

THE QUEER CITIZEN

Political attitudes and voting behavior of
gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany

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1. Introduction

In the text at hand, I build a framework for my PhD thesis titled ‘The Queer Citizen – Political attitudes and voting behavior of gay, lesbian and trans* citizen in Germany’. First, I will give a general introduction about my PhD project, followed by a contextualization within German LGBTIQ¹ politics. As a next step, I shall present the state of art regarding political science research into LGBTIQ voting and political attitudes of LGBTIQ citizens. The subsequent section provides insights into the three papers that builds the foundation of this PhD thesis (Hunklinger 2021; Hunklinger/ Ferch 2020; Hunklinger/ Ajanovic 2021) and discusses the results. Lastly, I analyze the main findings of said papers and draw conclusions regarding political attitudes and voting behavior in terms of party preferences among gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany, the guiding research interest of this PhD thesis.

The starting point of my PhD project was the observation that there is almost no research on political participation or political attitudes of queer people in Germany. While there is growing literature dealing with gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in political science (Ayoub/ Paternotte 2014; Ayoub 2016; Hines/ Santos 2018; Kuhar/ Monro/ Takács 2018; Halberstam 2018; Monro/ Van Der Ros 2018; Paternotte 2018; Ayoub/ Chetaille 2020; Ayoub 2022), they remain largely invisible in the mainstream of the political science field. This holds especially true for the German case. If there is any research in the area of LGBTIQ citizens it is mainly in the context of intolerance, victimization or discrimination (Meyer 2015; Bayrakdar/ King 2021). This research gap still exists due to the socio-political context as well as methodological problems. Sexual orientation or gender identity usually do not play any role in party and election research or political participation research in Germany, as in most other countries. Therefore, we do not know if and how LGBTIQ people participate, what their political attitudes are and which parties they support. This PhD project sets out to plug this gap and contribute to political science research through the examination of voting behavior and political attitudes of gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany.

This PhD draws its inspiration from decades of social science that argues sexuality is best understood not as a tangential issue but as an essential avenue of inquiry for political analysis. Sexuality is a core feature of collective (political) life. As a social structure in its own right, and closely entangled with gender, race and class, it directly impacts on the way people organize, what

¹ LGBTIQ is an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, inter* and queer. It includes sexual orientation like gay or lesbian as well as gender identities like trans*. Gender identities should not be mistaken for sexual orientations. Being homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual is considered separate and as not always correlated with gender identity.

they believe and how they participate. I suggest an emancipatory approach and focus on gay, lesbian and trans* citizens as political subjects. My work positions queer people as citizens in the center of analysis and gives gay, lesbian and trans* people in Germany a voice.

I acknowledge the fundamental differences in the approaches of conventional voting behavior research, originally rooted in rational choice-induced voting and general political behavior research on the one hand, and more recently queer studies on the other. While voting behavior research is primarily based on clear-cut categories and socio-demographic indicators, the latter employs deconstructivist and poststructuralist approaches. My aim is to bridge this gap between conventional political participation research and queer studies, thus contributing to both strains of research. Moreover, this PhD highlights the importance of minority rights and the political participation of minorities for the functioning of a democracy and adds to our understanding of citizenship of marginalized groups in our society.

Against this background, the guiding research question of this PhD is: Which political attitudes and party preferences are articulated by gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in the context of elections in Germany? To explore relevant answers, I present three papers that approach the questions of voting behavior in terms of party preferences and political attitudes of gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany from different angles in the context of the local elections in Berlin 2016 and the national elections 2017.

I begin with an analysis of voting behavior and political attitudes of gay men and lesbian women, followed by the analysis of two sub-groups within the LGBTIQ community: trans* citizens and LGBTIQ voters of right-wing populist parties. The first paper (Hunklinger 2021) looks at voting behavior and political attitudes of gay men and lesbian women in Germany in the context of the federal elections 2017. As gay men and lesbian women are the biggest subgroup among queer citizens, this paper is vital in the examination of how queer citizens vote and to explore explanations for this voting behavior. Moreover, it looks at political attitudes (e.g. in regard to social or environmental issues) that contextualize their voting decisions. The second paper (Hunklinger/Ferch 2020) puts trans* citizens in the center of analysis and investigates voting behavior and political attitudes in a broader context of German trans* politics in the context of the federal elections 2017. This is especially important, as trans* citizens are often considered an invisible minority among queer citizens. The third paper (Hunklinger/ Ajanovic 2021) takes the polarization regarding LGBTIQ people as a starting point and looks at a part of the queer community that has not been the subject of analysis in the German context thus far: right-wing queer citizens. It does

so in the context of the local elections in Vienna 2015 and Berlin 2016. In the paper, I introduce the concept of ‘electoral homonationalism’ which interlinks nationalist and sexual political discourses in the electoral arena. If we want to grasp the different aspects of voting behavior and political attitudes of queer citizens, this is essential to understand queer citizenship today. All three papers provide a systematic analysis of LGBTIQ voting and political attitudes of LGBTIQ citizens in Germany and therefore contribute to a broader understanding of queer citizenship. Some of the papers also address Austria as a case study. However, as this PhD thesis is focused on Germany, the following analysis will be drawn only in regard to gay, lesbian and trans* voters in Germany.

Year	Title	Author(s)	Journal
2021	Voting for diversity? Political Attitudes and Formal Political Participation of gay men and lesbian women in Germany	Michael Hunklinger	Momentum Quarterly
2020	Trans* voting. Demand and supply side of trans* politics in Germany	Michael Hunklinger / Niklas Ferch	European Journal of Politics and Gender
2021	LGBTIQ voters and the far-right – a strange liaison? Findings from Austria and Germany	Michael Hunklinger/ Edma Ajanovic	Social Politics

Table 1: Overview of the papers

The data presented in these papers is based on the *LGBTIQ Election Survey 2015-2016* and the *LGBTIQ Election Survey 2017* which were the first ever surveys targeting LGBTIQ people in Germany. Our research team² conducted online surveys in the run-up to the local elections in Vienna on 11th of October 2015 and Berlin on 18th of September 2016. While in Vienna 448 LGBTIQ people participated in the survey, in Berlin the number of participants reached 1160 (LGBTIQ Election Survey 2015-2016). The surveys addressed questions of voting preferences, motives, and socio-political attitudes. Seeing as we learned from the Vienna survey – implemented prior to Berlin – that migration played a big role, we made some adjustments to the questionnaire in the Berlin survey (LGBTIQ Election Survey 2015-2016): We added more questions regarding social attitudes and racist and anti-migrant attitudes. After these pilot studies in 2015 and 2016, in the run up to the general election in Germany in 2017, we collected data with the help of an online survey for the first time in Germany. In total, 5329 participants identifying as LGBTIQ and as eligible to vote in the 2017 *Bundestag* election completed the survey (LGBTIQ Election Survey 2017). The surveys were available on the internet for six weeks prior to election day.

² Dorothée de Nève, Niklas Ferch, Michael Hunklinger and Tina Olteanu

Empirical research on electoral behavior and political preferences is essentially based on representative surveys. However, one of the major preconditions for the realization of a representative survey is knowledge about the distribution of characteristics among the population to be examined (Döring/ Bortz 2016). Against the backdrop of discrimination and (criminal) prosecution of LGBTIQ people in Germany in the past (Gammerl 2010) and present (Heitmeyer 2012; Decker, Kiess/ Brähler 2016), this precondition for a representative sample cannot be fulfilled in the case of LGBTIQ citizens. Thus, exit polls or other surveys in Germany do not include questions concerning sexual orientation or gender identity. The methodological problem of a lack of data on LGBTIQ people within the general population is insurmountable in a free and democratic society but addressing LGBTIQ people by means of an online survey enabled us to reach out to this so-called 'special population' (Gabriel/ Keil 2014: 834) by a random procedure, regardless.

It follows that all three surveys are self-selective samples (Häder 2014: 12), which is the best way to reach LGBTIQ people, although this method is not without flaws. Self-selective sample means that participants choose to participate in research on their own accord by filling out an online survey. The online survey is accessible to everyone with internet access and some participants might not be relevant for the analysis. Consequently, the data was cleaned before analysis. Moreover, internet-based surveys only reach a certain segment of the populations with specific socio-demographic and cultural characteristics. Therefore, I assume that only those LGBTIQ persons with internet access, corresponding technical affinity and equipment, as well as an affinity for networking in the digital LGBTIQ community noticed or participated in the survey at all. This method is especially effective when the basic population is unknown. However, internet users cannot be treated as a random sub-sample of the entire population (Häder 2014: 11). A special characteristic of this self-selective method of data collection (Häder 2014: 11) lies in the assumption that the individuals under examination are in regular contact with one another within a subculture (Dannecker/ Reiche 1974: 67). In this way, LGBTIQ people can be considered as members of a sort of hidden subculture (Gabler 1992: 50). The advantage of this method lies in the fact that the respondents actively and freely decided to take part in the study. The main disadvantage of the method, however, lies its self-selectivity and the asymmetrical distribution of the internet's range (Häder 2014: 12) – access to participation in such a convenience sample cannot be controlled. The difficulty of self-selectivity was combatted by targeted online and offline promotion; the survey was promoted via social media (*Twitter* and *Facebook*, including targeted advertising), LGBTIQ community organizations such as the *Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland* (LSVD), as well as through advertisements on LGBTIQ dating websites.

Given the methodological complexity, this data is not representative and does not necessarily reflect the demographic composition of Germany. All conclusions in the remainder of the papers forming part of this PhD, as well as this text at hand, are drawn cautiously with regard to the participants of the surveys, not the German LGBTIQ community at large. The prerequisite for conducting a representative survey is that data on the population is available. However, this prerequisite is not given in terms of LGBTIQ persons – it is simply not known how many LGBTIQ persons actually live in Germany and what their socio-economic characteristics are, such as age, marital status, occupation, level of education, etc. Therefore, I cannot compare these characteristics of our sample of LGBTIQ voters in Germany with the characteristics of the whole of LGBTIQ people in Germany. Due to which, one cannot draw a random (and thus representative) sample from the general population of LGBTIQ persons in Germany to conduct generalizable inferential statistics.

Nevertheless, the sample of LGBTIQ voters in Germany presented here depicts a heterogeneous and reasonably sized group of individuals and therefore a solid base for the analysis of voting behavior and political attitudes of gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany. It is central to emphasize that the data presented here as part of this PhD thesis is the first of this kind in Germany. This does not only add new insights to research regarding voting behavior and political attitudes of marginalized citizens but also helps to test ideas in queer studies more systematically.

2. LGBTIQ politics in Germany

LGBTIQ politics, which I understand as policies focusing on the equality/anti-discrimination of LGBTIQ people, as well as other actions in this regard, and the fight for equal rights for LGBTIQ citizens, have generally been a linear development in Germany. However, although LGBTIQ history is mostly a straightforward narrative of progress, the reality is more complex. LGBTIQ politics has been both diverse and divided, marked by differences of identity and ideology. The following chapter gives a short historical overview about the legal and political background of LGBTIQ politics in Germany, to better understand the analysis of LGBTIQ voting and political attitudes of LGBTIQ citizens today.

2.1 A short history of LGBTIQ politics in Germany

In 1945 the National Socialist regime ended in Germany. However, when the system collapsed, neither the persecution of queer people nor their discrimination ended. LGBTIQ citizens remained mainly invisible in German society and regulation of homosexuality by the state was characterized by criminalization and discrimination. The following section gives a brief overview of the historical background regarding the (legal) situation of LGBTIQ citizen in Germany. This is especially important looking at political participation of LGBTIQ citizens since legal equality as well as the visibility of ones' own identity are important preconditions for political participation. Regulation primarily targeted gay men and female homosexuality was largely denied (Plötz 1999: 47). Of course, persecution after 1945 cannot be compared with the repression that went before, rather it was carried out within the legal framework of criminal justice and discrimination consisted of silence on the one hand and ridicule on the other. In terms of emancipation, the two decades after the Nazi dictatorship initially brought little success for queer citizens (Benz 1998: 12). However, the developments in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) were very different.

It was not until September 1, 1969 that the criminal law reform came into force in West Germany. After National Socialism and persistent pressure to prosecute throughout the late 1940s to late 1960s in (West-)Germany, it brought redemption for many homosexual men. Homosexual acts by adults under the age of 21 were still punishable, and even after the reform of the Sexual Criminal Law of 1973, sexual acts by men of age with male adolescents under the age of 18 remained criminal. Nevertheless, the main retraction of the prosecution of homosexual acts was a big step. However, state prosecution of homosexuals under Section 175, which the National Socialists had tightened, continued unfettered until 1969 in the Federal Republic (Benz 1998: 13). This legal background shows how hard it was for LGBTIQ citizens to openly fight for their rights as doing so would have resulted in criminal prosecution.

In East Germany many courts also made decisions under the auspices of Nazi law before the Supreme Court of the German Democratic Republic ruled in 1950 that the Weimar version of the paragraph should be applied. From the end of the 1950s, homosexual acts among adults were no longer prosecuted in the GDR (Stümke 1989: 132). Instead of pursuing progressive legislation to open up society, existing resentments and legal restrictions were applied. The media used well-established concepts of the enemy to differentiate East German society from that of the West, like crime, drug abuse or homosexuality, framed as phenomena that only existed in the West. The GDR

was practically a country without public places for non-heterosexual citizens. The climate was characterized by media slander, state surveillance and police persecution, similar to the situation in the USSR (Sabrow 2004: 7). In 1968 the German Democratic Republic introduced a new criminal code and the old paragraph 175 was replaced by a new paragraph 151, which outlawed male and female minors, but not adults, from engaging in same-sex relations (Davidson-Schmich 2017: 536).

Parallel to the liberalization of criminal law, a new movement developed in West Germany: the gay and lesbian movement. This, as well as the Stonewall riots on New York's Christopher Street in 1969, formed the backdrop for a queer movement that was establishing itself and was deliberately referred to as the gay and lesbian movement. Being open about one's homosexuality in public continued to harbor dangers until the 1970s, which again made it more challenging for LGBTIQ people to openly participate in political processes. For example, students were expelled from universities for alleged misconduct on the basis of a conviction under Section 175. Public servants were removed from service because of their homosexuality until the mid-1960s, and soldiers and teachers experienced this for even longer (Gollner 2016: 105). The protests on Christopher Street in New York also acted as catalysts for German movements, and in the 1970s and 1980s a network of national and international organizations emerged focusing on the representation and support of homosexual interests. Encouraged by the film 'Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation in der er lebt.' (Not the homosexual is perverse, but the situation in which he lives) by director Rosa von Praunheim, broadcast by the German state television in West and East Germany in 1973, gay and lesbian groups such as the 'Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin' (HBI) (Homosexual Interest Group Berlin) were formed (Sillge 1991: 93). The rising visibility alongside the liberalization of the law contributed to a fundamental change in the self-image and organizational forms of homosexual men after 1970. Another important impetus came from the USA, where after an uprising against police repression – the New York Stonewall riots of 1969 – the lesbian-gay civil rights movement formed, shaping Western European developments throughout the 1970s and serving as a kind of model. Another decisive factor was the change in society as a whole, often summarized under the abbreviation '1968', which also brought with it new open-mindedness and tolerance towards homosexuality (ibid.: 94).

Particularly being female, lesbian women saw themselves exposed to extensive discrimination. Therefore, many gathered under the umbrella of the women's movement but also continued public work together with gay men when they had common concerns. The groups were engaged, but often divided on direction. This is important to keep in mind with regard to the analysis of gay and lesbian political participation and political attitudes. Using information stands, film productions

and demonstrations, they created visibility, aroused offense and attention, created publicity and awareness – initially among their own people, gradually also among the population (Holy 1998: 87). After 1970, some lesbian women collaborated with gay groups, but the second women's movement provided the crucial context within which they developed new modes of intimacy between women and alternative forms of organization. During this time, lesbian feminist groups were founded in several cities. Regardless of some discrepancies, the women's and lesbian movements jointly brought about a change in the way of life and in the self-image of (lesbian) women as well as gender relations. Coming out, consciously showing oneself, was also becoming increasingly important for lesbian women, which was reflected in new ways of dealing with homosexuality (Weiland 1994: 8-10).

Since 1979, starting out in Bremen, Cologne, Stuttgart, Munich and West Berlin, people have regularly gone public with demonstrations, the so-called Christopher Street Days (CSD). Demonstrations are one important form of political participation. Especially for marginalized groups, they are an opportunity to achieve visibility within society. 'Homolulu', a large meeting over several days, was held in Frankfurt am Main in the same year. The first meetings of representatives of the emancipation movement and politicians took place in 1979 in Berlin and Cologne. Participants were politicians from the SPD, FDP, the Bunte Liste and the communist DKP (Kraushaar 2012: 83). The conservative CDU did not send a representative. The first party in the Bundestag to demand the complete abolition of paragraph 175 in its election manifesto was the liberal FDP in 1980 (FDP 1980: 35). In the same year the Greens stood up for the rights of homosexuals, even though they were not yet represented in the Bundestag at the time. In 1985 Herbert Rusche, previously a member of the emancipation group 'Homo Heidelbergensis' and an openly gay candidate of the Greens, declared that he was homosexual in front of parliament (Kraushaar 2012: 84). It was the first time a member of the Bundestag came out in that space. Those actions constituted the first prospect for LGBTIQ citizens that political parties might openly stand up for their rights and therefore LGBTIQ issues could be taken into account for their voting decision for the first time.

In the 1980s, the AIDS crisis became the overriding issue. It was hyped up as a threat to society and moved the issue of homosexuality from its social niche position into the center of attention. The rising framing of gay men led to more visibility but at the same time a stigmatization and marking off (Dobler/ Rimmel 2008: 545). At the exact moment when the second gay and lesbian movement had gradually started to question or dissolve prejudices and enemy images of deviance and delinquency, these successes were jeopardized again by AIDS. In this context, it was even more

difficult for LGBTIQ citizens to formulate demands. Many of the victims of the disease were homosexual men. This offered conservative politicians in particular a welcome opportunity to raise the mood against gay men and to connect with the concept of the dangerous alien other. Self-help associations and organizations such as the German 'AIDS Hilfe' were founded and made homosexuality a public issue in a new way and on an unprecedented scale. In turn, they contributed to the professionalization of the gay movement. Next to demonstrations this institutionalization of political demands was an important step towards political participation of the queer community. At the same time, the increasing promotion of queer organizations through state funds and private donations intensified their official and social recognition (Engelmann 2014: 271).

The beginning of the 1990s and the reunification of Germany was also a very important time for LGBTIQ citizen and the queer community as a whole. With the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany, a new political field with previously unknown possibilities opened up. This created the space for new social movements and forms of political participation that have the desire to actively shape the new Germany and thus to create more equality (Raab 2009: 246). Lesbian, gay, and trans* citizens have acquired manifold legal protection since unification. Much of the credit can be attributed to German activist groups like the LSVD that campaigned for full equality of LGBTIQ citizens (Davidson-Schmich 2017: 551). In 1994, the Federal Republic of Germany removed Paragraph 175 in as part of the legislative harmonization after reunification. This was a consequence of the impunity that had existed in the GDR since 1988. In 1995, the *Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen* parliamentary group submitted the first draft law aiming at marriage for same-sex couples. The draft law was rejected in the recommendation of the Legal Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag in 1998. At that time CDU/ CSU, SPD and FDP voted against the introduction of marriage equality. The far left PDS and *Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen* supported this. The demand to open up marriage to lesbian women and gay men led to heated discussions in the community. The opponents of marriage equality argued that marriage is an outdated bourgeois relic and that it is therefore counterproductive to ask for it to be extended to lesbian and gay people rather than to be abolished. Lesbian activists also asserted that marriage was the patriarchal instrument used to oppress women; there was a risk that lesbian and gay communities would develop similar structures and relationships of dependency.

In 2000, the Bundestag unanimously overturned Nazi-era convictions based on paragraph 175. It was not until 2001 that same-sex couples were allowed equal status and granted the right to have civil partnerships, under the coalition government of the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) and the Greens. This was one important step towards marriage equality, that had been a crucial demand

from LGBTIQ organizations. In the same year the red-green coalition made it clear during discussion about the ‘registered civil partnership’ in that this was a question of human rights and the basic law. The civil partnership was introduced by the red-green coalition against the votes of the CDU / CSU, FDP, with a majority abstention from the PDS on August 1, 2001. Proposals to allow same-sex couples to marry were subsequently blocked by the CDU/CSU. Trans* persons have legally been able to change their gender without surgery or sterilization since 2001 and Germany has allowed a third gender option on legal forms since 2017. In the same year, the introduction of a third gender option was fought for before the Federal Constitutional Court.

The German parliament finally voted for equal marriage in 2017. A part of the CDU/CSU and a vast majority of all other parties voted in favor of granting same-sex couples the right to marry and hence adopt. This certainly was a huge success for LGBTIQ citizen and a big step towards full legal equality. However, the debate circling around marriage equality exemplifies that the political spectrum of LGBTIQ activism ranges from liberal civil rights to identity politics critical of patriarchy to queer theory criticism of identity-political practices (Raab 2009: 313). It is important to note, that there is not only *one* queer emancipation movement but that various identity-political and sexual emancipatory currents can be found in the LGBTIQ emancipation movements.

2.2 LGBTIQ politics in Germany today

As this short historical outline showed, the position of non-heterosexual people within society and the way in which queer people were/ are treated is evolving and changing. Much has been achieved for the equality of LGBTIQ people in Germany, both legally and with regard to visibility and acceptance within society. Today, Germany is a country that is consistently ranked high in regard to LGBTIQ acceptance and LGBTIQ rights (TGEU 2019). In contrast to the situation a couple decades ago, the current situation of LGBTIQ emancipation movements in Germany is characterized by growing cooperation with state institutions. Moreover, there are many new challenges and contradictions within the LGBTIQ movement. Some scholars, like Nair (2010: 4), even argue, that mainstream causes like marriage equality have played a role in the loss of the transformative potential of the LGBTIQ movement.

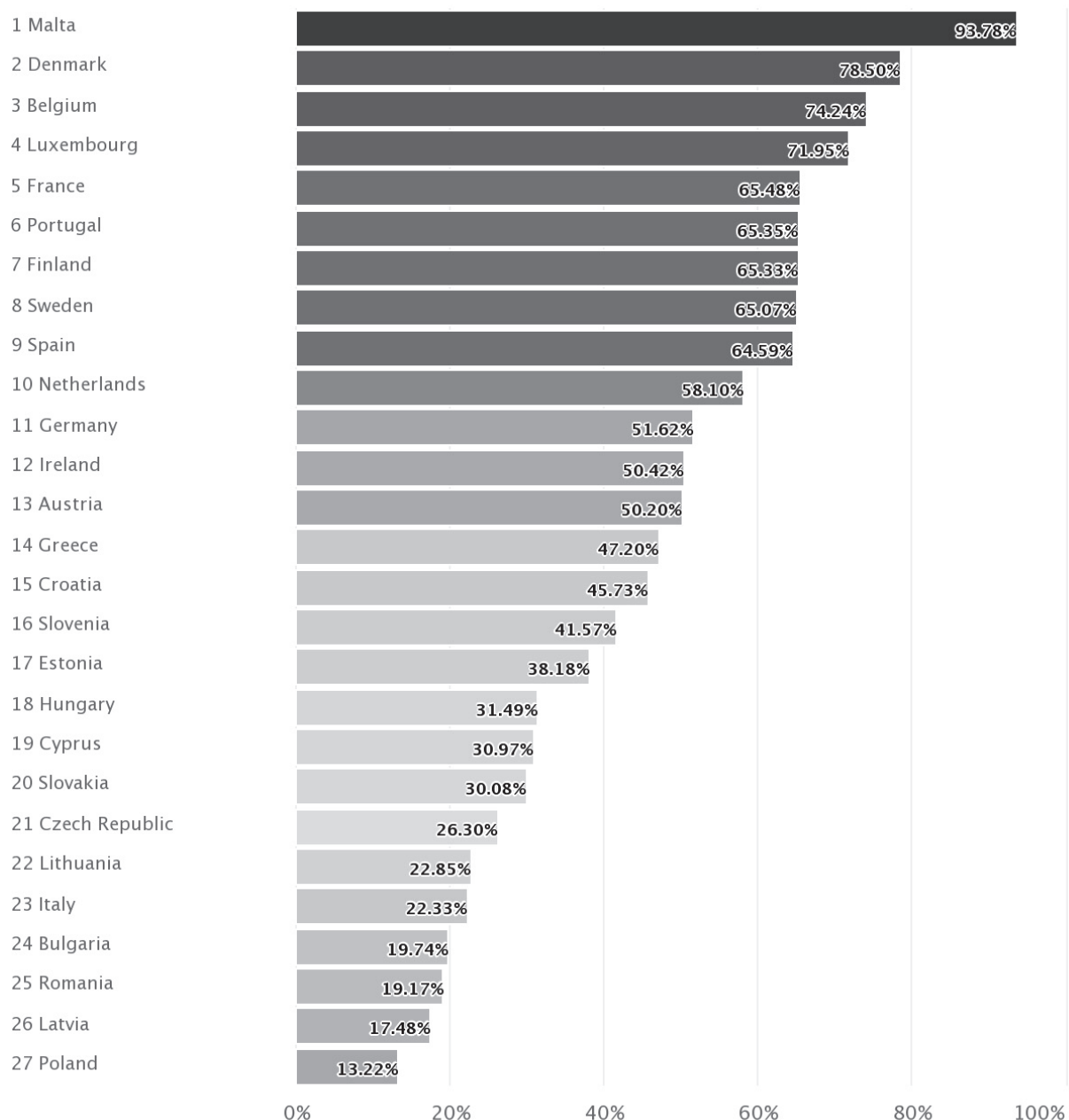


Figure 1 - ILGA Ranking 2021 1

Despite Germany being one of the most LGBTIQ friendly countries in the world, there are still improvements to be made. According to the ILGA Country Ranking 2021 (ILGA 2021) Germany is above average in the EU. Legal equality is an important part of achieving full equality for LGBTIQ citizens, however there are many other elements like adequate forms of political participation or societal recognition where there is still a long way to go. German society is deeply structured in a heteronormative way. This means, that (hetero-) sexuality as a decisive normative social structuring principle and thus directs interest to the normative apparatuses, institutions, symbols, codes, behavioral patterns and knowledge systems of heterosexual culture (Raab 2009:

13). Next to this, gender binarism is highly institutionalized by the German political and cultural system, including welfare and labor market policies, which are based on primarily heterosexual family models (Leitner 2003: 368; Leitner 2014: 40-41). With the abolition of the binary gender concept and the creation of an alternative, a so-called third gender, in October 2017, Germany is one of only twelve countries worldwide pioneering the gender revolution. Together with the introduction of same-sex marriage, this can be interpreted as a sign of social change within Germany. However, gay men are still not allowed to donate blood for example. A reassessment of existing social norms regarding the binary of gender, sexuality, partnership, and life concepts calls into question the premise of heteronormativity and thus creates a space for more diversity and acceptance within a pluralistic society.

(LGBTIQ) visibility is seen as a powerful tool to challenge and battle the social, legal and political (as well as cultural) marginalization and discrimination faced by LGBTIQ people – and thus decisive for the full implementation of citizenship. The Green party Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and the far-left Die Linke have the most differentiated policy offers for LGBTIQ voters today. Both parties, as well as SPD and FDP, consider LGBTIQ people and LGBTIQ issues as cross-cutting issues. The conservative CDU/CSU does not address LGBTIQ people or LGBTIQ rights (Hunklinger 2021). The right-wing populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) uses LGBTIQ rights and especially trans* issues to define themselves in a marginalized position vis-à-vis the mainstream political parties, a typical anti-elite and anti-system approach of populist parties. LGBTIQ rights are an ideal battleground for these parties (Inglehart/ Norris 2016; Hunklinger/ Ajanovic 2021). At the same time, the AfD tries to depoliticize LGBTIQ issues by referring to them as private which also implies that there is no need for regulations (e.g. in terms of legal equality) or that there are no means for public claims. Moreover, anti-LGBTIQ positions can be understood as a unique selling point in the electoral competition in the context of Germany, seeing as most parties support or at least tolerate the existing status quo and do not openly agitate against LGBTIQ people. For example, out politicians are to be found in all parties currently represented in the Bundestag. Even one of the co-leaders of the far-right AfD, Alice Weidel, does not hide the fact that she is married to a woman (Hunklinger/ Ferch 2020).

Against this background, questions arise about the relationship between LGBTIQ citizen and the state. It can be assumed that the state is neither neutral nor permissive. Rather, it can be assumed that statehood is a strategic field with a central role in the production, organization, and regulation of sexuality. The findings of Margot Canaday (2009: 3) regarding the United States also hold true for the German case: ‘as the state expanded, however, it increasingly developed conceptual mastery

over what it sought to regulate.’ This itself was part of the work of state-building, part of a longer process of the state coming to know and care about homosexuality. The state’s ways of regulating sexuality are therefore not only historically contingent and in this sense are subject to changes, rather they are embedded in political, social, cultural, and legal disputes about their social significance and definition. The identification of certain sexual behaviors and gender traits were constructed as grounds for exclusion. Therefore, the state did not only ‘implicate but also constituted homosexuality in the construction of a stratified citizenry’ (Canaday 2009: 4).

Thus, sexuality is the result of political struggles that also include state ways of regulating sexual matters (Raab 2009: 318). Regarding the current differentiation of the political positions and (identity) political currents of LGBTIQ citizen, an end to coherent group politics based on identities is emerging. Further research ought to explore these entanglements between state, sexuality, and identity more.

3. State of the art – exploring gay, lesbian and trans* voters

As Ekman et al. (2016: 1) put it, the ‘way in which citizens get involved in politics, as voters, activists or protesters, remains one of the most studied phenomena in social sciences’. However, there is still a big blind spot when it comes to LGBTIQ citizens, although more and more research is being conducted (Schaffner/ Senic 2006; Smith 2007; Egan/ Edelman/ Sherrill 2008; Perrella/ Brown/ Kay 2012; Proctor 2016; Swank 2018; Turnbull-Dugarte 2020a; Turnbull-Dugarte 2020b; Proctor 2021; Ayoub 2022). With regard to LGBTIQ citizens, it is important to recall T.H. Marshall's (1950) conception of citizenship: Taking *political* citizenship and *social* citizenship into account, such an understanding of citizenship entails, political participation and advocacy on the one hand and the inclusionary character of (social) citizenship as a status of full membership in society (Marshall 1950: 28-29) on the other. This notion of citizenship is frequently inter-linked with politics of visibility and recognition, ‘which attempts to re-shape social justice on the basis of reinstating recognition that has been previously denied’ (Hines/Santos 2018: 38). Assuming, that being publicly visible plays an essential role in having one's demands (e.g. anti-discrimination laws, marriage equality, health care) recognized, would consequently mean that some groups – namely those *with* public visibility – are more *likely* to achieve positive outcomes regarding their demands. This relates to the visibility of LGBTIQ people in politics, but also in society as a whole. Following the ideas of Phillip Ayoub (2016: 5) regarding the politics of LGBTIQ visibility in societies, one could argue even more that LGBTIQ visibility encompasses a group that is often referred to as an

‘invisible minority’, ‘but whose newfound presence and influence in many different nation states is a development that offers fresh opportunities for the study of sociopolitical change and the diffusion of norms’ (ibid.). This norms revolution did not affect the personal life of sexual and gender identity minorities but also opened up new possibilities for political action.

Political participation is undoubtedly important in any democracy and is a keystone of enfranchisement that allows citizens to engage with the state. As Hines and Santos (2018: 37) put it, the ‘construction of citizens as those who are able to participate publicly in decisions that affect their lives, and to make claims which are heard and recognized, brought to light new layers of exclusion’ (ibid.). Moreover, participation in the electoral process is one of the core elements in democratic societies. Especially for minority groups, ‘participation in decision-making has both instrumental and intrinsic value in challenging oppression and domination (...), (since) it is instrumentally valuable because it means that all interests will be voiced’ (Fletcher 1998: 203-204).

While literature dealing with politics, political participation and political discourses concerning LGBTIQ has grown in the past years (Ayoub/ Paternotte 2014; Ayoub 2016; Hines/ Santos 2018; Kuhar/ Monro/ Takács 2018; Halberstam 2018; Monro/ Van Der Ros 2018; Paternotte 2018; Ayoub/ Chetaille 2020; Proctor 2021; Ayoub 2022), in the mainstream of political science, LGBTIQ voters' behavior, political attitudes or political participation remain almost invisible. This PhD thesis adds to the understanding of political participation of sexual and gender minorities by analyzing voting behavior as one specific form of political participation of gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany. Moreover, within political sciences, the status of LGBTIQ studies is still regularly questioned and studies dealing with LGBTIQ people are either framed as too politicized, too private, or simply not important enough (Hines and Santos 2018). Against this backdrop, this PhD thesis adds to this marginalized string of political science research.

In his review article Paternotte (2018) showed that the field of LGBTIQ politics in political science has been diversifying over the past years. Not only has the literature on social movements been growing (Ayoub/ Chetaille 2020; Ayoub/ Paternotte 2014; Swank/ Fahs 2013) but also the analysis of representation and studies dealing with LGBTIQ political candidates and their campaigns (Reynolds 2013/ 2019; Magni/ Reynolds 2018). Furthermore, as Ayoub and Page (2019) have recently illustrated, political participation of LGBTIQ people and those who support LGBTIQ rights is overall higher in LGBTIQ-friendly societies (ibid.); while the opposite is true for societies where political homophobia (Bosia/Weiss 2013) is predominant. Following this logic, by becoming more visible in public, LGBTIQ people and allies would prepare the ground for both higher

political participation (and thus higher political efficacy) of LGBTIQ people and, eventually, a more LGBTIQ-friendly climate within society.

3.1 LGBTIQ Voting

Analyzing voting is a crucial part of understanding political participation, as even today, ‘elections (...) are not only the most general, but also the simplest and most egalitarian form of political participation’ (Schultze 1998: 471). This is especially important if looking at people from marginalized groups, who may not have as many resources to participate in political participation activities as people who belong to the majority population. Moreover, in much of political science, there appears to be a normative assumption that voting is the best way to participate in a democracy (van Reybrouck 2016: 136). In addition, voting turnout ‘has been described as the most commonly used measure of citizen participation’ (Ekman et al. 2016: 2). Therefore, I examine *formal political participation* (Ekman/ Amna 2012) and focus on formal political participation on the *individual level* (*voting*). I focus on voting as *the* form of political participation because it ‘was perceived as the primary way for citizens to make their voice heard in the political system’ (Ekman et al. 2016: 2).

Studies that include analysis of voting behavior of minorities mostly focus on ethnic minorities. Several have looked at the impact of social capital attributes on the probability of voting by ethnic minorities (Bevelander/ Pendakur 2009: 1407). Instead of adding to the investigation of minority voting by further analyzing ethnic minorities, this PhD thesis focuses on gay, lesbian and trans* citizens as part of a sexual or gender identity minority. Both strings of research can be fruitful for each other and are crucial if we want to understand voting behavior and party preferences of minority groups. Political participation is an effective strategy to improve cultural integration of, and respect for, different identities within societies (Rahman 2000; Carneio/ Menezes 2007: 69). Most empirical studies show that ethnic minorities are less active in politics than members of majority groups and that socioeconomic factors, such as age, income, and education, can largely explain the low participation rates of minorities (Sandovici/ Listhaug 2010: 113). On the other hand, exclusion sometimes can also lead to political engagement and excluded individuals or groups seem to ‘possess a set of social-perceptual and social-cognitive skills that might aid in finding promising re-affiliation partners’ (Claypool/ Bernstein 2014: 571). Moreover, the discussion on citizenship of minorities and what constitutes it has long been at the core of theoretical and political debates regarding the position of vulnerable subjects (Hines/Santos 2018: 37). This challenges common notions of citizenship but also enables us to consider citizenship in a broader and more inclusive way.

As Ayoub (2016) has illustrated, visibility is a crucial element of the action potential of minority groups. Swank and Fahs (2010: 70) point out the importance of the effects of publicly embracing one's sexual orientation, seeing as 'several studies have found that out or fully queer sexual minorities are more politically active than their counterparts who routinely hide their sexual orientation'. In many cases, discrimination increases group consciousness and thus provides a motivation that is necessary for a person to participate in politics (Proctor 2016: 114). However, the minority status is ascribed rather than individuals choosing to join this label. This discrepancy reflects several interesting societal and theoretical implications that are discussed as part of this PhD thesis. It highlights the problematic nature of the minority concept itself, which is even more aggravated by survey/category-based social science research, where certain categories of identification are constructed from the outside. Many studies suggest that the frequency of political activism was roughly the same among gay men and lesbian women (Jennings/ Andersen 2003; Rollins/ Hirsch 2003; Swank/ Fahs 2011). As Herek et al. (2010) show for the US case, there are some gender differences regarding electoral activism of gay men and lesbian women. While gay men tend to be more active in established forms of political participation and for example write more letters to politicians and make larger financial contributions to political candidates, lesbian women tend to be more involved in unconventional forms of political participation. In this context the so-called gender gap in political participation also has to be taken into account. Moreover, according to Lewis et al. (2011), gay men are participating in gay and lesbian rights protests slightly more than lesbian women. O'Toole and Gale (2013) stress the importance of researching minority groups which aids understanding exactly how participation norms are evolving.

Studies dealing with voting behavior and political attitudes of LGBTIQ citizens are still scarce and have mainly been focused on the United States context (Schaffner/ Senic 2006; Smith 2007; Hertzog 1996; Egan/ Edelman/ Sherrill 2008; Swank 2018) and Canada (Perrella/ Brown/ Kay 2012). This PhD projects adds new data and therefore the possibility of new (European/ German) perspectives on that phenomenon that can both, confirm as well as challenge findings from the US. For the US context, Herzog (1996) showed that self-identified lesbian women, gay men, and bisexual people comprised a distinctive and highly active voting bloc in electoral politics. Thus, LGBTIQ citizens vote cohesively across a variety of issues and at higher rates than the general population. They seem not only to have an above average interest in politics but it also appears that sexuality shapes citizens' voting behavior (Hertzog 1996; Bailey 1999). Studies regarding this context for instance show that LGBTIQ voters primarily vote for leftist parties, such as the Democrats in the United States (Schaffner/ Senic 2006: 130; Swank 2018: 34).

Studies on voting behavior in the context of LGBTIQ people hardly deal with European cases, which this dissertation sets out to correct. The oversight is partly due to the fact that exit polls or other surveys do not include questions concerning sexual orientation and gender identity, in countries like Germany. This makes it hard to draw any conclusions on the voting behavior of LGBTIQ citizens. The data presented in the papers of this PhD formed the first pilot studies targeting LGBTIQ voters Germany (LGBTIQ Election Survey 2015-2016; LGBTIQ Election Survey 2017). In the context of Western Europe, Stuart Turnbull-Dugarte illustrated that, similarly to the United States context, LGBTIQ voters are more likely to vote for social democratic and other leftist parties (Turnbull-Dugarte 2020a; Turnbull-Dugarte 2020b). Studies that explicitly deal with the voting behavior and political attitudes within the LGBTIQ community in German-speaking countries have only recently been carried out by the author of this PhD thesis in cooperation with colleagues (de Nève et al 2018, de Nève / Ferch 2018; Hunklinger/ Ferch 2020). Up to today, very little is known about voter preferences and political attitudes of non-heterosexual citizens in Germany (de Nève et al. 2018).

This overview shows, that despite a growing number of studies dealing with LGBTIQ voters and voting, said studies do not deal with the case of Germany. This PhD thesis takes this into account and provides an analysis of voting behavior of gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany for the first time.

3.2 Political attitudes of LGBTIQ citizens

Political attitudes and value orientations are essential components of people's belief systems. They also play a central role in explaining political behavior, notably as intermediate variables between social structure and political behavior. In political science, however, the attitude concept is often applied without reaching the level of elaborateness of social psychology (Arzheimer 2008: 62). According to Gabriel (2009: 22), political attitudes are the not directly observable tendencies of individuals who react cognitively and/ or judiciously to political facts. In this respect, political attitudes relate to political objects such as institutions, actors, actions, situations, facts, and symbols. Political attitude objects can be 'political ideas, ideologies, parties, politicians and their actions, policies, single institutions, and political systems as a whole. The variety of attitude objects implies different consequences for the characteristics of specific political attitudes concerning their formation, changeability, accessibility, and power in shaping individual behavior' (Bauer 2020: 14).

Egan (2012: 598) highlights the importance of identities as both causes and effects of distinctive political attitudes. Identities have been shown to be powerful predictors of voting choice, party identification, political participation, and attitudes regarding public policies – with the result being that individuals who share an identity can exhibit remarkable levels of cohesion with regard to political activities and beliefs (Egan 2012: 597). Being a queer citizen is political because of the sheer concept of being a minority. This often includes, that your identity and beliefs are challenged by the norms of society. Simply being is a political act.

Party identification – understood as a long-term stable psychological bond to a political party – is not only considered a key factor in election research, it is also believed to have a strong impact on political attitudes and behavior in general (Abdelal/ Herrera/ Johnston/ McDermott 2006; Arzheimer 2012; Schoen/ Weins 2014). Moreover, there is a strain between the analysis based on the variable gender and the fact that gender inequality is a multidimensional social structural relationship that cannot be represented in one variable (Fuchs 2018: 38). An analysis of the historical development of women's voting behavior reveals a change in Western industrial societies. Up until the 1970s, a 'traditional gender gap' was evident, with women tending to vote more conservatively. In the 1970s, this trend changed towards a 'modern gender gap', whereby women tended to vote for left-wing parties (ibid.: 39).

There is a distinction between expressive and instrumental theories of selector behavior. The former view the individual's election decision as an expression of social and psychological ties between the voters, the latter as an instrument to assert political interests and goals (Wüst 2003: 33). Classically, the democratic-theoretical relevance of election promises is attributed to the acceptance of the mandate theory of democracy, according to which rational citizens choose a party based on the greatest possible congruence of their own attitudes with the political content (e.g. election promises) offered by that party (McDonald/ Budge 2008).

Intersectional scholarship has shown that members of marginalized groups often replicate existing hierarchical structures that affect other marginalized constituencies (Strovitch 2007). In his recent study, Andrew Proctor (2021:10) showed, that members of marginalized groups have more egalitarian attitudes than straight whites, and the political consequences of out-group hostility vary across racial and sexual hierarchies. Moreover, white LGB people had more egalitarian attitudes than otherwise similar straight people (Proctor 2021: 14). Marginalization produces a different type of in-group pride compared to groups who form in-group pride without experiencing disadvantage.

By experiencing marginalization, the members of marginalized groups increase support for policies that help other marginalized groups (Proctor 2021: 3).

Most research on political attitudes of marginalized citizens focuses on ethnic minorities and not on LGBTIQ citizens. Research on political attitudes shows that LGBTIQ citizens mainly support progressive and left-wing issues. However, none of the case studies have dealt with Germany thus far. My PhD thesis provides insight into political attitudes of gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany for the first time and therefore adds to the understanding of political attitudes of minorities.

4. Results from the three papers

4.1 Voting for diversity? Political Attitudes and Formal Political Participation of gay men and lesbian women in Germany (Hunklinger 2021)

This paper uses original data from the *LGBTIQ Election Survey 2017* to examine political attitudes (Gabriel 2009) and formal political participation (Ekman/ Amna 2012) on the individual level (voting) and on the collective level (membership in parties, trade unions and NGOs) of gay and lesbian citizens in Germany. The paper bridges the gap between conventional political participation research and queer studies and adds to both strings of research. It shows that the majority of gay and lesbian voters who participated in the survey supports a progressive agenda and therefore votes for and engages with progressive and left-wing parties, as they tend to be more inclusive towards LGBTIQ. The most important issues for their voting decision were discrimination and homophobia as well as issues like migration and the environment. With regard to formal political participation on a collective level, gay men are more involved in political parties than lesbian women who are more likely to be organized in NGOs.

The research in this paper gives insight into the results of the *LGBTIQ Election Study 2017* and shows that gay and lesbian citizens in Germany are not one monolith but a diverse group of people with different backgrounds, voting behavior and political attitudes. Nevertheless, the majority of gay and lesbian voters who participated in the study votes for progressive or left-wing parties. Election preferences within the left-wing spectrum differ in terms of sexual orientation. This becomes evident in political attitudes regarding matters of social equality and immigration as well. While lesbian women have expressed a stronger preference for the Green Party and the left-wing party Die Linke, gay men are more likely to support social-democratic and liberal parties. One explanation for this could be the more inclusive party programs of the Green Party and Die Linke and the fact that a vast majority of lesbian voters stated that the program of a party was very important to them. Moreover, environment policies were more important to the women in the survey than to the men. For both, lesbian women and gay men, discrimination was the most important issue.

The conservative parties CDU/CSU do not mention LGBTIQ people or make any reference to LGBTIQ topics in their election manifesto. This is a typical pattern of argument within conservative and right-wing parties in regard to sexuality politics or LGBTIQ (Mayer/ Ajanovic/ Sauer 2014). Conversely, the conservative Christian democratic union consisting of CDU and CSU

only gains very little support from the LGBTIQ electorate. By not mentioning issues – by denying certain issues' visibility – they try to push them out of the political sphere and into the private sphere. Without public visibility, no public recognition of these issues takes place and therefore implementation of the norms that would lead to more equality becomes less likely. Invisibility is not only a challenge for specific subgroups within LGBTIQ communities, but also a broader issue across states and societies, among which the levels of recognition for sexual or gender identity minorities vary tremendously (Ayoub 2016: 3).

Regarding formal political participation on a collective level, gay men are more involved in political parties than lesbian women. This replicates findings of previous studies, setting out that men tend to be more active in political parties than women (Dörfler/ Kaindl 2019). Lesbian women are more active in NGOs or in less organized forms; for instance, in small local (autonomous) groups or as individual citizens.

Obviously, community is extremely important to gay men and lesbian women in the survey and the results confirm the findings of Sullivan (2003: 137), that community is clearly invaluable to LGBTIQ identifying people. A vast majority of the gay and lesbian participants feel that they are part of the or a LGBTIQ community. This might have to do with the fact that some of them do not have supportive communities within their own families, neighborhoods, and/or religions, and therefore seek each other out and create communities amongst themselves (ibid.). Howarth argues that 'community is not a latent, abstract concept; instead, we find communities that give our daily practices, our political differences and our understanding of ourselves significance' (Howarth 2001: 225). Being part of or forming a community enables gay men and lesbian women to persist in an often oppressive society. Thus, it could be suggested, it is possible for gay and lesbian people to frame their positions of political participation through community ties. It is important for the participants of the survey that political parties and candidates have a LGBTIQ friendly program and that they express their solidarity. These findings hint at a high level of group consciousness within the gay and lesbian community. Gay men and lesbian women are often aware of the different forms of discrimination and challenges the LGBTIQ community faces and therefore are conscious of their political identity.

With regard to political attitudes, the study shows that there are a variety of topics that are important for gay men and lesbian women and which influence their voting decision. In any case, discrimination still plays a major role. For lesbian voters in our survey, discrimination was the most important issue in the Bundestag elections in 2017. Followed by migration/ asylum with and

environment with as well as education and marriage equality. For gay men in our survey, migration/asylum was the most important issue in the Bundestag elections in 2017. Followed by homophobia and discrimination, as well as wages and environment. Nevertheless, these findings must be seen in the general political context of the election in 2017 and the socio-economic bias of our sample. Migration played an important role and dominated the political discourse in the run up to the election, which could be one explanation for the relatively high amount of mentions of this issue. Since men in our sample vote more center/ right than women it is also not surprising that the issue of migration is more significant for men than for women. The fact that environmental issues are important for many participants of our survey might be linked with the high amount of support for the green party and therefore a certain level of consciousness in this regard. In recent years, the most prominent issue for the LGBTIQ movement has been same-sex marriage. But this does not mean that it is the most important issue for gay and lesbian voters in our survey. Marriage equality was only the fifth important issue for lesbian women participating in our survey. It did not even make the top five among gay voters. This replicates findings from Flores and Sherrill (2016) demonstrating that same-sex marriage was not a top-five priority for LGBTIQ people in the United States. Against the backdrop of a strong class / educational bias within the sample, one may ask to what extent some of the answers concerning voting preferences or the decisive 'subject areas' (e.g. environment) result from the interplay between the respective class situation and LGBTIQ identity. It will be important for future research to analyze these intersections.

The results of this paper show, that gay and lesbian citizens in Germany mainly vote for progressive or left-wing parties. While lesbian women have expressed a stronger preference for Green and left-wing parties, gay men support social-democratic and liberal parties more. This also matches their political attitudes identified in our survey displaying support for left-wing and progressive issues. However, there is a certain number of gay men who also support right-wing parties and issues. This phenomenon will be analyzed more closely in the third paper of this thesis.

/ Voting for Diversity?

Political Attitudes and Formal Political Participation of Gay Men and Lesbian Women in Germany

Michael Hunklinger*

Abstract

This paper uses original data from the LGBTIQ Election Survey 2017 to examine political attitudes (Gabriel 2009), as well as formal political participation (Ekman/ Amna 2012), on the individual level (voting) and on the collective level (membership of parties, trade unions, and NGOs) of gay and lesbian citizens in Germany. The paper bridges the gap between conventional political participation research and queer studies and adds to both strands of research. It shows that the majority of gay and lesbian voters who participated in the survey support a progressive agenda and therefore vote for and engage with progressive and left-wing parties, since they tend to be more inclusive of the LGBTIQ* community. The most important issues for their voting decision were discrimination and homophobia, as well as issues like migration and the environment. Regarding formal political participation on a collective level, gay men are more involved in political parties than lesbian women who are instead active in NGOs.x*

Keywords: LGBTIQ*; gay; lesbian; voting; Germany; Bundestagswahl 2017

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Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel beschäftigt sich mit politischen Einstellungen (Gabriel 2009) sowie formeller politischer Partizipation (Ekman/ Amna 2012) auf individueller Ebene (Wahlen) und auf kollektiver Ebene (Mitgliedschaft in politischen Parteien, NGOs und Gewerkschaften) von schwulen und lesbischen Bürger_innen in Deutschland. Die Mehrheit der schwulen und lesbischen Wähler_innen, die an der Umfrage teilgenommen haben, unterstützten dabei eine progressive Agenda und wählen progressive bzw. linke Parteien. Die wichtigsten Themen für ihre Wahlentscheidung waren dabei neben Diskriminierung und Homophobie, Migration und Umwelt. In Bezug auf formelle politische Partizipation auf kollektiver Ebene sind schwule Männer stärker in politischen Parteien engagiert als lesbische Frauen, die hingegen mehr in NGOs aktiv sind.

Schlagwörter: LGBTIQ*; schwul; lesbisch; Wahlen; Deutschland; Bundestagswahl 2017

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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LGBTIQ people have “vote[d] like [their] rights depend on it.”*

(Proctor 2016: 121)

1. CHALLENGING RESEARCH ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, inter*, and queer (LGBTIQ*) issues have been part of the political science literature for years. However, there is a crucial difference in the approaches of conventional political participation research – which is originally rooted in rational choice-induced voting – on the one hand and queer studies on the other hand. While political participation research is primarily based on clear-cut categories and sociodemographic indicators, the queer studies mostly employ de-constructivist and poststructuralist approaches. These problems are reflected in the current state of research as well. Within political sciences, studies dealing with LGBTIQ* issues are still questioned regularly and often framed as too political, too private, or simply not important enough (Hines/Santos 2018). Paternotte (2018), however, has shown in an overview that the field of LGBTIQ* politics in political science has been growing and diversifying in recent years. Not only has the literature on social movements been increasing (Ayoub/Chetaille 2020; Ayoub/Paternotte 2014; Swank/Fahs 2013) but also the analysis of representation and studies dealing with LGBTIQ* political candidates and their campaigns (Reynolds 2019, 2013; Magni/Reynolds 2018). Studies dealing with voting behavior and political attitudes of LGBTIQ* citizens are still scarce and have mainly focused on the United States (Schaffner/Senic 2006; Smith 2007; Hertzog 1996; Egan et. al 2008; Swank 2018) or Canada (Perrella et al. 2012). Herzog (1996) showed that self-identified lesbians, gays, and bisexuals comprised a distinctive and highly active voting bloc in electoral politics in the US. Thus, LGBTIQ* citizens vote cohesively across a variety of issues and at higher rates than the general population. Not only does their interest in politics seem to be above average, but furthermore it seems that sexuality shapes citizens' voting behavior (Hertzog 1996; Bailey 1999). For instance, studies show that LGBTIQ* voters primarily opt for leftist parties, such as the Democrats in the United States (Schaffner/Senic 2006: 130; Swank 2018: 34). In the context of Western Europe, Turnbull-Dugarte illustrated that similarly to the United States, LGBTIQ* citizens are more likely to vote for social democratic and other left-

tist parties (Turnbull-Dugarte 2020a, 2020b). Studies that explicitly deal with the voting behavior and political attitudes of the LGBTIQ* community in German-speaking countries have only been carried out recently (de Nève et al. 2018; de Nève/Ferch 2018; Hunklinger/Ferch 2020).

This paper uses data from the *LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2017* to examine the political attitudes (Gabriel 2009) and formal political participation (Ekman/Amna 2012) of gay and lesbian citizens in Germany. It looks at formal political participation on the individual level (voting) and on the collective level (membership of parties, trade unions, and NGOs). The expectation is that gay and lesbian citizens mostly—but not always—support a progressive agenda and therefore vote for and engage with progressive parties, since progressive parties tend to be inclusive toward LGBTIQ* people.

Against this background, this paper addresses the following research questions: How do gay and lesbian voters in Germany participate in politics (on an individual and collective level)? What are their political attitudes in regard to LGBTIQ* issues and social equality and which issues are most important for their voting decision?

The paper is structured as follows: First, it gives a short overview of the theoretical background of political attitudes and formal political participation and presents its methodological approach. Second, it analyzes the political attitudes and formal political participation of gay and lesbian citizens in Germany in the context of the 2017 Bundestag (federal) elections and discusses its findings.

2. POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND FORMAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

2.1 Political Attitudes

Political attitudes and value orientations are essential components of people's belief systems. They also play a central role in explaining political behavior, notably as intermediate variables between social structure and political behavior. In political science, however, the attitude concept is often applied without reaching the level of elaborateness of social psychology (Arzheimer 2008: 62). According to Gabriel (2009: 22), political attitudes are the not directly observable tendencies of individuals who react cognitively and/or judiciously to political facts. In this respect, political attitudes relate to political objects such as institutions, actors, actions,

situations, facts, and symbols. Political attitude objects can be

“political ideas, ideologies, parties, politicians and their actions, policies, single institutions, and political systems as a whole. The variety of attitude objects implies different consequences for the characteristics of specific political attitudes concerning their formation, changeability, accessibility and power in shaping individual behavior” (Bauer 2020: 14).

Egan (2012: 598) highlights the importance of identities as both causes and effects of distinctive political attitudes. Identities have been shown to be powerful predictors of vote choice, party identification, political participation, and attitudes to public policies—with the result being that individuals who share an identity can exhibit remarkable levels of cohesion with regard to political activities and beliefs (Egan 2012: 597). Party identification—understood as a long-term, stable psychological bond to a political party—is not only considered a key factor in election research, but it is also believed to have a strong impact on political attitudes and behavior in general (Abdelal et al. 2006; Arzheimer 2012; Schoen/Weins 2014). There is a distinction between expressive and instrumental theories of selector behavior. The former view the individual's election decision as an expression of social and psychological ties between the voters, the latter as an instrument to assert political interests and goals (Wüst 2003: 33). Classically, the democracy-theoretical relevance of election promises is attributed to the acceptance of the mandate theory of democracy, according to which rational citizens choose a party based on the greatest possible congruence of their own attitudes with the political content (e.g., election promises) offered by that party (McDonald/Budge 2008).

2.2 Formal Political Participation

As Ekman et al. (2016: 1) put it, the “way in which citizens get involved in politics, as voters, activists or protesters, remains one of the most studied phenomena in social sciences.” However, there is still a big blind spot when it comes to LGBTIQ* citizens. Political participation is undoubtedly important in any democracy and is a keystone of enfranchisement that allows citizens to engage with the state. Moreover, participation in the electoral process is one of the core responsibilities in democratic societies. Especially for minority groups, “participation in decision-making has both instrumental and intrinsic value in challenging oppression and

domination [...], it is instrumentally valuable because it means that all interests will be voiced” (Fletcher 1998: 203–204). This paper I examines *formal political participation* (Ekman/Amna 2012), looking at it on the *individual level* (voting) and on the *collective level* (party membership). It focusses on voting as *the* form of political participation because it “was perceived as the primary way for citizens to make their voice heard in the political system” (Ekman et al. 2016: 2). Analyzing voting is a crucial part of understanding political participation, since even today, “elections [...] are not only the most general, but also the simplest and most egalitarian form of political participation” (Schultze 1998: 471). This is especially important when looking at people who belong to a minority who might not have as many resources to take part in political participation activities as people who belong to the majority. Moreover, in much of political science, there appears to be a normative assumption that voting is the best way to participate in a democracy (van Reybrouck 2016: 136). In addition, voting turnout “has been described as the most commonly used measure of citizen participation” (Ekman et al. 2016: 2).

Of course, political participation occurs in a vast range of ways and voting is merely one of the more institutionalized forms. Therefore, political science has moved toward a broader conceptualization of participation that includes the multitude of so-called “alternative” or “unconventional” modes of participation and participation research has developed different categories over time to typologize them (Hoecker 2006; de Nève/Olteanu 2013). Studies that include an analysis of minorities' voting behavior mostly focus on ethnic minorities. Several of them have looked at the impact of social capital attributes on the probability of voting by ethnic minorities (Bevelander/Pendakur 2009: 1407). Political participation is an effective strategy to improve the cultural integration of, and respect for, different identities within societies (Rahman 2000; Carneio/Menezes 2007: 69). Most empirical studies show that ethnic minorities are less active in politics than members of majority groups and that socioeconomic factors, such as age, income, and education, can largely explain the low participation rates of minorities (Sandovici/Listhaug 2010: 113). On the other hand, exclusion sometimes can also lead to more political engagement and excluded individuals or groups seem to “possess a set of social-perceptual and social-cognitive skills that might aid in finding promising re-affiliation partners” (Claypool/Bernstein 2014: 571.) As Ayoub (2016)

has shown, visibility is a crucial element of the action potential of minority groups. Swank and Fahs (2010: 70) point out the importance of the effects of publicly embracing one's sexual orientation, since "several studies have found that out or fully queer sexual minorities are more politically active than their counterparts who routinely hide their sexual orientation." In many cases, discrimination increases group consciousness and thus provides a motivation that is necessary for a person to participate in politics (Proctor 2016: 114). However, the minority status is ascribed rather than individuals choosing to join this label. This discrepancy has several interesting societal and theoretical implications. It highlights the problematic nature of the minority concept itself, which is even more aggravated by survey/category-based social science research, where certain categories of identification are constructed from outside. Many studies suggest that the frequency of political activism was roughly the same among gay and lesbian individuals (Jennings/Andersen 2003; Rollins/Hirsch 2003; Swank/Fahs 2011). As Herek et al. (2010) show for the US case, there are some gender differences regarding the electoral activism of gay and lesbian citizens. While gay men tend to write more letters to politicians and make larger financial contributions to political candidates, lesbians tend to wear more political buttons. Moreover, according to Lewis et al. (2011), gay men participate in gay and lesbian rights protests slightly more frequently than lesbian women. O'Toole and Gale (2013) stress the importance of researching minority groups as a means to understand just how participation norms are evolving. As Hines and Santos (2018: 37) put it, the

"construction of citizens as those who are able to participate publicly in decisions that affect their lives, and to make claims which are heard and recognized, brought to light new layers of exclusion, as well as new opportunities to frame citizenship beyond a narrow understanding of a strictly social and political set of formal rights."

3. DATA AND METHOD

3.1 Background and Method

This paper presents data on the political attitudes and formal political participation of gay and lesbian citizens in Germany and thus shines a light on a part of society that has so far received almost no attention in electoral studies in Germany (de Nève et al. 2018). It focuses on the national level, more specifically on the

electoral arena in Germany. Germany is chosen as a case since the antagonism regarding legal equality and simultaneous increasing social polarization shows itself particularly well here. In October 2017, "marriage for all" (*Ehe für alle*) was introduced, thus fulfilling a long-standing demand of the gay and lesbian movement. At the same time, with the entry of the right-wing populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party into the German Bundestag in September 2017 and the previous Bundestag election campaign, the polarization of LGBTIQ* rights increased sharply (Hunklinger/Ferch 2020). Moreover, in Germany—as in all of Europe—gender binarism is highly institutionalized in the political and cultural system, including welfare and labor market policies, which are based on primarily heterosexual family models (Leitner 2003: 368; Leitner 2014: 40–41). Furthermore, legislation regarding the LGBTIQ* community is not as progressive as one would presume, given the country's high international reputation (Hunklinger/Ferch 2020; TGEU 2019).

As yet, very little is known about the voter preferences and political attitudes of non-heterosexual citizens (de Nève et al. 2018). One main obstacle is the lack of data: in general, empirical research on electoral behavior and political preferences is essentially based on representative surveys. However, one of the major preconditions for the realization of a representative survey is knowledge of the distribution of the characteristics of the population under examination. Against the backdrop of discrimination and (criminal) prosecution of the LGBTIQ* community in Germany in the past (Gammerl 2010) and present (Heitmeyer 2012; Decker et al. 2016), this precondition for a representative sample cannot be fulfilled in the case of LGBTIQ* citizens. Thus, exit polls or other surveys in Germany do not include questions concerning sexual orientation or gender identity. The methodological problem of lacking figures on the LGBTIQ* community within the general population is insurmountable in a free and democratic society but addressing LGBTIQ* individuals by means of an anonymous online survey enables us to nevertheless reach out to this so-called "special population" (Gabriel/Keil 2014: 834) via a random procedure. For the first time in Germany, we collected data with the help of an online survey in the run-up to the most recent general election in Germany: the *Bundestagswahl* (federal election) of September 24, 2017. The survey was available on the internet for six weeks prior to election day and contains questions on voting preferences, attitudes toward the political

system and relevant and salient political issues, as well as political participation and engagement. A special characteristic of this self-selective (Häder 2014: 11) method of data collection lies in the assumption that the individuals under examination are in regular contact with one another within a subculture (Dannecker/Reiche 1974). In this way, LGBTIQ* citizens can be considered as members of a sort of hidden subculture (Gabler 1992: 50). The advantage of this method lies in the fact that the respondents actively and freely decide to take part in the study. The main disadvantage of the method, however, remains its self-selectivity and the asymmetrical distribution of the range of the internet (Häder 2014: 12)—access to participation cannot be controlled in such a convenience sample. We assume that only LGBTIQ* individuals with internet access, corresponding technical skills and equipment, as well as an affinity with networking in the (virtual/digital) LGBTIQ* community, would have noticed or participated in the survey at all. Attempts were made to combat the difficulty of self-selectivity by making use of targeted online and offline promotion. This included targeted advertising on Twitter and Facebook, cooperation with LGBTIQ* community organizations such as the Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland (LSVD), as well as advertisements on LGBTIQ* dating websites.

3.2 Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Sample

In total, 5,329 participants identifying as LGBTIQ* and as eligible to vote in the 2017 Bundestag election completed the survey; of them, 3,123 individuals identified as gay men and 1,140 as lesbian women. Given the methodological complexity, this data is not representative and does not necessarily reflect the demographic composition of Germany. All conclusions in the remainder of this article are drawn with regard to the participants of the study, not the German LGBTIQ* community at large. The participants come from all states (*Länder*) of the Federal Republic of Germany and their age span ranges from 18 (which is the legal voting age for general elections in Germany) to 75. 44% of the gay and 56% of the lesbian participants hold some kind of university degree. 77.6% of the gay and 75.5% of the lesbian citizens identify as being part of the middle class; 7.9% (gay) and 8% (lesbian) identify as being part of the working class. The majority of the people taking part in the survey state that their economic situation is good (46.7% of the gay and 46.1% of the lesbian parti-

cipants) or very good (14.4% of the gay and 11.5% of the lesbian participants; LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2017).

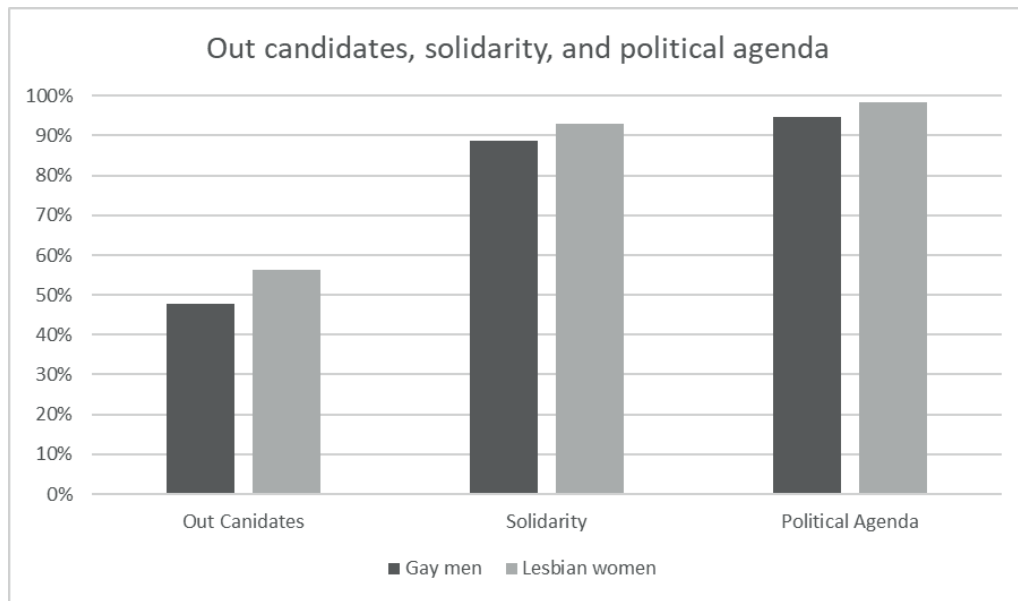
4. POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF GAY AND LESBIAN CITIZENS IN GERMANY

4.1 Out Candidates, Solidarity, and Agenda

Of utmost importance for the participants of the survey are LGBTIQ*-friendly policies of parties and candidates. 94.7% of the gay voters and even 98.4% of the lesbian voters think that it is very important or rather important that political parties or candidates have an LGBTIQ*-friendly agenda. Whether or not political candidates are out is not as important. Still, 47.9% of the gay men in our survey think that it is very important or rather important to have political candidates who are out and 56.3% of the lesbian women in our survey share this opinion. However, it is crucial for candidates and parties to express solidarity with the LGBTIQ* community if they want to win their support: 88.8% of the gay voters and 93% of the lesbian voters think that it is very important or rather important that candidates express solidarity with the LGBTIQ* community.

As can be seen in figure 1, most important for the participants of the survey is that political parties and candidates have an LGBTIQ*-friendly program and that they express their solidarity. These findings hint that there is a high level of group consciousness within the gay and lesbian community. Gays and lesbians are often aware of the different forms of discrimination and challenges the LGBTIQ* community faces and therefore are conscious of their political identity. As Proctor put it, “group consciousness combines in-group politicized identity [...] with a set of ideas about a group’s relative status and the strategies that will be useful in improving it” (Proctor 2016: 114). This holds especially true if group membership has political relevance. LGBTIQ*-friendly parties and candidates play an important role in this context, since political actors can help to increase the skills necessary for citizens’ political participation, such as political knowledge (Proctor 2016: 111). As early as the 1960s, the LGBTIQ* community recognized “the importance of both gay and gay-friendly politicians in securing gay rights, as political representation through electoral institutions is essential in achieving gay political victories” (Proctor 2016: 123). Moreover, personal contact with a candidate has a particularly powerful impact on encouraging

Figure 1: Out candidates, solidarity, and agenda



Source: xxx

political participation (Proctor 2016: 112). This might hold especially true for out candidates or candidates who openly support LGBTIQ* rights and gay and lesbian voters.

4.2 Part of the or an LGBTIQ* Community?

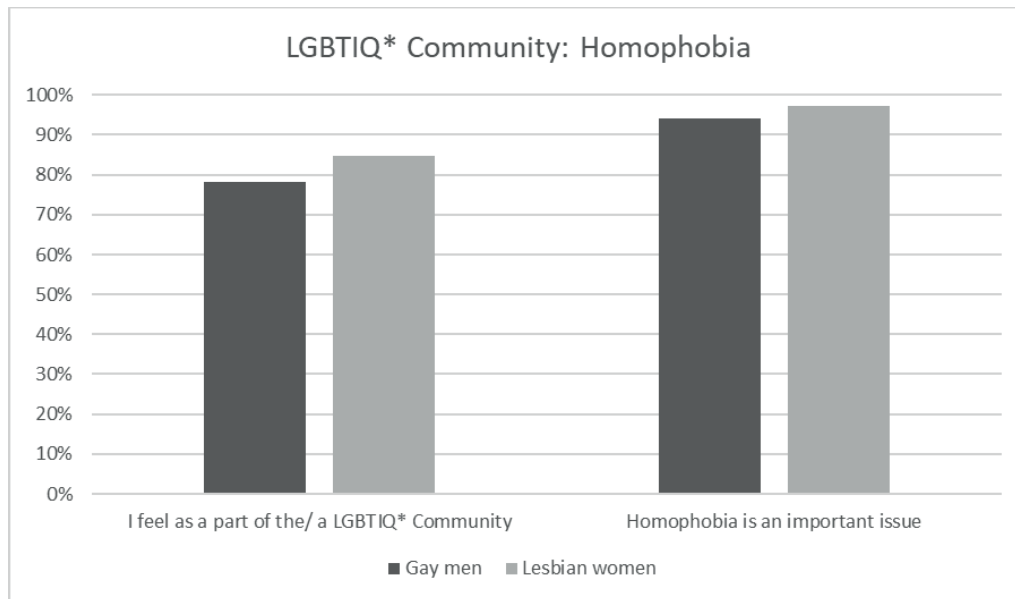
Community is, obviously, incredibly important to the gays and lesbians in the survey and these results confirm the findings of Sullivan (2003: 137) that community is clearly invaluable to people who identify as LGBTIQ*. 84.8% of the lesbian and 78.1% of the gay participants feel that they are part of *the* or *an* LGBTIQ* community. This might have to do with the fact that some of them do not have supportive communities within their own families, neighborhoods, and/or religions, and therefore seek each other out and create communities among themselves (ibid.). Howarth argues that “community is not a latent, abstract concept; instead, we find communities that give our daily practices, our political differences and our understanding of ourselves significance” (Howarth 2001: 225). Being part of *the* or *a* community enables gays and lesbians to persist in an often oppressive society. Thus, it could be suggested it is possible for gay and lesbian people to frame their positions of political participation through community ties. This links with ideas of sociological institutionalism. Communities can be seen as informal institutions that provide us with frames of meanings and a lens through

which we can view society (Hall/Taylor 1996: 947). In general, the framework of group consciousness accents the role that strong, disadvantaged, group-based identities play in structuring participation. As Proctor (2016: 116) put it, “by encouraging members to connect, share their experiences, and understand themselves in the context of the political world, group consciousness inspires group members to act in the political realm on behalf of their group.” Often, for people who identify as gay or lesbian, community is imagined as a safe space (Sullivan 2003: 137). However, this does not mean that there is no sexism, racism, or trans*phobia within the LGBTIQ* community.

4.3 Homophobia

Homophobia is a pressing issue for an overwhelming majority of the participants in our survey. 97.2% of the lesbian women and 94.1% of the gay men identify homophobia as a very important or important issue. In both groups more than 60% say it is a very important issue. Homophobic discourse focuses on social discrimination with regard to gender identity and sexual orientation, including social perceptions and expectations of masculinity and femininity. The dominance of heterosexual life plans means that all sexual orientations deviating from the social norm are regarded as unnatural and inferior (Adam 1998: 388; Steffens 2010: 14). The term “heteronormativity,” introduced by

Figure 2: Community and homophobia



Source: xxx

scholars of queer theory, postulates heterosexuality as a social norm and the two-part gender system as the only desirable one (Woltersdorff/Logorrhöe 2003). In addition, the increasingly complex social challenges (crisis of migration, changes in the world of work as a result of globalization and digitization, drifting apart of rich versus poor and urban versus rural regions) increase the many people's experience of subjective insecurities and fears. The tendencies toward stereotyping and prejudice against minorities, which can be clearly observed in some cases, are growing especially but not only in the context of increasing racism and homo-/transphobia (Zick et al. 2011; Decker et al. 2016).

4.4 Social Equality

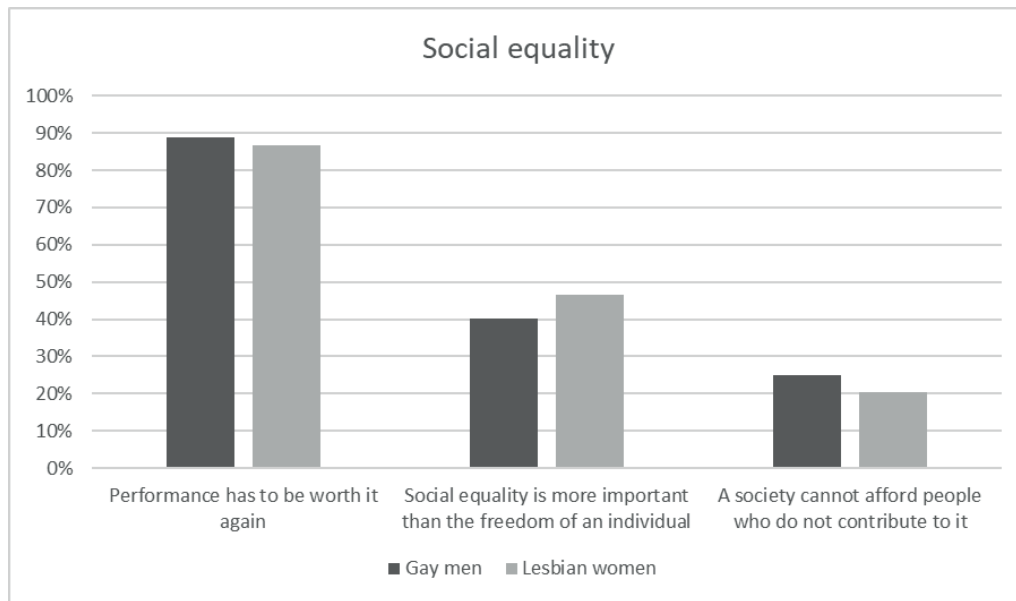
A vast majority of the participants in our survey agree that performance has to be worth it again ("Leistung muss sich wieder lohnen"). 88.8% of the gay men and 86.6% of the lesbian women support this claim that is usually made by liberal and conservative parties. This, once again, might have to do with the bias of the sample, as the majority of participants in the survey identify themselves as being part of the middle class or upper class. Asked whether social equality would be more important than the freedom of an individual, more than half of the male and female participants of our survey disagree. 40.3% of the gay men think that

social equality is more or somewhat more important than the freedom of an individual, whereas 59.7% disagree and highlight the importance of the individual. The support for the first claim is slightly higher among lesbians (46.7%) but nevertheless, the majority (53.3%) thinks that individual freedom is more important. The vast majority of the gays and lesbians in our survey disagree with the statement "A society cannot afford people who do not contribute to it." However, this claim is supported by almost a quarter of the gay participants in our survey (24.9%) and even a fifth of the lesbian voters (20.3%).

4.5 Intersectionality

The findings should be discussed within a wider context of intersectionality approaches, "which highlight the ways in which social and political forces manipulate the overlapping and intersecting inequalities within marginal groups" (Strolovitch 2007: 23). This leads to the circumstance that individuals might be marginalized in regard to one aspect of their identity (e.g., sexual orientation) but might find themselves in a more privileged group in regard to other aspects (e.g., white male). Therefore, "those who occupy multiple subordinate identities, [...] may find themselves caught between the sometimes conflicting agendas of two political constituencies to which they belong, or are

Figure 3: Social equality



Source: xxx

overlooked by these movements entirely” (Cole 2008: 444). This has to be taken into account since our survey has a certain bias in terms of class, income, and education. In the context of social equality, it is especially important to highlight the high number of participants who are economically well situated. Undeniably, intersectionality offers a “series of interesting questions about the formation of coalitions, even if their stated or overarching goals previously differed” (Ayoub 2019: 2). Also inherent in the data is that groups often portrayed as uniform are indeed very diverse in their political attitudes. Our data suggest that gay and lesbian people have a high level of intersectional consciousness, which “may draw new people into movement mobilizations, and it may generate visibility for new narratives of how to understand the broader dimensions of any particular struggle” (Ayoub 2019: 24).

4.6 Most Important Issues

Besides the general importance of certain policy fields and political issues, we also asked for the single most important issue for the upcoming election (by means of a single-choice question). For the lesbian voters in our survey, discrimination (16.5%) was the most important issue in regard to the Bundestag elections in 2017, followed by migration/asylum at 11% and the environment at 8.7%, as well as education (8.4%) and marriage equality (7%).

For the gay men in our survey, migration/asylum (13%) was the most important issue in regard to the Bundestag elections in 2017, followed by homophobia (8.7%) and discrimination (8.2%), as well as wages (6.7%) and the environment (6.5%). This shows that there is a variety of topics that are important to and influence the voting decision of gay men and lesbian women. Despite this, discrimination still plays a major role. Nevertheless, these findings have to be considered in the general political context of the 2017 election and the socioeconomic bias of our sample. Migration played an important role and dominated the political discourse in the run-up to the election, which could be one explanation for the relatively high quantity of times this issue was mentioned. Since the men in our sample vote more center/right than the women, it is also not surprising that the importance of the issue of migration is higher for the men than for the women. The fact that environmental issues are important for many participants in our survey might have to do with the high amount of support for the Green party and therefore a certain consciousness in this regard. In recent years, the most prominent issue for the LGBTIQ* movement has been same-sex marriage. But this does not mean that it is the most important issue for the gay and lesbian voters in our survey. Marriage equality was only the fifth most important issue for the lesbians in our survey. Among the gay voters it did not even make the

Table 1: Single most important issue

Gay men	Lesbian women
Migration/asylum (13%)	Discrimination (16.5%)
Homophobia (8.7%)	Migration (11%)
Discrimination (8.2%)	Environment (8.7%)
Wages (6.7%)	Education (8.4%)
Environment (6.5%)	Marriage equality (7%)

Source: xxx

top five. This replicates findings from Flores and Sherrill (2013), which demonstrate that same-sex marriage was not a top-five priority for LGBTIQ* voters in the United States. As Haider-Markel and Miller (2017: 625) showed for the US case, when “asked about the most important problems facing the LGBTIQ* community, 57% of respondents provided open-ended answers indicating social treatment, such as discrimination, and 32% cited legal rights or the right to marry.” Against the background of the strong class/educational bias of the sample, the question arises as to what extent some of the answers with regard to voting preferences or the decisive “subject areas” (e.g., environment) result from the interplay of the respective class situation and LGBTIQ* identity. It will be important for future research to analyze those intersections.

5. FORMAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF GAY AND LESBIAN CITIZENS IN GERMANY

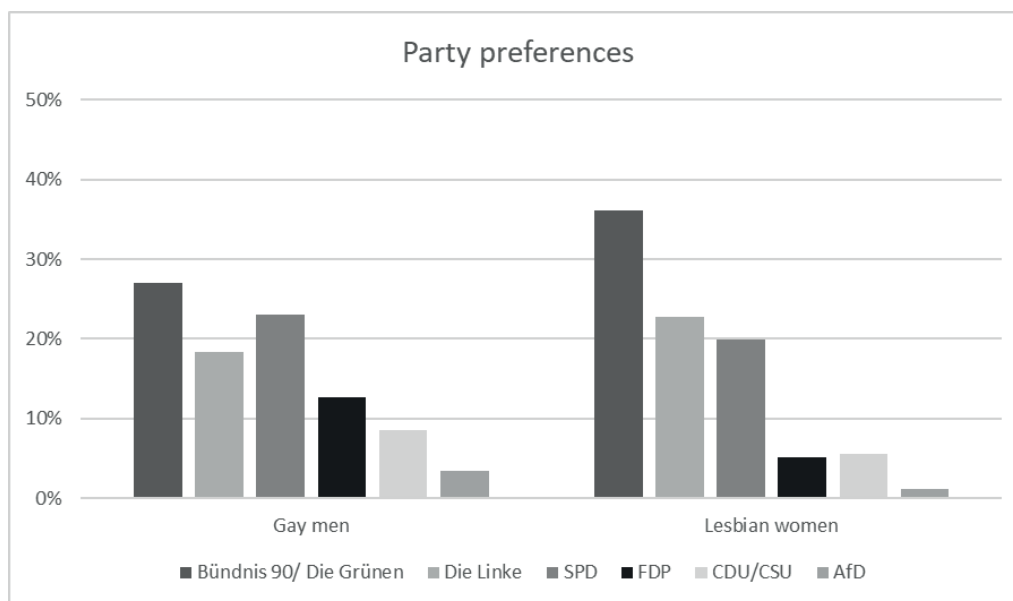
5.1 Formal Political Participation on an Individual Level (Party Preferences)

One central goal of the *LGBTIQ* Election Study 2017* was to examine the party preference of the participants for the 2017 nationwide elections in Germany. Since many gay rights issues (e.g., job discrimination) are still open for legislative action, “one should expect politically conscious LGBTIQ* persons to continue to use voting as a uniquely gay political behavior in the future” (Proctor 2016: 122). In the case of the election in Germany in 2017, the preference among all LGBTIQ* respondents for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (the Greens, 29%) was obvious. This was followed by Die Linke (the Left, 22.6%) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD, 21.2%). This confirms the presumption that LGBTIQ* voters have a strong preference for left-wing and leftist parties and reproduces the results of studies that have been conducted in the US and Canada (Edel-

mann 1993; Hertzog 1996; Bailey 2000; Egan 2004; Egan et al. 2008; Schaffner/Senic 2006; Smith 2007; Gates 2012; Perrella et al. 2012) or Western Europe (Turnbull-Dugarte 2020a, 2020b). Among other things, these differences in the center-left spectrum may be due to the fact that the respective parties have special policies for specific sexual or gender identities or take up LGBTIQ* topics in general terms. The lesbian participants expressed a stronger preference for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (36.1%) and Die Linke (22.7%) than the gay respondents (27% for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and 18.3% for Die Linke). At the same time, gay men stated more often that they would support the Social Democrats (23%), the liberal FDP (12.7%), or the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU, 8.5%). Overall, the far-right AfD had little support among voters in our survey: 3.4% of gay and 1.2% of lesbian voters declared that they supported the AfD.

One explanation for this voting pattern are the party programs. The Green party Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and the far-left Die Linke have the most differentiated policy offers for LGBTIQ* citizens. Both parties, as well as the SPD and FDP, see LGBTIQ* people and LGBTIQ* issues as cross-cutting issues. The conservative CDU/CSU does not mention LGBTIQ* people or LGBTIQ* rights in their 2017 election manifesto at all. The right-wing populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) uses LGBTIQ* rights and especially trans* issues to define themselves in a marginalized position vis-à-vis the mainstream political parties, a typical anti-elite and anti-system approach of populist parties. LGBTIQ* rights are an ideal battleground for those parties (Inglehart/Norris 2016). At the same time, the AfD tries to depoliticize LGBTIQ* issues by referring to privacy, which also implies that there is no need for regulations (e.g., in terms of legal equality) or that there are no means for public claims. Moreover, anti-LGBTIQ* positions can be understood as a unique selling point in the electoral competition in the context

Figure 4: Voting (gay/lesbian)



Source: xxx

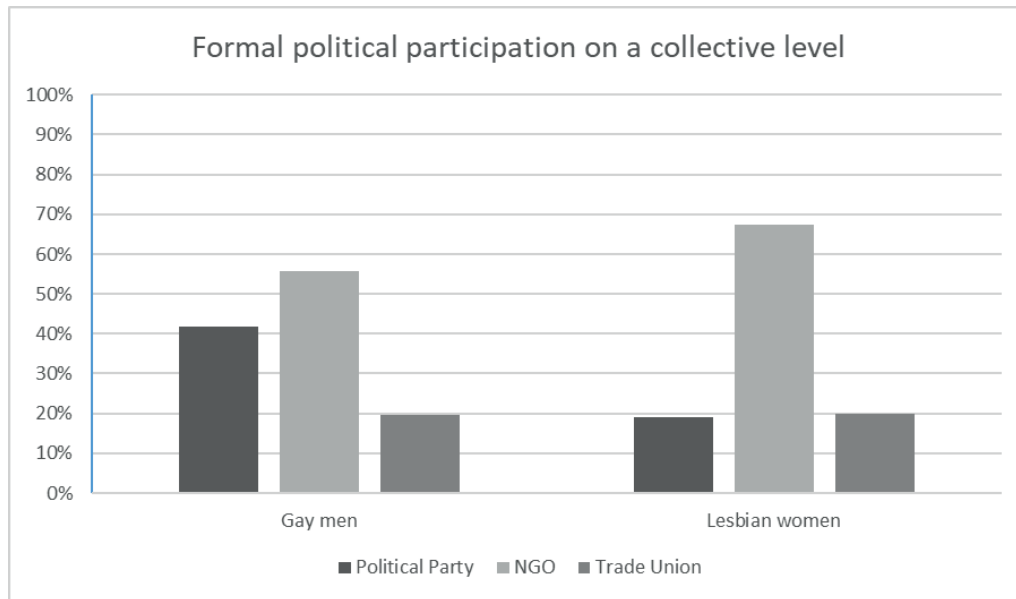
of Germany, since most parties support or at least tolerate the existing status quo and do not openly agitate against LGBTIQ* people (Hunklinger/Ferch 2020).

Even so, voting is still one of the most important forms of political participation. I follow O'Toole and Gale's (1995: 129) argument that "emergent political subjectivities, new grammars of action and changing forms of socio-political identification" are becoming more and more significant. However, these other modes of political participation do not entirely override older forms of activity, but rather, they coexist with them (ibid). As our findings show, intersectionality plays a vital role in regard to LGBTIQ* voters, not least due to the different socioeconomic backgrounds of the participants in our survey. Therefore, "policy makers need to be aware that for many people in this group, legal and social aspects of citizenship are intertwined and mutually constitutive in a way that is different to other social groups" (Kuhar et al. 2018: 126). In order to make policy makers aware of LGBTIQ* issues, however, LGBTIQ* voters and their political claims or demands need to be visible and recognized by both politics and society. Moreover, the results reveal what studies in the US have showed before: LGBTIQ* citizens are as likely to register to vote and cast ballots as the general public and might be more likely to engage more strongly in other political activities (campaign activities, contacting officials, etc.; Flores/Sherrill 2016).

5.2 Formal Political Participation on a Collective Level

Apart from party preference, voting behavior, policy preferences, and attitudes, participants in the LGBTIQ* election survey were also surveyed on their formal political participation on a collective level. Community engagement is an integral facet of encouraging political participation. Therefore, the survey asked whether or not (and if so, where or how) those interviewed would participate in politics and/or society. The survey shows that the majority of respondents are socio-politically active, and not only in regard to LGBTIQ* issues. As it is also the case with the general sample(s) of LGBTIQ* citizens, gay and lesbian citizens tend to be most active in clubs or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In general, the majority of the gay (55.8%) and lesbian (67.4%) voters who completed the survey stated that they were active in such associations. 41.7% of the gay participants are involved in a political party, while political engagement in a party seems to play a minor role among the lesbian women in our survey: only 19.1% stated that they were active in some form in a political party. This replicates the findings of previous studies that men tend to be more active in political parties than women (Dörfler/Kaindl 2019). About a fifth of the gay (19.6%) and lesbian (20%) respondents participated in some form of trade union activity.

Figure 5: Formal collective



Source: xxx

Once again, it is important to highlight that individuals might be marginalized in regard to one aspect of their identity but might find themselves in a more privileged group in regard to other aspects (Strolovitch 2007). Besides these traditional forms of political and societal involvement, gay and lesbian citizens are also active in politics and society in a broad variety of different, sometimes less-organized forms; for instance, in small local (autonomous) groups or as individual citizens (e.g., joining demonstrations). Our data once again confirm findings on gender differences in political participation that stress that women are less likely to consider formal political activities (Westle 2001) and are more likely to participate in participatory organizations such as NGOs and district work (Hoecker 1998).

Research demonstrates that using forms of formal social engagement, such as membership of political parties or trade unions, NGOs, or other forms of political activities, increases collective interest in politics and helps people develop the political skills that enable political participation (Harris 1994; Verba et al. 1995; Radcliff/Davis 2000). Moreover, those networks enable the social exchange of political information and expose individuals to new political information, which leads to an increase in their interest and understanding (Proctor 2016: 113). One can argue that this is especially important for minorities since the individuals in these groups face similar issues and cooperation with others

and organization around political (or social) issues enable change. Advocacy organizations in particular are very important in this context, since they often provide a safe space for marginalized groups. Besides, community ties provide social and human capital, which is necessary to be able to be active in political and civic life. Especially for young people, many of these community organizations “expose individuals to social networks of activists that facilitate longer-term engagement and retention” (Fisher 2012: 122).

When asked about political or societal involvement with an explicit focus on LGBTIQ* issues, part of the image changes. Two thirds (66.3%) of the lesbian and 59.6% of the gay voters surveyed stated that they were involved in NGOs with an explicit focus on LGBTIQ* issues. 32.8% of the gay men and 12.4% of the lesbian women stated that they were involved in political parties with an explicit focus on LGBTIQ* issues. Within our survey, there is very little political activity that focuses on LGBTIQ* within trade unions (among gay men: 4.9%) (among lesbian women: 4.5%).

Political parties and organizations could also draw on the high willingness of many homosexual voters to participate. However, social belonging and the accompanying challenges cannot be reduced to a single indicator. Even groups that are commonly represented as uniform (e.g., “lesbian women”) are coalitions (Cole 2008; Murib/Soss 2015). They are situated at the inter-

section of an ensemble of complementary dimensions. Some scholars, like Nair (2010: 4), even argue that mainstream causes like gay marriage have played a role in the loss of the transformative potential of the LGBTIQ* movement. Proctor (2016: 117) points out that the forms of political participation that are relevant to each minority community may be different, indicating that not all groups will employ the same actions or venues across all issues.

6. CONCLUSION

This insight into the results of the *LGBTIQ * Election Study 2017* shows that gay and lesbian citizens in Germany are not one monolith but a diverse group of people with different backgrounds, voting behaviors, and attitudes. Nevertheless, the majority of gay and lesbian voters who participated in the survey vote left or center left. However, election preferences within the left-wing spectrum differ in terms of gender. While lesbian women expressed a stronger preference for the Green party and the left-wing party Die Linke, gay men rather support social democratic and liberal parties. One explanation for this could be the more inclusive party programs of the Green party and Die Linke and the fact that the vast majority of lesbian voters stated that a party's manifesto was very important to them. Moreover, environmental policies were more important to the women in the survey than to the men. For both lesbian women and gay men, discrimination was a very important issue. In regard to formal political participation on a collective level, gay men are more involved in political parties than lesbian women. In turn, lesbian women are more active in NGOs or in less-organized forms of collective participation; for instance, in small local (autonomous) groups or as individual citizens. Even though gay and lesbian citizens are less and less excluded in many societies, it is imperative to remember that while some aspects of living an openly homosexual life are becoming "accepted" by wider society, many forms of exclusion and discrimination are still a reality for non-heterosexual citizens. This often includes one's identity and beliefs being challenged by the norms of society, so simply to be is a political act. Therefore, being a gay or lesbian citizen is political because of the sheer fact of being part of a marginalized group of society. Moreover, the findings highlight the problematic nature of the minority concept itself, which is even more aggravated by survey/category-based social science research, where certain categories

of identification are constructed from outside. This challenges not only common notions of citizenship, but also enables us to think of citizenship in a broader and more inclusive way. Research on LGBTIQ* people and issues can disrupt traditional approaches in political science and add a new perspective to pressing issues within our societies.

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4.2 Trans* voting. Demand and supply side of trans* politics in Germany (Hunklinger/Ferch 2020)

Trans* people and trans* issues have been part of the scientific literature for over a decade, yet mostly framed under umbrella terms such as ‘LGBT’ or ‘LGBTIQ*’ and often without further consideration of trans*-specific issues. In our paper, we take an emancipatory approach and focus on trans* people as political subjects. Thus, we present data on political preferences, attitudes and voting behavior of trans* people in Germany for the first time and put it in relation to the parties’ manifestos for the 2017 German general election (*Bundestagswahl 2017*). We discuss our findings in the theoretical context of trans* citizenship and trans* visibility. This approach positions trans* people as citizens in the center of analysis and adds to our understanding of citizenship of minorities in our modern societies.

This article presents data on both the demand side and the supply side of trans* politics in Germany in the context of the 2017 German general election (*Bundestagswahl 2017*). On the demand side, it examines political preferences, attitudes and voting behavior of trans* people in Germany by using data from the 2017 LGBTIQ Election Study. While the most important issues for the trans* voters in the survey are – independent from their economic background – discrimination and trans*phobia, this rarely studied section of the electorate seems to especially support progressive political parties on the left. A vast majority of the trans* participants of the survey consider themselves part of the (or a) LGBTIQ community. This shows how important this interpersonal visibility is to the sample.

To explore the demand side of trans* politics, the paper also asked participants in the survey to rate the general importance of certain policy fields or political topics. Unsurprisingly, genuine trans* and LGBTIQ issues rank the highest among trans* voters: Trans*phobia is perceived as a ‘very important’ or ‘important’ topic by a vast majority of trans* voters in the sample. Also being perceived as important or very important are discrimination, education, environmental protection, and xenophobia. Apart from trending topics such as migration, asylum and refugee policy and the energy transition, trans* voters in the sample also tend to rank welfare and labor market issues such as wages, housing, health care, and pensions highly.

In the case of trans* politics, public visibility is especially important as it takes place in a public political sphere. Political parties set the agendas of election campaigns. By addressing certain issues, they make them visible to a broader public. A majority of the participants in our survey stated that visibility of LGBTIQ candidates was very important or important to them. This is a good example of how this public visibility can help – or seems to help – a minority group become seen and

recognized by society and the state via representatives within politics. A majority of those interviewed as part of the study state that a public portrayal of solidarity from politicians and political parties is very important for them. Ayoub (2016: 6) argues that differing degrees of visibility have produced different outcomes for sociopolitical change across states (ibid.) and that it was this process of ‘coming out’ that led to the socio-political recognition of rights that altered the situation for such groups (Ayoub 2016: 4). Internal minorities (Green 1995) – like trans* citizens within the group of LGBTIQ citizens – have very often been identified as cultural minorities and the subject of other forms of discrimination of social groups within a minority (e.g. women) (see also Eisenberg/Spinner-Halev 2005). This hierarchization of priorities within marginalized groups results in the oppression of internal minorities. As the findings show, intersectionality plays a vital role in this case. Not only due to different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds of trans* people, but also because of differing sexual orientation of trans* citizens.

On the supply side, in their election manifestos especially those left-wing and progressive parties explicitly and comprehensively address LGBTIQ issues and thus make a detailed offer to trans* voters in Germany. Most parties only recently started acknowledging different forms of sexual orientation and gender identities. Putting trans* issues on the agenda is not just a sign of support and championship towards trans* people, but also a sign towards a broader audience – and in our case the electorate. Explicit trans* issues are cross-cutting issues, visible throughout the whole manifesto of the far-left party *Die Linke* and the green party *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*. The social democratic SPD and the liberal FDP support trans* people and trans* issues, however, only address them under the umbrella term LGBTIQ. Conservative parties fully neglect trans* people and trans* issues, while the far-right AfD openly campaigns against LGBTIQ people and especially against trans* people. This leads to a re-polarization of LGBTIQ issues, which is especially visible concerning trans* issues. Thus, trans* visibility seems to play a pivotal role for both the political participation of trans* persons and political efficacy, i.e. the introduction of trans* rights. Hence, trans* politics, trans* visibility and trans* citizenship is interwoven. Following this argument, trans* visibility in election manifestos is an important step towards shifting public discourse, leading to, as Ayoub (2016: 6) puts it, the socio-political recognition of rights which alters the situation for such groups. This can also be observed within our data.

Trans* issues – as cross-cutting issues – are visible throughout the whole manifesto of *Die Linke* and the green party *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, reflected also in the support those parties received from the trans* electorate during the most recent general election in Germany (2017). Almost three quarters of those interviewed claim to vote for the far-left *Die Linke* or the Greens. Monroe and van

der Ros (2018: 73) argue that ‘political recognition of the diversity of gender identities is required, followed by political representation, such as the establishment of mechanisms to ensure that divergences and conflicts regarding rights claims are played out within the democratic political sphere, to ensure just and equal (re-)distribution of public resources’ (ibid.). It can thus be argued that the concept of LGBTIQ (in-)visibility not only relies on the aspect of making oneself *visible*, but also on being seen and *recognized* – on an individual as well as on a structural level.

One could argue that this has been the case in the context of the appearance of the right-wing populist *Alternative für Deutschland* within the German political arena. The AfD addresses LGBTIQ issues regularly and tries to politicize them by arguing against LGBTIQ rights, visibility and recognition in a very hostile manner. Consequently, the LGBTIQ-hostile AfD appears to be highly unpopular among the LGBTIQ voters in the sample. SPD and FDP mainly address trans* people and their agendas only with the label of LGBTIQ. In these policies regarding LGBTIQ, especially bisexual, trans* and queer people are marginalized. This marginalization within the party manifestos is a fitting mirror to the marginalization of BTQ people within our societies.

In terms of the research interest of this PhD thesis, the results of this paper show that trans* citizens in Germany mainly vote for left-wing parties and support left-wing issues. There was no support for right-wing parties within the trans* voters in the survey and compared to gay and lesbian voters, trans* voters are more left-wing regarding both their party preferences and their political attitudes.

RESEARCH

Trans* voting: demand and supply side of trans* politics in Germany

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Trans* people and trans* issues have been part of the scientific literature for over a decade, though framed most of the time under umbrella terms such as ‘LGBT’ or ‘LGBTIQ*’ and often without further consideration regarding trans*-specific issues. In this article, we take an emancipatory approach and focus on trans* people as political subjects. For the first time, we thus present data on the political preferences, attitudes and voting behaviour of trans* people in Germany, and put them in relation to the parties’ manifestos for the 2017 German general election (the 2017 *Bundestagswahl*). We discuss our findings in the theoretical context of trans* citizenship and trans* visibility. This approach positions trans* people as citizens in the centre of analysis and adds to our understanding of the citizenship of minority groups in our modern societies.

key words trans* • LGBTIQ* • Germany • voting • political participation • political parties

Key messages

- Left-wing and progressive parties address trans* issues and have a detailed offer for trans* voters in Germany.
- Conservative parties neglect trans* issues while the far right openly campaigns against trans* rights.
- Trans* voters in our survey support mostly left-wing and progressive parties.
- The most important issues for the trans* voters in our survey were discrimination and trans*phobia.

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Introduction

Visibility can trigger clandestine groups to rise up and tap into their latent movement potential. (Ayoub, 2016: 26)

Trans* people and trans* issues have been part of the scientific literature for over a decade, though most of the time framed under umbrella terms such as ‘LGBT’ or lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, intersexual and queer ‘LGBTIQ*’ and often without further consideration regarding trans*-specific issues. While there is a growing literature dealing with trans* people and trans* issues in queer studies (see, among others, Halberstam, 2018; Hines and Santos, 2018; Kuhar et al, 2018; Monro and Van der Ros, 2018; Paternotte 2018), in the mainstream of political science, LGBTIQ*¹ and especially trans*² people remain almost invisible. Moreover, within the political sciences, the status of LGBTIQ* studies is regularly still questioned. Often, studies dealing with LGBTIQ* people are either framed as too politicised, too private or simply not important enough (Hines and Santos, 2018). The mainstream of political science often operationalises LGBTIQ* with regard to intolerance or victimisation. This holds especially true for political science research on trans* people. Alternatively, we suggest an emancipatory approach and focus on trans* people as political subjects. For the first time, we thus present data on the political preferences, attitudes and voting behaviour of trans* people in Germany, and position these in relation to the parties’ manifestos for the 2017 German general election (the 2017 *Bundestagswahl*). This approach positions trans* people as citizens in the centre of analysis and adds to our understanding of the citizenship of minority groups in modern society. This is especially important since citizens’ rights and even basic human rights are again being contested in some European societies (Hark and Villa, 2015; Sauer et al, 2016; Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017).

Our contribution highlights the importance of minority rights and political participation of minority groups for the functioning of a democracy through the example of trans* politics in Germany. In Germany – as in all of Europe – gender binarism is highly institutionalised by the German political and cultural system, including welfare and labour market policies, which are based on primarily heterosexual family models (Leitner, 2003: 368; 2014: 40–1). Furthermore, legislation regarding trans* people is not as progressive as one would presume given the country’s international reputation (TGEU, 2019). We analyse both the demand and supply side of trans*-(politics-) related issues in comparative perspective. The term ‘demand side’ focuses on the trans* electorate. We use data from the ‘LGBTIQ* election survey 2017’ to examine the political preferences, attitudes and voting behaviour of trans* people in Germany. The term ‘supply side’ refers to the positioning of political parties in the electoral arena by choosing salient issues and strategies, thus making a political offer to this electorate. In this way, we furthermore analyse the manifestos for the corresponding *Bundestagswahl* (the 2017 German general election) to identify positions towards trans* people and trans*-related issues, and to examine how visible they are in these election manifestos.

Therefore, we address the following questions: what are the political attitudes and motivations of trans* voters? Which issues are important to trans* voters? Which parties do trans* people vote for? How visible are trans* issues in the manifestos of the parties competing in the latest general election in Germany (the 2017 *Bundestagswahl*)? Which positions do these political parties take towards trans* people/the trans* community/trans* issues?

Our expectation is that trans* people are a heterogeneous part of society that mostly – but not always – supports a progressive agenda and therefore votes for progressive parties since progressive parties tend to be inclusive towards trans* people and trans* rights. Furthermore, our expectation is that the different parties competing in the latest general election in Germany address trans* people and trans* issues in a variety

of ways. Some of them neglect or ignore trans* rights, some of them are openly hostile towards trans* people and deny them any rights, while some are more inclusive and champion trans* rights/issues. Certain parties make a more detailed offer for trans* voters than others. With regard to ideology, we expect that progressive and liberal parties have a more inclusive agenda regarding trans* people, while conservative and right-wing parties do not advocate for trans* people at all.

We acknowledge the crucial differences in the approaches of conventional political participation research, originally rooted in rational choice-induced voting and general political behaviour research, on the one hand, and queer studies, on the other. While political participation research is primarily based on clear-cut categories and socio-demographic indicators, the latter employs de-constructivist and poststructuralist approaches. Research on trans* and LGBTIQ* issues can break up traditional approaches in political and social science, and add a new perspective to pressing issues within our societies. Our aim is to bridge this gap between conventional political participation research and queer studies, and to add to both strains of research.

The article focuses on the national level, more specifically, on the electoral arena in Germany, and is structured as follows. After presenting our methodological approach, we analyse the political preferences, attitudes and voting behaviour of trans* people in Germany. Second, we examine the election manifestos of all major parties³ competing in the most recent nationwide general elections to the German *Bundestag* in September 2017, displaying the different ways in which trans* people and trans* issues are being approached by political parties. Third, we discuss our findings in the theoretical debates regarding trans* citizenship and trans* visibility.

Methods and data

Political parties and elections fulfil classical functions such as interest aggregation and articulation or the selection of government. Election research has developed numerous theories that explain voter preferences, originating from micro- and macrosociology or social psychology. Nevertheless, one cannot draw a causal link between party manifestos and voter choice due to diverse factors that influence the rationale of voting (see, for example, [Evans, 2004](#)). However, one can assume that the policy offers of political parties with regard to LGBTIQ* have some impact on the decision-making process of voters. Furthermore, the German Gay and Lesbian Association (*Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland* [LSVD]) – Germany's biggest LGBTIQ* advocacy non-governmental organisation (NGO) – publishes an overview of the LGBTIQ*-relevant positions of parties before national elections, which often sparks public debates regarding LGBTIQ* issues and might therefore have some impact on the decision-making processes of certain voters ([LSVD-Wahlprüfsteine, 2017](#)).

First, we turn to the demand side of trans* politics by investigating the political preferences and attitudes of trans* voters in the most recent general election in Germany (the 2017 *Bundestagswahl*). Today, very little is still known about voter preferences and the political attitudes of trans* people. One main obstacle is the lack of data: in general, empirical research on electoral behaviour and political preferences is essentially based on representative surveys. However, one of the major preconditions for the realisation of a representative survey is knowledge on the distribution of the characteristics of the population under examination. Against the backdrop of discrimination against and the (criminal) prosecution of LGBTIQ* people in Germany

in the past (Gammerl, 2010; Rathkolb and Ardel, 2016) and present (Heitmeyer, 2012; Decker et al, 2016), this precondition for a representative sample cannot be fulfilled in the case of LGBTIQ* people in general and in the case of trans* people in particular. Thus, exit polls or other surveys in Germany do not include questions concerning sexual orientation or gender identity. The methodological problem of lacking figures for trans* people within the general population is insurmountable in a free and democratic society; however, addressing this part of the electorate by means of an online survey enables us to nevertheless reach out to this so-called ‘special population’ (Gabriel and Keil, 2014: 834) by a random procedure, resulting in what, to our knowledge, are the only data on trans* voters in Germany whatsoever. These data was collected in the run-up to the most recent general election in Germany: the *Bundestagswahl* of 24 September 2017. The survey was accessible on the Internet for six weeks prior to election day and contained questions on voting preferences, attitudes towards the political system and relevant and salient political issues (such as migration), and political participation and engagement. A special characteristic of this self-selective (Häder, 2014: 11) method of data collection lies in the assumption that the individuals under examination are in regular contact with one another within a subculture (Dannecker and Reiche, 1974). In this way, LGBTIQ* people can be considered as members of a sort of hidden subculture (Gabler, 1992: 50). The advantage of this method lies in the fact that the respondents actively and freely decided to take part in the study. However, the main disadvantage of the method remains its self-selectivity and the asymmetrical distribution of the range of the Internet (Häder, 2014: 12) – access to participation in such a convenience sample cannot be controlled. The difficulty of self-selectivity has been combated by targeted online and offline promotion: the survey was promoted via social media (Twitter and Facebook, including targeted advertising), LGBTIQ* community organisations such as the LSVD and advertisements on LGBTIQ* dating websites. In total, 5329 participants identifying as LGBTIQ* and as eligible to vote in the 2017 *Bundestag* election completed the survey, with 86 individuals thereof identifying as trans*. Given the methodological complexity, these data are not representative and do not necessarily reflect the demographic composition of Germany. All conclusions in the remainder of this article are drawn with regard to the participants of the study, not the German trans* community at large.⁴ We cannot compare these characteristics of our convenience sample of trans* voters in Germany with the characteristics of the whole of trans* people in Germany since – for very good reasons – such data do not exist. Due to this, one cannot draw a random (and thus representative) sample from the general population of trans* people in Germany to conduct generalisable inferential statistics. Nevertheless, the sample of trans* voters in Germany presented here depicts a heterogeneous and reasonably sized group of individuals, as their characteristics show. In the remainder of this section, we present a selection of our data on German trans* voters’ political attitudes, salient issues and preferences.

Second, we examine the supply side of trans* politics in Germany by analysing the election manifestos of all major parties taking part in the most recent general elections in Germany in 2017 using structuring content analysis (Mayring, 2014, 2015). Election manifestos play an important role in political campaigns and elections, and define the battleground on which the election will be won or lost (Richards, 2001: 155). Harmel et al (2018: 230) identify several functions of election manifestos, such as ‘direct appeal to the voters’ and the ‘indirect mobilization of voters (through

Table 1: Usage of key terms in the party manifestos

Key words
Trans*
LGBTIQ*/LSBTIQ*
<i>Geschlecht</i>
Gender
Sex
Queer

Note: In German, ‘*Geschlecht*’ is the term for both biological sex and gender.

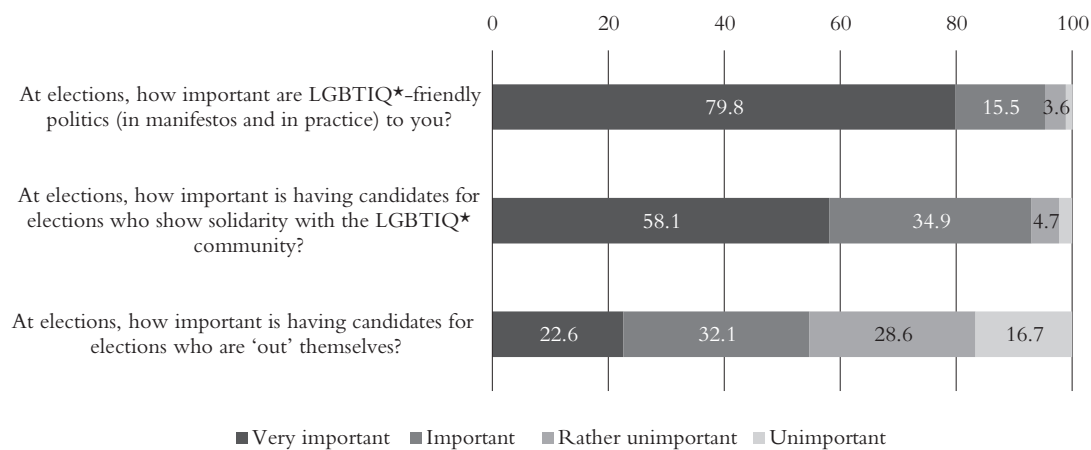
media)’. In search of the parties’ trans* politics and/or their policy positions regarding trans* people, structuring content analysis (Mayring, 2014: 95ff) has been applied to the manifestos of the CDU/CSU, SPD, AfD, FDP, *Die Linke* and *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* for the 2017 *Bundestagswahl*. The main objective of structuring content analysis is to extract a certain structure from the material in the form of a category system deduced from theory (Mayring, 2014: 95). We deductively analysed the election manifestos according to certain key words concerning trans* (see Table 1). We were looking for direct relations in the manifestos, not camouflaged references.

Demand side of trans* politics in Germany: results from the 2017 LGBTIQ* election survey

In the following section, we discuss the demand side of trans* citizens and their attitudes towards selected issues and political parties. Trans* voters are usually not the focus of election studies. Our aim is to make their attitudes and demands visible for the first time.

Socio-economic characteristics of the sample

Our sample of trans* voters for the 2017 general election in Germany (the 2017 *Bundestagswahl*) consists of 86 individuals who completed our comprehensive online survey, explicitly identifying as ‘transgender’ and eligible to vote in that election. These 86 individuals come from all states (*Länder*) but one (the rather small city-state of Bremen) of the Federal Republic of Germany and their age span ranges from 18 (which is the legal voting age for general elections in Germany) to 67, with an average age of 32 years. The educational level of those interviewed is above the average level of the general German public, with slightly over 60 per cent holding some kind of university entrance qualification. Nevertheless, only about one third (32.6 per cent) perceive their economic situation as ‘good’ (and only 7 per cent as ‘very good’), while one quarter each of the trans* voters in our sample state that their economic situation is either ‘partly good, partly bad’ (25.6 per cent) or ‘bad’ (24.4 per cent). A little less than 10 per cent state that their economic situation is ‘very bad’. The majority (48.8 per cent) identifies as belonging to the middle class, while little less than one fifth each identifies as working class (18.6 per cent) or rejects being categorised (17.4 per cent). However, 89 per cent of those trans* voters interviewed for the project identify as belonging to a (or ‘the’) LGBTIQ* community (LGBTIQ* Election Survey, 2017).

Figure 1: Importance of LGBTIQ*-friendly politics, candidates and ‘out’ candidates

Source: LGBTIQ* Election Study (2017).

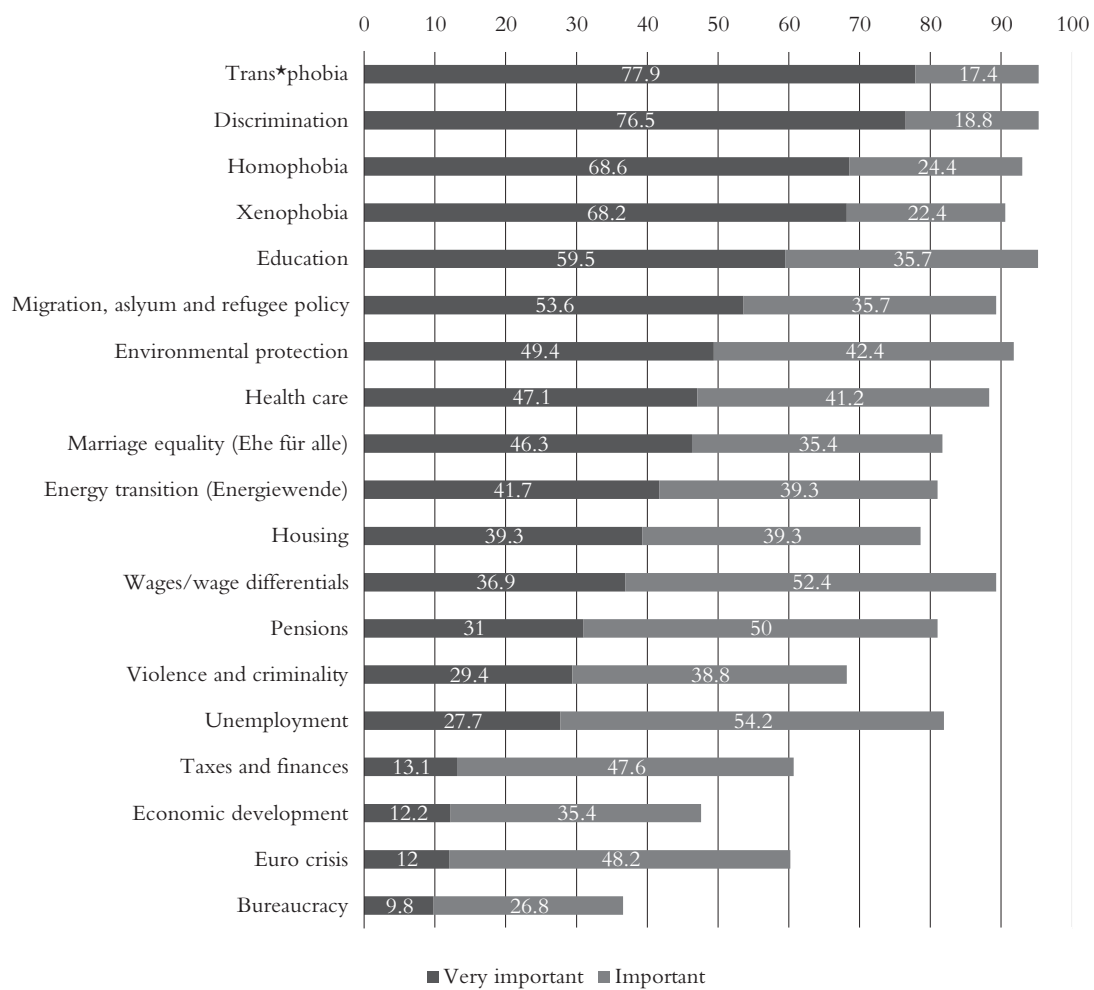
Note: Figures in percentages of respondents (valid percentages). $N = 86$ trans* voters.

Visibility and advocacy: LGBTIQ candidates, policy and solidarity*

In our survey, three questions deal with the relevance of LGBTIQ* issues and candidates within political parties. This looks explicitly from the demand side (voters) to the supply side (parties and candidates) of policies. The first question relates to the importance of a specific ‘pro-LGBTIQ* agenda’: a striking 95.2 per cent of those interviewed state that LGBTIQ*-friendly politics (in manifestos and in practice) are ‘very important’ (79.8 per cent) or ‘important’ (15.5 per cent) to them. The second question is an indicator of the public–private differentiation and the visibility of trans* people in society. Having candidates for elections who show solidarity with the LGBTIQ* community is ‘very important’ to 58.1 per cent of the trans* voters in our sample and ‘important’ to another 34.9 per cent; however, having candidates for elections who are themselves ‘out’ is only ‘important’ (32.1 per cent) or ‘very important’ (22.6 per cent) to a little more than half of the sample, while 16.7 per cent state that this is not important whatsoever (LGBTIQ* Election Survey, 2017).

Important issues for trans voters*

To explore the demand side of trans* politics, we also asked the participants in our survey to rate the general importance of certain policy fields or political topics. Not surprisingly, genuine trans* and LGBTIQ* issues rank the highest among trans* voters⁵: trans*phobia is perceived as a ‘very important’ (77.9 per cent) or ‘important’ (17.4 per cent) topic by more than 95 per cent of the trans* voters in the sample, and homophobia by 93 per cent of them. Also perceived as important or very important by more than 90 per cent of the participants are discrimination (95.3 per cent), education (95.2 per cent), environmental protection (91.8 per cent) and xenophobia (90.6 per cent). Apart from trending topics such as migration, asylum and refugee policy (89.3 per cent), and the energy transition (*Energiewende* [81 per cent]), trans* voters in our sample also tend to rank welfare and labour market issues such as wages, housing, health care and pensions highly (LGBTIQ* Election Survey, 2017). This might entail relevant implications in terms of intersectionality, as we will discuss later on.

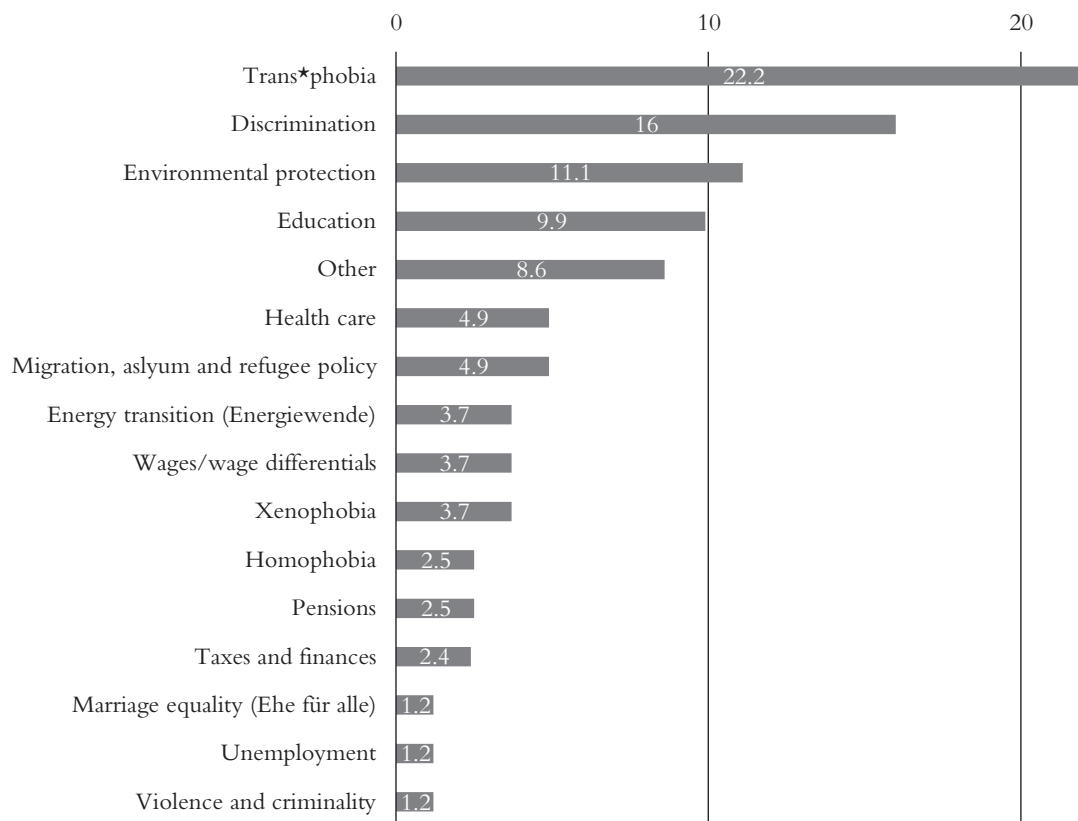
Figure 2: General importance of issues and policy fields

Source: LGBTIQ* Election Study (2017).

Note: Figures in percentages of respondents (valid percentages). $N = 86$ trans* voters.

Besides the general importance of certain policy fields and political issues, we also asked for the single most important issue for the upcoming election (by means of a single choice question). At least for the trans* voters in our sample, trans*phobia appears to be the most important single issue for the 2017 general election in Germany, being mentioned by more than one fifth (22.2 per cent) of the participants in the study. Next in line are discrimination (16 per cent), environmental protection (11.1 per cent) and education (9 per cent), while only 2.5 per cent of those interviewed view homophobia as the most important issue for the election. Notably, trans* voters thus state that a genuine trans* topic (trans*phobia) depicts the most important issue for the election – this is a remarkable difference to the entire sample of our LGBTIQ* election study for the 2017 German general election, where the most important single issue for all LGBTIQ* voters was migration, asylum and refugee policy (12 per cent) (see [LGBTIQ* Election Survey, 2017: 22](#)).

Also inherent in the data is that groups that are often portrayed as uniform are, indeed, very diverse in their political attitudes. Our descriptive data suggest that trans* people have a high level of intersectional consciousness, for example, as seen in the high regard that they give to issues surrounding class and the environment. This means much for the potential that trans* communities show for visibility and

Figure 3: The single most important issue/policy field for the 2017 general election in Germany

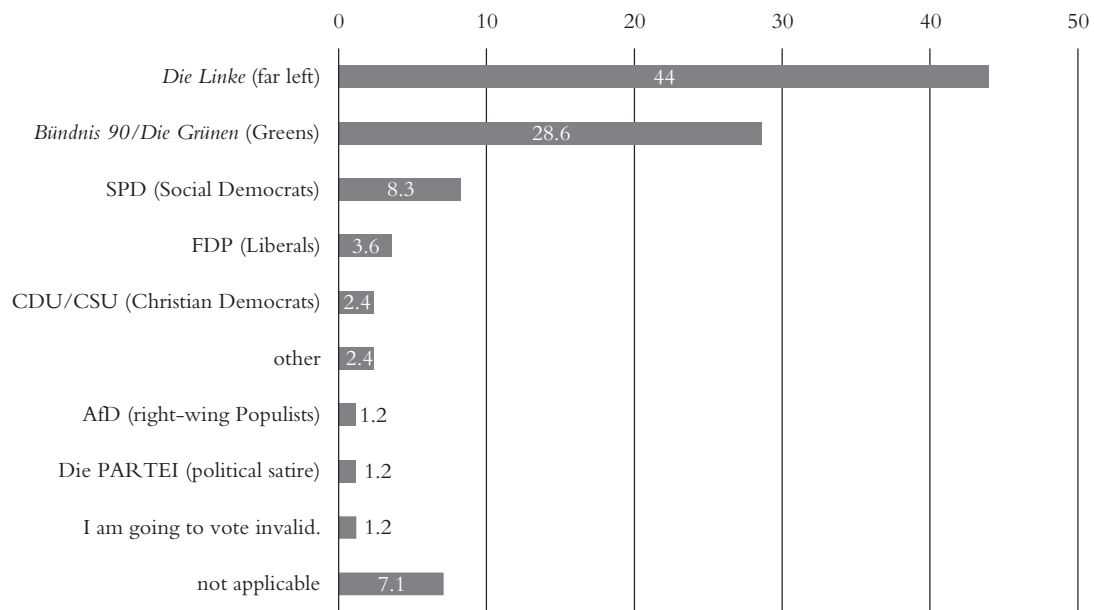
Source: LGBTIQ* Election Study (2017).

Note: Figures in percentages of respondents (valid percentages). $N = 86$ trans* voters.

political mobilisation around far-reaching progressive social goods. Intersectional consciousness ‘may draw new people into movement mobilizations, and it may generate visibility for new narratives of how to understand the broader dimensions of any particular struggle’ (Ayoub, 2019: 24).

Party preference of trans voters*

The preferences of the trans* voters in our sample for those parties campaigning with an encompassing LGBTIQ* or even a specific trans* agenda are obvious: almost three quarters of those interviewed vote for the far-left *Die Linke* (44 per cent) or the green *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* (28.6 per cent). Conversely, the conservative Christian-democratic ‘union’ consisting of the CDU/CSU (2.4 per cent) and the LGBTIQ*-hostile right-wing populist AfD (1.2 per cent) appear to be highly unpopular among the trans* voters in the sample. In between lie the SPD (8.3 per cent) and the FDP (3.6 per cent). These figures also differ significantly from the overall sample of our LGBTIQ* election study: most popular among the over 5300 LGBTIQ* voters in the data set is *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* (29 per cent); second and third are *Die Linke* (22.6 per cent) and the SPD (21.2 per cent); and the centre-right parties of the CDU/CSU (6.9 per cent) and FDP (9.5 per cent) are less popular among LGBTIQ* voters but nevertheless more often mentioned in our studies among LGBTIQ* voters than among trans* voters (LGBTIQ* Election Survey, 2017: 7). The least preferred

Figure 4: Party preference for the 2017 general election in Germany

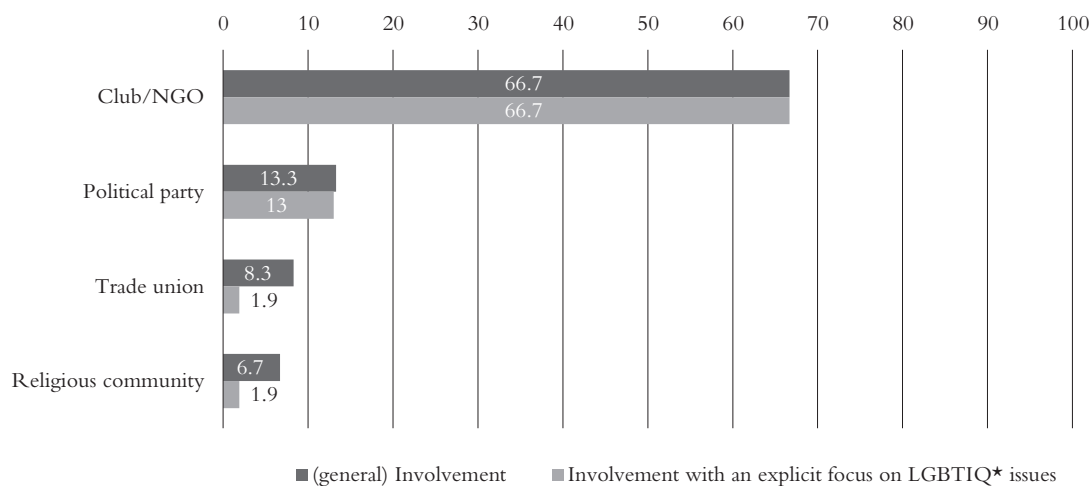
Source: LGBTIQ* Election Study (2017).

Note: Figures in percentages of respondents (valid percentages). $N = 86$ trans* voters.

both among trans* voters and LGBTIQ* voters is the right-wing populist AfD (2.7 per cent), though there is evidence that at least gay men with xenophobic and/or Islamophobic attitudes might cast their vote for the right-wing populist AfD (LGBTIQ* Election Survey, 2017: 7).

Political participation of trans voters*

Apart from party preference, voting behaviour, policy preferences and attitudes towards the political system and society as such, participants in our LGBTIQ* election studies were also surveyed on their voluntary political and societal participation. Therefore, we asked whether or not (and, where applicable, how) those interviewed would participate in politics and/or society. As is also the case with the general sample(s) of our LGBTIQ* election studies, trans* voters tend to be most active in clubs or NGOs. In general, two thirds (66.7 per cent) of the trans* voters state that they are active in such associations. Another 13.3 per cent are involved in a political party, while trade unions (8.3 per cent) and religious communities (6.7 per cent) only seem to play a minor role. When asked for political or societal involvement with an explicit focus on LGBTIQ* issues, part of the image changes: two thirds (66.7 per cent) of the trans* voters interviewed still state that they are involved in NGOs with an explicit focus on LGBTIQ* issues; also, 13 per cent still claim to be involved in political parties. However, when it comes to trade unions and religious communities, the figures both drop to 1.9 per cent. Thus, trans* voters involved in unions and religious groups seem to have other motives for their involvement in these associations, while NGOs and political parties seem to provide a better environment for involvement in trans* issues. Besides these traditional forms of political and societal involvement, trans* voters are also active in politics and society in a broad variety of different and sometimes less organised forms, for instance, in small local (autonomous) groups or as individual citizens (for example, joining demonstrations).

Figure 5: Political involvement of trans* voters

Source: LGBTIQ* Election Study (2017).

Note: Figures in percentages of respondents (valid percentages). $N = 86$ trans* voters.

In general, discrimination and trans*phobia are the most important issues for trans* voters in our survey. Moreover, within the trans* electorate, the support for left-wing and progressive parties is especially high. Out candidates are not as important for the trans* voters in our survey as LGBTIQ*-friendly policies and solidarity. Regarding political participation, trans* people participate not only via elections, but also in clubs, NGOs and political parties. After having shown the demand side of trans* voters, we now turn to the supply side of trans* politics, analysing the manifestos of the German political parties for the 2017 general election (the 2017 *Bundestagswahl*) regarding their offers for trans* people.

Supply side of trans* politics in Germany: trans* visibility in the 2017 election manifestos

In search of the parties' trans* politics and/or their policy positions regarding trans* people, we applied structuring content analysis (Mayring, 2014: 95ff) to analyse the manifestos of the CDU/CSU, SPD, AfD, FDP, *Die Linke* and *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* for the 2017 general election. We deductively analysed the election manifestos according to certain key words concerning trans* issues (see Table 1) and identified the following areas in which trans* people and trans* issues are being addressed: (1) promoting diversity; (2) fighting discrimination; (3) legal issues; (4) health; (5) education and research; (6) family; (7) asylum; and (8) foreign policy.

The SPD, FDP, green *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* and far-left *Die Linke* portray themselves as champions for trans* people. All four parties commit to promoting diversity (1) and fighting trans*phobia (2). However, the way in which they frame diversity and position themselves differs considerably. While the FDP demands 'diversity management' (FDP, 2017: 94), *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* supports more diverse youth politics that explicitly include trans* youth and demand awareness training for police, justice and public servants (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 123). All four parties claim to support a diverse society that includes trans* people (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 117; FDP, 2017: 94; SPD, 2017: 84), or as *Die Linke* (*Die Linke*, 2017: 69) puts it: 'Diversity is not lip service for us, but a matter of course,

a sign of quality of life and humanism'.⁶ Moreover, the SPD, FDP and *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* highlight the importance of sports under the notion of diversity. While the FDP and *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* speak of promoting general diversity beyond gender and sexual orientation (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 119; FDP, 2017: 32), the SPD (2017: 88) explicitly see sports as a means to battle trans*phobia.

The SPD, FDP, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* and *Die Linke* see trans* rights (3) as basic human rights and demand the abolition or reform of the *Transsexuellengesetz*, which depicts the legal framework for trans* people in Germany today (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 123; *Die Linke*, 2017: 73; FDP, 2017: 94; SPD, 2017: 84). In addition, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* and *Die Linke* stress that the injustices against trans* people, especially the persecution during the Nazi regime (1933–45), should be accounted for and victims should be compensated and rehabilitated (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 124; *Die Linke*, 2017: 73).

While the SPD (2017: 84) states more broadly that they 'will improve the situation of trans and intersex people and ensure that they can determine their own lives ... [which] concerns medical, health, social and legal aspects', *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, *Die Linke* and the FDP are more specific in their manifestos concerning trans* people's health (4) and demand, for example, that sex reassignment surgery should be covered by public health insurance funds (*Die Linke*, 2017: 73; FDP, 2017: 94), gender reassignment therapy should be forbidden (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 123) and reproductive rights for trans* people should be enabled (*Die Linke*, 2017: 73).

Education and research (5) is mainly addressed by the right-wing populist AfD, who oppose trans* rights and trans* visibility. The AfD (2017: 54) demands a ban on the 'one-sided highlighting of homo- and transsexuality' in schools. Different sexual orientations and gender identities are seen to be 'against the natural order', and talking about different sexual orientations and gender identities is seen to 'confuse the children' (AfD 2017: 54). The right-wing populist party often mixes homo- and transsexuality with 'gender ideology'. In the perception of the AfD (2017: 53), 'the goal of gender ideology is to destroy the traditional family'. Thus, the right-wing populists demand the abolition of gender studies at universities 'as there is no differentiation between gender and sex' (AfD (2017: 54). In contrast to the AfD, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* requests that curricula acknowledge the diversity of gender identities more strongly than is currently the case (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 123) and the SPD demands more sensitivity and training of teachers and staff concerning the discrimination of LGBTIQ* children and youth in schools (SPD, 2017: 11). The FDP, (2017: 94) calls for more funds for the Federal Magnus Hirschfeld foundation, which aims to enhance the acceptance of LGBTIQ* people.

With regard to family policies (6), *Die Linke*, the SPD, the FDP and *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* support the equality of all living designs regardless of sexual orientation or gender identities (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 123; *Die Linke*, 2017: 67; FDP, 2017: 92; SPD, 2017: 8). Moreover, *Die Linke* (*Die Linke*, 2017: 84), *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 123) and the FDP (2017: 92) demand a modern family law that includes all different kinds of ('rainbow') families. The AfD (2017: 54) positions itself against all forms of family besides the heteronormative nuclear family and wants to protect family and marriage, claiming that 'children should not become the plaything of the sexual inclinations of a loud minority'.

Regarding asylum (7), *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* demand that 'gender-specific reasons for flight, such as genital mutilation, gender identity or sexual orientation,

must also be taken into greater consideration in the asylum procedure' (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 106). *Die Linke* (*Die Linke*, 2017: 115) demands the defence and extension of the asylum rights of LGBTIQ*⁷ people, and the *SPD* (2017: 76) want to support queer refugees.

The FDP regards LGBTIQ* rights as an important element of foreign policy (8). The FDP (2017: 112) 'resolutely opposes the discrimination of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people and intersex people in foreign and development policy and is committed to promoting LGBTIQ projects worldwide and reducing development cooperation in the event of the tightening of punitive measures against LGBTIQ people'. The *SPD* (2017: 112) wants to address LGBTIQ* rights in its development policies and *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* wants to promote, protect and implement LGBTIQ* rights as human rights in their foreign and development policies (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2017: 81).

Summing up, the far-left *Die Linke* and the green *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* have the most differentiated policy offers for trans* people. Both parties have specific chapters focusing on trans* issues, while in the party manifestos of the *SPD* and *FDP*, trans* issues are always part of LGBTIQ* issues. However, in all four parties, trans* issues and trans* rights are cross-cutting issues. The conservative *CDU/CSU* does not mention trans* people, trans* issues or trans* rights in their 2017 election manifesto at all. The right-wing populist *AfD* uses LGBTIQ* rights and especially trans* issues to define themselves in a marginalised position vis-a-vis the mainstream political parties, which is a typical anti-elite and anti-system approach of populist parties. LGBTIQ* rights are an ideal battleground for parties like this and the *AfD* therefore incorporates the cultural backlash (see *Inglehart and Norris*, 2016) into its manifesto. At the same time, the *AfD* tries to depoliticise trans* issues by referring to privacy, which also implies that there is no need for regulations (for example, in terms of legal equality) or that there are no means for public claims. Moreover, anti-LGBTIQ*/anti-trans* positions can be understood as a unique selling point in the electoral competition in the context of Germany. Most parties support or at least tolerate the existing status quo and do not openly agitate against this minority.

Discussion: trans* politics, trans* citizenship and trans* visibility

The discussion on citizenship and what constitutes it has been at the core of theoretical and political debates regarding the positions of vulnerable subjects for a long time (*Hines and Santos*, 2018: 37). As *Hines and Santos* (2018: 37) put it:

[the] construction of citizens as those who are able to participate publicly in decisions that affect their lives, and to make claims which are heard and recognised, brought to light new layers of exclusion, as well as new opportunities to frame citizenship beyond a narrow understanding of a strictly social and political set of formal rights.

This not only challenges common notions of citizenship, but also enables us to think about citizenship in a broader and more inclusive way. Trans* citizenship can be related to other areas of citizenship studies in terms of the extent to which wider citizenship frameworks are problematised by addressing the rights of a particular group. This article adds to this encompassing notion of citizenship by highlighting

exactly such political claims. We have presented data on the political claims of trans* voters in Germany in the sense of what we call the demand side of trans* voting. Furthermore, our analysis of party manifestos shows that at least some of the German parties – not surprisingly, the progressive ones – ‘heard’ and recognised these claims, in Hines and Santos’s (2018: 37) sense, and thus made a political offer towards these trans* voters; this is what we call the supply side of trans* voting.

However, from our perspective, (trans*) citizenship is not only about demands, participation and recognition in the political arena. In an early but path-breaking contribution to the conceptualisation of citizenship, Thomas Humphrey Marshall (1950: 28–9) suggested a definition of citizenship as ‘a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community’ and, at the same time, stated that such citizenship consists of three dimensions: a *civil*, a *political* and a *social* one (Marshall, 1950: 10). Despite critics and further elaborations of the concept of citizenship, we follow Kuhar et al’s (2018: 101–2) claim to rediscover the fruitfulness of Marshall’s (1950) early essay for the contemporary discussion on citizenship for trans* people. Besides the *civil* dimension of citizenship, for example, the liberty of the person and freedom of speech, thought and faith (Marshall, 1950: 10), Marshall (1950: 11) defines *political* citizenship as the ‘right to participate in the exercise of political power’ and *social* citizenship, in broad terms, as ‘the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society’. From our perspective, both of these are at the core of trans* voting: such an understanding of citizenship refers, on the one hand, to political participation and advocacy (see earlier) and, on the other, to the inclusionary character of (social) citizenship as a status of full membership in society. The notion of citizenship is frequently interlinked with a politics of visibility and recognition, ‘which attempts to re-shape social justice on the basis of reinstating recognition that has been previously denied’ (Hines and Santos, 2018: 38). Furthermore, as Ayoub and Page (2019) have recently shown, the political participation of LGBTIQ* people and those who support LGBTIQ* rights is higher overall in societies that are LGBTIQ*-friendly, while the opposite is true for societies where political homophobia (Bosia and Weiss, 2013) is predominant. Following this logic, by becoming more visible in public, trans* people and their allies would prepare the ground for both the higher political participation (and thus higher political efficacy) of trans* people and, eventually, a more LGBTIQ*- and trans*-friendly climate within society.

Related to this, the empirical data presented here add to another aspect of recognition: trans* participants in our study highlight issues such as trans*phobia and discrimination as the most important political topics to them (see Figures 2 and 3), and thus tend to vote for those parties who claim to do something about trans*phobia, homophobia and discrimination – and to strengthen the position of LGBTIQ* people in general and that of trans* people in particular (see Figure 4). Internal minority groups (Green, 1995) have very often been identified as cultural minorities and the subject of other forms of discrimination of social groups within a minority (for example, women) (see also Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev, 2005). This hierarchisation of priorities within marginalised groups is resulting in the oppression of internal minorities. These findings can also be discussed within a wider frame of intersectionality approaches, ‘which highlight the ways in which social and political forces manipulate the overlapping and intersecting inequalities within marginal groups’ (Strolovitch, 2007: 23). Strolovitch (2007) has shown how these mechanisms also

work within advocacy groups. This holds especially true for trans* people as well: as our findings show, intersectionality plays a vital role in this case, not only due to the different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds of trans* people, but also because of the different sexual orientation of trans* people. Therefore, ‘policy makers need to be aware that for many people this group, legal and social aspects of citizenship are intertwined and mutually constitutive in a way that is different to other social groups’ (Kuhar et al, 2018: 116). However, in order to make policymakers aware of trans* issues, trans* voters and their political demands need to be visible and recognised by both politics and society.

This relates to the visibility of trans* people in politics, as well as in society as such. Following the ideas of Ayoub (2016: 5) regarding the politics of LGBTIQ* visibility in societies, one could argue even more that trans* visibility encompasses a group that is often referred to as an ‘invisible minority’, ‘but whose newfound presence and influence in many different nation states is a development that offers fresh opportunities for the study of sociopolitical change and the diffusion of norms’. Even though trans* people have always existed, they constitute a group of people who only recently came to attention to a broader public in Germany. Within Ayoub’s (2016: 5) concept of LGBTIQ* visibility, the main focus lies on being visible to the public, especially to political institutions. He attributes a lot of political potential to (collectively) being ‘out’ and to being visible as LGBTIQ*. He differs between interpersonal visibility and public visibility:

Through social relationships, *interpersonal visibility* brings individuals into interaction with people identifying as LGBT. These interactions can be both among people who come to identify as LGBT (in-group) and between LGBT people and their broader social networks. Put most simply, it is about members of the group seeing each other and being seen by segments of their other communities. *Public visibility* is the collective coming out of a group to engage and be seen by society and state. Both interpersonal and public visibilities have political consequences for the diffusion of norms. (Ayoub, 2016: 23, emphasis in original)

Almost 90 per cent of the trans* participants in our survey see themselves as part of the (or a) LGBTIQ* community (LGBTIQ* Election Survey, 2017). This shows well how important this interpersonal visibility is to our sample. In the case of trans* politics, public visibility is especially important since it takes place in a public political sphere. Political parties set the agendas of election campaigns. By addressing certain issues, they make them visible to a broader public. A majority of the participants in our survey stated that the visibility of LGBTIQ* candidates was very important or important to them. This is a good example of how this public visibility can help – or seem to help – a minority group to be seen and recognised by society and the state via representatives within politics. Almost 60 per cent of those interviewed as part of our study state that a public portrayal of solidarity by politicians and political parties is very important for them (see Figure 1). Ayoub (2016: 6) argues that differing degrees of visibility have produced different outcomes for socio-political change across states and that it was this process of ‘coming out’ that led to the socio-political recognition of rights that altered the situation for such groups (Ayoub, 2016: 4). (Trans*) Visibility is seen as a powerful tool to challenge and battle the social,

legal and political (as well as cultural) marginalisation and discrimination faced by LGBTIQ* people – and thus decisive for the full implementation of citizenship in the understanding of [Marshall \(1950\)](#).

Following this argument, trans* visibility in election manifestos is an important step towards shifting public discourse, leading to, as [Ayoub \(2016: 6\)](#) puts it, the socio-political recognition of rights that alters the situation for such groups. This can also be observed within our data. More than 90 per cent of the participants in our study state that it is very important or important to them that political parties run on an LGBTIQ*-friendly platform and support LGBTIQ* issues (see [Figure 1](#)). However, the extent of ‘success’ depends – among other factors – on the nature (for example, qualitative/quantitative, positive/negative) and degree of visibility, as well as, and maybe more importantly, on how LGBTIQ* visibility is construed by society and political institutions ([Ayoub, 2016: 11](#)). Most parties started acknowledging different forms of sexual orientation and gender identities only recently. Putting trans* issues on the agenda is not only a sign of support for and championing of trans* people, but also a sign towards a broader audience – in our case, the electorate.

Trans* issues – as cross-cutting issues – are visible throughout the whole manifesto of *Die Linke* and the green *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, as also reflected by the support that those parties received from the trans* electorate during the most recent general election in Germany in 2017. Almost three quarters of those interviewed claim to vote for the far-left *Die Linke* or *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*. [Monro and Van der Ros \(2018: 73\)](#) argue that ‘political recognition of the diversity of gender identities is required, followed by political representation, such as the establishment of mechanisms to ensure that divergences and conflicts regarding rights claims are played out within the democratic political sphere, to ensure just and equal (re-)distributions of public resources’. It can thus be argued that the concept of LGBTIQ* (in)visibility relies not only on the aspect of making oneself *visible*, but also on being seen and *recognised* – on an individual as well as on a structural level.

However, it has to be taken into account that the conceptualisation of a ‘universal visibility’ of LGBTIQ* people is seemingly detached from the power structures and socio-political circumstances enabling *some* LGBTIQ* people and communities to have (relative) visibility while others are made invisible through and within them or, out of safety and/or a lack of resources, (decide to) remain (publicly) invisible. Coming out takes individual courage, especially when taking into account the ongoing discrimination that trans* people, as well as LGBTIQ* people in general, still experience on a day-to-day basis in even the most progressive societies (cf [TGEU, 2019](#)). Assuming, then, as discussed earlier, that being publicly visible plays an essential role in having one’s demands (for example, anti-discrimination laws, marriage equality, health care) recognised, would consequently mean that some groups – namely, those *with* public visibility – are more *likely* to achieve positive outcomes regarding their demands. In our case, this would be the case for trans* people. This also holds true if one examines the German parties’ manifestos for the most recent general election in Germany (the 2017 *Bundestagswahl*).

The conservative CDU/CSU does not mention trans* people or make any reference to LGBTIQ* in its election manifesto. This is a typical pattern of argument that can be observed within conservative and right-wing parties with regard to sexuality politics or LGBTIQ* people ([Ajanovic et al, 2014](#)). Conversely, the conservative Christian-democratic ‘union’ consisting of the CDU and CSU only gained very low support

among the trans* electorate. By not mentioning issues – by denying the visibility of certain issues – they try to push them out of the political sphere and into the private sphere. Without public visibility, no public recognition of these issues takes place and the implementation of the norms that would lead to more equality therefore becomes less likely. Invisibility is not only a challenge for specific subgroups within LGBTIQ* communities; it is also a broader issue across states and societies, among which the levels of recognition for sexual minority groups vary tremendously (Ayoub, 2016: 3).

However, there is also some critique of the commercialisation of trans* visibility (David, 2017) that can be applied to the political arena. Furthermore, as Fejes and Balogh (2013: 7) suggest, while visibility might be a potent tool for transformation, it has to be acknowledged that being visibly trans* can also constitute a risk – especially at the intersection of class and racialisation/ethnicisation (Ghabrial, 2017: 42). One could argue that this has been the case in the context of the appearance of the right-wing populist AfD within the German political arena. The AfD addresses trans* issues regularly and tries to politicise them by arguing against trans* rights, visibility and recognition in a very hostile manner. Consequently, the LGBTIQ*-hostile AfD appears to be highly unpopular among the trans* voters in the sample.

The SPD and FDP address trans* people and their agendas only within the label of LGBTIQ*. Within these policies regarding LGBTIQ*, a marginalisation of BTIQ* people takes place. This marginalisation within the party manifestos is a fitting mirror to the marginalisation of BTIQ* people within our societies. The issue of gender-variant and non-binary identities is now becoming a pressing issue for policymakers of all parties given the increasing prominence of non-binary and gender-queer identities (Monro and Van der Ros, 2018: 58). This discrepancy reflects several interesting societal and theoretical implications. It highlights the problematic nature of the minority concept itself, which is even more aggravated by survey/category-based social science research, where certain categories of identification are constructed from outside. Thus, the minority status is ascribed rather than individuals choosing to join this label. Some scholars, like Nair (2010: 4), even argue that mainstream causes like gay marriage have played a role in the loss of the transformative potential of the LGBTIQ* movement. The fact that both the social-democratic SPD and the liberal FDP do not make a distinct offer towards trans* people is also reflected in the voting intentions of our sample, which suggest only little support for those two parties.

Conclusion

In this article, we presented data on both the demand side and the supply side of trans* politics in Germany in the context of the 2017 German general election (the 2017 *Bundestagswahl*). On the demand side, we examined the political preferences, attitudes and voting behaviour of trans* people in Germany by using data from the 2017 LGBTIQ* election survey. While the most important issues for the trans* voters in the survey – independent from their economic background – are discrimination and trans*phobia, this rarely studied part of the electorate seems to especially support progressive political parties on the Left. On the supply side, in their election manifestos, especially left-wing and progressive parties explicitly and comprehensively address LGBTIQ* issues and thus make a detailed offer towards trans* voters in Germany: explicit trans* issues are cross-cutting issues that are visible throughout the whole manifesto of the far-left *Die Linke* and the green *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*. The

social-democratic SPD and the liberal FDP support trans* people and trans* issues but only address them under the umbrella term 'LGBTIQ*'. Conservative parties fully neglect trans* people and trans* issues, while the far-right AfD openly campaigns against LGBTIQ* people and especially against trans* people. This leads to a re-polarisation of LGBTIQ* issues, which is especially visible concerning trans* issues. Thus, trans* visibility seems to play a pivotal role for both the political participation of trans* persons and political efficacy, meaning the introduction of trans* rights. Trans* politics, trans* visibility and trans* citizenship are hence interwoven.

With regard to trans* citizenship, it is important to recall T.H. [Marshall's \(1950: 28–9\)](#) conception of citizenship: taking *political* citizenship as well as *social* citizenship into account, such an understanding of citizenship entails, on the one hand, political participation and advocacy, and, on the other, the inclusionary character of (social) citizenship as a status of full membership in society. This notion of citizenship is frequently interlinked with a politics of visibility and recognition, which is especially important for minority groups such as trans* people.

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Notes

- ¹ Gender identities should not be mistaken for sexual orientations. Being homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual is considered to be separate and as not always correlating with gender identity. Put simply, a trans* or a cis person can be either of the three. The focus of this article is on gender identity, not on sexual orientation.
- ² This article uses the term 'trans*' as an umbrella term to represent a large variety of (non-normative) gender identities and expressions, including transsexual people, those who identify with both or neither of the usually applied binary gender categories, and gender nonconforming people ([Kuhar et al, 2018: 103](#)).
- ³ These are: the Christian-Democratic Union (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/ Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern* [CDU/CSU]); the Social Democrats (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* [SPD]), the right-wing populist *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD); the Liberals (*Freie Demokratische Partei* [FDP]); the far-left *Die Linke*; and the Greens (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*).
- ⁴ We assume that only trans* people with Internet access, corresponding technical affinity and equipment, and an affinity with networking in the (virtual/digital) LGBTIQ* community noticed or participated in the survey at all.

- ⁵ The figures for marriage equality (*Ehe für alle* [81.7 per cent]) might appear surprisingly low here, but this is most likely due to the fact that the claim for marriage equality in Germany was a salient topic in the public debate during the election year of 2017. Every potential coalition partner of Angela Merkel's ruling CDU party declared the introduction of gay marriage to be a precondition for entering into a coalition with the CDU after the election. Therefore, the German Parliament held a conscience vote in favour of it in June 2017 (for a process-tracing analysis on this, see Davidson-Schmich, 2018).
- ⁶ The original German quotes have been translated by the authors.
- ⁷ We use 'LGBTIQ*' as an umbrella term when referring to people, issues or the movement in general. In terms of rights, we use 'LGBTI(Q*)' since many queer actors consciously operate outside institutions and challenge rights-based approaches.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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4.3 LGBTIQ voters and the far-right – a strange liaison? Findings from Austria and Germany (Hunklinger/ Ajanovic 2021)

Gender and sexuality have become increasingly relevant issues for right-wing populist parties. This paper analyses political attitudes of LGBTIQ voters of right-wing populist parties in local elections in Vienna (Austria) and Berlin (Germany). Right-wing LGBTIQ voters display similar negative attitudes towards migrants, women, and other sexual minorities as the right-wing parties AfD and FPÖ they vote for. We argue that this '*electoral homonationalism*' is a bridge from the nationalist discourse of parties and political groups to voting practice.

The study of party preferences and attitudes of LGBTIQ voters in Vienna and Berlin, shows that this group of voters is rather progressive and mostly supports liberal or left-wing parties, on the one hand. This held true for both our samples in Vienna and Berlin. However, out of our 1608 survey participants between 7 percent (AfD) and 8 percent (FPÖ) supported far-right parties in the local elections of Vienna and Berlin. Our aim was to identify the attitudes and motivations for this and to discuss to what extent 'homonationalist' attitudes play a role in this decision.

There are only few studies that discuss links between LGBTIQ voters or attitudes on sexuality politics and right-wing populist and extremist parties. In general, research has shown that anti-immigration attitudes are the strongest motivation to vote for right-wing populist parties (Spierings/ Lubbers/ Zaslove 2017; Norris 2005). Furthermore, men more often than women give these parties their vote (Spierings/ Zaslove 2017: 837). Concerning voters of right-wing populist parties, Niels Spierings and others (2017) demonstrated that the likelihood to vote for such parties is somewhat lower among people who support lesbian and gay rights. However, there are still some in this group who have strong anti-migration attitudes, and thus vote for right-wing parties. Spierings et al. (2017) call these voters (voters with anti-immigrant but pro-LGBTIQ attitudes) 'sexually modern nativists' – not referring to their sexuality but rather their attitudes towards it. In their comparative study 6.4 percent of the analyzed sample can be identified as 'sexually modern nativists' (Spierings/ Lubbers/ Zaslove 2017: 224). This implies that despite the anti-LGBTIQ or anti-genderism of right-wing populist parties, they do also attract pro-LGBTIQ voters. In the Austrian case, these made up around 7 percent of people asked (Spierings/ Lubbers/ Zaslove 2017: 229).

The findings regarding LGBTIQ voters who support far-right parties are somewhat surprising. For instance, there is a tendency among FPÖ and AfD voters to de-problematize homophobia and transphobia compared to 'progressive' voters. While gay men and lesbian women are increasingly

being accepted in these countries, other sexual or gender identity minorities are constantly neglected and discriminated against – and as we demonstrate, sometimes also by LGBTIQ people in our sample. This not only confirms the findings from other studies regarding minorities within minorities (Eisenberg/ Spinner-Halev 2005) but also reflects the societal invisibility (Ayoub 2016) of some LGBTIQ persons and displays the public/private divide (Scrinzi 2017: 134). These findings feed into the AfD and FPÖ argumentation frequently used, namely that sexual orientation or gender identity is private and not subject to public discourse. This strategy is linked to the previously mentioned depoliticizing of LGBTIQ issues.

Far-right LGBTIQ voters further hierarchize between men and women – FPÖ voters are more inclined to hold discriminatory views on women – and do not prioritize the issues of those who challenge gender norms (transphobia), which also implies that they seem to support a traditional gender order (Klammer/ Goetz 2017: 82). The lack of solidarity among right-wing LGBTIQ voters towards women and other sexual or gender identity minorities can also be discussed within a wider frame of intersectionality approaches ‘which highlight the ways in which social and political forces manipulate the overlapping and intersecting inequalities within marginal groups’ (Strolovitch 2007: 23). Throughout our study it has become evident again that the LGBTIQ community is not a homogenous unit, but a very heterogeneous group of people with differing political attitudes.

As this paper shows, there are several – ambivalent – connections between right-wing parties and the LGBTIQ community. Although right-wing populist parties do not offer an LGBTIQ agenda, they can still attract voters from the LGBTIQ-community. The main reason for this is what we – following Jasbir Puar – call ‘electoral homonationalism’. For Puar homonationalism interlinks nationalist and sexual political discourses in International Relations. LGBTIQ rights are symbolically charged and perceived by Western governments and civil society organizations as manifestations of progress and superiority of the West over Muslim countries. In return, many LGBTIQ activists participate in Islamophobic discourses and describe homophobia as a problem emanating from Muslims and Muslim societies (Puar 2007: 9). Nationalist and sexual-political discourses are approximated and seem to be mutually supportive of the constructed common enemy: the anti-feminist and homophobic Muslim ‘Other’.

The data not only implies the reproduction of nationalist and racist discourses among LGBTIQ voters but also shows that nationalist and racist attitudes are the main motivation to vote for AfD and FPÖ for right-wing voters in our sample. For such right-wing voters, electoral homonationalism functions as a pseudo-liberal position: it displays a seemingly equal society,

arguing in favor of protection but against expanding the rights for the LGBTIQ community. This is evident when right-wing voters do not prioritize the fight of homophobia and transphobia for instance. This focus on ‘protecting’ LGBTIQ people is further linked to an alleged outside threat. As such, it serves a racist construct of the Muslim or migrant ‘Other’ and downplays demands for equality – for everyone. Right-wing populists introduced tradition and values as constitutive elements of nations that naturalize societal relations and hinder emancipatory social change. This on the other hand leads to the objectification of vulnerable groups in need of protection by the (male) state against aggressors from outside. As such, electoral homonationalism is a bridge from the nationalist discourse of parties and political groups to voting practice. In short: it is a practice of mainstreaming and strengthening homonationalism and with it the exclusion and segregation ‘of racialized and sexualized “Others”’ (Puar 2017: 2) beyond the discourse of right-wing and conservative political groups and parties. Unfortunately, this exclusionary form of identity politics (see Wodak 2015) shows that in Vienna and Berlin some LGBTIQ voters are even willing to risk restriction of their own personal freedoms for an imagined ‘greater good’. While we are already experiencing the devastating political and material consequences of (electoral) homonationalism for migrants and Muslim persons in Austria and Germany, the consequences of this for LGBTIQ demands and the fight for equality are still unknown and further research will be necessary.

This paper shows, that even though the majority of LGBTIQ voters support left-wing or progressive parties and issues, there is a certain amount of LGBTIQ citizens who vote for right-wing parties and support right-wing issues. One crucial element of this is what we call ‘electoral homonationalism’, mainly supported by gay men. This paper shows that especially the group of gay men is more diverse in its political attitudes and in its voting behavior in terms of party preferences than lesbian and trans* citizens.

Voting Right? Analyzing Electoral Homonationalism of LGBTIQ* Voters in Austria and Germany

Michael Hunklinger* and Edma Ajanović

Gender and sexuality have become increasingly relevant issues for right-wing populist parties. This article analyzes political attitudes of lesbian, gay, bi, trans*, inter, and queer (LGBTIQ*) voters of right-wing populist parties in local elections in Vienna (Austria) and Berlin (Germany). Right-wing LGBTIQ* voters display similar negative attitudes toward migrants, women, and other sexual minorities as the right-wing parties Alternative für Deutschland and Freiheitliche Partei Österreich they vote for. We argue that this “electoral homonationalism” is a bridge from the nationalist discourse of parties and political groups to the voting behavior of the electorate.

Voting Right?

Ahead of the local elections in Berlin in September 2016, lesbian, gay, bi, trans*, inter, and queer (LGBTIQ*)¹-related topics played an important role. Most parties supported an expansion of gay rights and more equality for LGBTIQ* people. Only the far-right party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) openly opposed marriage equality for LGBTIQ* or the right to adopt children for same-sex couples. And yet, the party had a poster campaign featuring two allegedly gay men saying that Muslim immigrants were a threat to their “way of life” (figure 1). While none of the other parties had posters featuring homosexual couples, the AfD did not emphasize a pro-LGBTIQ* agenda with this picture but rather an alleged threat by “Muslim immigrants” to “our” values. While right-wing populist parties often denounce different sexual identities and orientations, in some cases, as figure 1 shows, they do target the LGBTIQ* community as potential voters.

Against this backdrop, the question so far not sufficiently discussed in research, regarding the AfD and the Freiheitliche Partei Österreich (FPÖ), is

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Figure 1. “My boyfriend and I do not care to make acquaintance with Muslim immigrants, who consider our love as an original sin.” (Merkur 2016, Translation by the authors).

how we can make sense of this rather contradictory approach toward sexuality and LGBTIQ* people. Apart from studies on gay and lesbian far-right activists and party members in Germany (Wielowiejski 2018, 2020) we do not know to what extent and based on which motives these parties are able to attract voters who identify as LGBTIQ*. In this article, we seek to give more insights into LGBTIQ* voters and analyze data from two pilot studies, the *LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015* implemented in Vienna (Austria) during the Viennese municipal elections and the *LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2016* implemented in Berlin (Germany) during the municipal elections there. In this article, we do not seek to explain electoral behavior in general but rather aim to discover to what extent there is a motivation among LGBTIQ* people to vote for right-wing parties despite both the FPÖ’s and AfD’s anti-genderist and anti-LGBTIQ* agenda and based on which attitudes. Our article contributes to discussions on the complicated relationship of the far-right and gender and sexuality issues (Dietze 2018). It further provides empirical evidence from the perspective of voters on the debate on “homonationalism” (Puar 2007) and “sexually modern nativists,” voters who vote right-wing but are liberal when it comes to sexuality rights (Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017).

The Paradoxes of the Gender/Sexuality Agenda of the German-Speaking Far-Right

As our article highlights LGBTIQ* voters’ attitudes in Vienna and Berlin, this section discusses the ambivalent gender and sexuality agenda of the FPÖ

and the AfD. Drawing attention to this sheds light on the potential motivations of LGBTIQ* voters to vote for far-right parties. Furthermore, it describes the paradoxes or inconsistencies of far-right parties' representation of sexuality and gender matters.

Natural Order of Gender, Sexuality, and Nation

The FPÖ in Austria is a party with a long and difficult history, as it has been ideologically and personally linked to German-national groups (Pelinka 2002, 286–87), while the AfD was established in 2013 and is thus a rather recent phenomenon. Both parties are embedded in a similar political system, in which mainly two big and established parties, the respective conservative and social-democratic parties, have governed the countries since the Second World War. However, the transformation of the party landscapes in both Austria and Germany began in the 1960s and with these opportunities for far-right and populist parties grew. Right-wing populist parties emphasize anti-elite, anti-pluralist ideas where the “pure” people (us) and corrupt elites (them) stand in opposition to each other (Reinfeldt 2000; Taggart 2004). Right-wing populism, being a “thin-centred ideology” (Mudde 2004), is also flexible in identifying the deviant “other.” Since the established parties shifted their interest from the electorate's needs to staying in power, right-wing populist parties emerged successfully throughout Europe from the 1980s onwards—Germany being at first an exception in this regard (Sauer 2017, 2). At about the same time, the established parties, often in accord with European Union (EU) law, implemented first gender mainstreaming measures. Furthermore, lesbian and gay movements also gradually led to increased sexual liberalization. This pressure however only recently—2017 in Germany and 2019 in Austria—led to legalization of same-sex marriage and child adoption for same-sex couples, which some see as a great political achievement against the conservative family concepts prevalent in both countries.² The increasing presence of gender and sexuality issues in the public sphere can also be interpreted as a result of rising (economic) inequality and social precarization of male-dominated labor sectors (Sauer 2017, 9) as well a growing anti-gender discourse (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). Against this backdrop, far-right parties and conservative groups increasingly identify gender and sexuality issues as potential battlegrounds. As Sauer et al. (2016, 104) pointed out, “issues related to gender, gender equality, sexuality and LGBT people became one of the constitutive elements of a right-wing populist and extremist discourse across Europe.”

In this context, the AfD's and FPÖ's stance is rather paradoxical, as research has shown (e.g., Dietze 2018; Mayer, Ajanovic, and Sauer 2014). Their programmatic argumentation often centers around the following: women's rights, gender, and LGBTIQ* equality measures are an attack on traditional values and will not only result in the destruction of “natural” men and women

but also “family order,” seen as consisting of a mother, father, and child(ren), as well as “national order.”

First, right-wing populist parties in Austria and Germany subscribe to rather conservative norms when it comes to femininity and masculinity. Often, they address women and men as of “equal value” but not “equal” (in the way of rights). They argue instead that this apparent “natural difference” requires different treatment of men and women. This view manifests itself in not only their programs but their politics too. In the FPÖ’s program for mandataries, the party for instance states the following: it acknowledges that society disadvantages women and this ought to be changed, but not “by changing sex-specific behavior through influence, nagging and force” so that women act like men (FPÖ n.d., 125). In terms of politics, once in local government, the FPÖ introduced cuts to the funding of women’s safe houses and other women’s organizations (Ajanovic and Mayer 2017, 199). This logic of “natural differences” but of “equal value” implies a hierarchization. To quote Raewyn Connell’s famous conceptualization, hegemonic masculinity dominates not only over femininity but marginalized masculinities too (Connell 2005). The far right’s and to a certain extent conservative parties’ rising agitation over LGBTIQ* demands can thus be interpreted as a fight to re-enforce or secure an alleged natural gender order.

Second, equality measures as well as feminist and LGBTIQ* demands in their view undermine not only the gender order and the dominance of hegemonic masculinity but also pose a threat to the family order as well as the nation (Mayer, Ajanovic, and Sauer 2018a; Sauer et al. 2016, 113; Klammer and Goetz 2017). In the Austrian and German far-right discourse, thus far discussed, LGBTIQ* people are portrayed in a deprecatory manner and even construed to be an “internal threat” to the imaginary right-wing populist “us” (Kuhar and Ajanović 2018, 145). The AfD’s party program illustrates this in stating that homosexuals should not have the same rights as heterosexuals, especially concerning marriage and adoption (AfD Berlin 2016, 9). The FPÖ follows a similar argumentation concerning sexuality politics. They oppose marriage equality and the right of LGBTIQ* people to adopt children in several passages of their program (FPÖ 2013, 103, 142). Both want to protect the “true family,” which in their view should consist of one mother, one father, and children, and therefore oppose any alternative family models, framing them as a threat to society at large (AfD 2016, 41; AfD Berlin 2016, 9; FPÖ 2013, 103, 142; FPÖ 2015, 8). In addition, the FPÖ and AfD often argue, sexuality is or should be a private matter (Hunklinger and Ferch 2020). By referring to privacy they not only imply that there is no need for regulations (in terms of marriage equality or adoption rights) but they perpetuate the depoliticization of LGBTIQ* issues and a “cultural backlash” (Inglehart and Norris 2016).

Third, to add to this “naturalization” of a particular order, both parties oppose gender mainstreaming as well as so-called diversity measures

regarding sexuality—combining them to a “genderism” threat. This argumentation serves the purpose of enforcing gender and sexuality norms and is part of the broader discourse of anti-genderism, first arising in parts of the Catholic Church (Paternotte 2015). So called anti-genderism groups misunderstand the concept of gender and portray it as a threat, as it will allegedly lead to a “genderless human,” to cite the former FPÖ representative Barbara Rosenkranz (Rosenkranz 2008). In this context, the AfD criticizes “sexualized education,” meaning programs implemented at schools where pupils learn about pluralist sexual orientations, identities, and the negative effects of discrimination. According to the AfD, this would lead to a “confusion about sexual identity” (AfD 2016, 55). Similarly, both parties oppose the use of so-called gender-inclusive language. As part of this anti-genderism, they do not only denounce for example Gender Studies as being an ideology-based science (Hark and Villa 2015) and sexual equality measures, but link them to other in their view “nature-threatening” phenomena, such as migration. In this discourse, gender becomes an “empty signifier” (Mayer and Sauer 2017) or “symbolic glue,” in which the threat emanating from sexual, gender (and often any other) equality is bundled and in which various topics and actors are linked (Kováts and Poim 2015). In light of the above developments, it can be assumed that through this anti-genderism discourse the far-right and conservatives aim to establish a counterhegemonic discourse against demands and forms of equality (Mayer, Ajanovic, and Sauer 2018b, 38), increasingly introduced from the 1970s onwards in Europe. This is evident, as both the FPÖ and AfD further consider “genderism” an ideology imposed onto people from the so-called liberal elite. This discursive strategy serves to portray right-wing populist groups and the “people” they argue to represent in a marginalized position vis-à-vis the mainstream political parties or the elite. By their contribution to the anti-genderism discourse, they also play into the idea of the “heartland”—a utopian community of the past (Taggart 2004)—presenting them as defenders of traditional (Christian) values, fighting political correctness and other forms of the *Zeitgeist*. In this context LGBTIQ* rights seem an ideal battleground to reinforce this utopian past.

‘Inclusion’ for the Purpose of Exclusion

However, the position of the far-right in Austria and Germany toward gender and sexuality is not as simple as it seems. The AfD billboard on the mobilization of gay voters depicted in figure 1 illustrates this. When it comes to women and sexual minorities, both the FPÖ and AfD see them as worthy of protecting from the alleged threat posed by an imagined “outside,” currently—but not exclusively—projected onto “Muslims” or “migrants.” This is well-illustrated in a statement by Alice Weidel, the parliamentary group leader of the AfD, who said: “I am not here (in the AfD) in spite of my homosexuality, but also because of my homosexuality”³ (FAZ 2017, translated by the

authors). In her view, the AfD is the only party addressing the alleged attacks of Muslims against homosexuals.

As shown above, far-right discourse claims that the achieved women's and LGBTIQ* rights (i) are already substantial enough or (ii) that the discrimination of women and LGBTIQ* is legitimized by nature. The call for protection of equality coming from the far-right thus presents itself as an "inconsistency" (Mayer, Ajanovic, and Sauer 2014) or "paradox" (Dietze 2018) at first sight. Deeper analysis, however, reveals it is part of their goal to secure the order of the "nation"—as previously mentioned—and also of their anti-Muslim racism and xeno-racism (Fekete 2004, 2001). Interestingly, right-wing discourse only sees the rights of women and LGBTIQ* threatened by constructed "Muslim" or migrant "Others"—although they themselves call for the discrimination as we have illustrated above. How are they able to link these on the one hand anti-feminist, misogynist and anti-LGBTIQ* stances with feminist demands such as "self-governance and maturity for women" (FPÖ n.d., 125) and calls to protect LGBTIQ*? More than being a contradictory discourse, this displays a phenomenon Jasbir Puar discussed in the context of the United States and called "homonationalism," "a form of sexual exceptionalism—the emergence of national homosexuality." "[T]his brand of homosexuality operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects" (Puar 2007, 2). For Puar, homonationalism interlinks nationalist and sexual-political discourses in international relations. LGBTIQ* rights are symbolically charged and perceived by Western governments and civil society organizations as manifestations of progress and superiority of the West compared with Muslim countries. In return, many LGBTIQ* activists participate in Islamophobic discourse and describe homophobia as a problem emanating from Muslim societies (Puar 2007, 9). In the European context, this process of branding "Muslims" as incompatible with liberal values is equally evident. Fatima El-Tayeb (El-Tayeb 2011) or Suhraiya Jivraj and Anisa de Jong (Jivraj and de Jong 2011) for instance analyzed this within the context of the Netherlands. El-Tayeb, as Puar, illustrates that through homonationalism not only are "Muslim" people racialized but only particular queers and women are included into the nation. For her, participation in the "age of neoliberal consumer-citizens," as she identifies in the context of the Netherlands, is only possible for those "willing and able to pay the price, including those formerly excluded, such as women and queers" (El-Tayeb 2011, 122). In line with Puar's (2007, 9) evidence from the United States, studies from Germany and Austria also show that LGBTIQ* persons are active in far-right groups and parties, though this research is still only starting to emerge (de Nève et al. 2018; Wielowiejski 2018, 2020).

Furthermore, the inconsistent discourse or paradoxes display what Sarah Farris called femonationalism, "the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalist and neoliberals in anti-Islam (but, as I will show, also anti-immigration)

campaigns and to the participation of certain feminist and femocrats in the stigmatization of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality” (Farris 2017, 4). Similarly, the inclusion of women into the neoliberal nation has a price, namely, an anti-Muslim and anti-immigration discourse that is often but not only directed against the “Other” men. Right-wing groups but also certain “feminists and femocrats” claim to protect “Other” women from their allegedly traditionalist men and families, only to make them exploitable as nannies, cleaning women and other caring labor force (Farris 2012, 188).

It is strikingly evident that the purpose of profeminist and pro-LGBTIQ* discourse appropriated by the right-wing and conservative groups is racism and the exclusion of imagined racialized “Others,” instead of equality for women and LGBTIQ*. The outlined paradoxes show that it is all about “defending the nation” from an imagined “outside” threat. Their evident and even more prominent anti-feminist, anti-genderist, and anti-LGBTIQ* stances unmask the alleged efforts to protect women and LGBTIQ* as conditional equality and a way of excluding and segregating racialized, gendered, and sexualized “Others.”

For our research interest, the theoretical question is: How can we conceptualize the bridge from discourses of far-right parties and political groups to the voting practice? We suggest the concept of “electoral homonationalism” in order to trace homonationalist attitudes that contribute to right-wing action and voting. It links in a paradoxical manner not only allegedly profeminist and equality attitudes with racist attitudes but also with anti-feminist, anti-LGBTIQ*, and anti-gender attitudes. For us, “electoral homonationalism” is not only a way of expressing homonationalist values through voting but also a practice of mainstreaming and strengthening paradoxes within and hence the exclusion and segregation “of racialized and sexualized ‘Others’” (Puar 2017, 2) as well as gendered “Others” beyond the discourses of right-wing and conservative political groups and parties. In our article, we seek to shed more light on this phenomenon of electoral homonationalism by answering the following research question: *How do homonationalist attitudes and motives contribute to right-wing voting behavior among LGBTIQ* voters in Vienna (2015) and in Berlin (2016)?*

Understanding LGBTIQ* Voters’ Preferences

Although a large proportion of literature discusses the backgrounds and attitudes of voters of right-wing populist and extremist parties (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Norris 2005; Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017), we still know very little about voter preferences and political attitudes of LGBTIQ* people in general, but more specifically in the context of Austria and Germany. One obstacle is the lack of data, which was the main motivation to implement the *LGBTIQ* Election Survey* in these two countries on a regular

basis. Against this backdrop, the next section intends to give an insight into the few studies regarding the Austrian and German cases. This again illustrates the research gap on LGBTIQ* voters' preferences in general and more particularly on the homonationalist mobilization of LGBTIQ* voters we seek to fill.

Within political sciences, studies dealing with LGBTIQ* issues are still questioned regularly and framed as too political, too private, or simply not important enough (Hines and Santos 2018). However, in his review article Paternotte (2018) showed that the field of LGBTIQ* politics in political science has been diversifying in the past years. Not only has the literature on social movements been growing (Ayoub and Chetaille 2020; Ayoub and Paternotte 2014; Swank and Fahs 2013) but also the analysis of representation and studies have been dealing with LGBTIQ* political candidates and their campaigns (Magni and Reynolds 2018; Reynolds 2019, 2013). Studies dealing with voting behavior and political attitudes of LGBTIQ* citizens are still scarce and have mainly been focused on the United States (Egan, Edelman, and Sherrill 2008; Hertzog 1996; Schaffner and Senic 2006; Smith 2007; Swank 2018) and Canada (Perrella, Brown, and Kay 2012). For this context, Hertzog (1996) showed that self-identified lesbians, gays, and bisexuals comprised a distinctive and highly active voting bloc in electoral politics. Thus, LGBTIQ* people vote cohesively across a variety of issues and at higher rates than the general population. They seem to not only have an above-average interest in politics but it also appears that sexuality shapes citizens' voting behavior (Bailey 1999; Hertzog 1996). Studies regarding this context for instance show that LGBTIQ* voters primarily vote for leftist parties, such as the Democrats in the United States (Schaffner and Senic 2006, 130; Swank 2018, 34).

Studies on voting behavior in the context of LGBTIQ* hardly deal with European cases. This is partly due to the fact that in Austria and Germany exit polls or other surveys do not include questions concerning sexual orientation. This makes it hard to draw any conclusions on the voting behavior of LGBTIQ* citizens. The data presented in our article originate from the first pilot studies targeting LGBTIQ* voters in Vienna and Berlin (LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015–2016). In the context of Western Europe, Stuart Turnbull-Dugarte illustrated that, similarly to the United States context, LGBTIQ* voters are more likely to vote for social-democratic and other leftist parties (Turnbull-Dugarte 2020a, 2020b). However, there are only few studies that discuss links between LGBTIQ* voters or attitudes on sexuality politics and right-wing populist and extremist parties. In general, research has shown that anti-immigration attitudes are the strongest motivation to vote for right-wing populist parties (Norris 2005; Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017). Furthermore, men more often than women give these parties their vote (Spierings and Zaslove 2017, 837). Concerning voters of right-wing populist parties, Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove (2017) showed that the likelihood to vote for such parties is somewhat lower among people who support lesbian

and gay rights. However, there are still some in this group who have strong anti-migration attitudes, and thus vote for right-wing parties. Niels Spierings and his colleagues (2017, 224) call these voters (voters with anti-immigrant but pro-LGBTIQ* attitudes) “sexually modern nativists”—not referring to their sexuality but rather their attitudes toward it. In their comparative study, 6.4 percent of the analyzed sample can be identified as sexually modern nativists (Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017, 224). This implies that despite the anti-LGBTIQ* or anti-genderism of right-wing populist parties, they do also attract pro-LGBTIQ* voters. In the Austrian case, these made up around 7 percent of people asked (Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove 2017, 229).

Although studies are rather scarce on these issues, the above-discussed authors can give us some insights on the LGBTIQ* voting behavior in Austria and Germany. In the following portion, we shall present original data from the first LGBTIQ* Election Surveys in these two countries, in order to give empirical evidence on homonationalist attitudes among LGBTIQ* voters in Vienna and Berlin.

Data and Methods of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey

We conducted online surveys in the run-up to local elections in Vienna on October 11, 2015 and Berlin on September 18, 2016. In Vienna 448 LGBTIQ* people participated in the survey, whereas in Berlin the number of participants reached 1,160. The survey addressed questions of voting preferences, motives, and sociopolitical attitudes. As we learned from the Vienna survey—implemented prior to Berlin—migration played a big role and we therefore adjusted the questionnaire for the Berlin survey. To this end we added more questions, that is, regarding social attitudes and racist and anti-migrant attitudes. The surveys were promoted via social media, LGBTIQ* community organizations, flyers in LGBTIQ* bars and clubs, and through dating websites. It was available online for six weeks prior to the election date in both cases. It is a self-selective sample (Häder 2014, 12), which is the best way to reach LGBTIQ* people, even though this method has some flaws. Internet-based surveys only reach a certain segment of the population with specific sociodemographic and cultural characteristics. Internet users cannot be treated as a random subsample of the entire population (Häder 2014, 11). For this research project, we assume that only those LGBTIQ*-persons with Internet access, corresponding technical affinity, and equipment, as well as an affinity with networking in the digital LGBTIQ*-community, noticed or participated in the survey at all. These tend to be mostly young people, as our data on the age also show. The advantage is that the interviewees actively and voluntarily decide to participate in the survey. The disadvantage of this method lies in its high level of self-selectivity (Häder 2014, 12). We mitigated the problem of self-selection by actively recruiting participants (offline/online, targeted advertising). Against this backdrop, this method provides the best means to get

access to a large group of potential respondents, if you do not have any information regarding the basic population. Nevertheless, the data are not representative and do not reflect the demographic composition of Vienna or Berlin. Thus, all conclusions we draw in this article refer to the participants of the study, not the LGBTIQ* community at large.

The bias concerning age (mainly young), gender (predominantly male), education (high levels of university-educated), and income (middle-class and upper-middle class) is similar in both samples as illustrated in [table 1](#). These data do not allow for a more detailed analysis, that is, to analyze differences between the various groups. Concerning education and income, the LGBTIQ* voters of the AfD and the FPÖ are above average, as compared to the whole sample. This suggests that right-wing voters are not principally those “economically left behind” ([Schwander and Manow 2017](#)). Our sample further confirms findings of [Spierings and Zaslove \(2017\)](#), that men are more likely to vote for right-wing populist parties than the women.

LGBTIQ* Voters’ Preferences and Attitudes in Vienna and Berlin

The following section describes the voting behavior of the participants in our surveys. We will start with an overview on the popularity of the different parties among LGBTIQ* voters. Furthermore, below we compare AfD and FPÖ LGBTIQ* voters to the whole sample by discussing their attitudes toward LGBTIQ* and gender issues, nativism as well as migration, and hence their potential for electoral homonationalism and attitudes toward the political system. In the survey, we asked the participants about the importance of different issues with a fixed set of items. Multiple selections were possible.

Greens Score High

Green parties are the first choice for LGBTIQ* respondents in both cities, while conservative parties score extremely low. In Vienna, most of the respondents opted for the Green party (45 percent), followed by the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ 16 percent), and the liberal party (NEOS 12 percent). The right-wing party FPÖ received 8 percent of the votes and the conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) attracted the lowest number of the voters (3 percent). This is not surprising, as the Green party has been most visible in supporting LGBTIQ* people for years. Furthermore, the 3 percent for the ÖVP might differ now after the change in party leadership. It is well-known that Sebastian Kurz, the leader of the ÖVP since 2017, attracts more people, especially due to his anti-migration stance.

In Berlin, the picture looks similar. Left-leaning parties (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 33 percent, Die Linke 24 percent, SPD 17 percent) attracted most of the respondents, while the liberals (FDP 9 percent) scored slightly better than

Table 1. Overview of the survey participants according to sociodemographic indicators (in percent with regard to each party)

	Average age	Most mentioned highest education university (in %)	Most mentioned economic situation (five-item scale; very good to not good at all; in %)	Male (in %)
Germany				
SPD (Social Democratic)	38	56.4	Good (48.6)	82.1
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Green)	38	63.3	Good (46.5)	70.1
Die Linke (left-wing)	39	45.8	Neither nor good (41.9)	72.3
FDP (liberal)	41	65	Good (49)	92
AfD (right-wing)	44	65.6	Good (41)	92.5
Total	39	58.3	Good 43.3	76.6
Austria				
SPÖ (Social Democratic)	35	35.7	Good (45.7)	72.9
Die Grünen (Green)	34	51	Good (41.1)	62.4
NEOS (liberal)	35	54.5	Good (38.29)	69.1
FPÖ (right-wing)	32	37.8	Good (43.2)	78.4
Total	34	48.3	Good (41.9)	67.9

the far-right AfD (7 percent). Only 4 percent of the respondents indicated their preference for the conservative CDU (LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015–2016). Both differ greatly from the election results. Election results for Vienna: SPÖ 39.6 percent; FPÖ 30.8 percent; ÖVP 9.2 percent; Grüne 11.8 percent; NEOS 6.1 percent (Stadt Wien 2015); election results Berlin: SPD 21.6 percent; CDU 17.6 percent; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 15.2 percent; Die Linke 15.6 percent; FDP 6.7 percent; and AfD 14.2 percent (Stadt Berlin 2016). Overall, this confirms similar findings for LGBTIQ* voters in the United States who predominantly vote for liberal candidates (Schaffner and Senic 2006; Swank 2018). Interestingly, already a first glance shows that with support of 8 percent (FPÖ) and 7 percent (AfD), there is a potential for electoral homonationalism in both countries (figure 2).

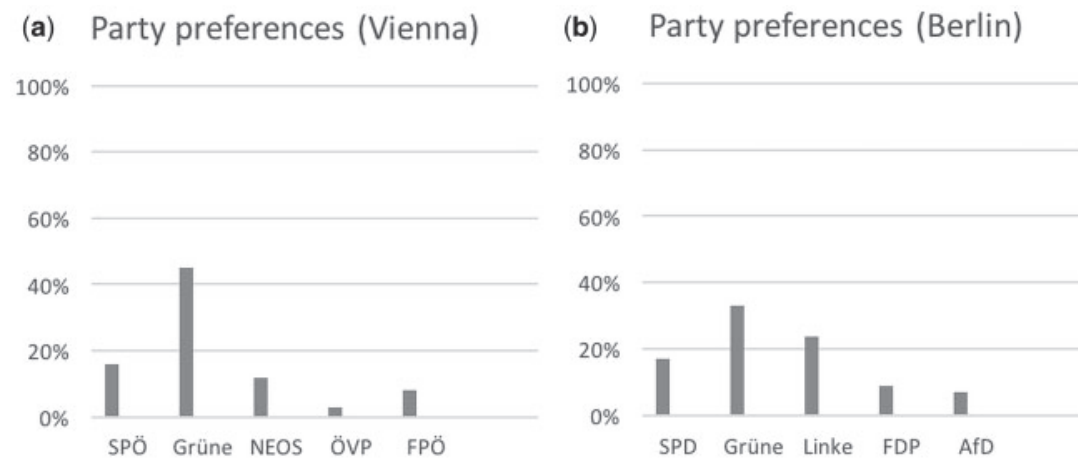


Figure 2. Party preferences of LGBTIQ* voters. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

LGBTIQ* and Gender Issues

The following section links party preferences with attitudes toward LGBTIQ* and gender issues. With these questions, we wanted to see to what extent LGBTIQ* and gender issues are the parameters when electing a specific party. As both right-wing parties offer no specific policy proposals to LGBTIQ* people and instead question the existing status quo, we assumed that this, paired with conservatism in terms of gender and family concepts, might be something that prevents LGBTIQ* persons from voting right-wing.

The first question is an indicator for the public–private differentiation—raised in the above party programs and ideologies—and reads as follows: “How important is it to you that the party has candidates that are out?” The second question relates to the importance of specific “pro-LGBTIQ* agenda” in the party program and practice (figure 3).

Although most people who participated in our survey in Vienna (52.9 percent) believe that having candidates who are out is important, only 29.7 percent of the right-wing LGBTIQ* voters hold the same view. In Berlin, the numbers of both groups are even smaller. Only 41.9 percent of the whole sample of LGBTIQ* voters and 18.3 percent of the LGBTIQ* AfD voters consider it to be important. There is a striking difference between AfD and FPÖ voters compared to the voters of all other parties. This indicates that AfD and FPÖ voters do not see the importance of a public discussion of sexuality. Concerning LGBTIQ* issues in general, this trend is even more obvious. While over 90 percent of the LGBTIQ* electorate in our survey (92.2 percent in Vienna and 92.5 percent in Berlin) think that it is (very) important for a party to have a pro-LGBTIQ* agenda, within the LGBTIQ* voters of right-wing populist parties the number is lower (Vienna 56.7 percent; Berlin 50 percent) (figure 4). A possible explanation for the differences could be that LGBTIQ* issues are often portrayed as part of left-wing or liberal agenda.

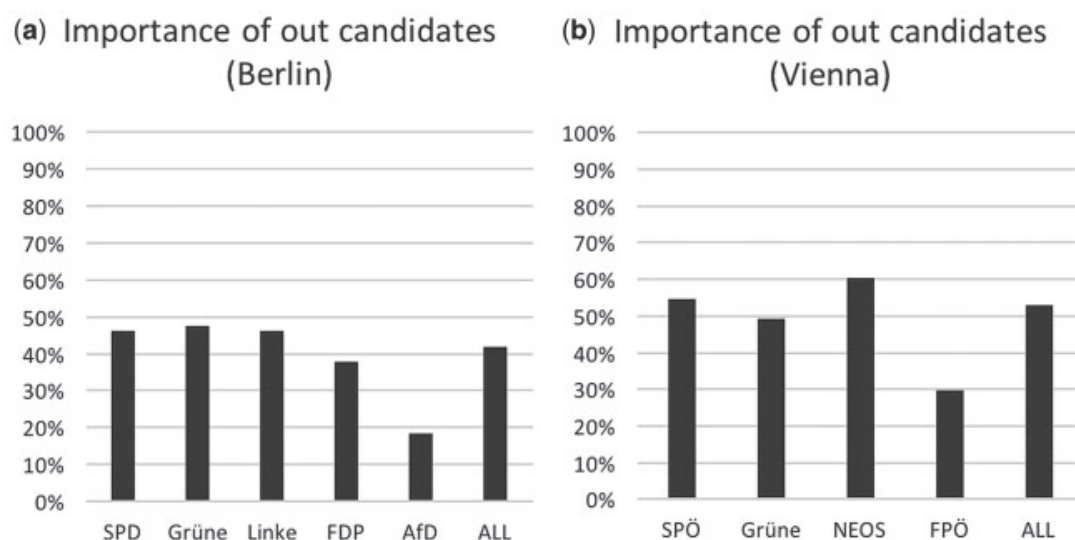


Figure 3. Question out-candidates. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

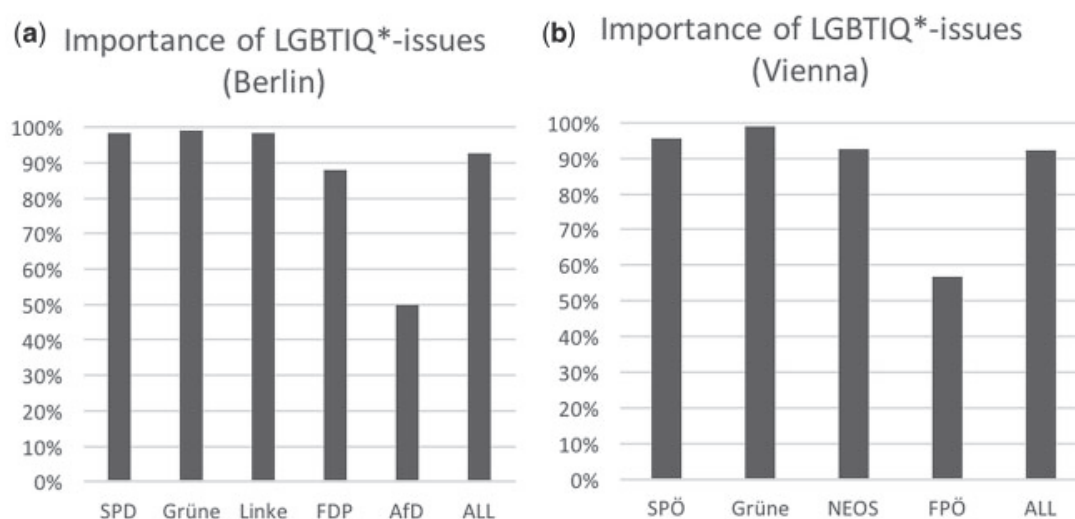


Figure 4. Question LGBTIQ*-issues. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

Right-wing LGBTIQ* voters might not identify as being part of the LGBTIQ* community or even as LGBTIQ* (only as gay or lesbian) and prioritize other political issues instead. It also relates to the public–private gap we have addressed. Importantly, it seems that voters of FPÖ and AfD do not vote for these parties to represent their sexuality/equality-related interests, but other interests—as our questions below will illustrate. This rather restricted approach toward being in the open about one’s sexuality is part of electoral homonationalism. Although these results do not fully show an anti-LGBTIQ* attitude within the group of right-wing LGBTIQ* voters, they indicate a preference for the privatization of sexuality issues (Scrinzi 2017).

Furthermore, we included the following questions in order to identify “group consciousness” and solidarity among the community. In many cases, discrimination increases group consciousness and thus provides a motivation that is necessary for a person to participate in politics and support a certain—in this case pro-LGBTIQ*—agenda (Proctor 2016, 114). AfD and FPÖ voters consider it less urgent to fight homophobia or transphobia than voters of other parties. This is another indicator for their anti-LGBTIQ* stances especially when it comes to marginalized LGBTIQ* groups as trans* persons.

For about 90 percent (89.4 percent in Vienna and 91.7 percent in Berlin) of the LGBTIQ* electorate, homophobia is a (very) important issue. Compared to the overall sample, only around half of the right-wing LGBTIQ* voters in Vienna (52.8 percent) and 59.2 percent in Berlin hold the same view (figure 5). Only a third (27 percent in Vienna and 31.2 percent in Berlin) of the right-wing LGBTIQ* voters consider transphobia an important issue, as compared to the whole sample where 74.2 percent of the general LGBTIQ* electorate in Vienna and 83.3 percent in Berlin agree that transphobia is a (very) important issue. These data show a clear difference between the general LGBTIQ* electorate and its segment of right-wing voters. Homophobia and transphobia are considered to be less important societal issues by right-wing LGBTIQ* voters. This indicates that within right-wing LGBTIQ* voters group consciousness is not as important. Similarly, maybe due to our gender bias in the sample, we can also identify masculinist or traditional attitudes regarding women among the right-wing voters in the sample (figure 7).

In total, 40.5 percent of the right-wing LGBTIQ* voters in Vienna agree with the statement that men should be given jobs over women if jobs are scarce. The overall support for this within the “community” in Vienna is only 6.3 percent. In Berlin, the picture is more moderate (figure 7). While only 3 percent of the sample would support the idea of men getting jobs before

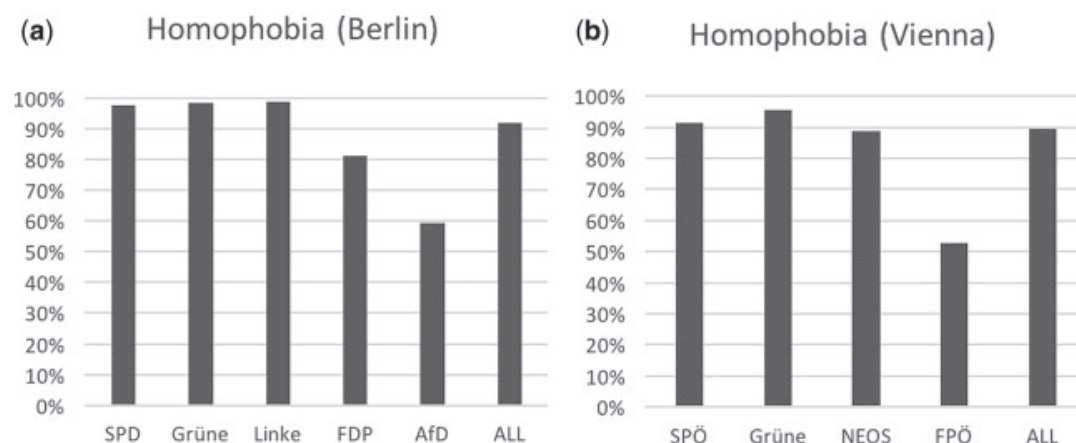


Figure 5. Which societal problems are of importance and should be solved urgently?—Homophobia. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

women, support among AfD voters is much higher (16.2 percent). Concerning women, the FPÖ voters display high levels of sexism within the LGBTIQ* voters. In the AfD, over 20 percent have openly sexist attitudes seeing as they support discrimination of women. As most of the FPÖ and AfD voters are gay men, the same pattern as before can be observed. Women—as a social minority within the LGBTIQ* community and general society—are not considered equal, and a stratification takes place. This again corresponds to the homonationalism of right-wing populist discourse, unmasking the stance

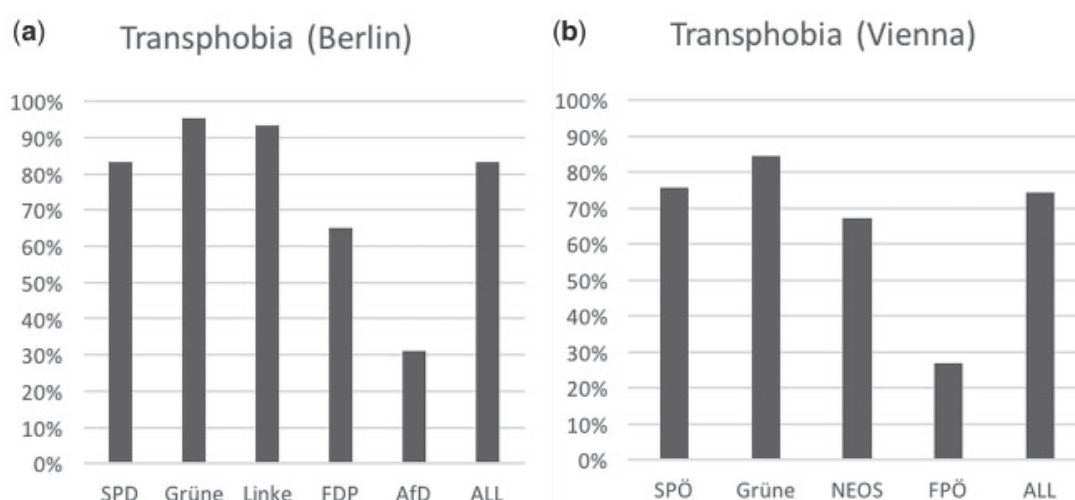


Figure 6. Which societal problems are of importance and should be solved urgently?—Transphobia. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.



Figure 7. If jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

especially among LGBTIQ* voters supporting the FPÖ, that only “queers” who follow a certain norm (Puar 2007, 2) are seen as worthy of inclusion.

Nativism and Migration

The following set of questions highlights typically programmatic issues of right-wing parties when it comes to migration, nativism, and anti-Muslim racism.

If the same question on jobs is asked about migrants (figure 8), the results are even more pronounced. Over 80 percent of the right-wing voters in both cities would discriminate against immigrants. Overall, 89.2 percent of the right-wing voters within the LGBTIQ* electorate in Vienna and 81.7 percent in Berlin support this idea. Within the whole sample, a vast majority of the LGBTIQ* voters do not support a preference of native citizens over immigrants (72.3 percent in Vienna and 80.3 percent in Berlin). These findings show evidence of electoral homonationalism among right-wing LGBTIQ* voters and a high potential for identifying “migrants” as a threat. The overlap in homonationalist attitudes in each party and its voters is even more evident in the Berlin survey. As mentioned, in the later conducted Berlin survey, we added more questions concerning the topic of migration and found that 98.6 percent of the right-wing LGBTIQ* electorate supported the call for stricter rules for accepting migrants (figure 9). In total, 91.9 percent agree with the statement that asylum seekers are a threat to “our culture” (figure 10). Whereas in the whole LGBTIQ* electorate in Berlin, 31.9 percent support stricter rules for the acceptance of migrants and only 21.9 percent see asylum seekers as a threat to society. Asked whether queer asylum seekers are particularly in need of protection, 94.4 percent of the LGBTIQ* electorate agree (figure 11). This view is less popular among the LGBTIQ* AfD voters.

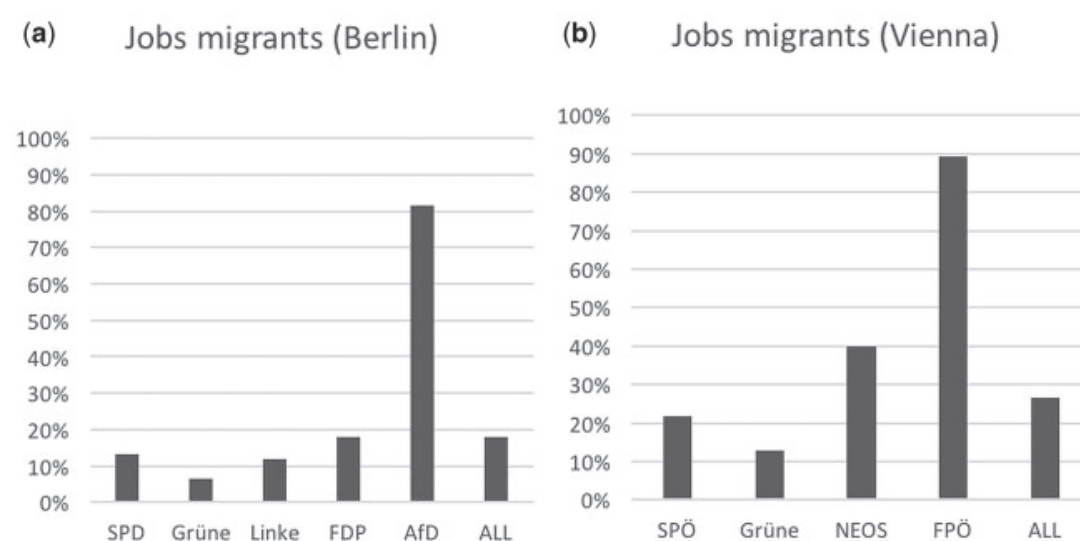


Figure 8. If jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to people of this country over immigrants. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

Among those, only 77 percent think that queer asylum seekers are particularly in need of protection. This again indicates that right-wing voters tend to differentiate between LGBTIQ* groups.

This importance of migration issues for FPÖ and AfD voters among LGBTIQ* participants is further illustrated in the answers to an open question we also added to our survey where participants could name important current issues. In both cities, two topics were mentioned particularly often by right-

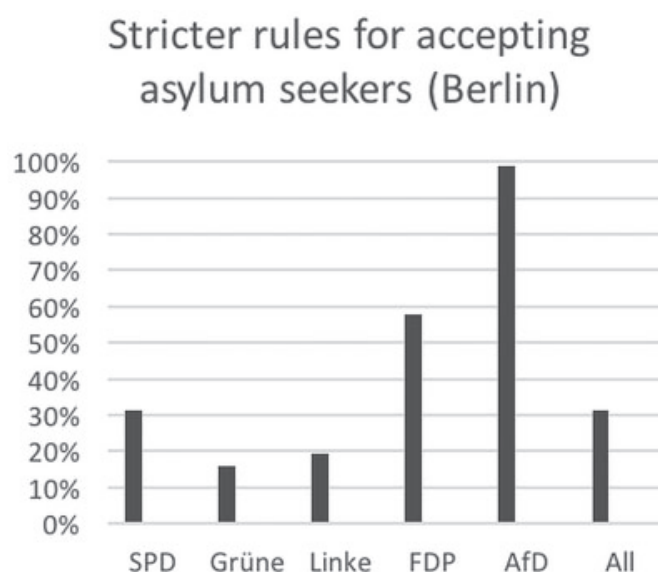


Figure 9. Stricter rules for accepting asylum seekers. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

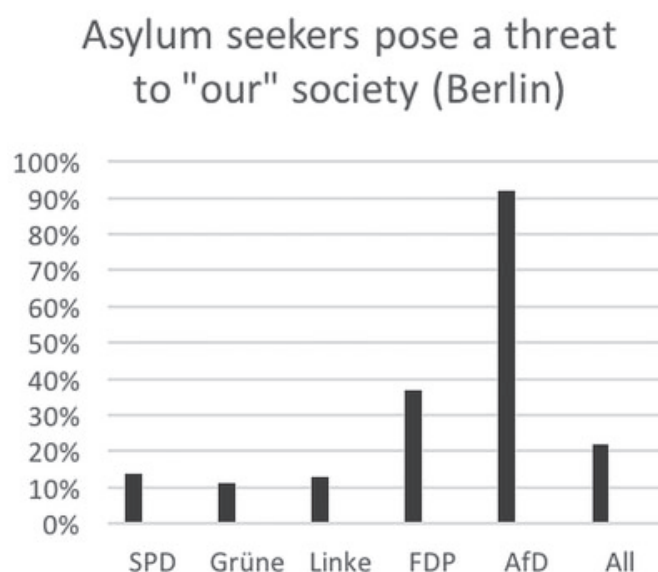


Figure 10. Asylum seekers pose a threat to "our" society. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

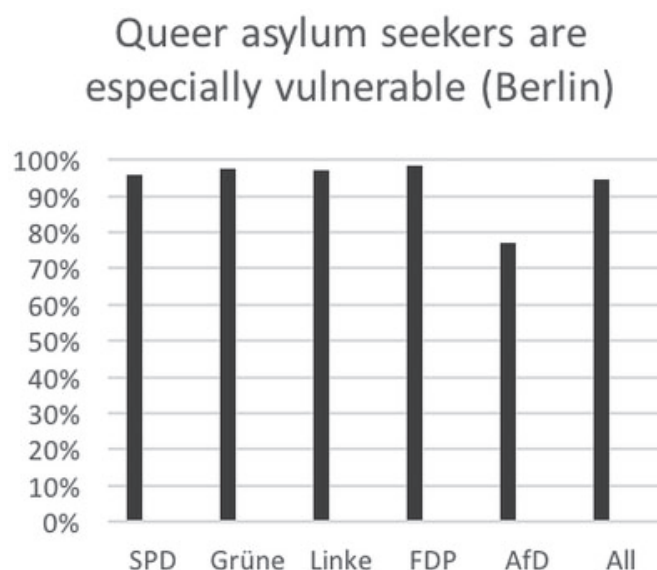


Figure 11. Queer asylum seekers are especially vulnerable. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

wing LGBTIQ* voters. First, that there is a “need to stop asylums seekers or migrants in general from entering the country.” Voters mentioned, for example, that it was necessary to “stop the wave of refugees to Vienna” or to “stop the wave of asylum seekers” (LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015–2016). The second issue gay right-wing voters addressed is “homophobia among migrants” and “Islamist violence against gays.” Transphobia is not considered an important issue as compared with homophobia.

Overall, these answers show clear electoral homonationalist attitudes and a certain hierarchization among LGBTIQ* demands within the right-wing electorate. This illustrates an obvious stratification of voters within the LGBTIQ* “community” and mirrors the homonationalist mobilizations of far-right parties. Importantly, this also implies a differentiation between “normal” homosexuals, or national homosexuals who should be protected while other “queers” are not protection-worthy.

Political System

Right-wing populists quite often display a special relationship with democracy and its institutions while drawing on strong leadership (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2014). Thus, the next set of questions addresses attitudes toward the political system and the “authoritarian temptation” (Heitmeyer 2018) of voters.

A vast majority of the participants in both cities support a democratic system. In Berlin, there is only a one-point difference between the general LGBTIQ* and the right-wing LGBTIQ* electorate (figure 13). The situation in Vienna is slightly different: only 72.9 percent of the LGBTIQ* voters of the

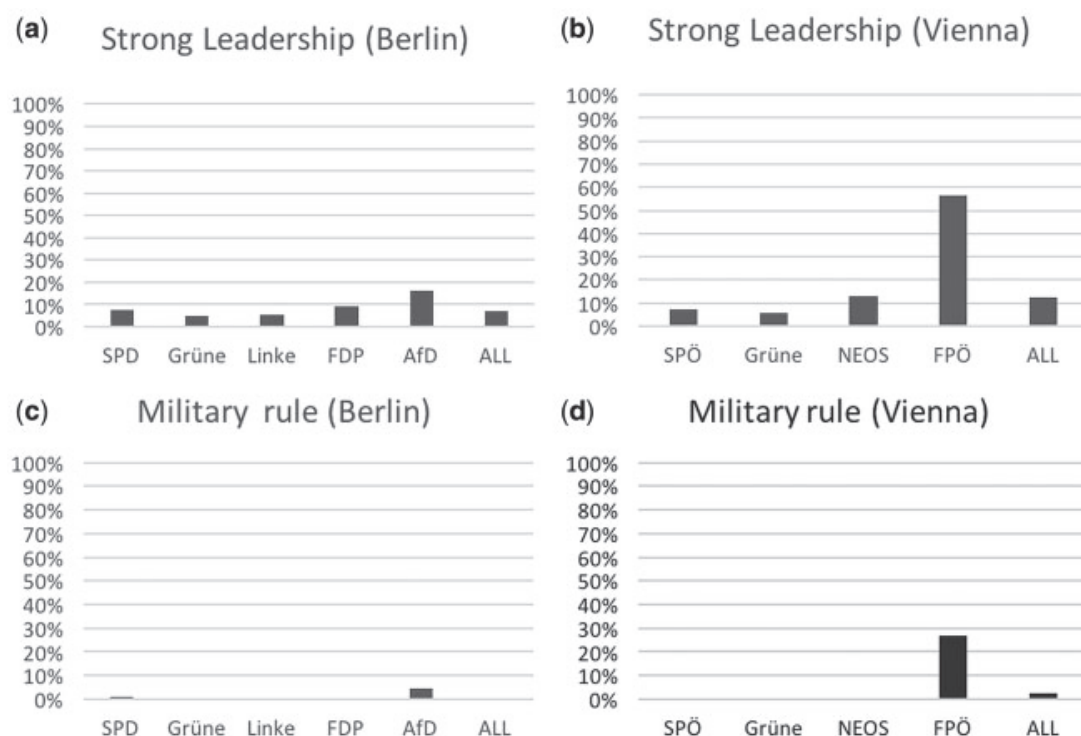


Figure 12. Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections/having the army rule. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

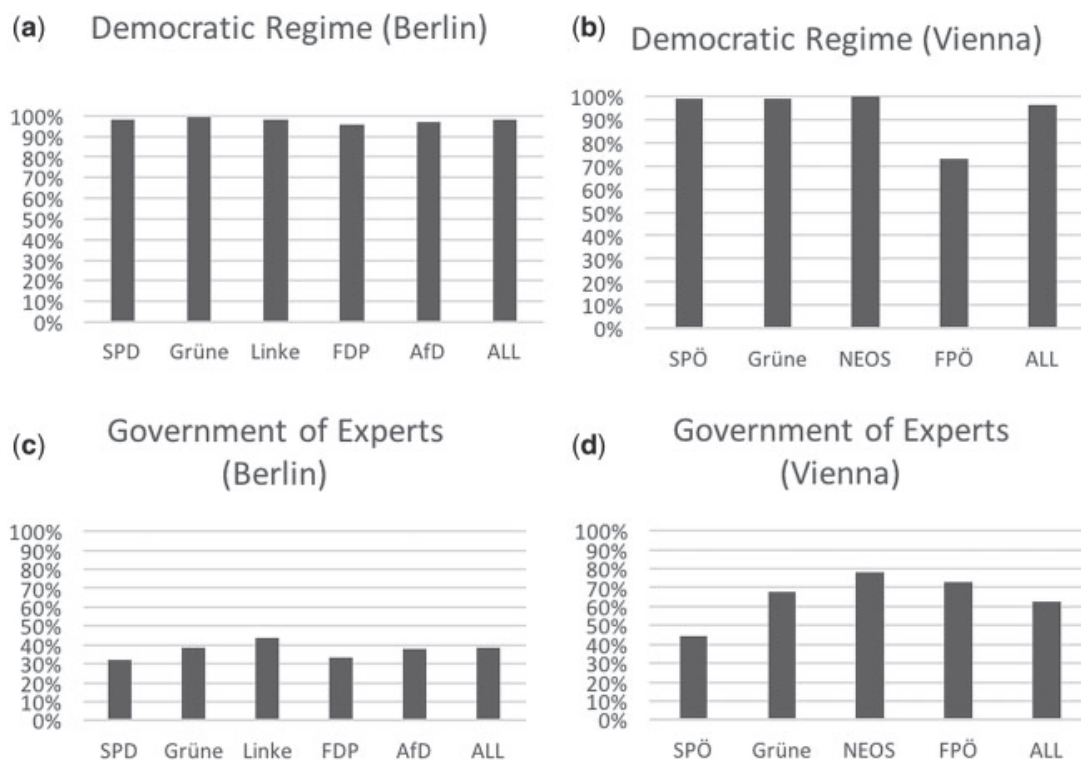


Figure 13. Having a democratic political system/having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country. *Source:* Authors, based on their own data of the LGBTIQ* Election Survey 2015/2016.

FPÖ favor a democratic system. The LGBTIQ* voters of the FPÖ also stand out in two other questions: 27 percent of them agree that having the army rule would be a (very) good idea. More than half (56.7 percent) agree with having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections; 16.2 percent of the LGBTIQ* voters of the AfD support this idea as well (figure 12). This shows that a segment of FPÖ and AfD voters sympathizes with authoritarian political systems. More than half agree with having a strong leader while up to 27 percent would support a military government. More than half of the Viennese respondents and a third of the Berlin respondents (of the overall sample) support an expert-led government. The approval of an expert-led government is divided between voters in Vienna and Berlin and not between right-wing voters and the whole sample. In Vienna, 62.7 percent of the whole sample (and 72.9 percent right-wing voters) support the idea of an expert government. In Berlin, it is the other way around. And 38.8 percent of the whole sample (and 37.6 percent right-wing voters) agree with the question. Interestingly, the differences among voters with regard to questions of authoritarian rules are more evident between the two city samples than among the different party voters. One explanation could be that the FPÖ and its demands are more established. The party has a long history in Austria, which is not only linked to German-nationalist tradition but focuses on strong party leaders. In contrast, the AfD does not have those strong leading figures due to its recent foundation as well as its disruptive history regarding the leaders of the party. Overall, we do see a tendency toward authoritarian rules of FPÖ voters among the LGBTIQ* participants. In terms of electoral homonationalism, this is something future research should pay even more attention to. Namely, to what extent are authoritarian attitudes linked to homonationalism and its paradox links between anti-feminists and anti-LGBTIQ*, racists attitudes as well as nationalist feminism and queerness.

Conclusion

Our study of voting behavior and political attitudes of LGBTIQ* voters in Vienna and Berlin shows that, on the one hand, these voters are quite progressive and mostly support liberal or left-wing parties. This is true for both our samples in Vienna and Berlin. However, out of our survey participants between 7 percent (AfD) and 8 percent (FPÖ) support far-right parties in the local elections of Vienna and Berlin. Our study showed clearly that the LGBTIQ* community is not a homogeneous unit, but a very heterogeneous group of people with differing political attitudes. Our aim was to identify the different attitudes and motivations in terms of voting and to discuss to what extent “homonationalist” attitudes play a role in deciding which party to vote for. We conclude that there is an evidence for what we call electoral homonationalism, a practice of expressing homonationalist values through voting and

linking of homonationalist values to anti-LGBTIQ* and anti-feminist, anti-genderist attitudes, as summarized below.

First, FPÖ and AfD voters tend to hierarchize among LGBTIQ* groups. FPÖ and AfD voters in our sample deproblematize homophobia and transphobia compared with the “progressive” voters. This hierarchization is also evident among some LGBTIQ* people in our sample. Furthermore, the tendency of far-right LGBTIQ* voters to deprioritize openly gay candidates, reflects the societal invisibility (Ayoub 2016) of some LGBTIQ* persons and illustrates the public–private divide (Scrinzi 2017, 134). These attitudes mirror the argumentation frequently used by right-wing parties, that sexual orientation is private and not subject to public discourse. It is linked to the already mentioned depoliticizing of LGBTIQ* issues and corresponds to a wider societal phenomenon: while gays and lesbians are finding increased acceptance in the countries analyzed, other sexual minorities are constantly neglected and discriminated against.

Second, far-right LGBTIQ* voters further hierarchize between men and women. Far-right voters are more inclined to hold discriminatory views on women and more often do not prioritize the issues of those who challenge gender norms (transphobia). This corresponds to anti-genderist and sexist views and implies that far-right LGBTIQ* voters also seem to support a traditional gender order (Klammer and Goetz 2017, 82) and the dominance of hegemonic masculinities (Connell 2005).

Third and importantly, our study shows that homonationalist attitudes are the main driver for voting right among LGBTIQ* persons in our sample. LGBTIQ* far-right voters almost fully supported anti-migrant and racist statements in our survey. More than 80 percent of the right-wing voters in both cities support discrimination against immigrants when it comes to job distribution. In the Berlin survey, the vast majority of the right-wing LGBTIQ* voters support the call for stricter rules on accepting migrants and think that asylum seekers are a threat to “our culture.”

Fourth, our results show there is also a strikingly high authoritarian potential—especially among those who voted for the FPÖ in Vienna. This evidence calls for further research on the links between electoral homonationalism and authoritarian attitudes.

Against this background, our data imply not only the reproduction of anti-feminist and anti-LGBTIQ* discourse among LGBTIQ* voters of our sample but also show that homonationalist attitudes are the main motivation to vote for AfD and FPÖ for right-wing voters in our sample. With their electoral homonationalism, right-wing LGBTIQ* voters have a paradoxical idea of an equal society. In it, LGBTIQ* persons and their rights need protection, however, only from an alleged outside threat. This idea of society allows for a pseudo-equal and pseudo-emancipatory position, as they do not support the expansion of rights or visibility of the LGBTIQ* people. This view serves a racist construction of the Muslim or migrant “Other” as well as the gendered

and queered “Other” and their exclusion from this society. Unfortunately, this exclusionary form of identity politics (Wodak 2015) shows that in Vienna and Berlin some LGBTIQ* voters are even willing to risk a restriction of their own personal freedoms for an imagined “greater good.” Although we have already experienced the devastating political and material consequences of (electoral) homonationalism for migrants and Muslim persons in Austria and Germany, the repercussions of this on LGBTIQ* demands and the struggle for equality are still unknown and will require further research.

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Notes

1. Lesbian, gay, bi, trans*, inter, and queer.
2. The controversy of marriage equality is discussed from a queer-feminist perspective also in the countries at stake (see, for instance, Mesquita 2017).
3. “Ich bin nicht trotz meiner Homosexualität, sondern auch wegen meiner Homosexualität hier.”

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5. Connecting the dots

Sexual orientations and gender identities are strong predictors for political participation and political attitudes, especially for LGBTIQ citizens (Egan 2012: 597). Regarding the guiding research question of this PhD thesis, the results of the papers show, that gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany are a heterogeneous group of people, that mainly – but not always – support left-wing and progressive issues and political parties. Gay men are the subgroup with the most diverse political attitudes and support liberal as well as left-wing and Green parties. There is a small group of gay men that support right-wing parties. Lesbian women mainly support Green and left-wing parties. Trans* voters mainly support the left-wing party Die Linke. This is also reflected in their political attitudes. Trans* voters show strong support for left-wing issues. Lesbian women back environmental as well as left-wing policies and gay men mainly support more center left and liberal issues. There is a certain number of gay men who also support right-wing issues.

Looking at these results one must take the nature of the survey into account. A self-selective survey is not representative. However, in the absence of representative data, it is the best way to explore and analyze voting behavior as well as political attitudes of LGBTIQ citizens. The data that constitute the basis for the analysis of this PhD thesis was the largest LGBTIQ sample to date and includes people ranging in age from 18 to 97, with different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, from all over Germany. Therefore, the survey provides a good sample for the analysis of citizens who identify as LGBTIQ.

The exploration of voting behavior and political attitudes of gay, lesbian and trans* citizen reveals several interesting societal and theoretical implications. Thinking about political participation of queer citizens challenges us to question traditional categories of voting behavior research and generally political participation research. Above all, it highlights the problematic nature of the minority concept itself, which is further aggravated by survey/category-based social science research, where certain categories of identification are constructed from outside. The minority status is ascribed rather than individuals choosing to join this label. From a political science point of view, the findings show that empirical survey research on LGBTIQ voters requires an extension of socio-demographic categorization. This does not merely challenge common notions of citizenship, but also enables us to consider citizenship in a broader and more inclusive way which is especially important in the context of political participation of marginalized individuals. Research

on LGBTIQ citizens can break up traditional approaches in political and social science and add a new perspective to pressing issues within our societies.

5.1 Progressive voting

The research conducted within this PhD project confirms previous findings on LGBTIQ voting (Schaffner/ Senic 2006; Swank 2018; Turnbull-Dugarte 2020a; Turnbull-Dugarte 2020b), that a majority of LGBTIQ citizens votes for left-wing or progressive parties. A vast majority supports parties like the Green Party (Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen), the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) or the far left party Die Linke. Although there is some support for conservative and right-wing parties among gay men, there is only little support for those parties from lesbian women and no support for those parties from the trans* participants in our survey. When looking at the different subgroups analyzed as part of this PhD it becomes clear, that support for the Green party is highest among lesbian women while gay men rather support social-democratic and liberal parties like the SPD or the FDP. Trans* citizens mainly support the Green Party or the far-left Die Linke.

One possible explanation could be the fact that both, the Green Party as well as Die Linke understand and present LGBTIQ issues as cross cutting issues within their party programs and election manifestos. SPD and FDP mainly focus on issues like marriage equality which directly appeal to homosexual voters. This could be a reason for their support from the group of gay men. Since both, SPD and FDP only talk about trans* issues under the umbrella term of LGBTIQ and do not have special policy propositions, it is not surprising, that the support for both parties from the trans* voters in our sample is quite low. Moreover, the fact that men tend to earn more money than women (DeStatis 2022) might be another explanation for the support of the FDP, widely seen as a party advocating the interests of the wealthy. Moreover, it has to be taken into account that our data has a certain bias in regard to class, income and education. In the context of social equality, it is especially important to highlight the high number of economically well-situated participants.

The diversity within the gay, lesbian and trans* electorate also has some implication for political parties or policy makers, who ‘need to be aware that for many people this group, legal and social aspects of citizenship are intertwined and mutually constitutive in a way that is different to other social groups’ (Kuhar et al. 2018: 116). In order to make politicians and policy makers aware of LGBTIQ issues, however, LGBTIQ voters and their political demands need to be visible and recognized by both politics and society. This PhD adds to this encompassing notion of citizenship by highlighting such exact political claims.

Even though LGBTIQ citizens are less and less excluded in many societies, it is imperative to remember that while some aspects of living an openly queer life are becoming 'accepted' by wider society, many forms of exclusion and discrimination are still a reality for non-heterosexual citizens. As portrayed in the state of the art, according to Marshall (1950) one has to take the *political* citizenship as well as the *social* dimension of citizenship into account when talking about access to political participation. Even if there are ever fewer legal obstacles for LGBTIQ people in Germany to participate equally in the political and societal sphere, the social dimension and its reality of discrimination and exclusion must be considered. A broad variety of instruments of political participation might not be as easy to access for queer people as it is for others. Therefore, the most crucial element of political participation in a democracy – voting – is even more important when it comes to marginalized groups and individuals. This is especially important seeing as research shows that minority groups – apart from sexual and gender identity minorities – are less likely to participate in democratic processes (Just 2017; Rocha et al. 2010). It would be important for future research to connect the theoretical debates regarding ethnic and social minorities and focus specifically on the intersections of ethnicity, gender (identity) and sexual orientation.

5.2 Diverse political attitudes

The insights gained from the three papers presented above show that gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany are not one monolith but a diverse group of people with different backgrounds and realities of life. Inherent in the data is that groups often portrayed as uniform are indeed very diverse in their political attitudes. In all three groups examined, discrimination and the fight against homo- and trans*phobia are very important issues. For some people, those issues are of such significance that they constitute the main reason for their voting decision. The data suggest that gay, lesbian and trans* citizen have a high level of intersectional consciousness, which 'may draw new people into movement mobilizations, and it may generate visibility for new narratives of how to understand the broader dimensions of any particular struggle' (Ayoub 2019: 24). A vast majority of the people in all three surveys support trans* rights and see trans*phobia as an issue that is as important as homophobia. This also holds true if we look only at the attitudes of gay men and lesbian women in our surveys who do not just consider homophobia a pressing issue in society but feel the same way about trans*phobia.

As we have seen in the state of the art, discrimination increases group consciousness and thus provides the motivation necessary for a person to participate in politics (Proctor 2016: 114). In the case of gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany, this awareness of discrimination against oneself

or others leads to a high level of group consciousness and solidarity within the LGBTIQ community and in part also with other marginalized groups.

Apart from issues connected to discrimination, homo- or trans*phobia, other topics like climate change, wages or migration were more important when deciding who to vote for. A vast majority of the gay, lesbian and trans* voters display a high awareness regarding social and environmental issues and rate issues like education or climate change as very important issues our society faces today. When asked whether refugees or asylum seekers should be permitted into Germany, a majority of gay, lesbian and trans* respondents agreed. This illustrates an awareness for the needs of a marginalized group that goes beyond ones' own identity. Solidarity with others seems a high priority for gay, lesbian and trans* citizen in Germany. One possible explanation for this could be, that if someone experiences discrimination or exclusion it leads to an awareness of discrimination and exclusion faced by others even if oneself is not affected by it. However, as laid out mainly in the third paper, there is a certain number of mainly gay men and some lesbian women who feel migration is the main threat to society at present.

Gay men in the sample are also slightly more center or even center-right in their political attitudes, illustrated for example in their support of conservative and right-wing parties or, like in the case of the FDP, fiscally conservative and socially liberal. In the context of economic policies, a majority of the gay men and lesbian women agree that performing well has to pay off again ("Leistung muss sich wieder lohnen"). In terms of social equality and the question whether this would be more important than the freedom of an individual, more than half the gay and lesbian participants disagreed. The answers to both questions show that neoliberal attitudes are also rooted within the LGBTIQ electorate. This may again be down to the bias of the sample, as the majority of participants in the survey identified as middle class or upper class. These findings can also be discussed within a wider frame of intersectionality approaches 'which highlight the ways in which social and political forces manipulate the overlapping and intersecting inequalities within marginal groups' (Strolovitch 2007: 23). Even though participants in our study are marginalized as gay, lesbian or trans*, they might be part of other societal groups like the upper class or well-educated people and have advantages as compared to other heterosexual people in this regard.

As laid out in the introduction, marriage equality played a big role in the discourse of LGBTIQ politics in Germany. However, if we look at the attitudes of the participants in the survey, marriage equality was only the fifth most important issue for the lesbian women and among gay voters it did

not even make the top five. One reason for this could be, that the 2017 elections were the first federal elections after marriage equality had been introduced earlier that year.

All in all, the results of our studies suggest that the gay, lesbian and trans* citizens' support for specific political parties is highly issue-oriented and policy-driven. This can be observed across the political spectrum. However, one cannot draw the conclusion that gay, lesbian and trans* citizen always vote in their perceived self-interest, as the third paper illustrates. Some gay and lesbian voters are demonstrably willing to put their own legal situation aside and support parties like the AfD (or the CDU/ CSU) that openly oppose LGBTIQ equality because they consider other issues more important.

6. Conclusion

The guiding research interest of this PhD thesis are political attitudes and voting behavior in terms of party preferences among gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany. The findings of this PhD show that there are strong links between political attitudes and voting behavior in terms of party preferences among gay, lesbian and trans* citizens in Germany. This holds true for both political attitudes towards more equality for LGBTIQ citizens, as well as other issues ranging from social equality to the environment and migration. My research shows that the LGBTIQ community in Germany is not a monolith but a group of people with many similarities but also contradictions. There is a community of gay, lesbian and trans* people who consider themselves part of a community. These people also vote for left-wing or progressive parties. Homo- and trans*phobia are important issues for them. They have progressive or left-wing political attitudes and vote for progressive or left-wing parties. However, some gay and lesbian citizen do not identify as part of the or a LGBTIQ community and/ or support conservative and right-wing parties. Some of them are willing to put aside their own legal situation because they feel other issues like the perceived threat from migrants are more important. This is what I identify as 'electoral homonationalism'. This concept, based on Puars 'homonationalism' (2007) constitutes one of the central theoretical takeaways of this PhD thesis as it helps us to not only analyze homonationalist attitudes but also test this theoretical concept.

One aim of this PhD thesis was to bridge this gap between conventional political participation research and queer studies and add to both strings of research. I was able to show that it is necessary to rethink and adjust the clear-cut categories that build the basis of the research on voting behavior.

As the research of this PhD project shows, sexual orientation and gender identity are relevant categories when researching political participation. The findings of this PhD thesis give new impulses to the discussion regarding identity and political participation and especially voting. The diversity within the group of LGBTIQ citizens leads towards different identity aspects. Some individuals might be marginalized in regard to one aspect of their identity (e.g. sexual orientation or gender identity) but might find themselves in a more privileged group in regard to other aspects (e.g. white male). Therefore, ‘those who occupy multiple subordinate identities, [...], may find themselves caught between the sometimes conflicting agendas of two political constituencies to which they belong, or are overlooked by these movements entirely’ (Cole 2008: 444). These findings should be discussed within a wider frame of intersectionality approaches ‘which highlight the ways in which social and political forces manipulate the overlapping and intersecting inequalities within marginal groups’ (Strolovitch 2007: 23). Unfortunately, the data does not provide evidence on the ethnic background of the participants. Therefore, a deeper analysis of the intersectional dimensions of the LGBTIQ voters is not possible but would be very fruitful and should be drawn upon for further research. Such research should delve deeper here and further explore the connections between identity formation and voting behavior. Moreover, the findings are relevant not only to those who study identity formation but also to scholars interested in how identity groups achieve policy change through the political process.

Political participation in connection with gender, identity and sexuality are crucial if we hope to understand our democracy today. The research of this PhD thesis shows that there is an LGBTIQ community but there are some factors disrupting this community like class, gender, or ethnicity. It is important to keep in mind that both discrimination and exclusion within society as well as within the LGBTIQ community have certain effects on LGBTIQ citizens, their political attitudes, and their voting behavior. Inequalities in political participation undermine the quality of deliberation, representation, and legitimacy in the democratic process. Therefore, it is crucial to further research as well as actively work on dismantling those inequalities.

7. Literature

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8. Table of Figures

Table 1: Overview of the papers – p. 5

Figure 1: ILGA Ranking 2021 1 – p. 13

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Wien, am 22.03.2022

Erklärungen nach § 17 der Promotionsordnung des Fachbereichs Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften der Justus–Liebig–Universität Gießen

Ich erkläre: Ich habe die vorgelegte Dissertation selbständig, ohne unerlaubte fremde Hilfe und nur mit den Hilfen angefertigt, die ich in der Dissertation angegeben habe. Alle Textstellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus veröffentlichten Schriften entnommen sind, und alle Angaben, die auf mündlichen Auskünften beruhen, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Bei den von mir durchgeführten und in der Dissertation erwähnten Untersuchungen habe ich die Grundsätze guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis, wie sie in der ‚Satzung der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis‘ niedergelegt sind, eingehalten.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Hunklinger', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael Hunklinger, MA

