Queering the Far Right: Homonationalism in the
Alternative für Deutschland

by

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Introduction:
Gender, Sexuality, and the German Far Right

The study of the European far right carries with it a sense of urgency, as more extremist parties gain power in Western democracies, in part as a response to rising numbers of refugees and immigrants. The actual influence of these parties can be debated, but they have ushered in new, or forgotten, conversations about nationalism, fascism, and xenophobia.

Nowhere is this more troubling, and pressing, than in Germany. Germany is unique in its strong anti-extremism laws and norms, and its political culture has strong taboos against nationalist rhetoric and cooperating with extremists. Parties must pass a five percent threshold to enter parliament, thereby institutionally preventing extremism, and mainstream parties have vowed never to cooperate with extreme rightwing parties. As other European democracies faced the rise of extremist parties and rhetoric, it seemed that Germany, and the welcome it offered to refugees, would be the bulwark against European xenophobia and nationalism. But Chancellor Merkel’s leadership in the refugee crisis led to backlash, and a new Eurosceptic party reshaped itself into an anti-immigration party, drastically altering German politics.

On September 24, 2017, the Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD) became the first far right party to ascend to the German Parliament, the Bundestag, since the Nazi period. Other far right parties have held seats at the state and municipal level, but since the parliament of West Germany was
established in 1949, after Nazi defeat, no far right party has held seats at the national level. Leaders of the AfD have challenged German cultural norms of remembrance and atonement of the Nazi past, prompting much criticism and debate. In a country that otherwise shies away from nationalist rhetoric and imagery, the AfD has pushed against ideas of the acceptable in German politics.

*Research Questions and Overview*

In this thesis, I study how the AfD engages with Jasbir Puar’s (2007) theory of homonationalism, or the alliance of LGBTQ interests and state nationalism, in order to justify xenophobic positions, often regarding Islam. I argue that far-right parties such as the AfD are using homonationalist rhetoric as a strategy to legitimize themselves as long-lasting parties, and lessen their extremist image, by framing themselves as tolerant and pro-queer, and framing Islam as inherently homophobic and incompatible with supposed Western tolerance.

Literature on the far right tends to categorize these parties as conservative regarding gender and sexuality, but this ignores the recent incorporation of homonationalist rhetoric into the parties, particularly embodied by AfD leader Alice Weidel. The study of the far right requires an intervention with queer theory to best understand the evolving use of queer politics in the far right.

As Mudde (2007) argues, the far right does not share a consistently conservative attitude towards gender and sexuality, but rather far-right parties vary between traditionally conservative and what might appear like progressive values regarding gender. I find that the AfD, rather than projecting one traditionalist agenda
on gender and sexuality, in fact contains two wings, one antifeminist and homphobic, as scholars frequently observe, and the other homonationalist and centered in a kind of queer politics. The first wing, led by Alexander Gauland, is the one most commonly conflated with the party as a whole, as opposed to LGBTQ rights and “non-traditional” families. However, Alice Weidel and the Alternative Homosexuals (AHO) embody an emerging part of the AfD, that fits homonationalism and queerness into the existing anti-immigrant agenda through protectionist rhetoric. The party as a whole both is homophobic in policy, and claims to protect homosexuals from the supposed homophobia of Islam and immigrants.

After examining the literature on gender and far right parties and other scholars’ analysis of the AfD, particularly the phenomena of “gender ideology” and “gender mainstreaming,” I have found a gap in the scholarly discussion regarding the instrumentalization of certain queer identities, even in tandem with the overt homophobia in the traditionalist wing.

This strategic use of queer politics is not to say that the AfD is actually gay-friendly or progressive—it still holds violently homophobic policy platforms—but only that this more nuanced lens helps illuminate the adaptability and popularity of the party, and how it is expanding to new voters.

Just as Mudde has criticized the feminist bias of the far-right literature regarding gender, it is important to note biases in discussions of queer politics. Queer voters, like women, do not always vote for what might seem to others like “their own” interests, and LGBTQ voters are not unilaterally progressive. “Queer” politics itself is a complicated phrase to use, because it both refers to LGBTQ identities, but
also a history of marginalization of the community that “queer” groups like the Alternative Homosexuals actively try to distance themselves from. The incorporation of queerness into nationalism, which is exactly what the Alternative Homosexuals and other homonationalist groups seek to do, raises questions about the very use of “queer” to describe what might be a homonormative un-queering—to incorporate themselves in the normative politics of nationalism, and to cease being the “other” that “queer” connotes.

However, even in highlighting the rising homonationalism in far-right parties, it is important not to conflate this with the actual incorporation of LGBTQ people into politics, and not to be misleading about a party that wants to take away the rights of queer people, and that for many even harkens to the Nazi party and the systematic murder of queer people. Puar focuses on remembering and foregrounding queer Muslim lives in a political climate that denies the coexistence of Islam and queerness, and likewise, it is crucial to interrogate the AfD’s use of white queerness for their anti-immigration platform.

The incorporation of homonationalism into AfD party strategy is initially surprising given the emphasis on traditional families in its platform, and the homophobic remarks made by several leaders. Nonetheless, Alice Weidel’s leadership as well as the courting of homosexual voters, in groups such as the Alternative Homosexuals and in campaign materials, suggests that the AfD is shifting from the traditionalist, conservative social values associated with nationalism and the far right, and looking for support in new societal groups such as women and queer communities. The question of homonationalism in the AfD can be investigated
through the voter lens, asking why queer voters are attracted to far right nationalist parties, and the party lens, asking why far right nationalist parties look to court queer voters, while maintaining their “traditional values” core voters.

Weidel’s identity politics baffle onlookers, but she is not just a token to prove the party’s tolerance; she is immensely popular within the party, even with constituents who might not be expected to embrace a queer leader. Another part of the puzzle of Alice Weidel is her identity specifically as a lesbian, not a homosexual man, which is the demographic the AfD seems to be targeting and gaining popularity with. Why is Weidel the de facto face of homonationalism in the AfD, and how does her gender interact with masculinist, and gay masculinist, gender norms in the party?

This thesis studies the AfD and homonationalism in three sections, corresponding to three levels of politics: organizations, leaders, and voters. I investigate first the party itself in relationship to the Alternative Homosexuals (AHO). I then turn to study the faces of this wing of the party, Alice Weidel and Alexander Tassis, leader of the AHO. Last, I study the voters who support the AfD and AHO, in relation to existing literature on the masculinity inherent to the far right, and how this literature engages with heteronormativity. My central questions are: Why do these homophobic and homonationalist wings emerge in a party generally seen as focused on immigration and the EU, not social policy? Are these wings and their ideologies in contradiction to each other, or in cooperation? Is homonationalist rhetoric a purposeful strategy to court new voting groups, and is it successful?


**Literature Review: Far Right Party Survival and Success**

The literature on radical right parties focuses on explaining their unexpected successes, and rarely addresses the gender and sexuality dynamics of the parties, although this area of analysis has grown in recent years. The main theories address how radical right parties interact with and are shaped by mainstream parties, the role of activists, adaptability, and supply and demand. Although three out of four of these theories do not bring gender into the conversation, they leave room for important gender analysis.

Meguid (2005) argues that fringe parties’ success is shaped by how mainstream parties respond to the issues they raise. She shows that niche parties not only take a stance on issues such as immigration, but also alter their salience and claim ownership of issues, and mainstream parties can either dismiss, align with, or align against, the issue claims that fringe parties make. Whereas Meguid focuses on mainstream party interaction and issue ownership, Art (2012) argues that the key factor in far right parties is the kind of activists they recruit. He argues for the centrality of historical legacies shaping resources available to these parties, as well as the social environment and political opportunity structure, such as cordon sanitaires.

Both Meguid and Art write before the creation of the AfD, but they provide frameworks helpful for analyzing the AfD’s relationship to the CDU and

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immigration, as well as how the AfD is shaped by obvious and less obvious historical legacies, and its types of activists.

Meguid studies how niche parties interact with issue selection differently than longer established mainstream parties. She notes that the issues these parties raise often do not coincide with the existing lines of political division, at times even cross-cutting traditional partisan alignments. Meguid cites radical right parties and immigration, and Green parties and the environment, as key examples of this. She also argues that niche parties are different from mainstream parties because they limit their issue appeals, opting for a restricted set of issues rather than comprehensive policy platforms. Even when they increase the number of issues on their platform, Meguid argues, voters still perceive them as single-issue parties.

Niche parties rely on the salience of their one central issue stance for voter support, such as anti-immigration in the AfD’s case. By choosing which issues to compete on, parties shape the importance of policy dimensions, and voters take cues from parties on which issues are relevant. Meguid proposes that how established parties react to the issues niche parties campaign on affects the success of these niche parties. She categorizes three responses that mainstream parties can have regarding these issues: dismissive, accommodative, or adversarial strategies. Meguid argues that “non-action” is actually a deliberate choice that she terms a dismissive strategy, where an established party chooses to not take a position on the niche party’s issue, thereby signaling to voters that the issue is not important. If voters are convinced by this dismissive strategy, they will not vote for the niche party and it will not be successful. However, if the established party chooses to take action, they are faced
with either converging or diverging with the niche party stance. Either way, the “salience of that issue increases as the mainstream party acknowledges the legitimacy of the issue and signals its prioritization of that policy dimension for electoral competition.”

Established parties can either take an accommodative strategy, by agreeing with the niche party and trying to co-opt the issue stance, or an adversarial strategy, and take the oppositional stance against the niche party. Meguid notes that even in an adversarial stance, the party still reinforces the niche party’s issue ownership through juxtaposition, and strengthens the link in voters’ minds between issue stance and the niche party.

Meguid concludes that fringe parties affect mainstream parties because mainstream responses change the dimensions of political competitions. By taking either an accommodative or adversarial strategy, the mainstream party legitimizes the relevance of the niche party issue and includes it in the mainstream political debate. Meguid also argues that the “success” of the niche party issue is distinct from the party’s electoral success; she cites immigration and the environment as mainstream campaign topics even where Green and radical right parties have failed. She states: “Strategies directed against short-term threats, therefore, may have a lasting impact on the content of the political debate.”

Meguid’s framework can be used to categorize the relationship between the AfD and the CDU, the mainstream right party in Germany. In the wake of the refugee crisis, when Chancellor Merkel proclaimed Germany’s welcoming stance to refugees,

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3 Meguid, page 349.
4 Meguid, page 357.
she situated the CDU in a clearly adversarial stance to the AfD’s anti-immigration platform. However, although Meguid describes mainstream parties as taking stances on immigration in response to niche party stance, in the case of the refugee crisis, immigration could not have been dismissed as a relevant issue, and Merkel was responding to the influx of refugees to the EU, not just to the AfD’s stance towards those refugees.

Although Meguid’s analysis does not incorporate a gender and sexuality lens, we can still ask, do mainstream parties affect far right parties’ messaging regarding gender and sexuality? Issue choice is less gendered than Art’s activist characteristics, but still engages the gendered expectations of masculine and feminine issues. Angela Merkel’s leadership of the CDU is certainly regarded in gendered terms, as she is nicknamed “Mutti,” or “mother,” and her decision to “welcome” is often framed in the language of empathy and stereotypically female governing characteristics, which in turn genders the AfD’s stance as more aggressive and masculine.

Art examines far right parties from the inside, providing a new layer of analysis to the success and failure of these parties, which he locates outside of the mainstream/niche political arena. He focuses his analysis on radical right party activists, which he defines as a spectrum from party leaders to ordinary members whose level of involvement exceeds paying yearly dues. Art claims that “the internal life of radical right parties – and, indeed, political parties in general – is shaped by the nature of their activists.” He notes that the literature on the far right focuses on voters and largely ignores those who commit more to their parties, treating them as fanatics.

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5 Art, page 6.
or followers, whereas Art describes activists as varying importantly in their visions, extremism, commitment, and levels of education and experience. He also argues that radical right parties are uniquely positioned to take advantage of the fluid electoral environment of the twenty first century, where party fortunes and electoral behavior have become notably less predictable than in the past. Nonetheless, Art writes, it is up to parties to take advantage of this opportunity in a volatile environment.

Art diverges from Meguid in his analysis of issue salience. He states, “While demand-side factors – particularly immigration – appear to be necessary for the rise of the radical right, they are certainly not sufficient for electoral success.”6 He counters that the trajectories of far-right parties are shaped by the activists they recruit, which he categorizes as moderates, extremists, and opportunists. According to his typology, extremists are united by their rejection of parliamentary democracy, and many are authoritarian. Moderates accept democracy, and although they may want to alter democratic institutions, they adhere to democratic legitimacy. Art also notes that moderates adhere to ethnopluralism rather than biological racism, and stress the issue of immigrant cohabitation rather than inferiority. Opportunists, as opposed to extremists and moderates, do not emerge from far-right subcultures, but rather are attracted by the far right’s electoral success, and hold less coherent attitudes, being more interested in power and career advancement. In addition to this typology, Art also categorizes activists based on their socioeconomic status and education. He argues that these attributes affect how parties develop, attract new members, and remain viable. Art argues that activists’ attributes affect party cohesion, competence,

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6 Art, page 13.
legitimacy, and ideological flexibility. More moderate activists with more political experience affect the parties’ competence and legitimacy especially.

Art’s argument hinges upon not only the nature of party activists, but also the presence of preexisting political resources from historical legacies. He argues that historical legacies provide the means for far-right party building, which much of the literature on the radical right has ignored. Art states, “radical right parties, like fascist movements, are the product of a distinct historical epoch, [and] their success and failure cannot be understood in isolation from the movements that preceded them.”

In this part of his analysis, Art aligns with Meguid as he forefronts the importance of the interaction between the mainstream and radical right. He discusses cordons sanitaires, or agreements not to cooperate with extremists, which affect the ability of far-right parties to attract new supporters in order to survive. He argues that the environment, shaped by historical legacies, affects whether far right parties are ostracized or allowed a seat at the table, which then in turn affects their ability to recruit and survive.

Art applies his activist and history framework to Germany’s NPD, tracing the German historical response to extremism post-Nazism. He describes how a combination of Allied and German state policy marginalized the potential leaders of the far right, and banned parties that openly advocated for Nazi policies. He concludes that radical right parties in Germany have not been able to overcome the Nazi legacy and extremist tilt.

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7 Art, page 231.
Art’s analysis of gender is noticeably absent, and a fruitful element of activist characteristics to study. He discusses how activists’ levels of education, experience, and extremism affect their parties’ successes, but not how their gender or sexuality might affect these issues. In application to the AfD, Art’s activist framework is helpful for categorizing Weidel and Gauland’s strategic differences, and suggests that Weidel’s moderate stance is far more beneficial for the future of the party. In regards to historical legacy and cordons sanitaire, the AfD is certainly shaped by the German law banning extremism, and Merkel’s decision never to form coalition with the AfD. Homonationalism and female nationalism can be seen as strategies to overcome the perception of the AfD as too extremist to cooperate with. However, he does not acknowledge how moderation and extremism are shaped by gendered expectations—Weidel’s position as more moderate certainly has to do with her identity as female and queer, as female politicians are proven to be perceived as more moderate than their male counterparts, regardless of their actual position.

Betz (1993)\(^8\) discusses the far right in relation to reactionary and future-oriented models, arguing that far right parties are incorrectly categorized as only traditional and reactionary to societal changes, and rather they at times anticipate and expect radical changes. Unlike Meguid, Betz places more agency on the far-right parties themselves, but also focuses on issue choice and programs. He views the far right as capable of innovating and adapting to change and new groups, rather than remaining rigid and tied to social conservatism. Although written two decades before

the birth of the AfD, Betz’s framework allows for the possibility of a homonationalist
turn in far right politics, as these parties defy traditional conservative ideas and
anticipate changes in the political arena.

Betz frames his discussion as the far right either being reflective of temporary
resentment and single-issue protest, or a response to structural problems of Western
democracies. Betz argues that the success of far-right parties depends on two factors:
“their ability to mobilize resentment and protest and their capability to offer a future-
oriented program that confronts the challenge posed by the economic, social, and
cultural transformation of advanced West European democracies.”9 He acknowledges
the importance of immigration as an issue, but argues that the mobilization of
xenophobia is not enough to account for far right success. Betz stresses the populist
side of these parties: “By appealing to lingering sentiments of powerlessness, to
widespread alienation from the political process, and to growing resentment against
the prevailing political system, radical populist right-wing parties present themselves
as the true ‘antiparty parties.’”10

Betz argues that the success of the radical right can best be attributed to the
mixture of its program, combining populist mobilization of resentment with a future-
oriented response to the challenges of cultural transformation facing western
societies. He describes debate over the nature of the radical right as either a response
by the losers of modernization to marginalization, or as a response to the broader
cultural transformation, where the far right occupies one pole on a new axis of

9 Betz, page 415.
10 Betz, page 419.
conflict over social values. Betz defines these issues as the environment, changing morality norms, and multiculturalism, where the radical right reactions with an emphasis on “old politics”: “sustained economic growth, technological progress, economic stability, a tough stand on questions of law and order, and a return to traditional moral values.”

Neither of these sufficiently explains the ambiguities of the far right, says Betz. He argues that these interpretations show the far right as reactive against change, rather than embodying change in a new direction. Betz defines these parties as reactionary, or attempting to prevent change, in regard to refugees, as they seek to return to an ethnically homogenous past, but argues that their “neo-liberal stance, on the other hand, explicitly anticipates, supports, and endorses radical change and thus hardly appeals to those threatened by these changes.” Successful parties, notes Betz, have forged an electoral alliance between members of the working class as well as members of the new middle class. He finds that these parties attempt to appeal especially to newly emerging groups in society, who accept the market as the decider of individual chance.

Betz concludes that the radical right is still ideologically rightwing, but considerably different from the traditional extreme right. He notes its similarities to the libertarian left, in its liberal commitment to individualism and adaptation. However, the difference is in equality, for although the libertarian left is committed of equality, the radical right assumes basic inequality, as shown by its anti-immigrant

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11 Betz, page 421.
12 Betz, page 421.
and economic policy that puts the national population first. The programmatic mixture, to Betz, explains its success: the xenophobic program poses little threat to new middle-class voters, and its neoliberal program poses little threat to its working-class voters.

Whereas Art focuses on activists and Mudde on internal and external supply structures, Betz focuses on programmatic mixture and future-oriented strategies. This framework centers the success of these parties in their adaptability and multilayered programs, rather than their ownership of one issue.

Betz’s theory of adaptability lends itself to studying the AfD’s stances on gender, sexuality, and family policy. He stresses that these new far right parties are fundamentally different from the traditional extreme right, and more willing to appeal to emerging groups in society—in this case, extremist women and LGBTQ Germans. In viewing the AfD as future-oriented, rather than reactionary and conservative as much analysis holds, it is far more likely that the party would court queer voters.

Mudde (2007)\textsuperscript{13} frames the far right in terms of supply and demand, and addresses the gaps in literature on the far right concerning gender roles, although does not theorize about sexuality. Like Art, Mudde argues for the importance of the political culture and levels of stigmatization of extremism, which he classifies as the supply side of politics. Parallel to Meguid, Mudde also cares about the mainstream, but he argues that the radical right embodies “pathological normalcy” rather than “normal pathology,” or radicalization of mainstream ideas.

This distinction between “pathological normalcy” and “normal pathology” intervenes in questions not only of the success of the far right, but also of its very nature as “far.” Mudde argues that literature on nationalism, fascism, and the far right are based on the thesis of normal pathology, where the populist radical right is seen as a pathology of all liberal democracies. Support is usually marginal, but increases in times of crisis and mass immigration. He counters that the far right is actually a case of “pathological normalcy,” where mainstream ideas already present are radicalized, which for Mudde shifts the questions from “why do people hold populist radical right ideas?” to “why do they vote for these parties?” to which he answers: the supply side of politics.

Successful far right parties need a strong breeding ground, consisting of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism, but this demand side alone is insufficient to explain the success of the far right: “Every European country has a (relatively) fertile breeding ground for the populist radical right, yet only in some countries do these parties also flourish in elections. The answer to that puzzle is not to be found in the demand side, but in the supply side.”\(^\text{14}\) Mudde argues that during the electoral breakthrough phase, far right parties themselves are not the most important factor, although charismatic leaders, professional propaganda, and strong organization help. In this phase, he locates the supply side factor as external, in the political opportunity structures. These structures include the electoral system, convergence between the major established parties, a broad nativist subculture, and media coverage.

\(^{14}\) Mudde, page 298.
Once a far-right party has achieved electoral breakthrough, Mudde argues that a new set of factors determines its electoral persistence and long-term survival. He states, “The focus shifts from the external to the internal supply side, in other words, the importance of the political opportunity structure decreases,” and the party itself becomes the crucial independent variable. The party’s important supply side variables are organization, personnel, and propaganda. Mudde stresses that the party must be well-organized and well-led to attract larger voter groups and media coverage. He also discusses the problem faced by far-right parties of how to balance old and new voters: it must be able to speak to new voters without alienating its old hardcore base. Mudde describes the transformation new voters must undergo, from soft supporters and protest voters to loyal party supporters, which requires that parties legitimize themselves, in part through issue ownership.

Of the supply side factors affecting party success, political culture is central. Mudde describes the stigmatization of political extremism leading to failure: “in countries where nationalism is regarded with great suspicion and easily linked to the period of the Second World War, populist radical right parties run to the risk of ‘being tarred by the extremist brush.’” Mudde’s analysis of far-right parties also includes an important discussion of gender roles and traditionalism. He describes the far right as “Männerparteien,” or “men’s parties,” and recounts the lack of literature on gender and the far right, and the feminist bias within that literature, to read the radical right as simply sexist and traditionalist.

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15 Mudde, page 301.
16 Mudde, page 302.
The Missing Piece: Gender and Sexuality in Far-Right Parties

The study of the European far right has predominantly not used gender analysis, although literature on gender and the far right has expanded significantly in the last decade or so. The existing literature can be divided into three main focuses: female voters for the far right, rhetoric about women and gender, and female leaders and representatives of far-right parties and movements. One of the main tensions in this field of research is how welcoming these parties are to women. From the Nazi regime to Jean-Marie Le Pen’s Front National, the far right is genuinely thought of as rooted in misogyny and toxic masculinity, but as new researchers are showing, at least in the West, the far right is becoming a more welcoming place for white women.

Gender analysis has been applied to nationalism theory for longer and more robustly than it has to the study of far right parties. Nationalism and gender have an intricately connected relationship, as nationalist movements traditionally see motherhood as vital to the continuance of the nation. The nation has been constructed predominantly as a male project, and imagined as a brotherhood.17 Mayer (2000) writes, “Because men regard the nation—that is themselves—as a single body, their own ego becomes at stake in national conflicts, and they frequently seek to sustain control over reproduction and representation of both sexuality and nation.”18 This relationship between masculinity and the nation has materialized in far-right movements and parties, which have until recently been aggressively male spaces.

17 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, 1983.
The initial literature on the gender and far right focuses on this gender gap, i.e., why more men than women seem to vote for far-right parties. This question can be seen as the launching point for much of the literature that has followed. Miller-Idriss and Pilkington (2017) summarize this phenomenon: “There is a substantive research literature attending to the gendered dimensions of right-wing radicalism, generally creating a consensus amongst scholars that gender acts as a protective factor (in the case of women) and a risk factor (in the case of men).”\(^\text{19}\) However, the relationship between gender and far right is far from stable and static. For example, Spierings and Zaslove (2015)\(^\text{20}\) provide evidence that the gender gap is narrowing across many areas in Europe, and many scholars are researching the recent trend of far-right parties incorporating gender equality and LGBTQ rights into their anti-Islam ideologies, extending the potential appeal of the far right to women and queer people. Contemporary researchers agree that some of these parties are beginning to treat gender differently, and there is much written about the far right and gender that needs to be revisited and explored further.

Mudde (2007), as well as analyzing the supply and demand and pathology dynamics of the far right, discusses the role gender plays. Mudde introduces the existing research on women and the far right as “seriously flawed because of a feminist bias… work in the field builds upon two erroneous assumptions: gender equality is the normal situation in party politics, and all women hold modern/feminist

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\(^\text{19}\) Cynthia Miller-Idriss, Hilary Pilkington, “In search of the missing link: gender, education and the radical right.” *Gender and Education*, 2017. Pages 133-146.

\(^\text{20}\) Spierings, N., and A. Zaslove. 2015. “Gendering the Vote for Populist Radical-right Parties.” *Patterns of Prejudice*. 22
views on gender roles.”

Mudde finds the literature, in 2007, to be frustratingly limited, and incorrect in its assumption that all nativists are highly traditional regarding motherhood and gender roles. Mudde counters that the far right actually does not share a consistent attitude on gender and family, and that there are crucial distinctions between parties that promote only traditional gender roles and motherhood, and ones that promote motherhood in conjunction with women working, and even what might seem like progressive values regarding women.

There is a general consensus that in far-right rhetoric, women’s politics are conflated with family politics, and women should be protected as mothers. Some parties take a fully traditional view, in which women matter only as mothers, and others espouse a modern traditional view, in which women are responsible for the family but also can have careers and even political aspirations. Mudde writes that while some parties are anti-feminism, others “acknowledge the important achievements of the first wave of feminism, such as equality in education and voting as well as improvement of working conditions and right. What they claim to oppose is the ‘extremist’ feminists of the second wave, who are believed to be Marxist.”

Much of the literature on gender and the far right is written about specific national contexts, making it difficult to see broader trends, and also leading to a language barrier. One of the most common areas of study for gender and the far right is Germany, spanning from gender norms of the Nazi regime to contemporary parties.

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21 Mudde, page 91.
22 Mudde page 94.
Bitzan (2016)\textsuperscript{23} surveys literature on the German far right in both English and German, noting the main phases of this research. She describes the first phase in the early 1990s, focused on men and women’s different styles of political engagement: Men are more active in public arenas, women more in their social environment. Bitzan also notes Siller’s argument: “Women have their own specific reasons for turning to the far right: the attractiveness of the traditional image of women, or the externalisation of conflicts resulting from a so-called double socialisation (doppelte Vergesellschaftung).” The literature on the German far right from the 1990s also discusses the “ethnicization of sexism,”\textsuperscript{24} in which the foreign/nonwhite man is seen as a potential rapist, endangering the nation’s women and their white purity.

Into the 2000s, however, Bitzan notes that images of women are not all “traditionalist,” and even “reminiscences of emancipative statements can be found.” In the current studies of the German far right, she notes a body of research being conducted on the role of women in recently created movements and parties, namely PEGIDA and the AfD, as voters, participants, and even leaders, such as Frauke Petry. Bitzan notes, “Although they propagate antifeminist ideas and traditionalist gender roles and family policies (Kemper 2014), they present women’s emancipated status as a value of ‘German’ or ‘Western civilisation’, for instrumentalising this in the discourse against immigrants.”

Bitzan then describes a third phase of gender research, beginning in 2003, focused on masculinity. In far-right ideology, men must protect white German

\textsuperscript{23} Renate Bitzan, “Research on Gender and the Far Right in Germany Since 1990: Developments, Findings, and Future Prospects,” 	extit{Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe}.

\textsuperscript{24} Uli Linke, 	extit{Blood and Nation}, 1999.
women to save the “pure race.” This is done through controlling women’s sexuality and reproduction, and fighting against “foreign men” as a “threat.” Bitzan describes multiple interpretations of the attractiveness of far-right masculinity to young men: it is a response to the “background of changing gender norms within society. This can lead to uncertainty and therefore strengthen a longing for old school clearness in gender roles. Or—another interpretation—the so-called crisis of masculinity is not real, but a discourse intended to fight modernisation and defend male domination.” Although this analysis focuses on masculinity and the gendered anxieties of German men in the far right, this literature is overwhelmingly heteronormative and ignores the possibility that some of these angry white men may be queer.

Queering the Radical Right: Homonationalism Theory

The incorporation of LGBTQ people into radical right parties and movements is an unpredicted and often ignored topic in literature about the radical right. It is seen as a relatively recent phenomenon that strikes many as at odds with both the interests of queer people and the violently homophobic history of the far right. The far right is traditionally understood as the territory of angry white men, with literature beginning to complicate the role white women also play in far-right politics. Queerness, even more than gender, has been left out of the discussion of the far right and what motivates and concerns its voters.

Despite its rightwing nature and “traditional values,” the AfD has made a recent turn towards queer politics, courting LGBTQ German voters and campaigning on protectionist rhetoric regarding supposed Muslim violence against queer people.
One of the two leaders of the AfD is a lesbian mother, Alice Weidel, and many AfD voters are also queer: a survey from “MEN,” a German monthly magazine targeted at gay men, showed that in 2016, 17% of respondents openly supported the AfD, higher than the national average. The party also explicitly courts LGBTQ voters with a group called “Alternative Homosexuals,” formerly called “Homosexuals in the AfD.”

Queerness is an important element in understanding the rising popularity of the far right and how it moves from the fringes to legitimate politics.

This alliance of queerness and far right politics can be understood through the gender and sexuality studies frame of homonationalism. Coined by theorist Jasbir Puar, the theory of homonationalism posits queerness as an element of the imperial nation state, where (mainly white) LGBTQ tolerance and inclusion is framed as part of the cultural superiority of the tolerant West, in opposition to the homophobic backwardness of other states, and often Islamic cultures. Puar describes this as the “uneasy yet urgent folding in of homosexuality into the ‘us’ of the ‘us-versus-them’ nationalist rhetoric.” Queer rights are used to justify xenophobia on the premise that the West is egalitarian and tolerant, and migrants, usually Muslim, are intolerant and homophobic.

Puar’s (2007) theorizing of homonationalism begins with a discussion of nationalism theory. Nationalism has conventionally been understood as a heterosexual project by feminist and queer studies, because it has for so long focused on traditional gender roles and family procreation paralleled to the procreation of the nation. However, Puar argues that in the twenty first century, there is a new shift in

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the sexuality of nationalism. LGBTQ citizens used to be excluded from the “us” of the nation, because they were viewed as Other and did not conform to heterosexual norms of marriage and reproduction, which also form the continuance of the nation. Now as queers are included in neoliberal structures and allowed to marry and have families, they are being fit into these capitalist sexual structures and tentatively allowed a space within nationalism.

Puar (2007) writes, “The fraternal nation state is organized to promote political homosocial relations among men in order to discourage and prohibit homosexual relations between men.”26 Political relations between men are central to nationalism, and Puar argues that this homosocial behavior is put in opposition to homosexual relations with men, by placing one kind of relation between men as right and the other as wrong. Puar frames her discussion of specifically queer nationalism within these broader feminist discourses regarding nationalism and gender. Puar (2013) writes, “I had become increasingly frustrated with the standard refrain of transnational feminist discourse as well as queer theories that unequivocally stated, quite vociferously throughout the 1990s, that the nation is heteronormative and that the queer is inherently an outlaw to the nation-state.”27

According to Puar, 9/11 led to a major shift in American nationalism, creating a stronger need for a unified United States. Central to this newly framed American nationalism is the idea of “Western values” and tolerance, in opposition to Islam and its perceived intolerance. The United States used its image as more progressive and

26 Puar, page 49.
tolerant than the Middle East in part to justify its military actions, and to do so, had to make some changes to its nationalism at home regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ Americans: state homonationalism. Puar (2007) continues, “Certain domesticated homosexual bodies provide ammunition to reinforce nationalist projects,” but this is only certain homosexuals who conform to certain “appropriate” kinds of queerness that match with American heteronormativity, such as marriage. The “you’re either with us or against us” slogan of the post 9/11 period captures the “us versus them” dichotomy so central to nationalism, and allows “patriotic” queers into the “us” for the first time. The “ammunition” Puar references is mainly rhetorical: the promotion of America as a diverse and tolerant nation compared to the rigidity and traditionalism of Islamic cultures, or “sexually progressive multiculturalism justifying foreign intervention.”

Another important element of Puar’s homonationalism theory is the argument that Muslim fundamentalists specifically target queer Westerners through violence. Puar articulates this argument as “Muslims are an especial threat to homosexuals, that Muslim fundamentalists have deliberately and specifically targeted homosexuals,” making a “civilization versus barbarism” dichotomy. This allows the homonationalist state to sideline debates over queer rights by making the priority “protecting” national queers from Muslim violence.

Puar stresses that this homonationalism is not actually as progressive and tolerant as it proclaims: “the nation-state maintains its homophobic and xenophobic

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29 Puar, page 20.
stances while capitalizing on its untarnished image of inclusion, diversity, and
tolerance.” The incorporation of some queers into the American nation in the early
2000s did not encompass a radical change in policy regarding queer rights, Puar
notes. Queer tolerance is in this case rhetorical rather than wholly substantive. Puar
also highlights one of the tensions in American homonationalism: “homophobia is
cast as properly conservative and traditional when it serves the political right and the
state, [but is] cast as uncospolitical and hopelessly provincial when it can fuel anti-
immigrant, counterterrorist, and antiwelfare discourses.” Homophobia has long
been a part of American politics and nationalism, for example in the national
government’s response to AIDS and denial of the right to same sex marriage until
2015, often justified through conservative Christian values. In fact, an element of the
“Moral Majority” and Reagan-era social conservativism can be seen as a response to
queer visibility in the American public sphere after the Stonewall Riots. However,
Puar tracks how these same “social conservatives” began to proclaim American
tolerance and progressiveness regarding the treatment of women and queer people, in
contrast to the supposed misogyny and homophobia inherent to the Koran.

Puar also argues that homonationalism is not only state pinkwashing (a
strategy similar to whitewashing but regarding gender and sexuality rather than race),
but a “collusion between homosexuality and American nationalism that is generated
both by national rhetorics of patriotic inclusion and by gay and queer subjects
themselves.” This means that homonationalism can both be state strategy and

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31 Puar, page 29.
32 Puar, page 39.
performed by queer communities, participating in the vilifying of Islam to be accepted by the American nation.

The rhetoric surrounding women and queers in the wake of 9/11 was protectionist and rooted in claims of cultural and moral superiority to the intolerant Middle East, which needed to be democratized and instilled with Western values. Queer studies theorist Heike Schotten, in response to Puar, describes how “Gayatri Spivak’s famous formulation of colonialism’s project as white men saving brown women from brown men” now includes a new element: “white homosexuals saving brown homosexuals from brown homophobes.” The new judgment of a nation’s value and sovereignty, which during the colonial era was “how well do you treat your women,” has become, according to Schotten, “how well do you treat your homosexuals?” The tolerance for LGBTQ citizens has become a barometer by which national sovereignty is evaluated. Same-sex marriage and the heteronormalizing of relations between queer people is treated as evidence of equality and contrasted with other states that still criminalize homosexuality or do not legally recognize same-sex couples.

Puar’s theory of homonationalism does not perfectly lend itself to a study of the German far-right, as she does not include Europe in her analysis, only the United States and Israel, and focuses on states rather than parties, but her theory nonetheless extends well to other Western nations that are increasingly defining themselves in opposition to Islam and struggling with cultural shifts stemming from immigration

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from the Middle East. However, despite the immense relevance of Puar’s theory to political science, homonationalism and nationalism remain relegated to different disciplines.

Despite the relevance of gender and queer studies to the social sciences, queer theory is rarely brought to illuminate issues in political science, such as the study of far-right parties. Smith and Lee (2014)\textsuperscript{34} discuss political science’s tendency to disregard queer theory: despite queer theorist Judith Butler being one of the most cited social theorists of all time, “political science remains distinctly untroubled by queer theory, and gender and sexuality are frequently treated as marginal (not central) concerns.” They discovered that study of gender, sexuality, and the body are massively influential and popular across cognate disciplines such as sociology, history, and psychology, but ignored by political science. “Today’s political science is consciously marginalising issues of gender and sexuality and hardly doing justice to the political analysis of social relations that queer theorists have been successfully doing for quite some time.”\textsuperscript{35}

Gender and queer theory are incredibly useful to the study of politics: “a central project for feminist theory has precisely been to reveal how the state itself is often coded as masculine: that is, it is associated with the public realm of political power and decision-making and, as such, with masculine influence and identity.”

Queer theory is fundamentally concerned with questions of power, and “insists that what gets to be counted as ‘political’ is itself political—it is a product of the exercise


\textsuperscript{35} Smith and Lee, page 50.
of power, with real material effects. In this sense, queer theory seeks to politicise ‘the political’ itself.’" 36

The implications for the marginalization of queer theory are troubling. Political science is “failing to fully account for the ways in which the personal is political and how this is fundamental to the ways in which we construct and control sexuality, gender and the body.” 37 This also is detrimental for those in the discipline who study these issues, and risk their work being considered marginal or irrelevant.

My analysis of homonationalism in the AfD seeks to disrupt these norms in political science, and is political in its study of the political, in insisting on the usefulness of queer theorists like Puar to studying political parties.

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36 Smith and Lee, page 55.
37 Smith and Lee, page 59.
Chapter 1: Organizations

AfD: Homophobic and Homonationalist

Introduction

Homonationalism, according to Puar, is the collusion between nationalism and homosexuality, generated both by the nation and its leaders, and by queer subjects themselves, therefore performed at all levels of politics. In applying Puar’s framework to the AfD, a party with various institutions and formal mechanisms and platforms, we must examine not only how certain actors operate, but the institutions themselves, to successfully see how homonationalism functions in this context. This chapter focuses on the organizational level of homonationalism in the AfD, analyzing the party itself and the Alternative Homosexuals (AHO). Beginning with an overview and history of the party, I review other literature analyzing the rhetoric of the AfD regarding gender sexuality. I then analyze the AfD’s manifesto myself, studying how its language leaves or does not leave room for homonationalist rhetoric, and then study the manifesto of the AHO. Before analyzing specific queer politicians in Chapter 2, I first examine how their queerness and homonationalism can fit into a party so frequently deemed unilaterally homophobic, asking, are the AHO and AfD ideologically compatible? How do they reconcile their differences? How is space made for homonationalism and homonationalists in the AfD?
AfD History and Overview

The Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD) was founded in 2013 as a Eurosceptic party, but has now staked its political claim on Islamophobia. The AfD has evolved from a party of economists criticizing EU bailouts to an anti-immigration far right party, declaring Islam incompatible with German values. In September 2017, the AfD won 94 seats in the Bundestag, with over 12 percent of the national vote, to become the third most powerful party in Germany. This was the first time a far-right party has entered the Bundestag, and as Germany ostracizes extremist politics far more than its neighbors, this was a crucial moment in European politics.

In 2013, the AfD was a professors’ party, classified by political scientists as “soft Eurosceptic,” critical of the Euro and bailout for countries such as Greece. It was founded by economist Bernd Lucke and elected Frauke Petry as chairwoman. As the refugee crisis affected Europe in 2015, and Chancellor Merkel took a pro-refugee stance, the AfD became polarized into an economic faction around Lucke and an anti-immigration faction around Petry. Xenophobia won, and Petry led the party.

Immediately following the AfD’s historic victory in 2017, Petry stepped down, and the party is now chaired by Jörg Meuthen and led by Alexander Gauland and Alice Weidel. Gauland is not a surprising figure in the far right; he was a member of Merkel’s mainstream conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) for

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decades, and has now turned further to the right, causing outrage with statements such as "Germans should be proud of the achievements of the German soldiers in two world wars."\(^{41}\) Weidel, on the other hand, surprises many with the difference between her personal and party politics. A former investment banker, Weidel is openly lesbian, raising two children with her partner, although the AfD is opposed to “alternative” LGBT lifestyles and family structures.

AfD voters in the 2017 election were predominantly white men. 16% of male voters supported the AfD, compared to 9% of female voters.\(^{42}\) AfD voters were also composed of many Germans who don’t usually vote: of the 6 million AfD voters, 1.2 million were voters who chose not to vote in previous elections. Voters were also pulled from the mainstream conservative CDU, Merkel’s party, and even from the left: 500,000 voters had previously supported the center-left Social Democrats, and 400,000 had supported the Left Party. AfD voters in general tended to be between the ages of 30 and 60, male, manual workers, and less educated.

The transformation and success of the AfD cannot be explained without the refugee crisis and Germany’s prominent role in accepting refugees. In 2015, around 1 million refugees arrived in Germany seeking asylum, and Chancellor Merkel chose to welcome them, saying “We can do it.” In response, the AfD shifted its focus from the euro and economics to security and immigration, becoming more nationalistic and nativist. Although the influx of refugees in 2015 had lowered significantly by 2016,


immigration and its effects on German society were central to the 2017 campaign. The AfD’s slogan "We will get our country back!" appealed to many voters. The party coalesced around rejection of Merkel’s refugee policies, which AfD leader Alexander Gauland called a “gift to the party.”

Another central factor in the success of the AfD is its regional popularity and the East-West divide in Germany. The AfD won 12.6% of the vote, but up to 35% in certain regions of the East, making it far more popular in former communist East Germany. Although the AfD is treated as a Western European far right party, its stronghold is the region formerly occupied by the Soviet Union, and many of its voters experienced the downfall of communism and the hasty reunification of the two Germanies. The former communist country was given aid by Western Germany and quickly reintegrated, and many eastern Germans feel secondary to their western counterparts.

It would be incorrect to describe the AfD as a contemporary phenomenon without historical roots. Germany’s relationship to its dark history is in fact what sets apart its treatment of the far right from its European neighbors. After the Holocaust and the occupation of Germany by the Western Allies, the German constitution was written in 1949 and designed explicitly to prevent the possibility of future dictators and nondemocratic forces. Parties are required to adhere to democratic standards,

creating a political culture that ostracizes extremism. The AfD has broken many political norms with its treatment of Germany’s Nazi history: AfD members have called for Germany to rethink its culture of atonement and remembrance of the Holocaust and Nazi crimes. With Petry nicknamed “Hitlerina” and the party’s nationalism and nativism, many are worried about what a resurgence of the far right means in a country with this history.

With the influx of Muslim refugees from the Syrian civil war and the Middle East, anti-Islam rhetoric has become central to the party, and it has even established an AfD Jewish group—despite some AfD members’ Holocaust revisionist rhetoric. In becoming an anti-Islam party, the AfD is now making room for previously Othered groups, explicitly trying to incorporate Jews into the party and movement.

The party also has a group for LGBTQ voters, called the “Alternative Homosexuals.” Even though the AfD opposes same-sex marriage and adoption, and advocates for “traditional families,” one of its leaders, Alice Weidel, is a lesbian, and many gays and lesbians support the party that seems to oppose their interests. The AfD is opposed to what they call “early sexualization” and “gender madness” through sex education at schools, but there is not a unified stance on homosexuality—the party advocates against homosexuality as non-traditional for families, and some leaders such as Petry have made homophobic remarks, but the party also has an accepted queer leader with a partner and children. The “Alternative Homosexuals” of

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the AfD argue that preventing immigration of people not familiar with German culture also increases the acceptance of social subgroups such as homosexuals.\textsuperscript{47}

The gender politics of the AfD are similarly fraught. Several of the AfD’s most prominent leaders are women, including Frauke Petry, Alice Weidel, and Beatrix von Storch, another leader of the AfD as well as a Duchess, who is known for her inflammatory comments calling Muslims “rapist hordes” and telling border control to shoot migrants. The AfD manifesto condemns the spread of “gender ideology,” which includes gender studies, quotas for female representation in government, Equal Pay Day, and gender-neutral language.\textsuperscript{48} Despite this anti-feminist platform, the AfD champions a “welcome culture for children” in contrast to Merkel’s “welcome culture for refugees” that appeals to women in the far right.

Although the AfD is generally placed on the far right of the political spectrum, it has gained voters from the center and far left, and is making effort to court marginalized voters and expand from its traditional rightwing base. The AfD’s policy and rhetoric regarding gender and sexuality are especially surprising, and we must turn to the political science literature on radical right parties to understand how the AfD seeks to stay in power and court new, and even unexpected, voting groups.

\textit{Studies of the AfD: Gender-Mainstreaming}


\textsuperscript{48} Jack Sommers, “AfD Policies That Will Alarm You - From Its Hostility To Islam To Why It Thinks Equal Pay Is ‘Propaganda’,” Huffington Post, September 29, 2017, \url{https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/afd-policies-far-rightgermanelec__uk_59c8c532e4b06ddff45f8eb8a?guccounter=1&guce_referrer_us=aHR0cHM6L}

\url{v93d3cuZ29vZ2xI8mNvbS8&guce_referrer_cs=7pJ6xH9UgzWxE7Jqptsu2A}
Studies of the AfD’s gender and sexuality policy and rhetoric tend to categorize the party as consistently antifeminist and homophobic, with little reference to the complications of queer leaders and homonationalist rhetoric. The AfD is certainly not a “queer” party in its progressive connotation, as it has many openly homophobic platforms, against marriage equality and education about sexuality. However, ignoring the party’s appeals to LGBTQ voters and leaders paints an incomplete picture of a complex party.

As a new party, the literature on the AfD, especially regarding gender and sexuality, is not robust, and focuses on the phenomenon of “gender mainstreaming” or “gender ideology,” which is what the AfD and other far right parties call gender equality-focused policy. Homonationalism, then, seems to be contradictory to this antifeminist rhetoric, and therefore has been sidelined in the discussion. The AfD certainly is opposed to expanding the rights and equality of women and LGBTQ Germans, and yet can be seen appealing to queer voters and applauding its queer members. The literature is missing a discussion of homonationalism, or how the party instrumentalizes “queer danger” and “Islamic homophobia” to portray itself as a tolerant, pro-queer party, even as the only party that cares about protecting queer Germans. The following literature review outlines other earlier studies of the AfD’s gender and sexuality rhetoric, showing a focus on how the party works to frame gender equality as an ideology.
In an EU project report, bEUcitizen, Siim, Krizsán, Gruziel, and Nissen (2014)\textsuperscript{49} conduct cross-national case studies on gender equality as the focus of national and nativist discourses based on the rhetoric of the far-right parties. Focusing on the EP-electoral campaign of 2014, they study the parties’ instrumental uses of gender and family issues, such as “gender ideology” and “gender mainstreaming” as a way to solve problems of demographic sustainability and nationalism. They categorize the AfD as an anti-gender party, with an agenda that builds on “neoliberal, Christian fundamentalist, antifeminist, national conservative, and men’s rights discourses.”\textsuperscript{50} According to the authors, anti-gender movements and parties such as the AfD and other European far right parties want to claim that gender equality is an ideology, and use misleading terminology like mainstreaming. They target LGBTQ rights, reproductive rights, and sexual and equality education.

They divide the AfD into three factions: neoliberal, clerical-aristocratic, and new right wing. Despite internal conflicts, the three groups are “unified by the general belief in a so-called natural order of social inequalities. Disagreements pertain to details, for example whether those inequalities concern various social groups (neoliberals), or genders (clerical-aristocratic) or between Germans and non-Germans (new right wing).”\textsuperscript{51} These factions, according to Siim, et al., are united by their resistance to “gender mainstreaming” and gender equality, which is at the core of the party agenda.

\textsuperscript{50} Siim et al, page 18.
\textsuperscript{51} Siim et al, page 18.
According to anti-gender movements and parties, “gender ideology” or “gender mainstreaming” threatens a demographic crisis, involving competing family models replacing monogamous heterosexual couples with children, adoption by same-sex couples, available abortions, and a masculinity crisis. Siim et al. argue that parties with this ideology propose an interventionist role, where policy should intervene to cancel existing laws and policies informed by “gender ideology,” or gender equality, and stop funding for gender-related projects. They put the AfD into this category, referencing the party’s anti- “gender mainstreaming” which they describe as a “battle of the sexes,” and seek to “reestablish the natural order of gender.” They conclude that the AfD sees “the traditional model of the family functions as an antidote to its indoctrinating gender ideology,” and is heavily influenced by the contemporary masculinist movement.52

They also note a seemingly contradictory homonationalist current in the party. The AfD “supports homophobic campaigns and requests the removal of education on sexual diversity from school curricula.” However, Siim et al. also document how the party “argues that Christian values protect both women and homosexuals in the best possible way because Christianity is founded on the respect towards every individual human. The current rise of gender ideology undermines the very basis of the Christian civilisation and undermines the basis of women and homosexuals’ safety. Thus, gender equality is portrayed as against the Christian, European civilization, but also against those it claims to protect.”53 Although the scholars do not term it

52 Siim et al, page 52.
53 Siim et al, page 49.
homonationalism, they note its self-contradiction, as a protectionist exception to the party’s otherwise antagonistic stance towards homosexuals.

Other scholars focus more exclusively on the AfD’s idea of gender mainstreaming. Blum (2015)\textsuperscript{54} discusses the AfD’s construction of gender equality as an ideology: “The local organisation of the AfD in Osnabrück referred to ‘gender theory’ as follows: ‘Gender theory is by no means scientifically proven, although it tries to appear this way. It fulfils all the criteria of an ideology. It works in favour of the homosexual and extreme feminist lobby, and is being used as the ‘theoretical’ foundation in their fight against alleged disadvantage, which plays no part of our daily life anymore.” Here, the AfD is in opposition to the “ideology” that favors homosexuals and extreme feminists. But this is only one side of the platform, as they also vilify Islam for posing a threat to women and homosexuals.

Von Redecker (2016)\textsuperscript{55} studies the relationship between the AfD and Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident), a German nationalist movement. She notes that although the AfD often tries to distance itself from Pegida and claim to be less extremist, the party and the movement align on gender and sexuality, both “equating gender mainstreaming with an anti-democratic, EU-orchestrated agenda to abolish gender identity.”


Berbuir, Lewandowsky, and Siri (2014)\textsuperscript{56} study the rhetoric of the AfD and categorize it as right-wing and Christian-conservative: “We find party communications that are phrased in the vocabulary of right-wing-politics, such as the denial of multiculturalism, the condemnation of non-heteronormative lifestyles such as same-sex unions or ‘political correctness.’” This “Christian-conservative, anti-equality discourse” avoids “avoids any impression of blatant racism. Nevertheless, by emphasizing the ideal of the heterosexual German family that is threatened both by ‘multiculturalist re-education’ and ‘pro-homo gender-re-education’, they are on the other hand compatible with racist and heteronormative anti-homo morals.”\textsuperscript{57}

These scholars, mainly studying party rhetoric from 2014, focus on the homophobia and anti-feminism of the party’s rhetoric, with particular interest in the phenomena of “gender ideology” and “gender mainstreaming” to criticize equality-based policy. Only Siim et al. venture into the homosexual protectionist side of the AfD’s sexuality rhetoric, but still see it as a rather small exception to the rest of the party platform. This suggests the analytic difficulty of reconciling clear homophobic rhetoric and policy with this seemingly contradictory homonationalism.

\textit{AfD Party Platform: Homophobic and Homonationalist?}

Building from this gender and sexuality literature, I examine a more recent AfD party document from 2016, to explore if there is room for two diverging narratives about sexuality in the AfD: homophobic or homonationalist, or if the 2016


\textsuperscript{57} Berbuir, Lewandowsky, and Siri, page 14.
party manifesto is only traditionalist and anti-gay, as other scholars suggest. Between the studies from 2014 and this 2016 manifesto, has there been an evolution in sexuality rhetoric or policy? Or have scholars ignored the homonationalist lens in earlier studies from 2014?

The AfD party platform, approved at the Federal Party Congress on May 1, 2016, outlines party positions on a variety of issues, including the Euro, national security, family, and immigration. Their platforms on gender and sexuality are included mainly under the chapters “Labour and Social Policy,” “Families and Children.” and “Schools, Universities, and Research.” The arguments about gender and sexuality in the manifesto are predominately focused on the role of education about sex and sexuality. They emphasize the need for large families in response to immigration, as well as “traditional” heteronormative family structures, and they view children’s classrooms as the central places for spreading their heteronormative values.

In the “Labour and Social Policy” chapter of the manifesto, the AfD first indirectly acknowledges the role of gender in the party ideology by discussing parents and labor. One of their central arguments is that larger families are the solution for preventing mass immigration, and they propose policies that compensate parents for childrearing, without discussing the gendered dimensions of childcare. The AfD “acknowledges the role of parents in giving birth to, raising, and educating children, both in a material and non-material sense,” and “aims to correct the existing financial disadvantages of families with children as opposed to childless families”; they conclude, “By way of dedicated government support for large families, the AfD will

58 AfD Manifesto 2016, https://www.afd.de/grundsatzprogramm/#englisch
encourage citizens to have more children.”\textsuperscript{59} Although they say, “giving birth,” this section does not acknowledge the gendered differences of parental labor, or differentiate between mothers and fathers, instead choosing gender-neutral language. In this section, these families are also not specified as heterosexual or traditional. The agenda is only “citizens having more children,” not “mothers” or “heterosexual couples.”

Transitioning from economic incentives to social phenomena in the chapter “Families and Children,” they highlight their main issues as “the demographic crisis,” supporting traditional and large families, and “ending discrimination of full-time mothers.” This chapter does not directly address the existence of LGBTQ families, instead focusing on traditions, marriage, and “gender mainstreaming.” The manifesto states, “It is a vital concern to the AfD to protect well-established cultural and regional traditions, and to preserve proven institutions. They keep people grounded and connected. Marriage and family are the nucleus and germ cells of civil society and a cornerstone of social cohesion, and therefore deserve special protection from government.”\textsuperscript{60} Registered partnerships for same-sex couples became legal in Germany in 2001, and same-sex marriage became legal on October 1, 2017, after this manifesto was written in May 2016. Therefore, they could reference marriage as a heteronormative institution without directly referencing sexuality. This chapter stresses the need to protect traditions and marriage, but does not specify LGBTQ marriage rights as the threat.

\textsuperscript{59} AfD Manifesto, page 36.
\textsuperscript{60} AfD Manifesto, page 39.
The AfD frames the obstacles to happy, traditional German families as the “increased trend of allowing government institutions such as day-care facilities and full-time schools to raise our children, the implementation of gender mainstreaming projects, and the general focus on individuality,” all of which “contribute to undermine the family as a significant and fundamental unit of society.” They also discuss the role of feminism: “The economy is calling for women as part of the workforce. There is a misconceived view of feminism, which favours women with a career above mothers and housewives. The latter often experience less recognition and are financially disadvantaged.”\(^61\) They argue that feminism is an ideology that is opposed to mothers and traditional families.

The AfD brings together immigration and gender, two very different policy areas, in the discussion of birth rates. Seeing immigration as related to demographics and not humanitarian crises, the party takes a classically nationalist approach to birth rates: “We regard the closing of the gap between the actual number of children being born, and the desire of 90% of young Germans to have children, as a central element of our political platform.”\(^62\)

They also use the guise of single parent structures to discourage non-heterosexual parent structures. “We firmly oppose pronouncements by organisations, media, and politicians who propagate single-parent families as a progressive or desirable lifestyle. Government should encourage the cohabitation of father, mother, and children by financial and other means in times of need.”\(^63\) They frame single

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\(^61\) AfD Manifesto, page 40.
\(^62\) AfD Manifesto, page 41.
\(^63\) AfD Manifesto, page 43.
parents as the opposite of heterosexual couples, without mentioning the same-sex couples they are also implicitly criticizing. This leaves the Alternative Homosexuals room to agree with two-parent structures, even though their non-“father and mother” families are also grouped here with single parents.

In the section “Schools, Universities and Research,” the AfD criticizes gender studies at the university level and teaching about LGBTQ identities in classroom, which they call “gender mainstreaming” and “early sexualization.” They propose cutting the funding of gender studies at universities, arguing that the field does not constitute reputable research: “Its methods do not fulfil the criteria of science, as its objectives are primarily politically motivated. The federal and state governments should thus no longer provide special funds for gender research. Existing university chairs for gender research should not be filled again, and ongoing gender research projects should not be prolonged.”

The bulk of the AfD’s gender and education argument is focused on children in the classroom, however, rather than university gender studies. Much like Russia’s 2013 anti-homosexuality laws that articulate queerness as propaganda for children, the AfD also focuses their anti-homosexuality rhetoric on “our children,” rather than society at large. They state, “We reject the one-sided emphasis on homosexuality and trans-sexuality in classrooms, as well as the ideological influence of gender mainstreaming. The picture of the traditional family must not be destroyed. Our children should not be the plaything to the sexual orientation of a noisy minority at

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64 AfD Manifesto, page 51.
school.”65 This is the only part of the manifesto that directly identifies non-heterosexual identities that are otherwise only alluded to as the non-normative. They proclaim sexual education as having an undue emphasis on homosexuality and trans-sexuality, where children are threatened. The tone also changes here from rational to emotional and even threatening, with the traditional family “destroyed,” and German children abused as “playthings.”

They continue describe how teaching about diverse sexualities and identities will harm children: “the AfD demands that the early sexualisation of children in nursery schools and schools is prohibited, as children should not be unsettled about their sexual identity.”66 The discussion of the sexualization of children is similarly fraught with the pedophilia connotation, a stigma often derogatorily associated with queerness. The emphasis on protecting children from upset or inappropriateness deflects from the homophobia in the policy.

In the “Immigration, Integration and Asylum” chapter, they discuss “immigrant-related crime,” a topic central to homonationalist arguments.

“Immigration-related crime is extremely difficult to combat–embedded, as it is, in family, clan and cultural structures, and aided by language barriers. The current judicial state of affairs which makes it virtually impossible to terminate the right of residence of these offenders, is something that must be changed. We want to create the legal mechanisms to withdraw the right of residence of criminals more quickly and more easily. This is an effective means of combating immigrant crime. The AfD

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65 AfD Manifesto, page 53.
66 AfD Manifesto, page 54.
demands that the protection of citizens against immigrant crime receives top priority.”67 This rhetoric is far calmer and more rational than the discussion of sexuality education in schools, and they focus on law and order rather than Islamophobic descriptions of immigration communities. Unlike in other speeches by AfD leaders such as Weidel, they do not elaborate on the protection of citizens as being women or LGBTQ Germans.

This 2016 manifesto articulates traditionalist Christian-based values, much as Siim et al. and Berbühr, Lewandowsky, and Siri show in 2014. Most notable is the rhetoric regarding protecting children to disguise homophobia, which allows queer voters to agree with the opposition to “early sexualization” rather than sex education at large. Also important is that the immigrant crime section does not describe any inherent Muslim homophobia or Christian tolerance, as Siim et al. find, and as Alice Weidel does in speeches. Although this document does not directly appeal to queer voters, it does leave important things unsaid, allowing the Alternative Homosexuals to stake out a queer nationalist space in German politics.

Alternative Homosexuals: Aligned with the AfD?

The AHO, or the Alternative Homosexuals, formerly known as Homosexuals in the AfD, is a group for LGBTQ voters in the party. The AHO’s website, with a German flag next to a rainbow LGBTQ pride flag at the top of the page, describes the important contributions of queer (white male) Germans to their national history.

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67 AfD Manifesto, page 63.
The existence of the AHO has baffled many an onlooker—the AfD is opposed to same-sex marriage and adoption, so it can be difficult to see how it could reflect the interests of LGBTQ Germans. However, the Alternative Homosexuals argue in their manifesto that their interests, mainly regarding Islam and the belief that Muslim immigrants specifically target queer people, make the AfD the only party that will protect them.

Alexander Tassis, leader of the AHO, and a Greek immigrant himself, has stated that he “agrees with the AfD’s emphasis on traditional families,” but he and other members “differ from the AfD’s stance on adoption.”\(^{68}\) Same-sex partners cannot adopt children as a couple in Germany. When asked about the AfD's views on gay marriage, Tassis responded that same-sex legal unions “give gay couples around 90 percent of the same benefits as heterosexual marriage. We're not seeking equality. It doesn't have to be the same.” Already there is evidence of tension between the AfD and AHO—Tassis says that he differs from AfD stance on adoption, but not on marriage, because they are not seeking equality.

The AHO presents itself as cheerfully nationalist, its website adorned with dual LGBTQ Pride and German flags, as well as pictures of quaint German gardens and cobblestone streets. The only visibly “queer” marker is the pride flag; their website could otherwise be for tourists. The blue background of the AHO website

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perfectly matches the AfD website\(^{69}\), although there is no mention of the party on the AHO homepage.

In guiding principles of the AHO\(^{70}\), they state: “Gays and lesbians are just as important to Germany as any other loving person with a connection to family, home and nation.” They proclaim the inclusion of queerness into the German nationalism, so long as it conforms to heteronormative home and family structures. This proclamation also stresses equality in “just as important,” refusing to be secondary to heterosexual Germans.

Their manifesto then continues to align itself with the 2016 AfD manifesto. The AHO states, “We demand a strong family policy for the benefit of the children. Homosexuals and their partnerships are not opposed to this, but rather fully share conservative values for the preservation of the nation.” Here, they carefully agree with the traditionalist family policy, arguing that homosexuals can also share conservative and nationalist values. “Not opposed to this” suggests an implicit criticism of perceptions of queer politics, and perhaps a criticism of the AfD manifesto for implying that only heterosexual couples can have families with traditional values.

The AHO also agrees with the AfD’s sexuality education platform. “Above all, our absolute no to gender mainstreaming includes the fight against supranational, uncontrollable organizations that try to dictate to nation states. In particular, we reject the early sexualization of children.” Whereas the AfD manifesto opposes “one-sided

\(^{69}\) [https://www.afd.de/](https://www.afd.de/)

\(^{70}\) Translated by Elizabeth Whitney, [http://alternativehomos.de/](http://alternativehomos.de/)
emphasis on homosexuality and trans-sexuality” altogether, the AHO only refers to the “early sexualization” without mentioning queer identities.

They distance themselves from queer feminism by agreeing with the AfD’s opposition to “gender mainstreaming,” and they even distance themselves from anti-homophobia. “We reject the use of the word ‘homophobia’ and other derailments of political correctness, such as the taking of gays and lesbians as hostages for left-wing extremist society experiment.” Just as Tassis argued that they were not seeking equality, the AHO also rejects the categorization of homophobia.

Importantly, the AHO directly ties immigration to the tolerance of LGBTQ Germans: “A stop on immigration for people who are not familiar with the culture also increases the acceptance of social subgroups.” “Not familiar with the culture” implying Muslims, they argue that Islamophobia is the answer to stopping homophobia—although they disagree with the use of the word “homophobia.” They say, “Clear rules for immigrants are essential. In order to maintain tolerance, we consider the fight against Islamization to be vital. Our German community of values must be lived lovingly and presented as an ideal.” They both claim to seek the increase of acceptance of social subgroups, i.e. LGBTQ Germans, and to maintain tolerance, in a society without homophobia.

They conclude, “Our way of the future is to create our own phenomenology of homosexuality based on German culture and language and the work of the many important same-sex loving personalities in our history.” They propose a rewriting of queer German history, constructing a nationalism that fits their subgroup.
It is also important to note that the AHO’s manifesto includes “gays and lesbians” in addition to the “Homosexuals” in its title. The AfD manifesto opposes “homosexuality and trans-sexuality” in the classroom, but the AHO does not mention trans identities or non-binary gender identities, only homosexuality, male and female. Queerness, in AHO language, is still binary, with no allusion to spectrums or nonconformity.

By positioning gay couples as a means of promoting pro-nationalist, pro-family and anti-immigration goals, the AfD, both its traditional and its homonationalist wings, are agreeing to rank their shared goals ahead of their differences.

Conclusion: The AHO and Homonormativity

As the literature review reveals, the analytic difficulty of reconciling clear homophobic rhetoric and policy with this evidence of homonationalism has led to the invisibility and erasure of queer far right interests, even as they are represented formally in official institutions. This comparison the AfD’s and AHO’s manifestos importantly shows that there is room for the AHO within the AfD—queer supporters are not significantly disagreeing with the AfD platform, or asking the party to be more inclusive. Rather, the AHO fits itself into the AfD, finding space within the party’s manifesto for the queer, so long as the queer is nationalist, traditional, and conservative. Queers as individuals, importantly not as modes of being that disrupt the normative and traditional, are allowed entry to the far right.
While the AfD is heteronormative, assuming that everyone is invested in traditional, heterosexual trajectories of reproduction and family, the AHO is in turn homonormative. Lisa Duggan (2002)71 defines homonormativity as “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.” Rather than contesting the AfD heteronormative assumptions, such as gender mainstreaming and early sexualization in the party manifesto, the AHO upholds these assumptions and institutions, buying into and sustaining xenophobic German nationalism, so long as these “demobilized” queers are included in the nation.

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Chapter Two: Politicians

Homonationalist Personas: Alice Weidel and Alexander Tassis

Introduction

Queer politicians in the far right are often labeled as hypocrites, or seen as tokens of feigned tolerance, but the AfD has multiple queer leaders who adamantly state how their sexualities make the AfD the right party for them. Reynolds (2018)\textsuperscript{72}, studying LGBTQ politicians, writes, “Some see high profile right-wing lesbian and gay leaders as merely fig leaves of respectability for unpleasant parties, but there is more to it than that. LGBT voters are increasingly gravitating to such parties with their mix of gay rights policies, xenophobia, and anti-Muslim rhetoric. The French National Front has steadily increased its share of the LGBT vote. It was up to 15 percent in 2013. Four years later Le Pen won 21 percent of the gay male vote in the first round of the election and 36 percent in the second. Her support among gay men under the age of thirty was 44 percent. In 2017 surveys found 17% of LGBT Germans support the AfD. The German press called them homonationalists.” The assumption that queerness and progressive politics must go together is strongly rebuffed by European far right parties, as there are more and more queer far right politicians embracing homonationalism.

This chapter studies two prominent homonationalist politicians in the AfD: Alice Weidel and Alexander Tassis. Tassis, a gay immigrant from Greece, is the

leader of the Alternative Homosexuals (AHO), and often speaks for the organization. Weidel, on the other hand, is not affiliated with the AHO or any other homosexuality-oriented organization, and her homonationalist rhetoric therefore is more centered around her own personal candidacy.

In this chapter, I will examine both how Weidel and Tassis frame their sexualities and sexuality politics in their own words, and how the media discusses them. It is important to note the different national backgrounds and genders of Weidel and Tassis. Homonationalism, although applicable to a variety of queer identities, is most strongly associated with white gay men, which Tassis embodies. Lesbian women, on the other hand, do not seem to be the demographic that the AfD is courting, at least not as strongly. Whereas Tassis in interviews talks specifically about the AfD as a party for gay men, Weidel does not make parallel appeals to German lesbians, rather addressing homosexuality at large. I will discuss their different rhetoric around gender and sexuality, as well as how Tassis’s identity as a Greek immigrant affects his immigration rhetoric, and the nationalist aspect of homonationalism.

Kahn (1994) studies how the media represent male and female political candidates, finding that “women receive less campaign coverage than their male counterparts and the coverage they receive is more negative—emphasizing their unlikely chances of victory.” The news media is “more responsive to the messages sent by male candidates. The media's agenda more closely resembles the agenda

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issued by male candidates in their televised political advertisements.” She compares the media’s representation of candidates to their own campaign advertisements, to see how the media differed from the candidates’ own “presentation of self.”

Similarly, I compare Weidel’s representation in the media to her own self-representation in a speech to AfD supporters, where her message is unfiltered by media bias. My selection of media coverage is limited by language, but I am able to compare how the English-speaking media frames Weidel compared to how she frames herself, and discuss gendered differences in the representation of Weidel and Tassis. It is important to note that these English-language media sources are intended not for German voters themselves, but rather external Western observers. Another barrier to comparison is Weidel and Tassis’s relative prominence: Weidel is well-known enough outside of Germany for her speeches to be translated into English, but Tassis is a much smaller figure in German politics; therefore, I am able to compare Weidel in the media to Weidel in her own words, but Tassis only through limited media interviews. However, both Tassis and Weidel are interviewed by Vice News, providing another window for comparative analysis. These comparisons provide insight into Tassis and Weidel’s gendered differences, and how these affect their perceptions as queer representatives.

*Alice Weidel in Her Own Words: Fearmongering Homonationalist*

Weidel often avoids focusing on her sexuality in the media, but to certain audiences she is willing to discuss her sexual identity frankly. In April 2017, Weidel gave a speech in Cologne at the AfD party congress in which she addressed her
sexuality and how it shapes her political beliefs. Weidel argues that marriage equality for LGBTQ Germans should not be the priority because they are currently under threat of homophobic violence committed by Muslim gangs. Although at key moments in the speech she distances herself from the party line regarding LGBTQ rights, she stresses that immigration, not equality-based legislation, is the issue most affecting the lives of queer Germans. Weidel, in her own self-presentation, positions herself to define the political priority of homosexuals as immigration, not other issues such as marriage.

Weidel begins her speech by addressing her sexuality with humor and frankness, her tone much lighter than in her later words regarding Islam and violence. She begins by saying, “I live with a woman, although somewhat less lately, but normally yes. In addition, we raise two children together, some of you may have already guess what I’m talking about, and you will hear the rest from me: I am homosexual.” She feigns shock and the seated supporters cheer. In this introduction to her speech, Weidel frames her sexuality as something decidedly normal, and makes fun of those who are shocked by it. She is upfront and nonchalant, employing humor to critique the news media that fixates on her sexual identity.

Weidel continues with an explanation of why she joined the party and a justification for queer xenophobia. “People always ask why I’m a homosexual woman in the AfD. I am not in the AfD despite my homosexuality, but indeed because of my homosexuality.” She confronts what others call a contradiction head on, and rather than framing her identity and policy platform as separate issues, she argues that they

74 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvJ_ybwV40A&index=50&t=0s&list=WL](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvJ_ybwV40A&index=50&t=0s&list=WL)
actually are linked in a compelling way. Weidel says that she joined the party
“because of the legal breaches and handling of law and order in Germany. I would
never vote for another party, and that is as a homosexual woman. The reason for this
is the eroding security situation… because without internal security, there is no
freedom, neither for my way of life, or for yours.” Weidel does not argue that she is
the same as her audience, but rather that her lifestyle and theirs both need to be
protected by the German state. She argues that both LGBTQ and straight Germans,
although they have different ways of life, need the same freedom and security that the
government is failing to provide.

Weidel also addresses the status of LGBTQ rights in Germany. The AfD does
not support marriage equality, and Weidel voices her opposition to the party line:
“Personally I welcome any improvements in the rights of same-sex couples, even
against the majority opinion of my own party. That much freedom I allow myself.
That is why I would like to talk about the just-passed law of marriage for all. From a
legal point of view, there may actually be a few improvements to the registered life
partnership in which I live.” Here, Weidel distances herself from the AfD platform,
which she calls the “majority opinion,” and frames her distancing in terms of
freedom. Despite her proclamation of personal support, she also downplays the
importance of this legislation, saying it may create “a few” changes, rather than
significantly improve the lives of queer Germans.

However, she continues, “There is factually in this country, a much bigger,
more dramatic problem… the explosion of acts of violence. The gays and lesbians in
this country will not care in the end of the day whether their relationship is a
registered life partnership or marriage when they do not dare to go out on the street, arm in arm.” This fear-mongering forms the crux of Weidel’s argument about queerness and Islam. She downplays the significance of the AfD not supporting LGBTQ equality by arguing that immigration is far more relevant to queer lives than marriage equality. Weidel seeks to instill anxiety in the audience about this violence, even though her audience is not supposed to be queer and therefore not targeted by homophobic Muslim violence.

Weidel creates a hierarchy of queer issues through her belittling of the Green Party’s LGBTQ policy. She describes the Greens as “alleged pioneers for the rights of homosexuals” who “could not give a damn about these statistics” of violence against queers. “They get all worked up about rainbow flags,” she says, and “they are so happy about how open to the world and tolerant our society has become because of this law. Only it has nothing to do with the reality of life and real fears of lesbians and gays.” According to Weidel, issues of representation and equality are only distractions from the bodily threat to LGBTQ people. She frames liberals as out of touch with the real queer problems, which she is attuned to as a queer woman and a representative of a party such as the AfD. She also trivializes queer concerns as being about rainbow flags rather than broader issues of how queer people are recognized and treated in German society.

The intensity of Weidel’s speech rises as she continues to describe the supposed violence facing LGBTQ Germans. She states, “Muslim gangs have recently begun literally hunting down homosexuals, in the middle of Germany, and this is a scandal.” Weidel then describes a series of cases of gay men being assaulted because
of their sexuality. “Why? Because of the sexual orientation of this man. According to
the Sharia law of haram, which we have to learn now. And the Islamic ‘scholars’
have disagreed if flogging is enough of a punishment, or if this lifestyle must be
punished by death.” Without differentiating between different Muslim identities,
Weidel depicts the entirety of Islam as violently homophobic, stating that Muslims
want to flog and even kill gay people.

Weidel frames both women and queer Germans as the targets of Muslim
violence. She describes a case of a supposed Muslim gang sexually harassing German
women, then discovering they were transgender. “These ‘new citizens’ harassed two
women, at first only sexually. We know that this has been the national sport since
Angela Merkel became Chancellor. When they noticed the two women were
transsexual men, they let them go, but not to go their own way, because their
offended ‘honor’ did not allow this. It was decided to liberate these two people from
their torment, and stone them. In Germany in 2016! The attackers told the police quite
willingly that this was their religious duty.” Whereas the AHO avoids discussing
transgender politics, only claiming to represent gays and lesbians in its manifesto,
Weidel includes “transsexual men” in the “we” group of queer people being targeted
by supposed Muslim violence in this speech.

Weidel then describes “no go areas” where homosexuals are not safe from
implied Muslim violence: “It is unbearable that there are no-go areas for
homosexuals. It is unacceptable that honest citizens have to be afraid in Germany
simply because of their sexual orientation, and therefore, my tolerance ceases at the
point where none is offered to me. And that is why I am in the AfD.” No-go areas in
Germany, in a scholarly context, refer to neo-Nazi controlled areas where police do not have control, and foreigners and minorities are not safe. Novotný (2009)\textsuperscript{75} describes the history of the extreme right-wing NPD party “controlling the streets,” where the “objective is to create a zone for neo-Nazi sympathisers, chase out foreigners and citizens who do not share extremist views.” Although the existence of these neo-Nazi controlled no-go areas has long been debated, “what do exist—and press articles and statements from respondents confirm this—are fear zones, places where foreigners, members of a national minority, or even just people that do not think like neo-Nazis, are scared to go.”\textsuperscript{76} Weidel reverses this understanding of no go areas as zones of rightwing extremism and intolerance, to mean a place where white Germans who are queer are not safe.

Weidel concludes, “I am here not despite of my homosexuality, but because of my homosexuality, because the AfD is the only party that stands for law and order, and from this all citizens benefit, irrespective of their sexual orientation.” She argues that her queerness is not in contradiction with her party affiliation, but intrinsically tied to it. Her rebuttal to labels of hypocrisy is that the AfD, homophobic family policy aside, is the party of safety for queers threatened by Islam. She frames her party as the tolerant protector of national queers, violently threatened by homophobic Muslim gangs. To an audience of AfD supporters, with no one to fact-check her, she is the arbiter of what queer Germans need, and what queer politics should be about, i.e. immigration and Islam not marriage rights or discrimination.

\textsuperscript{76} Novotný, page 605.
Weidel in the Media: Lesbian, Mother, Banker, Betrayer

In the Cologne speech discussed above, Weidel gets to discuss her sexuality on her own terms, eventually articulating the explicit connection between nationalist queerness and xenophobia, in a prime example of homonationalism: “I am here [in the AfD] not despite of my homosexuality, but because of my homosexuality.” She frames herself as representing the needs of gays and lesbians in Germany, who are supposedly in danger from Muslim violence.

In interviews and in the media, however, Weidel does not have the same opportunity to define queer interests. Weidel fights back against reporters questioning her queerness and rightwing politics, repeatedly arguing that the AfD is not homophobic, even as the media fact-checks her and cites homophobic remarks by her colleagues.

Central to these media representations of Weidel is the question of queer community—is Weidel a betrayer, an enemy, of other queers? The reporters and interviewers do not bring up the AHO or Tassis or other queer nationalists, instead viewing her as an isolated oxymoron, a lesbian fighting against her own interests, and her own family’s interests. Whereas in her own speech, Weidel refers to herself as a homosexual, rather than a homosexual woman or lesbian, thereby tying herself to a larger queer community, these articles predominately isolate her from other queers. The headlines in the following articles label her: a “Lesbian Mother,” “Lesbian Goldman Sachs Economist,” “Marine Le Pen-like leader Alice Weidel” and “openly gay former investment banker,” and “young, clever, lesbian.”
In an interview with the Washington Post entitled “German’s Far Right Preaches Traditional Values, can a Lesbian Mother be its New Voice?”\textsuperscript{77}, Weidel said that she “saw no contradiction between her party’s stated stance in favor of ‘traditional families’ with ‘a father and mother’ and her life with her female partner and children. Germany offers civil partnerships, she said, and she and her party remain in favor ‘of keeping the status quo.’” This article describes Weidel as a “lesbian mother,” and focuses on the relationship between her queer family and the AfD’s family policy. Weidel says, “My election and my high acceptance within the party show that, contrary to public perception, my party is tolerant.” She fights back against the public perception of the AfD as intolerant to queer people, citing her personal success as counterevidence.

Weidel also discussed how other queer people view her negatively: “I was labeled by a gay magazine as the most dangerous homosexual in Germany. I called up my partner and said, ‘In Germany, especially in Berlin, we cannot show up at gay parties anymore.’ She was like, ‘We’ve never done that, and we won’t do that,’ so I have no problem.” This is an important, and unusual, glimpse into Weidel’s relationship with German queer communities. The label of “most dangerous homosexual in Germany” calls to mind her homonationalist rhetoric surrounding danger to homosexuals, compared to other queer people viewing her as dangerous. This anecdote suggests hostility within the queer community, and a sense of isolation.

affecting her and her partner. The suggestion that Weidel and her partner never went to “gay parties” in the first place reinforces the sense of a distance between Weidel and the German queer community.

In Foreign Policy’s article, “Meet the Lesbian Goldman Sachs Economist Who Just Led Germany’s Far Right to Victory,” the headline focuses on her professional background rather than motherhood and family, although it still places her sexual identity first. This piece quotes Weidel saying, “As if [gay marriage] were Germany’s most pressing problem at the moment. The grand coalition is pushing through ‘marriage for everybody’ legislation, while the mass migration that has swamped the country over the last two years considers homosexuality a crime.” This aligns with her homonationalist speech, but it does not go uncontested in the media. They write, “Weidel maintains that she’s never been the object of bias in the AfD, even though the German media is flush with examples of AfD homophobia. In the regional legislature of Saxony Anhalt, the AfD’s Andreas Gehlmann interrupted a speaker condemning countries that outlaw homosexuality, by yelling: ‘We should do that in Germany too!’ A family, Weidel responded curtly to Gehlmann and others, is ‘where there are children.’ Weidel is described as “curt” in response to her colleague’s homophobia, and they focus on whether she has been discriminated against in her own party, rather than if she herself is a force for homophobia.

With the headline, “Germany's far-right party surged to its best election result since the Nazis — meet Marine Le Pen-like leader Alice Weidel,” Business Insider describes Weidel as “an openly gay former investment banker in a civil partnership with a Swiss national.” This headline, rather than initially stressing her queer motherhood or business experience, compares her party to the Nazis, and Weidel to Le Pen, leader of the French far right. She is labeled “openly gay” rather than “lesbian,” and her civil partnership is stressed instead of her motherhood. Of these headlines, this is the only reference to “open” queerness and the implied closet, tying her to shared queer experiences of coming out.

“Weidel has previously suggested that Germany's legalisation of same-sex marriage was a waste of time,” they write, and she “lives with her partner, Swiss film producer Sarah Bossard and their two children in Biel, Switzerland” in what she describes as a “modern family.” After 2016 protests against LGBTQ issues being introduced in schools, Weidel said, “I don't want anyone with their gender idiocy or their early sexualisation classes coming near my children.” However, she insisted that she “had no problem with children being taught about homosexuality in schools, but only after they hit puberty.” Here, Weidel carefully treads the line of supporting the party’s coded homophobia as focused on childhood education, but not being overtly against LGBTQ education.

In a Vice video interview, “10 Questions for Alice Weidel, AfD,”

Weidel was asked, “How do you react when colleagues from the party express homophobic sentiments?” She responded, “Homophobic expressions don’t come from my colleagues in the party. I believe we had one, one time, the guy came straight from the caucus to Berlin, immediately. And within our party, that has actually never been a topic in any form.” Vice’s fact-checking subtitles to the video reads, “This is how the AfD talks about homosexuals... The AfD chairperson for Sachsen-Anhalt [state] calls LGBTQ-enlightenment in schools “defilement of children’s psyches/souls,” November 2016” and continues with a long list of other homophobic remarks by party leaders. Vice rebuts Weidel’s claims of AfD tolerance by factchecking her with subtitles throughout the video.

Vice asked Weidel, “How did your coming out go?” to which she responded, “Hmm...that wasn’t so early. At some point during college I told my parents and they found it really, really funny.” “Funny?” She responded, “Yeah, the answer was: Oh, we actually already thought so and it’s okay.” This question, unlike others that place her in opposition to pro-queer politics, is humanizing and allows her to relate to a queer audience with common experiences. Although it is not dwelt upon, Weidel describes acceptance of her queerness by her family.

Weidel was then asked, “Why don’t you support other homosexuals?” She responded, “My emphasis is just something else. I entered the AfD because of the Euro-critical profile of this party. Those are really my most important issues. I mainly

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81 Interview translated by Elizabeth Whitney
work with economic policy, European policy, and currency policy within the party. Those are also the issues I know best.” Here, Weidel is allowed to justify her politics by framing it as issue prioritization.

In “Alice Weidel: The Pride of the Populists, a Mystery to Everyone Else,” DW\(^82\) writes, “She’s young, she’s unflappable and she’s perhaps the savviest AfD politician when it comes to the media.” The article describes her as a “very confident public figure,” as well as “young, clever, lesbian.” The headline’s “pride of the populists” also references Weidel’s accepted role in the party as well as alluding to queer “pride.” They ask, “How can Weidel, who is raising children with another woman, represent a homophobic party? The AfD is, after all, the party that wanted to sue the government over same-sex marriage.” DW seems to frame Weidel’s career as a moral conundrum, private versus political, and emphasizes her youthful savviness, confidence, and cleverness.

The article also includes a glimpse into Weidel’s own queer partnership: “she admitted that her partner was so ‘annoyed’ with her rants about what was wrong with German politics that she encouraged her to go into politics and do something about it.” This moment alludes to a moment of domesticity, with tension but also her partner’s support of far right political career.

This survey of media representations of Weidel shows an emphasis on her “lesbian mother” identity, as well as a tension regarding her relationship with the queer community. Some articles represent conversations with her partner and even

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her coming out story, whereas other focus on the ideological conflict with queer interests such as marriage equality. The implicit and explicit question in many of these interviews concerns betrayal—how could you betray the interests of your own community? How do you reconcile your relationship and your motherhood with your politics? The media stresses her isolation from other queers, implying that she therefore cannot represent queer interests, and refusing to see her a representative of conservative queer interests.

*Alexander Tassis: The Homonationalist Immigrant*

Whereas the media often frames Weidel as an isolated oxymoron in the otherwise homophobic AfD, Alexander Tassis, leader of the Alternative Homosexuals, is never discussed separately from other queer voters, specifically, other gay men. In addition to being a far less famous politician, and a man, Tassis is also a gay immigrant from Greece, and his nationality, in relation to the anti-immigration party, is often questioned. For while the discussion of homonationalism often focuses on the “homo,” it is just as much about the nation, and the xenophobia found in homonationalism is at odds with Tassis’s own status as an immigrant. The “betraying your community” question that arises in discussions of homonationalism is exacerbated in this case, with Tassis’s dual identity as queer and immigrant—however, it is not raised as frequently in these interviews. Tassis’s status as queer representative is less questioned than Weidel’s.
A CNN interview with Tassis introduces him as “the man who is now responsible for the AfD's gay outreach,” and they describe Tassis as a gay immigrant from Greece, who strongly believes that “Islamization” is a threat to Germany and Europe and that “the AfD will soon become the most popular party among gay men.” Gay men are singled out as the most important demographic for party, although Tassis later mentions the LGBTQ community at large. In the interview with CNN, Tassis says, “There's no contradiction in the party's stance against gay marriage,” and they remark that “it's clear he views the LGBT community as an overlooked source of votes this election.” Tassis is discussed explicitly in relation to the broader queer community, linking his conservative queerness to other conservative queers.

Tassis continues, “Gays, lesbians and also older migrant groups in Germany--like myself who came to Germany a long time ago--are just as important to Germany as any other human being who lives here. The LGBT and older migrant groups have concerns that other parties simply don't understand and don't get. I represent those groups and want to give those groups a voice. That's what I am here for.” Tassis links LGBTQ people and “older migrant groups” as connected identity groups, both of which he sees himself representing. He frames himself as a substantive representative of both “gays and lesbians” and “older migrant groups.” Notably, he describes the “LGBT” community as overlooked for votes, but specifically mentions “gays and lesbians,” playing into the larger invisibility of trans identities in these conversations.

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DW’s article “Gay in the AfD: Talking with LGBT supporters of Germany’s Populist Party” interviews Tassis, who denies that the party is moving “towards the right,” saying “It's becoming more and more the party that I wanted.” They describe Tassis as “the 46-year-old son of a Greek migrant worker, card-carrying AfD member since 2013.” Regarding marriage legislation, Tassis states that he is not actually seeking equality, because legal unions “give gay couples around 90 percent of the same benefits as heterosexual marriage.” Whereas Weidel sidelines the marriage equality question by placing emphasis on other policy areas as central to queer safety, Tassis explicitly disrupts the assumption that LGBTQ legislators are seeking equality-based legislation. Tassis agrees with the AfD’s emphasis on “classical families,” but differs from the AfD’s stance on adoption, as same-sex partners cannot adopt children as a couple in Germany. He stated that families should provide children with “modern values,” including “reliability and responsibility for each other and for society.”

Vice’s interview with Tassis describes him arguing that the AfD “will soon be the most popular party among gay men in Germany despite the fact that it officially opposes gay marriage”—a “luxury problem,” in his words. He calls multiculturalism a “West Coast fantasy,” and is concerned with the “Islamization of Germany’s Western values.” “If you are gay, you have to see the way the social environment is changing, now through Merkel's refugee politics.” He appeals directly

to a gay (not queer) audience, arguing for the community to oppose the entry of refugees into Germany. The article states, “Tassis also doesn't believe gay people have a moral duty to support other marginalized people, like refugees.”

“Humanitarianism,” Tassis said, “is a decadent millionaire upper-class immorality. Gays need to distance themselves so it's clear on which side we'll stand in the future.”

Of note here is Tassis’s use of “gays” not “LGBTQ people” etc. as the group label. He also calls for gays to “distance themselves” and take sides against humanitarian immigration policy. He repeatedly uses class markers: luxury problem, West coast fantasy, decadent millionaire upper-class immorality, invoking a “working class” ethos opposed to immigration, and implying that his gay audience is not upper class.

Whereas Weidel’s isolation is stressed in her media portrayals, these interviews with Tassis frame him as a representative of the queer community, particularly of gay men. He sees himself as a representative of “older migrant groups” as well, a category left unquestioned by the media.

Both Tassis and Weidel are interviewed by Vice News, a news site which self-describes as a promoter of “under-reported stories.” Tonally, both articles are politically opposed to the politicians they interview, despite being in different languages and aimed at different audiences—the Weidel interview is in German, on the German website, amongst other political candidate interviews, whereas the Tassis article is categorized under “LGBTQ” news, and describes German politics from more of an outsider’s perspective. The article featuring Tassis is entitled, “Gays Really Love Germany's Racist, Homophobic Far Right Party,” subtitled, “How,

86 https://news.vice.com/about
exactly, did the European far right capture gay voters and candidates? It was easier than you think,” which is far more inflammatory than the title, “10 questions for Alice Weidel.” Although the Weidel interview treats her as any other political candidate, as the others featured in the category of “top politicians” are treated in the same fashion, they nonetheless focus on her sexuality in the interview, asking questions about party homophobia and her coming out story. Vice treats both Weidel and Tassis as centrally queer politicians, viewing their identities as central to their political personas.

Queer Substantive Representation: Lesbian Not Liberal

This comparison of media representation of two most prominent homonationalists in the AfD shows that Tassis, though more extremist in rhetoric, is seen as representing other queers, whereas Weidel is treated as isolated oxymoron. Weidel’s self-representation and message, as shown in her Cologne speech, is not able to get through in the media. The interviews and articles about Weidel show a deep concern with the issue of queer representation, such as in discussions of marriage equality and her and her partner’s relationship to the queer community. Regarding Weidel, the media surveyed does not seem to “buy in” to homonationalism as an authentic queer interest, conflating lesbian and liberal. Tassis, however, is treated as a representative of queer conservatism, especially of gay men. The media moralizes Weidel’s choices, interrogating her family life and stressing her motherhood. This seems to be a gendered difference, conveying that lesbians, even more than women as a group, are perceived as progressive. The media does not
question Tassis’s personal life, or question his identity as an immigrant in relation to the xenophobic party.

This media survey shows a preoccupation with the question of representation, descriptive and substantive, of the queer community. Reporters ask both leaders if they represent their community, and who constitutes that community. Tassis’s interviews show an uncertain categorization of the queer community: sometimes representing “gays,” “gays and lesbians,” and “LGBT group.” In Weidel’s speech, she discusses “homosexuals” predominately, although she does also reference “transsexuals” as supposed victims of Muslim violence. The invisibility of transgender identity and focus on gays and lesbians is evident in these representations.

The existing literature on queer representation in government builds on studies of the descriptive and substantive representation of women and minorities. Drawing on these fields, Reynolds (2013) summarizes, “There is clear evidence to suggest that the inclusion of marginalized groups is correlated with policy benefits for that group” and there is a “clear empirical link between women’s descriptive and substantive representation. The causal links may sometimes be murky, but women in office are more likely to take liberal positions, support feminist proposals, and take the lead on women’s issues.”

Reynolds draws on women’s representation literature to study the presence of LGBTQ legislators cross-nationally. He writes, “This work rests on the theory that

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the presence of LGBT legislators in a national assembly will make more likely the
passage of laws that heighten equality on the basis of sexual orientation, and I present
strong evidence to suggest that to be the case.” Reynolds argues that queer
substantive representation is in fact more powerful than that of women or minorities:
“Although these findings echo the evidence that shows how the descriptive
representation of women and ethnic groups can enhance protections for those
communities of interests, LGBT MPs seem distinctive in the power of their
presence.” He concludes that this may be because “their visibility in office is such a
new and, in some cases, jarring phenomenon.”

Celis and Childs (2012)\textsuperscript{89}, however, complicate Reynolds’ findings,
problematizing the discipline’s defining of women’s substantive representation as
feminist. They summarize the research on women’s substantive representation:
“Feminist political theory, and especially the ‘politics of presence’ literature, provides
the link between descriptive representation (being a woman representative) and
substantive representation (representing women’s issues, interests, needs and wants).”

Celis and Childs problematize the use of feminist to mean “for women,” which
excludes conservative women from representing women’s interests. This bias towards
so-called feminist interests limits a full understanding of women’s representation: “an
exclusive focus on feminist actors and policies creates both a blind spot and bias in
our empirical research, and furthermore, limits our theoretical understanding of

\textsuperscript{88} Reynolds, page 2.
\textsuperscript{89} Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, “The Substantive Representation of Women: What to Do with
Conservative Claims?” Political Studies: 2012 Vol 60.
substantive representation and of what constitutes ‘good’, democratic
representation.”  

Celis and Childs note that conservative representatives also claim to act “for
women,” and should not be excluded from these studies: “Existing assessments of
‘whether women act for women’ tend to accept, albeit sometimes implicitly, that
women’s sex is the most crucial political identity and, in so doing, fail fully to
acknowledge ideological differences.”

These interventions into the studies of women’s representation are also
necessary for queer representation. Reynolds’ study constitutes queer policy interests
as progressive, and “pro-equality,” parallel to the “feminist policy” for women, but
this ignores the role that queer conservatives play in legislatures. This lack of
ideological diversity in what constitutes “queer interests,” often limited to marriage
equality, frames Weidel as a “betrayer” of the queer community, rather than a
substantive representative of rightwing queer interests. The assumption that queer,
especially lesbian, means liberal or progressive, renders the conservative queer
invisible.

In Tassis’s interview regarding marriage legislation, he states, “We are not
seeking equality, it doesn’t have to be the same.” Contrary to Reynolds assumptions
that LGBTQ legislators actively seek equality-based policy, homonationalist
politicians are not prioritizing equality-oriented legislation, but rather dismissing its
importance, as they focus on issues such as immigration. And it is not about

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90 Celis and Childs, page 214.
91 Celis and Childs, page 216.
“betraying their own interests,” rather, Weidel and Tassis define their interests, and the queer community’s interests, as being about stopping Muslim immigration. To extend Celis and Child’s argument regarding conservative women: conflating queer with progressive fails to acknowledge how queer identities can engage with xenophobia, white supremacy, and other interests. Homonationalism is a queer interest, and the “queer community” is not a progressive and tolerant monolith, focused on marriage equality.
Chapter 3: Homonationalist Voters
Far Right Masculinity, Homosexuality, and Visibility

Introduction: The Visible AfD Queer

In the summer of 2016, the AfD launched a billboard campaign featuring a gay couple, saying “My partner and I don't want to get to meet Muslim immigrants who believe that our love is a deadly sin.”92 Two white men stare head on, solemn-faced, one with his arms crossed looming above his partner, the quote in large letters placed next to them. The billboard was controversial in Berlin, where it was advertised on the sides of trucks.

This AfD campaign was specifically targeted at queer voters, gay men in particular. It was not a niche AHO advertisement, but an official AfD billboard, signifying the party’s public acknowledgement, and overt courtship, of homosexual voters. AfD queers were made suddenly visible through this campaign.

This hypervisibility of queer voters is notably in contrast to the literature on the AfD and far right voters, which ignores the relevance of queer identity to these voters. The consensus in far-right literature is that these voters are mainly male, and although there is disagreement in the importance and causes of the gender gap, the masculinity element is widely acknowledged. The mainstream political science studies are aggressively heteronormative, but a limited number of scholars have

engaged with the existence of queer far right voters, documented in interviews and even their own manifestos. Surveying neo-Nazi and far right materials from the Third Reich, postwar period, and through to the 2000s, they theorize about how these “gay Nazis” interact with traditional, hegemonic masculinity.

These scholars of queer far right voters contend that their homosexuality is marginalized and rendered invisible, but as theorists such as Puar argue, the relationship between homosexuality and the nation is undergoing change, creating new space for the visible nationalist queer. Nationalism has long been associated with hegemonic masculinity, with nationalist men framed as warriors and protectors of the nation and family, but as the rise of gay male homonationalist voters shows, nationalist masculinity is evolving to include certain kinds of state-sanctioned homosexuality. The category of far-right masculinity, long-thought of as rigidly heterosexual, has expanded to include the nationalist queer—despite pervasive assumptions that queer and progressive should be linked. Hegemonic masculinity is evolved into a more “inclusive” (although not politically progressive) category, where queerness becomes visible and even state-sanctioned, if homonationalists participate in the Othering of Muslims.

Conflating queer with progressive has rendered the complexities of far-right masculinity and queerness invisible. Mudde (2007), in his chapter “Mannerparteien” (“men’s parties”), offers a “revisionist account” of gender and the far right, arguing that the existing literature is flawed because of its “feminist bias,” or the assumption that “all women hold modern (or even feminist) views on gender roles.” He writes, “various studies have demonstrated that women vote for populist radical right parties
far less than men. Interestingly, this is the only sociodemographic variable that is consistently relevant in practically all European countries.”

However, this is not because of political views; there is no significant gender gap in terms of radical right attitudes. Mudde argues, “the theory of ‘antifeminism,’ which argues that women do not vote for populist radical right parties, because of their ‘antifeminine’ or ‘sexist’ ideology abhors female voters, makes intuitive sense, but has both empirical and logical flaws. Most notably, it assumes that women hold progressive (or even feminist) views on gender relations; an assumption not substantiated by empirical research.”

Mudde’s intervention into feminist bias in studying the far-right gender gap is incredibly relevant to far-right queerness. Just as the assumption that most (or all) women hold progressive or feminist views is not substantiated, nor is the assumption that all queers are progressive or even support marriage equality.

There seems to be an assumption in the far-right literature that the men supporting far right parties such as the AfD are heterosexual, because these parties often take homophobic stances and are opposed to marriage equality. But this “progressive queer” bias is unfounded, and fails to examine the nuances in the sexualities and masculinities of these male voters.

The queer men represented in the AfD campaign poster do not embody the hyper-masculine homosocial or homosexual ideology that existed in tension with the Nazi regime and later in the postwar German far right; these two men instead seem to embody a more inclusive, less traditional masculinity. This AfD campaign both

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94 Mudde, pg 114.
makes visible the existence of its queer voters, and provides insight into how the far right is imagining queerness in evolving terms.

This chapter examines the heteronormativity of AfD voter studies, and traces the history of queer Nazis and the relationship between masculinity and homosexuality in the Third Reich, through to the contemporary formations of far right German queerness, to understand the evolving relationship between masculinity, nationalism, and homosexuality, and the significance of a party such as the AfD openly depicting its supporters as homosexual. The chapter first investigates who these voters are and how central masculinity is to AfD voting and AfD queers, and then moves to history and theory, to understand the importance of this queer masculinity in the far right and its transformation, in both the identities of queer far right voters, and how the far right itself understands and imagines queerness.

AfD Voter Demographics: The Gender Gap and Heteronormativity

Studies of the AfD have mainly focused on the supply side of the party rather than the demand side, voters, but a limited number of studies have examined the demographics of its voters since the party’s recent creation in 2013. There is no acknowledgement in any of these studies of sexuality as a relevant factor, although gender is frequently mentioned, as the “gender gap,” or the predominantly male demographics of far-right parties, is a well-documented phenomenon.
Goerres, Spies, and Kumlin (2018) frame their research within the broader consensus on far-right part voters: “As far as demographics are concerned, time and again research has reported that men are much more likely to support PRRPs than women. Also, the Radical Right draws disproportional strong support from voters of younger and older age groups, while it is underrepresented among middle-aged voters.” Using surveys from 2017, they find that AfD voters conform to these expectations regarding gender, and conclude: “Besides the gender-effect, and as indicated by several subnational election results, the only noteworthy finding is that the AFD gains more support in the Eastern than in the Western part of Germany.”

Goerres, Spies, and Kumlin argue against claims that the AfD represents a political protest against mainstream parties, instead showing that the party has “already managed to form a coherent supporter base motivated by both cultural and economically right-wing policy preferences.”

Hansen and Olsen (2019), also studying AfD voters from the 2017 federal election but with different surveys, come to different conclusions regarding gender. They write, “Previous research has confirmed that voters for far right parties tend to be men, older, less educated, unemployed, union members, and have less political knowledge. Our findings thus contradict some previous scholarship, which has suggested that AfD voters have lower levels of union membership and education and are primarily male.” Hansen and Olsen find that AfD voters are not significantly more

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male, and rather do not have a specific socio-demographic profile when compared to other German parties. They argue that AfD voters do not differ demographically from voters of other parties, “in terms of gender, education, employment status, and union membership.” They do not list sexuality as a potential relevant socio-demographic factor. They conclude, “AfD voters in 2017 were driven solely by two factors: their attitudes towards immigrants/refugees and anti-establishment sentiment/satisfaction with democracy in Germany.”

Berbuir, Lewandoskry, and Siri (2014) study AfD sympathizers in 2013, a period when the party had not fully staked its identity on immigration and was focusing still on Euroscepticism, but their study can still offer a useful historical trajectory of AfD voter demographics. Of their sample of “AfD sympathizers,” 80 percent were male. They were also surveyed on social policy issues including LGBTQ rights. When asked whether they agreed with the statement “The right to adoption should only be granted to heterosexual couples,” the agreement/total agreement rate was highest in the AfD group compared with other parties. More than 50 percent of AfD sympathizers were found to be in favor of limiting adoption rights to heterosexual couples, with more than 33 percent in total agreement.

There is an unfortunate lack of data and studies of AfD voters in general, but particularly regarding sexuality. The two most recent studies disagree on the importance and prominence of the gender gap, but gender is the nonetheless treated as a potentially relevant factor. The broad consensus is that far-right voters, including

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AfD voters, are mostly men, but the sexuality of these men is never addressed. Only Berbui, Lewandoskry, and Siri (2014) address sexuality and LGBTQ rights at all in their study, and not regarding demographic identity but policy preference. These studies do not discuss sexuality as a relevant demographic factor, rendering queerness invisible in the mainstream. Instead, glimpses into the sexuality demographics of AfD voters only come from less than scholarly sources, such as the survey from “MEN,” a German monthly magazine targeted at gay men, in which 17% of respondents openly supported the AfD in 2016, higher than the national average.\(^9\) These voters are predominately men, some of whom are queer, but there is not enough data and information to render these voters clearly, so we must turn to a historical view to understand the (in)visibility of the queer far right voters.

*History of Far-Right Homosexuality: Evolving Masculinities*

Just has the queerness of AfD voters is often ignored because of its supposed inherent contradictions, so has historical far right queerness, placing this contemporary phenomenon in a difficult history of the queer German far right. Simultaneously, queer scholars are discovering more and more about contemporary far right queerness and Nazi queerness, uncovering nuances and difficult relationships to masculinity across nearly a century.

Discussion of the Nazi regime’s relationship to masculinity and sexuality often focuses on militarized hyper-masculinity and violent misogyny it glorified, but

there were also many homosocial and even homoerotic elements of Nazism that have been erased. It is important not to paint the Third Reich as tolerant or pro-gay in any way, but still to acknowledge that it had gay leaders and important tensions that in no way detract from the violence it perpetrated. The regime encompassed both the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, made visible with pink triangles in concentration camps, and gay SA chief Ernst Röhm, arguing for the acceptance of private-sphere homosexuality, stemming from the hyper-masculine, misogynistic ideology of the Männerbund.

Just as far right parties such as the AfD are often read as unilaterally homophobic and heteronormative despite internal tensions involving queer leaders and constituents, the Nazi regime encompassed complex queer politics underlying the violent repression of queers. Homonationalism is theorized as a contemporary, post-9/11 phenomenon, but there are threads of proto-homonationalism in the German Männerbund and its homosocial, misogynistic ideology. Reading contemporary queers as only now beginning to support far right parties and ideologies that dehumanize them and are “against their own interests” because of newly-gained rights, fails to address the history of queer fascism. It is important to link the contemporary far right in Germany to this history, and acknowledge the trajectory of the relationship between queerness and the far right.

To understand the complexity and inherent contradictions of Nazi queerness, one must first look at how misogyny, hyper-masculinity, racism, and antisemitism were linked in Nazi ideology. Nazi propaganda stressed hypermasculinity and militarized masculinity, centered on the image of the German man as warrior and
protector of the nation. Women were largely seen as the procreators of the nation, and part of the project of violent antisemitism involved the image of the effeminate Jew.

Uli Linke (1997)\textsuperscript{99} discusses the German military’s “heavy reliance not just on men as soldiers, but on misogynist forms of masculinist soldiering,” arguing that “German fascism created a culture of terror by accentuating existing forms of violence against women, privileging those cultural images of masculinity and manhood that were driven by a desire for bloodshed. The brutalization of women was fundamental to the making of the German fascist.”

Nazi ideology valorized the hyper-masculine, violent German man, while degrading the feminizing and racialized Jew. This stemmed from earlier eighteenth and nineteenth century ideals of masculinity, embodied in the Männerbund. Elizabeth Heineman (2002)\textsuperscript{100} describes this “masculinity that united intellectual strength, moral virtue, and physical beauty,” which defined itself in opposition to various Others: “women as well as working-class, Jewish, and homosexual men.” Heineman writes, “The Männerbund, which translates imperfectly as ‘male collective,’ united men of disciplined mind and body who, undistracted by women, transformed their deep bonds with each other and their leader into a powerful creative force. Prior to the First World War, sympathetic theorists of the Männerbund declared this productive male bond to be homoerotic in nature, although true men of the Männerbund bore no similarity to the dandified homosexuals of negative stereotype.”


\textsuperscript{100} Elizabeth Heineman, “Sexuality and Nazism: The Doubly Unspeakable?” \textit{Journal of the History of Sexuality}, Vol. 11, No. 1/2, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism (Jan. - Apr., 2002). Page 38.
Heineman describes how the ideology of the Männerbund reached its peak in fascism, “the ultimate anti-Socialist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, misogynist ideology.” However, she notes that a “powerful tension existed between the homoerotic bonds of the Männerbund and the vilification of the homosexual, whose ‘otherness’ was necessary for positive definitions of masculinity.”

Puar also discusses the relationship between nationalism and sexuality exemplified in the Männerbund: “homosexual desires, and their redirection, are foundational to the project of nationalism, as is the strict policing of the homo-hetero binary, and nations are heteronormative because of, rather than despite, homosexuality.” She continues, “The fraternal nation-state is organized to promote political homosocial relations among men in order to discourage and prohibit homosexual relations between men… heterosexuality sanctions homosociality while naming and producing the disallowed homosexuality.” This tension between promoting the homosocial and forbidding the homosexual among men of the nation must be carefully regulated, and when transgressed, disrupts understandings of masculinity.

SA chief Ernst Röhm’s homosexuality was so explosive and controversial because he argued that his sexuality was compatible with the Männerbund ideology’s celebration of manhood and homosocial male relationships. Many Nazis, including Hitler, considered Rohm's homosexuality irrelevant as long as he was effective, but other Nazis responded to Rohm’s transgression of the boundaries of acceptable

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101 Heineman, page 38.
102 Puar (2007), page 49.
masculinity with violence. Eleanor Hancock (1998)\textsuperscript{103} writes, “Röhm's homosexuality broke the distinctions established between homosexual desire and homosocial male bonding,” thereby challenging “the privileging of heterosexual over homosexual masculinities. If Röhm’s masculinity reassured some Nazis, it threatened others. His open homosexuality may have threatened the psychological security of some other National Socialists, creating a form of ‘male homosexual panic.’”

Hancock describes how Röhm “attached paramount importance to the values of militarized masculinity” which aligned with the Nazi homosocial Männerbund. However, she argues that for men who found deep meaning in the homosocial element of Nazism, Rohm's blurring of boundaries was intolerable. Röhm understood the line between homosocial and homosexual as potentially fluid.

Understandings of the Third Reich’s treatment of homosexuality (very justifiably) focuses on homophobic violence and pink triangles. This violence should not be sidelined, but rather held in conversation with the visible and partially sanctioned fascist queer leadership. The Nazi era’s complex and contradictory formulations of masculinity and sexuality have influenced postwar and contemporary far right understandings, including the AfD.

Scholars of more contemporary far right German queerness are similarly struck by the tensions and contradictions, especially in relation to nationalist masculinity. Claus and Virchow (2017)\textsuperscript{104}, surveying representations of homophobia

\textsuperscript{103} Eleanor Hancock, “Only the Real, the True, the Masculine Held Its Value: Ernst Röhm, Masculinity, and Male Homosexuality,” Journal of the History of Sexuality, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Apr., 1998), pp. 616-641

and homosexuality in German neo-Nazi and far right rhetoric from the postwar period through the 2000s, note the contradiction between the official propaganda against homosexuality and the existence of homosexual neo-Nazis. They argue that the construction of manhood and the heteronormative, white family are both central to far-right ideology, and therefore the debate on homosexuality is marginalized in the far right, because they cannot resolve “the contradiction between a violent heteronormative ideology and the existence of homosexual comrades.”

Claus and Virchow examine Michael Kühnen’s 1986 booklet “National Socialism and Homosexuality,” in which the author, a prominent far right activist until he died after contracting HIV in 1992, “tried to create a space for homosexuality in the ideology of the ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ by arguing that male bonding and camaraderie are a necessary precondition for human development.” They also analyze other representations of queer German neo-Nazis, such as Rosa von Praunheim’s 2005 interviews of far-right activists who are out of the closet. One interviewee stated that he did not “see any contradiction to the ideal of masculinity that is prominent in neo-Nazi circles: ‘Personally, I am a very intolerant gay… I did not become gay because I like feminine types. I became gay because I like tough guys.’ His ideal of masculinity affirms values such as strength and brawniness.” Another of von Praunheim’s interviewees said, “The struggle against gays is not a struggle against men who go to bed with other men, but a struggle against unmanliness.”

105 Claus and Virchow, page 312.
106 Claus and Virchow, page 311.
Claus and Virchow argue that the “homophobic dismissal of ‘feminine attitudes’ or weakness is central to this construction of gay Nazis—hypermasculinity legitimates certain expressions of homosexuality. In this discourse, partial ‘tolerance’ should not be confused with acceptance or emancipation. Homosexual far-right activists have to avoid any kind of effeminacy if they want to be respected as full members of their movement.”\textsuperscript{107} In these representations, far right homosexuality is deeply intertwined with hegemonic masculinity, and attempting to distance itself from “effeminacy.” Claus and Virchow argue that gay neo-Nazis and far right members are deeply entrenched in hypermasculinity and traditional ideals of manliness, furthering rather than deconstructing or expanding hegemonic masculinity.

They conclude that neo-Nazi and far right homosexuality is rendered invisible: “On the individual level, homosexual Nazis exist, but they are rendered invisible in right-wing discourses and narratives. Values such as faithfulness, family and togetherness are placed first on the agenda. Sexual practices are not an issue, and cleanliness counts as an aim.”\textsuperscript{108} However, this homosexual invisibility in right-wing discourses has evolved from the postwar to early 2000s sources that Claus and Virchow study. As the AfD campaign billboard suggests, nationalist hegemonic masculinity seems to have undergone change or expansion in order for a homosexual couple to be visibly claimed by the far-right nationalist party.

\textsuperscript{107} Claus and Virchow, page 311.
\textsuperscript{108} Page 315.
Slootmaeckers (2019)\textsuperscript{109} discusses the role of masculinity in nationalism, in both the hetero and homo varieties, positing a new relationship between them. He uses a conceptual framework of nationalism as competing masculinities, to “highlight how nationalism relies on masculine technologies of Othering to distinguish itself from other nations.” Slootmaeckers draws on Joane Nagel’s (1998)\textsuperscript{110} argument that masculinity and nationalism are intertwined: “the nationalist project is a major avenue for the accomplishment of masculinity because the national state is essentially a masculine institution.” He intervenes in nationalism theories that treat masculinity as stable and undifferentiated, arguing for a new more inclusive brand of hegemonic masculinity.

In agreement with Puar, Slootmaeckers argues, “The increased visibility of the LGBT movement in Western countries and the shifts in societal attitudes towards homosexuality has contributed to the decline in homophobia as a masculine technology of Othering. Indeed, exemplifying a response of accommodation to shifting gender relations, hegemonic masculinities have come to define themselves in more inclusive or hybrid terms.”

Unlike Claus and Virchow, who see the neo-Nazi homonationalist as necessarily hyper-masculine and conforming to traditional manhood, Slootmaecker’s conception of a new “more inclusive or hybrid” masculinity creates room for the far right homosexual to be seen, incorporated into the national “us” rather than Othered,


like in the past. Slootmaeckers argues, “The ultimate homophobic Other is then represented as one of an orthodox, hetero-patriarchal masculinity which is sexually backwards and repressive to both homosexuals and women and is therefore positioned as less than the western new modes of inclusive/hybrid masculinities.”

Slootmaeckers differentiates between heteronationalism and homonationalism through the location of homophobia as a technology of Othering. He argues, “Heteronationalism draws from homophobia to enforce the nation’s one masculine image by excluding homosexuals or effeminate masculinities from the nation—to demark both internal and external boundaries—and to claim the dominant position in the masculine hierarchy of nations.” Heteronationalism, or nationalism as it has traditionally been understood and theorized, uses homophobia to prioritize an exclusive brand of masculinity and Other homosexuals.

Homonationalism, on the other hand, uses homophobia to vilify other nations, seeing homophobia as a political problem inherent to other national cultures but not its own. Slootmaeckers argues, “it is the Other’s use of homophobia as a technology of Othering that is used to position it as inferior. Homonationalism thus relies on the masculine Othering process of marginalisation to reaffirm the hegemonic position of a tolerant masculinity that (at least at a utilitarian level) values diversity vis-à-vis the homophobic pre-modern masculine nations. Doing so, homophobia is located outside the national Self and presented as the ultimate defining feature of the national Other.”

Whereas Claus and Virchow present an invisible, traditional hypermasculine queer, Slootmaecker’s new inclusive hegemonic masculinity holds a new
positionality of homonationalism, where certain queerness is no longer Othered, in the face of supposedly homophobic Islam.

In *Terrorist Assemblages*, Puar also discusses the relationship between masculinity and homonationalism, but her argument focuses instead on the prominence of terrorist masculinities. She argues, “The depictions of masculinity most rapidly disseminated and globalized at this historical juncture are terrorist masculinities: failed and perverse, these emasculated bodies always have femininity as their reference point of malfunction, and are metonymically tied to all sorts of pathologies of the mind and body—homosexuality, incest, pedophilia, madness, and disease.” According to Puar, homonationalist masculinities or “masculinities of patriotism” then work to differentiate themselves from this terrorist masculinity.

In Puar’s analysis, 9/11 and national imaginations of Muslim terrorists are the new Other that changed the positionality of the queer in relation to the nation. The queer citizen becomes newly able to claim “patriotic masculinity” and fraught acceptance in the national “us,” if they participate in the vilifying of Muslims, which includes a sexual component, portraying the Muslim terrorist as perverse and effeminate, while their homonationalist masculinity is neither.

*Queer, or Cis Gay Male, Homonationalist?*

As the scholars of Nazism and Röhm show, queer fascists, Neo-Nazis, and far right extremists have existed for a long time; it is nationalism and hegemonic masculinity’s relationship to queerness that has evolved, not queer inclination to

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111 Puar 2007, page xxiii.
conservatism or fascism. AfD queers are not new, and not voting for the far right, as some argue, just because they have recently gained marriage rights or other rights—this fails to acknowledge the complex history of queer fascism and queer nationalism. The AHO might be a new organization, but there is a substantial history of enclaves of queer interests in the far right.

From the pre-Nazi Männerbund, to Röhm, to “tough guy” gay neo-Nazis, to the recent AfD campaign billboard, masculinity has been central to these discussions of far-right queerness. Whereas other chapters have compared lesbian and gay leaders, and presented a more robust and varied queerness, this examination of homonationalist voters and supporters has focused centrally on masculinity. Is homonationalism, at its core, rooted in maleness, in addition to whiteness? The word “queer” is used to avoid identity politics and categorizations, but it is also important to acknowledge differences in privilege among the LGBTQ community—such as masculinity. White, cisgender, gay men are easier to fit into the “national us” than queer people with other intersectional identities. So how does Alice Weidel fit into this narrative about masculinity?

In the Vice interview with Alice Weidel examined in Chapter 1, the subtitle reads, “Alice Weidel is the top candidate of the AfD, but definitely not the average member of her party. No party is more male than the AfD (16% women)"\textsuperscript{112} referencing a German study from 2016.\textsuperscript{113} Despite the AfD campaign billboards that heavily feature German women—such as one billboard showing a white woman

\textsuperscript{112} https://video.vice.com/de/video/10-fragen-an-alice-weidel/59ae9c7ccc16f4ca574cde5
\textsuperscript{113} https://www.fu-berlin.de/presse/informationen/fup/2017/fup_17_183-parteienstudie/index.html
looking back in fear at two hooded men, and urging voters to cast their ballots for AfD to “protect our women and children”\textsuperscript{114}—they do not reflect the proportionate constituency that the billboard in the beginning of this chapter seems to reflect.

An article in the Guardian entitled, “From Le Pen to Alice Weidel: how the European far-right set its sights on women,”\textsuperscript{115} is subtitled, “In far-right populist parties across the continent, a new generation of angry white women are rising to leadership roles. Why are they turning to groups that have traditionally opposed feminism?” The article, which discusses Weidel in depth, only mentions her sexuality at the end, focusing instead on her gender. Noting the potentially shrinking gender gap, they write: “A surge in rightwing populism across Europe over the past 20 years has been largely male-dominated – sometimes characterised as angry white men voting for angry white men. But this is changing. Angry white women are emerging as an important constituency, too.” Sexuality is an afterthought in comparison to gender; the “angry white men” category, they warn, is expanding to make room for “angry white women.” The Guardian describes the AfD as having one of the largest gender gaps in the European far right, saying that the party “appears to be only just waking up to the fact that they might have to do things differently to attract female voters. Only about 13% of the AfD’s 30,000 party members are women. In


parliament it has 10 female MPs – and 82 male.” Different sources vary as to the exact percentage of female AfD voters, but it is small.

Although they do peripherally note Weidel’s sexuality, there is no discussion that her following of “angry white men” and “angry white women” might be anything but heterosexual. The conversation is about gays, or about women, but seemingly never both. As this chapter explores, clearly some of these “angry white men” are gay, but what about the angry white lesbians?
Conclusion:

Gendered Differences and Homonationalist Visibility

The far right has traditionally been understood as the territory of angry white men, with some literature beginning to complicate the role white women also play in far-right politics. Queerness, even more than gender, has been ignored and erased from the discussion of the far right and what motivates and concerns its voters. This thesis has centrally discussed the visibility the queer far right in Germany, in relation to its erasure and invisibility in the discipline of political science and studies of the AfD, and its hypervisibility in the party’s own campaign materials and the candidacy of Alice Weidel, and her treatment by the media. Whether as part of formal institutions such as the AHO, or at the voter level, LGBTQ supporters of the AfD have been interpreted as betayers of their own community, against their own interests, and treated as either objects of spectacle for their inherent contradictions, or ignored for that same reason.

LGBTQ far right voters should not be treated as confused tokens or outliers, but as any other rational voter, following their own political interests. If they say they support the AfD not despite of but because of their sexuality, we should treat their politics and sexuality as related, and investigate how certain queer interests are served by xenophobia and Islamophobia. As the analysis of the media representation of Alice Weidel in Chapter 2 shows, “queer” and “lesbian” are often conflated with “liberal” and “progressive,” despite the diversity within LGBTQ political interests,
and queer conservatives’ adamancy about their own conservatism. One of the central conclusions of this research is that homonationalism is a queer interest, despite assumptions that queer identity necessitates progressive politics or tolerance. Being Other does not always lead to sympathy for different marginalized groups such as immigrants or Muslims.

The AfD, rather than being unilaterally homophobic and heteronormative, is in fact internally divided between two wings. One wing, led by Alexander Gauland, is often seen as representing the party as a whole, and embodies the values traditionally associated with the far right, with a focus on heteronormative family structures and traditional gender roles. The other wing, often ignored by political science and deemed self-contradictory by the mainstream media, is represented by Alice Weidel and the Alternative Homosexuals (AHO), led by Alexander Tassis. This wing is homonationalist and homonormative, meaning that rather than staking interests outside of the AfD and pushing for inclusion or political changes, it has found space within the AfD to uphold its values.

The study of the far right requires an intervention with queer theory to best understand the evolving use of queer politics in the far right. Jasbir Puar’s theory of homonationalism, or the alliance of LGBTQ interests and state nationalism, when applied to the AfD, illuminates how the party uses homonationalist rhetoric to justify xenophobic positions, often regarding Islam as the homophobic Other. The AfD’s use of homonationalist rhetoric also serves to legitimize itself as a long-lasting and less extremist party, presenting an image of tolerance and pro-queerness.
These chapters have employed a variety of sources, including media, speeches, manifestos, interviews, and campaigns, to examine homonationalism from the party organization level down to the voter level. Structured by levels of politics: organizations, leaders, and voters, these chapters did not present a uniform picture of homonationalism, but rather striking gendered differences, and tensions regarding who is included in the “homo” of homonationalism.

Chapter 1, which examined the Alternative Homosexuals (AHO) in relation to the AfD manifesto, concluded that the AHO is homonormative, meaning it upholds rather than contests heteronormative assumptions and institutions of the family and traditional gender norms. The AHO carefully fits itself into the AfD’s manifesto, agreeing with the party’s traditionalist family policy and arguing that homosexuals can also share conservative and nationalist values. The AHO website presents the rainbow Pride flag next to the German flag, wedding the queer and nationalist imagery into a homonationalist platform. In their guiding principles, they state, “Gays and lesbians are just as important to Germany as any other loving person with a connection to family, home and nation.” They proclaim the inclusion of queerness into the German nationalism, so long as it conforms to heteronormative family and gender structures.

This chapter finds that there is room for the AHO within the AfD—queer supporters are not significantly disagreeing with the AfD platform, or asking the party to be more inclusive. Rather, the AHO fits itself into the AfD, finding space within the party’s manifesto for the queer, so long as the queer is nationalist, traditional, and
conservative. Queers as individuals, importantly not as modes of being that disrupt the normative and traditional, are allowed entry to the far right.

Chapter 2, which compared Alice Weidel and Alexander Tassis, the two most prominent homonationalists in the AfD, found gendered differences in their media coverage, regarding their authenticity as queer representatives. Conflating lesbian and liberal, the media treated Weidel as a betrayer and exception to normative queer politics. Tassis, however, was treated as a genuine representative of queer conservatism, particularly gay men. Weidel’s identity as queer and female led the media to moralize her choices and interrogate her motherhood and queer partnership in opposition to the AfD platform. Queer representation is often only seen in progressive terms, ignoring the presence of queer conservatives. This lack of ideological diversity in what constitutes “queer interests,” often limited to marriage equality, frames Weidel as a “betrayor” of the queer community, rather than a substantive representative of rightwing queer interests. The assumption that queer, especially lesbian, means liberal or progressive, renders the conservative queer invisible.

In an interview about German marriage legislation, Tassis states, “We are not seeking equality, it doesn’t have to be the same.” AfD homonationalists, as both queer and nationalist, are not prioritizing equality-oriented legislation, but rather dismissing its importance as they focus on issues such as immigration. Weidel and Tassis define their interests, and the queer community’s interests, as being about stopping Muslim immigration. Conflating queer with progressive fails to acknowledge how queer identities can engage with xenophobia, white supremacy,
and other interests. Homonalisation is a queer interest, and the “queer community” is not a progressive and tolerant monolith, focused on marriage equality.

Chapter 3, which investigated the masculinity of homonalists voters and traced a history of proto-homonalism from the Männerbund and Nazi era through to the AFD, challenges narratives of queer far right invisibility. Beginning with an AFD campaign billboard featuring a gay couple proclaiming their opposition to the supposed intolerance of Islam, this chapter examines how the AFD renders queerness hyper-visible through this targeting of queer voters, gay men in particular.

Scholars of historical far right queers contend that their sexuality is marginalized and rendered invisible, but as theorists such as Puar argue, the relationship between homosexuality and the nation is undergoing change, creating new space for the visible nationalist queer. Nationalist masculinity is evolving to include certain kinds of state-sanctioned homosexuality. The category of far-right masculinity, long-thought of as rigidly heterosexual, has expanded to include the nationalist queer, and hegemonic masculinity is evolving into a more “inclusive” (although not politically progressive) category, where queerness becomes visible and even state-sanctioned, if homonalists participate in the Othering of Muslims.

Discussion of the Nazi regime’s relationship to masculinity and sexuality often focuses on the militarized hypermasculinity and violent misogyny it glorified, but there were also many homosocial and even homoerotic elements of Nazism that have been erased. Just as far right parties such as the AFD are often read as uniformly homophobic and heteronormative despite internal tensions with queer leaders and
constituents, the Nazi regime contained complex queer politics underlying the violent repression of queers.

Homonationalism has been theorized as a contemporary, post-9/11 phenomenon, but there are threads of proto-homonationalism in the German Männerbund and its homosocial, misogynistic ideology. Portraying contemporary queers as only now beginning to support far right parties and ideologies because of newly gained rights such as marriage equality, fails to address the history of queer fascism. It is important to link the contemporary far right in Germany to this history, and acknowledge the trajectory of the relationship between queerness and the far right. Far right queerness is not new, but its lesbian leadership is.

Comparing these different levels of homonationalist politics, there is not only internal incoherence between the homophobia of the traditionalist AfD wing and the homonationalist wing, but also the gendered incoherence of a lesbian leader representing a queer constituency still rooted in the misogyny and masculinity of the Männerbund legacy.

This research has prompted the following questions about homonationalism and identity: Why is German homonationalism being represented by a queer woman on the leadership level, but queer men on the voter level? How many queer people who are not cis gay men are voting for the AfD? Is there a lesbian constituency voting for Weidel, or is homonationalism in the AfD still rooted in masculinity and the Männerbund culture, only led by a woman to lend an image of tolerance?

The absence of adequate sexuality data contributes to the erasure of far-right queers, and specifically to the gendered implications of homonationalism. Political
science and queer studies need to engage with each other far more robustly, and future research about lesbians in the AfD must occur to fully understand the significance of Weidel’s leadership and the evolution of homonationalism.

The centrality of gender to homonationalism is not fully addressed by Puar, although she importantly discusses patriotic masculinity in relation to terrorist masculinity as its constituting other. Queer studies links homonationalism to contemporary globalization and capitalism, as well as the war on terror, but it should also be linked to a long history of queer and specifically gay fascism and right-wing extremism.

Another important question raised is the category of queer itself. I have chosen to use “queer” and “LGBTQ,” both in reference to the theoretical traditions of queer studies, and inclusive identity politics and communities. “Homosexual” does not encompass these same histories and worlds of meanings, and also limits queerness to only what has been studied thus far. LGBTQ, and its other iterations (such as LGBT, which Tassis uses in interviews, and LGBTQIA+, which is more inclusive) are English-language frameworks which map productively but imperfectly onto German sexuality. Weidel uses the category of “homosexual,” the AHO references “gays and lesbians,” and Tassis references both “gays” and “LGBT” Germans. It is important to not conflate or interchange these categories, as they all call on different and varyingly exclusive categories of queerness.

I have drawn on Duggan’s theory of homonormativity and Puar’s theory of homonationalism, both of which use “homo” rather than “queer” within queer studies, to highlight different positionalities and privilege. I have chosen to reference “AfD
queers” rather than “AfD homosexuals,” to avoid replicating the exclusivity and intolerance of the far right. The very limited data on LGBTQ far right voters is centered on gay men, but the invisibility of other identities in studies does not mean they do not exist. The study of the queer far right elevates male homosexuals, such as the gay Nazis examined in Chapter 3. This research is not about queers, but the visibility of gay men, which is replicated in AfD campaigns. Homonationalism is visibly gay, as its voters and leaders studied are homosexual, but exclusively referencing “AfD homosexuals” would exclude the potentiality of other queer nationalists who have not been studied and are not represented in the literature yet.
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