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# Playing the Gender Card: Femonationalism in Norwegian Immigration and Integration Discourse

Thesis submitted by

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## Author's Declaration

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mette Risom Olsen'. The signature is somewhat stylized and includes a large, scribbled-out area at the beginning.

Mette Christine Risom Olsen

Berlin, July 15, 2018

## Abstract

From the early 2000s onwards, Western European populist radical right parties have begun “playing the gender card” and talking of the importance of gender equality. It is puzzling that this party family, which traditionally is family conservative and sometimes even blatantly anti-feminist, has begun preaching for the emancipation of female Muslim immigrants. The most prominent explanation for why these parties employ gender equality rhetoric revolves around bordering who belongs to the nation and who does not, and establishing difference between what is represented as the gender equal majority population and the patriarchal (Muslim) immigrant population. In other words, scholars propose that these parties “play the gender card” in order to further their anti-immigration agenda. An interesting contribution to the scholarly debate is Sarah Farris’ political economy approach to the phenomenon.

This thesis looks at how gender equality and anti-immigration discourse operate together in the Norwegian context by analyzing discourse by the Norwegian Progress Party, as well as discourse in Norway’s civic integration program and discourse by anti-Islam feminists and femocrats. My analysis is informed by Farris’ approach, and the findings are discussed in light of her findings. Overall, I find little evidence of Farris’ political economy explanation for exclusionary gender equality rhetoric, which might be explained by the fact that Norway significantly differs from the countries she has studied. I find that in Norway, gender equality rhetoric is used for anti-immigration and assimilationist purposes.

**Keywords:** Femonationalism, racism, gender equality, civic integration, populism

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## Introduction: Playing the Gender Card

*“Gender inequality is not a problem for Norwegian women, only for immigrant women”<sup>1</sup> –*  
(Norway’s former Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration Sylvi Listhaug,  
Progress Party)

The struggle for gender equality is not usually associated with the political far right. Indeed, norms of gender equality and feminism are historically at odds with this end of the political spectrum, as far right parties tend to be family conservative (Akkerman 2015). Yet, from the mid-2000s onwards Western European populist radical right parties (PRRPs) have increasingly been using gender equality rhetoric and voicing concern for the emancipation of (Muslim) female immigrants in Europe (Farris 2017). For instance, the leader of the Dutch far-right Party for Freedom has been quoted saying that, among other horrors, Muslim mass immigration “flushes decades of women’s right down the toilet” (Farris 2017, 1, 31). In an op-ed written after the Cologne New Years Eve assaults, Front National’s Marine le Pen wrote: “I am revolted today by the unacceptable silence and, therefore, tacit consent of the French Left in the face of these fundamental attacks on the rights of women. I am scared that the migrant crisis signals the beginning of the end of women's rights” (as cited in Poirier 2017). When talking of immigration on its website, the Danish People’s Party states that immigrant women in Denmark “have a hard time liberating themselves from patriarchal ways of life that many Muslim unfortunately adhere to,” and therefore want measures to be taken to help these women “get on the right track” (Dansk Folkeparti n.d.).

While “talking gender” might seem like a positive development of populist radical right parties and a sign of the solidification of gender equality norms in society, scholars find that the reasons for, and the repercussions of, this rhetoric are far from benevolent. While these parties focus on (the lack of) gender equality when talking of minority populations, and specifically Muslims, they tend to oppose general gender equality measures. As Akkerman shows in her systematic classification of PRRPs in Western Europe, most of them are actually family conservative and promote traditional gender and family norms (Akkerman 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from Scandinavian languages to English in this thesis are my own

The literature review will shed light on the fact that the gender emancipatory rhetoric by PRRPs usually comes accompanied by suggestions of restricting immigration. Honor killings, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, and social control of women are frequently used as proof of the deep-rooted, irreconcilable cultural differences between a supposed homogenous Islamic culture and the European ones (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007). The gender equality rhetoric is often utilized in a type of “clash of civilizations” argument, where the logical policy solution to the problem of gender inequality among immigrants becomes to simply not let immigrants in, and thereby prevent “Islamization” of the majority culture. The discourse on female rights is not about giving Muslim women voice; it is about using these women as a symbol of Islam’s backwardness and inferior or savage culture.

Through using the case study of Norway, this thesis will delve into question surrounding how, why, and with what effect anti-immigration, uniculturalist parties and actors have started talking about the rights of Muslim women. Before going into the case study, there is a literature review to map the existing research on populist radical right parties’ use of gender equality rhetoric in terms of the utilization’s origins, the methods used to invoke such rhetoric, and the repercussions of doing so. From there follows a section on sociologist Sarah Farris’ theories on the topic, before going into the thesis’ specific research question and expected outcomes. After the methods section, a backgrounder of Norwegian populism, immigration history and gender equality policy will follow, before the case study, analysis, and findings.

Throughout this thesis, I will use the term *femonationalism* (short for feminist and femocratic nationalism) (Farris 2012). Coined by sociologist Sarah Farris in 2012, the term refers to both “the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-Islam (and anti-immigration) campaigns and to the participation of certain feminists in the stigmatization of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality” (Farris 2017, 4).

## Literature Review on Populist Radical Right Parties and Gender

To understand populist radical right parties, one must first understand populism. Unfortunately, scholars do not seem to agree on the definition of populism. While some emphasize the charismatic leader as emblematic of populism, other scholars (see Meret, Siim, and Pingaud 2016) point out that the leader might not necessarily be very charismatic or essential to the party's populism. Others maintain that populism is purely stylistic, and is created through a stratification of the social world into "us" versus "them" (see for instance Laclau 2005).

A broader camp of scholars, with Cas Mudde at the fore, maintains that the core of populism is the parties' proclamation that they, and only they, are the voice of the people (Mudde 2007). In the populists' eyes, bureaucracy and politics are elitist and have betrayed the ordinary citizen. The social world is thus split into two homogenous and antagonistic groups "us" versus "them." Mudde calls this a "thin-centered" ideology that is filled with either right-wing or left-wing ideas, which explains why populism can be either right or left on the political spectrum (Spierings et al. 2015).

In order to be defined on the right of this spectrum, the parties must be unculturalists and nativists (meaning they maintain a harsh anti-immigration stand and believe the nation should only comprise nations) (Mudde 2007). What distinguished populist radical right parties from populist extreme right parties is, according to Berntzen, the former group's use of democratic methods to reach their goals. Even though they are critical of the establishment, the radicals still operate within a democratic space. The extremists do not (Berntzen 2018).

Scholars have used different lenses to enhance the understanding of why populist radical right parties have begun incorporating feminist themes into their party programs. The different perspectives are not necessarily antithetical to one another. Indeed, many authors explain the newfound use of gender equality rhetoric by populist radical right parties through a mix of these. This literature review is based on literature from sociology, nationalism studies, populism studies, postcolonial studies, and intersectional/critical feminism studies.

## **How did femotionalism within PRRPs come about?**

There are different views on why PRRPs began using gender rhetoric. Postcolonial researchers point out that the rhetoric surrounding the emancipation of Muslim women by “westerners” became prominent in the aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001. They describe this phenomenon as a neocolonial invocation of a “civilizing mission” used to justify the War on Terror. For instance, liberating Afghan women was employed as a key rationalization by politicians and other public figures for the US bombings in Afghanistan (Abu-Lughod 2002).

The rhetoric surrounding the emancipation of a people’s women is not novel, and was readily used in colonial times, for example by France in Algeria (where the French orchestrated unveiling ceremonies of Algerian women). Rescuing Muslim women is simply a reformulation of the old narrative Spivak in the 1980s referred to as “white men saving brown women from brown men” (as cited in Abu-Lughod 2002; Haritaworn 2012).

While some scholars believe PRRPs began invoking feminist themes because they modernized to hold more liberal values, Akkerman (2015) shows that these parties at best have an ambivalent relationship to gender equality. With exception of the Geert Wilders’ party in the Netherlands, she found that most PRRP parties in Europe are still family conservative and care little about gender equality or directly oppose feminist themes in general.

A prominent view among academics of different disciplines is that PRRPs began using gender equality rhetoric because the contexts in which they are embedded are liberal, and using the liberal notion of gender equality (when discussing immigration) thereby helped legitimize their anti-immigration agenda. This is a strategic way to avoid accusations of racism by reverting to a rhetoric of incompatible difference between Western and Muslim culture rather than racial superiority arguments (Betz and Meret 2009).

## **How do PRRPs invoke femotionalism?**

Scholars have advanced different explanations as to how and why PRRPs utilize gender equality rhetoric. The Danish sociologist Lægaard coined the term “liberal nationalism” to explain the inclusion of, among other things, gender equality rhetoric into far right politics (Lægaard 2007). On the surface, this goes against the common notion that



liberal values are universal and the antidote to nationalism (see for instance Habermas 1992). However, as PRRPs tend to switch back and forth between conservatism and liberalism depending on their audience, their liberalism seems only to be superficial (Berntzen 2018; Mayer, Ajanovic, and Sauer 2014; Akkerman and Hagelund 2007). These parties instrumentalize liberalism to create exclusionary boundaries between who does and does not belong, hence the term liberal *nationalism*. This has been called a semi-liberal equilibrium (Berntzen 2018) and liberal illiberalism (Moffitt 2017).

Other scholars have pointed out PRRPs' coupling of gender equality with the national majority population and gender inequality with national minorities (Siim et al. 2016). This coupling allows for populist radicals to dismiss gender equality concerns in general by claiming that gender equality has already been achieved for the majority population, so there is no more to do. In fact, implementing additional gender equality measures like workplace quotas would be discriminatory towards men. This argument allows for consistency when claiming that gender inequality is an important issue.

Although scholars disagree on some of the terms discussed above, they do have consensus on one point: one reason PRRPs invoke gender equality rhetoric is to culturalize gender inequality to be a deep-rooted part of Muslim culture. They treat forced marriages, female genital mutilation, and honor killings as endogenous to Islam, and also repeatedly make reference to the headscarf as an open symbol of this violence against women. Intersectional feminist literature refers to this phenomenon as “exclusionary intersectionality” (Meret and Siim 2017).

### **What are the repercussions of PRRPs' femonationalism?**

Gender equality rhetoric is just one component of PRRPs' messaging, but it has played an outsized role in helping them win support and sometimes govern. According to scholars like Fekete, gender equality rhetoric helped PRRPs move from the political fringe to the mainstream. When the conservative mainstream used women's rights to justify the War on Terror and a more hostile stance towards (male) Muslims, this securitization of Muslims and immigration aligned with the radical right's existing immigration policies (Fekete 2006).

Seemingly, the use of gender equality rhetoric not only helps PRRPs win voters; it also helps them gain clout with traditional parties. A focus on gender has made right-wing

populist parties' anti-immigration stance more palatable for mainstream parties and their traditional voters in countries where gender equality is on the national agenda (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007; Siim and Skjeie 2008). By employing language linked to liberal democracy, these parties have become bedfellows with mainstream parties, enabling them to join governing coalitions. This is what happened in Norway in 2013 when the Conservative Party included the PRR Progress Party in a coalition government.

At the same time as rhetoric of women's rights masks the underlying racism of their policies and stance on Islam, it also allows their xenophobic agenda to remain unchallenged by others (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007). Who can argue *against* women's rights and gender equality when gender equality has become embedded in Western European countries' nationalism?

### **The Political Economy of Femonationalism**

Farris, the sociologist coining the term femonationalism, believes the issue of gender equality rhetoric for xenophobic purposes is best studied under the umbrella of nationalism. Yet, she takes the analysis further by bringing in a political economy perspective. Specifically, Farris sees the phenomenon in question as a symptom of neoliberalism<sup>2</sup> and as a means to aid in the neoliberal project.

While the European populist parties differ in their degree of adherence and adulation of neoliberal policies (privatization, deregulation and "small state"), western European countries have all experienced a shift towards neoliberal policies after the global recession (and some also before that). According to Farris (2012, 2017), femonationalism has been used to aid the neoliberal project by tying emancipation of migrant women from their supposedly patriarchal, traditional culture to formal labor market participation in the receiver country. Equating labor participation with emancipation is quite an individualistic, neoliberal view of gender equality, and one that serve the populist right-wing parties well. It provides them with "proof" that majority women are already emancipated, as the work participation of majority women in western European countries is high.

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<sup>2</sup> Other scholars agree that culturalization of politics has happened in neoliberal times. See e.g. Bangstad 2015

Additionally, European countries need cheap and disposable labor, especially in the social reproductive sector (care work), as neoliberal policies typically cut funding for services such as public daycare or elderly care (the latter being especially important as the European population is aging). Immigrant women, who are typically considered low-skilled and often have little to no political representation ensuring their labor market protection make great candidates for filling these positions (Farris 2017). By pushing for integration policies consisting of migrant women entering the labor market, European countries get workers for the undervalued, low paying jobs that no nationals want (Farris 2017). In effect, this results in a sort of outsourcing of gender inequality in the labor market, as migrant women take the feminized jobs that the majority women leave for better-paying and better-protected jobs. It can thus appear as though gender inequality decreases, as majority population women catch up to majority men in terms of working conditions and pay, but the patriarchal system remains unchanged, and gender inequality is just transferred from some women to other women.

Farris points out that nationalist parties are not the only ones culturalizing gender inequality and linking it to Muslims and Islam. Some feminists also use a similar language, and neoliberal civic integration programs are often built around this logic as well (Farris 2017).

## **Femonationalism in Norway – Research Question**

A number of studies on femonationalism include case studies on Norway. However, there is no study investigating whether Sara Farris’ political economy approach to femonationalism holds for Norway. Farris herself uses Italy, France, and the Netherlands as case studies. My research questions are thus: **How does femonationalism operate in the Norwegian context? And does Farris’ political economy approach to femonationalism hold for Norway?**

I will attempt to emulate Farris’ approach, and study femonationalism in the Progress Party, among Islam-critical feminists, and in the civic integration program for immigrants. Studying femonationalism in Norway will bring new insights to the phenomenon, as Norway is far less neoliberal than the countries Farris studies in her book, and because Norway prides itself on its well-established welfare system.

I hypothesize that the Progress Party and the Islam-critical feminists mainly link the supposed “culture of gender inequality” in Islam to calls for restriction of non-western immigration. I believe the civic integration programs will be less femonational, and have less of an inclination to push immigrant women into social reproductive work, than in the countries studied by Farris. This is because Norway not only has a stronger hold on its welfare state (and care services have not been privatized to the same extent), but possibly also a more strongly rooted gender equality sentiment than France, Italy, and the Netherlands.

## Methodology

In her 2017 book *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*, Farris tests her theory in France, Italy, and the Netherlands. Through critical discourse analysis, she studies femonationalism in these countries in the time period 2000-2013 by looking at different actors and programs:

1. Front National (FN) in France, Lega Nord (LN) in Italy, and Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) in The Netherlands
2. Certain Islam-critical feminist politicians and bureaucrats working for women's rights agencies
3. Neoliberal policies within civic integration programs

I will follow Farris' method of analysis by employing CDA to study femonationalism in the Progress Party, in the civic integration program for immigrants, and among Islam-critical feminists. I will supplement this by employing what Carol Bacchi (1999) coined the "What is the problem represented to be?" (WPR) approach to study what discourse makers convey women's rights issues to be.

WPR and CDA are both interpretivist approaches that recognize that there is no objective reality and that policy issues are constructed, and therefore subjective. The aim of WPR is to unravel what policy makers believe the problem to be and who or what is perceived to be responsible. The problem's diagnosis will inevitably determine the policy problem's suggested solutions (Bacchi 1999). In line with Bacchi's (1999) thinking, it is important to note that I do not believe that the framing of a specific problem is necessarily intentional on the part of policymakers, but nonetheless, the lack of certain intention does not equal the lack of a certain consequence.

Broadly speaking, CDA sees discourse as a social practice and as both a means of (re)producing and challenging power and a product of such power and resistance (Wodak and Meyer 2016). CDA attempts to uncover the relationship between power and discourse by deconstructing the meaning-making present in the discourse (van Dijk 1993, 283), and also the effect this discourse has on policy.

There are different ways of understanding and utilizing CDA. For my thesis, I will follow van Dijk's sociocognitive approach, which sees cognition as a mediating factor between discourse and society (including power and resistance) (van Dijk 2016). This approach is informed by cognitive and social psychology, and includes an exploration of schemas, the mental structures humans use to quickly (and sub-consciously) categorize and interpret new information in relation to their existing knowledge (Goldstein 2015). Schemas influence how humans interact with each other and understand the world. According to this approach, it is necessary to understand the sociocultural cognitive frameworks -or knowledge- shared between the discourse producer and the intended audience in order to fully grasp the meaning present in the discourse (van Dijk 2016). In other words, sociocognitive CDA accounts for the filters of meaning that mediate discourse and its effects on, and manifestations of, society. According to van Dijk (2016), cognitive structures may remain implicit or be explicit. An example of implicit cognitive structures is a discourse producer beginning a sentence with the qualifier "I am not racist, but..."

When employing a normative approach such as CDA, I need to position myself within the issue I wish to study, and be explicit about my own standpoint and biases. CDA has an ethic and deals with social issues in order to highlight and change them (van Dijk 1993). My aim with this thesis is to shed light on problematic aspects of the Progress Party's gender equality rhetoric, and to contribute to the understanding of how neoliberal logics operate within the civil integration program for immigrants in Norway. The larger goal is to contribute to provoking positive action against racism, and thereby reduce social inequality. I am a member of the majority population in Norway. As a member of the imagined community of homogenous (white) Norwegians, I have socially shared knowledge that allows me to unwrap the mental models in the chosen material more easily than someone who is unfamiliar with the Norwegian context. At the same time, my eight years abroad in a range of different countries might enable me to problematize certain discourses more easily than someone who has stayed embedded in Norwegian society, perhaps especially as all my higher education has been abroad.

When analyzing femonationalism in the Progress Party, I will study the current party program in addition to speeches and opinion pieces by the Progress Party's loudest femonationalistic voice, namely former (and Norway's only) Minister of Justice, Immigration, and Integration Sylvi Listhaug. When exploring the civic integration program

for immigrants in Norway (most commonly referred to as the Introduction Course [*Introduksjonskurset*]), I will look at the current syllabus for the mandatory civics course for immigrants, and also a 2017 teacher's guide to explaining Norwegian values and culture to refugees. I will also analyze opinion pieces by two prominent feminists and social commentators, Amal Aden and Hege Storhaug, and a consultation response on a proposed law to ban face-covering garments by the Ombudsman for Equality and Anti-Discrimination, Hanne Inger Bjurstrøm. All my data for analysis is in Norwegian, and the selection of discourse I have used can be found in Appendix A.

Due to the scope of the thesis and the prominence of immigration discourse in recent years, I have restricted my analysis to focus on expressions of femonationalism from 2015 onwards. 2015 is the year when immigration became an especially heated topic in Norway, due to the large influx of asylum seekers and the political climate in Europe turning rightwards on immigration in Europe in general (Wilhelmsen 2016).

# Immigration, Racism, and Nationalism in Norway

## Immigration and Racism

Immigration became a political issue fairly late in Norway. The country only became a consistent net receiver of migration in 1967, when Norwegian companies began employing (male) labor migrants to work in for instance the oil and energy sector (Bangstad 2015). Initially, the politics surrounding immigration were liberal, and it was easy both to enter and work in Norway. This changed during the 1970s. In 1975, due to popular perception of growing socioeconomic inequality and restrictions in other European countries, Norway implemented an immigration stop that temporarily banned new (so-called unskilled) labor migrants from entering the country (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2014). The ban changed the demographics of migration, as family migration to the existing labor migrants now made up the largest portion of migration to Norway. From then on the pendulum has swung between more liberal immigration policies and stricter, generally with political agreement across the board. The exception has been the Progress Party, which has always had a stricter stance on immigration than any other party (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2014).

The most recent (and still ongoing) European refugee crisis became an important political issue in Norway in the fall of 2015, when Norway saw the number of asylum seekers triple from the year before. In September 2015 the visual of thousands of asylum seekers braced the cold and bicycled over the border from Russia to seek asylum in the very north of Norway further accentuated immigration to Norway. The issue quickly became preeminent in Norway, and in November Norway temporarily reinstating border controls despite being in Schengen (Brekke and Staver 2018). Less than a month later, on December 16, 2015, Norway got its first minister of immigration, Progress Party's Sylvi Listhaug. This quickly resulted in the strictest asylum regime Norway has had to date (Wilhelmsen 2016).

Debates over immigration have fueled social conflict that has sometimes turned violent. In 2000, Norway became the first country in Western Europe to have an explicitly anti-Islam civil organization, when Stopp islamiseringen av Norge [Stop the Islamization of Norway] (Berntzen 2018). In 2011 Anders Behring Breivik carried out the deadliest terrorist attack on Norwegian soil since World War II. He identifies with the far right, and carried out the attack on the government building and at a Labor Party youth summer camp because he wanted to wage war on Islam and the Islamization of Europe. He suggests that the Labor



Party colludes with Islamists to create a Eurabia. Breivik is a former member of the Progress Party.

The most recent study on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Norway (conducted by the Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities) found that 34.1% of majority population Norwegians have pronounced prejudices against Muslims, that 39% think Muslims constitute “a threat to Norwegian values,” and that 31% believe Muslims want to “take over Europe” (HL-senteret 2017). In contrast, only 8.3% of the Norwegians expressed prejudices towards the Jewish minority (HL-senteret 2017). The Center concludes the report by stating that anti-immigration rhetoric for political gain is likely to have played a role perpetuating these attitudes (HL-senteret 2017).

### **Absence of Race and Gender Equality as National Values**

As Norway has never been a colonial power, the country is often considered as “innocent” of a racial project (Myrdahl 2010). And indeed, *race* is absent in Norway. That is to say, race is not talked about, and Norway very much applies a color-blind approach to policy. By not talking about race, the problem of racism and racist discourse is left unchallenged (Myrdahl 2010; Bangstad 2015). Calling someone a racist (and thereby acknowledging the social constructions of race) is more offensive than saying or doing something racist, and equality and sameness are embedded cultural values and imaginaries (Gullestad 2002). At the top of the human development index and among the best ranked in gender equality, as the host of the Nobel Peace Prize, and with its peace mediator reputation, Norway’s nationalism very much builds on Norwegians as virtuous.

In 1987, Helga Hernes coined the term “state feminism” to describe how the Nordic states work with feminists to create and pursue gender equality goals through public policy (Hernes 1987). Norway’s many active attempts at improving gender equality, and the country’s high ranking on gender equality indexes, have led to both Norway’s international reputation and Norway’s self-image including strong norms of gender equality (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007). As Birthe Siim states, “Nordic scholarship has demonstrated that the discourse about women’s rights and gender equality has, during the last 30 years, become an intrinsic part of Nordic identities and belongings” (Siim 2013). Gender equality has thus become an integral part of (re)producing Norway’s “imagined community” (Anderson 1983;

Jacobsen 2018), and denotes the borders between “us Norwegians” and “those immigrants/foreigners.”

The self-image holds true even though Norway still faces gender equality issues and political disagreement over whether gender equality has been achieved or whether political instruments to achieve equality are even desirable. Last November, when the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) gave its concluding observations on the latest periodic review on Norway, the organization was worried about the gendered impacts of the restriction in immigration policy. Additionally, budget cuts for free legal help for vulnerable women and the fact that there is no statistics on forced marriage and female genital mutilation were raised as concerning. The government’s recent merger of the gender equality law with the discrimination law was also raised as problematic, as the new law has weaker commitments to gender equality than the previous law (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women 2017).

## Norwegian Populism: The Progress Party and Femonationalism

The Progress Party has been instrumental in bringing anti-Islam sentiments into policymaking and the mainstream in Norway. The quote on the first page is by Sylvi Listhaug, a prominent member of the Progress Party and Norway's first ever Minister of Immigration. She is arguably also the most controversial Norwegian politician. A few months ago, she was ousted from her position as Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Immigration after posting a photo of the terror organization al Shabaab on Facebook with a caption that read: "The Labour Party<sup>3</sup> thinks the rights of terrorists are more important than the nation's security" and then refusing to apologize for it. The context was that the Labour Party did not lend its support to a government proposition to strip persons suspected of terrorism or joining foreign militant groups of their Norwegian citizenship without a court hearing (Libell and Martyn-Hemphill 2018). Listhaug has repeatedly been criticized for wrongfully portraying research to serve an anti-immigration agenda, often by the respective researchers themselves (Rosa 2016).

Scholars disagree on whether the Progress Party is a populist radical right party, with some (like Ignazi 2006) calling it a doubtful case, and Mudde calling it a negative case (Mudde 2007). However, many scholars do analyze the Progress Party in comparative studies of populism, and Jungar and Jupskås calls it Norway's functional equivalent of a populist radical right party (Jungar and Jupskås 2014). The party places a strong emphasis on *the people* (the party slogan reads "for folk flest," which translates into "for most people"/"for the ordinary citizen"). It is highly anti-immigration, it regularly tries to discredit the largest left-wing party (Labor Party), is very anti-state (even in government), and its Members of Parliament and Ministers are known for speaking their mind and "saying what others won't say" (which also includes blatant lies) (Hellström 2016). Additionally, Sylvi Listhaug, a prominent member of the party (whose discourse I will analyze in this thesis), welcomes the populist label and says that a populist "is someone who listens to the people" (Listhaug 2017).

Founded in the 1970s by Anders Lange as a fringe one-issue party against taxation and government intervention, it is now Norway's third largest party as measured by voters,

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<sup>3</sup> The Labour Party's youth organization was the victim of the biggest terrorist attack in Norway since WWII (the Utøya attacks perpetrated by anti-Islam Anders Behring Breivik)

and has been in a minority coalition government with the Conservative Party since 2013. Why is the party so big? There are economic explanations, for instance that disenfranchised working class people have turned to the right. However, these economic arguments seem less than entirely plausible given Norway's limited inequality, highly developed welfare system, and low unemployment rates (Jungar and Jupskås 2014). Cas Mudde, in his theorizing of populism, famously said "it's *not* about the economy, stupid" (Mudde 2007). However, the voters of the Progress Party are typically "blue-collar" workers and more likely to be on welfare than the general population (Jupskås 2016). Simplification of reality might explain some of its appeal, especially in the day and age of "click-bait," fast-cycled, short story media (Hagelund 2003).

Arguably, rather than economic drivers, the party's anti-immigration messaging helped it grow support. The party saw its support skyrocketing once it brought anti-immigration on its agenda in 1987 (Jupskås 2016). As previously mentioned, during its time in government, immigration regulation has become increasingly strict, leading the Progress Party to proclaim on their website that it is responsible for Norway now having the strictest immigration regulations in Europe (Bech, Borevi, and Mouritsen 2017).

### **The Progress Party's Femonationalism**

As the last section demonstrates, scholars agree that the Progress Party built support by employing anti-immigration appeals. More specifically, however, the party has relied on tying these appeals to claims about gender equality in Norway.

Broadly speaking, the party has tended to convey the idea that Norway has already achieved gender equality in the majority population, as can be seen by the Listhaug quote. Relatedly, it claims that further gender equality measures are a "social engineering" project by the left-wing political elite, and that such measures would discriminate against men (Moffitt 2017). Therefore, the party wishes to scrap Norway's gender equality law. Within the frame of logic of opposing group-specific rights, it wants to dissolve the Sami Parliament of Norway and also get rid of social benefits for refugees (as these people have not worked in Norway) (Akkerman and Hagelund 2007; Hellström 2016).

Akkerman and Hagelund (2007) analyzed the party programs of the Progress Party and a right-wing party in the Netherlands, and found that both parties increasingly use the lack of gender equality in immigrant communities as an argument for stricter regulation of immigration. It appears that the (Muslim) immigrant woman has now become the center of concern for the Progress Party, and this focus on gender has helped the anti-immigration agenda and the shift away from multiculturalism in Norway (Siim and Skjeie 2008). Bangstad (2015) claims that the Progress Party actually took its cue from PRRPs in the Netherlands, and copied their successful approach of discussing Muslim women for anti-immigration purposes.

### **Analysis of Progress Party Material**

*“The immigration policy shall become stricter. To improve integration, we must take care of what makes Norway, Norway. Therefore we want a ban on female-discriminating garments such as burkas and niqabs”* (The Progress Party’s Party Program 2017-2021)

This statement already appears on the second page of the Progress Party’s 120-page party program for 2017-2021. A lot can be extracted from these three sentences. First and foremost, these sentences make clear that, in the eyes of the Progress Party, immigration refers to non-western, Muslim persons in Norway. This representation of immigration is consistent across all the Progress Party documents and speeches I have analyzed. Additionally Sylvi Listhaug, in her speeches, uses “immigrant” and “asylum seeker” interchangeably. This is despite the fact that the top three countries of origin of immigrants in Norway are Poland, Lithuania, and Sweden (Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2018a), who virtually all are labor migrants. Secondly, gender is represented as wrapped up in Norway’s national identity, as clothing deemed “female-discriminating” is seen as a threat to “what makes Norway, Norway.” Thirdly, burkas and niqabs are seen as both a sign of threatening immigration and female discrimination, and a sign of the lack of willingness to integrate. The three sentences show the use of gender equality to establish difference between Norwegians and immigrants. This is a frequent occurrence in the Progress Party discourse surrounding (Muslim) women’s rights.

The niqab recurs in the party program’s section on immigration. In contrast to most of the images in this document – images of smiling (white) people or vast mountain landscapes

– one of the pictures accompanying the section on immigration depicts a scowling woman in a dark brown niqab, whereas the other one depicts a white policewoman standing in front of a line of asylum seekers at the Russian border in the north of Norway. The fact that the color scheme is darker in this section than in the other parts of the program signals that this topic is a somber topic, or even a scary one. Picturing a white policewoman signals that Norwegian women not only work, but are also employed even in very masculinized sectors such as the police force. This image is juxtaposed with the woman in the niqab, a garment the party has already explicitly stated is female-discriminating.

There is a section in the party program devoted to gender equality. Here, the party's understanding of gender equality surrounds equal opportunities for men and women and individual choice and family choice. The party is in favor of the cash-for-care program allowing mothers to stay home with their young children instead of going back to work after maternity leave is over, something that signals conservative family values. As previously mentioned, the Progress Party is opposed to affirmative action, and it states in its party program that the free market and non-intervention on part of the state are the best remedies to discrimination. When mentioning immigrants on the other hand, the program explicitly states that integration must sometimes trump the right to individual choice for immigrants. As the Progress Party states that immigrants must adhere to Norwegian values, assimilation is what is meant by integration. Interestingly, the Conservative-Progress Party government recently made an amendment to the cash-for-care regulation to prevent immigrants from outside the European Economic Area from accessing this option (Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration 2018). This implies that while Norwegian majority women have individual choice, as they are represented as already having reached “gender equality”, female immigrants from non-European countries cannot decide to stay home with their children, as they are not.

At a conservative Christian conference, Listhaug's tone was different from the gender equality rhetoric in other discourse by her/the Progress Party. The speech, which took place a few months before the general elections in 2017, was an appeal to the conservative Christians to choose Progress Party over the Christian Democratic Party. The shift in rhetoric indicates that gender equality is not a solid value for her and the party, but rather a value that can be instrumentalized. Listhaug did mention gender equality here as well, but it was followed by a quick qualifier: “I am not talking about that every woman should become CEO

or about gold, high salaries, retirement savings, or other things the leftist feminists are concerned with.” With this, she manages to both criticize gender equality struggles and immigration, and thus appeal to a conservative audience even when talking of (some) women’s rights. Listhaug ended this speech by appealing to conservative family values and stating that she would now “go home to be a housewife for a while” and that “nothing is better than this, to be able to spend time with one’s children.” The party make appeals to Christian voters also by the aforementioned cash-for-care program, and when the party, in 2013, voted in favor of restricting Norway’s abortion law by allowing doctors to deny women a referral for an abortion if this went against their moral beliefs (Kolberg 2014).

The fact that the gender equality rhetoric of the party shifts according to audience gives evidence to the argument that the party simply instrumentalizes gender equality when it is deemed fit. If the rhetoric is about establishing a difference between “us” and “them,” what is this difference used for? Sometimes it seems to be used in a larger argument about the danger of Islamization of Europe, and the subsequent need to further restrict immigration to prevent this from affecting Norway. One of the texts I have analyzed is a blog post by Listhaug titled “Of Course Not Every Culture Has Equal Worth,” written after she had to resign as minister. Here, the tone is blunt. As in other Progress Party discourse, she juxtaposes Muslim values with Norwegian values. She then takes this one step further by stating that most people in Muslim countries want sharia law and that Norwegians have to be careful to protect their values (and even fight) against this inferior culture. She discusses Islam as a culture rather than a faith. This could be to deflect criticism of racism. The discourse in this blog post fits within a crisis frame, which is likely used to rally people around anti-immigration and to justify her and her party’s Islamophobia as necessary to protect Norway.

According to Listhaug’s speech at a national integration conference, limiting immigration is necessary to fully integrate those who come. This implies that non-integrated immigrants are bad, and gives association of the necessity to dilute a person’s otherness by only letting in a few “different” people at a time. It also very much implies that integration is a one-way street and that Norwegians have nothing to learn from immigrants.

The Progress Party also uses femonationalism to discredit the political left. An example of this is Sylvi Listhaug’s *whataboutism* – attacking the left to deflect attention from

what the Progress Party is being accused of - whenever the left criticizes the Progress Party for being inhumane in their asylum policy or for being racist. Her speeches are often on the offensive, and frequently imply (or explicitly state) that left-wing feminists (who she refers to as the “feminist elite”) only care about what she deems to be trivial issues, such as equal pay or unhealthy body and beauty standards. The Progress Party manages to discredit feminist causes and what Listhaug refers to as the “so-called women’s movement”, by pitting them against extreme, and ethnicized, forms of violence against women. She calls the Norwegian women’s movement selfish and implies that this movement is only concerned with issues that seem trivial when compared to extreme – and ethnicized – forms of violence against women, such as female genital mutilation or honor killings.

Listhaug does this by for instance asking rhetorical questions such as “where did the commitment that led women to burn their bras on a bonfire go? Where are they when their fellow sisters are wrapped in clothing by their men that only allows their eyes to show?” This discourse again links certain Muslim garments with female oppression. Niqab and Burkas are seen as symbols of female repression and intolerance, and when the left (or Sweden, which she frequently mentions as a scare case for immigration) defends the right to wear this garment, then they fail to stand up for western values, a term she uses as a synonym for human rights. The rhetoric shows that she takes for granted that the garments are forced upon the women who wear them, and that Muslim immigrant women have no agency, but are passive victims of a patriarchal system. By making (false) accusations that the feminists and politicians on the left do not care about the predicament of Muslim women, Listhaug and the Progress Party manage to both strike a point with those who are anti-feminist and those against immigration.

Discrediting the left by claiming this side of politics do not care about minority women can be seen in connection with discrediting the left for liberal immigration policies more broadly. For instance, Listhaug frequently mentions Sweden as an example *not* to follow. She uses Sweden as a comparative “scare” case on immigration, as Sweden has been one of the countries to take in the most refugees per capita during the most recent refugee crisis. She also makes a causal link between Sweden’s liberal immigration policy to this country having a larger neo-nazi movement than Norway, again blaming the political left for all sorts of issues, some of which are much closer to the political right.



## **The Political Economy Aspect**

Where the analysis results differ most from Farris' findings of PRRPs in the Netherlands, Italy, and France is in regards to political economy. In its party program, the Progress Party ignores Norway's future demographic challenges (with an aging population), and states that Norwegians themselves should fill the jobs in Norway. If needed, people from the European Economic Area (read: white and Christian) can meet the demand for labor. This implies that the party is not interested in outsourcing feminized jobs to immigrants. Rather, it seems that the party does not want non-western immigrants at all.

The only time immigrants are mentioned in the labor and welfare sector is when stating the following: "The Norwegian welfare system is vulnerable to high immigration." This implies that immigrants are a burden to the state's welfare rather than potential contributors and a resource in the labor market. The welfare state is very important to the Progress Party, and even though the party proposes tax cuts, Norway's large oil fund can, for some time, make lowering taxes and increasing welfare spending a reality.

In the Progress Party material I have analyzed, immigration is represented as a threat to Norwegian values and unity, and also as a threat to the Norwegian welfare state. The femonationalism in the party program, and in the body of discourse in general, use niqab and burka-clad women as a symbol of Islam's incompatibility with Norway.

## Civic Integration

In the 1990s, there was a shift in the citizenship model of the Scandinavian countries towards increasingly stressing citizens' obligations rather than just focusing on citizens' rights (Breidahl 2017). According to Kulbrandstad, who analyzed Norwegian white papers on integration from 1980-2016, there has been a corresponding shift in the Norwegian citizen model relating to the integration of new stateswomen and -men. Each white paper except for the most recent one from 2016 portrays integration as a two-way street of mutual responsibilities of the immigrant and the Norwegian society. In contrast, the 2016 white paper exclusively expresses integration as something the immigrant has a responsibility of doing (Kulbrandstad 2017). This can be seen as denoting a shift away from multiculturalism. Even during the time multicultural celebration was in fashion, white papers on integration still only accepted diversity if values were based on equality, including gender equality (Jacobsen 2018). Even so, gender equality has now become a precondition for inclusion, whereas it previously was lauded as a right and a possibility for immigrants (Jacobsen 2018).

In 2004, all municipalities in Norway accepting refugees became obliged to offer this group of immigrants a civic integration program that runs fulltime and includes lessons in Norwegian language, civics, and work preparation in a language they understand (Introduksjonsloven, §§ 17-20, 2003). Immigrants who participate will get financial support in return. Colloquially, this law is known as the Introduction Law, and the courses known as the Introduction Program (Introduksjonsprogrammet). Since its inception, the law has changed a number of times. Currently, all newly settled immigrants except EEA citizens and labor/education migrants are required to enroll in the civic integration program and attend 600 hours of Norwegian and civics classes. The current government has made the course mandatory even when immigrant women are on maternity leave. This move has been criticized by the United Nations as bad for gender equality, and goes against the hard-won gains of Norwegian feminists that have managed to establish mandated maternity leave (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women 2017).

Additionally, from 2013 onwards, immigrants have to pass an exam in both Norwegian and civics in order to gain Norwegian permanent residency or Norwegian citizenship (Kompetanse Norge 2017). The current government has also reinstated an obligation to swear loyalty to Norway in order to gain citizenship (Jacobsen 2018).

In 2016, integration went from being a policy issue dealt with in the Ministry of Children and Equality to one that concerned the Ministry of Justice. In January 2018 integration was separated from immigration, when integration became the purview of the Ministry of Education and Research (Statsministerens kontor 2018). Integration now being conceived as an Education issue aligns with my analysis of the civic integration program as a civilizing tool. As Jacobsen points out, “the ‘knowledge of society’ demanded is highly normative and defines what is required of the ‘good citizen’” (Jacobsen 2018).

### **Analysis of the Norwegian Civic Integration Program**

*“The purpose of the training is to highlight how central gender equality is in Norway”*  
(Teacher’s Guide to the Civic Integration Program)

One of the texts analyzed is the curriculum for the mandatory civics class, and the other is a guide for teachers giving asylum seekers training in Norwegian culture and Norwegian values. Integration as used in Norwegian policy documents is used as synonymous to assimilation. This is mirrored in the Progress Party discourse I have analyzed.

In the civics integration program the stated goal of the topic “children and family” includes: “gain knowledge about the fact that violence against children and other family members, female genital mutilation, and forced marriage are forbidden, and about the judicial consequences of breaking these laws.” Here, culturalized forms of violence against women are mentioned explicitly, whereas other forms of (more common) violence against women such as for instance sexual assault, is not mentioned explicitly. Other illegal activities that are not culturally specific, such as breaking into cars or financial fraud, are not mentioned anywhere in the curriculum. As this course is thus not a summary of Norway’s legal code, yet still distinctly mention very specific crimes that are considered a threat to gender equality, there is an assumption that immigrants do not know that these specific crimes are illegal as their moral codes and culture differ from the Norwegian one.

The assumption that immigrants do not hold gender equality values and therefore needs to learn them is even more apparent in the teacher’s guide to training one specific group of immigrants, namely asylum seekers. Eight out of the nine chapters in the training about Norwegian culture and values include gender equality themes. The only chapter where

gender equality is missing is the chapter on threats against the democracy. There is also a large focus on sex in this training program. This could be related to the historical and common racial stereotype of “the other” (“the brown man”) as a sexual perpetrator. The illegality of buying sexual services is mentioned, along with information about what constitutes sexual misconduct (which includes a definition of rape that is stricter than the Norwegian law formulation), sexual health and diseases, and Norwegian age of sexual consent. The training represents that lack of “good” norms about gender equality and sexual relations as a problem among asylum seekers, and that this group of immigrants need to learn these norms in order to integrate or assimilate.

The teacher’s guide reads like a civilizing document. The topics focused on imply to a large extent that asylum seekers uncivilized by for instance explicitly mentioning that it is rude to talk loudly on the phone on the bus, that it is not alright to come late for appointments or social gatherings, that it is rude and provocative to cut ahead in the queue, and that it is polite to offer your seat on the bus to the elderly or pregnant women.<sup>4</sup> The standards for integration thus seem much stricter for immigrants than standards Norwegians hold. Instead of teaching immigrants the reality of how Norway operates, they are being taught the ideal, and the ideal is falsely represented as the state of things in Norway.

It is peculiar that throughout these documents gender equality is presented as an undisputed Norwegian value when indeed the parties themselves differ on what gender equality means, how important it is, and family rights versus gender rights (Jacobsen 2018).

### **Political Economy Aspect**

Throughout the curriculum for civic integration, there is emphasis on the importance of work for tax revenue and thus for maintaining the welfare state. The focus on work in relation to welfare can be interpreted as the Norwegian state seeing immigrants as a threat to the welfare state, and that immigrants’ default would be not to work. Despite the focus on work overall, female immigrants are never specifically mentioned when talking of these issues in the civic integration program. In the teacher’s guide to training asylum seekers, there is however specific mention of female participation in the workforce and that this is the norm in Norway that immigrants are also expected to follow. The training suggests that

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<sup>4</sup> This is by no means a common Norwegian value of politeness. Personally, I have never witnessed a Norwegian offering his or her seat to an elderly person. When I moved to Canada it actually struck me as something positively surprising when I saw people doing that.

unpaid volunteer work would be a good way to integrate, but does not suggest this course of action for female immigrants specifically.

It is important to note that the work participation among immigrants from the Global South is lower than that of immigrants from the Global North and that of the native population (Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2018b). Although employment among men is higher than women in all population groups, the difference between the employment of Global South immigrant men and Global South immigrant women is higher than the difference in other groups, meaning that immigrant women from these countries have the lowest employment levels of all groups (Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2018b). This means that the focus on employment for asylum seekers (who are from the Global South) derives from statistics on lower work participation. However, it is still much more common for women in Norway to work part time than for men to do so. When majority women work part time, this is seen as personal choice, but when immigrant women work part time, their decision is attributed to (patriarchal) culture (Midtbøen and Teigen 2014). Additionally, the program fails to acknowledge that there are alternate reasons for the lower employment rates. It could be that it is harder for immigrants from these countries to gain employment due to discrimination, and that there might be higher levels of discrimination of immigrant women than immigrant men (for instance due to stereotypes of females intersecting with stereotypes about immigrants, or due to stereotypes linked to religious garments such as hijabs). Indeed, researchers from the University of Agder in Norway have found that women with foreign origin are systematically discriminated when it comes to hiring decisions (Gjestland 2018). Additionally, when Midtbøen and Rogstad conducted a field experiment where they sent job applications to Norwegian employers, they found that those supposedly from an ethnic Norwegian were much more successful than those from a person with a foreign-sounding name (an Arabic name). The difference in success rate of getting called in for an interview was as much as 25% (Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012). These studies suggest that access to the Norwegian labor market depends on more than a person's willingness to integrate and work hard. Yet, this training program represents the problem as being one of immigrants' (Muslim) culture.

## Feminists and Femocrats in Norway

Farris (2017) explores how certain feminists and femocrats, that is, female bureaucrats and those working in gender equality organizations, help legitimize the femonationalist rhetoric of the PRRPs. When those with authority on gender equality echo rhetoric that for instance culturalizes violence against women to be a symptom of Muslim patriarchal culture, the rhetoric is likely to become naturalized and more palatable for the mainstream. For this thesis, I have chosen to focus on two feminists and one femocrat in Norway. The two feminists are social commentators and known to be critical of immigration and Islam. The femocrat, the Ombudsman for Equality and Anti-Discrimination is, as the name suggests, supposed to be both concerned with feminism and ethnic discrimination. It is therefore somewhat surprising that her discourse on facial veils bears resemblance to femonationalist rhetoric and logic.

### Analysis of Feminists and Femocrats' Femonationalism

*“The Storting<sup>5</sup> is likely to adopt a ban on face-covering garments in kindergartens and educational institutions tomorrow. The mobile women’s prisons are thus still allowed everywhere else in society. Why is this propaganda for fascism not stopped?”*

(-Hege Storhaug, Human Rights Service)

Hege Storhaug is an influential activist on the topic of Islam and Muslim gender (in)equality in Norway. According to Akkerman and Hagelund (2007), most of the Progress Party’s policy proposals regarding immigrant women derive directly from Storhaug’s ideas and opinion pieces. She works for the organization Human Rights Service, an organization highly critical of immigration and Islam. Human Rights Service is one of nineteen organizations that receive public grants for their work in the field of integration and inclusion, and receives 1.8 million kroners a year (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet 2018). Many, including all opposition parties, some politicians from the governing Conservative party, and one of Norway’s largest newspapers, urge the government to cut funding for the organization, as they argue Human Rights Service does more to marginalize and exclude than to help with integration (Aftenposten 2017).

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<sup>5</sup> The Norwegian Parliament

In October 2017 Storhaug caused public outrage when she announced that Human Rights Service wanted to document “the cultural revolution” happening in Norway: “Norway is changing fast. Islam increasingly dominates the public space. We are alienated. Join us in our unique project to document our contemporary society.” A photo of four women – three women wearing chadors (Iranian full-body cloaks) and one black woman - waiting for the bus at a bus stop in the eastern part of Oslo,<sup>6</sup> and a call for readers to send in pictures of the “revolution,” accompany the text. Urging people to take pictures of supposed Muslims they see on the street is obviously problematic, and a recipe for encouraging Islamophobia and racism. Storhaug portrays Islam as a threat to “us,” the Norwegian majority population, and implies that Islam is spreading in Norway. She uses Muslim garments to visualize Islam, and to create a distinction between “us” and “them.” In this project of documenting Islam in Norway, there is no pretense of caring about Muslim women’s rights.

Hege Storhaug criticizes the political justification for a selective ban on garments covering the face, which is that it is to ensure maximum learning and communication in the classroom. Storhaug calls the niqab “the mobile women’s prison,” and sees the selective ban as cowardly and insufficient to stop the Islam from spreading in Norway. She links the niqab to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), as she notes that this terrorist organization’s female uniform consists of a niqab. Her discourse is alarmist and also explicitly Islamophobic. She represents Islam as a women-unfriendly religion linked to terrorism. In her blog posts, Muslim women are both portrayed as victims of a patriarchal culture and as active participants in terrorism and fascist ideology.

Amal Aden is a pseudonym for a social commentator and author who moved from Somalia to Norway some twenty years ago. She frequently writes think pieces for major Norwegian newspapers on the topic of Muslim immigrants, integration, gender equality, and LGBTQI issues. Similarly to Storhaug, Aden expresses her femonationalism using blunt and inflammatory language. In one of her opinion pieces she writes “there are groups that have been in Norway for generations, but that still suppress girls and women.” The use of the “but” in this sentence implies that Norway is gender equal and that it therefore goes against conventional wisdom that someone could live in this country for generations and still be gender unequal.

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<sup>6</sup> A part of Oslo that has a comparatively large immigrant population

In her op-eds she makes appeals to the majority population with the aim of getting more Norwegians to engage with minority problems. However, her opinion pieces generalize a whole immigrant group – or rather *the* immigrant group (as immigrants equal Muslims in hers and the other discourses discussed in this paper) – using inflammatory and alarmist language. This is likely to rather contribute to marginalization than to solidarity with, and aid to, those Muslims who do struggle with the issues she discusses, such as strict social control. Aden, like Storhaug and the Progress Party, portrays Islam as something that is sweeping over the nation and needs to be stopped. She states that “honor culture has to be combated before it spreads more than it already has here in Norway.”

The last discourse I will analyze in this thesis is the discourse embedded in the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman<sup>7</sup> Hanne Inger Bjurstrøm’s consultation response to a policy proposal regarding banning garments covering a person’s face. The ombud supports banning these garments using different arguments, including the importance of signaling that Norway does not tolerate restricting female participation in society, that the outfits lead to lack of good communication, and that they hinder learning. At the same time, she points out that studies from other countries find that there are women who want to wear these garments, and also that there strictly is no need for a ban in Norway, as virtually no women are wearing niqabs or burkas. Upon weighing these factors against each other, she supports the ban. This signals that the symbol politics of this ban as promoting gender equality is more important than its negative consequences. This ban can exclude certain women from fully participating in society and from getting an education, if women wearing these garments refuse to take them off. It could also increase stigma against this population and also Muslims in general, by association.

Like the ombud says, there strictly is no need for this ban. A think tank for minority issues in Norway estimates that only 50-100 women wear outfits covering their faces (burka/niqabs), and Norway’s universities report that there have only been two to three instances of women wearing niqabs (and zero of women wearing burkas) in all universities combined (Persen 2017). Nonetheless, the parliament recently passed the law banning these outfits in educational situations, thus becoming the first Nordic country to do so (Mogen 2018).

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<sup>7</sup> The irony of the female gender equality ombud’s official title in English including “man” is not lost on me



### **The Political Economy Aspect**

Except for when Aden writes in an op-ed that some female Muslim immigrants prefer to be on social welfare rather than to work, there is little in the feminists and femocrat's discourse in terms of the political economy aspect of femonationalism.

## Discussion and Conclusion

My analysis shows that femonationalism is very much present in Norway and among different types of actors. In the material I analyzed, the most prevalent use of gender equality rhetoric is for the purpose of establishing difference between the “gender equal” Norwegians” and the “gender unequal” Muslim immigrants. The supposed, and taken for granted, lack of gender equality among Muslims is represented as being due to their culture. Whereas the Progress Party, Hege Storhaug and Amal Aden use femonationalism to warn of the increasing Islamization of Norway and to thus argue for stricter immigration, the civic integration program and the training for asylum seekers put requirements of changing this “culture of inequality” and assimilate those immigrants who are already in the country with what is represented as unquestionable values of Norwegianness.

Compared to Sarah Farris’ theory of femonationalism being used in a neoliberal project to make immigrant women take the social reproductive jobs no one in the majority population wants, there is little distinction in the call for self-sufficiency and work for immigrant men and immigrant women. This could be due to the fact that Norway has a very comprehensive welfare state, and that despite neoliberal tendencies of establishing private-public partnerships for day care and elderly care centers, the services these provide are still in the purview of the state and financed by the welfare system. Therefore, reproductive care has not gone back to being individual women’s responsibility, and thus there is no great need for domestic help in order for majority women to work outside the home.

I expected to find few traces of femonationalism in the curriculum for the civic integration program, as this was made in 2012, before the issue of migration became politicized to the extent it is today and before the Progress Party entered government for the first time. I was therefore surprised to find many traces of the phenomenon there as well. This shows that femonationalism is not a new phenomenon in Norway, and that it has had prevalence outside the ranks of the Progress Party even before the party came to power. Further research should therefore look at how femonationalism operates in Norway’s other political parties, and see whether a political party’s explicit immigration stance matters to its femonationalism. It could also be useful to do a comparative study of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, as these three countries are all known for having very comprehensive welfare states and internationally known for being champions of gender equality (especially Sweden).

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## Appendix: Material Used for Analysis

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Listhaug, Sylvi. 2015. "Kronikk: «Du må ikke tåle så inderlig vel ...»." [You should not tolerate...]. <i>Verdens Gang</i> , March 5, 2015. <a href="https://www.vg.no/a/23408636">https://www.vg.no/a/23408636</a> .	Op-Ed
Listhaug, Sylvi. 2017a. "Oslo Symposium 2017." Speech presented at the Oslo Symposium, Oslo, Norway, March 3. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiJ-OW0nCAc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiJ-OW0nCAc</a> .	Speech
Listhaug, Sylvi. 2017b. "Åpningstale på Den nasjonale integreringskonferansen i Oslo." [Opening Speech at the National Integration Conference]. Speech presented at the Den nasjonale integreringskonferansen 2017, September 27. <a href="https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/den-nasjonale-integreringskonferansen-2017/id2573034/">https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/den-nasjonale-integreringskonferansen-2017/id2573034/</a> .	Speech
Listhaug, Sylvi. 2018. "Selvfølgelig er ikke alle kulturer like mye verd." [Of course not all cultures have equal worth]. <i>Sylvi Listhaug</i> (blog). June 8, 2018. <a href="https://sylvi-listhaug.com/2018/06/08/selvfolgelig-er-ikke-alle-like-kulturer-like-mye-verd/">https://sylvi-listhaug.com/2018/06/08/selvfolgelig-er-ikke-alle-like-kulturer-like-mye-verd/</a> .	Blog Post
<b>Civic Integration</b>	
Lærerplan for 50 timers samfunnsfag. [Curriculum for 50 hours civics]. <i>Forskrift om læreplan i norsk og samfunnskunnskap for voksne innvandrere</i> . 2012. <a href="https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2012-04-19-358">https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2012-04-19-358</a>	Curriculum
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<b>Feminists and Femocrats</b>	
Aden, Amal. 2016. "Hun hater Norge, men hun er veldig glad i pengene hun får	Op-Ed

fra NAV.” [She hates Norway but loves the money she gets from Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration] Dagbladet.no. October 20, 2016. <a href="https://www.dagbladet.no/a/63975422">https://www.dagbladet.no/a/63975422</a> .	
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Aden, Amal. 2018. “Det er viktig å ikke bagatellisere bruk av hijab på små jenter.” [It is important not to trivialize use of hijab on young girls]. Dagbladet.no. July 11, 2018. <a href="https://www.dagbladet.no/a/70007366">https://www.dagbladet.no/a/70007366</a> .	Op-Ed
Storhaug, Hege. 2017. “Rights dokumenterer den kulturelle revolusjonen.” [Rights document the cultural revolution]. <i>Human Rights Service</i> (blog). October 1, 2017. <a href="https://www.rights.no/2017/10/rights-dokumenterer-den-kulturelle-revolusjonen/">https://www.rights.no/2017/10/rights-dokumenterer-den-kulturelle-revolusjonen/</a> .	Blog Post
Storhaug, Hege. 2018. “Forbud: Nikab er en kulturell og politisk erobringstokt.” [Ban: Niqab is a cultural and political conquest]. <i>Human Rights Service</i> (blog). Accessed July 13, 2018. <a href="https://www.rights.no/2018/03/nikab-forbud-overhodet-ikke-godt-nok/">https://www.rights.no/2018/03/nikab-forbud-overhodet-ikke-godt-nok/</a> .	Blog Post
Bjurstrøm, Hanne Inger. 2017. “Høringsuttalelse - Forslag Om å Innføre Forbud Mot Bruk Av Plagg Som Helt Eller Delvis Dekker Ansiktet i Barnehager Og Utdanningsinstitusjoner.” [Consultation response - proposal to ban garments that partially or fully covers the face in kindergartens and educational situations]. Consultation response 17/1330-2-CAS. Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet. <a href="https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/9f30a957f6dd4490ba68a511290c42e9/1do.pdf?uid=Likestillings-_og_diskrimineringsombudet">https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/9f30a957f6dd4490ba68a511290c42e9/1do.pdf?uid=Likestillings-_og_diskrimineringsombudet</a> .	Consultation Response