’ that exposes society to that other crisis of masculinity: the threat posed by the racialized male Other. The ‘traditional’ family, and its functions in reproducing, literally and ideologically, the naturalized hierarchies of the gender/racial order, has become a central site of social and sexual anxiety about this threat in far-right narratives. The next section will discuss in more detail the far-right’s heterogeneous ‘family values’ and the meanings of, and concerns about, masculinity invoked in such narratives.

But before this, it is helpful to highlight the discursive frames used by the far-right to center the ‘traditional’ family at the heart of its ethnonationalism. The frame of the national ‘family’ and the frame of the cultural community, both defined by their naturalized gender roles and hierarchies and their racialized conceptions of home and belonging, rely on symbolic practices of masculinity and femininity for their affective force and political resonance. In far-right discourse on the ‘family’ of the nation, the figure of the father is central. Norocel’s analysis of articles published by the leader of the far-right Sweden Democrats in *SD-Kuriren*, the party’s main media outlet, found that in “its radical right populist interpretation the ‘nation is a family’ envisions a hierarchical structuring of various family members as dependants of a strong male figure.”²²⁸ Norocel also reports on his research on the 2004 presidential elections in Romania, which found that far-right candidates regularly invoked the metaphor of the “strict father” in their writings and speeches, framing their appeal in terms of their capacity to protect, discipline and punish the people.²²⁹

A 2018 study of right-wing populist media in Finland and Sweden emphasizes the importance of tropes of white masculinity to far-right narratives, and that of fatherhood to such tropes:

²²⁸ Norocel, O. C. (2010) "Constructing radical right populist resistance: Metaphors of heterosexist masculinities and the family question in Sweden." *NORMA: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies* 5(2): 169–183. p171

²²⁹ Norocel, O. C. (2010) "Romania is a family and it needs a strict father: conceptual metaphors at work in radical right populist discourses." *Nationalities Papers* 38(5): 705-721.

The masculinity ideal is described in this context as the (biological) father figure, firmly embedded in traditional family values, and who provides the most suitable environment for the development of white Swedish off-spring and their future lives as socially well-adjusted adults.²³⁰

The figures of the father, as head of the family, and the mother, as homemaker and caretaker, guarantee not only family well-being but, by extension, social order and national prosperity. As the study's authors make clear, this emphasis on biological fatherhood in far-right discourse serves several purposes. It not only "opposes blankly the extension of adoption rights to include same-sex couples", but also "points to the risks of racial miscegenation, though only in the case of Swedish women building families with racialized men", thereby revealing the "patriarchal logic whereby transferring white racial privilege from one generation to another is the monopoly of Swedish men."²³¹ Research on far-right discourse in Romania has pointed out the emphasis on the "the unrestrained sexuality of the Roma men" and the threat posed to "the genetic heritage of Romanians."²³²

In her study of the far-right National Rally in France (formerly known as the National Front, NF), Scrinzi notes that the "nation is compared to a domestic community threatened by invaders, on the basis of dualisms opposing Us (the inside, the private) to the Other looming large on the outside" and that "this assimilation of the national society to a domestic community serves to naturalise xenophobia."²³³ Even further, familial metaphors and father figures have come to characterize not only discursive framings of the nation but also the nature of far-right party organization itself. Scrinzi's research on National Rally found that:

The party itself, claiming to represent and defend the family, tends to be constructed as a family, thus legitimating the internal hierarchies between the leader, constructed as a benevolent father, and the base, as well as between men and women.²³⁴

As already noted, Scrinzi makes clear not only the "importance of the linkage between family and nation in the NF ideology", but that this "required the hypervisibility of the racialised man, represented as a sexual and cultural threat to female citizens."²³⁵ This hypervisibility has entered the mainstream, as is evident from critiques of "the media focus on the figure of the 'garçon arabe', the young male of immigrant origin, as racialised men of the suburbs tend to be depicted as potential rapists."²³⁶

²³⁰ Norocel, O. C., T. Saresma, T. Lähdesmäki & M. Ruotsalainen (2018) "Discursive Constructions of White Nordic Masculinities in Right-wing Populist Media." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-22. p15

²³¹ Ibid. p15

²³² Norocel, O. C. (2015) "The Panoptic Performance of Masculinity for the Romanian Ethno-Nationalist Project: Disciplinary Intersections in Populist Radical Right Print Media." *Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* 2(1-2): 143-156. p152

²³³ Scrinzi, F. (2017) "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petó, 127-140. p134

²³⁴ Ibid. p134

²³⁵ Ibid. p136

²³⁶ Ibid. p129

Far-right narratives of the racialized male Other would appear to depend for their affective force on the intimate nature of the threat posed by 'his' dangerous masculinities; this threat is often portrayed in personal, familial terms. In the afore-mentioned study of the National Rally in France, the intimacy of this threat is clear: "Women and the family are represented as potential victims of immigration, which is associated with crime, insecurity and violence, and it is the women in the family who are assigned the responsibility of reproducing the 'natural' social order."²³⁷ A summary of research on the gender dimensions of far-right political discourse in Germany since 1990 also emphasizes that:

A central function of men in far-right ideology is to save the "pure race" by "protecting" white German women. This means controlling women's sexuality and reproductive abilities and fighting against "foreign" men as a "threat" to "our own" women (or better: to the "racial pureness" of the next generation).²³⁸

The male protective role has long been central to the "patriarchal bargain" identified by Kandiyoti and other feminist scholars: that in exchange for their patriarchal privileges, it is men's role, whether as fathers, husbands or other family members, to protect 'their' women and girls.²³⁹ For the far-right, men's duty and ability to fulfill this bargain is at stake.

Examining white supremacist discourse in the USA, Ferber observes that the "protection of white womanhood comes to symbolize the protection of the race; thus, gender relations occupy a central place in the discourse."²⁴⁰ Equally, the patriarchal bargain in the context of colonial histories has always had a racial logic; the bargain, based on family and kinship relations, extends to protection of the ethno-nation and its racialized 'culture'. In many societies, the far-right draws on longstanding mainstream narratives of deeply sexualized threat from alien 'bodies', both within and beyond the boundaries of the ethno-nation. "Ultimately, the radical right wants to make the boundaries of the state equivalent with those of the titular and dominant ethnic group, as well as to cleanse the nation of [...] internal and external 'enemies'", Bar-On makes clear.²⁴¹

Metaphors of purity and pollution recur in far-right discourse. As Bar-On writes, "[e]thnic nationalists long for a homogeneous state cleansed of minority ethnic, cultural, religious, or biological differences."²⁴² For Rydgren, "radical right-wing parties claim the right of national cultures to protect their cultural identity" by

²³⁷ Ibid. p134

²³⁸ Bitzan, R. (2017) "Research on Gender and the Far Right in Germany Since 1990: Developments, Findings, and Future Prospects." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 65-78. p72

²³⁹ Kandiyoti, D. (1988) "Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender and Society* 2(3): 274-290.

²⁴⁰ Ferber, A. L. (2000) "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors." *Men and Masculinities* 3(1): 30-56. p36

²⁴¹ Bar-On, T. (2018) "The Radical Right and Nationalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-28. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p4

²⁴² Ibid. p6

insisting that “there are several threats to their national identity, of which the alleged “invasion” of immigrants is the most important.”²⁴³

The far-right’s emphasis on the cleansing and purification of the national ‘family’, and the significance of the male protective function in this ethnonationalist hygiene, centers a concern about borders and boundaries, linked to notions of ‘home’ and ‘culture’. In her study of far-right and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland, Keskinen notes the discursive deployment of what she terms “white border guard masculinities to grasp how ideas of homeliness, whiteness and sexual relations are connected to each other in the kind of rhetoric studied.”²⁴⁴ As she makes clear:

What characterises such masculinities is a fixation on borders, border-control, cultural boundary work and exclusions that are treated as necessities in the changing setting. The racial and sexual “homeliness” of the nation is seen to be under threat, which serves as a basis for reimagining national and sexual politics in order to gain hegemony, instead of merely vocalising passive nostalgia.²⁴⁵

This masculinized border anxiety and calls for border control are clearly evident elsewhere, not least in the U.S. context, where “white border guard masculinities” take very literal form in the vigilante groups encouraged by President Trump to ‘defend’ the southern border from invasion by the barbarous masculinities of the immigrant. Linking border fixations and masculine insecurities in the figure of the white border guard illustrates the ways in which the concerns of the anti-immigration movement and the anti-feminist men’s movement come together. “While these two social movements should be regarded as distinct, they nevertheless intersect at nodal points,” Keskinen insists.²⁴⁶

3.2.2 The frame of the cultural community and religious ethnonationalism

Highlighting the significance of borders in far-right discourse, and its deployment of racialized masculinities in the service of defining and defending these boundaries, also draws attention to the second discursive frame shaping the presentation of ethnonationalist ideology: the frame of the cultural community. It is this frame that helps explain the paradox of a transnational ethnonationalism and the threat of a far-right, whose national formations are increasingly seeking opportunities for coalition-building and joint platforms in regional and global fora. For the cultural community promoted by the Euro-American far-right is both sub-

²⁴³ Rydgren, J. (2018) “The Radical Right: An Introduction.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, edited by J. Rydgren, 1-16. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p4

²⁴⁴ Keskinen, S. (2013) “Anti-feminism and white identity politics: Political antagonisms in radical rightwing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland.” *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4): 225–232. p227

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p227

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p227

national and supra-national, increasingly defined by islamophobia as its primary vector of racialization marking the borders of the community.

The racialized masculinities deployed by the far-right are presented as a threat not only to the 'nation', defined in ethnonationalist terms, but more broadly to 'Europe' or the 'West'. Scrinzi observes far-right parties, in contexts as different as France, the UK, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries, positioning themselves as the true defenders of liberal values, basing "their claims on religion, with Christianity considered to be the essence of the European civilisation."²⁴⁷

In otherwise very different contexts, a similar far-right fusion of religious ethnonationalism and racialized masculinities is also evident. A 2015 study of the manifestos of far-right parties in the Netherlands and Flanders noted the framing of gender equality as a marker of 'cultural' difference between 'Islam' and 'the West', and thus a significant battleground in the "clash of civilizations".²⁴⁸ As the authors stress, the far-right critique of Islam:

stems from the observation that 'Islamic values' are at odds with liberal democratic values such as the autonomy of the individual, democracy, the emancipation of homosexuals and women, the equality of men and women, freedom of expression, and separation of church and state.²⁴⁹

The figure of the hyper-sexual Muslim male continues to be central to Hindu nationalist ideology and its claim to defend the Hindu identity of India.²⁵⁰ In Romania, the Greater Romania Magazine (Revista România Mare, RRM) has played a significant role in escalating ethnic tensions and mobilizing support for far-right ideology, which led to the founding of the Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare, PRM) in November 1990. The RRM has explicitly linked Orthodox religion and heterosexuality "to generate and reify specific performances of respectable Romanian masculinity and to differentiate between these and the masculinity performances of the Others."²⁵¹ In such narratives, Norocel notes the ways in which "the performance of masculinity that is ascribed authenticity as "truly" Romanian and invested with normative power is one intimately connected to Orthodoxy."²⁵²

What is striking, then, across differing national and cultural settings is the use made by far-right parties of the figure of the sexually predatory male Other to legitimize their ethnonationalist ideology. Underpinning this legitimization is the

²⁴⁷ Scrinzi, F. (2017) "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 127-140. p131

²⁴⁸ de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) "Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. Huntington, S. P. (1997) *The Clash Of Civilizations: And The Remaking Of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

²⁴⁹ de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) "Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. p65

²⁵⁰ Vanaik, A. (2018) "India's Two Hegemonies." *New Left Review* 112(July-August): 29-59.

²⁵¹ Norocel, O. C. (2015) "The Panoptic Performance of Masculinity for the Romanian Ethno-Nationalist Project: Disciplinary Intersections in Populist Radical Right Print Media." *Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* 2(1-2): 143-156. p147

²⁵² Ibid. p150

racialization of masculinities, which serves to frame a set of concerns (about economic precarity, crime, immigration, national security) as manifestations of a threatened 'natural' social order (both gendered and racialized), finding normative expression in the nation-as-family and the cultural community of Euro-American Christianity. With these discursive frames, the 'dangerous masculinities' of the ethnic Other energize a particular affective intensity of masculinized anxiety and anger, attached to issues of reproduction and virility, violence and protection, and entitlement and loss. This racialization of masculinities, however, also serves another purpose in the far-right's discursive struggle for hegemony; this use of masculinities has also enabled a far-right maneuver on the terrain of gender equality politics. Keskinen notes that the centering of gender equality as "essential for current Nordic discourses on nationhood" has relied on "the creation of self-images as modern, progressive and advanced nations through a juxtaposition to migrant 'others' projected to the past," promoting a vision of "equal, emancipated and tolerant Nordic citizens through a contrast to 'bad patriarchies' located in distant places and migrant bodies."²⁵³ The implications of this juxtaposition for far-right gender politics is discussed next.

3.3 RACIALIZED MASCULINITIES AND FAR-RIGHT GENDER POLITICS

In many countries, far-right parties have stoked fears of the dangerous masculinities of migrant and minority men as part of their effort to normalize and legitimize their racist ethnonationalism. Their racialization of 'toxic' masculinities has been used to 'de-toxify' their political brand. Norocel has charted the evolution of the Sverigedemokraterna party in Sweden, describing their "ideological normalization" from "fringe nationalism (antidemocratic national socialism) and outright racism to welfare chauvinism and cultural racism (Islamophobic exclusionary nationalism) in conservative clothing."²⁵⁴ In doing so, he notes the way in which welfare chauvinist appeals are used to "acknowledge the importance of gender equality in Sweden, and are used as a device to contour two antithetic entities: the supposedly gender-equal Swedish ethnic majority as the opposite of the allegedly deeply patriarchal migrant Other."²⁵⁵

In similar vein, Marine le Pen's success in bringing the extremist Front National into the center of French political life as the Rassemblement National (National Rally) has, in part, relied on the "appropriation of issues of secularism and

²⁵³ Keskinen, S. (2013) "Anti-feminism and white identity politics: Political antagonisms in radical rightwing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4): 225–232. p226

²⁵⁴ Norocel, O. C. (2017) "Åkesson at Almedalen: Intersectional Tensions and Normalization of Populist Radical Right Discourse in Sweden." *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 25(2): 91-106. p91

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p91

gender equality—two traditionally left-wing ideological markers”.²⁵⁶ Scrinzi emphasizes that the “mobilisation of the theme of gender equality as an ‘anti-immigration’ argument and the shift to more moderate positions on issues of reproductive rights indicate that gender is an important dimension of the party ideology’s current evolution.”²⁵⁷

As elsewhere, this mainstreaming of extremism by the far-right in France has succeeded, in part, because of the foundations already laid by racist narratives and policies on immigration, often initiated by nominally left-wing governments. In Scrinzi’s account, the dominant discourse on immigration in mainstream French political life has long been highly gendered; “female migrants tend to be seen as passive and subaltern women with no previous experience of employment,” while “migrant men tend to be stigmatised as patriarchal and oppressive.”²⁵⁸ Starting in the 1980s, under a left-wing government, state policy on ‘integration’ was “informed by normative representations of feminine migration in terms of a move from tradition to modernity, including gender modernity.”²⁵⁹ Over the last decade, however, such representations have increasingly been taken up by conservative and far-right forces, who “have declared gender equality as a defining value of the French national identity, as opposed to the patriarchal ‘cultures’ attributed to the migrants.”²⁶⁰

This far-right externalization of “‘bad patriarchies’ located in distant places and migrant bodies” is an intensified expression of mainstream discourse in many countries. In their 2007 study of the major shift in Dutch gender equality policy to an almost exclusive focus on migrant women and, simultaneously, the growing emphasis on gender issues within policy discourse on ethnic minorities, Roggeband and Verloo emphasize that:

Unequal gender relations in minority groups (particularly among Muslims) are now seen as a core problem, demonstrating the ‘backward’ character of Islam and the gap between the ‘modern’ Dutch culture and the imported culture of immigrants. This problem is principally located in men and a negative masculine culture.²⁶¹

Further, they highlight the discursive turn toward framing the problem of migrant women in terms of “cultural causes – mainly a traditional culture that privileges men and subordinates women, and legitimizes violence.”²⁶² In this framing, “migrant men surface as a new target group.”²⁶³

²⁵⁶ Scrinzi, F. (2017) “A ‘New’ National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right.” In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petó, 127-140. p136

²⁵⁷ Ibid. p136

²⁵⁸ Ibid. p129

²⁵⁹ Ibid. p129

²⁶⁰ Ibid. p129

²⁶¹ Roggeband, C. & M. Verloo (2007) “Dutch Women are Liberated, Migrant Women are a Problem: The Evolution of Policy Frames on Gender and Migration in the Netherlands, 1995–2005.” *Social Policy & Administration* 41(3): 271-288. p272

²⁶² Ibid. p281

²⁶³ Ibid. p282

The use of a discourse of gender equality as a boundary marker between the White/majority and the racialized other complicates a reductive analysis of far-right anti-feminism and gender conservatism. On the one hand, there is a long history of anti-feminist thought and practice on the far-right, as Murdoch makes clear:

Far-right movements have long held sexist, misogynist and anti-feminist views. Yet, in a pronounced way, for elements of the contemporary far right these ideas are not merely a result of their wider political outlook but rather a central pillar of their ideology.²⁶⁴

On the other hand, this anti-feminism co-exists with the far-right's use, at least in some countries, of gender equality as a marker of ethno-national modernity set against the 'primitive' gender practices of the Other. As Akkerman notes, commenting on far-right parties in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland:

With regard to gender issues, these parties are to some extent Janus-faced. Principles like gender equality and freedom of choice are emphasized in the immigration and integration domain, while almost all the parties are conservative when they address issues related to the family, such as opportunities of women on the labour market, childcare, abortion or the status of marriage.²⁶⁵

"The defence of gender equality and female autonomy has become part of the anti-Islam agenda", Akkerman emphasizes.²⁶⁶ This "racialisation of sexism" has been a significant aspect of the far-right's evolution in recent years, and its efforts to legitimize its islamophobic and xenophobic ethnonationalism.²⁶⁷ In their study of gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries, de Lange and Mügge emphasize that "[w]hile gender and immigration are consistently important over time for all parties, the relationship between gender and Islam has become increasingly significant since 9/11."²⁶⁸

Significant to this evolution has been the tying of debates about immigration and integration policies to national security agendas and, with family-related migration becoming a significant form of immigration into the European Union during the past decade, a focus on the immigrant family as a locus of concern.²⁶⁹ Writing of the French far-right National Rally, Scrinzi concludes that the "mobilisation of the

²⁶⁴ Murdoch, S. (2019) "Why Understanding The UK Anti-Feminist Movement Is Vital To Countering The Far Right." *Huffington Post* [Online] [Accessed February 26]. p2

²⁶⁵ Akkerman, T. (2015) "Gender and the radical right in Western Europe: a comparative analysis of policy agendas." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 37-60. p56

²⁶⁶ Ibid. p53

²⁶⁷ Scrinzi, F. (2017) "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 127-140. p132

²⁶⁸ de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) "Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. p74

²⁶⁹ Akkerman, T. (2015) "Gender and the radical right in Western Europe: a comparative analysis of policy agendas." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 37-60.

theme of gender equality as an ‘anti-immigration’ argument and the shift to more moderate positions on issues of reproductive rights indicate that gender is an important dimension of the party ideology’s current evolution.”²⁷⁰ That this evolution has not been without complications is evident in the case of the National Rally leader Marine Le Pen herself. Scrinzi notes that her “statements on the matter of women’s rights are equally paradoxical, alternating between defending women’s liberation and defending the traditional family, the latter viewed as the basis of the nation’s welfare.”²⁷¹

The complications of such an evolution can be seen in the “complexity and diversity of the gender ideologies adopted by right-wing populist parties, with most parties espousing a unique mix of ideas on gender.”²⁷² While the centering of the heteronormative family, with its essentialized gender roles, remains hegemonic on the far-right, parties differ in the extent to which they support policies that promote women’s work outside the home. Distinctions between modern, modern-traditional and neo-traditional far-right gender politics have been proposed. A study of far-right parties in the Low Countries notes the resulting complexity of positions:

[W]e can conclude that the manifestos of the Dutch LPF and Flemish VB contain elements of modern, modern-traditional and neo-traditional views, with the LPF leaning towards the modern and the VB gravitating towards the modern-traditional view. The VB’s comprehensive plans to reform family policies, in particular, cannot easily be classified as either modern or traditional.²⁷³

The authors emphasize that “interdisciplinary feminist as well as non-feminist political science accounts of gender and right-wing populist parties underestimate the variation in gender ideologies across parties.”²⁷⁴ Social and political contexts clearly affect this variation. Akkerman’s multi-country study of far-right parties in Western Europe makes clear that “their conservatism is embedded in a liberal context, and has been clearly affected by liberal ideas,” noting that they “tend to package their conservative views in liberal phrases.”²⁷⁵

Variation in far-right gender politics is evident from the changing gender dynamics of far-right organizations. For many years, far-right formations were seen as and assumed to be ‘men’s parties’, but recent studies suggest this is no longer the case. In 2015, Spierings and Zaslove noted “the rise of a new

²⁷⁰ Scrinzi, F. (2017) "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 127-140. p136

²⁷¹ Ibid. p132

²⁷² de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) "Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. p79

²⁷³ Ibid. p73

²⁷⁴ Ibid. p73

²⁷⁵ Akkerman, T. (2015) "Gender and the radical right in Western Europe: a comparative analysis of policy agendas." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 37-60. p56

generation of women leaders in Norway and France, following on the heels of Denmark,” as making a “move towards a more liberal nativist agenda, one that supports modern but still conservative women, easier to accomplish.”²⁷⁶ In 2017, the editors of *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, reviewing the findings from the collated research, concluded that:

[I]t has been assumed for a long time that far-right groups are based on traditional gender arrangements. Men are seen as ‘politically active’ and ‘potentially violent’, and women as followers or supporters of the men. But in practice it is hard to find justification for these stereotype gender ascriptions, as shown in many of the chapters in this volume.²⁷⁷

At the same time, this growing visibility of women in leadership, and flexibility of women’s roles as members, of far-right parties is contained within an overall conservative gender logic of the masculine/feminine binary. “[T]he binary nature of gender is generally not questioned and that gender, especially the category of masculinity, still seems to be a constitutive element of far-right ideologies,” as Blum and Köttig make clear.²⁷⁸ Writing of the Populist Radical Right (PRR) in Europe, Spierings and Zaslove point out that the “strong—masculine—leader remains a core characteristic of PRR parties, even when there are female leaders,”²⁷⁹ so much so that it may be that female leaders “have to prove themselves more and take an even more traditional or masculine position, claiming the importance of motherhood and the responsibility of raising children.”²⁸⁰

It is this attachment to a cisgendered, heteronormative masculine-feminine gender binary that characterizes the gender conservatism and social organicism of far-right ideology, an attachment that appeals not only to men but also many women. The ways in which the far-right deploys a discourse of ‘family values’, and the cisgendered, heteronormative gender binary that underpins them, is discussed next.

²⁷⁶ Spierings, N. & A. Zaslove (2015) "Conclusion: dividing the populist radical right between 'liberal nativism' and traditional conceptions of gender." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 163-173. p169

²⁷⁷ Blum, A. & M. Köttig. (2017) "Postscript." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 369-375. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. p370

²⁷⁸ Ibid. p372

²⁷⁹ Spierings, N. & A. Zaslove (2015) "Conclusion: dividing the populist radical right between 'liberal nativism' and traditional conceptions of gender." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 163-173. p170

²⁸⁰ Ibid. p173

4. FAMILY VALUES: FAR-RIGHT USES OF THE GENDER BINARY

4.1 THE FAMILY IN FAR-RIGHT GENDER POLITICS

4.1.1 Racialized families in far-right discourse

The heteronormative family, with its ‘traditional’ division of labor and leadership structure, is a bedrock of far-right ethnonationalism. For the far-right, this vision of the family embodies the “social order grounded in nature, based on the naturalisation of social relations, where sexism and racism—intended as ideologies which naturalise unequal social relations—are closely linked.”²⁸¹ The familial bonds that unify the ‘traditional’ family metonymically express the social harmony envisioned in the far-right’s ethnonationalist imaginary.

If the hetero-patriarchal family is, for the far-right, an image of the nation and its rightful social order, women’s roles in this social order are clear. They are both the biological and social reproducers of the national ‘family’ and its culture, values and identity. Equally, it is men’s role to protect ‘their’ women and families from threats to such reproduction. Hence, the emasculated (White/majority) male, no longer able to fulfill his roles within and for ‘his’ family, is a central figure in far-right narratives of national decline. In waging its self-declared ‘culture war’, the far-right frames the danger of the racialized male Other in terms of intimate violence and perverse sexuality, both understood as a threat to the heteronormative family.

As with so many other aspects of far-right discourse, this use of ‘family values’ to mark out the racial Other has a long history in mainstream policy and public opinion in many societies. Cooper’s recent work on *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism*, examining U.S. public policy over the last 50 years, makes clear the extent to which both neoliberal and neoconservative policy discourse pathologized the Black family.²⁸² This pathology was identified as the source of both African-American marginalization and deprivation as well as of the criminality and immorality threatening the (implicitly White) society as a whole. Cooper traces this pathologization of Black family life back to the Freedmen’s Bureau, set up in the aftermath of the U.S. Civil War to oversee the transition of formerly enslaved people from a state of bondage to legal freedom. As she makes clear:

²⁸¹ Scrinzi, F. (2017) "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 127-140. p134

²⁸² Cooper, M. (2019) *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism*. New York: Zone Books.

Throughout the South, Freedmen's Bureau agents pursued a vigorous campaign to promote marriage among [former] slaves, many of whom had previously been united in informal unions, had cohabited, or were involved in multiple relationships. [...] In all instances, they sought to regularize or dissolve what they perceived to be the illegitimate, immoral, and informal unions that had existed under slavery.²⁸³

Similarly, moral panics about the deviance and disfunction of the family within immigrant and minority ethnic communities have been a feature of mainstream media, as well as policy discussion, in many European countries. The UK's counter-terrorism strategy, Prevent, explains "Islamic radicalization" in part as a result of a failed policy of "multiculturalism", a failure born of a purported lack of adherence by "Muslim communities" to what the strategy refers to as "British values".²⁸⁴ As the primary agent of socialization, the Muslim family is implicitly blamed for this failure to integrate, and the Prevent strategy explicitly enlists Muslim women, in their family roles as mothers and aunts, as designated first responders to the early signs of their sons and nephews being radicalized.²⁸⁵ As Keskinen observes, "the discourse on "failed" multiculturalism circulating in Europe" has established "the marginalised and rioting young men from the non-white "ghetto" areas, the burden of the unemployed migrants for the welfare state and the patriarchal culture of non-Western migrants" as familiar tropes in mainstream media coverage and public opinion.²⁸⁶

It is against this background that the far-right's politics of 'family values', both gendered and racialized, should be understood. In their study of the manifestos of Dutch and Flemish right-wing populist parties represented at national and European elections between 1980 and 2012, de Lange and Mügge conclude that "[s]ince the mid-1990s, anti-Islam positions have been gradually linked to gender and family", meaning that "anti-immigrant politics has not only become focused on Muslim immigrants, but has become explicitly gendered."²⁸⁷ This is, in part, a function of changing patterns of migration. A 2015 analysis comparing the positions of the six most successful populist radical-right parties in Western Europe found that "issues related to family migration have gained importance in the context of debates on migration in general."²⁸⁸ This is because:

Worker immigration and refugee immigration have been replaced by family-related migration as the dominant mode of immigration into the European

²⁸³ Ibid. p79-80

²⁸⁴ Kundnani, A. (2015) *The Muslims are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War on Terror*. London and New York: Verso.

²⁸⁵ Rashid, N. (2016) *Veiled threats : representing the Muslim woman in public policy discourses*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

²⁸⁶ Keskinen, S. (2013) "Anti-feminism and white identity politics: Political antagonisms in radical rightwing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4): 225-232. p228

²⁸⁷ de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) "Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. p63

²⁸⁸ Akkerman, T. (2015) "Gender and the radical right in Western Europe: a comparative analysis of policy agendas." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 37-60. p39

Union during the past decade. Debates about immigration and integration therefore increasingly focus on the family and the role and status of women.²⁸⁹

The far-right has exploited these debates, intensifying as a site of racialization the immigrant/minority family, and especially the Muslim family. As the previous section made clear, the far-right has deployed a narrative of the dangerous masculinity of the male Other to help legitimate its racist ethnonationalism, and in parts of Western and Northern Europe has even claimed the mantle of defending gender equality from the threat of “bad patriarchies” located in distant places and migrant bodies.²⁹⁰ At the same time, the far-right’s focus on non-White/majority family relations as a primary site of these “bad patriarchies” has involved a racialization of femininity too. “Targeting Islam in particular as being highly repressive for women, some populist radical-right parties have emphasized their commitment to gender equality, women’s rights and freedom of choice”, Akkerman notes.²⁹¹ Writing with reference to the public discourse of the French far-right party National Rally, Scrinzi points out that “racialised women have acquired a new visibility, being exposed— by a female leader—as symbols of feminine oppression in debates on the burqa, the Muslim headscarf, and sexual violence.”²⁹²

The vulnerable and oppressed Muslim woman has become, for some far-right parties at least, a useful figure in their ethnonationalist culture war. In the Netherlands and Belgium, far-right parties “not only take issue with immigration in general,” but “specifically target Islam as a religion that does not respect equality between men and women, and that therefore impedes the emancipation of Muslim women.”²⁹³ More generally, Blee emphasizes that in “both Europe and the USA, far-right leaders have attacked religious communities they oppose by proclaiming that they are protecting women’s rights by doing so.”²⁹⁴

Racialization produces hypervisibility. Recalling Amar’s useful formulation, hypervisible subjects are both dehumanized and instrumentalized, rendered as “fetishized figures that preoccupy public discourse and representations but are not actually recognizable or legible as social formations and cannot speak on their own terms as autonomous subjects rather than as problems to solve.”²⁹⁵ If the vulnerability of the racialized female Other to the “bad patriarchies” of non-

²⁸⁹ Ibid. p40

²⁹⁰ Keskinen, S. (2013) "Anti-feminism and white identity politics: Political antagonisms in radical rightwing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4): 225–232. p226

²⁹¹ Akkerman, T. (2015) "Gender and the radical right in Western Europe: a comparative analysis of policy agendas." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 37-60. p40

²⁹² Scrinzi, F. (2017) "A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 127-140. p136

²⁹³ de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) "Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. p76

²⁹⁴ Blee, K. (2017) "Similarities/Differences in Gender and Far-Right Politics in Europe and the USA." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 191-204. p196

²⁹⁵ Amar, P. (2011) "Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of “Men in Crisis”, Industries of Gender in Revolution." *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 7(3): 36–70. p40

White/minority communities is one aspect of this hypervisibility, another is her dangerous fecundity.

4.1.2 Reproductive anxiety of the far-right

This is evident in the “great replacement” meme, which has featured prominently in far-right campaigns, from Europe to North America and most recently in the attacks on two mosques in New Zealand. Before embarking on his murderous attack in Christchurch, the suspected gunman posted a manifesto on Twitter entitled “The Great Replacement,” an explicit reference to the title of a 2012 book by right-wing French commentator Renaud Camus, in which he claims that Europe’s white majority is being replaced by North African and sub-Saharan African immigrants, many of whom are Muslim.²⁹⁶ Similarly, fears of demographic decline have long stalked the U.S. white nationalist imaginary.²⁹⁷

A reproductive anxiety, then, has come to characterize far-right discourse on the White/majority family and its place and functions in the far-right’s ethnonationalist vision. Strengthening this family in the face of the demographic threat posed by the racialized Other has become a significant concern. As the previous section noted, far-right parties are by no means uniform in their gender policies and politics, varying in their support for a women’s rights agenda, not least in relation to issues of reproductive justice. A study of Dutch and Flemish right-wing populist parties represented at national and European elections between 1980 and 2012 emphasizes “the complexity and diversity of the gender ideologies adopted by right-wing populist parties, with most parties espousing a unique mix of ideas on gender.”²⁹⁸ Mudde distinguishes between parties with neo-traditional or more modern-traditional gender ideologies.²⁹⁹ For neo-traditionalists, the goal is to best enable women to become mothers and housewives, while modern-traditionalists seek to combine this emphasis on women’s family roles with policies in support of women’s work outside the home, such as advocating equal pay for equal work.

But across this diversity there exists a consistent gender ideology on the far-right, whose three principal tenets Mudde specifies as: the equating of women’s politics with family politics; the staunch defense of ‘natural differences’ between the sexes; and the idea that, since women are the only sex that can give birth and offspring are vital to the survival of the nation, women should be ‘protected’.³⁰⁰ Even in contexts where far-right parties have favored a discourse of gender equality as a racialized marker of cultural ‘difference’ legitimizing their

²⁹⁶ Köttig, M. & A. Blum. (2017) "Introduction." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 1-10. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁹⁷ Ferber, A. L. (2000) "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors." *Men and Masculinities* 3(1): 30-56.

²⁹⁸ de Lange, S. L. & L. M. Mügge (2015) "Gender and right-wing populism in the Low Countries: ideological variations across parties and time." *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 61-80. p79

²⁹⁹ Mudde, C. (2007) *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

ethnonationalist project, an anti-feminist commitment is clear; the family needs to be protected from feminism.

In her study of radical right-wing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland, Keskinen identifies a common narrative of national decline, “characterised by a gender equality gone too far, having turned into a domination of feminists in the public sphere and the subordination of white heterosexual men.”³⁰¹ As she continues:

Moreover, this tendency is seen to exacerbate through the reproductive feebleness of the “white” population, expressed as “broken families”, homosexuality and women’s career orientation. These trends are, in varying ways by the authors, dated to the cultural revolution and the change of sexual behavior following the 1960s.³⁰²

This echoes the cultural backlash thesis advanced by Norris and Inglehart to explain the electoral support for the far-right in both Europe and the USA.³⁰³ In their study of right-wing populist media in Finland and Sweden, Norocel *et al* similarly note this strain of anti-feminism. “Gender equality is narrowly understood [...] as the default characteristic of Swedish society, which need not be ‘tinkered with’ by further feminist endeavors” and “[f]eminism is deemed harmful to the Swedish society in general and to the harmony between men and women within the heteronormative nuclear family in particular.”³⁰⁴

4.1.3 Anti-feminism and far-right family values

A focus on the heteronormative nuclear family in far-right declinist narratives is widespread. Research on the German far-right emphasizes that the “issue of crisis is central to far-right discourses”, in relation to which “the far right presents its concept of the ‘German family’ as an important line of political action.”³⁰⁵ Claus and Virchow note that “[f]ar-right narratives and actions have always drawn a clear line between an alleged ‘natural’ heteronormative sexuality, from which the imagined national community (‘Volksgemeinschaft’) benefits, and ‘perverse’ or ‘abnormal’ sexuality as a threat to society’s stability, future and peace.”³⁰⁶

Furthermore, they stress that:

The far right’s rhetoric of failed protection, unstable families and lack of order is [...] part of a more general discourse of the alleged destruction of moral

³⁰¹ Keskinen, S. (2013) "Anti-feminism and white identity politics: Political antagonisms in radical rightwing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4): 225–232. p228

³⁰² *Ibid.* p228

³⁰³ Norris, P. & R. Inglehart. (2019) *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁰⁴ Norocel, O. C., T. Saresma, T. Lähdesmäki & M. Ruotsalainen (2018) "Discursive Constructions of White Nordic Masculinities in Right-wing Populist Media." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-22. p14

³⁰⁵ Claus, R. & F. Virchow. (2017) "The Far Right's Ideological Constructions of 'Deviant' Male Sexualities." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 305-319. p314

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p306

values and the decay of stable identities and communities through the decadence of modern, liberal and capitalistic times.³⁰⁷

“Gender ideology”, as the source of family crisis and national/moral decline, has become a transnational meme for the far-right. In Europe, Kováts notes the “emergence of powerful social movements mobilizing against the enemy they call ‘gender ideology’, ‘gender theory’ or ‘genderism’.”³⁰⁸ This threat was first formulated in 2003 by the Family Lexicon issued by the Roman Catholic Church, which systematically expounded the Vatican’s position on what it called “gender theory” and “gender ideology.”³⁰⁹ This formulation explicitly positioned “gender” as an external imposition, which in undermining the sanctity of the family threatened the well-being of children. As Kováts suggests, the “connection of these two: gender as an intrigue of lobbies which have infiltrated transnational organizations, and as an ideology that threatens our children, makes of “gender” an enemy, an illegitimate claim which needs to be eradicated.”³¹⁰

In this polarized insistence on a necessary political antagonism, in which those with different ideological commitments are enemies whose claims are illegitimate, Kováts identifies a close affinity between anti-feminist activism and the far-right: “Anti-gender movements in this sense are similar to far-right movements in that they acknowledge the political but negate pluralism.”³¹¹ The impacts of far-right anti-feminism, linked to its ‘family values’ discourse, are already evident. These range from policy efforts to roll-back reproductive rights, denial of LGBTI rights, changes to government gender policies (e.g. in relation to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Poland), attacks on gender mainstreaming and restrictions imposed on progressive sexual education programs in schools and university gender studies departments and their financing. In October 2018, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of the far-right Fidesz party banned gender studies programs at universities in the country.

The roll-back of the ‘pink tide’ by conservative parties in Latin America has often been framed in terms of defending ‘family values’ in response to the progress made by feminist and LGBTI struggles for sexual and reproductive rights.³¹² Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, in his inaugural speech, explicitly declared that his administration will “combat gender ideology.” Under the Trump presidency, and its impact on the Supreme Court, efforts to eliminate women’s access to abortion have accelerated dramatically, with a slew of state-level bans and severe restrictions whose intention is to provoke Supreme Court review, leading to the overturning of *Roe vs Wade*. In 2019, the Trump administration announced a further expansion of the implementation of the global gag rule,

³⁰⁷ Ibid. p314

³⁰⁸ Kováts, E. (2017) “The Emergence of Powerful Anti-Gender Movements in Europe and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy.” In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 175-189. p175

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid. p177

³¹¹ Ibid. p178

³¹² Alvarez Minte, G. (2013) *Conservative Backlashes to Women’s Bodily Integrity in Latin America; The Cases of Mexico and Chile*. London: University of London.

restricting “gagged” organizations from funding groups that provide abortion services and information, even though those organizations that do not receive any aid from the U.S. government.

This reactionary ‘family values’ anti-feminism, so characteristic of far-right gender politics, has gathered mainstream momentum in recent years, as is evident from discussions at the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting. Conservative efforts to roll back progress on sexual and reproductive rights and related services and deny rights in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression have been an increasing feature of CSW discussions. At the 63rd meeting, held in March 2019, this conservative backlash was extended to issues of women’s access to social security, social services, and infrastructure; an initial draft of the CSW’s consensus outcome document met with opposition from around 25 country delegations who challenged the use of the word ‘gender’, preferring the binary formulation of ‘women and men’ and insisting on the ‘traditional’ heterosexual family as the necessary foundation of society and its provision of social protection.³¹³

4.2 MASCULINITY, SEXUALITY AND FAR-RIGHT USES OF THE GENDER BINARY

4.2.1 Far-right heteronormativity and its heterosexual anxiety

The overarching far-right narrative within which memes of reproductive anxiety and male protection are deployed is a story of a threatened social order, whose stability is premised on the ‘natural’ bonds of ethnic homogeneity and essentialized gender roles based on the heteronormative family unit. In line with the polarizing logic of far-right discourse, the enemy is clear: the dangerous masculinities of the racialized Other. But there is another threat also the far-right insists: the enervated condition of the masculinities of the majority, unable or unwilling to defeat the enemy.

In her account of the links between the ethnonationalism of U.S. white supremacist groups and the anti-feminism of the mythopoetic men’s movement, Ferber emphasizes that:

Throughout both discourses, contemporary social problems are blamed on the supposed demasculinization of white males by women and feminism. Both movements believe that the questioning of traditional gender roles and

³¹³ Goetz, A. M. (2019) "Religious and market fundamentalisms threaten gender equality at UN summit." *OpenDemocracy* [Online] Available: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/religious-and-market-fundamentalisms-threaten-gender-equality-un-summit/> [Accessed May 18, 2019].

identities has led men to become more like women, breaking down the natural order of essential sexual difference.³¹⁴

From this perspective, the “fate of the white race, then, hinges on the need for real white men to act.”³¹⁵ But emasculation has weakened White/majority men’s capacity to act, not least when it comes to addressing the sexual threat of the racialized male Other. The reproductive anxiety of the far-right is, more specifically, an anxiety about a loss of and threats to White/majority male virility and heterosexual performance.

Heterosexual anxiety animates the far-right, from the online communities of ‘betas’ and ‘incels’ and their fascination with male heterosexual inadequacy to calls for a restoration of virility to ward off the existential threat of the racialized male Other.³¹⁶ In her 2017 study of the self-identified intellectual vanguardist Identitäre Bewegung (in English, the New Right) in Germany, Blum notes the sexualized fears so central to its ideology, in which “foreign men and German men are engaged in a battle over sexual relationships and reproduction.”³¹⁷ As she continues, this “explains why a strong gender identity is needed to counter the aggressiveness and stealing of identity by Muslim men.”³¹⁸

Normative heterosexuality is fundamental to far-right gender politics. In their study of the German far-right, Claus and Virchow note that “[s]exuality—its conceptualization as heteronormative and its regulation by state institutions as part of a broader biopolitical approach to strengthen the ‘Volksgemeinschaft’—has always played a decisive role in far-right world-views and politics.”³¹⁹ Thus, while feminism is blamed for undermining the naturalized gender roles of the heteronormative family, the far-right also identifies sexual ‘perversions’ as another source of men’s heterosexual enervation. From this perspective, “homosexuality is fitted into a larger picture of a ‘degenerate society’ which constantly seems to produce artificial identities and a tremendous lack of values, disconnecting human life from its biological and natural basis.”³²⁰ As Claus and Virchow conclude:

Homophobia constitutes a central element of hegemonic masculinity, as well as the conception of manhood in far-right gender regimes. The construction of family in particular and ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ in general is located in a sexual and racial setting that is heteronormative and white.³²¹

This primacy of heteronormativity means, as Blee suggests, that most “far-right movements are decidedly heterosexual and consider lesbians, gay men,

³¹⁴ Ferber, A. L. (2000) "Racial Warriors and Weekend Warriors." *Men and Masculinities* 3(1): 30-56. p48

³¹⁵ *Ibid.* p52

³¹⁶ Ging, D. (2017) "Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20.

³¹⁷ Blum, A. (2017) "Men in the Battle for the Brains: Constructions of Masculinity Within the "Identitary Generation"." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 321-334. p328

³¹⁸ *Ibid.* p329

³¹⁹ Claus, R. & F. Virchow. (2017) "The Far Right's Ideological Constructions of 'Deviant' Male Sexualities." In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 305-319. p305

³²⁰ *Ibid.* p310

³²¹ *Ibid.* p310

transgendered persons, and others with minority sexual expressions to be abhorrent, sick, and deviant.”³²² As with the discourse on gender equality, there are some instances of the far-right using a homonationalist rhetoric³²³ to position the racialized Other as uniquely homophobic, and to use “support for liberal pro-LGBT policies [...] couched in anti-Islam rhetoric” as a marker of White European modernity and cultural superiority.³²⁴ But even in the contexts where this has happened, Spierings and Zaslove, in their study of the populist radical right (PRR), make clear that:

Most notably, not all PRR parties in Northern Europe seem to have made the (rhetorical) shift towards liberal policies regarding gender and sexuality. Support for pro-gay attitudes among PRR voters was only found in Norway and Sweden and not in Denmark and the Netherlands.³²⁵

More generally, the far-right remains deeply homophobic and transphobic, relying on a cisgendered heteronormative binary conception of gender to organize its gender politics. Nor, it should be emphasized, is this an extreme position, as this notion of the gender binary remains pervasive in many societies. As Baer *et al* remind us, “the opposition to gender mainstreaming, feminism or equal rights for LGBTIQ people is not limited to the extreme right. In these views, extreme right groups overlap and often join forces with various conservative milieus.”³²⁶

In far-right messaging, feminist and LGBTI movements are deemed to be such a threat to the ‘natural’ social order because their efforts to liberate women and gender and sexual minorities are equated with an emasculation of the cisgendered, heterosexual male. In appealing to fears of emasculation, the far-right can draw on the long-standing misogyny of men’s movements, from the mythopoetic organizing of the 1990s to the Men’s Rights Activism of today.³²⁷ The ways in which the far-right has both mobilized and amplified everyday misogyny in the service of its ethnonationalist project is discussed next.

4.2.2 Far-right heteronormativity and amplified misogyny

The ‘family values’ of the far-right center on the importance of the heteronormative family and its essentialized gender roles, emphasizing the ‘natural’ role of women in both biological and social reproduction and men’s roles as provider and protector. As already noted, far-right parties increasingly frame their gender politics in terms, not of men’s patriarchal subordination of women,

³²² Blee, K. (2017) “Similarities/Differences in Gender and Far-Right Politics in Europe and the USA.” In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 191-204. p197

³²³ Puar, J. K. (2007) *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

³²⁴ Spierings, N. & A. Zaslove (2015) “Conclusion: dividing the populist radical right between ‘liberal nativism’ and traditional conceptions of gender.” *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(1-2): 163-173. p172

³²⁵ *Ibid.* p168-169

³²⁶ Baer, S., O. Kossack & A. Posselius. (2017) “Gender Might Be the Key. Gender-Reflective Approaches and Guidelines in Prevention of and Intervention in Right-Wing Extremism in Europe.” In *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, edited by M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & A. Petö, 351-368. p354

³²⁷ Kimmel, M. & M. Kaufman. (1995) “Weekend Warriors: The New Men’s Movement.” In *The Politics of Manhood: Profeminist Men Respond to the Mythopoetic Men’s Movement (And the Mythopoetic Leaders Answer)* edited by M. Kimmel. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. Murdoch, S. (2019) “Why Understanding The UK Anti-Feminist Movement Is Vital To Countering The Far Right.” *Huffington Post* [Online] [Accessed February 26].

but of a naturalized complementarity between women and men based on their different functions within the family and society more generally.

If parties differ in the extent to which they prioritize women's domestic responsibilities over all else, or support women's right to work outside the home in addition to their 'natural' ability and proclivity to be the primary caregiver and homemaker, they share a view of a conservative gender order rooted in 'traditional' family values and settled gender roles. There is a quality of nostalgia to this far-right gender ideology. Research on far-right parties in Finland and Romania found that tropes of masculinity were being used to advocate for "the necessity to return to a pre-globalised, pre-modern gender structuring, that privileges men as heads of heterosexual nuclear families, controls women's bodies and reduces them to bearers of the nation."³²⁸

But other scholars have identified alternative temporalities and dynamics at work in some far-right anti-feminism. Far from being nostalgic for a lost or threatened conservative gender order, this anti-feminist strain is concerned with re-imagining a masculinity for the ethno-nation to come. This is a masculinity concerned less with the restoration of orderly gender roles and more with revivifying itself in the face of the necessarily disordered quasi-Darwinian struggle against the emasculating threats of feminism and the racialized Other. In her study of texts produced by Finnish anti-immigration and anti-feminist men's movements, Keskinen clearly identifies the discursive construction of this threat:

The emasculation of white men is double, since they are not only prevented from saving the nation but also forced to subordinate to the powerful women who control central positions in the government and administration. The cause of such "frustrated masculinities" is located in Finnish women who ally themselves with the "other" men.³²⁹

This emphasis on an identity politics of white or majority male victimhood returns us to the earlier discussion of wounded and excluded masculinities. But it is important to note the different vectors of far-right gender politics generated by this discourse of thwarted or wounded masculinities: one tending to look back to a lost gender order of stable families and distinct roles, the other looking ahead to the border battles to come in defense of the nation and its racialized, gendered values. Where the former favors a model of gender relations framed in terms of a necessary complementarity between women and men, even if in effect this constitutes an exercise of male control over female bodies and lives, the latter can be much more explicitly misogynistic, constructing gender relations as necessarily antagonistic.

³²⁸ Norocel, O. C. (2009) "Globalisation and its male contenders? The question of conservative masculinities within the radical right populist discourses across the EU." In *Globalisation – Challenges to Research and Governance*, edited by J. Kultalahti, I. Karppi, O. Kultalahti & E. Todisco, 237–250. Helsinki: East–West Books Helsinki. p237

³²⁹ Keskinen, S. (2013) "Anti-feminism and white identity politics: Political antagonisms in radical rightwing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3(4): 225–232. p229

In this respect, it is important to note the ideological and tactical evolution of reactionary men's movements, and how this has resonated with the recent flourishing of the far-right in many countries. As Ging makes clear, where male anti-feminism of the 1980s and 1990s, reacting to the progress of second-wave feminism, drew on sex role theory to highlight discrimination against men (e.g. in family law) and called for policy reform, the political rhetoric of contemporary men's rights activism "is almost exclusively dominated by evolutionary psychology, which relies heavily on genetic determinism to explain male and female behaviors in relation to sexual selection."³³⁰ In Ging's useful account, this marks a "shift from a predominantly political to a broadly cultural discourse, including a move toward more visual, video- and meme-based articulations of men's rights," meaning that "most men's rights rhetoric functions less as a call to political action and more as a channel for the collective venting of anger."³³¹

Such changes in both the form and content of men's rights activism have been significantly shaped by the explosive growth of social media and the technological affordances of its digital infrastructure. "Since the locus of debate and activism has migrated onto the Internet and, in particular, into the realm of social media, the discursive tone and communicative politics of men's rights have changed substantially", notes Ging.³³² She emphasizes that "the most striking features of the new anti-feminist politics are its extreme misogyny and proclivity for personal attacks. This marks a significant departure from men's rights before social media [...]."³³³ Similarly, Murdoch remarks that the "resurgence of conspiratorial anti-feminism has fuelled a particular online community which do pose a novel threat," an online community now commonly referred to as the manosphere.³³⁴

The manosphere has been defined variously as a "loose collection of websites, forums, blogs and vlogs concerned with men's issues and masculinity, oriented around an opposition to feminism and, within parts, embrace of extreme misogyny",³³⁵ and "a loosely connected group of anti-feminist Internet communities comprised of phenomena as diverse as #gamergate, the alt-right, men's rights activism, and pickup artist forums."³³⁶ Murdoch links the emergence of the manosphere to the growing visibility and influence of the far-right:

The manosphere's core ideas have snowballed into an ideology that has taken on a life of its own outside of its online niche, in part because the

³³⁰ Ging, D. (2017) "Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20. p12

³³¹ *Ibid.* p11

³³² *Ibid.* p2

³³³ *Ibid.* p8

³³⁴ Murdoch, S. (2019) "Societal Misogyny and the Manosphere: Understanding the UK Anti-Feminist Movement." In [State of Hate 2019: People vs The Elite?](#), edited by N. Lowles, 38-41. London: HOPE not hate. p38

³³⁵ *Ibid.* p40

³³⁶ Van Valkenburgh, S. P. (2018) "Digesting the Red Pill: Masculinity and Neoliberalism in the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20. p1

rejection of feminism and a broader conspiratorial outlook continues to find resonance with the wider contemporary far right.³³⁷

For Ging, it is important to understand the manosphere as a “discursive system or network of systems” whose “transcendence of local, regional, and global categories and [...] capacity for discursive aggregation and amplification” have been significant in shaping the gender politics of masculinities on the far-right.³³⁸ As many commentators have noted, the extreme misogyny of the manosphere is associated with an aggrieved male entitlement, often expressed, and self-consciously so, in terms of a ‘beta’ masculinity, in which sexual insecurities loom large. The resentment of the ‘betas’ has many targets which resonate with far-right thinking; the feminists whom they see as emasculating men and the sexual potency of the racialized male Other, the latter trope having a long history in colonial and imperial imaginaries, as discussed in section 3.

At the same time, there are particular characteristics of the digital infrastructure of social media, its technological affordances, that serve to aggregate and amplify male anger and anxiety and its misogynistic expression. Ging reports that “the data indicate that the technological affordances of social media have radically increased the flow of antifeminist ideas and information across groups, platforms, and geographical boundaries.”³³⁹ Specifically, these include affordances “such as speed, anonymity, platform algorithms, and social disembodiment [which] facilitate new and different ways in which to assert male hegemony.”³⁴⁰ In particular, the affective power of meme-based communication has meant that “emotionally charged claims to victimhood can be strategically amplified in a bid to dismantle perceived threats—both online and offline—to power and privilege.”³⁴¹

There is then an affective intensity to the manosphere that has been generative for and appealing to the far-right’s ideological and strategic investment in polarizing antagonisms. In Ging’s view, “the technological affordances of social media are especially well suited to the amplification of new articulations of aggrieved manhood.”³⁴² Significantly, Daniels attributes to these same affordances the ability of white nationalist movements to amplify their messaging; “the ‘Whitelash’ is algorithmically amplified, sped up, and circulated through networks to other White ethno-nationalist movements around the world, ignored all the while by a tech industry that ‘doesn’t see race’ in the tools it creates.”³⁴³

³³⁷ Murdoch, S. (2019) “Societal Misogyny and the Manosphere: Understanding the UK Anti-Feminist Movement.” In State of Hate 2019: People vs The Elite?, edited by N. Lowles, 38-41. London: HOPE not hate. p40

³³⁸ Ging, D. (2017) “Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere.” *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20. p16

³³⁹ Ibid. p7

³⁴⁰ Ibid. p4

³⁴¹ Ibid. p6

³⁴² Ibid. p1

³⁴³ Daniels, J. (2018) “The Algorithmic Rise of the ‘Alt-Right’.” *Contexts* 17 (1): 60-65. p65

There is also an epistemic disruption at the heart of the manosphere which resonates with the insurgent character and conspiratorial tone of much far-right discourse. It is not simply that the manosphere is constructed around a rejection of the evidence of men's patriarchal oppression of women in favor of a narrative of feminism's oppression of men. More significantly, much of the "discursive aggregation and amplification" of the manosphere is concerned with propagating the "red pill philosophy," whose cross-cultural appeal can, in part, be explained by the global success of the Matrix movies. This "red pill" meme enjoins men to see through the illusions of contemporary life:

Taking the blue pill means switching off and living a life of delusion; taking the red pill means becoming enlightened to life's ugly truths. The Red Pill philosophy purports to awaken men to feminism's misandry and brainwashing, and is the key concept that unites all of these communities.³⁴⁴

The "red pill" meme is thus part of the "crisis of epistemology" being engineered through digital media by a range of actors, including groups espousing far-right ideology and conspiratorial thinking. As Doctorow makes clear, "we're not living through a crisis about what is true, we're living through a crisis about how we know whether something is true. We're not disagreeing about facts, we're disagreeing about epistemology."³⁴⁵ Ging notes that although the "red pill" meme originated on a relatively obscure online forum (as the subreddit, r/TRP,) it has since proliferated into other domains of the manosphere, including pickup artist and men's rights forums, going so far as to suggest that r/TRP's underlying philosophy functions to "generate consensus and belonging among the manosphere's divergent elements."³⁴⁶ The masculine coding of the red vs blue pill is also clear; "in the alt-right sphere 'blue pill' is a term that is usually attached only to men portrayed as spineless, desperate and sexually unappealing to women - all traits antithetical to most understandings of hegemonic masculinity", Kelly emphasizes.³⁴⁷

The 'beta' masculinities, affective intensity and epistemic disruption of the misogynistic manosphere have all resonated with far-right sensibilities and strategies. This resonance is not without complexity and contingency, however. In a detailed study of what has come to be known as the alt-right, Lyons notes the initial variety of its gender politics.³⁴⁸ The term "Alternative Right" was introduced by Richard Spencer, who in 2010 set up AlternativeRight.com as a white nationalist mouthpiece. "The original AlternativeRight.com featured a range

³⁴⁴ Ging, D. (2017) "Alphas, Betas, and Incels:Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20. p3

³⁴⁵ Doctorow, C. (2019) "danah boyd explains the connection between the epistemological crisis and the rise of far-right conspiratorial thinking." *BoingBoing* [Online] Available: <https://boingboing.net/2019/05/07/production-of-ignorance.html> [Accessed May 15, 2019].

³⁴⁶ Ging, D. (2017) "Alphas, Betas, and Incels:Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere." *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20. p8

³⁴⁷ Kelly, A. (2017) "The alt-right: reactionary rehabilitation for white masculinity: US alt-right extremism is a logical consequence of mainstream neo-conservatism." *Soundings: A journal of politics and culture* 66(Summer): 68-78. p74

³⁴⁸ Lyons, M. N. (2018) CTRL-ALT-DELETE: The origins and ideology of the Alternative Right. Boston, MA: Political Research Associates.

of views on gender, from patriarchal traditionalism to a kind of quasi-feminism”, Lyons observes, with some male contributors expressing concern that their branch of the Right had attracted few women.³⁴⁹ By 2015, however, the alt-right has become a “an internet focused string of commentators, blogs, Twitter accounts, podcasters, and Reddit trolls,” combining “scientific racism, romantic nationalism, and deconstructionist neo-fascist ideas to create a white nationalist movement.”³⁵⁰

The alt-right has moved “beyond traditionalist claims about the sanctity of the family and natural gender roles” and “embraced an intensely misogynistic ideology, portraying women as irrational, vindictive creatures who need and want men to rule over them and who should be stripped of any political role.”³⁵¹ Lyons attributes this change to the influence of the manosphere:

A big reason for this shift toward hardline woman-hating is that the Alt Right has become closely intertwined with the so-called manosphere, an online antifeminist male sub-culture that has grown rapidly in recent years, largely outside traditional right-wing networks.³⁵²

The “discursive system” of the manosphere has helped to foster a transnational community or ecology of misogynistic ethnonationalism, with a “myriad of interconnected organizations, blogs, forums, communities, and subcultures, resulting in a much more extreme and ostensibly amorphous set of discourses and ideological positions.”³⁵³ Ging usefully draws on Papacharissi’s work on “affective publics,” which identifies emotion as a key driver in the political coalescence of digitally networked publics, to highlight the ways in which the aggrieved affect of online men’s rights activism has served to fuel the misogyny of the far-right:

The loose networks of the manosphere thus materialize and disband around connective conduits of sentiment, by mobilizing and reifying narratives of personal suffering to build affective consensus about an allegedly collective, gendered experience, namely men’s position in the social hierarchy as a result of feminism.³⁵⁴

³⁴⁹ Lyons, M. N. (2018) CTRL-ALT-DELETE: The origins and ideology of the Alternative Right. Boston, MA: Political Research Associates. p7

³⁵⁰ Antifascist Front. (2015) “Alternative Internet Racism: Alt Right and the New Fascist Branding.” *Anti-Fascist News* [Online] Available: <https://antifascistnews.net/2015/12/18/alternative-internet-racism-alt-right-and-the-new-fascist-branding/> [Accessed May 15, 2019].

³⁵¹ Lyons, M. N. (2018) CTRL-ALT-DELETE: The origins and ideology of the Alternative Right. Boston, MA: Political Research Associates. p8

³⁵² *Ibid.* p8

³⁵³ Ging, D. (2017) “Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere.” *Men and Masculinities*: 1-20. p2

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p16

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR OXFAM

5.1 LEARNING FROM OXFAM'S WORK ON MEN AND MASCULINITIES

5.1.1 Lessons from Oxfam's work with men on masculinities

The regressive gender and sexual politics of far-right organizations, and their growing influence on public discourse and policy debates in many countries, pose a severe threat to Oxfam's gender justice work. A neo-traditionalism, both patriarchal and heteronormative, characterizes the internal life and external campaigns of far-right movements. This constitutes one of the most significant contemporary engines of 'sustainable patriarchy', Cynthia Enloe's term for the capacity of patriarchal systems and ideologies to renew themselves in response to feminist progress.³⁵⁵ As a 2018 Oxfam report emphasizes:

Indeed, patriarchy has been renewed by a toxic mix of conservative and traditional forces across many countries over the past decade or so: the rise of populist nationalist parties; the resurgence of fundamentalist beliefs; the entrenchment of authoritarian leadership; continuing high levels of conflict and terrorism; and the increased visibility of men's rights activism and organisations.³⁵⁶

Male anxiety is energized by, and in turn energizes, the identity politics of far-right ethno-nationalist projects. The trope of the (majority) male protector, embodied in the political leadership of the 'strong man' and celebrated in far-right messaging as the defender of national identity and cultural 'purity', is shadowed by the figure of the emasculated male and his fragile masculinity. This figure features prominently in the rise of men's right activism in recent years, whose claims to reassert an authentic, virile masculinity against the emasculating effects of feminism have resonated strongly with far-right narratives of the traditional gender order of the ethno-nation under threat from 'outsiders' both within and beyond its borders. As already noted, research suggests that such men's rights activism has been a gateway into far-right online communities and offline action. For Oxfam, this raises urgent questions about how to conceptualize and strengthen its work with men and boys as part of its commitment to gender justice in ways that respond to the growing influence of the far-right.

³⁵⁵ Enloe, C. (2017) *The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging the Persistence of Patriarchy*. Oakland: University of California Press.

³⁵⁶ Ruxton, S. (2018) *Everyone's Responsibility: Oxfam's Work Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Justice*. Oxford: Oxfam International. p12

The history of Oxfam’s efforts to push back against this patriarchal resurgence by working directly with men and boys has recently been outlined.³⁵⁷ In the same year that the UN Commission on the Status of Women agreed a set of conclusions on “the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality”, Oxfam GB published *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*.³⁵⁸ In the preface, then Oxfam GB Director Barbara Stocking made clear that:

If we are to make progress towards gender equality, we must encourage more men to move out of the confines of rigid gender divisions at home, at work, and in the community. To reach a ‘tipping point’ where gender issues become visible, and therefore important, to the majority of men, it is essential that the benefits of gender equality for men as individuals and as members of families and communities should be more widely publicised.³⁵⁹

Fifteen years later, a report commissioned by Oxfam US, Oxfam GB, and Oxfam International begins by noting that “although Oxfam is doing - and has been doing - a wide range of programme work with men and boys as part of its commitment to gender justice, this had not to date been documented or brought together in any systematic way.”³⁶⁰ The report suggests that “in many ways we are behind the curve of increased attention and interest in work on gender equality with men and boys.”³⁶¹

This report, based on a survey of 50 Oxfam staff early in 2018, and secondary research of a range of documents, is Oxfam’s most recent and comprehensive review of its work on issues of masculinities. It concludes that “Oxfam affiliates, country offices and partners are already implementing work with men and boys in multiple ways” but that “to date this has been piecemeal and uncoordinated.”³⁶² Further, the report notes that “we still have little idea of the impact of many of the programmes identified.”³⁶³

The respondents interviewed for this report echoed this assessment. When asked about the extent to which issues of masculinities show up in gender analyses and program designs, responses ranged from “non-existent” to “very inconsistent” to “very patchy and experimental.” Some respondents commented that gender justice work continues to be framed within Oxfam as women’s rights work, with the implication that such a framing neglects or sidelines attention to issues of masculinities and work with men and boys.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ruxton, S. (2004) “Introduction.” In *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, edited by S. Ruxton, 1-18. Oxford, UK: Oxfam GB.

³⁵⁹ Ibid. p vii

³⁶⁰ Ruxton, S. (2018) *Everyone’s Responsibility: Oxfam’s Work Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Justice*. Oxford: Oxfam International. p3

³⁶¹ Ibid. p3

³⁶² Ibid. p6

³⁶³ Ibid. p6

The need to do more gender work with men and boys has been acknowledged within Oxfam. The aim of promoting gender equality and women's rights as integral to Oxfam's work is stated clearly in Oxfam International's Strategic Plan (2013-19), and its objective that "[m]ore poor and marginalized women will occupy key positions of power and influence in communities and organizations, providing transformative leadership in support of women's rights."³⁶⁴ A 2018 review of Oxfam's progress by the Transformative Leadership for Women's Rights (TLWR) Group points out that while TLWR, as both an approach and a strategy, "usually refers to women", it is clear that:

some of the TLWR work also illustrates the need to change men (especially boys). While resolving the question of the place of men as individuals in this type of project remains beyond the scope of this exercise, it can be said that TLWR work addresses its activities to women but aims at transforming both men and women.³⁶⁵

Indeed, the review concludes that "[m]any of our program examples indicate the need to do more on men's engagement in Gender Justice endeavours but offer few lessons."³⁶⁶ A similar point is made in a 2018 assessment of Oxfam's approaches to changes in social norms in VAWG/GBV programming globally, which recommends that Oxfam develop further "the men and boys advocate pillar with a focus on deconstructing masculinities and gender power."³⁶⁷ The report emphasizes that:

Gender norms inclusive of masculinities manifest and are reproduced across the social spectrum, so program interventions and coalitions must seek changes at the interpersonal, institutional, and community levels as well as within the political and legal spheres. In order to truly address the roots of discriminations, issues of power and masculinities should be explored along with a focus on creating equitable relationships of mutual respect.³⁶⁸

How to foreground "issues of power and masculinities" in gender programming for "changes at the interpersonal, institutional, and community levels as well as within the political and legal spheres" continues to be debated however. Oxfam's own review of its work engaging men and boys for gender justice found, among the staff interviewed, a "common concern [...] that focusing more on work with them would reduce capacity and resources for work with women and girls", and

³⁶⁴ Oxfam International. (2013) *The Power of People Against Poverty: Oxfam Strategic Plan 2013-2019*. Oxfam International. p16

³⁶⁵ Smyth, I. (2018) *Transformative Leadership for Women's Rights (TLWR): Lessons and Recommendations from Oxfam's Experiences. Oxfam Research Report*. Oxford: Oxfam International. p49 n21

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p12

³⁶⁷ Douglas, Z., R. Nitia, M. J. d. L. Pellecer, A. Pittman & I. Sahoo. (2018) *Final Review and Sense-making Exercise of the Gender Justice Change Goal: Assessing Oxfam's Approaches to Changes in Social Norms to end VAWG/GBV Programming Globally*. Oxford: Oxfam International and ImpactMapper. p7

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p7-8

that “if men became involved, they might ‘take over’.”³⁶⁹ The report also noted that the “resurgence of conservative and fundamentalist approaches to the family and gender relations in many states around the world was also identified as a considerable challenge.”³⁷⁰

Such concerns are echoed elsewhere. Myrntinen comments, with reference to male engagement programming in conflict-affected contexts, that “the privileging of male agency in these programs at the cost of female agency does carry the risk of merely cementing a ‘kinder, gentler’ patriarchy rather than transforming societal power dynamics.”³⁷¹ In his discussion of male inclusion narratives and male engagement programming within the Women, Peace and Security agenda, Duriesmith highlights the “problematic policy framings that reinforce narratives of barbarous violent men and the reformed “good men” who can protect women and girls [which] are often smuggled into ‘engagement’ materials.”³⁷² The result is that this:

kind of inclusion risks valorising the masculinity of already privileged men, sidelining the role of women’s organising, re-centring male protector narratives, downplaying the difficulty in creating societal change, and further marginalising other men and gender diverse groups that do not have the kind of privilege and visibility of ambassadors.³⁷³

Partly in response to such concerns, Oxfam’s review of its male engagement programming makes clear the need for “a sound gender and power analysis”, and that “[m]en should be engaged positively, but without reinforcing male privilege.”³⁷⁴ The review also highlights the “importance of working within feminist principles and frameworks”, and “finding a mode of approach and language that [will] resonate with men and boys.”³⁷⁵ Organizations working within what is commonly referred to as the “engaging men and boys field” (or “male engagement field”) have developed a set of principles and frameworks that reflect these concerns expressed by Oxfam staff.³⁷⁶

With these principles in place, the Oxfam review makes a number of recommendations, including the need for a “clear statement on the importance of men and boys being involved in gender equality strategies, while keeping a clear focus on women’s rights”, which is “grounded in an intersectional approach that

³⁶⁹ Ruxton, S. (2018) *Everyone’s Responsibility: Oxfam’s Work Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Justice*. Oxford: Oxfam International. p5

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p5

³⁷¹ Myrntinen, H. (2018) “Stabilizing or Challenging Patriarchy? Sketches of Selected “New” Political Masculinities.” *Men and Masculinities*: 1-19. p10

³⁷² Duriesmith, D. (2017) *Engaging Men and Boys in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Beyond the “Good Men” Industry*. London. p12

³⁷³ *Ibid.* p11

³⁷⁴ Ruxton, S. (2018) *Everyone’s Responsibility: Oxfam’s Work Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Justice*. Oxford: Oxfam International. p5

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p5

³⁷⁶ Peacock, D. & G. Barker (2014) “Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-based Violence: Principles, Lessons Learned, and Ways Forward.” *Men and Masculinities* 17(5): 578–599. Also see <http://menengage.org/about-us/our-core-principles/>

takes account of race, class, sexuality, ability, age, geography etc, as well as gender.”³⁷⁷ The review urges that efforts “to involve men and boys in working for gender equality” should also involve steps “to engage and build relations with women’s organisations and other social justice movements with shared aims.”³⁷⁸

At the same time, there is need for “[m]en with senior positions within Oxfam [to] provide high-profile and proactive support for gender equality measures and encourage other men to play their part”, and “safe spaces where men can explore and reflect on gendered power relations, notions of what it means to be a man, the relationship between their personal and professional lives, and their support for gender justice and feminist values.”³⁷⁹ In turn, the review recommends “training from informed and self-critical facilitators for staff working to engage men and boys in gender equality strategies” and “a pool of expertise within Oxfam on working with men and boys” in order to ensure that the “organisational culture, leadership and working relationships within Oxfam can support and strengthen men’s involvement in work on gender justice and women’s rights.”³⁸⁰

5.1.2 Applying these lessons to far-right political masculinities

How well do these recommendations respond to the political masculinities of the far-right discussed in this report? While such recommendations indicate the need for more explicit work with men and boys on issues of masculinities, their framing in terms of “male engagement” or “male inclusion” may itself misconceive the problems posed by the far-right’s gender politics.

Indeed, the exclusion/inclusion discourse that frames so much of the discussion of gender justice work with men and boys risks replaying, unwittingly, the far-right’s own insistence on male exclusion as the problem of contemporary gender relations. The misogyny of the far-right is energized by a discourse of exclusion: that men, and white men in particular, are excluded and oppressed by what far-right texts often refer to as ‘gender ideology.’ Care, then, should be taken by Oxfam (and others) not to replay a narrative of exclusion/inclusion when it comes to thinking through how best to expand and enhance the mobilization of men and boys to counter the regressive gender politics of the far-right.

Several respondents interviewed for this report expressed concern at the increasing frequency with which the question “what about the men?” was being asked in discussions of gender justice programming, because the question appeared to arise not from a specific gender analysis but rather from a

³⁷⁷ Ruxton, S. (2018) *Everyone’s Responsibility: Oxfam’s Work Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Justice*. Oxford: Oxfam International. p6

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p6

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p6

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p6

presumptive male exclusion. They also pushed back against the idea that a primary commitment to women's rights as defining of gender justice programming precludes or diminishes attention to issues of masculinities and direct work with men and boys. They pointed out that feminist struggles from their earliest beginnings have involved work with men, from holding men to account for their male power and privilege to enlisting the support of male allies in their struggles for equal rights with men.

In this respect, it is noteworthy that several of the programs discussed in Oxfam GB's 2004 publication *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice* were initiated and implemented by organizations primarily focused on women's empowerment. By the same token, the great majority of the programs identified in the recent survey of *Oxfam's Work Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Justice* are working with both women/girls and men/boys, often it would seem with a major focus on the former and often being undertaken by self-identified Women's Rights Organizations.³⁸¹ The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM), a collective of over 80 activists, academics, and practitioners working globally to end violence against women and girls, similarly notes that "many women's organisations and feminist strategies ha[ve] been engaging men as part and parcel of their efforts for decades."³⁸²

If male inclusion as a narrative frame is problematic, both because it neglects the long history of feminist anti-patriarchal work with men and resonates, however faintly, with the far-right insistence on White/majority men's exclusion as the rationale for its racist anti-feminism, so too is the insistence on "men and boys" as the lens through which to bring issues of power, masculinities and male supremacism into focus. As discussed in section 1.4.3, there is a long-standing critique, both from within and outside of the field of work with men and boys on gender equality, of its focus on the personal and the cultural over the structural and the political.

In their 2013 research study with 29 representatives of organizations that engage men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls in Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and North and South America, Casey *et al* found an emphasis on the personal and relational and a "lack of concomitant social change strategies within the institutional, peer, and community networks in which men spend most of their time," noting that this "may undermine or directly threaten men's efforts to address gender-based violence and create equity."³⁸³ Similarly, a 2018 review by the International Center for Research on Women of male

³⁸¹ Ruxton, S. (2018) *Everyone's Responsibility: Oxfam's Work Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Justice*. Oxford: Oxfam International.

³⁸² COFEM 2017. How a lack of accountability undermines work to address violence against women and girls. *Feminist Perspectives on Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls Paper No. 1*. Coalition of Feminists for Social Change. p3

³⁸³ Casey, E. A., J. Carlson, C. Fraguera-Rios, E. Kimball, T. B. Neugut, R. M. Tolman & J. L. Edleson (2013) "Context, Challenges, and Tensions in Global Efforts to Engage Men in the Prevention of Violence against Women: An Ecological Analysis." *Men and Masculinities* 16(2): 228-251. p246

engagement programming for gender justice, urges that “in order to create more sustainable gender norm transformation, simultaneous male engagement efforts need to occur at the institutional and policy levels to create more systematic and sustainable changes.”³⁸⁴

The personalist emphases of framing work on “issues of power and masculinities” in terms of working with men and boys on ‘their’ masculinities appears inadequate in the face of this need for social change strategies and institutional transformation.³⁸⁵ Such inadequacy is particularly striking when it comes to confronting the political masculinities of the far-right, and their uses of ideas, narratives and representations of masculinity in the service of their racist ethnonationalism and male supremacism. As this report has sought to make clear, far-right ‘culture wars’ and their struggle for hegemony rely on a symbolic practice of masculinities, whose ideological character, political purposes and affective force must be understood before they can be confronted. This means paying attention to the masculine metaphors and narratives deployed by the far-right in the service of its ethnonationalism and authoritarian gender conservatism. From his studies of far-right formations across Europe, Norocel concludes that “metaphors appear to be more effectively used in politics by representatives of extremist parties, simplifying complicated policy proposals into familiar concepts.”³⁸⁶

Countering the far-right’s symbolic practice of masculinities calls for analyses and strategies for incorporating masculinities issues into gender justice work that move beyond the current emphasis on programming with men and boys for attitudinal and behavioral change. Instead, there is a need for Oxfam, and progressive civil society organizations more generally, to engage with the hegemonic struggle over ideas, narratives and representations of masculinity being deployed by the far-right.

The terrains of this struggle are indicated by the particular uses the far-right has made of masculinities, as discussed in this report: narratives of White/majority masculinity in crisis as a result of economic transition and feminist progress; racialized masculinities and the threat of the male Other; and hetero-patriarchal family values and associated misogynies. This suggests the need to develop masculinities work in response to the far-right on the terrains of struggles for: economic justice in the context of a changing political economy of gender; racial justice at both national and transnational levels; and sexual and reproductive justice, including rights in relation to sexual orientation and non-normative gender

³⁸⁴ ICRW. (2018) *Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It Only Works When Everyone Plays*. Washington DC. p92

³⁸⁵ Douglas, Z., R. Nitia, M. J. d. L. Pellecer, A. Pittman & I. Sahoo. (2018) *Final Review and Sense-making Exercise of the Gender Justice Change Goal: Assessing Oxfam’s Approaches to Changes in Social Norms to end VAWG/GBV Programming Globally*. Oxford: Oxfam International and ImpactMapper. p7

³⁸⁶ Norocel, O. C. (2010) "Constructing radical right populist resistance: Metaphors of heterosexual masculinities and the family question in Sweden." *NORMA: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies* 5(2): 169–183. p173

identities and expression. What such work could look like is briefly discussed next.

5.2 CENTERING ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN GENDER JUSTICE WORK

The rise of the far-right, with its neo-traditionalist gender politics and racialization of masculinities/femininities, threatens efforts to more closely link struggles for gender justice and economic justice. Such struggles must take account of the changing political economy of gender, which itself constitutes a ground from which the far-right has grown. As this report has made clear, the far-right's claim to restore the hetero-patriarchal gender order appeals to the anxieties and resentments arising from a narrative of feminization and masculine decline. Gender becomes a ground on which to reassert a sense of order amid the volatility of post-2008 transnational capitalism and contemporary geo-politics.

Crucially, it is a ground defined, implicitly or explicitly, by a racialization of the 'nation' and its 'family values'. The very real crises of social reproduction, clearly attributed to neoliberalism by Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser in their recent *Notes for a Feminist Manifesto*, are re-framed by the far-right in terms of crises of culture, both hetero-patriarchal and racial.³⁸⁷ On these crises, and their associated insecurities, the far-right has built its appeal to protection, both economic (as in its anti-globalization, trade protectionism) and cultural (as in border walls and immigration controls): a protectionist impulse that is distinctly gendered.

The neo-traditionalism of the far-right's gender politics is organized around the distinction between the 'natural' roles of the female home-maker and male breadwinner, which, the far-right claims, are in crisis, undermined by 'gender ideology' and economic conditions alike. Countering this far-right narrative of masculine crisis in order to re-center attention on the gendered injustices of the political economy must involve masculinities work. But this is work that must, in Willis' phrasing, focus on "mens need to adjust to the decline of patriarchal culture by developing a sense of themselves and their place in the world that does not depend on the segregation or subordination of women."³⁸⁸

"[W]e find ourselves at a fork in the road," insist Arruzza *et al*, in their call to renew a militant anti-capitalist feminism that is adequate to the task of abolishing social hierarchies.³⁸⁹ For them the choices are stark: "Will we continue to pursue

³⁸⁷ Arruzza, C., T. Bhattacharya & N. Fraser (2018) "Notes for a Feminist Manifesto." *New Left Review* 114(November-December): 113-134.

³⁸⁸ Willis, E. 1999. How Now, Iron Johns? *The Nation*.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p114

'equal-opportunity domination' while the planet burns? Or will we reimagine gender justice in an anti-capitalist form, which leads beyond the present carnage to a new society?"³⁹⁰ At the "fork in the road" is also where the far-right positions itself, but it proffers a different choice: a militant conservatism that restores and protects a naturalized social order, both gendered and racialized.

The social organicism of far-right gender ideology, with its essentialized gender roles, is important to recognize; nature metaphors abound. Even the extreme misogyny of the manosphere is rooted in the 'natural' struggles of evolutionary psychology. Such organicism is also, as we have seen, deeply and necessarily racialized; immigrants and refugees are readily metaphorized as infecting or polluting the 'body' of the nation. Significantly, the appeal of this ethnonationalist social organicism is often framed in terms of a response to the distress caused by the current political and economic (dis)order, with its globalized elites and volatile movements of both capital and people.

To counter this militant conservatism of far-right gender ideology, it will be important to expose the fault lines of crisis in the neoliberal political and economic order against which it is constructed, and articulate a feminist vision of social justice that rejects the exclusions and hierarchies of the far-right's social organicism in favor of collective and equitable "life-making."³⁹¹ Masculinities work can play a critical role in this effort, and in re-centering attention on the political economy of injustice, but only if such work examines the ideological uses and institutional effects of hetero-patriarchal, racialized masculinities. To understand such work simply as "engaging men and boys" is to misconstrue both its focus and scope; rather, it is the work that is needed to address different constituencies of men and boys in differing projects of change, based in part on their varying positions within hierarchies of power.

Such a definition of masculinities work in terms of a focus on relations and operations of power rather than simply the target group of men and boys opens analytical space for thinking through the masculine hierarchies deployed by far-right messaging and programmatic space for building cross-gender alliances among those most targeted by far-right campaigns. As one of the leading scholars of masculinities research has herself emphasized, there "are many situations where groups of men may see their interest as more closely aligned with the women in their communities than with other men."³⁹²

In terms of specific work on masculinities, this suggests a need to:

- **Explicitly link gender justice programming with economic justice struggles.** The experiences of economic injustice that many men share with

³⁹⁰ Ibid. p114

³⁹¹ Arruzza, C., T. Bhattacharya & N. Fraser (2018) "Notes for a Feminist Manifesto." *New Left Review* 114(November-December): 113-134.

³⁹² Connell, R. W. (2005) "Change among the Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3): 1801-1825. p1809

women in their communities are an opportunity for education about and mobilization against the systemic causes and gendered effects of this injustice, toward building the social solidarity required for collective and gender equitable life-making. Men who are already active within economic justice struggles are an important target group for gender justice consciousness-raising and skills-building work.

- **Disaggregate the category ‘work with men and boys’.** It is clear from the analysis presented in this report that very different kinds of work and expertise will be needed for different constituencies and target groups of men and boys, based on their differential experiences of and positions within hierarchies of power. The task for any gender justice strategy that is committed to highlighting its ‘work with men and boys’ is to articulate the different kinds of male-focused work that will respond to the linked crises of gender injustice and social inequality, counter the conservatism and social organicism of the far-right and foster the social solidarity necessary for collective and gender equitable life-making.

5.3 CENTERING RACIAL JUSTICE IN GENDER JUSTICE WORK

Oxfam’s report on *The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs* emphasized the need to address “the drivers behind multiple beliefs and cognitive frames which embrace narratives counter to their values and principles.”³⁹³ Many respondents who were interviewed for this report confirmed that it will not be enough to rely on getting the right evidence and promoting technocratic solutions in order to challenge the growing influence and emotional appeal of the far-right. Challenging this influence and appeal means pushing back against the values of ethnonationalism and authoritarianism by foregrounding Oxfam’s vision and core values, to which an anti-racist feminism committed to economic justice is central. This means confronting the ‘culture wars’ of far-right white/majority male identity politics. “We understand that nothing deserving the name of ‘women’s liberation’ can be achieved in a racist, imperialist society,” Arruzza *et al* declare.³⁹⁴

The racialization of masculinities and femininities is fundamental to the ethnonationalism of the far-right. The threat to the ethno-nation is commonly depicted in terms of the dangerous masculinities of the racialized male Other; the far-right’s claim to protect the nation and its culture is often framed as a protection of white/majority women and children. This is to say that for many far-right formations, the vision of a heteronormative gender order, and associated

³⁹³ Galasso, N., G. N. Feroci, K. Pfeifer & M. Walsh. (2017) *The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs*. Washington DC. p10

³⁹⁴ Arruzza, C., T. Bhattacharya & N. Fraser (2018) “Notes for a Feminist Manifesto.” *New Left Review* 114(November-December): 113-134. p129

'family values', relies on a racialization of masculinities, in which the threat of the outsider/minority male must be resisted by the insider/majority male protector. This is an ideological project with significant institutional implications. The rise of the far-right throws into sharp relief what has always been true; masculinities work in the context of gender justice programming must confront the ideological deployment of racialized masculinities in the service of historical colonial conquest and contemporaneous national imaginaries.

As already noted, the far-right's racist ethnonationalism is in many ways only a more overt expression of the project of racial formation which, albeit in different ways, has shaped the ostensibly democratic political cultures of societies rooted in settler colonialism and imperial conquest. Racialization has been a mainstay of policy and discourse across the political spectrum in both North America and Europe. "Race constructs the boundaries of the imagined public sphere not only in white nationalism, but also hauntingly shapes many conservative and liberal understandings of the public," as Statzel makes clear.³⁹⁵

Countering the far-right's ethnonationalism must begin, then, with not exceptionalizing its racism; anti-racist work is required across the political spectrum. But far-right messaging and rhetoric is marked by a heightened emphasis on racialized gender, organized around themes of sexuality and violence, as defining its ethnonationalist project to protect the borders of the nation and the boundaries of the heteronormative family. Commenting on the rise of far-right parties in Europe, Lombardo notes the ways in which "[g]ender equality is instrumentally used to express historical narratives about Muslims as a 'threat to the Christian Occident'."³⁹⁶ This racialized, gendered narrative of threat is most clearly seen in contemporary policy debate and public discussion of migration; the extent to which a racist discourse of the migrant 'threat' has been normalized is an indication of the success of the far-right's hegemonic struggle to establish a mainstream ethno-nationalist common sense. Racialized masculinities have been very visible in this far-right effort, requiring that an anti-racist gender justice lens be central to the work of Oxfam and other agencies on immigrant and refugee rights.

The far-right's fusion of projects of racial and gender formation often center on the protection of the white/majority heteronormative family, and its essentialized roles and responsibilities; the family is rendered not merely the foundational social unit but metonymically expresses the social order itself, with its naturalized hierarchy. In this way, the racialized gender politics of the far-right highlight the limitations of framing male engagement work in terms of attitudinal and behavioral change at the individual level, for masculinities are also an ideological repertoire of images of and ideas about power and subordination that are

³⁹⁵ Statzel, R. S. (2008) "Cybersupremacy: The new face and form of white supremacist activism." In Tactics in Hard Times: Practices and Spaces of New Media, edited by M. Boler, 405-428. Boston: The MIT Press. p409

³⁹⁶ Lombardo, E. (2018) "Themed Book Review on Gender and Conservatism: Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe. Edited by Michaela Ko'ttig, Renate Bitzan, and Andrea Petó." *Politics & Gender*. p3

institutionally embedded and politically deployed. The forgoing has implications for masculinities work, both by Oxfam and its partners, in gender justice programming and within Oxfam as an organization. It highlights the importance of basing programmatic theories of change on analyses of power that articulate the connections between misogyny and other forces of social stratification, and the spectrum of their operations from the personal to the structural level. Several respondents interviewed for this report noted the continuing challenges that Oxfam as a whole still faces in fully integrating intersectional gender analyses into all of its work.

This means that many of the issues with which the gender justice programming of development NGOs is typically concerned, including the care economy, sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence, are important terrains on which to confront far-right discourse. Countering the far-right's racialization of 'family values' will involve highlighting and challenging its racist deployment of both masculinities and femininities in the service of ethnonationalism, by developing gender justice programming based on anti-racist principles and aligned with anti-racist struggles.

To do so effectively will also involve recognizing and addressing the affective intensity of the far-right's use of racialized gender to ground its ideology of militant conservatism and social organicism. Affective intensification is key to the far-right's politics of polarization, and the racialization of masculinities and femininities has played a significant role in the far-right's efforts to provoke White/majority anxiety and anger about the existential threat of the Other. As discussed above in relation to the influence of the manosphere on far-right organizing and messaging, the digital networking that has helped build a paradoxically transnational ethnonationalist movement has drawn heavily on tropes and memes of racialized gender to foster 'affective publics' receptive to far-right discourse. The work that is needed to challenge the far-right, then, includes work to build alternative publics, organized around progressive values of pluralism and solidarity.

Depending on local and national contexts, there may be a need to expand the range of civil society partners with whom Oxfam works to ensure that the commitment to an anti-racist feminism that understands and addresses economic exploitation is realized. Any effort to expand and deepen partnerships across different sectors must be guided by the principles and practices of solidarity, allyship and accountability. With this in mind, it is noteworthy that research on the internal gender politics and 'cultures' of progressive social justice movements confirms that male supremacist and other gender oppressive attitudes and practices continue to blight their work. A 2013 summary of research on *Gender and Social Movements* found that:

even as social justice movements engage in struggles for a diversity of economic, social and political rights, the aspirations and interests of women within these are either forgotten, assumed to be the same as men's, or equally advanced by the movement's strategic agenda.³⁹⁷

As the report concluded, sustained change “will only take place once actors in movements – especially movement leaders – name and begin to engage with the deep structure of patriarchal gender norms and the ways that these manifest in movement imaginations, power dynamics and roles.”³⁹⁸ Resisting the rise of the far-right calls for more work on the “deep structure of patriarchal gender norms” within the progressive civil society sector itself.

The rise of the far-right is also a transnational phenomenon, both operationally and ideologically. Notwithstanding its heterogeneous positions on a range of public policy issues depending on national context, the ethnonationalist and authoritarian tenets of the far-right pose a threat to Oxfam's work as a whole. For these reasons, effective responses to the far-right will depend on transnational collaboration across the Oxfam confederation and its partners, as well as internal alignment within each Oxfam on the principles and priorities that should guide gender justice work across the organization in the context of the threat posed by the far-right. The principle and practices of solidarity, and in support of these the practices of ally-ship and accountability, will be critical in developing such transnational collaboration and internal alignment.

In relation to work on masculinities, this suggests a need to:

- **Design gender justice and racial justice programming to be mutually reinforcing:** This will include addressing the specific ways in which the racialization of masculinities and femininities is used by the far-right to promote its ethnonationalist ideology, as well as developing services and campaigns for racially oppressed communities that address the gender issues they face. Work with men and boys within these communities needs to take account of their complex and linked experiences of gender privilege and racial subordination.
- **Strengthen capacity to counter the far-right's affective intensification of racialized gender:** Fostering the social solidarities that can challenge the hierarchies and exclusions of the far-right's ethnonationalist ideology and its social organicist vision will require a capacity to communicate affectively as well as cognitively; evidence-based programming must also be values-based and emotionally resonant. A vision of families and communities and, by extension, nations organized around the values of inclusive, sustainable and

³⁹⁷ Horn, J. (2013) Gender and Social Movements: Overview Report. Brighton, UK. p iii
³⁹⁸ Ibid. p89

gender equitable life-making is needed to counter the racialized ‘family values’ of the far-right.

- **Strengthen capacity for practices of solidarity, ally-ship and accountability within internal operations and external partnerships:** To be an effective advocate for a vision of gender justice in response to the far-right, Oxfam and its partners must transform aspects of their own deep structures and ‘cultures’ that reinforce or collude with the ideology of white, male supremacy underpinning the rise of the far-right.

5.4 CHALLENGING THE GENDER BINARY IN GENDER JUSTICE WORK

At the heart of far-right gender politics is the effort to control women within the heteronormative family and to exclude/punish those whose sexual orientation and gender identity and expression do not conform to heteronormative, cisgendered norms. Challenging this double gender binary (which oppresses women and those people with non-conforming genders and sexualities) must be central to efforts to resist the rise of the far-right. This has implications for the way in which masculinities work is conceived.

Insisting that masculinities, however multiple, belong to men and that transformed gender relations are fundamentally about changed relations, implicitly or explicitly heterosexual, between the female and the male, is to neglect the diversity of genders and sexualities through which people live their lives. A recent ICRW study of gender work with men and boys notes that “most of the work on positive masculinities and gender equity are [sic] built on the assumption of heterosexual gender relations.”³⁹⁹ Such an assumption inhibits a thorough analysis of and response to the many connections between gender, sexuality and violence. As the ICRW report emphasizes:

This heteronormative framing neglects the discrimination and violence experienced by people of diverse sexual orientations within the LGB community. It also neglects the gender binary bias and related transphobic prejudices that can lead to violence and discrimination in the transgender and intersex communities.⁴⁰⁰

A similar point is made by Dworkin *et al* in their survey of gender transformative programming with men on health issues. They point out that:

Gender-transformative programming privileges heteronormative masculinities and cisgender men. While some non-governmental and community-based

³⁹⁹ ICRW. (2018) Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It Only Works When Everyone Plays. Washington DC. p92

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. p92

gender-transformative programmes do address homophobia and transphobia, and also include men who have sex with men, science-based programming that is specifically gender-transformative largely ignores transgender and/or minority sexuality men.⁴⁰¹

The implication of these critiques is that any effort to deepen work on masculinities, especially in response to the militant gender conservatism of the far-right, must focus analytic and programmatic attention on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. At its most basic level, this means recognizing that work on masculinities does not equate to gender work with men only, and that gender work with men is not only confined to work on their heteronormative relations with women.

It is also clear from the research cited in this report that gender justice programming in response to the far-right must also address its misogynistic masculinism, directed at cisgendered and transgendered women. The online infrastructure of the alt-right in particular has played an important role in not only disseminating but also normalizing misogyny in public discourse. Challenging this normalization is a critical task for gender justice programming.

In terms of what this means for work on masculinities, this suggests a need to:

- **Ensure that campaign messages and training materials on masculinities and for work with men and boys problematize the double gender binary:** This will include addressing the ways in which patriarchal violence targets both women and girls and people with non-conforming genders and sexualities, and highlighting the multiplicity of masculinities and femininities in terms of a diversity of genders and sexualities.
- **Make sexual and reproductive rights, including rights in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, central to a vision of inclusive, equitable and democratic societies:** Control over sexuality and reproduction is at the heart of the far-right's patriarchal gender politics; challenging such a politics requires a rights-based agenda responding to the interests and needs of people of different gender identities and sexual orientations.
- **Strengthen capacity to build networked publics in support of gender justice:** Organizations on the progressive Left, and perhaps development NGOs in particular, have been slow to recognize and respond to the pernicious effects of the manosphere, and its normalization of extreme misogyny. Strengthening capacity to counter this normalization is an urgent priority, requiring more attention to online campaigns targeting young men. As research on the impact of digital technologies on community building makes

⁴⁰¹ Dworkin, S. L., P. J. Fleming & C. J. Colvin (2015) "The promises and limitations of gender-transformative health programming with men: critical reflections from the field." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 17(sup2): 128-143. p134

clear, anti-racist gender justice programming must attend to “what mediated feelings of connectedness do for politics and networked publics in the digital age.”⁴⁰² In Papacharissi’s suggestive phrasing, “[t]echnologies network us, but it is our stories that connect us.”⁴⁰³ The growing influence of the far-right, however, also makes clear the effective use of narratives to disconnect us, through mediated feelings of fear, resentment and anger. Fostering “feelings of connectedness” through linked work on gender and racial justice will be critical in resisting the ‘culture wars’ that the far-right seeks to fight.

⁴⁰² Papacharissi, Z. (2016) "Affective Publics and Structures of Storytelling: Sentiment, Events and Mediality." *Information, Communication & Society* 19(3): 307–324. p307

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.* p307

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