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Out of the Norm?! Producing, Evaluating, and Perpetuating Gender Difference through Language Practice

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Producing, evaluating, and perpetuating gender difference through language practice

Miriam Zapf, Andrea Chagas López & Silke Jansen

Healthcare, product design, urban planning – across various domains, there seems to be a noticeable and often unconscious tendency to prioritize the perspectives and needs of men, while those of women and other genders are not taken into consideration. For example, randomized controlled studies in the medical field have shown that women are frequently underrepresented, with the male gender being treated as the default human being, and women and other genders as the exception. This can result in serious consequences for people who do not correspond to the norm, for instance in the detection of health problems or access to effective medical treatments (cf., e.g., Daitch et al. 2022).

Norms and deviations from them also play a crucial role in understanding how language is used, perceived, and has evolved within societies. Various linguistic traditions highlight the nature of language as a social institution, being

essentially based on conventions that members of a speech community follow in order to communicate. While most linguistic approaches within academia today prioritize a descriptive approach to social norms, highlighting their arbitrary character, processes of linguistic standardization and codification (e.g., through grammar books, dictionaries, and language policies) often create norms which are treated as absolute within a prescriptive framework. As a result, deviations from prescriptive use are sanctioned as "errors." In this context, it is important to highlight that language is not just an arbitrary system of communication, but a fundamental component of social structure and organization. The language norms that characterize a given speech community do not exist in a vacuum, but rather are shaped by social relationships and cultural values that are constantly (re)produced through conventional linguistic practices.

The (re)production of such historically contingent, yet ultimately arbitrary social norms through linguistic practices is an example of the performative potential of language, which has garnered greater attention with the pragmatic turn in linguistics, ushered by Speech Act Theory (SAT; Austin 1962; Searle 1969). SAT posits that speech acts consist not only of the locutionary act, but also include an illocutionary act (the intention behind the utterance) and a perlocutionary act (its effect). Hence, speaking is also acting.

Drawing inspiration from SAT and the concept of performativity, Butler (1993, 1999, 2004) posits that gender is also performative, highlighting that it "is real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler 1988: 527). As such, gender is not something we are but rather something we do. Moreover, Butler pinpoints the repetitive character of such performative acts. It is through the recurrence of performative acts that a specific performance can become ritualized within a given society (cf. Butler 1993: 10). For example, specific dress codes can be used to perform gender categories according to the set of rules and norms within a specific society and the zeitgeist, but these are not universal and everlasting; the categories and the ways they are performed can vary across communities and change over time. The dynamic nature of gender categories and the way they are actively produced via social interaction has already been described several decades ago in ethnomethodology (cf. Garfinkel 1967; West & Zimmerman 1987). The use of linguistic resources plays an important role here, as they can bring about and perpetuate such differences.

In this thematic issue, we explore how linguistic practices serve as essential tools for the performative production of social categories, with a special focus on gender. Drawing on different theoretical frameworks and examples from case studies of various speech communities and social realms, the contributions examine how gender is constructed through iterative speech acts, establishing some of these constructions as the norm, while identifying (and often devaluating) others as deviations. In this exploration, we concentrate on three distinct manifestations of the performative potential of language practices:

1. **Language structure** (understood here as the sedimentation of ongoing linguistic practices), particularly examining the intersection between grammatical gender and social gender categories;
2. **Indexicalities**, i.e. the notion that the use of specific linguistic forms or codes by individuals or groups are socially interpretable

by members of speech communities and/or communities of practice, serving as indices for membership in a social category; and

3. **Discourse**, understood as a societal arena in which socially significant categories are constructed, communicated, and perpetuated.

Language structure, as an abstraction of the conventions underlying language use, is often the first topic that comes to mind when reflecting on the relationship between language, norms, and gender. In German and Romance-speaking societies, debates on language structure and gender have predominantly centered around the question of whether a direct connection between grammatical and social gender exists (cf. Zapf 2024). Central to these debates is the so-called "masculine generic," a topic that has sparked considerable controversy. The term "masculine generic" describes a linguistic practice according to which masculine forms (such as pronouns and nouns referring to human beings) are used to refer to men, women, and other genders collectively or in generic contexts. This practice assumes that the masculine form is neutral and inclusive of all genders.

However, the alleged "neutral" nature of the masculine generic has raised several concerns and criticisms, leading to advocacy for so-called "gender-inclusive" forms. In metalinguistic debates, the use of masculine forms when referring to mixed-gender groups is still often portrayed as a grammatical norm, while gender-inclusive alternatives are presented as deviations, and thus deemed incorrect (cf., e.g., Becker 2019; Müller-Spitzer 2021; Zapf 2024: 23–29). In a notable and particularly emblematic performative act, the Bavarian authorities recently reinforced the perceived "incorrectness" of certain gender-inclusive forms by legally prohibiting their use in certain contexts, arguing they do not conform to German orthographic norms. The argument that gender-inclusive forms are incorrect is frequently supported by framing language evolution as a "natural" process, dismissing seemingly "artificial" interventions to language use as illegitimate deviations from (perceived) language norms.

Against this backdrop, Müller-Spitzer and Ochs argue in their contribution "Shifting social norms as a driving force for linguistic change: Struggles about language and gender in the German Bundestag" that shifting social norms are a frequent source for language change. They exemplify this by analyzing debates about designations for gays and lesbians, about naming practices for women, and about gender-inclusive language in the German Bundestag. Their analysis shows that concerns about language and gender have repeatedly been discussed in the Bundestag since the 1980s, and that such debates have influenced linguistic practices in the Bundestag plenaries. Hence, interventions to language use are neither unusual nor inappropriate.

Questions of language use beyond the masculine generic also extend to translation studies, for instance concerning the question of how to promote the use of gender-inclusive language forms in machine translation (cf., e.g., Piergentili et al. 2024). Chagas, Hilß, and Müller's study "Neural machine translation and a queer perspective on gender bias – A qualitative study of how different strategies of *écriture inclusive* are translated into German by Google Translate and DeepL" approaches the question of whether neural machine translations (NMT) provide translations which go beyond a binary gender distinction. The authors examine how NMT (Google Translate and DeepL) handles the translation of French-to-German sentences in which

gender-inclusive strategies are used. The study reveals the prevalence of gender bias in translations generated by NMT systems. Although NMT does in some cases produce translations which use gender-inclusive strategies, they always encompass a binary gender distinction. Furthermore, masculine forms are typically favored as the default, regardless of the gender-inclusive strategy used in the source language. Translations are further influenced by gender stereotypes, particularly regarding prestigious professional and academic titles. As such, genderqueer individuals are notably excluded in the translations produced by NMT. Moreover, the technical challenges of translating gendered language, such as the use of specific characters like the point symbol for gender diversity, affect translation quality. The results are not surprising since this technology relies on corpora and algorithms that emerge from a society that still debates on linguistic practices regarding gender-inclusive strategies. In this vein, the article argues that without ethical frameworks for AI and data training sets, machine translation systems will continue to reinforce gender biases and representational harms.

Beyond gendered grammatical forms, speakers can deliberately use linguistic elements as a semiotic resource to perform gender and other social categories due to their **social indexical meaning**. They can strategically employ features associated with a particular group to express affiliation with and/or create distance from specific social categories. For example, individuals may adopt specific speech patterns to index their gender or sexual orientation (cf., e.g., Cameron & Kulick 2003; Motschenbacher 2007), leveraging socially shared associations between linguistic features and group membership. Thus, by using linguistic features commonly associated with, for example, femaleness or homosexuality, individuals can construct and perpetuate social differences between women and men, homosexuals and heterosexuals, and so forth.

In these processes, individuals often identify with a specific group – the ingroup – and categorize those they do not perceive as belonging to "their" group as an outgroup. The ingroup tends to be treated as the norm, while the outgroup is perceived and presented as a deviation from this norm. Such processes are often reflected in language use and further marginalize those perceived as members of the outgroup – for example when trans people are denied the use of their preferred pronouns, or when the existence of more than two genders is rejected by refusing the use of all-gender-inclusive forms. In the context of linguistic research on social discrimination, it is particularly illuminating to explore how linguistic resources are employed to construct social groups, to set them apart from one another and/or to evaluate them, establishing hierarchies between linguistic forms and the groups that they index.

Taking the multilingual society of Macau as a case example, Dohardt's contribution "Gender and language use in Macau, 16th – 19th century." illustrates how gender roles can shape linguistic repertoires both on an individual and a societal level, producing indexicalities with long-reaching historical consequences. Analyzing different kinds of metalinguistic data in Portuguese and Macanese Creole (also referred to as 'Maquista') within a historically informed discourse framework, Dohardt shows how gender regimes in colonial Macau, together with social barriers based on ethnicity, regulated access to the social spaces where the Portuguese prestige norm was used, excluding women from acquiring normative Portuguese. This explains

why the formation and transmission of Macanese Creole is historically tied to female identities and, given the hierarchical relationships between gender roles, subordinate social positions. With the democratization of education, the traditionally gendered pattern of bilingualism became obsolete, leading to the amplification of all genders' linguistic repertoires to include Sinitic languages and English, in addition to Portuguese. This happened at the expense of Maquista, which over the centuries had become associated with low prestige and social marginalization. However, a positive reinterpretation of Maquista as an identity marker can still be observed at present, especially in the performance arts, where Macanese still thrives.

Hence, outgroups are not always passively defined as "deviations" by hegemonic outsiders. Some take pride in their outsider status, deliberately marking it through their language practices. One aspect that differentiates LGBTQIA+ linguistic practices from mainstream norms is the use of specific linguistic features, such as the glottal stop in speech or the asterisk in writing in German, to denote non-binary and fluid gender identities. Unlike the generic use of the masculine form, which is prevalent in many languages, LGBTQIA+ dialects often incorporate gender-neutral language or alternative pronouns to affirm the diverse spectrum of gender identities present within the community. This departure from the norm challenges traditional linguistic conventions, highlighting the importance of the explicit linguistic representations of LGBTQIA+ individuals and identities. In these instances, the respective linguistic features are often perceived as deviating from conventional ways of speaking, hence by using them speakers also position themselves as a deviation from a (linguistic and social) norm.

Alves Vieira studies one of these "unconventional" linguistic practices in his contribution "*Graças a Deusa* – (Social) media uses of Pajubá, the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ dialect." Alves Vieira's sociolinguistic study approaches the attitudes of Brazilian Portuguese native speakers toward Pajubá, which originated in the temples of Candomblé and then, despite prejudices, oppression, and stigmatization, flourished within the Afro-Brazilian community as well as the queer speech community, and later also in non-queer circles. The study reveals various functions of Pajubá on social media, including fostering a sense of belonging, facilitating dialogue between queer and non-queer communities, and conveying humor, coolness, and trendiness. Despite some negative perceptions, such as commercialization and appropriation, most respondents expressed positive attitudes towards its use in online communication. The largely positive attitudes towards the use of Pajubá on social media show that this dialect is spreading more and more in the virtual world which could influence less gender-queered ways of speaking Brazilian Portuguese.

On a more referential level, gender differences are also constructed in **discourse**, when speaking about men, women, and other genders. This is especially evident when it comes to gender stereotypes. Various studies have shown that men and women are presented in a stereotypical manner in the media, in advertisements, dictionaries, proverbs, and so on (cf., among many others, Bühlmann 2002; Motschenbacher 2006; Eichhoff-Cyrus 2009; Fernández Poncela 2011; Burel 2017; Charlesworth et al. 2021; Müller-Spitzer & Lobin 2022). Such discourses simultaneously produce and perpetuate perceived gender differences, often intertwining them with other dimensions of social difference such

as sexual orientation, race, and religion. This underscores the importance of intersectional frameworks in research on these processes.

In this sense, Jansen's contribution "*Simplemente te casas con un alemán y ya tienes tu residencia*: Verbal violence, interactive positioning, and the stereotype of the opportunistic marriage migrant in Latin American migration contexts in Germany" explores the intersection between gender and ethnicity. Migrant women are often in particularly powerless positions, making them more vulnerable to various forms of violence. Jansen explores the role of stereotypes in the emergence of verbal violence at the intersection of gender and ethnic stereotypes. Her analysis is based on selected examples from the VIOLIN corpus, which consists of narratives collected from Spanish-speaking migrants in Germany who recount interactions with members of German society that left them hurt, angry, or otherwise negatively affected. Focusing on the example of the "opportunistic marriage migrant," which portrays women from economically disadvantaged countries as cold-hearted opportunists who use German men to achieve citizenship and economic wealth, she shows that stereotypes play an essential role in the emergence of verbal violence. Departing from the assumption of Positioning Theory, which posits that communication involves assigning social positions to interlocutors that are often "enregistered" in the collective social imaginary of a speech community, Jansen analyzes two examples in which speech acts categorize migrants as marriage scammers, posing a significant threat to their self-perceived social identity, which leads to the perception of the speech act as an instance of verbal violence. Nevertheless, the very same migrants who are negatively affected by such positioning acts also reaffirm the stereotype in their narratives, using it as a counterpoint against which they construct their own identities as independent and sincere women.

While the narratives analyzed by Jansen represent individual discourse excerpts where overarching discourse patterns manifest on a personal scale, proverbs encapsulate centuries-long beliefs and convictions in a condensed textual form. In her article "Gender stereotypes and social normativity: Insights from the Great Chain of Being metaphor in proverbs," Lomotey analyzes gender stereotypes and ideologies in Spanish proverbs. She argues that proverbs not only reflect shared knowledge or attitudes of a speech community but can also inform the behavior of its speakers, which is why it is important to unravel the gender ideologies they convey. Using the Great Chain Metaphor Theory (Lakoff/Turner 1989), Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick/Fiske 1997), and the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar 2007) as analytical approaches, she finds that some stereotypes openly convey hostile sexism (e.g., the belief that women must be obedient to men), while others reflect rather benevolent sexism (e.g., the idea that women are weaker than men and must therefore be protected). She concludes that proverbs about women and men can have powerful effects because they can reinforce notions of normative male and female behavior.

Besides personal narratives, public debates, for example within political institutions, are an important arena where gender categories and relations are constructed. In her article "*...celles qui ne rêvent que d'une chose: être libérées et s'affranchir du voile...* Unravelling the discursive dynamics of sign making in the French Senate's debates on the hijab and the burkini," Zapf examines debates in the French Senate that deal with legislation on wearing a hijab or a burkini. These garments are a

recurring topic in many countries with immigration from Muslim-majority countries. Drawing from Gal & Irvine's (2019) theoretical framework on sign making, Zapf analyzes how they came to be recognized as socially meaningful signs and what this means for images of "the Muslim woman" constructed in such debates. The analysis reveals that the hijab and the burkini are constructed as indices for the Islamic religion, for a specific politico-religious ideology, and as an instrument to impose this ideology. Hence, these signs are depicted as a threat to French society. From this, two images of hijab/burkini-wearing women are constructed: "the passive victim" as well as "the militant extremist." The author argues that these images can only be explained when considering both the gender and the religious dimension, which shows the necessity of an intersectional approach when studying how Muslim women are othered.

With its focus on gendered language structure and related metalinguistic discourse, social indexicalities tied to gender identities, as well as gender-related discourses, this special issue addresses just three realms of study that can be crucial for gaining deeper insights into how norms and deviations from norms are used to construct social groups and position them as "normal" or "abnormal." Much remains to be explored regarding how language practices not only contribute to the formation and perpetuation of social groups, but also to the marginalization and discrimination of individuals who, for various reasons, do not conform to expected norms. If this volume has contributed in even a small way to deconstruct notions of "normal" linguistic and social behavior, thereby promoting a more inclusive society on different levels, the editors would be exceptionally pleased.

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02

Shifting social norms as a driving force for linguistic change: Struggles about language and gender in the German Bundestag

02

Shifting social norms as a driving force for linguistic change: Struggles about language and gender in the German Bundestag[1]

Carolin Müller-Spitzer & Samira Ochs

„Die Frauenrechtler mögen verzweifeln, aber es läßt sich nun einmal nicht ändern: die Sprache hält's mit dem Mann. Sie ist noch immer nicht emanzipiert."[2]
Karl Kraus (1912)

[1] We thank IDS colleagues Alexander Koplenig, Jan Oliver Rüdiger and Sascha Wolfer for fruitful discussions about research on gender-inclusive language. In addition to all of our appreciated colleagues in the field of gender linguistics, we would especially like to thank Luise Pusch for her pioneering and tireless work in the field, from which we particularly benefited in this article.

[2] 'The women's rights activists may despair, but it cannot be changed: the language keeps it with the man. It is still not emancipated.' Kraus, Karl 1912: Die Abgeordnete. In: Die Fackel, 14. Jg., Heft 351-353 S. 66 (https://fackel.oeaw.ac.at/F/351,066), In: AAC - Austrian Academy Corpus: AAC-FACKEL Online Version: „Die Fackel. Herausgeber: Karl Kraus, Wien 1899-1936" AAC Digital Edition No 1.

This paper focuses on language change based on shifting social norms, in particular with regard to the debate on language and gender. It is a recurring argument in this debate that language develops naturally and that severe interventions – such as gender-inclusive language is often claimed to be – are inappropriate and even dangerous. Such 'interventions' are, however, not unprecedented. Socially motivated processes of language change are neither unusual nor new. We focus on one important socio-political space in Germany, the German Bundestag. Taking other struggles about language, gender, and sexuality in the plenaries of the Bundestag as a starting point, our article illustrates that language and gender has been a recurring issue in the German Bundestag since the 1980s. We demonstrate how this is reflected in linguistic practices of the Bundestag, regarding a) the use of self-chosen designations for gays and lesbians; b) naming practices for women in political positions; and c) more gender-inclusive legal language. Lastly, we discuss implications of these earlier language battles for the currently very heated debate about gender-inclusive language, especially regarding new forms with gender symbols like the asterisk or the colon (*Lehrer*innen, Lehrer:innen* 'male*female teachers') which are intended to encompass all gender identities.

1 Introduction

Shifting social norms are a driving force for language change, in particular regarding the omnipresent social category of gender. In the debate about language and gender, a recurring argument is that the change towards more gender-inclusive language has nothing to do with 'natural' language change. New gender symbols,[3] e.g. the asterisk in *Wissenschaftler*innen* ('scientists'), are especially contested in this regard, being considered by some linguists "a private invention and an ugly thing that tears up words and deforms texts" (Eisenberg 2020: 9, own translation). They are often framed to be inventions, "aggressively offered by a small group to the majority of the population against their will", e.g. by academic circles or left-wing parties, and "have nothing to do with language change whatsoever […]" (Bayer 2019a, own translation, cf. also 2019b). This gives the impression that societal interven-

[3] In German (as in other languages), new ways to address non-binary people more explicitly have been developed by the language community in recent years. An option already well established in the language system is to use neutralisations such as epicene nouns or derivatives of adjectives and verbs in the plural. New forms are an extension of established feminisation strategies (pair forms *Lehrerinnen und Lehrer*, 'female and male teachers') with new gender symbols that are intended to explicitly include non-binary people (*Lehrer*innen*, *Lehrer:innen*, 'teachers'). The gender symbols are new orthographic symbols inserted between the masculine stem and the feminine suffix of personal nouns. These symbols work particularly well in the plural, because German noun phrase elements do not vary for gender in the plural, unlike in Italian or French, for example. Some qualitative studies have already found tendencies for less masculine generics and more gender-inclusive forms (cf. Adler & Plewnia 2019, Elmiger et al. 2017, Krome 2020). Quantitative studies on the use of these symbols are still scarce (e.g. Sökefeld 2021, Waldendorf 2023, Ochs & Rüdiger 2025).

tions into language, either on the public or on the political level, are unprecedented and not part of language as a living, constantly changing system. However, language change based on shifting social norms is neither unusual nor new, especially regarding social categories like gender and sexual orientation.

In our paper, we focus on political arenas in which language and gender is negotiated – more precisely, we discuss plenary protocols of the German Bundestag. The Bundestag is Germany's federal parliament and serves as the primary legislative body in the country's political system. Its members, elected by the German people every four years, represent the public and pass laws, set budgets, and make decisions on national issues such as selecting the Chancellor, who heads the government, and in overseeing government actions to ensure they adhere to democratic principles. The plenary debates are therefore at the core of German socio-political discourse and serve as an ideal basis to illustrate battles about gender and language in political realms. We mainly focus on tracing these historical battles and on relating them to the current debates about gender-inclusive language forms. In particular, we use these examples to demonstrate that social norms are inherently reflected in language, and that changes in these norms inevitably lead to changes in linguistic expression. This point is often overlooked in the current debate surrounding gender-inclusive language in German, where it is frequently denied that the negotiation of linguistic norms has always been a fundamental aspect of social interaction. Yet, these two dimensions—language and societal norms—are deeply interconnected, especially when it comes to naming practices for individuals. To enrich this discussion, we integrate findings from small-scale corpus analyses throughout the article.

In section 2, we discuss a language battle concerning the terms *schwul* ('gay') and *lesbisch* ('lesbian') in the German Bundestag. In section 3, we trace the slow development of gender-inclusive language forms in the Bundestag regarding naming practices for female delegates and gender-inclusive legal language. We explore implications of these past language struggles for current issues of gender-inclusive language in section 4, followed by concluding remarks in section 5.[4]

2 *Sprache der Gosse:* The reference to sexual orientations in the German Bundestag

The first language battle of the Bundestag that we discuss is not so much concerned with gender as with sexual orientation. However, as we will see below, these language disputes reveal patterns of behaviour that we can also see in debates about gender-inclusive language. In 1969, the criminal prosecution of lesbians and gays was abolished in Germany, and in 1990 the WHO officially decided that homosexuality was not a mental illness. In Germany, the infamous paragraph 175 was removed from the constitution only in 1994, whereby same-sex sexual acts were legally equated with heterosexual ones.[5] The German parliament discussed issues of homosexuality and legal equality in several stages and with several different agents at the core of

[4] Parts of the first two chapters have already been published in German in Müller-Spitzer (2022).

[5] For detailed insights into queer German history, see Gammerl (2023).

the debate.[6] On the linguistic level, which we focus on here, it is important to know that the words *schwul* and *lesbisch*, similar to English 'gay' and 'lesbian', had long been stigmatized. Their use to denote gay or lesbian people was often intended or understood to be defamatory and insulting. Traces of this could be found in German youth language, where *schwul* was typically used in a highly discriminatory and derogative way, for instance as a synonym for 'revoltingly bad' or 'unattractive'.[7] However, the lesbian and gay movement itself hijacked these words and used them to refer to themselves, so that today they are mostly used neutrally. This phenomenon of reappropriating pejorative terms can also be observed in other languages and lexical domains, "e.g. the word 'queen' to refer to an effeminate man" (Calder 2020: 2) in English.

We use an incident from the year 1988 in the German Bundestag to illustrate linguistic discussions around reappropriation and self-designation.[8] It was triggered by a number of linguistic battles that went to court in the late 1980s. In 1988, the *Feministische Frauengesundheitszentrum Berlin* ('Feminist Women's Health Centre Berlin') wanted to publish an advertisement containing the word *lesbisch.* The *Deutsche Postreklame GmbH* ('German Post Advertising Corporation') refused to print the ad, claiming that the word 'lesbians' went against good morals. The Centre's objection was dismissed by the Frankfurt Regional Court: Because of its "vulgar" choice of words, the text was claimed to be disrespectful towards "those women who, in their erotic sensibilities, are attracted to female partners" (Pusch 1994: 248, own translation); in other words, it would be discriminating against lesbian women.

With this ruling, the local court prioritized its own judgment of appropriateness over the self-declared interests of the feminist women's centre. Four MPs from the party *Die Grünen* ('The Greens', a green political party) used a *Kleine Anfrage* ('small request', a very condensed request addressed to the executive of the government) to bring this linguistic dispute to the attention of the Bundestag, i.e. to the national level. The MPs asked whether the federal government could use its influence to ensure that the advertisement was allowed to appear in Berlin, and whether the federal government was aware that lesbian support groups even have the word *lesbisch* in their name. The MPs also asked whether the federal government could guarantee "the right to self-designation in the sense of an emancipatory expression of opinion for gays and lesbians" (Pusch 1994: 249–250, own translation).

The President of the German Bundestag, Philipp Jenninger, then rejected the inclusion of the *Kleine Anfrage* because of its wording. He argued that the entire House would not accept the terms *Schwule* and *Lesben.* He would only include it in the agenda if *Homosexuelle und Lesbierinnen*[9] ('homosexuals and lesbians') were used. Similar to English, where the term 'homosexual' "had medical and pathologizing

6 For a detailed analysis, see Ebner (2018).

7 The Duden dictionary states that this use is old-fashioned and not really found anymore in today's youth language. However, the connotation remains and a derogative usage is still possible, although we do not have current data on the actual frequency and domain of use.

8 For more details see Pusch (1994).

9 An outdated term which refers to female inhabitants of Lesbos (https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Lesbierin_Frau).

Figure 1: Still of Rita Süßmuth from the documentary "Die Unbeugsamen". Watch the clip here: https://journals.ub.uni-koeln.de/index.php/the_mouth/article/view/11964 (01:03:51-01:04:47; Copyright: Broadview Pictures; https://www.dieunbeugsamen-film.de/; 2020).

connotations" (Calder 2020: 2) and was slowly replaced with the positive term 'gay' by the in-group itself, the terms demanded by the President were considered pejorative and not accepted by the gay and lesbian community. The applicants replied that *Schwule* and *Lesben* were the freely chosen self-designations and that the proposed alternatives were neither appropriate nor acceptable. Annemarie Renger (SPD; 'Social Democratic Party of Germany', a centre-left social democratic political party)[10] was by then the new President of the Bundestag, which is why she answered the request. In her statement, she said:

> The terms 'gay and lesbian movement' may have passed over from colloquial to standard language in the meantime, but all members of the House still cannot accept them. Let me remind you that on September 29, 1988, the vast majority of the Council of Elders also voted against allowing the use of such terms (as cited in Pusch 1994: 253, own translation).

CSU ('Christian Social Union')[11] member Fritz Wittmann also stressed that the terms *Schwule* and *Lesben* were "Sprache der Gosse" ('vocabulary belonging to the gutter') and not worthy to be used within the parliament (Pusch 1994: 253).

The documentary film *Die Unbeugsamen* ('The Unbending') by Torsten Körner vividly shows how strong the everyday discrimination against gays still was at that time.[12] In the film (see Figure 1), CSU politician Hans Zehetmair, then Bavarian Minister of Education, asserts on a talk show that, in his view, homosexuality is "against nature" and "a pathological behavior." He argues that society should focus less on "better understanding the margins" and instead prioritize the "protection of the majority." According to Zehetmair, these "margins" should ultimately be "thinned out." Overt homophobia in political settings was still socially acceptable, and few politicians acted against this widespread attitude (e.g. CDU politician and former minister Rita Süssmuth; an interview with her is following the talk show with Hans Zehetmair).

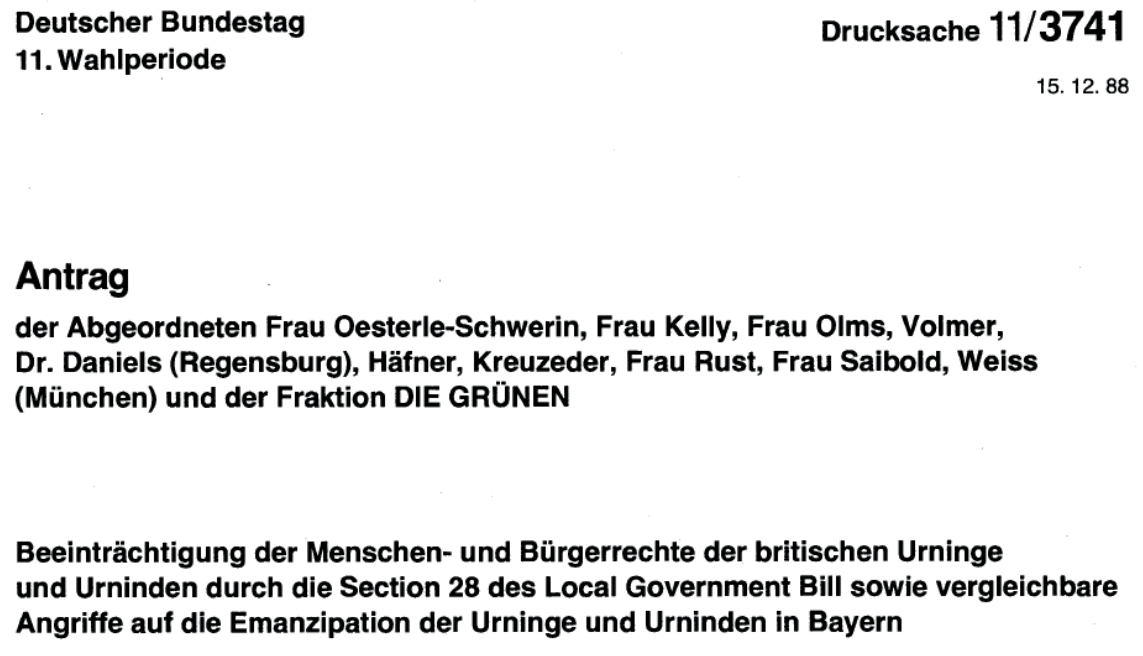
This reluctance to discuss matters openly also manifests itself in the further development of the language battle in parliament. After

[10] Annemarie Renger was the world's first female president of a democratically elected parliament.

[11] Forms a centre-right, conservative political alliance with the CDU, the 'Christian Democratic Union'.

[12] For an overview on the history of gay and queer people within the Federal Republic of Germany, see Könne (2018) and Gammerl (2023).

the refusal to negotiate the request if it contained the terms *Schwule* and *Lesben*, the Green party switched from confrontational to subtle methods. They reformulated the request with the made-up self-designation *Urninge und Urninden* found in a book about "male-male love" from the 19th century (Ulrichs 1864). In the explanatory note, the authors wrote that they preferred to fall back on this antiquated, made-up self-designation rather than to use the outsider designations *Homosexuelle und Lesbierinnen*.[13] This is how the motion was then actually negotiated (see Figure 2).



Deutscher Bundestag
11. Wahlperiode

Drucksache 11/3741

15. 12. 88

Antrag

der Abgeordneten Frau Oesterle-Schwerin, Frau Kelly, Frau Olms, Volmer, Dr. Daniels (Regensburg), Häfner, Kreuzeder, Frau Rust, Frau Saibold, Weiss (München) und der Fraktion DIE GRÜNEN

Beeinträchtigung der Menschen- und Bürgerrechte der britischen Urninge und Urninden durch die Section 28 des Local Government Bill sowie vergleichbare Angriffe auf die Emanzipation der Urninge und Urninden in Bayern

Figure 2: Excerpt from the protocol of the German Bundestag (December 15, 1988), containing the terms *Urninge* and *Urninden* (Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 11/3741: https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/11/037/1103741.pdf.)

It was not until 1991 that the dispute was settled. The Greens tabled another request with the terms *Schwule* and *Lesben*, giving the parliament the choice of accepting it as it was or, if rejected, publishing the rejection with the aim of maximum media coverage. The parliament then accepted the request in the submitted form, and since then the self-designations *Schwule* and *Lesben* are allowed to be included in the official negotiations and thus in the protocols (Pusch 1994: 258).

It is interesting that the rejection of the terms, as well as the court decision against them, are not openly directed against the linguistic-emancipatory efforts of the gay and lesbian movement. Rather, they are framed as protecting the gay and lesbian community, as

[13] Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 11/3741: https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/11/037/1103741.pdf; p.2.

it was assumed that a) the terms were pejorative *per se* and must be considered so also by the in-group, and that b) the politicians and judges as outsiders were more entitled to decide about the connotations and implications of the terms and therefore demand alternatives that they deemed more dignified.[14] A similar reliance on straw man arguments can be observed in today's debates on gender-inclusive language, which often sidestep an open exploration of the

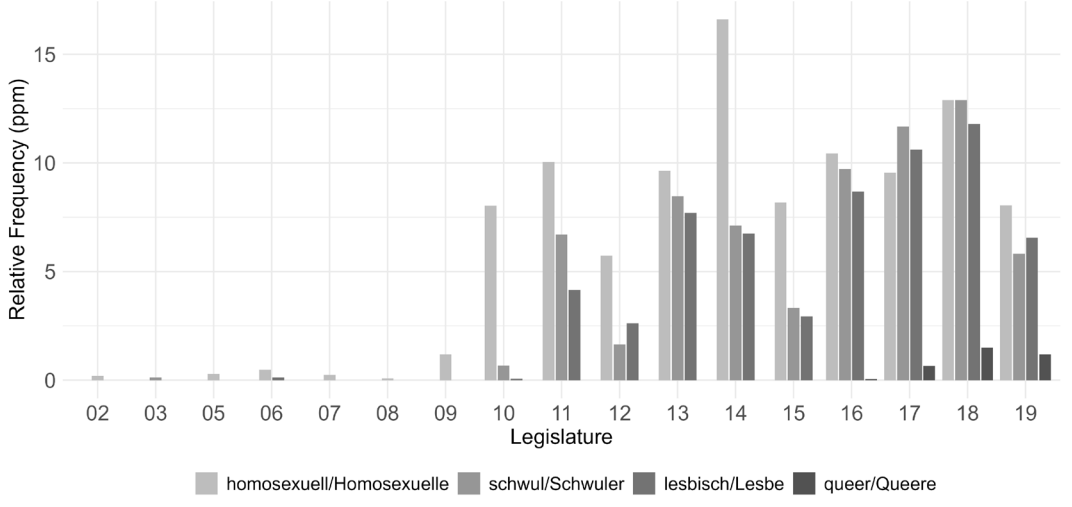


Figure 3: Relative frequencies of the adjectives *homosexuell, schwul, lesbisch, queer* and their nominal derivations in Bundestag protocols from 1953 to 2021.

social norms underpinning linguistic negotiations (see section 4).

We supplement these historical insights with our own analyses based on the corpus data of the German Bundestag plenaries. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the terms *homosexuell, schwul, lesbisch* and *queer* in the Bundestag protocols from the 2nd to the 19th legislature (from 1953 to 2021), which we extracted via regular expressions from the corpus of protocols of the German Bundestag (Müller & Stegmeier 2021). The topic of homosexuality is barely discussed at all before the 9th legislature (1980-1983), after which the term *homosexuell* is most prominent for several years. It is only in the 11th legislature (1987-1990), that *schwul* and *lesbisch* start to appear regularly in the protocols, most likely due to the discussions initiated and furthered by the Greens in 1988. From then on, the two terms appear nearly always in equal measure. This can be explained by the frequent use in pair forms, e.g. *schwule und lesbische Paare* ('gay and lesbian couples'), *lesbische Frauen und schwule Männer* ('lesbian women and gay men'), and *Schwule und Lesben* ('gays and lesbians'). The hypernym *homosexuell* remains the most frequent

[14] For moral aspects of using/not using self-designations, cf. Stefanowitsch 2018: 55–60; for sociological perspectives on self- vs. outsider-categorisation and the interactions between both, cf. Hirschauer (2021: 164–165).

realisation throughout the decades, and is less frequent than *lesbisch* and *schwul* only in the 17th legislature (2009-2013). This demonstrates that even though lesbian and gay communities chose *schwul* and *lesbisch* as self-designations, the use of the umbrella term *homosexuell*, to denote both, is typically dominant in the protocols. Contrary to English, where *gay* can be used as a synonym for *homosexual*, the term *schwul* in German is completely restricted to male homosexuals. Therefore, the existence and use of the underspecified hypernym *homosexuell* is still necessary in German (or, as another strategy, the use of both *schwul* and *lesbisch* in pair forms). In the 16th legislature (2005-2009), we see the emergence of the new umbrella term *queer*, an English loanword that comprises more than *homosexuell* (see Baker 2013). It is "a move beyond looking at dominant categories as homogenous identities towards a more inclusive understanding of non-normative sexuality [and gender identity]" (Jones 2021: 15). These conceptual changes go hand in hand with cultural frame shifts: "a sexual preference develops from the sin of sodomy to a medicalized concept of 'homosexuality', and then to a private lifestyle of same-sex romantic relationships with the option of an indiscriminate 'marriage for all'" (Hirschauer 2020: 329, own translation).

The parliamentary negotiations about language use and underlying social norms regarding sexuality show that those two dimensions are intrinsically intertwined. Several bigger questions arise from it: Who claims a voice and who listens to it? Who claims to know what is the appropriate term for a group? Who has the power to decide about these issues? These battles are often fought under false pretences: The real motives for rejecting the linguistic visibility of gay people were deliberately masked by using linguistic morals as a straw man argument. At the same time, we see that self-designations can be continuously changing. The linguistic community, consisting of in-group members and outsiders, is in a constant process of negotiating these terms, e.g. in the English-speaking world, where the explicit labelling of 'gay' and 'lesbian' is on the decline in favour of more inclusive and less categorical terms like 'queer' and 'LGBT' (Baker 2013, Jones 2021: 15).

3 Naming practices for women – a slow development towards more gender-inclusive language in the Bundestag

After focussing on queer self-designations and debates about them in the Bundestag in section 2, section 3 is dedicated to long-standing feminist emancipation efforts in politics. This is especially important regarding the pioneering role of feminist linguistic efforts for current debates about gender-inclusive language (see e.g. Lind & Nübling 2022, Müller-Spitzer 2021 and 2022, Simon 2022). We present three examples from the Bundestag to illustrate these efforts: The disputed use of the forms of address in the list of deputies (3.1), the use of feminised personal nouns when referring to individual women (3.2), and the use of pair forms to establish a more gender-inclusive legal language (3.3). Sections 3.2 and 3.3 are supplemented by our own corpus analyses.

3.1 *Frau* but not *Herr:* Feminine forms of address in the list of deputies

Our first example highlights the imbalance between practices of address for male and

female MPs. Deviations from a presumed norm tend to be marked linguistically. This has been discussed in the context of androcentrism, or 'male as norm' (MAN principle; see Bailey et al. 2019), which can manifest itself linguistically. Typical examples from German concern compounds like ***Frauen****fußball* or ***Frauen****mannschaft* ('women's football', 'women's team') as opposed to uncompounded *Fußball* or *Mannschaft* ('football', 'team'), which usually refer to male domains (see Kotthoff & Nübling 2018: 135, Pusch 1984: 98, 100–101, Trömel-Plötz 1978: 57). In few cases, we find 'female as norm', with the male being marked as the deviation, e.g. *Parfüm* 'perfume' vs. ***Herren****parfüm* 'gentlemen's perfume' (see Hornscheidt 2008 for a discussion on such deviations in Swedish). Other linguistic markings of deviations from supposed norms are found in racist terminologies ('white as norm' concepts, see Baker-Bell 2020), e.g. using 'white' and 'coloured' in direct opposition, or the German word *hautfarben* 'skin coloured' with light skin types as the default.

Liste der entschuldigten Abgeordneten

Abgeordnete(r)	entschuldigt bis einschließlich
Dr. Ahrens*	29. 9.
Baum	30. 9.
Frau Beer	30. 9.
Dr. Biedenkopf	30. 9.
Biehle	30. 9.
Büchner (Speyer) *	28. 9.
Carstensen (Nordstrand)	30. 9.
Frau Dr. Däubler-Gmelin	30. 9.
Frau Dempwolf	30. 9.
Ehrbar	30. 9.

Figure 4: Excerpt from the list of deputies of the German Bundestag from 1988 (Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 11/96, p. 6565, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/11/11096.pdf). Female MPs had *Frau* added to their names.

The Bundestag protocols are another example of how deviations from the 'male as norm' principle were marked linguistically. In the name lists of the plenary protocols, the address *Frau* ('Ms') was added to the names of female deputies. For male deputies, only the surnames were listed.[15] Figure 4 shows how the Bundestag name lists then looked like (see also Fig. 2, where the female deputies who were present at the plenary session are listed with *Frau*).

It was not until 1991 that this practice was abandoned, but not without much debate. In 1987, for example, Marliese Dobberthien (SPD) criticised the exclusive use of the feminine form of address in Bundestag protocols:

> All print matter of the Bundestag also contains completely unnecessary gender-specific formulations in which men are the standard, the norm, but women are only the exception to which special attention must be paid. In registers, for example: Why don't we put a *Herr* in front of the male deputies? Don't our men deserve a little more courtesy?[16]

The first women in the Bundestag were exceptional in the political arena, and this exceptionality was highlighted linguistically. It was only 30 years ago that the gender-specifying form of address and thereby the linguistic excep-

[15] Research shows that men are more often referred to by last name only, whereas first and last name or the address *Frau* tend to be used for women; see Ochs (2024: 34), Bühlmann (2002: 185); for English, see Atir & Ferguson (2018), McConnell-Ginet (2003).

[16] Own translation, Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 11/37, p. 2503, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/11/11037.pdf

tionality of women was removed from the protocols.

3.2 *Frau Präsident* or *Frau Präsidentin?* Feminisation of personal nouns

Our second example focuses on the use of masculine vs. feminised personal nouns for female referents. According to Hellinger and Bußmann (2003: 150–160), when referring to persons in German, we can distinguish personal nouns that specify referential gender by grammatical, lexical, or morphological means. We are only interested in the most prominent process when it comes to the linguistic representation of women: the derivation of feminine forms from a masculine base, usually realised with the suffix *-in* (e.g. *Minister*/*Ministerin*, 'male/female minister'; *Präsident*/*Präsidentin*, 'male/female president'). These are semantic minimal pairs as they have the opposing semantic features *+male/-female* and *+female/-male* (Diewald 2018: 290–293). Within these semantic minimal pairs, the masculine form typically serves two functions: first, as a marker for masculine-specific reference, and second, as a so-called 'masculine generic'. This term describes the use of the masculine form to denote a group of individuals whose gender is either unknown, irrelevant, or disregarded. For instance, *Wissenschaftler* [m.pl.] ('scientists') may refer to a mixed or unspecified group of scientists (Hellinger & Bußmann 2001).

Masculine generics are the main point of dispute in current debates about gender-inclusive language, as psycholinguistic evidence suggests that the masculine form evokes a male bias, meaning that masculine generics are probably not the most inclusive form of person reference (see for example Gabriel et al. 2008, Gygax et al. 2008, Körner et al. 2022, Zacharski & Ferstl 2023). Besides that, it is unusual to use the masculine form to refer to an individual woman in German. Singular specific expressions, especially direct addresses, are highly referential, leading to the expectation that the grammatical gender reflects referent gender: a masculine singular indicates a male individual, a feminine singular indicates a female individual (Kotthoff & Nübling 2018: 93). Becker (2008: 66) even calls female-referring masculines a "lie", e.g. if meeting with a female colleague was announced by the utterance *Heute Abend gehe ich mit einem Kollegen [m.sg.] zum Essen* ('Tonight I'll have dinner with a [male] colleague').

In actual language use, however, we find instances in which the masculine is used to refer to specific women, e.g. in compounds with highly referential first elements (Ochs 2024: 30). We also find examples of this in the Bundestag protocols, relating directly to feminist efforts of female visibility. When Annemarie Renger was the first woman to be elected president of the Bundestag in 1972, the Senior President addressed her as *Frau Präsident* (masculine form of 'president')[17] in his congratulations. Other female ministers were also addressed with the male form, e.g. Katharina Focke (SPD, term of office: 1972-1976): *Focke, Minister für Jugend, Familie und Gesundheit* ('Focke, Minister [m.sg.] for Youth, Family and Health'). This practice continued until the end of the 1980s, even though debates were hinting at a coming change: deputies started protesting with interjections

[17] Deutscher Bundestag, 1. Sitzung, 13. Dezember 1972, S. 3, https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/07/07001.pdf

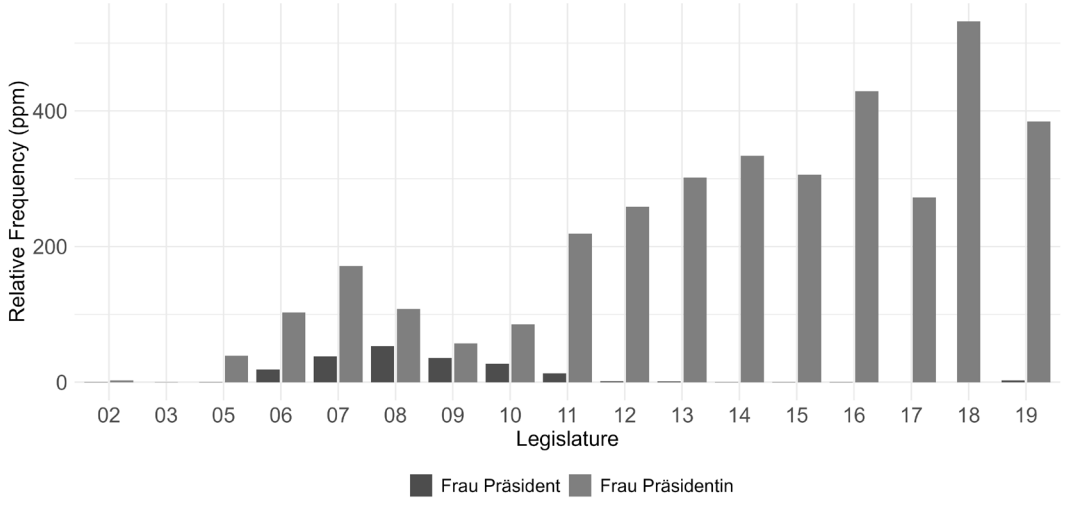


Figure 5: Relative frequencies of the addresses *Frau Präsident* and *Frau Präsidentin* in Bundestag protocols from 1953 to 2021.

when the masculine form was used to refer to a woman.[18]

We supplement this historical overview with our own corpus analysis of the forms *Frau Präsident* vs. *Frau Präsidentin* in the Bundestag protocols (Fig. 5). *Frau Präsident* (female address + masculine form) existed for some time (6th-11th legislature, 1969-1987) but was never more frequent than *Frau Präsidentin* (female address + feminine form).[19] After the 11th legislature (i.e. after 1990), it disappeared almost completely, until in the 19th legislature (2017-2021), there was a very slight rise again. This is mostly due to the AfD ('Alternative for Germany', a right-wing populist party), contributing 40 of the 49 usages (81.60%) in this legislature. In total, we see that the reinforcement to use feminine forms for female referents had the desired effects: From the 1980s onwards, we generally see "a dramatic increase" in the use of feminine forms in the protocols, which had been "virtually non-existent in the debates before" (Stecker et al. 2021: 1). Today, the *Protokoll Inland* ('Domestic Protocol') states that female officials should be addressed with feminised forms (e.g. *Präsidentin* or *Ministerin*) both orally and in writing (see Bundesministerium des Innern 2016; Wissenschaftliche Dienste Deutscher Bundestag 2021). If a party opposes such regulations, it is often a deliberate, reactionary act that linguistically reflects the party's ideology. In the case of the AfD, this includes their staunch rejection of gender-inclusive language

[18] Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 11/96, 6559, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/11/11096.pdf

[19] It is worth noting that these forms of address for female presidents are not limited to Presidents of the Bundestag. Similar titles have also been used for other presidencies, such as *Alterspräsidentin* Frau Dr. Dr. h.c. Lüders (the oldest member of parliament presiding over the first session until a regular president is elected) in the 2nd legislature, and for female vice-presidents, such as Anke Fuchs in the 14th and Edelgard Bulmahn in the 18th legislature.

and their broader anti-feminist and anti-queer agenda (see section 4).

3.3 *Bürgerinnen und Bürger*: Pair forms as a means of gender-inclusive legal language

Our third example focuses on the incorporation of more gender-inclusive language in legal texts, taking the discussion a step further than in section 3.2. There, we explored efforts to enhance the visibility of individual women. Here, we widen the scope to address broader issues of inclusivity, encompassing all personal nouns, regardless of their specificity.

The following resolution, passed in the Bundestag on July 24, 1991 with the votes of the CDU/CSU and the FDP ('Free Democratic Party', a liberal political party), reminds us of current debates about gender-inclusive language:

> The Federal Government is called upon to avoid gender-specific terms in all draft laws, ordinances and administrative regulations with immediate effect, and to either choose gender-neutral formulations or to use formulations that refer to both genders.[20]

This resolution was adopted because of an application submitted by the CDU/CSU parliamentary group. The SPD, the Greens and the Left Party had originally proposed a more comprehensive resolution with stricter obligations. As a result, they chose to abstain from the vote. However, there was cross-party agreement that the exclusive use of masculine forms in legal language was no longer appropriate. This, too, had been preceded by long discussions, as Parliamentary State Secretary Rainer Funke (FDP) explained:

> This critical attitude towards our language is now accepted and taken seriously. This was not always the case. It was a long and arduous way to get there; a way that began with controversial opinions, sometimes with mutual accusations by men and women, with exaggerated ideas and unobjective objections.[21]

The interconnectedness of language and gender equality was also made clear in the resolution:

> The correct way of addressing and referring to women is of great importance for the equal treatment of women and men in social reality. This particularly applies to official language that refers to specific facts and persons. However, also the choice of words in regulations needs to be revised.[22]

Efforts to achieve equality on this linguistic level were closely linked to successes of the women's movement. For example, the *Deutsche Frauenrat* ('German Women's Council') issued the first resolution on gender-inclusive legal language in 1982, in which they officially called for the legislature to use gender-inclusive language. This was motivated by feminist lin-

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20 Own translation, Deutscher Bundestag 12/1041: Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung: Maskuline und feminine Personenbezeichnungen in der Rechtssprache, 07.08.1991: https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/12/010/1201041.pdf

21 Own translation, Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 12/132, 11525, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/12/12132.pdf

22 Own translation, Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung. Maskuline und feminine Personenbezeichnungen in der Rechtssprache, Drucksache 12/1041, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/12/010/1201041.pdf

guists from the New Women's movement in the 1970s (Schewe-Gerigk 2004: 322).

We see that these political achievements were not easily won; rather, they were the result of persistent efforts, with every detail being fought for through numerous discussions, particularly by feminist groups.

Since then, many new or revised laws have been formulated along these lines (old ones remain unchanged). The masculine generic has continued to decline in legal and political language. This can be seen in the New Year's and Christmas addresses of the Federal Chancellors and Presidents of the last 30 years (see Müller-Spitzer et al. 2024). The masculine generic has been replaced by pair forms such as *Bürgerinnen und Bürger* ('female and male citizens'), gender-neutral forms (epicenes) such as *Rettungskräfte* ('rescue workers'), *Alte* ('the elderly'), or *Arbeitslose* ('the unemployed'), as well as pronominal paraphrases such as *wir alle* ('all of us') or *alle, die* ('all those who'). In his first New Year's address, the former chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) did not use a single masculine generic form (Müller-Spitzer et al. 2022, Müller-Spitzer et al. 2024). Pair forms, epicenes and paraphrases are considered subtle and long-established forms of gender-inclusive language, as can be seen from the positive ratings in an acceptability survey about different gender-inclusive forms by the German broadcasting service WDR (WDR 2023, see also Zacharski 2024). This is why politicians and other public figures, whose language is under much public scrutiny, tend to use these forms rather than the contested gender symbols or their phonetic realisation as a glottal stop.

Our own corpus analyses of the Bundestag protocols show that the use of pair forms has also become established in this text type. Figure 6 illustrates the constant rise of these forms in the plural, especially with the feminine form

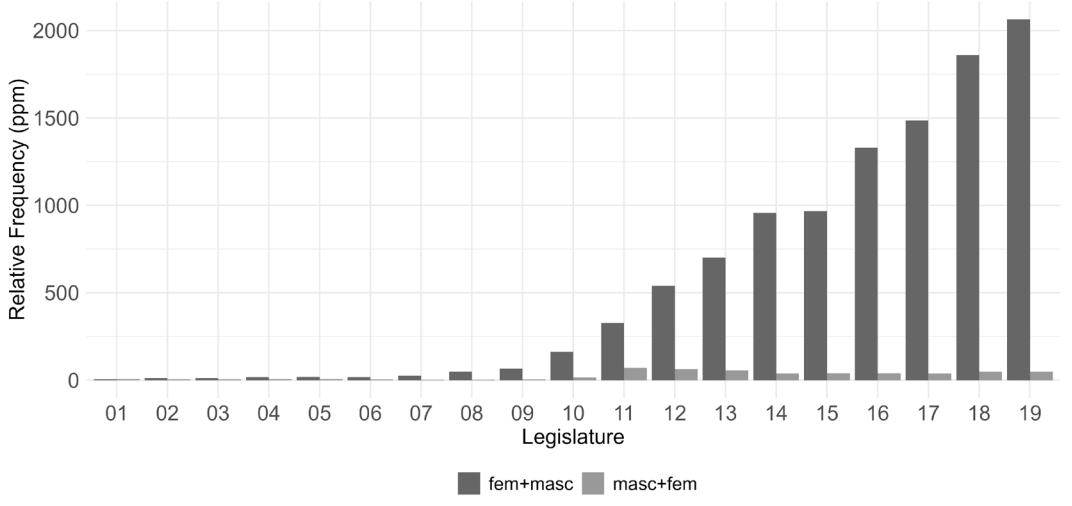

Figure 6: Relative frequencies of pair forms (feminine first, masculine first) in Bundestag protocols from 1949 to 2021. Only plural forms with the same lexical base were extracted (i.e. forms like *Damen und Herren* 'ladies and gentlemen' or *Frauen und Männer* 'women and men' are not part of the analysis).

in the first place (*Kolleginnen und Kollegen*, 'female and male colleagues'). Pair forms with the masculine form in the first slot (*Kollegen und Kolleginnen*, 'male and female colleagues') are much rarer. This 'feminine-first rule' in pair forms has been observed in other studies as well (Rosar 2022; Truan 2019, Ochs 2025). In a case study of the pair form *Bürgerinnen und Bürger* ('female and male citizens') in Bundestag protocols, Müller (2022: 126) also finds that it

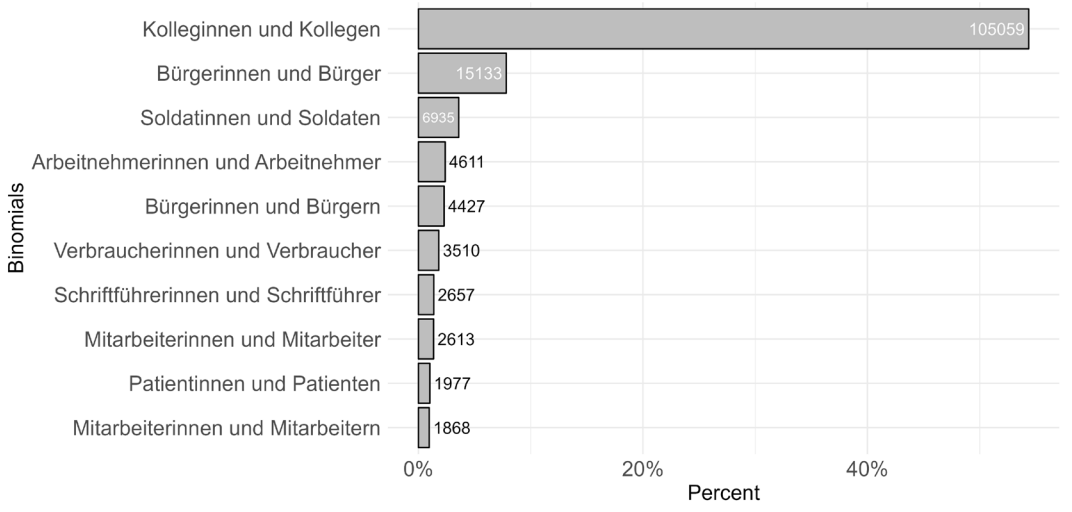

Figure 7: The ten most frequent pair forms with a feminine form in the first slot (total amount of types: 3,526; total amount of tokens: 193,242); Bundestag protocols 1949-2021.

has been on the rise since 1979, while generic uses of the masculine form *Bürger* are declining.[23] This is in line with Truan's findings that "[i]n German political discourse specifically, it has become usual – or politically correct – to use [pair forms]" (2019: 206).

Figures 7 and 8 show our analyses of the ten most frequent plural pair forms in the protocols. We see that the direct address of colleagues in the parliament (*Kolleginnen und Kollegen, Kollegen und Kolleginnen*) is most prominent in both graphs, followed by the 'topics' of political debates – the citizens (*Bürgerinnen und Bürger, Bürger und Bürgerinnen*). Most top-ten pair forms are shared by both formats; only three forms are unique. In the feminine-first forms, we find *Patientinnen und Patienten* ('female and male patients'). In the masculine-first forms, we see *Bauern und Bäuerinnen* ('male and female farmers') and *Rentner und Rentnerinnen* ('male and female pensioners') in 6th and 7th place, respectively.

This concludes our overview of feminist linguistic struggles and linguistic developments in the Bundestag, which can be summarised as follows: 1) It was achieved that female MPs were no longer marked as outliers by adding *Frau* to their names on lists. 2) Wom-

[23] However, Müller notes a slight rise of the masculine generic since 2018 due to the right-wing populist party AfD.

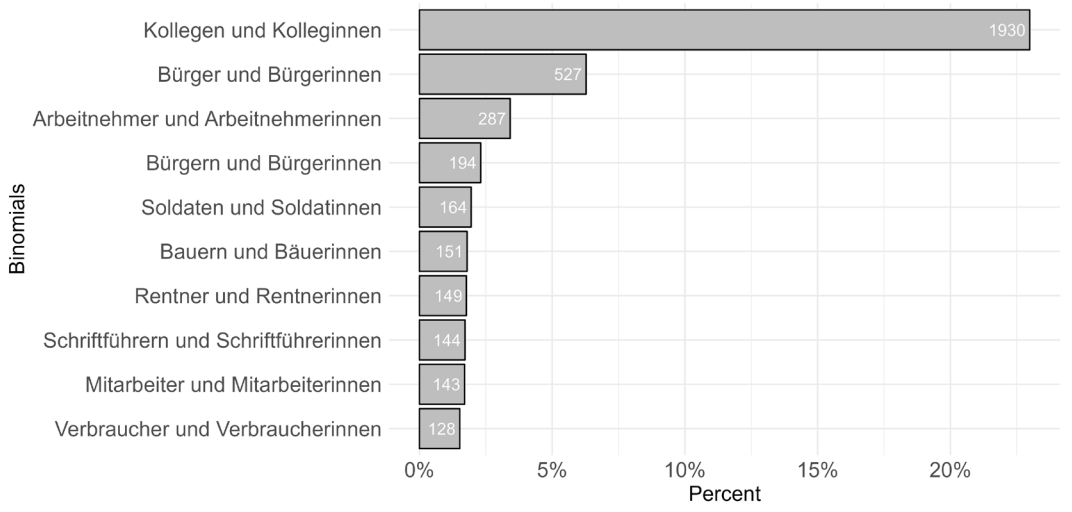

Figure 8: The ten most frequent pair forms with a masculine form in the first slot (total amount of types: 1,707; total amount of tokens: 8,396), Bundestag protocols 1949-2021.

en's visibility was instead increased by the obligatory use of feminised forms for specific female individuals. 3) Pair forms have become an established means in parliamentary and legal language to refer to both men and women, replacing masculine generics in new and revised legal texts. These linguistic debates can only be fully understood within the broader context of the women's movement of the 1980s and the growing push for women's emancipation. The resulting linguistic changes were not 'organic' but were explicitly negotiated among parliamentarians. In Section 4, we delve further into the ongoing political struggle surrounding gender-inclusive language.

4 *Wissenschaftler*innen* and *Kolleg:innen:* Current debates about gender-inclusive language

In this final section, we focus on how the past linguistic battles about language, gender, and naming sexual orientation relate to current debates about gender-inclusive language. We have presented political struggles about queer self-designations as well as feminist linguistic efforts. The debate about recent developments in gender-inclusive German can be understood as a crossroads of these dimensions: The contested new elements, the so-called gender symbols, are intended to encompass all gender identities (see Friedrich et al. 2021, Körner et al. 2022) and can therefore be regarded as an outcome of queer-feminist efforts. The most commonly used symbols today are the asterisk (*Wissenschaftler*innen* 'scientists of all genders') and the colon (*Wissenschaftler:innen*, see Waldendorf 2023, Ochs & Rüdiger 2025). They are inserted between the masculine base and the feminising suffix *-in*; some consider them altogether new suffixes (Völkening 2022).

Gender symbols are the focus of current linguistic battles around gender and language. Other strategies of gender-inclusive

language, such as pair forms, neutralisations, or pronominal substitutions, are rarely if ever part of the debates, as they are an established and norm-conforming part of the German language system. Gender symbols, however, intervene with traditional word formation processes and can result in grammatical follow-up problems, especially when used in the singular, where whole noun phrases would need to be changed into complex forms (e.g. *ein*e kritische*r Politiker*in* 'a critical politician'; however, these forms are very rare, see Ochs in press). In the plural, the use is less complicated, as noun phrase elements remain unchanged (e.g. *die kritischen Politiker*innen* 'the critical politicians'; see Friedrich et al. 2021). Opponents of gender symbols use the argument of ungrammaticality and deviation from norms to advocate for bans and restrictions (e.g. Eisenberg 2020, 2022). However, research has shown that gender symbols are a rare phenomenon, mostly limited to particular media outlets (Waldendorf 2023, Ochs & Rüdiger 2025), job postings (Müller-Spitzer & Ochs 2023), or queer communities (Löhr 2021). Looking at non-gender-inclusive texts, Müller-Spitzer et al. (2024) found that only about 1% of all tokens would undergo changes if gender-inclusive reformulations were adopted – and this is not to say that all reformulations would involve a gender symbol, as other substitution processes are available in German (e.g. substituting the masculine generic *Lehrer* 'teachers' with the epicene *Lehrkräfte*). Therefore, the quantitative aspect of the phenomenon alone is insufficient to explain the heated debate surrounding it. Rather, we have to consider its symbolic and indexical dimensions.

Feilke (2023) discusses these dimensions in detail, arguing that the grammatical point of view is only one aspect to consider in the use of gender symbols. Rather, their use should be understood as a signal of respect and courtesy. As signals, the symbols can be used in relevant positions, while being omitted in others. Thus, Feilke argues for a flexible use of gender-inclusive language, advocating for a mix of strategies and for the use of signals (like gender symbols) only where deemed appropriate and necessary. This flexibility is also called for in most style and writing guides (e.g. Diewald & Steinhauer 2020).

To the best of our knowledge, there is no instance of an official institution prescribing the use of gender symbols – only recommendations and preferences are found in respective guidelines (Siegenthaler 2024: 240). However, bans and prohibitions have become more common on the federal level: the federal states Bavaria, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Brandenburg and Rhineland-Palatinate have started banning the use of gender symbols in all official contexts (Lischewski 2023), i.e. in schools, administrative bodies, etc. These bans are mostly based on the grammaticality arguments outlined above, as well as on the orthographic status of the gender symbols as 'special characters': They are not considered part of German core orthography by the *Rat für Deutsche Rechtschreibung* ('Council for German Orthography', see Hennig 2024: 220), the official body regulating German orthographic norms. Although this does not mean that gender symbols are orthographically wrong, it is often interpreted in this way to legitimise prohibitions. So far, it is not clear how violations of these bans will be prosecuted – for example, it can still be at the teachers' individual discretion whether the use of gender symbols in students' texts is considered a mistake or not. However, teachers themselves are not allowed to use the symbols

in official documents, e.g. in letters to parents or work sheets for students, and are forced – at least in some states – to mark them as mistakes in exams.[24] The bans are considered constitutionally problematic by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2024).

Similar to the linguistic battles of the Bundestag outlined so far, the struggle about gender symbols goes beyond language use. It is closely tied to shifting social norms, especially to the question of how to address people beyond the gender binary. Gender symbols are both about self-designation as in the case of *schwul* and *lesbisch*, as well as about the linguistically adequate representation of certain groups, as in the case of pair forms and feminisations. We regularly see that opponents of gender symbols tend to use these linguistic forms as a straw man argument to cover anti-queer positions. This was the case with Sabine Mertens, initiator of a failed petition to ban gender symbols in official bodies of the city of Hamburg: In an interview with *Hamburger Abendblatt*, she clearly stated that her intentions go beyond language and against the LGBTQIA+ movement (Müller-Spitzer, Ochs & Rüdiger 2024). This has strong links to the straw man arguments used in the Bundestag to prohibit the use of self-chosen terms for homosexual people (section 2).

By now, the debate about gender symbols has also reached the Bundestag. To illustrate this, a plenary debate from June 2023 on gender-inclusive language provides a compelling example:[25] The AfD parliamentary group claims that a clear majority of about two-thirds of the German population rejects the introduction of the so-called *Gendersprache* ('gender language'; a term that is used by opponents of inclusive language). They argue that it reflects an ideological stance challenging the 'natural' biological gender system. They demand that the Bundestag and government authorities refrain from using 'gendered language' in their communications and instead promote traditional linguistic norms, including the use of the masculine generic. Furthermore, the AfD calls for uniform language standards in schools and universities based on official spelling rules. They emphasize the importance of the German language as a pillar of democracy and cultural identity, implying that 'gendered language' poses a threat to this cultural asset. MPs of other parties react in various ways to this request: Katja Leikert (CDU/CSU) takes a neutral stance, highlighting individual freedom as a key factor in the use of gender-inclusive language. This is harshly criticised by Denise Loop (The Greens), who underlines the role of CDU/CSU in bans on gender-inclusive language in the state of Thüringen. Loop emphasises that the AfD, contrary to what they claim, is the only party on the federal level that repeatedly demands bans on gender-inclusive language instead of focussing on other issues of gender equality.

Over the past years, the AfD has introduced five motions on the issue, while other

[24] https://www.hessenschau.de/politik/hessische-schueler-duerfen-in-abschlusspruefungen-keine-genderzeichen-mehr-verwenden-v2,genderverbot-schulen-abschlusspruefungen-hessen-100.html (accessed December 2024).

[25] https://www.bundestag.de/mediathek/video?videoid=7555395#url=L21lZGlhdGhla292ZXJsYXk/dmlkZW9pZD03NTU1Mzk1&mod=mediathek;%20
Deutscher%20Bundestag,%20Drucksache%2020/7348:%20
https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/073/2007348.pdf

parties have refrained from addressing gender-inclusive language as a political topic at all (see Lobin 2023). This creates the (seemingly) paradoxical situation in which the party most opposed to the issue is also the one bringing it into political discourse. The reactionary stance of right-wing parties in contesting gender-inclusive language is a phenomenon that has been observed globally (see Erdocia 2022, Roth and Sauer 2022), especially as a pretence to challenge gender equality and diversity as a social rather than a linguistic concept.

The plenary debate shows how the topic of gender-inclusive language, or rather gender symbols, is evaluated and discussed by MPs of various parties. On a more linguistic level, the question arises how the explicit use of non-binary forms should be transcribed in the protocols – cf. the discussion about the inclusion of terms like *schwul* and *lesbisch* in section 2. If an MP uses a phonetic realisation of gender symbols (e.g. a glottal stop between masculine base and feminine ending: *Politiker*innen* → *Politiker[ʔ]innen* 'politicians'), then the stenographic transcription and later the protocol must accurately represent this. Therefore, discussions about the official inclusion of gender symbols in the transcription process arise (Hallik 2020: 86). The official linguistic counselling institution of the Bundestag, the GfdS, says: "If gender gaps [i.e. glottal stops] are used in spoken language as representations of gender asterisks or comparable forms, it is unclear how to properly transcribe them (e.g. in protocols of speeches)."[26] The protocol of the plenary debate summarised above shows this lack of clarity: It is unclear from the audio file whether Denise Loop (The Greens) uses feminine forms to denote all addresses (i.e. feminine generics, e.g. *Kolleginnen* 'colleagues', *Parteifreundinnen* 'party friends'), or a glottal stop (e.g. *Kolleg*innen, Parteifreund-*innen*). Katja Leikert (CDU/CSU) utters a clear glottal stop in *AfDler*innen* ('AfD party members'), metalinguistically commenting on it afterwards. Both this clear and the unclear instances are transcribed with a slash followed by a dash in the protocol, i.e. *Kolleg/-innen, Parteifreund/-innen* and *AfDler/-innen*. On the one hand, this choice can certainly be justified by the fact that the spelling with slash and dash is the only abridged variant officially accepted by the Council for German Orthography. On the other hand, it is questionable whether the transcriber was truthful to Loop's utterance, as a glottal stop is not clearly audible. This might be a case of hypercorrection, assuming that an MP of the Green party uses glottal stops (thereby perhaps undermining the linguistic choice of feminine generics). Besides that, the spelling with slash and dash does not have the same indexical and symbolic dimensions as gender symbols – rather, it is a variant to shorten the binary pair form (e.g. *Kolleginnen und Kollegen* to *Kolleg/-innen*), lacking the non-binary intensions of the asterisk and the colon (Diewald & Steinhauer 2020: 122).

Several layers of linguistic choices converge here in competition: the pursuit of orthographic accuracy in protocols, the alignment of phonetic and graphematic representation, and the indexical aspirations embodied in new gender symbols. These tensions in parliamentary transcription practices reflect the broader debate about the legitimacy of socially motivated linguistic interventions and the complex interplay between natural and artificial

[26] Own translation; https://gfds.de/gendersternchen/

language change (Haspelmath 2019). Such interventions, as illustrated in sections 2 and 3, are neither new nor inherently destabilizing for language; rather, they are part of an ongoing negotiation between societal values and linguistic forms. The controversy surrounding gender symbols, for instance, highlights the symbolic weight that language carries in broader discussions of equality and diversity.

As with earlier language controversies, this "language struggle [...] is actually a cultural war" (Simon 2022: 22). While tacit consensus has emerged in areas such as pair forms or gender-neutral terms, the deeper social issues these practices address—questions of equity and representation—often fade from focus (Hark & Villa 2015). The stakes extend beyond grammar, encompassing fundamental challenges to worldviews, emancipatory efforts, and demands for participation (Simon 2022: 22).

5 Concluding remarks

Struggles about language, gender, and sexual orientation have surfaced in the German Bundestag since the 1980s. We outlined how the terms *schwul* and *lesbisch* were normalised in the protocols as self-chosen terms for homosexual people. Further, we analysed how feminist efforts led to more gender-inclusive language both in the parliamentary debates and in legal texts. Last, we summarised ongoing linguistic discussions about gender symbols and how the topic is negotiated in the Bundestag. The Bundestag plenary protocols serve as a valuable source for these socio-political struggles, as our small-scale corpus analyses have shown. Further, more in-depth evaluations—such as the role of gender in interjections, the specific word choices of certain parties, or the transcription of glottal stops—would be desirable for future research.

The chronological overview presented in this paper shows that political and parliamentary disputes about our world are often deeply intertwined with disputes over words and labels. Questions of who speaks about whom, using which linguistic forms, and who holds the authority to determine what language is deemed acceptable in which contexts, are fundamentally questions of power—questions that have consistently shaped linguistic and political debates surrounding shifting social norms.

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03

Neural machine translation and a queer perspective on gender bias

A qualitative study of how different strategies of *écriture inclusive* are translated into German by DeepL and Google Translate

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The issue of gender in translation has garnered significant attention since the establishment of (human aided) machine translation as previously existing gender biases in natural language are now being reproduced by translation machines. Although machine translation has a long history, recent advancements, such as neural machine translation (NMT), have revolutionized the field. NMT systems rely on training algorithms and large corpora which are influenced by human choices that can be negatively biased regarding gender, race, etc. In the context of written French, *écriture inclusive* strategies seek to establish gender-inclusive alternatives to promote gender equality in language use. However, the debate on gender and inclusive language

still predominantly focuses on binary gender representations. This study explores how Google Translate and DeepL handle *écriture inclusive* strategies when they are translated into German. Three main aspects will be directly addressed in this section. First, we will take a look at the common translation practices offered by the machines regarding sentences in *écriture inclusive*; second, we will examine the target term strategies that differ from the source language's; and third, we will examine the instances where translations incorporate genders beyond the binary. We therefore aim to investigate how machine translation systems, specifically Google Translate and DeepL, perform in these cases. In this article, we argue that the absence of ethical frameworks for AI and data training has resulted in the reinforcement of gender biases and representational harms within machine translation systems.

1 Introduction

The issue of gender in translation began attracting scholarly attention in the 1980s, particularly among feminist translation theorists, and has since evolved and diversified. Grammatical gender systems vary significantly across languages, requiring both machine translation systems and human translators to make deliberate and informed choices when selecting lexemes that encode gender. This process demands close attention to the grammatical structures of the target language in order to appropriately select lexemes that correspond to specific social gender categories and to match them with suitable translation equivalents in each linguistic context (cf. Di Sabato & Perri 2020: 367). In the past, translation decisions have predominantly favored the use of masculine forms, which nowadays continue to be employed by a large segment of the population in a presumed gender-neutral manner.

The key aim of Germany's second-wave feminist movement, which emerged in the 1970s, was to advance gender equality in society. A central strategy of this movement was to pursue gender equality by promoting linguistic equality, thereby challenging the generic use of masculine forms and increasing the visibility of women through the explicit use of feminine grammatical forms. Contemporary queer feminist movements have extended these efforts, advocating for inclusive language that transcends the binary gender framework. Unlike earlier feminist approaches, queer feminist perspectives seek to foster gender equality by incorporating non-binary and gender-diverse categories into linguistic practices. Issues regarding gender remain a subject of contentious debate in broader social contexts, in research and more specifically in translation studies. Sun et al. (2019) and Prates et al. (2020), for example, have shown the need for this kind of awareness targeting gender bias in automated systems such as Google Translate. Prates et al. (2020) highlight how sentences originating from gender-neutral languages often yield translations that perpetuate stereotypical gender roles, with a marked tendency to default

to male classifications over female ones. For instance, when translating from a gender-neutral language, Google Translate commonly produces results such as "He is an engineer" rather than "She is an engineer," mirroring societal biases that associate engineering and related professions predominantly with men. This tendency is particularly salient in fields such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) which have traditionally been male dominated. In other words, the gender biases are expressed through linguistic practices and therefore are likely to be present in AI tools and neural machine translation (NMT). Studies on automated translation have demonstrated that gendered language can perpetuate stereotypes, thereby highlighting the growing importance of gender-inclusive language use. These findings prompt critical inquiry into how machine translation systems perform in comparison to human translators, who already grapple with the complexities of gender representation in language. While human translators are often equipped to make context-sensitive decisions, machine translation systems operate on computational strategies that have evolved significantly over time. Although the concept of translation machines dates back to the early days of modern digital computing, recent technological advancements have led to the development of systems based on neural machine translation (NMT), e.g. those used by DeepL and Google Translate. These systems employ artificial neural networks—modeled on the structural and functional characteristics of the human brain—to implement machine learning algorithms. Through exposure to large and diverse corpora, NMT systems learn to apply a variety of translation strategies, yet they remain susceptible to reproducing the gender biases embedded in their training data. A clear example can be found in Caliskan et al. (2017: 183) who analyzed whether semantics derived automatically from language corpora contain human biases, finding that "human-like semantic biases result from the application of standard machine learning to ordinary language—the same sort of language humans are exposed to every day." Therefore, machine translators that are trained to learn from corpora will likely reproduce "historic biases" (ibid.) that were displayed through language use in the first place. Regarding the biases studied in this paper, we follow the argumentation by Tomalin et al. (2021: 420) who claim that gender biases and representational harms, such as stereotyping, exist due to datasets that demonstrate an asymmetric and/or prejudiced societal representation in which a white, cis-gendered male is defined as the norm.

Inclusive language use takes on varied forms and strategies across languages, which presents a problem not just in machine translation (MT) but also concerning the stereotypes and biases in the aforementioned datasets. In written French, *écriture inclusive* strategies aim to establish gender-inclusive alternatives (cf. Viennot 2020: 149).

Based on our own corpus containing sentences in *écriture inclusive* in French and their German translations, we aim to explore the following interrelated research questions: How do Google Translate and DeepL translate the diverse strategies of *écriture inclusive* into German? Which strategies are most commonly found in the translation from French to German? Are there any tendencies that are applied to the translations in the target language (German) that differ from the strategies in the source language (French)? Can we identify in-

stances in German where the translations incorporate genders beyond the binary?

To comprehensively examine the established subject matters, we begin by analyzing the various grammatical and morphological structures referring to social gender in section 2, as well as inclusive language practices in both French and German. Section 3 addresses the influence of grammatical gender on machine translation and the technologies utilized in this field and inspects the persisting gender biases more closely. Section 4 describes the methodology of building and evaluating a corpus of French sentences in *écriture inclusive* for translation into German. Section 5 provides an analysis of the translations produced by Google Translate and DeepL, focusing on the translation strategies used for *écriture inclusive* to German and the assumed biases behind them. Finally, section 6 presents the conclusion.

2 Gender-inclusive language – grammatical and morphological differences between German and French

2.1 Gender markers in German and French

In German, all nouns have a specific grammatical gender. The grammatical gender system consists of a tripartite gender division that includes a feminine, a masculine, and a neuter gender. The grammatical gender of words for animate beings, however, does not necessarily correlate with the social gender (and/or sex). For example, *das Mädchen* ('the girl') is neuter in grammatical gender even though the word's meaning addresses girls. This is the direct result of the diminutive suffix *'-chen'*, which consistently produces neuter nouns regardless of the social gender lexically assigned in lexemes for animate beings. Nevertheless, a strong correlation between grammatical and social gender does exist, with only a few exceptions, where the correlation can be explained by semantics. Nübling (2020: 10) illustrates this close relationship between grammatical gender and sex (and/or social gender) through the example of the so-called *Differentialgenus*. When a German noun referring to a person is derived from a nominalized adjective or participle, the only grammatical gender marker is the article (or other determinants, if present). These associated function words serve primarily (but not exclusively) a grammatical function by marking syntactic agreement with the noun, in line with Hockett's definition: "Genders are classes of nouns reflected in the behavior of associated words" (1958: 231).[1] In such cases, grammatical gender and social gender are congruent. The noun itself does not suffice to identify its grammatical gender, as the grammatical category is expressed externally through these agreement markers. In plural, the associated function words no longer exhibit gender-specific marking, since the co-occurring number inflection neutralizes morphological gender distinctions. This phenomenon can be attributed to phonological coincidence whereby the diverse plural inflections underwent phonological simplifications, resulting in the current syncretism. Rather than representing a deliberate grammatical feature, this phonological coincidence is

[1] For example, in *die/der Studierende* ('the student', f./m.), only the article reveals the reference to the social gender in these cases. In plural, on the other hand, the article does not reveal any reference to the social gender, e.g., *die Studierenden* ('the students').

responsible for the absence of gender differentiation in plural forms (cf. Schwarze 2009: 111).

Moreover, personal pronouns (e.g., *er* 'he', *sie* 'she', *es* 'it') play a significant role in the expression of gender. As (co-)referential devices, they reflect the word's grammatical gender (cf. Busch & Stenschke 2018: 117). When referring to a person, they are also used to index social gender (cf. Kotthoff & Nübling 2018: 148).[2]

In summary, grammatical gender isn't necessarily congruent with the social gender of the referred person, but there is, in many cases, consistency between the grammatical gender of an animate noun and the social gender of its referent. This becomes especially obvious when talking about personal nouns like *die Mutter* ('the mother', f.) or *der Vater* ('the father', m.), in which grammatical gender reflects social gender, and which even carry gender stereotypes of their own.

French, on the other hand, has a binary grammatical gender system. French nouns are either grammatically masculine or feminine. Still, there are homonyms that may refer to either a man or a woman depending on their grammatical gender as reflected in accompanying function words. For example, this can frequently be found in invariant occupational titles such as *le ministre* ('minister', m.) and *la ministre* ('minister', f.). This is an example for *genre commun* or *Differentialgenus* as explained above. In French, the grammatical gender of a noun is not only marked by accompanying function words such as articles and pronouns, but also through the declension of attributive and predicative adjectives.

French determinants and pronouns[3] are also inflected according to the grammatical gender of the noun. For example, the demonstrative pronouns *celui/ceux* ('the one(s)', m., sing./pl.) and the demonstrative determinants *ce/cet* ('this', m.) have masculine grammatical gender while the demonstrative pronouns *celle/celles* (f., sing./pl.) and the demonstrative determinant *cette* (f., sing.) are grammatically feminine. The gender opposition is neutralized in the demonstrative plural determinant form *ces* (m./f., pl.). Other neutralizations occur, among other examples, before feminine nouns that begin with a vowel, where the masculine form is used (*mon amie* 'my friend', f. but not **ma amie*). Ordinal numbers and predicative or attributive adjectives are also inflected in agreement with the gender of the noun. For instance, *l'homme est beau* 'the man is beautiful' and *la femme est belle* 'the woman is beautiful'.

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[2] We want to point out that personal pronouns are also used by individuals whose gender identity falls outside the cis-binary classification. In particular, people who do not identify with either of the two established binary gender categories are confronted with the absence of a neutral pronoun that can refer to human beings in German (as the neutral pronoun *es* is restricted to non-human referents). This includes many non-binary individuals, though not necessarily all trans people, some of whom identify with either the male or female gender and therefore use the corresponding binary pronouns. To address this gap, neopronouns such as *sier, xier,* or *nin* have emerged, alongside borrowed English pronouns such as *they*, which can refer not only to plural referents but also to singular individuals of unknown or non-binary gender (cf. Di Sabato and Perri 2020: 367). As a result, neopronouns like *dey*, derived from the English *they*, have been established to refer to non-binary individuals in German (cf. Verein für Geschlechtsneutrales Deutsch e.V.). These neopronouns, in turn, require the same morphological verb forms as those used for binary pronouns such as *he* and *she*.

[3] As opposed to German, there is no neuter grammatical gender in French that could be applied as such regarding social gender. Both in the singular *(elle, il*) and in the plural *(elles, ils)*, the personal pronouns indicate social gender. Therefore, the neopronoun *iel* in the singular and *iels* in the plural were suggested to refer to groups of mixed genders (cf. *Haut Conseil à l'Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes* 2023: 21).

2.2 Gender-inclusive language strategies in German and French

In both German and French, different strategies can be applied to avoid gender marking or to explicitly mark social gender linguistically. It is important to highlight that the different strategies carry strong ideological associations according to the markers being used and the gender categories included in the reference of the selected variant (Sarrasin et al. 2012). For instance, a double mention of the female and male variants of a lexeme reproduces the established binary understanding of gender. We will expand upon this topic later in the section.

We previously introduced the grammatical features of German used to mark gender, as well as the parts of speech that can carry gender markers. Function words, such as articles, always agree in grammatical gender with the noun they accompany. In cases where a noun referring to a human being does not itself indicate grammatical gender, the feminine article form is used exclusively to refer to individuals of the female gender. This is always true for the *Differentialgenus*, which often occurs in designations for individuals derived from nominalized adjectives or participles: *die Schöne* ('the beautiful woman') vs. *der Schöne* ('the handsome man') (cf. Nübling 2020).

Regarding the strategies for German that explicitly mark gender – according to a binary understanding of gender – feminists set their goal to linguistically highlight the visibility of women in the 1970s. This led to the use of paired forms like *Arzt und Ärztin* ('doctor', m./f.) or *Lehrer und Lehrerin* ('teacher', m./f.). In many cases, the feminine form is placed first purposefully like in *Damen und Herren* ('ladies and gentlemen'), stemming from historical developments.[4] The explicit use of feminine forms serves communicative functions, such as signaling the speaker's intention to refer to both women and men. These paired forms were subsequently abbreviated using parentheses or slashes (e.g. *Lehrer(in)* or *Lehrer/in*) to indicate both genders simultaneously. Another strategy capitalizes the *'-I'* of the morpheme *{-in}* utilized to mark the feminine gender (e.g. *LehrerIn*). Pusch (1979) also suggested replacing the masculine generic with a feminine generic, arguing that the lexemes inflected to mark female gender morphologically include both the masculine and the feminine markers (e.g., *Leser* is part of *Leserin*, 'reader'). Strategies that mark gender beyond the binary can be found in contemporary queer feminist movements that introduced the so-called gender-gap. This gap is made visible by using special characters such as an underscore (_, e.g., *Lehrer_in*), an asterisk or gender star (*, e.g., *Lehrer*in*), or the colon (:, e.g., *Lehrer:in*) before the suffix marking female gender (cf. Kotthoff & Nübling 2018: 218). The use of special characters signals a break with binarity by creating a visible disruption within the word itself. This form includes the representation of male and female gender and through the disruption, it leaves room for all possible gender categories. These solutions therefore make visible and create a gap between the poles of the binary gender system in order to account for the continuum of social genders that exist beyond this division.

[4] For a closer look on this behalf and the (ir)reversibility of gender order in binomials in German see Rosar (2022).

In French, as in German, different strategies[5] are used to create more gender-inclusive language forms. In France, in contrast to Germany and other Francophone countries like Canada, the form of *écriture inclusive* is still more gender-equitable rather than gender-inclusive (Dupuy 2020: 2), meaning that the focus is mainly on adding female representation in language but not to encompass all genders. The use of feminine job titles has been an important battleground in the fight for binary gender equality in France. Their usage has been gradually increasing in the last 30 years (cf. Viennot 2020). However, there are reservations and even certain restrictions[6], primarily regarding the use of feminine versions of job titles for positions of power or for professions that have been historically held by men. Consequently, feminine forms are still subject to controversy, and their usage is still not normalized. The French Academy has only approved of some of the female word forms as of 2019 (cf. Lessinger 2020: 380).

One approach to gender-fair language, referring only to individuals of both traditional genders, is to mention both the masculine and feminine forms *(doublets): les étudiants et les étudiantes* ('students', m./f.). An additional practice to mark multiple genders in French involves the use of two symbols around the feminine ending, in this case the interpunct: *étudiant·e·s (point médian)*. This method was recommended in the 2016 guide by the *Haut Conseil à l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes* as the best way to be more gender-inclusive beyond the binary. In the updated 2023 version, this strategy is no longer suggested for the sake of an even less explicitly gendered and rather gender-neutral language as will be discussed at a later point in this section (cf. Haut Conseil à l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes 2023: 16). This means that the first steps towards an all-encompassing gender-inclusive and even gender-neutral language are being taken. Still, even the previously explained and often favored use of special signs is not always neutral nor practical, as each strategy is loaded with ideologically driven decisions or other (technical) restrictions.[7] The use of *doublets*, for example, acknowledges the existence of two genders but does not leave any room to include people that identify with genders beyond that conception. The use of parentheses that enclose the feminine ending, such as *-e*, for example, merely suggests a possibility of marking both genders without indicating equivalence (e.g., *les étudiant(e)s*). The hyphen (*trait d'union*) can be separated by line breaks and is already used to form compounds (e.g., *étudiant-e-s*). The slash (*barre oblique*) tends to suggest an either/or distinction, rather than the intended inclusive interpretation (e.g., *étudiant/e/s*). The period, by contrast, already functions as a punctuation mark indicating the end of a sentence. Its use can even lead to unintended effects – for example, when not enclosing the feminine suffix, as in *étudiant.es*, it may be misinterpreted as a hyperlink or as referencing the Spanish top-

[5] Additionally, these methods vary across different countries in the Francophone community (cf. Dupuy 2020). This work, however, focuses only on *écriture inclusive* used in France.

[6] In 2017, France's prime minister decreed the generic use of masculine forms while explicitly prohibiting the use of *écriture inclusive* in official government documents (Ministère de la Justice 2017), and in 2021, the use of the interpunct and other symbols was prohibited in schools (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports 2021).

[7] However, the use of the so-called masculine generic is also often perceived as indexing an ideological stance.

level domain *.es*. Starting the feminine ending with a capital letter is rejected by Viennot (2020) on the ground that the use of capital letters within a word is not customary and that it disproportionately emphasizes the feminine form. The use of the interpunct is to date the most progressive and inclusive way of re-writing grammatically feminine and masculine gendered words in French.

In contrast to the explicitly gendered forms introduced above, there are also neutralizing strategies akin to the sociological concept of "undoing gender" (Diewald & Nübling 2022). In this approach, forms that allow to avoid referring to social gender are preferred. In German, general terms like *Kundschaft* ('customer base') or *Publikum* ('audience') are used instead of person-referential designations like *Kunde/Kundin* ('costumer', m./f.) or *Zuschauer/Zuschauerin* ('viewer', m./f.). The employment of compound words using *-person* or *-kraft* (e.g., *Lehrperson, Lehrkraft* 'teacher') is another strategy. Additionally, designations for individuals are formed by nominalizing attributive adjectives and the present participle forms of verbs (e.g., *Deutsche* 'German persons', *Studierende* 'persons who are doing their studies'). The latter forms are mainly suitable as gender-neutral designations when they are in the plural form, as the marking of the *Differentialgenus* in the singular form reintroduces gender. However, this can also be avoided through a (gender-inclusive) dual designation of feminine and masculine articles, such as *die/der*. Furthermore, there are various other strategies to avoid gender-marked designations, including the use of epicene words like *Person* 'person' or *Mensch* 'human' in combination with attributive adjectives (e.g., *befreundete Person* 'befriended person') (cf. Becker et al. 2022: 27, Ewels 2020: 56). Nevertheless, Klein (2022) demonstrates that seemingly gender-neutral epicene terms in person-referential nouns often function as pseudo-epicenes with their interpretation being guided by the reference context and predominantly aligned with their grammatical gender. In French, we can also find strategies which aim at undoing gender. One example is the explicit use of gender-neutral words, especially when they are used in plural and when they are accompanied by gender-neutral articles, such as *personnes* ('persons' or 'people') instead of *hommes et femmes* 'men and women'.

The differences between the strategies applied in both languages under observation result from the differences in the morphological systems. One difference between both systems is the existence of a neutral gender in German and the lack thereof in French. Regardless of this, the gender marking in plural function words is neutralized in most cases in German. On the other hand, in French, while plural articles like *les* and *des* do not mark gender, other plural elements such as adjectives and participles often retain gender distinctions. Furthermore, in French, gender marking is required in a wider range of contexts. For example, adjectives agree in gender with the noun in predicative constructions (e.g., *elle est fatiguée* 'she is tired' vs. *il est fatigué* 'he is tired'), whereas in German, they remain unmarked (*er ist müde, sie ist müde*). This, in turn, establishes a relatively strong gender specificity for French and a weaker one for German (cf. Schwarze 2009: 95).

Upon examining the various forms of gender-inclusive language and *écriture inclusive*, it becomes evident that despite substantial grammatical and morphological differences, significant commonalities exist. Across both languages, four main types can be classi-

fied: the paired mention of the feminine and masculine forms, their abbreviation through symbol integration at morpheme boundaries (representing either a binary distinction or a continuum between genders), the use of gender-neutral expressions, and the use of gender ambiguous words of the *genre commun*/ *Differentialgenus.*

3 Translation technologies: machine translation

3.1 Introduction to different technologies of machine translation

The term 'translation technology' generally refers to various technological means that render one expression in a language into another (cf. O'Brien & Rodriguez Vazquez 2020: 264). Two main technologies are used in machine translation nowadays.[8] The first is Computer Aided Translation (CAT) and the second is Machine Translation (MT) (cf. Werthmann & Witt 2014: 82).[9] Examples of CAT tools include Translation Management Systems, corpus analysis software, or terminology databases (cf. O'Brien & Rodriguez Vazquez 2020: 264). MT comprises different strategies using language and text data to produce translations. For instance, these strategies can be rule-based, example-based, or statistical, which is corpus-based, among other approaches (cf. Zhang & Liu 2023: 118).

Although machine translation has made significant progress over the past decades, it still faces challenges arising from the complexity of natural language (cf. Prates et al. 2020: 6364). The most recent form of statistical MT's evolution relies on corpus analysis to train the machine. The MT uses deep learning strategies that allow the technology to build neural networks inspired by the structure and function of the brain to perform translation tasks. Neural Machine Translation (NMT) proves to be a promising approach that can help solve the shortcomings of traditional translation systems. Wu et al. (2016: 1), for example, point out that the advantage of NMT

> lies in its ability to learn directly, in an end-to-end fashion, the mapping from input text to associated output text. Its architecture typically consists of two recurrent neural networks (RNNs), one to consume the input text sequence and one to generate translated output text.

Even though NMT provides a solid foundation to MT, this system also shows some weaknesses such as "its slower training and inference speed, ineffectiveness in dealing with rare words, and sometimes failure to translate all words in the source sentence"

[8] The first machine translators were Rule-Based-Machine-Translation (RBMT) that are based on "linguistic resources, namely (1) bilingual dictionaries providing the morpho-syntactic and semantic information, and (2) a set of morpho-syntactic and sometimes also semantic rules for both the source and target languages" (Monti 2020: 459). The first prototypes provided a word-for-word translation based on a set of rules that parted from the linguistic structure of the target language. Further developments of RBMT include a three-step approach based on (1) analysis of the source language, (2) transfer, and (3) translation into the target language (ibid.).

[9] Machine translation finds applications in various forms, both independently and in conjunction with human translation, for example, in the form of human-aided machine translation (HAMT) or machine-aided human translation (MAHT). The latter can also be grouped under the term Computer Aided Translations (CAT) (see Hutchins 1995: 431).

(ibid.). NMT predicts how likely certain linguistic structures, such as word sequences, are to appear in a context departing from patterns observed in datasets used to train it. Each word in the dataset is transcribed into a vector that receives a singular, unique value in the process of encoding and decoding. The machine therefore analyzes the source text, encodes it into vectors to then decode them to the target language. The engine predicts how correct the translation is according to the data used to train the machine. Like other kinds of MT, NMT also uses probabilistic models. Yet, NMT does not separate the input introduced into sub-categories but rather treats it as a whole. This difference allows NMT to make decisions according to the contextual information and not only on the linearity of a sentence (Choi et al. 2017). As Saunders & Byrne (2020: 7724) point out,

> natural language training data inevitably reflects biases circulating in our societies. For example, gender bias manifests itself in training data (corpus) which features more examples of men than of women. Tools trained on such data will then exhibit or even amplify the biases.

The translation of grammatical gender is one of the challenges NMT deals with when translating sentences from and/or into languages with a grammatical gender system. Sun et al. (2019) as well as Prates et al. (2020) have shown that translations of sentences that contain information about men and/or represent stereotypical gender roles are translated more accurately than cases where women are described, especially if they have a stereotypically male occupation.[10]

DeepL and Google Translate both use NMT based on AI to translate from source to target language; however, they show some key differences. DeepL draws from Linguee's corpus that consists of manually translated sentences, idioms, etc., while Google Translate originally drew from the Europarl Corpus[11] and now draws its dataset from different digital resources (Choi et al. 2017). Nevertheless, both MTs display similar limitations since they both use similar training strategies even though the data they draw upon to train their neural systems differ. Both MTs therefore struggle with the same difficulties that are endemic to AI and machine translation. NMT-generated output can be used to identify current ideologies, since the AI relies on algorithms – programmed by humans – to explore and learn from the examples in the dataset.

In the following section, we will discuss how the current circulating ideologies reflected in language use – in our case regarding gender – are embedded in the dataset used to train neural models (NM) and can therefore influence the development and also the functioning of NMT according to different demographics.

[10] The studies approaching problems related with gender biases in translation have concentrated on studying grammatical and pronominal gender. The main research areas included anaphora resolution (cf. Hardmeier 2012, Luong and Popescu-Belis 2016, Voita et al. 2018) and named entities recognition such as the classification of names of singular people, locations, etc. (cf. Babych and Hartley 2003).

[11] Europarl Corpus is a multilingual corpus that contains most of the documents published on the European Parliament's official website.

3.2 NMT and gender bias

Bias can be defined in several ways; we apply the definition introduced by Savoldi et al. (2021: 846) who take a human-centered approach to define the "motivated framing of bias" which parts from a sociolinguistic point of view: "[W]e consider as biased an MT model that systematically and unfairly discriminates against certain individuals or groups in favor of others" (ibid.). In this paper, we part from a (socio)cognitive definition of bias and recognize that biases have a (socio)cognitive function that causes people to evaluate a situation and/or a person more quickly. Hence, these biases have the cognitive function to create mental shortcuts to help people react in an interaction (cf. Tversky & Kahnemann 1973: 1974). This concept can be sustained for AI, since 'bias' in natural language processing (NLP) is conceived as the development of a norm or ideally expected value resulting from the examples in the dataset.

For example, Caliskan et al. (2017: 184) refer to bias as "a necessary prerequisite for intelligence," therefore 'bias' stands in this context for the prior information needed in order to train neural machines. However, "prior information" or biases can be problematic when this "prior information is derived from precedents known to be harmful" (ibid.). Therefore, biases have ethically negative effects on the learning process of NMT only in certain cases. Negative gender bias (or prejudices) in NMT results from different co-occurring causes that are intrinsically related to each other. Pre-existing prejudices in society can be reproduced in the development of technical tools and also new biases can emerge. For instance, Sweeney (2013: 1) demonstrates that personal, proper names are racially tagged in Google Search.[12] A linguistic bias, on the other hand, emerges in NMT when the system establishes a grammatical gender norm based on the predominance of masculine generic forms in the training data. As a result, AI-generated translations – unless the underlying algorithms are explicitly adjusted to mitigate the bias – default to and reproduce masculine forms, which represent the most frequently used grammatical gender in many languages with a grammatical gender system.

Technical biases, by contrast, refer to

> aspects related to data creation, model design, and training and testing procedures. If present in training and testing samples, asymmetries in the semantics of language use and gender distribution are respectively learned by MT systems and rewarded in their evaluation. (Savoldi et al. 2021: 849)

Different strategies used to train MT can magnify or minimize the effect of certain biases.[13] Emergent bias, however, arises when a system is developed for a 'norm' and therefore a specific demographic group. The corpora used to train MT – as we discussed above – show

[12] Sweeney (2013) studied "racially associated names and finds statistically significant discrimination in ad delivery based on searches of 2184 racially associated personal names across two websites". Google searches involving names stereotypically related to the Black or Hispanic community were more likely to get an ad suggestive of a criminal record while searches containing names associated to white demographics got more neutral ads.

[13] We will not deepen into this topic; however, to those interested in the topic, we recommend consulting Vanmassenhove et al. (2019, 2021) or Roberts et al. (2020).

gender disparity and the generic use of the masculine grammatical gender. Consequently, when women and people who belong to other genders beyond the binary interact with MT systems, they will most likely have to adjust the translations to the grammatical gender that best represents their social gender in the target language. Google Translate, however, has stated the aim to "promote fairness and reduce gender bias" (Kuczmarski 2018: n.p.). They aim to achieve this goal by introducing a double translation that includes a feminine and masculine translation for a specific word or sentence structure. This approach, however, perpetuates the idea that gender is divided into a binary.

These endemic difficulties are well known in the industry and also approached by the UNESCO Recommendations on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021). Policy area six of the UNESCO Recommendation report approaches the topic of gender in AI explicitly. For our purpose here, two recommendations are central. First, UNESCO recommends that the "Ethical Impact Assessment should include a transversal gender perspective" (UNESCO 2021: 32). This assessment, on the other hand, should explicitly include the analysis of certain circulating and already known biases. UNESCO's recommendation therefore states that

> 89 Member States should ensure that the potential of AI systems to advance the achievement of gender equality is realized. They should ensure that these technologies do not exacerbate the already wide gender gaps existing in several fields in the analogue world and instead eliminate those gaps. These gaps include: the gender wage gap; the unequal representation in certain professions and activities; the lack of representation at top management positions, boards of directors, or research teams in the AI field; the education gap; the digital and AI access, adoption, usage and affordability gap; and the unequal distribution of unpaid work and of the caring responsibilities in our societies. (ibid.)

One of the aspects highlighted by the recommendation report concerns the "unequal representation in certain professions and activities" (ibid.). The studies of Sun et al. (2019) and Prates et al. (2020) discussed above highlight that NMT can translate sentences that reproduce gender stereotypes about, for example, professions more accurately in terms of the linguistic coding of gender. As we will discuss in this paper, both MTs being tested show a clear tendency to reproduce stereotypical gender roles, especially when it comes to the representation of certain professions.

Regarding technological biases, we can observe that NMT uses semantic representation of words also known as 'word embedding.' Caliskan et al. (2017: 184), for example, explain how negative biases can show up in word embedding:

> These [biased implicit associations] are derived by representing the textual context in which a word is found as a vector in a high-dimensional space. Roughly, for each word, its relationship to all other words around it is summed across its many occurrences in a text. We can then measure the distances (more precisely, cosine similarity scores) between these vectors. The thesis behind word embeddings is that words that are closer together in the vector space are semantically closer in some sense.

> Thus, for example, if we find that programmer is closer to man than to woman, it suggests (but is far from conclusive of) a gender stereotype.

We already stated previously that the corpora used to train NMT shows a disparity in gender representation, which leads to the creation of a supposed norm. In order to counteract against the biases resulting from the corpora, programmers need training on diversity and equity topics in order to raise awareness within the people in charge of developing algorithms used to train[14] NMT. We suggest there is a need to raise awareness regarding gender disparity in society and also the corpora used to train AI in order to assure that certain biases are not reproduced by our technologies.

When it comes to genderqueer representation, it is noteworthy that both institutions – UNESCO and the European Parliament – do not mention genderqueer perspectives. The recommendations under Policy area six of UNESCO only address gender equality from a binary perspective. Legislations overall still rely on gender binarity and still do not fully recognize the role of social genders. This positioning exhibits once again that even though there are institutions aiming to minimize gender biases, the efforts being made only encompass the binary conception of gender. NMT still does not fulfill the recommendations proposed by UNESCO (not even for the gender binary). One of the aspects cited in the quote above will be analyzed, namely the representation problems resulting from both the corpora and the algorithms used to train NMT.

Kate Crawford (2017), co-founder of the AI Now Institute and professor at New York University, has studied the consequences of biased systems. She discusses the existence of two main errors in estimation and over- or underrepresenting populations in sampling.

First, she speaks of a **representational harm** that detracts the representation of social groups which affects their identity, attitudes, and beliefs. This representational harm displays two bifurcations. First, underrepresentation refers to the reproduction of visibility reduction of certain groups in society. An example of this underrepresentation is the low representation of women and non-binary people in texts and their translation. In many cases, sentences which describe women and non-binary people are translated into the generic form of the masculine grammatical gender, misrepresenting these social groups as illustrated in the results of this study. This can lead to an erasure of certain social groups and can also "fail to reflect their identity and communicative repertoires" (Savoldi et al. 2021: 846). Mostly women are underrepresented while non-binary people are omitted and/or are not acknowledged. The second effect is stereotyping, which contributes to problematic generalizations regarding a certain social group. For instance, women are categorized as caretakers or chefs, but not as pilots, doctors, or scientists. As such, the output provided by MT indexes social roles and gender identities that are currently associated with less prestigious occupations. The second harm presented by Crawford (ibid.) is **allocational harm**; this arises when a system "allocates or withholds opportunities or

[14] Authors like Bolukbasi et al. (2016), Bordia and Bowman (2019), and Zhao et al. (2018) have approached gender bias and developed methods to debias the machine during training. To deepen the strategies – e.g., soft vs. hard debiasing methods – we suggest consulting the literature just cited.

resources to certain groups" (Savoldi et al. 2021: 846) and is related to aspects of "data creation, model design, and training and testing procedures." Allocation is affected by representation since the results of translations are more accurate for men than for other genders. There is a performance disparity on NMT and therefore the quality of service is more efficient for those individuals who conform to the 'norm' than those who are treated as deviances by the systems. In our analysis, we do not include the allocational harms, since we would need to draw on other kinds of data in order to analyze the consequences of representational harm.

Savoldi et al. (2021: 845) point out that

> MT is a multifaceted task, which requires resolving multiple gender-related subtasks at the same time (e.g., coreference resolution, named entity recognition). Hence, depending on the languages involved and the factors accounted for, gender bias has been conceptualized differently across studies.

These differences contribute to the complexity of NLP and the mitigating strategies applied to close the gaps provided by a biased data set.[15]

MT processing based on statistical or neural approaches does not differ from other AI applications since it learns from the dataset, and it relies on an algorithm to train the engines. Caliskan et al. (2017: 325) point out that this kind of technology is trained to try to maximize overall prediction accuracy and therefore "[i]f a specific group of individuals appears more frequently than others in the training data, the program will optimize for those individuals because this boosts overall accuracy." We can hence observe that the dataset used influences the output that NMT produces. On the other hand, computer scientists "evaluate algorithms on 'test' data sets, but usually these are random sub-samples of the original training set and so are likely to contain the same biases" (ibid.). The way scientists evaluate the data, as well as the lack of attention being paid to differences in society by the programmers therefore reproduce society's biases and norms.

4 Method

We used a small corpus of French sentences that contain examples of gender-inclusive language and their translations made by two different machine translation systems (Google Translate and DeepL) in order to analyze how NMT translates French examples of gender-inclusive language into German. The corpus consists of 48 French sentences containing at least one word in *écriture inclusive*. They were selected to include various forms of *écriture inclusive* in differing syntactic contexts. In total, the corpus contains 60 individual words (types) in *écriture inclusive*. Nouns and their modifiers (e.g., articles and adjectives) were treated as a unit. Our research focus lies on the nouns in *écriture inclusive*, although other word classes in *écriture inclusive*, such as indefinite pronouns, are also part of the corpus. The sentences were taken from texts published on various feminist French websites between September 2022 and May 2023, including the website of the feminist organization *Osez le*

[15] A 'biased data set' refers to a data set that reflects the differences, discrimination, and exclusion of certain people (women, BIPOC, disabled, etc.) that do not represent the norm (white, cis, able-bodied, men) in real life.

Féminisme!, which is part of the French *Haut Conseil à l'Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes*, and the feminist online newsletter *Les Glorieuses*. Regarding the text type, most of the examples were taken from online articles as well as online newsletters. After the compilation of the corpus in the source language, the utterances in *écriture inclusive* were entered into the machine translation software (Google Translate and DeepL). Even though in our analysis we concentrated on the translation of specific nouns, full sentences were introduced to the NMT to provide enough grammatical cuing allowing the machines to assign a gender marker based on the sentence and not an isolated word.

Each of the 48 source language sentences is attributed to a number and the translations are additionally marked with either D (DeepL) or G (Google Translate) to indicate which NMT produced the target language element:

(1) 41. ***Chacun·e*** *devrait se sentir libre, dans* ***son*** *corps et dans* ***sa*** *tête.*[16]
Own translation: '**Everyone** should feel free, in **their** body and **their** mind.'
41G. ***Jeder*** *soll sich frei fühlen, in* ***seinem*** *Körper und in* ***seinem*** *Geist.*
41D. ***Jede/r*** *sollte sich frei fühlen, sowohl in* ***ihrem/seinem*** *Körper als auch in* ***ihrem/seinem*** *Kopf.*

The decision to work with this corpus was made consciously due to our aim to analyze the corpus qualitatively, whereas most of the studies conducted until today have focused on a quantitative approach (Cho et al. 2019, Prates et al. 2020, Rescigno et al. 2020). It was further a response to the studies that have been conducted in the last years regarding gender bias only addressing the topic from a binary gender perspective (cf. Braun 2000, Hacker 2018, Koehn 2005). We therefore propose to analyze the data – both the source and target language strategies – from a queer perspective. As such, our main goal in this paper is to analyze the translation strategies from a non-binary gender perspective including genderqueer options. There we propose an approach to study the harms which (i) (under)representation and (ii) stereotypes of queer genders can potentially reproduce in translations.

Regarding our research design, after collecting the examples in our corpus and translating the sentences to the target language with both NMT, we coded the data with MAXQDA. The first step consisted of coding the strategies in *écriture inclusive* in the source language according to the system displayed in Table 1.

Each strategy was given a specific value which can be observed in Table 1. We classified the different strategies of *écriture inclusive* by genderqueer and binary gender representation. In our definition, *point median, point*, neutral expressions and paraphrasing are considered genderqueer-friendly, while *doublet* and *trait d'union* are defined as only representing the binary system. Regarding the genderqueer representation, we must however highlight that the first two categories depicted in the table above (*point median* and *point*) mark genderqueerness explicitly, making the current debate on gender marking visible. The last two genderqueer representations (neutral and paraphrase) do not

[16] Mouronval, Amélie. 2023. "Les Petites Glo: Personne ne veut voir de femmes rondes dans la mode." https://lesglorieuses.fr/femmes-rondes-mode/ (accessed July 2023).

Strategies of *écriture inclusive* in source text	**Kind of gender representation**
Point median (·)	Genderqueer representation
Point (.)	Genderqueer representation
Trait d'union (-)	Binary gender representation
Doublet	Binary gender representation
Neutral (epicenes)	Gender indifferent, genderqueer-friendly representation
Paraphrase	Genderqueer, genderqueer-friendly representation

Table 1: Kinds of gender representation according to different strategies of *écriture inclusive* in the source language

display explicit gender marking which we here define as queer-friendly, although this does not mean that the gender-inclusivity by way of neutrality has been achieved intentionally.

The translations in our target language – German – were also coded using a similar scheme as in the source language examples (cf. Table 2). The difference in the coding lies in the morphologic differences between German and French, for example the neutralization of gender in plural.

The first category 'symbols' encompasses all strategies of inclusive language previously introduced in section 3.2. The symbols (/) and (-) are considered to perpetuate the visibility of the gender binary. The code 'masculine generic' is self-explanatory and was applied to all the cases in which the masculine grammatical gender seems to be used in a generic function. Regarding the category 'plural (or formal)', we used this label to code all the examples in which the plural declination in German did not allow for an explicit analysis of gender due to the morphological structure of the language. The category 'neologism/anglicism' on the other side was applied to all translations that contained loan words and/or those cases in which a new word was derived to refer to a female person in the source text. However, we would like to highlight that not all neologisms are based on loan words. Many follow the derivation rules of French/German itself. Our categorization treats neutral translations as those that encompass either a paraphrasing strategy or exhibit the use of grammatically gender-neutral nouns in German.

After localizing the different strategies used, both in source and target language, we moved on to analyze the data applying the two main categories suggested by Crawford (2017) (see section 3.2). Our main aim is to categorize how automatic translations reproduce negative linguistic biases or prejudices regarding gender. As we already stated before, our aim therefore is not to determine how the biases emerge but rather to analyze the (i) (under)representation and (ii) stereotyping of women and non-binary individuals in the translations. Regarding the category 'underrepresentation', we analyzed the corpus and coded the sentences in French to categorize the translations according to the strategies introduced in Table 2. The second category refers to stereotyping gender roles. This category was analyzed by paying attention to the meaning behind the examples in our corpus. We observed how the NMT translated nouns which are stereotypically perceived as female or male occupations. We analyzed harm according to the following categories: For the category of representation, we divided 'underrepresentation' into subcategories of (1) female and (2) queer underrepresentation. Translations which use a masculine generic form were coded as examples of underrepresentation of women and queer people. For cases in which a strategy of inclusive language was provided by the NMT but included only men and women were labeled as 'queer underrepresentation'. The code 'stereotype' was used for those cases in which the NMT uses the mas-

Strategies in translations in the target language	**Kind of gender representation**
Symbols (*, and/or : and/or _) (/ and/or -)	Genderqueer representation Binary gender representation
Doublet	Binary gender representation
Masculine generic	No representation of women and/or genderqueer
Feminine/Plural/Formal	Gender indifferent
Neologism and anglicism	Genderqueer representation Binary gender representation
Neutral	Genderqueer-friendly representation

Table 2: Kinds of gender representation according to different translations in the target language

culine form generically (e.g., for occupations and/or the declination of a nominal phrase even though there are other alternatives).

5 Analysis

In the previous section we provided an overview of the codes used to categorize the data in our corpus. Our corpus consists of 3959 tokens and 1374 types, the type-token ratio is =0.3471. In order to visualize the data, we present a quantitative overview of the preliminary results before analyzing the translation strategies and possible phenomena (representation and/or stereotyping) the produced output can create qualitatively. Figure 1 depicts the frequency in percentage of how often a specific strategy of *écriture inclusive* appears in our corpus.

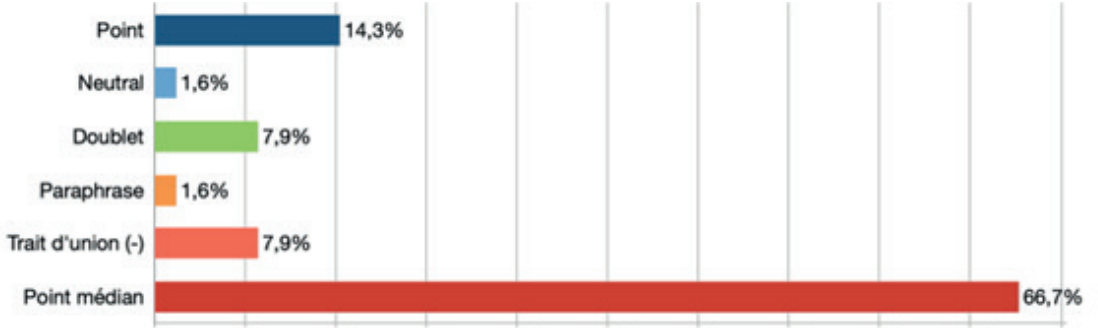

Figure 1: Frequency of different strategies of écriture inclusive

As we can see in the visualization of frequency, the strategy with the highest occurrence is the *point médian* (66,7 %). Hence, two thirds of the examples in our corpus are fully gender-inclusive. The second most frequent strategy is the *point* (14,3 %). In total, 81 % of the corpus consists of sentences that are gender-inclusive as the most frequent occurrences of strategies encompass those solutions we define as queer-friendly. On the other hand, *doublets* and examples with *trait d'union* make up 15,8 % of the strategies present in the corpus.

Regarding the strategies of inclusive language that both NMT applied to translate the input into the target language, we can observe a clear difference between DeepL and Google Translate.

As can be seen in Figure 2, DeepL's most frequent strategy (33,3 %) is to neutralize the input from the source language, that is to say that the gendered source term is translated in a way that the target term does not refer to gender at all, such as the use of neutral words as seen in DeepL's translation of the word *l'aîné-e* ('the oldest', m./f.) in sentence number 2. While Google Translate erroneously transformed the French explicitly binarily gendered form into *der Älteste*, 'the oldest', which is the German masculine form, DeepL translated it as *das älteste Kind*, 'the oldest child', which strips the term of any notion of gender, seeing that the German *Kind* is semantically gender-neutral. For example:

(2) 5. *[L]es enfants d'une même fratrie doivent avoir le même nom que l'aîné-e.*[17]
Own translation: 'Siblings must have the same name as the oldest child.'

5G. *Die Kinder derselben Geschwister müssen denselben Namen haben wie der Älteste.*

5D. *Geschwister müssen denselben Namen wie* ***das älteste Kind*** *haben.*

Other examples frequently used in daily life include the usage of epicenes like *persons, people,* or *humans* instead of *women* and/or *men*, sometimes seen in suffixes as well such as *Fachmensch* 'professional (human)' instead of *Fachmann* 'professional (man)' or *Fachfrau* 'professional (woman)'[18] in either of the languages. The second most frequent strategy (28,3 %) is the generic use of the masculine grammatical gender. It is interesting to observe that oftentimes, sentences translated using the masculine generic (MG) were sentences which contained occupations in the source language that are considered stereotypically male. The 23 job titles in the source texts used either gender-inclusive variations, both the female and the male or solely the latter form, but no kind of ambiguous designation that might have been interpreted as a reason for NMT to struggle with an adequately gendered translation into the target language. Google Translate employed the MG for all of them except in one case, *Europaabgeordnete* 'members of the European Parliament', which is a form of *Differentialgenus* in plural form and thus does not indicate gender. However, it may very well be argued that this output resulted from the fact that this is the most commonly used form in German and there is no masculine generic alternative. This example shows that lexical choices in NMT often mirror the frequency and conventionality of certain forms in the

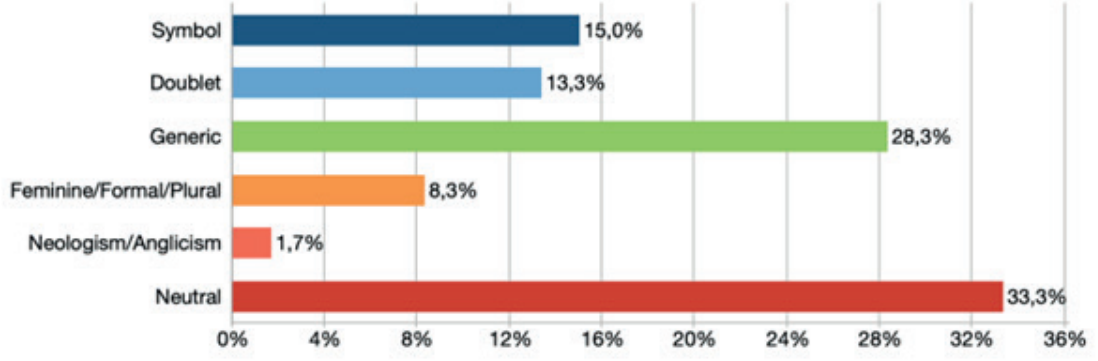

Figure 2: Frequency of occurrence of codes for DeepL

[17] Chloé. "Porte mon nom." https://feministoclic.olf.site/porte-mon-nom/ (accessed July 2023).

[18] Contrary to some opposing voices, many of these terms in both French and German have existed for decades and even centuries and thus are not simply an invention of modern queer-feminist efforts, cf. *Fachmensch*, in: Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, Erstbearbeitung (1854–1960), digitalisierte Version im Digitalen Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache.

training data even though (NMT) systems operate based on vector embeddings rather than relying solely on statistical frequency. Therefore, the distribution patterns within the training corpus continue to exert a significant influence on the outputs.

When it comes to *doublets*, Google Translate rendered the French phrase *les sénateurs et les sénatrices* ('senator', m./f.) into the German *die Senatoren* ('the senators', m., pl.), thereby collapsing the inclusive formulation into the masculine generic:

(3) 29. *Nous appelons toutes celles et tous ceux qui sont attaché·es*[19] *au droit à l'IVG à suivre la séance et à réagir aux débats au Sénat pour encourager* ***les sénateurs et les sénatrices*** *à voter en faveur de la loi.*[20]
Own translation: We call on all those who are attached to the right to abortion to follow the session and react to the debates in the Senate to encourage **senators** to vote in favor of the law.

29G. *Wir rufen alle, die sich für das Recht auf Abtreibung einsetzen, dazu auf, die Sitzung zu verfolgen und auf die Debatten im Senat zu reagieren, um* ***die Senatoren*** *zu ermutigen, für das Gesetz zu stimmen.*

On the other hand, sentences that contained female gendered occupation titles in the source language were translated using masculine generic counterparts in German: *une magistrate professionnelle*, ('a professional magistrate', f.), was translated as *ein professioneller Richter* (m.) instead of *eine professionelle Richterin* (f.) and *cheffes étoilées*, ('star chefs' f., pl.) was translated as *Sterneköche* (m., pl.) instead of *Sterneköchinnen* (f., pl.). Contrastingly, DeepL only used the MG 14 times. However, similar tendencies to Google Translates' strategies can be found in the sentences delivered by DeepL. The following example exhibits that also DeepL subsumed the gender-inclusive use of *point médian* into the MG counterpart in German.

(4) 8. *Les médicaments abortifs retirent la décision de mettre fin à une grossesse des mains* ***des docteur·e·s*** *et* ***des élu·e·s*** *et la remettent entièrement entre les mains des personnes qui ont besoin d'avorter.*[21]
Own translation: Abortion drugs take the decision to terminate a pregnancy out of the hands of **doctors** and **elected officials**, and put it entirely in the hands of those who need an abortion.

8D. *Abtreibungsmedikamente nehmen die Entscheidung, eine Schwangerschaft zu beenden, aus den Händen von* ***Ärzten*** *und* ***Abgeordneten*** *und legen sie vollständig in die Hände der Menschen, die das Bedürfnis haben abzutreiben.*

This example shows that DeepL also doesn't provide a gender-inclusive translation when dealing with occupation titles in this case.

When it comes to the examples *une magistrate professionnelle* ('professional judge', f.) and *cheffes étoilées*, ('star chef', f.) previously dis-

[19] In this case the use of point médian can also be interpreted as a binary translation. We need to highlight that in French there is no uniform use of this strategy. Therefore, point médian can both be used to represent gender in binarity or beyond binarity.
[20] Osez le Féminisme ! 2022. "Droit à l'IVG dans la Constitution: la bataille commence au Sénat!". https://osezlefeminisme.fr/droit-a-livg-dans-la-constitution-la-bataille-commence-au-senat/ (accessed July 5th 2023).
[21] Clement, Megan. 2023. "IMPACT". https://lesglorieuses.fr/qui-a-peur-de-la-pilule-abortive/ (accessed May 9th 2023).

cussed for Google Translate, we can state that DeepL correctly translated both of the female job titles into *Berufsrichterin* ('professional judge', f.) and *Sterneköchinnen* ('star chefs', f.).

We can clearly observe that most of the job titles refer to prestigious occupations such as *Präsidenten* ('presidents', m., pl.), *Dekane* ('deans', m., pl.), or *Minister* ('ministers', m., pl.) which are considered as stereotypically male. However, jobs that could be considered 'modern' and are expressed with neologisms borrowed from English into French and/or German (e.g., *instagrammeur/instagrammeuse* 'instagrammer', m./f., and *Medienmanager* 'media manager', m.) are considered neither stereotypically male nor female. While the source terms are at times gender-inclusive, these occupations are translated using only the masculine grammatical gender.

Additionally, there are nouns in plural with *Differentialgenus* (e.g., *Minderjährige* 'underaged' or *Jugendliche* 'young people'), which do not index gender themselves but only through accompanying function words in singular form. Here are a few examples:

(5) 34. *Les Petites Glo, c'est la première newsletter destinée aux* ***adolescent·e·s***.[22]
Own translation: Les Petites Glo is the first newsletter aimed at **teenagers.**
34D. *Les Petites Glo ist der erste Newsletter, der sich an* ***Jugendliche*** *richtet.*

Therefore, we cannot generally speak of a translation that explicitly applies gender-inclusive strategies neutralizing gender in the translation, but they are rather the result of the coincidence that those lexemes do not index gender in German. Yet, there are examples where DeepL used neutral forms when a translation by a masculine generic form was also applicable and even more common at times: *rangées d'étudiant·e·s* ('rows of students', m./f.) became *Reihen der Studierenden*, whereas Google Translate used the more traditional masculine form *Studentenreihen*.

(6) 46. *Reste encore l'image des* ***rangées d'étudiant·e·s*** *devant la distribution d'aide alimentaire, des apéros-visios et des examens chamboulés…*[23]
Own translation: There's still the image of **rows of students** in front of the food aid distribution, of aperitif-visios and disrupted exams…
46D. *Es bleibt noch das Bild von den* ***Reihen der Studierenden*** *vor der Verteilung der Lebensmittelhilfe, von den Aperitifen und den Prüfungen, die durcheinander gebracht wurden...*

The results regarding occupations and the strategies used by DeepL coincide with the results of other studies that analyzed gender bias by measuring different translation equivalents of job titles (cf., e.g., Farkas & Németh 2022).

Google Translate, on the other hand, shows a clear tendency to provide translations in generic use of the masculine grammatical gender; 60,5 % of the results contain this strategy. The second most frequent category are neutral word forms with 31,6 %, as figure 3 depicts.

The tendency that we observed for DeepL, namely a preference for the generic use of the

[22] "Les Petites Glo". Accessed May 9th 2023. https://lesglorieuses.fr/les-newsletters/les-petites-glo/

[23] Mouronval, Amélie. 2023. "Les Petites Glo: Ceci n'est pas un problème isolé." https://lesglorieuses.fr/ceci-nest-pas-un-probleme-isole/?cn-reloaded=1(accessed July 3rd 2023).

masculine grammatical gender for stereotypically male occupations, is maintained in the translations provided by Google Translate. The main difference is that Google Translate utilizes masculine forms generically in a greater number of examples, such as *Praktikanten* 'intern' (m., pl.), while DeepL in certain cases applies other strategies for such input as discussed previously in this section.

Google Translate translates most of the occupations present in our corpus as masculine (e.g., *Parlamentarier* ['member of the parliament', m.], *Praktikanten* ['intern', m., pl.], *Minister* ['minister', m.], *Ärzte* ['doctors', m., pl.], *Richter* ['judge', m.], *Elektriker* ['electrician', m.], *Senatoren* ['senators', m., pl.], etc.). This is done even in the case of *Paläontologe* or *Minister*, which in French are words of the *Differentialgenus* that do not indicate grammatical or social gender without a determinant – this was not present in the source texts.

(7) 28. *Plusieurs **ministres** et près de 440 **parlementaires** au Sénat et à l'Assemblée nationale, se sont déjà **engagé·es** dans une démarche d'inscription du droit à l'IVG dans la Constitution.*[24]

Own translation: Several **ministers** and nearly 440 **members** of the French Senate and National Assembly have already committed to enshrining the right to abortion in the Constitution.

28G. *Mehrere **Minister** und fast 440 **Parlamentarier** im Senat und in der Nationalversam mlung haben sich bereits dafür eingesetzt, das Recht auf Schwangerschaftsabbruch in die Verfassung aufzunehmen.*

Google Translate further tends to employ masculine forms for other nouns which do not necessarily imply gender roles: for example, *leurs ami·e·s* is translated as *Freunde* 'friends' (m.).

When it comes to apparently neutral translations, on the other hand, we see a similar pattern in the translations provided by DeepL.

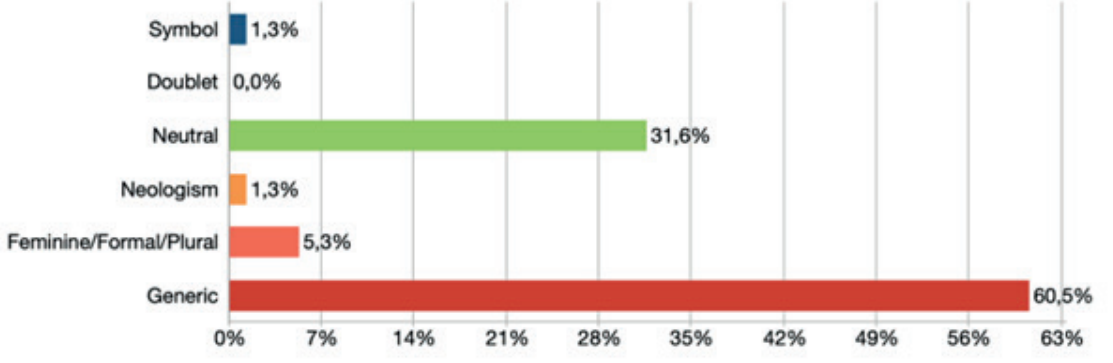

Figure 3: Frequency of occurrence of codes for Google Translate

[24] Osez le Féminisme ! 2020. "Droit à l'IVG dans la Constitution: la bataille commence au Sénat !". https://osezlefeminisme.fr/droit-a-livg-dans-la-constitution-la-bataille-commence-au-senat/ (accessed July 5th, 2023).

Figure 4 quantifies the translations we coded to interpret the harms resulting from the translation procedures used by both NMT. The percentages were obtained by applying the categories presented in Figure 2. Translations could be coded with more than one variable. E.g., 'Harms_Female underrepresentation' could also at the same time be labeled as 'Harms_queer underrepresentation'.

As can be observed in Figure 4, 'queer underrepresentation' occurs most frequently in our corpus (31,0 %), followed by female underrepresentation (24,3 %). In 22,2 % of the cases, the translations provided by both NMT represent gender from the source language in concert with the target language. Concerning stereotypes, 22,6 % of the translations represent a reproduction of stereotypes according to gender marking either on a syntactic (e.g., a correction in declination may be needed) or lexeme level (e.g., the nouns regarding occupation might need adjusting). This was especially shown with the examples that contained profession titles (lexeme) and the syntactic structure surrounding the profession titles.

In order to better understand the negative effects, or 'harms', as Crawford (2017) defines them, we analyze the data qualitatively. In the translations made by Google Translate and DeepL, the use of masculine word forms predominates, thus leading to the underrepresentation of both women and genderqueer people. This becomes most apparent in terms of occupation. While DeepL frequently translates occupation-related terms using the masculine generic, it occasionally employs gender-inclusive strategies. Google Translate, on the other hand, uses masculine generics rather broadly. We should note that there is an ongoing debate, concerning French, regarding the usage of the feminine grammatical gender in occupational terminology (cf. Lessinger 2020, Viennot 2020). The use of feminine job titles has been increasingly accepted over the last 30 years; still, the *Académie Française* – as the official authority on changes in the linguistic policies regarding the French language – agreed only recently, in 2019, to the use of certain feminine terms for occupations, and these will be gradually represented in corpora used to train NMT (cf. Haut Conseil à l'Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes 2023: 4). However, the hesitance and lack of norms regarding gender-inclusive language in society fits with our findings, where terms denoting oc-

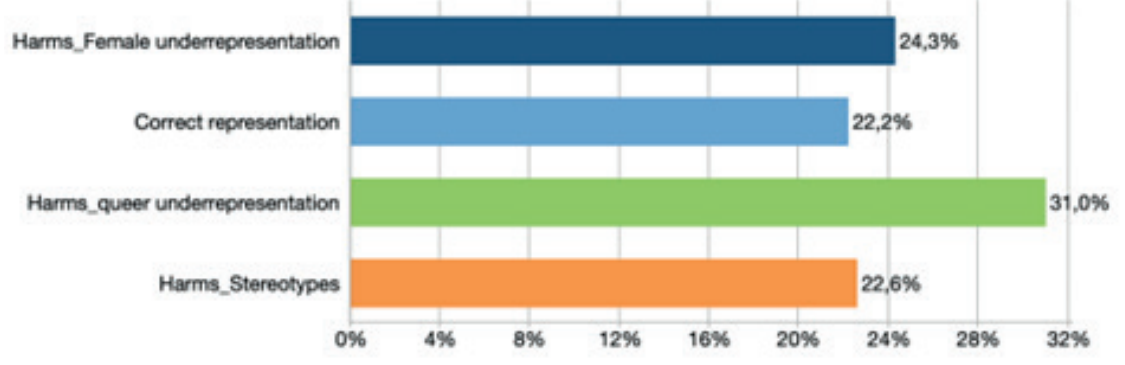

Figure 4: Representation harms in corpus

cupations were in most cases translated using masculine forms.

The translations show a strong bias towards treating the masculine grammatical gender as standard. This applies not only to occupational terms; most gender marked terms are translated into masculine forms with only a few exceptions. In Google Translate, these exceptions can be attributed to the linguistic characteristics of the language pair French/German.

Similarly, when a sentence containing a term referring to one or more person(s) in the French source text is translated into German by restructuring the syntax and introducing a different part of speech as the predicate, a gender-neutral expression may be created as part of the translation process without deliberately taking a gender-inclusive approach. For example, *Mais elles sont moins bien informé.es* (see (8)).

As we can see in the following example, the French sentence starts with the feminine third person plural pronoun (*ils* marks the 3. p. pl. for men). In German, however, the plural pronoun is ambiguous, because the plural pronoun *sie* indexes all genders. As such, the translation will be gender-indifferent.

(8) 12. *Mais **elles** sont moins bien **informé.es**, plus mal **suivies** que les hommes et s'occupent davantage de la santé de leurs proches que de leur santé.*[25]
Own translation: But they are less well-informed, have poorer follow-up than men, and are more concerned with the health of their loved ones than with their own health.

12G. *Aber **sie** sind weniger gut informiert, werden weniger gut betreut als Männer und kümmern sich mehr um die Gesundheit ihrer Lieben als um deren Gesundheit.*

12D. ***Sie** sind jedoch weniger gut informiert, werden schlechter betreut als Männer und kümmern sich mehr um die Gesundheit ihrer Angehörigen als um ihre eigene Gesundheit.*

In the example above, the original appears as an attempt at gender-inclusive phrasing using the feminine plural pronoun *elles* in a generic manner while also making use of the gender-inclusive strategy utilizing the point at the morpheme boundary to indicate the notion of including more than just the female gender. Alternatively, one could have used the gender-neutral neopronoun *iels*.

Another phenomenon specific to this language pair may arise due to the disparity in the gender marking of pronouns. While possessive pronouns are inflected according to the gender of both the possessor and the possessed entity in the third person in German, they are only inflected according to the gender of the possessed in French. Consequently, when there is only little context, the French source text may lack information needed to produce an adequate translation into German. Concerning this, there was a disparity between the translations provided by DeepL and Google Translate, as in the following example:

[25] Germian, Isabelle. 2023. https://www.lesnouvellesnews.fr/le-coeur-des-femmes-moins-bien-soigne-que-celui-des-hommes/ (accessed July 2023).

(9) 11. ***Sa*** *conviction que "nous ne sommes pas mal adapté·e·s au monde dans lequel nous vivons".*[26]
Own translation: **Her** conviction that "we are not badly adapted to the world we live in".

11G. ***Seine*** *Überzeugung: „Wir sind für die Welt, in der wir leben, nicht schlecht geeignet."*

11D. ***Ihre*** *Überzeugung, dass „wir nicht schlecht an die Welt, in der wir leben, angepasst sind."*

Google Translate translates *sa* ('her' in this case) as *seine* ('his'), whereas DeepL produced *ihre* ('her'). In this case, the lack of information leads Google Translate to revert to a masculine generic target term for translation. However, it needs to be pointed out that DeepL, lacking the same information, produced a gendered translation. This may be attributed to the fact that further in the same sentence, a gender-inclusive participle indicates that a masculine term may not be adequate.

There is only one exception to the predominance of the generic use of the masculine grammatical gender in translations produced by Google Translate, namely the word *féministe* ('feminist', m./f.). The source term alone, having a *Differentialgenus*, does not indicate its grammatical gender, but is marked as gender-inclusive by the usage of the *point médian* in the preceding article and attributive adjective in French.

(10) 7. *Dites-nous qui vous a fait devenir* ***un·e meilleur·e féministe.*** [27]
Own translation: Tell us who made you a better **feminist.**

7G. *Sagen Sie uns, wer Sie zu* ***einer besseren Feministin*** *gemacht hat.*

7D. *Sagen Sie uns, wer Sie zu* ***einer besseren Feministin/einem besseren Feministen*** *gemacht hat.*

DeepL therefore provided for this example a gender-inclusive translation that contains a binary mention of 'feminist' (m./f.) using the slash.

Google Translate on the other hand provided a translation solely in the feminine (7G): (*eine bessere Feministin*, 'a better feminist', f.). As seen with the predominating use of the masculine, the source text's gender-inclusive marking is omitted in the translation output here as well. In contrast, DeepL employed a gender-inclusive strategy for the target text including both women and men (*einer besseren Feministin/einem besseren Feministen* ['a better feminist', f./m.]), albeit not genderqueer people. In our view, this results from the frequency that *Feministin* appears within the corpora from which the translation machines draw.

The reproduction of such stereotypes in the translations, particularly those produced by Google Translate, offers an insight into gender bias which is present in the corpus data on which the MT software is based. Whereas Google Translate fails entirely to bypass this bias, to employ adequate target terms and improve on its translation quality, DeepL manages to apply gender-inclusive strategies at least in some cases. Nevertheless, the predominance of the generic use of the masculine reflects social practices where MG is used as the norm.

[26] Clement, Megan. 2023. "Impact: Qui de la pilule abortive?". https://lesglorieuses.fr/qui-a-peur-de-la-pilule-abortive (accessed July 2023)

[27] Clement, Megan. 2023. "Impact: Qui de la pilule abortive?". https://lesglorieuses.fr/qui-a-peur-de-la-pilule-abortive (accessed July 2023).

Therefore, it is of great importance not only to notice such disparities in translation but also to conduct further research into their causes, and to implement strategies to reduce them.

Interestingly, DeepL seems to apply the respective chosen strategy concerning the gender marking of terms referring to people consistently throughout a sentence, even in cases where the original terms differ in the morphological marking of gender-inclusive language. In an enumeration of three different terms for occupations, only the first term *électricien·ne* clearly employs a gender-inclusive strategy, while *paléontologue* as well as *prof' de techno*, having the *Differentialgenus*, could be read as female or male for the lack of a gender defining article. Nonetheless, DeepL applied the same strategy of gender-inclusive language for all three terms in German.

(11) 43. *On ne naît pas pour devenir **électricien·ne**, **paléontologue** ou **prof' de techno** au collège.*[28]
Own translation: You are not born to become an **electrician**, a **paleontologist** or a **technology teacher** at high school.
43D. *Man wird nicht geboren, um **Elektriker/in**, **Paläontologe/in** oder **Techniklehrer/in** am Gymnasium zu werden.*

Thus, it seems that the existence of the one term demonstrating the intention of using gender-inclusive language was sufficient for DeepL to translate using a gender-inclusive strategy, to produce a translation output which represents women and men, although it excludes genderqueer people.

6 Implications and conclusion

This study set out to analyze the treatment of grammatical gender in neural machine translation (NMT), considering the linguistic particularities present in German and French, as well as translational phenomena.

While grammatical gender itself does not consistently refer to biological or social gender, there is a strong correlation between the grammatical gender of a personal noun and the social gender it refers to. Thus, it is important to be conscious of the possible reciprocal influence that language use might have on the perception of reality, and vice versa. Consequently, it is not only the results of machine translation that perpetuate gender stereotypes; it is stereotypes in the first place that presuppose the creation of inadequate translation output through gender bias present in machine translation. Gender bias is developed when the data that NMT is built upon is flawed, in the way that gender norms and stereotypes exist in patriarchally shaped societies and are thus incorporated into machine learning without being considered and treated critically. Hence, a cycle develops in which gender bias is transported through the mediums of both human and machine.

The results of this study show clearly how gender bias is (re)produced in NMT translations. There is a strong tendency for translations to employ masculine forms in a generic, supposedly gender indistinct manner. This greatly reduces the visibility of women and, even more so, genderqueer people. Additionally, stereotypical gender roles and norms assigned to women and men reflect the notion

[28] Mouronval, Amélie. 2023. "Les Petits Glo: Et toi tu veux faire quoi?". https://lesglorieuses.fr/et-toi-tu-veux-faire-quoi/ (accessed July 5th 2023).

of a binary system with preferences for gender marking; this results in inadequate translations, particularly for prestigious professional and academic titles. Genderqueer people, however, are not subject to any kind of biased notions based on gender performance; rather, they are excluded completely in translations produced by the NMT software.

Considering the technical aspects of NMT, it is unclear how the various types of gendered language utilizing different characters affect the translation quality. However, it has become evident that employment of the point as a symbol for gender diversity between French morpheme boundaries may quite well be a difficulty to the NMT in struggling to differentiate from its common use as a punctuation mark. This is corroborated by the fact that none of the French words employing one or two points as a means of gender-inclusive language were translated as such to German: The masculine generic was mostly applied next to some words or word forms that are gender-neutral in German. Thus, it can be shown that technical aspects have an influence on the treatment of gendered language as well. The examples introduced above exhibit that although contemporary NMT systems like Google Translate and (partially) DeepL are built on vector-space representations rather than explicit statistical frequency tables, the representations themselves are trained on language data where certain forms – such as the masculine generic – occur significantly more often. In this way, the training process internalizes and reproduces dominant linguistic norms. The vector embeddings reflect the distributional regularities of the corpora, which means that more frequently occurring lexical items are statistically overrepresented. This therefore illustrates that vector-based NMT does not eliminate the influence of frequency. Consequently, inclusive forms that are less prevalent in the training corpora remain marginalized in machine translation outputs, reinforcing linguistic norms that privilege default MG.

This exhibits how important it is to develop legislation that regulates how AI is trained to deal with various disparities and inequalities. As was pointed out in this paper, the recommendations of UNESCO and the European Parliament need to become a set of rules that regulate the development of AI-tools such as NMT.

In order to improve upon the translation quality and reduce negative gender bias in NMT, it is necessary to start by becoming aware of the ways in which bias presents itself and where it stems from. This has been attempted at a limited capacity in this study. It has become evident that the source data used for NMT machine learning will need to be further evaluated regarding the presence of harmful stereotypes that will then need to be extracted from the data. Similarly, the process of data acquisition needs to be revised as well, seeing that diverse, bias-informed texts already exist and can be drawn upon. Furthermore, the algorithms employed in NMT need to be able to incorporate different strategies of gendered language, such as word formation according to genderqueer-inclusive standards.

To be able to further assess NMT's performance when translating languages with grammatical gender systems, translations from German to French will need to be considered as well. A comparison between the two directions of translation may offer valuable insight when investigating how the translation of gendered language may be improved.

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04

Gender and language use in Macau, 16th – 19th century

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Raphael Dohardt

This contribution traces the impact of gender (roles) in the dynamics of language genesis and shift in Macau, focusing on the city's creole community. The hypothesis on which I elaborate is that most Asian, African, and Eurasian women living in the Portuguese-ruled part of Macau from the 16th to the 19th century found themselves in a social position that was *out of the norm* – a fact reflected in their language use. During this period, these women's access to normative language use was systematically impeded by factors such as gender and ethnic origin. Considering these factors, I reconstruct the interrelatedness of speakers' social position and communicative behaviour. To this end, I analyse metalinguistic data, such as glottonyms, metalinguistic statements, and descriptions of diverse types of speakers. I mostly rely on Portuguese and Macau Creole texts (henceforth: Maquista), which I approach within a framework informed by linguistic anthropology and historical sociolinguistics, with special regard to gender.

1 Gender and creolisation

Gender has long attracted linguists' interest. Studies have focused, for instance, on anatomical differences between male and female speech production, on systematic structural differences between male and female language use, on the construction of third genders and non-binary identities through language use (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall 2004, 2016; Kreiman et al. 2008, Johnson 2008: 378–382), and on the role that gender plays in language change. When it comes to research on contact languages – the interest of this contribution – gender has usually been evoked as a relevant factor in the emergence of so-called *mixed languages.* Mixed languages display a binary split in their lexico-grammatical structure, with one subdomain deriving from one language and a second one from another one. Such a split is often argued to be the result of systematic code-switching in societies where mixed families are common (e.g., male French settlers and local Cree women in Canada, e.g., Michif, Bakker & Papen 2009: 416–419).

Curiously, the role of gender is less often discussed when it comes to the formation of *creoles*, i.e., contact languages the lexicon of which is largely derived from one language (called the *lexifier*), whilst its grammar displays significant restructuring (e.g., Thomason 2009: 45–47). Although explanations of creole formation discuss language learning and acquisition in specific social settings – e.g., expansionism, colonialism, and other such forms of societies marked by strong power asymmetries – gender figures less prominently than ethnicity or socio-economy as a dimension of analysis. Nor is gender discussed broadly with respect to the disappearance of creoles. Focusing on language use in Macau, here, I will discuss the significance of gender for the case of Maquista, to explore the relevance of this dimension for creoles.

I concentrate on the emergence, transmission, and disappearance of Maquista – one of the few creole languages with a long literary tradition, offering a comparatively good documentation of the city's social history, from diverse social strata's perspectives. The hypothesis on which I elaborate is that most Asian, African, and Eurasian women living in the Portuguese-ruled part of Macau from the 16th to the 19th century found themselves in a social position that was out of the norm – a fact reflected in their language use. During this period, these women's access to normative language use was systematically impeded by societal factors such as gender and ethnic origin. As will be shown, this situation had consequences for women's linguistic repertoires, as well as for the formation of linguistic ideologies, and language transmission in Macanese society. I will compare the language situation of Macau to Hong Kong and Shanghai, where the Macanese community has been living in different sociolinguistic settings.

After an outline of the considered data and relevant theoretical notions (Section 2), I proceed with the historical analysis (Section 3). I begin by discussing the role of population movements in pre-colonial and pre-modern Macau from a gendered perspective (Section 3.1). Then, I discuss the impact of education in colonial Macau (Section 3.2). I finish the analysis by considering cultural practices that entail metapragmatic aspects of communication, such as creative writing and theatre (Section 3.3). I conclude by summarising this study (Section 4).

2 Data and methodological approach

This analysis follows a discourse framework which understands a discourse, following Busse & Teubert (1994), as the (virtual) sum of texts that are (a) locally, temporarily, and socially grounded; as well as (b) thematically coherent and structurally cohesive (see also Dohardt 2021: 119–120). For this contribution, I collected and interpreted texts that contain metalinguistic statements on Maquista to uncover how gender and language use intersect.

However, the metalinguistic data on gendered language use in Macau are fragmented, scattered throughout comments on specific languages or on reading and writing in general. Therefore, fictional and factual, poetic and prosaic, public and private sources need to be adduced like pieces of a puzzle to reconstruct the big picture of women's language use. To contextualise these texts properly, I adduce sociohistorical background information (e.g., Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2012).

Furthermore, the semantic analysis of terms for speaker types and glottonyms, as documented in these texts, is particularly insightful (Hermanns 1994, Dohardt 2021).

2.1 Gender hierarchies: Implications for sources and language use

Gender is not a socially neutral category – a fact that has consequences for the sources under consideration as well. Generally, there are significant lacunas in conventional archives when it comes to records on women (Lerner 1993: chap. 11, Schwartz & Cook 2002: 6–9, 16; but see Hinsch 2002: 2–9).

In Macau, however, historical information on women is comparatively rich, in documents that portray the colonial Other. This is so because gender intersects with class, ethnicity, and nationality (see Woolard 1997), as well as with a person's socioeconomic background, civil status, and age (see Tosh 2004: 41–42). Descriptions of women, hence, appear often to complete the description of the (stereo)typical Portuguese, Macanese, or Chinese society as viewed by the other ethnicities.

As in conventional sources, however, one observes that the documentation in Macau reflects gender hierarchies in society. In this regard, Tosh (2004) notes that social relations as construed by gender (performance, assignment, and roles) are hierarchised on the micro-level (e.g., in the household) and on the macro-level (e.g., by marriage legislation). These hierarchies are too complex to be simplistically reduced to notions like *patriarchy* or *matriarchy*. These notions ignore the hierarchical relations between people of the same gender, who exhibit different performances of gender identity, or who are assigned different gender roles (often by force, see below). Tosh (2004: 42) notes, for instance, that stigmatised expressions of masculinity occupy a comparable rank in the social ladder as do certain expressions of femininity. In turn, expressions of femininity that come closer to certain forms of masculinity may have a higher social standing. This motivates Tosh (2004: 43) to use the term *hegemonic masculinity* to describe the dominant form of masculinity, according to which other expressions of gender identity are evaluated.

It is, first and foremost, hegemonic masculinity on which historical documentation centres, rather than on

masculinity in general. In Macau, hegemonic masculinity was embodied by the political and ecclesiastic elite. In the Catholic part of the city, the languages associated with these circles were standard Portuguese and Latin, in which most European sources were written. Women and men from lower social strata seldom had access to Portuguese and Latin, remaining in Creolophone circles. Although many Creole sources exist in the case of Macau, they are still fewer than Portuguese or Latin ones. In the Chinese part of the city, models of societal organisation, especially Confucianism, relegated women to stay in the private sphere, and they restricted their language use to orality and local norms of communication.[1]

Until the 18th century, most metalinguistic documents were produced in political contexts, either by Macau's Chinese officials or Romance-speaking Catholic clerics and the city's administration. Even if they address women's language use, they are hence documents of a male perspective. Maquista texts available for this period, such as popular songs known and recited by broader strata, were written down in the 19th and 20th centuries. Although their history and text traditions can be reconstructed, their authorship often remains unclear. As sources of popular culture, these folkloristic texts emerged in Creolophone circles, offering a more gender-inclusive perspective than the elite's writings (see Jackson 2011). For the 19th century, first-hand linguistic data are available in the form of letters written between female authors.

Tosh's concept of hegemonic masculinities also allows for the following hypothesis: women whose status comes closer to hegemonic masculinity will display linguistic repertoires that are more similar to men's; complementarily, men who do not embody hegemonic masculinity will show more overlaps with women in their language use than they do with men who embody hegemonic masculinity.

2.2 One's own and the other's language

The texts under study must be treated with caution when it comes to their authors' relation to the language they chose. Not all sources discussed here are 'written *as*' testimonies of Maquista speakers; some are 'written *like*' such documents (see also Spotti & Blommaert 2016: 171), imitating the varieties of Maquista which the authors normally do not consider theirs. Thus, they appropriate these varieties of other speakers (or writers) for a specific metacommunicative purpose. In this metacommunicative act, the imitated writer or speaker functions as a *figure of personhood*, which "refers to a set of indexicals that are linked with a recognizable person type – that is, a group of indexical signs that can point to a type of character that is socially identifiable […]" (Park 2021: 47, further references omitted). Therefore, data produced by L2 speakers must not be considered less authentic or less important, but, to the contrary, a valuable source for historical sociolinguistics.

Focusing on gender, I argue that the prototypical figure of personhood considered

[1] See Tomás (2009: 53–56), Diaz de Seabra (2017), and Carneiro de Sousa's (2007) study on the city's marriage policies regarding female orphans in light of ethnic, religious, and economic considerations.

the best speaker of authentic Maquista is an elderly Macanese woman who was conceptualised as lacking discretion and being rude, but frank. In performance arts, these characteristics were used humorously to turn the tables, putting sarcastic social criticism into the mouths of those elderly who '[…] are ignorant of and critical towards Portuguese and the modern world […]' (Marques Morgado Ferreira de Oliveira 2016/2017: 50–51, my translation; Serra 2022).[2]

2.3 The history of linguistic repertoires

This study does not consider Maquista alone, nor does it treat the emergence and disappearance of this language as a system of communication existing as an abstract and disembodied *langue* in the Saussurian sense. Instead, this study departs from a perspective that focuses on the linguistic repertoire of individuals and societies. A linguistic repertoire, here, is understood as the sum of an individual's linguistic resources (lexico-grammatical chunks, combinatorial knowledge, and metapragmatic dimensions of language use), acquired during language acquisition and learning (e.g., Matras 2020: chap. 2–4). Linguistic repertoires do not need to comprise 'complete' languages. Based on an individual's biography, they may be "truncated" (Blommaert 2010: 103), i.e., contain only domain-specific chunks that do not necessarily fulfil the criterion of well-*formedness* in a normative sense. Nevertheless, these chunks may be well-*functional*, as they are typically acquired and learnt in concrete situations. Furthermore, repertoires are also partially redundant, as people often need to accomplish the same communicative tasks with speakers of different languages (e.g., shopping with Chinese and Macanese merchants, talking to a Portuguese father and an Indian mother, etc., see Ansaldo 2009: 101). In the formation of contact languages, new communicative routines emerge over time, building on previous communicative experiences. From a repertoire perspective, this process entails, on the one hand, the restructuring of communicative repertoires through the emergence of new resources (e.g., a creole's lexicon and grammar) and, on the other hand, the emergence of new norms of communication, i.e., routines and habits according to which the resources in one's (shared) repertoire are actualised in communication (Ansaldo 2009: 149–156, Matras 2020: chap. 10). In high contact ecologies, not all linguistic resources become shared amongst all members of a communication community. Instead, certain resources will become reserved for in-group communication, functioning, thus, as ethnolinguistic, religious, or – in this case – as gender repertoires. Tightly associated with certain social groups, such in-group languages also acquire an indexical value, pointing at their prototypical users (Benor 2010). It is from this level of social indexicality that the above-described metapragmatic usages derive when speakers use these repertoires for enacting figures of personhood, without voicing their own identity. The dynamics of ascribing gendered and ethnic indexicality to those linguistic

[2] Marques Morgado Ferreira de Oliveira (2016/2017: 50–51): "são ignorantes e críticas ao [Português] e ao mundo moderno [...]" (see also pp. 49–56, 106–109). See Wong (2004), on elderly men, *avô-gông*, as depicted in Macanese theatre.

resources which we call Maquista are pertinent for this analysis.

3 A gendered history of Maquista

In the analytical section, I will proceed chronologically and highlight three important aspects: first, the significance of mobility and ethnicity in the formative phases of Maquista; second, the stigmatisation of Creolophone people in the context of education, leading to the disappearance of Maquista; third, the role of cultural practices that have functioned as a counterbalance to such stigmatisation, helping preserve the Creole of Macau.

3.1 Mobility and ethnicity in pre-colonial and colonial Macau

Macau started its existence as a fishing village on a peninsula in the Pearl River Delta (Mnd. *Zhūjiāng Sānjiǎo Zhōu* 珠江三角洲). The district of Xiāngshān (香山), to which Macau belonged, was founded in 1152. About one century later, in 1277, Emperor Sòng Duānzōng (宋端宗), ruler of the Southern Sòng-Dynasty (南宋, 1126–1279), fled the Mongol invasion to Xiāngshān. This led to an increase in the population by about 50,000 people (CHRONOLOGY 2000: 21). Macau kept growing as a centre of pilgrimage, thanks to the foundation of the Ama-Temple (Tan 2000, Zheng 2000: 249–254) and the city's role in maritime trade, which attracted most notably merchants from the neighbouring province, Kanton (Mnd. *Guǎngdōng* 廣東) and Fújiàn (福建). Already in the late 15th century, Macau was a multilingual place, with a plethora of Sinitic languages spoken (Cantonese or *Yuè* 粵, Hokkien or *Fújìanhuà* 福建話, Chiu Chao or *Cháozhōuhuà* 潮州話, and Hakka or *Kèjiā* 客家, see Moody 2021: chap. 3).

From its beginnings until the 13th century, when Macau was still a village, one could assume that there was a relatively homogenous population speaking a historical form of the Cantonese *Táishān* (臺山) dialect. The language situation was complexified after the arrival of the Southern Sòng. Although many speakers of different Chinese regional languages came to Macau, the Táishān dialect remained the dominant vernacular until the 18th century (see Chan 1994).

The dynamics of migration and gender help explain the persistence of the Táishān dialect. Most pilgrims who came to Macau remained only briefly. Many traders likely did so as well, although some might have taken residence. Only the population that followed the Sòng permanently might have had a larger impact on the speech situation. Yet, the gendered division of labour offers insights into why many local norms prevailed. In traditional Chinese society, men are seen as the workforce and the family's representatives in the public sphere. This is reflected in the Chinese script, in which the character for the lexeme meaning 'man' (男) (e.g., Mnd. *nán*) is composed of the semantic components 田, derived from the character used to write the lexeme for 'field' (e.g., Mnd. *tián*), and 力, used to write 'force' (e.g., Mnd. *lì*). The compound, thus, means 'workforce (in the field),' which is the prototypical labour performed outside of the home in premodern China (e.g., Hinsch 2003, Dohardt 2021: 135). From this fact, one can deduce that most language contact outside homes occurred between men. This suggests that these men learnt the diverse Sinitic languages in Macau rather as L2s than L1s. The

Táishān dialect was acquired, then, as an L1 because the socialisation of children at the age of L1 acquisition was considered women's duty. The female population remained in the private sphere, which restricted their communicative range to the local vernacular.

Gendered mobility patterns are also reflected in Sinitic lexemes for 'to marry.' For a woman, one uses 嫁 (e.g., Mnd. *jià*). This character consists of one semantic and one phono-semantic component, 女 and 家. The components are derived from characters used to write the lexemes for woman and family (e.g., Mnd. *nǚ* and *jiā*). In this compound, they reflect the fact that women leave their homes for marriage. The complementary lexeme for men is 娶 (e.g., Mnd. *qǔ*). This character is composed, again, of 女 but also of 取, which is used to write a lexeme that means 'to take' (e.g., Mnd. *qǔ*). This character stands for men's 'taking a wife' into their household. After this event of female mobility, women were to remain in their new homes (*patrilocality*). Thus, their contacts to the direct vicinity were limited to interaction with more mobile household members, servants, or maids – a domestic workforce recruited locally. These circles were disconnected from supra-regional tasks like administration and maritime trade. Women were concerned with the household, crafting, and educating children. Before sons were old enough to follow their fathers and to take over responsibilities outside the house, they would acquire the Táishān dialect as an L1 during their early socialisation amongst women. Only those who became traders or members of the administration would become multilingual, as these tasks required interprovincial mobility and knowledge of the languages used in the respective domains.

This Chinese pattern of gendered mobility and multilingualism compares to the Portuguese pattern during the initial phase of expansion. Most of the first people from the *Estado da Índia* who came to Macau were men: merchants, missionaries, low-ranked nobles (Ptg. *fidalgos*), navigators, and slaves[3] (see Boxer 1968, Stolz 1998, Ptak 2000, Baxter 2009, Pinharanda Nunes 2012, 2013: 28–31, Kihm & Rougé 2016, Dohardt 2025). Again, this highlights the central role of unguided second language learning in the formation of Portuguese overseas varieties and contact languages (de Matos 1968, Ansaldo 2009: chap. 8, Cardoso 2016: 70–71). The mobile population steadily absorbed new members in every harbour conquered, who then had to get acquainted with the language spoken on the ship. The few women on the fleets were enslaved Asians, mostly from Japan.[4] They were called *bichas de cozinha* 'kitchen girls' in Portuguese, which refers to their work on the ship (see Teixeira 1965: 8–11, 31; Amaro 1988: 8–9, 106; 1991, de Pina Cabral & Lourenço 1993: 67). Most of these girls and women would likely have not known any Portuguese before. Hence, they also had to learn a form of this language as an L2. At sea, Portuguese (varieties) may not have been attributed any cultural value by L2 speakers. Instead, the language situation on the ship resulted from Portuguese dominance coupled with a mere necessity for successful

[3] See Clements (1996, 2000) and Cardoso (2012) on African slaves' impact on creole formation in India.

[4] To a minor extent, there were also people from Malaysia, the Philippines, Siam (nowadays Thailand), Cochinchina (today: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), as well as from Timor (Teixeira 1965: 8–11, 41, see also Tomás 2009: 52–56, Diaz de Seabra 2017).

and efficient communication, so that all crew members aligned their linguistic behaviour accordingly.

On land, in the harbour cities of the *Estado da Índia*, some of these men founded permanent residences and started families with local women. This led to the acquisition of contact languages as an L1 and, thus, to the emergence of nuclei of stabilisation in the Luso-Asian contact zone. In Asia, the Portuguese

> […] were always a small minority in their colonies […]. [M]ost important in terms of social cohesion and control, was the creation of a casado class (European Portuguese officially married to local women), which produced stable bi- and multilingual mestiço populations loyal to Portugal. (Baxter 2005: 10)

In the logic of the Indian caste system, women who married into Portuguese circles, as well as those who converted to Catholicism, were quickly regarded as outsiders to their society of origin. As the linguistic background of these women (and male converts) was quite homogenous, there was no reason to stop using one's L1 when communicating with locals. Portuguese and Portuguese-derived languages were spoken with missionaries and male family members of the first *casado* generation. The *mestiço*-children, i.e., children of Eurasian ancestry, growing up in mixed families, learnt the languages of their fathers, Portuguese and Creole, as well as those of their Indian mothers. Regarded as ethnically, culturally, and linguistically different from people of either exclusive Indian or European descent, the *mestiços* formed a novel social stratum. Thus, contact languages developed the strongest potential for identity alignment as the language of inter-ethnic contact (Clements 2012: 12, see also Teixeira 1965: 19–26).

Next to the outlined, usual pattern of gendered mobility, as linked to sea fare, Tomás (2009) mentions two events of mass mobility that have mobilised men and women alike: the Dutch conquest of, and rule over Ceylon (Ptg. *Ceilão*, nowadays Sri Lanka), from 1638 to 1658; as well as the takeover of Malacca (1641–1825), which led to the exodus of entire families resettling mostly in other cities of the *Estado da Índia*, rather than in Brazil or Europe. Many people from these territories came to Batavia, and also to Macau (see also Diaz de Seabra 2017).

The ethnic and linguistic diversity of the *Estado da Índia* that was brought to Macau was perceived as more homogenous in Chinese sources. The *Monography of Macau* (Mnd. *Àomén Jìlüè* 澳門記略), a geographic and cultural description of this city by two Chinese provincial officials (e.g., Boltz 1977, Coudmont 1993), for instance, does not discuss linguistic diversity broadly. To the contrary, it includes a largely Portuguese-based glossary considered useful to trade with all who are regarded as foreigners.[5] Ethnicity and gender are discussed more broadly, which allows one, however,

[5] In this contribution, I cite the version digitised by Cornell University (signature DS796MIIY51801, V. 1-4), and provide page numbers according to the .pdf-scan. In the bibliography, there are links to scans of the other available versions. Their orthography occasionally differs. The *Monography's* glossary was later expanded into an independent phrasebook in the 19th century, the "Compendium of Assorted Phrases in Macau Pidgin" (Li 2016: 116), printed around 1830 (Mnd. *Àomén fānyǔ zázì quánběn* 澳門番語雜字全卒, see also Li & Matthews 2016). The *Monography* became so popular that the first xylographic edition from 1751 was re-edited several times (1800/1801, 1827, 1884).

to conjecture about women's language use when considering further sources as well. One example of descriptions of foreigners in the *Monography* shall be considered in more detail:

> 其人白晳鼻昂而目深碧不晌不畜鬚髮別編黑白髮蒙首及頷蜷然蒙茸賜自法土得者以為榮其通體黝黑如漆特唇紅齒白略似人者是曰鬼奴(MONOGRAPHY, p. 289) […] 女亦具白黑二種別主奴 (p. 290).
>
> 'These people are of the white race, with big noses, and dark green eyes without glimmer. They do not let the beard grow, and their hair is either white or black. They let it fall from the head to the neck, where they wear it curled up or loose. Those who have slaves take themselves as important. The latter's bodies are entirely black, like varnish, their lips red, and their teeth white. They are very similar to human beings and are called Devils' Slaves. There are also two types of women, Whites and Blacks, i.e., mistresses and servants.' (my translation)

The above-cited quote divides the Portuguese-ruled city demographically according to two genders and two ethnic categories, which must be interpreted hierarchically with regard to their respective social position. White people are portrayed as masters of Black people, although it remains unclear who was considered Black in Chinese eyes, next to people from Africa (Indians, *mestiços*?). Moreover, from the fact that women are mentioned as a kind of afterthought, after men, we can deduce that they were regarded as less important than men. However, as white women were considered to belong to the mistresses, their status was supposedly considered higher than that of Black men and Black women. Black female servants, thus, stand at the bottom of society, according to this description.

Although somewhat vague, this classification in the *Monography* has captured, *grosso modo*, categories that indeed were relevant to Macau's Christian population with regard to the social hierarchies of gender and ethnicity. Macanese and Portuguese sources, as well as language data, help obtain a more nuanced view of this issue.

As outlined above, most of those who came from the *Estado da Índia* were male, and amongst them, people born in Europe constituted the minority. There were even fewer women of European descent in the Portuguese colonies. Most of these women were wives of nobles or other highly influential people, following their husbands. They belonged, thus, to the "masters" mentioned above. The demographic majority in Christian Macau, however, was constituted by Asian and Eurasian women with few economic means, many being unfree and household servants (Holm 1989: 286, Tomás 2009: 54–55, Diaz de Souza 2017).

There is anthropological and linguistic evidence that suggests European women did not socialise with Asian and Eurasian women in Macau. Cantonese and Maquista-speaking women called European women disrespectfully *ngau³-po⁴* (Mnd. *fèipó* 肥婆) and *ngao-pó* 'fat hag' (literally: 'fat granny'), which reflects disparate ideals of beauty. The term refers to a stereotype of female aristocrats (and members of the elite) as being obese, arrogant, snobbish, and ugly (Amaro 1988: 8–9, 26–30, 37–40, 57, 92; 1991, Gaião 2019: 638–639). Demonstrating a certain in-group pride of lower-class women, this pejorative term for European females suggests that there

were few motivations to align their identity with this group. Whilst Eurasian and Asian women may thus have used Maquista as an in-group language, European women may have preferred to use registers like foreigner talk when communicating with their servants, so that they could maintain Portuguese as their own in-group language, aligning them with their husbands.

Further evidence for this sociolinguistic segregation comes from another glottonym for Maquista, *língu nhonha* (Batalha 1988: 239/494, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 117, Gaião 2011: 282–283, 2019: 21), a term derived from the lexeme *língu* 'language' and *nhonha* (pl. *nhonhonha*) – a designation for *mestiça* women common in Southeast Asia. Maquista is, thus, 'the *nhonhonha*'s language.' How did this designation emerge, and what does it imply in terms of language ideologies?

The term *nhonha* (also spelt *nyonya*) is widely used throughout the *Estado da Índia* and in the Straits of Malacca, e.g., in Malaccan Creole Portuguese (*Kristang*), to refer to a "(Straits-Born) Chinese Woman." It is "[a]lso used as a form of address for a Chinese woman, if the person is unknown to the speaker" (Baxter & de Silva 2004: 66, see also p. 65 on "*nona*"). The Straits-Born Chinese are people of Sino-Malay origin, living, e.g., in Malaysia and Singapore (Ansaldo et al. 2007, Ansaldo 2009: chap. 3, 2010: 617–618). A well-known Malaccan folk song *Jinkli Nona* (aka *Jingli Nona*) contains a line which testifies that these women married into the Portuguese communities: "Jikli Nona, iou querê casá" ('Faire Girl, I wanna marry (you)'). Another popular folk song from Macau helps pinpoint who *nhonhona*'s available bachelors were:

> […] Nhonha na jinella
> Cô fúla mogarim,
> Su mãi tankaréra,
> Su pai canarim.
> […] Quim casá cô preto,
> Tem pocô sintimento.
> 'A woman stands at the window,
> With Jasmin flower in her hair.
> Her Mother is a Tanka,
> Her Father a Canary.
> [She] who marries a Black [guy],
> Has few sentiments.'
> (Marques Pereira 1900, II.11: 704, my translation)[6]

These lines inform us that the *nhonhonha* married into the lower-ranked circles of the Macanese colonial society, as the Black person mentioned in the song is likely a domestic slave from Africa.[7] One also obtains information on the *nhonha*'s pedigree, which hints at marginalisation. Her mother is a Tanka (Mnd. *Dànjiā* 蜑家), a Chinese ethnicity who traditionally lives on boats. Land-dwellers often hold prejudice towards them, considering their lifestyle a sign of poverty. As such, they were also suspected of being involved in shady businesses and prostitution. The song alludes to prostitution through the *nhonha*'s second attribute: She wears a jasmine flower to perfume her hair,

[6] See also Barreiros (1944, III.5: 508) and Batalha (1988: 105/342).

[7] Other people in Southeast Asia who were considered Black by Europeans and used Portuguese-derived contact vernaculars are the Maradikas (also called *mardijkers* or *zwaarte Portugueesen* in Dutch) who came from the Moluccas, Makassar, Ternate and Flores. Their ancestry can be traced to Malabar and Coromandel, as well as to Malacca (Tomás 2009: 60–61).

a sign to identify prostitutes in the *Estado da Índia* (Marques Pereira 1900, II.10: 706, Batalha 1988: 277/541–278/542, Peixoto 1988, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 159, Gaião 2019: 906–907).[8]

The *nhonha*'s father is also of humble origin. He is not, as one might think, from the Canary Islands. *Canarim* is a pejorative term for Luso-descendants born in India (Batalha 1988: 104/342, 233/487). Often, male *Canarins* came to Macau to escape jurisdiction after committing a crime. Others came for military service. Not seldom had these men affairs with *nhonhonha*, whom they tended to abandon, however, upon leaving for Portugal or another harbour when their service was over. These social dynamics had two linguistic consequences for the *nhonhonha*. First, they were integrated into circles where Luso-Asian contact languages were commonly spoken. Left alone in Macau, their linguistic models became the other *nhonhonha*. Second, abandoned by their fathers, the *nhonhanha*'s children remained in their mothers' social circles where they grew up with Maquista, who also would not have obtained access to normative forms of language use (Amaro 1988: 15–19, 40–42; 1991, see also Teixeira 1965: 31).

Due to their immobility, the semantic shift from *nhonha* meaning 'Sino-Malay *mestiça*' to 'Sino-Portuguese *mestiça*' is explicable, as *nhonha* was applied to refer to the typical *mestiça* in the respective harbour city. The above-cited verses portray the *nhonha* as a young woman. So, the question arises of why the figure of personhood of the typical Maquista-speaking woman is now elderly. The trajectories of this development are traceable through the complementary analysis of the term *chácha*. In Malaccan Creole, *chacha* means 'senile' (Baxter & de Silva 2004: 20), derived from the Malayan term *chachat*, meaning 'a flaw, a defect, a blemish,' which is also a disrespectful designation for handicapped people (Batalha 1988: 119/357). In Maquista, *chácha* must have started similarly, as a designation for weak or senile elderly, narrowing down to 'elderly' in general, and then to 'elderly women.' Already, the *Monography* documents a further semantic specification, providing this term – written 自茶 (Mnd. *zìchá*, Cnt. "tchi-tch'a," see also Gomes 1979: 217, MONOGRAPHY, p. 221) – as the translation of the Sinitic lexeme meaning '(maternal) grandmother' 亞婆 (Mnd. *āpó*, Cnt. *a³-po³*). Gomes (1979: 271) transcribes this as *Xáxa*, Thompson (1959: 40–41) as *Chacha*. In contemporary Macanese, both terms are used. *Apô* (also *aporóna*, which is slightly pejorative) refers to elderly Chinese women, which reflects the Chinese custom of addressing unknown people by designations for family members (Batalha 1988: 48/286, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 37, Gaião 2019: 80–81). *Chácha*, in turn, can mean 'grandmother' or 'elderly woman' in general, having a humorous undertone (Batalha 1988: 118/356, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 37, Gaião 2019: 229–230). This undertone might result from its originally pejorative connotation, weakened by a frequently joking usage. The negative connotation implies the stereotype that *chácha* are uneducated, yet sharp-tongued. Thus, in Macau's life world, *chácha* became pragmatically synonymous with an elderly *nhonha.*

[8] See also Nunes (1991) on prostitution in Macau and China.

Returning to the hypothesis that the linguistic repertoires of men who do not embody hegemonic masculinity may resemble those of lower-class women, it becomes evident that a closer analysis of the historical trajectories of terms for the *nhonhona*'s children and other men situated at the lowest strata of society is necessary to fully understand this linguistic alignment. The local, Macanese concept that comes closest to the notion of hegemonic masculinity is that of 'decent men' (Ptg. *homens-bons*) in a Catholic sense. These were most often Portuguese men, occupying important positions in the Senate and the Church, which were offices denied to people like the above-mentioned *canarim* or the *preto* (see Carneiro de Sousa 2007: 7–8, 26). As adults, men at the lower end of society had, however, comparatively more agency than poor women. Amongst the poorest people in early Macau, there were many women from India and Timor, living in slavery-like conditions, abused as prostitutes, beggars, and thieves. They shared this role with boys, lacking the agency of adult men. There is a drastic example of coercing unfree boys into this marginalised femininity, although this practice was officially forbidden (see Teixeira 1965: 49–50): Bishop D. Alexandre da Silva Pedrosa Guimarães of Macau, writing to the King of Portugal in the 18th century, informs us that some criminals in Macau

> [...] alugavam meninas chinas para as levarem consigo, ou ao colo, para receberem a dita esmola e o mais é que fingiam vultos e levavam animais [...]. Nesse mesmo número se introduziam *atais*, que são chinas, mas do género masculino, que iam vestidos de mulher contra a lei, a receberem a esmola (cited in Teixeira 1965: 46).
>
> 'rend Chinese girls to take them with themselves, or on their laps, in order to get the above-mentioned alms. Moreover, they fool people and take [their] animals. At this very moment, they introduced *atais*, who are Chinese, but of male gender, who go disguised illegally as women to receive the alms.' (my translation)

The word *atai* in Macanese comes from a Cantonese lexeme meaning 'little brother, younger brother' (Cnt. *a³-tai⁶* 阿弟). The female pendant, 'little sister, younger sister' (Cnt. *a³-mui²* 阿妹) also entered Maquista with a slight semantic change. Today, these terms refer to Chinese boys and girls, mostly of humble origin. They were employed as servants, home helps, or to do the household's shopping (Batalha 1988: 43/181, 57/297, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 7–8, 12; Diaz de Seabra 2017, Gaião 2019: 65–66, 96). In premodern Macau, these Chinese children were unfree servants of Portuguese masters. Their social position was the same in legal terms and, as shown by the bishop, also in terms of their gender roles, with boys being dressed as girls when being sent to steal and beg. Most of these boys, hence, grew up entirely amongst marginalised women who did not have the chance to learn Portuguese in school.

3.2 Education in colonial Macau

The formation of homes in the *Estado da Índia*'s harbour cities brought about the emergence of urban societies marked by immense linguistic and ethnic diversity. Whilst a part of this population was frequently mobile (e.g., traders), others stayed for a larger amount of time (e.g., missionaries, soldiers, administrators), and

again others tended to remain permanently (e.g., converted wives). Urban language use was more complex and stratified than on ships, where homogeneous communication was required for practical reasons. Drawing from sources about education, this section shows how language use and gender (roles) were interrelated in the nuclei of the *Estado da Índia.*

In India, as in Macau, schooling was central to solidifying gendered differences in the creole community's linguistic repertoire. The schools frequented by people with Portuguese ancestry or those who had social affiliations with the Luso-descendants were largely administered by the Catholic Church. The Church initially favoured contact languages to facilitate conversion, but after Catholic communities had grown large enough, schooling in Portuguese (and later in Latin) became the norm, and the use of contact languages was discouraged (Dohardt 2024: 80). In India and China, Catholic clerics typically educated mostly boys. This is documented, for example, in a letter by Spanish missionary St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552), writing to a fellow missionary:

> Do your best above all for any Chinese and Japanese boy there, instructing them carefully in Christian doctrine, taking great heed that they progress in spirit, and seeing that they learn to read, write and speak Portuguese so that they may be able to act as interpreters to the Fathers who, please God, will be coming to Japan and China before long. […] That was the dialect I used myself when I taught at Goa. (translation by Brodrick 1952: 392–393)

This passage informs us about the linguistic and gendered backgrounds of the emergent speech community. First, it confirms that Japanese people, too, learnt Portuguese as an L2 upon integration into Lusophone circles. This remained an important demographic factor of the Christian community in the 16th century because converts from Japan, who were persecuted on religious grounds, used to take refuge in Macau as the centre of the Catholic Mission in South East Asia (Teixeira 1965: 8–11, 41).[9] Second, the quote shows indirectly that women were not schooled by the Jesuit Fathers, at least during this period. Finally, it is a testimony to the relevance of Portuguese as the *lingua franca* between Europeans in Asia, given that many missionaries, like St. Francis Xavier himself, were Spaniards or Italians (de Matos 1968, Ansaldo 2009: chap. 8, Cardoso 2016: 70–71).

One expression about language used in this letter merits a closer look. St. Francis Xavier's insistence that the boys learn "to read, write and speak" implies register competence and, as far as writing is concerned, an orientation towards the standard language. The constant presence of standard Portuguese in missionary schools influenced the Luso-descendant community's linguistic repertoires, including language ideologies. For instance, Macau's most important educational institution was in the hands of the Jesuits: St. Paul's College, founded in 1594.[10] Until the 18th century, Latin remained the language of Christianity and erudition in Macau, which paralleled the situation in Europe. Creole languages were similarly regarded as yet another corruption, namely of their lexi-

[9] The presence of Japanese people was a thorn in Chinese officials' eyes due to conflicts with Japanese pirates. Therefore, the Japanese were officially expelled in 1564, and the purchase of Japanese slaves was forbidden. De facto, however, this ruling had no long-lasting effects (see Gomes 1979: 108–109).

[10] The Jesuits previously founded a St. Paul's College at Goa, not to be confused with Macau's.

fiers (Holm 1988: 20, Dohardt 2024: 80). In places like Macau, where Latin and Portuguese were present, contact languages were thus doubly stigmatised during the Renaissance and the 18th century (see Dohardt, accepted; 2024: 80). Nevertheless, the spreading of these ideologies remained limited to a small elite until the 18th century. Furthermore, because of repeated conflicts between the Portuguese Government and influential Catholic orders in Macau, there have been repeated lacunas in Macau's education system that hampered the diffusion of standard languages and normative ideologies (Pinharanda Nunes 2013: 31–33).

Before schooling was widely accessible, Macanese and Portuguese were understood as different registers of the same communicative medium. This fact is also latently present in the above-cited letter by St. Francis Xavier, who tells his fellow missionaries to preach in Portuguese, the "dialect" he used at Goa. There are now two options to interpret this term. First, as a Spaniard, St. Francis Xavier might have labelled Portuguese as a dialect in relation to Spanish (i.e. as an Iberoromance vernacular). Second, as hypothesised by Whinnom (1956: 9), "dialect" can refer specifically to the dialect of Portuguese as spoken in Goa, which would indeed be the term used during this period to refer to pidgins and creoles (still in use in many Ibero-Asian communities, which often do not call their languages 'Creole'). Asian glottonyms, too, suggest that missionaries relied on restructured Portuguese to facilitate conversion (Dohardt 2024: 80). For instance, Malacca's Luso-Asian creole language is called *Kristang* (Malaccan) 'Christian' but in Maquista, *papiá cristám* 'to speak Christian' means 'to speak Portuguese' and 'to speak Maquista' (dos Santos Ferreira 1978: 77, Batalha 1988: 8/126, see also the nominal form *língu cristám* 'Christian language,' Gaião 2019: 302, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 126).

Since the Church was well established, however, contact languages disappeared from any teaching contexts. A gendered divide emerged in the Macanese community because girls were largely excluded from education. As more and more clerics from Portugal were no longer familiar with contact languages, they took note of communicative barriers with Macanese women. In the 18th century, this situation motivated the above-mentioned Bishop Pedrosa to remark the following about women's language use:

> [F]alam uma linguagem que é mistura de todos os idiomas e gírias, imperceptível aos que não são nacidos no país, por culpa dos maridos e pais de família, que há dois séculos não cuidarem em introducer o português correcto, sobre o que vou trabalhando, por ser esta coisa aquela em que cuidam todas as nações em sus domínios (Teixeira 1965: 45).
>
> 'They speak a language that is a mixture of all tongues and jargons, incomprehensible to anyone who was not born in the country, due to their husbands and family fathers who did not bother introducing correct Portuguese for two centuries, which I will work on because this is what all nations do in their dominions.' (see also Dohardt, accepted, fn. 4)

Considering the diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of these women, there are two complementary options for reading this statement. On the one hand, the bishop could

have referred to what is nowadays called code-switching.[11] On the other hand, a mixture might simply refer to Maquista, as contact languages were generally described as a mixture and, pejoratively, as a bastardisation of 'real' languages. The letter implies, of course, that male family members understood female ones. Thus, this letter demonstrates that the above-discussed relegation of females to the private sphere was still relevant.

Much like a mirror image of the *âtai,* there was, however, one important group of women in Macau who had more economic independence from men, more education than most women, and a well-respected social status. Consequently, they also had a more diverse linguistic repertoire, similar to the *homens-bons*: nuns.[12] Given that not everyone who joined a convent must have been of European descent, joining a religious order was a way to ascend the social ladder for Asian and Eurasian women in Macau.[13] In the Portuguese sources, the figure of the nun is not as prominent as in Chinese ones, likely because female clerics occupy the bottom of the ecclesial hierarchy from the Catholic perspective. However, Chinese sources see nuns' agency with critical astonishment, given that their high degree of agency did not conform to their own cultural models of femininity. Lǐ Xiálíng's (李遐齡, 1766–1832) Miscellaneous Poems on Macau (Mnd. *Àomén záyǒng* 澳門雜詠) contains a literary portrayal of this group (see Zhang W. 1996, 1997, 2000b: 273–377):

一女為尼九族崇,
殺人如蟻不能訌。
旋盆半片紙條入,
絕勝秋官石肺通。
(cited in Zhang W. 1996)

'A daughter becoming a nun is held in awe by all.
And she can have people killed like ants at will.
She just scribbles a few words on a piece of paper.
And settles all life-and-death matters.'
(cited in Zhang W. 1997, German in 2000b: 373)

Their education offered the nuns literacy. As outlined above, knowing how to read and write meant knowing Portuguese and Latin, which used to be a privilege of upper-class men. Next to their language skills, nuns' living conditions in convents set them apart from marginalised and ordinary females because they did not have any (reproductive) duties towards a family father, and they were socio-economically dependent on the convent, and not on a man. Thus, they also lived apart from servant women, comparable to female aristocrats.

In the 19th century, changes in the educational system led ordinary women's and *nhonhonha*'s linguistic repertoire to become increasingly diverse. Whilst the elderly remained closer to Maquista norms, gendered differences in the language use of younger generations were steadily reduced. Nonetheless, receiving a better education, at this time, often required

[11] See dos Santos (2012) on code-switching and identity in contemporary Macau.

[12] For religion in Anglophone circles, see Leong (2023).

[13] Note, however, that being sent to a convent in the *Estado da Índia* was used as a method to banish unwelcome women from Portugal, such as prostitutes, convicts, or orphans. From these Europeans' perspective, joining a convent was, thus, rather a punishment than an advancement (see Tomás 2009: 54–55).

emigration to Shanghai and Hong Kong (see also Nunes 2013), cities flourishing at the expense of Macau's former economic splendour (Lo 1999: 54, Ptak 2000: 164–171, Dohardt 2022: 38–39).

Divided between these cities, Macanese families wrote letters to maintain contact, which included correspondences between women. The first correspondence analysed here is from the second half of the 19th century, between an elderly Macau-based woman, Pascoela, and her niece, Florência (nicknamed *Chencha*),[14] who resides in Hong Kong. Both women have a high social position; Pascoela's husband works in the Macanese city administration. Florência, too, seems to live in favourable circumstances, as deducible from her rather reactive writing, offering less information than Pascoela's. Florência's husband often frequents Macau's and Hong Kong's high society, and Florência likely does so, too. This is manifested in her language use, which exhibits strong influences from Portuguese and English:

> Minha Querida Tia.
> Eu já receb**eu** muito carta de minh**a** adorad**a** Ti**a**, mas não respond**eu** pelo motivo de **está padecendo** de molestia de proveito. [...] Minha Ado fic**ou** na palma de mão de todos nosso gente de Macáo de dois Clubo, unde elle lev**ou** todo**s** novidade de Macáo que minh**a** adorad**a** Ti**a** escrev**eu** para eu (3rd of May 1870, cited in Barreiros 1943, I.3: 246, my emphasis).
> 'My dear Aunt. I had received a lot of letters from my beloved aunt, but I did not respond due to further unease. […] My Ado spent a lot of time in two clubs amongst our Macanese people to spread all the news from Macau about which my beloved aunt had written to me.' (my translation)

Some influences of standard Portuguese can be observed in Florência's letter: (1) the use of inflectional verbal morphology, instead of exclusively used TAM markers in combination with an invariant verb (Arana-Ward 1977: 96–101, Pinharanda Nunes 2010: 162–163; 2012, 2013: 26–28); (2) the (overgeneralised) use of the plural marker *-s* on nouns and determiners – motivated on semantic grounds rather than morphosyntactic requirements (e.g., *todos* all.M.PL. *novedade* novelty.F.SG.) – instead of reduplication or non-marking (dos Santos Ferreira 1978: 17, Ansaldo & Matthews 2004, Gaião 2007, Avram 2016); (3) the elevated use of gender marking and agreement (see also dos Santos Ferreira 1978: 17–22, Baxter 2012, Pinharanda Nunes 2012); (4) the use of high-register collocations from Portuguese such as *pelo motive de* 'because of,' instead of the more idiomatic *pr'amor de/promor de*. This demonstrates that Florência communicated in Portuguese more regularly than in Maquista, including in writing, which suggests an educated background.

Her aunt Pascoela does not have any trouble understanding this Lusitanised Maquista, likely because she was alphabetised in Portuguese. Despite this, she apparently prefers forms of expression that tend more towards the Maquista pole of a Portuguese-Maquista continuum, probably because of the communicative routines in her generation of women. In the next excerpt, Pascoela complains that she did not understand the English word *firework*, used by her husband, but she understood

[14] See Batalha (1974: 36ss), Amaro (1988: 60–64), Gaião (2019: 1026–1034) on Macanese nicknames.

the Portuguese term *fogo d'arte*, which suggests that, at least in Macau, speakers of Maquista and Portuguese interacted often enough to understand each other passively:

> [D]á com ung-a vapor branco fundado na fronte de palacio. Preguntá com vôsso tio grande são que vapor aquelle, elle falá ung-a nome inglez que eu nompôde entendê, mas cavá jâ virá pra portuguez, falá são chomá "Fogo d'arte" (11th of November 1869, cited in Barreiros 1943, I.2: 134).
>
> 'Suddenly, there was a white vapour in front of the palace. I asked your grand-uncle what that vapour was. He said an English name that I could not understand, but I have translated it into Portuguese, where it is called 'firework.' (my translation)

This excerpt demonstrates another intergenerational difference between Pascoela and her niece, Florência. Whilst Pascoela does not understand English (as opposed to her husband!), Florência does, which was not uncommon for a Hong Kong-based woman of her age. Pascoaela (25th of October 1869), in turn, even complains about Florência's writing being influenced by English and French (alluding to an influence by French-governed Shanghai):

> [E]u amestê pidi ung-a cuza com vôs, pra quando escrevê ôtro vez nuncabom botá na carta palavra inglez, ô frances, pra tem que incomodá vôsso Tio pra pôde sabe são que cuza. Vôs escrevê na carta "City Hall" – querê que eu divinhá são que asnera de palavra são este? Vôsso Tio mesmo, na principio nompôde entendê; mas cavá, com fôrça de isgravatá na dicionario de Pe. Rosquete, então que sabe que são baraca de artu (cited in Barreiros 1943, I.2: 129).
>
> 'May I kindly ask you for a favour? When you are writing to me next time, please do not put English or French words in the letter because I have to bother your uncle to know what they mean. You wrote "City Hall" in the [last] letter – do you want me to guess what that nonsense is? Even your uncle could not understand it at first, but he finally ended up finding it, after great efforts, in Pe. Rosquete's dictionary. Then, we got to know it was the City Hall (literally: High Barracks).' (my translation)

This passage is remarkable as it shows that even men of Pascoela's generation who knew some English did not use the language routinely; otherwise, the term *City Hall* could hardly have been confusing in a context where Hong Kong is frequently mentioned. In another letter, from the 19th of April 1870, Pascoela tells her niece about meeting a Spanish politician, which can be interpreted as a testimony to a more widely spread multilingualism present in Florência's generation:

> Consur espanhol tamêm jâ conversá que lai de tanto cô vôsso prima, mas ella falá que nunca entendê ni ung-a palavra de alquelle papiador, que frovê como bicho-balichão[15] que nontêm tempo (19th of April 1870, cited in Barreiros 1943, I.3: 244).
>
> 'The Spanish Consul was also conversing a lot with your cousin, but I never understood a single word of that chatterbox that talks nineteen to the dozen.' (my translation)

[15] See Gaião (2019: 136) on the expression *bicho-balichám*.

Pascoela reports that she does not understand the Spanish Consul because he speaks too fast. There are now two possible interpretations. If the Consul knew Portuguese, Pascoela may not have understood him just because of the velocity of his speech, which would then hint at her stronger orientation towards Maquista. Alternatively, Florência's cousin, the Consul's primary interlocutor, may even have understood him speaking in Spanish, which would then be a testimony to younger women's increasing multilingualism.

These correspondences show as well that the general trend of young people was to become more multilingual, speaking standard languages at the expense of Maquista. This shift is documented in another set of letters, some of which are reproduced in the anthology *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó* (大西洋國), others were directly written to its editor João Feliciano Marques Pereira. The anthology contains historical information on Macau's society, history, and language(s). It was published in Macau and Lisbon, with multidisciplinary contributions from experts, lay investigators, and locals. The journal became so popular that many (female) Macanese readers sent in letters, either self-composed or reprints of their private correspondences.

One of these excerpts comments on the impact of the anthology itself. It is a postscript to a letter by a namesake and contemporary of Pascoela, an elderly woman signing her letter as *Chácha Pancha*. On the 3rd of January 1865, she writes to her daughter Miquela, mentioning that her writing has improved because of the schooling she received, and thanks to her reading *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó:*

> P.S. – vos logo sintí grandi difernça na minha modo di escrevê. Eu já aperfeiçoá bastante neste um poco tempo. Tudo este escóla novo de machu e femia, e aquele gazeta Ta-ssi-Yang-kuo já fazê indretá bastante nossu lingu (Marques Pereira 1900, I.5: 324, de Carvalho e Rêgo 1950: 18, 23).
>
> 'P.S. – You will see a great difference in my mode of writing. I have already improved quite a lot in this short time. All these new schools for boys and girls and this journal Ta-ssi-yang-kuo have fairly corrected our language.' (my translation)

On the one hand, this comment shows that co-ed schooling had become common. On the other hand, it demonstrates that there was still a tendency to regard Maquista and Portuguese as registers of the same language.[16] If Maquista had been understood in terms of an independent language, it would have hardly made sense to claim that increasing skills in writing Portuguese would perfect one's Maquista. This conviction ultimately led to a decrease in the use of Maquista in most communicative domains. However, as outlined below, the Creole of Macau could maintain a special value for metapragmatic purposes.

3.3 Communicative practices with a metapragmatic dimension

Another letter from *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó*, written by a Macanese woman, who signs the letter

[16] Another Macanese woman, Maria, also begins her letters with the words: „Que pena eu nôn pode escrevê portuguez assim galante" ('It's a pity that I can't write Portuguese so elegantly', Barreiros 1943: I, 4: 350), demonstrating she considers Maquista just a variety of Portuguese, less correct than the standard.

as *"Ung'a Nhonha"* ('a Nhonha'), documents that metalinguistic awareness grew in Macau during the 19th century. Towards the end of the century, Maquista was more and more considered to have proper norms, distinct from Portuguese. Nevertheless, the Nhonha claims that authentic Macanese is losing ground in her generation, precisely because of the influence of Portuguese and English:

> […] Sam divéra sintí ung̃a ancusa pezado na coração quando uvi inglezada fazê chacota di nosso boboriça. Nôs ôtro, Sium co eu, sam nôs já nacê na Macau; mas nôsso gente sam tudo de aqui, por isso nôs sintí vergonha olá este um pôco, vai pa alá sevandiziá com tudo china-china. Qui sabe Sium logo entendê este linguazi ó nadi. Nôsso rancho nunca sã falá assim sa; mas eu já prendê com dós chacha más véla de Macau, promor de sintí saião déçá cavá ung̃-a lingu assí chistosa. Oze em dia tudo nhonhonha sã falá portuguezado; caregá na *r* como acung̃-a Chente ! Estung̃-a linguazi já servi pra eu anos trazado vistí bobo na Quarentóra na más. Si Sium non pôde intendê, eu lógo falá modo de agora, mêo portuguezado, mêo ingrezado; ô intão pôde falá môde de Vochom que fazê avano, si Sium querê. [...]
>
> Ung̃a-a Nhonha (Marques Pereira 1900, II.12: 781; Barreiros 1943, I.4: 359–360).[17]
>
> 'Indeed, I felt saddened when I heard that the English poked fun at us. Sir, you and I were born in Macau; all of our people are from here. Therefore, I felt a little ashamed when I heard this, when I went there and they were mocking us, together with all the Chinese. Who knows whether or not you, Sir, are going to understand this language? Our group had never been speaking in such a way, but I learnt to do so with two very old grannies (*chácha*) from Macau. That is why I feel regret for having left behind so amusing a language. Nowadays, all Macanese girls (*nhonhonha*) speak Lusitanised, emphasising the *r* like that Vincent![18] In the last few years, I have only made use of this language when disguising myself for the Fat Sunday celebrations. So, Sir, if you cannot understand this, I will later speak in the contemporary way, half Lusitanised, half Anglicised, or I will speak like Vochom the fan-maker – if you, Sir, want me to do so.
>
> A *Nhonha*' (my translation)

This letter provides information on many aspects of language use in Macau. First, it shows that there are salient sociophonetic features which speakers identified as Lusitanisms, criticised as unauthentic, e.g., the overemphasis of the phoneme /r/, pronounced as a trill [r] – common in European varieties of Portuguese – instead of a tap [ɾ], which was the most wide-spread realisation in Maquista and Macanese Portuguese. In addition, an overuse of Portuguese expressions is perceived as snobbish. The use of such Lusitanisms is pejoratively called *falá portuguesado* in Maquista (Batalha 1988: 6/124, 253/561, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 134, Gaião 2019: 757–758) or *torâ português* 'to toast Portuguese' (Senna

[17] The last sentence is a wordplay, meaning 'I will get this work done properly' and 'I will write in Luso-Chinese jargon' (Marques Pereira 1900, II.12: 782–785).

[18] *Chente* is a figure in a poem reproduced in Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó (1899, I: 57ss.). The quote, thus, shows that this *nhonha* read the anthology as well.

Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 163).[19] Second, the influence of English on Maquista is also portrayed as a threat to authenticity. In analogy to the term *portuguesado*, the Nhonha speaks of *ingrezado* (see also Batalha 1988: 6/124). The depreciation of Anglicisms can be explained by the economic and cultural rivalry between the Macanese communities in Macau and Hong Kong. Residents in Macau called those from Hong Kong disrespectfully *Tôm-tôm* (literally 'candy,' a term also used for '[d]ried animal excrement,' Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 162). Hong Kongers labelled Macanese from Macau *Macau-Paio* 'Macau sausage' (Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 103). Crucially, the Nhonha postulates proper norms for Maquista as a language distinct from Portuguese and English. Contrary to Chácha Pancha, this Nhonha goes so far as to see Portuguese influence on Maquista as a violation of Maquista norms; thus, as a qualitative deterioration which has become common in quantitative terms, however, amongst her generation.

According to the Nhonha, there are two forms of authentic Maquista. One is spoken by Chinese merchants when addressing their Macanese and Portuguese customers. This form is called *Macau Pidgin* in academia, primarily being a mercantile jargon. There are still some rare mentions of this vernacular in the first two decades of the 20th century until it was entirely given up in favour of (forms of) English (Marques Pereira 1899, I.1: 55, dos Santos Ferreira 1967: introduction, de Pina Cabral & Lourenço 1993: 179, 202; Li 2016, Dohardt, accepted; see also Jorge 1992).[20]

The second and most important form is Maquista spoken by *chácha*, portrayed as living archives of Macanese songs and lore. The Nhonha assigns this role to the *chácha* when reminiscing about her own family:

> Pos eu, parece que ta uvi inda, nosso mai di casa, com minh'ai a Zabel, qui Deus lembra, cantá:
> - Lio-lio lorcha vai Cantão,
> Buscá seda fazê quimão;
> Novo-novo nina visti,
> Vêlo-vêlo limpá chão.
> (Marques Pereira 1900, II.12: 781, see Barreiros 1944, III.2: 203 for variants of this popular folk song)
> 'Well, I it is as if I still hear our home-help singing with my aunt Isabel, may God rest her soul: "A ship floats to Canton,/searching silk for a kimono./The girls wear the new ones/The old ones are used to mop the floor".' (my translation)

The letter of the Nhonha is an important testimony to a new direction in the identity alignment of the Macanese community with Anglophone and Lusophone circles. More and more, 'authentic' or 'pure' Maquista is perceived as a distinct speech style spoken by the elderly, and thus as distinct from the younger generation's, many of whom had left Macau for Hong Kong or Shanghai where one was more used to speaking English, French, or standard

[19] Batlha (1991: 73, note 3) interprets *torrar português* as 'to speak good Portuguese, with the *rr* rolled, as they should be,' but Senna Fernandes & Baxter (2004: 163) interpret this pejoratively as speaking "with an affected accent."

[20] Although Jorge's (1992) article is lay-linguistic, it provides a valuable window into the vestiges of Macau Pidgin in the 20th century.

Portuguese.[21] What has been less salient, however, are possible influences from Sinitic varieties, especially Cantonese. It is possible that Sinitic features did not figure prominently in the metalinguistic discussions analysed so far because Sinitic varieties constitute a shared linguistic resource in the repertoire of nearly all Macanese communities. As such, Sinitic would not impose any barriers to communication or count as a salient feature of differentiation worth discussing.

There is also a sociolinguistic meta-layer in the letter by the Nhonha. She mentions that she herself only uses the language of her elderly female household members to complete her disguise or costume during the Fat Sunday celebrations. Thus, the Nhonha had enough competence in authentic Maquista to imitate the elderly, but she did not claim this register to express her own identity (see also Gal & Irvine 2019: 60). In other words, the *chácha* as a figure of personhood was already present during that period. The fact that the Nhonha writes her letter to *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó* in this style can be interpreted as a metapragmatic act. After all, the Nhonha reports that authentic Macanese culture is vanishing, alongside Maquista, which is lamentable for the community, motivating her to present a sample thereof.

As she said, many recipients of other ethnicities did not get the gist behind Macanese humour, which often breaks with social taboos. Such misunderstandings were a factor that contributed to the stigmatisation of Macanese, as alloglots took these parodies mistakenly for real (see also Tomás 1988, 1990). From a Macanese perspective, however, performance arts served as the perfect outlet to denounce ignorance, so, theatre became one of the last domains in which Maquista continued to be practised (see Jorge 1994, Dohardt, accepted).

As the most authentic speaker of Maquista, the figure of personhood of the *Chácha* was often used to voice social criticism in the theatrical context, as documented by the Nhonha's letter. The letter demonstrates, furthermore, that this practice was applied to written communication, too. In this spirit, Pedro Nolasco da Silva contributed to *Jornal único* (2nd of April 1898), a periodical on Macanese culture, writing through a fictive figure he calls *Annica* (a middle-aged to elderly Macanese woman), sending a letter to her equally fictive niece *Béba*. In the letter, *Annica* laments about the vanishing of Maquista and Portuguese culture in Macau, in the face of other languages. Da Silva, too, subtly transports this social criticism to the metalevel, i.e., the communication between him and his readers, by voicing his description of Macanese history in a language that stands for aspects of Portuguese culture that could actually not be preserved any longer:

> Agora nunca uvi fallá, mas qui inglez, allémám, francez, hollandez, italiano, dinamarquez, láia-láia di gente; mas quim já insiná caminhu pra elôtro vem pra India, pra China, sam purtugez qui já abri porta, fazê

[21] Note that Portuguese was taught in Hong Kong since the mid-19th century, resulting from efforts in the Macanese community to maintain their cultural ties to Macau. Social clubs and libraries were built, too. As Pinharanda Nunes (2013: 34–38) notes, more Macanese – and especially immigrants – had access to Portuguese education in Hong Kong than in Macau. Therefore, as discussed below, many linguistic documents from Hong Kong show an orientation towards Portuguese norms of language use. Nonetheless, this orientation towards Macanese culture, rather than Portuguese, may also have been a factor in not abandoning Maquista entirely in this diaspora community.

caminhu pra tudo gente vem [...] (originally published in *Jornal único*, cited in Barreiros 1943, I.4: p. 358, de Carvalho e Rêgo 1950: 28).[22]
'Now one only hears people talk English, French, Dutch, Italian, and Danish – all kinds of people, but those who taught them the way to India, to China were the Portuguese, who have opened the doors and made a way for everybody to come.' (my translation)

Contrary to the Nhonha who wrote the above-discussed letter, it is unknown in which precise circumstances da Silva has learnt Maquista. Nevertheless, the fact that he writes this letter as a correspondence between two fictional characters shows that he did not consider Maquista a language that contributes to his identity. In this case, the *chácha* is, hence, entirely a figure of personhood in his linguistic repertoire, used to voice social criticism.

Although embedded in fiction, da Silva's letter corresponds to the observable tendencies during this period and the following century, which saw an increasing decline of Maquista. In the 20th century, one of de Pina Cabral's & Lourenço's (1993: 183) interviewees uttered a statement which is reminiscent of da Silva's letter, claiming: 'it was the steamships that killed Maquista, approximating Macau to other Lusophone territories.'[23] With Macau's increasing connections to the English- and Chinese-speaking world, even Portuguese has nowadays almost disappeared, except from the education system and the city administration (Bray & Koo 2004, Ming Young 2009). In the 21st century, performance arts are now the last stronghold of Maquista, which must be considered obsolete in daily interaction. It is in this context that Maquista still perdures as a symbol of local identity (Dohardt, accepted), and the elderly Macanese woman has survived therein, becoming the guardian of local culture.

4 Summary and conclusions

In the example of Macau, this contribution has investigated the role of gender for the formation and disappearance of creole languages, specifically, Maquista.

In the formative phases of Maquista, in the 16th and 17th centuries, gendered patterns of mobility played a crucial role in the emergence of this contact language. Generally, creolisation is discussed in relation to *maritime*[24] language use, which this study, too, considers an important factor; however, one that concerns, first and foremost, male language use. Female mass mobility has been limited to events of "expulsion". Much more important for the constitution of women's repertoires in this period was the *littoral* life experienced by the population in port cities who seldom travel, becoming intermediaries between *continental* (here, Chinese) and maritime culture (Pearson 2006: 356, Rosa 2015: 12). On the shores of the *Estado da Índia*, most of the female population used to live a rather immobile life, after they had come into the Portuguese-ruled cities, be it by force as servants or

[22] Portuguese: "Agora só se ouve falar em Ingleses, Alemães, Franceses, Holandeses, Italianos, Dinamarqueses, toda a espécie de gente; mas quem lhes ensinou o caminho para a Índia, para a China, foram os Portugueses que abriram a porta fazendo caminho para toda gente [...]" (de Carvalho e Rêgo 1950: 31).

[23] "[F]oram os barcos a vapor que mataram o patoá, aproximando Macao dos outros territórios lusófonos" (Original). For other Ibero-Asian Creoles, see Lee (2018, 2020).

[24] Rosa (2015) speaks of *oceanic* languages, but *maritime* language, as in *français maritime*, is more widely used in linguistics in order not to confuse this sociolinguistic term with historical classifications (i.e., languages from Oceania).

deliberately by conversion and marriage. It was in these female circles where Chaudensonian (1992) "approximations of approximations" of Portuguese occurred. Asian women approximated the maritime forms of Portuguese spoken by their husbands, family fathers, and male servants. Isolated from European women, they then aligned their own norms, rather than approximating metropolitan norms. Hence, Maquista became the *língu nhonha*. Nevertheless, Maquista was never completely "disenfranchised" (Mufwene 2001) from Portuguese, given that men acquired this language, too, and learnt Portuguese only if they were from wealthy families with access to education.

In Christian Macau, education used to be in the hands of the Catholic church. In early phases, contact languages were used in conversion, but once Catholicism was firmly established in Macanese society, Portuguese and Latin became the dominant languages in service and education, following European models (Dohardt 2024). Privileging the education of boys and men, only European women had access to standard Portuguese. Eurasians and Asians, thus, generally remained speakers of Maquista. This situation began to change gradually at the end of the 19th century (see also Nunes 2013), when education became democratised and more gender-inclusive. As a consequence, more and more Macanese women's language use aligned with metropolitan Portuguese norms more directly. As a socioeconomically less promising language, Maquista lost ground, being considered old-fashioned.

These tendencies working against the transmissions of Maquista intensified with increasing globalisation. As a counterreaction to a perceived loss of local, Portuguese identity, interest in Maquista as the most characteristic and unique expression thereof grew. Using the stereotype of the sharp-tongued elderly woman to voice criticism against cultural uniformism, the negative stereotype of the *chácha* was turned into a figure of personhood to defend Macau's uniqueness. Maquista, thus, acquired an increasingly metapragmatic function in the linguistic repertoire of the Macanese. Having started as an ethnically neutral medium on the fleets, it became considered women's speech, and – ultimately – a marker of Macanese identity in the 19th century.

With the focus on gender, this study paid special attention to the assignment and ascription of (perceived) gender roles, arguing with Tosh (2004) that societal hierarchies between women and between men must be considered, too, next to hierarchies between men and women. The hypothesis that expressions of femininity that come closer to hegemonic masculinities will have a linguistic repertoire more similar to men's and *vice versa* was confirmed. The example of nuns has demonstrated that gaining independence from men through joining a religious order was a chance for women to gain a better socioeconomic standing and to become literate, which implies learning Portuguese and Latin. In turn, poorer men and boys were excluded from these privileges. Whilst adult men still had a comparatively high degree of agency, the example of the *âtai* has demonstrated that boys of humble origin were even coerced into female gender roles, being abused as thieves and beggars like Asian girls.

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or deleted after the latest access. Note, furthermore, that I have used traditional Chinese characters (Mnd. *fántǐzì* 繁體字) throughout this article uniformly, following sinological conventions. The original may use simplified characters (Mnd. *jiǎntǐzì* 簡體字). When discussing the Chinese script, I provide Mandarin readings as examples. Cantonese readings are only provided where phonology is relevant.

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05

Graças a Deusa – (Social) media uses of Pajubá, the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ dialect

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Eduardo Alves Vieira

Previous research on Brazilian Portuguese shed light on how LGBTQIA+ communities use language. More specifically, they explored how LGBTQIA+ individuals use Pajubá, the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ dialect. However, LGBTQIA+ speak in that language remains underexplored due to the only recent appearance of Queer Linguistics in Brazil. This paper scrutinizes the language attitudes of native Brazilian Portuguese speakers toward using Pajubá on (social) media specifically, given that no studies to date have provided a substantial discussion on the topic. Primary data

come from an online Qualtrics survey completed by 910 participants promoted via social media and through a friend-of-a-friend technique. By analyzing the language attitudes of those speakers toward the uses of Pajubá on (social) media, this paper displays how the online/digital environment helps promote the dialect, contributing to the language variation of Brazilian Portuguese. Moreover, it shows some controversial uses of the dialect, for example, when non-LGBTQIA+ people, companies, and organizations appropriate Pajubá for performative allyship and commercial purposes. Lastly, it explains that the dialect creates a dialogue between people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+, showing how both groups embrace sexual and gender diversity and widely accept the language variation that Pajubá offers.

1 Introduction

Since the publication of foundational texts like "Beyond the Lavender Lexicon" (Leap 1995) and "Queerly Phrased" (Livia & Hall 1997), the field of Queer Linguistics (QL) has emerged as a vital area of scholarly inquiry, illuminating the intricate relationship between language and aspects of sexual and gender identity. While QL is firmly rooted in certain regions, notably the United States and other nations within the Global North, its development has been asymmetrical in regions such as those within the Global South (Leap 2021), exemplified by countries like Brazil.[1] This asymmetry partially arises from Brazil's intricate socio-historical context, characterized by the emergence of queer activism and visibility, which exists in tension with prevailing conservative sociopolitical forces (Alves Vieira forthcoming). Although QL has expanded its focus beyond the lavender lexicon pertinent to LGBTQIA+ communities in different parts of the world, its epistemological foundations may have overlooked significant linguistic phenomena. To address certain erasures within QL and to reflect the field's commitment to African American/"quare"[2] linguistics (Johnson 2001), as well as other intersectional matters and endeavors, this study investigates the language attitudes of native Brazilian Portuguese (BP) speakers regarding Pajubá, known by lay people and the media as the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ dialect (Pati 2018).

While previous studies (published primarily in Portuguese) looked at Pajubá, explaining how LGBTQIA+ individuals and non-LGBTQIA+ people use the dialect (Lima 2017, Alves Vieira 2022 and forthcoming), there is a dearth of research about it published in English (Araújo 2022). In fact, the only text I found with substantial information in English about the dialect is Araújo's (2022) book chapter titled *Pajubá*. Furthermore, although scholars have published exciting and valuable information about Pajubá, its use in more contemporary set-

[1] See Silva & Melo (2020) and Borba (2020) for more information about the development of QL in Brazil.

[2] Johnson (2001) reveals that many versions of queer theory tend to overlook issues of race and class or only address their impact in discursive rather than tangible ways. To address this gap, the author introduces "quare" studies as a redefined and practical application of queer theory that includes racialized sexual understanding.

tings, for instance, in (social) media, has been underexplored.

Through a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) of 910 responses to an online questionnaire, this article explores the language attitudes of native BP speakers toward the uses of Pajubá on (social) media, providing more insights into the dialect's current developments. The information provided here stems from a project titled *Is Portuguese becoming queer?*, which studies the factors inspiring the use of Pajubá and how it promotes language variation in BP. [3]

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 explains the emergence of Pajubá and its development, discussing relevant literature about the dialect that contributed to the argument developed here. Section 3 describes the theoretical framework on language attitudes and QL used for the analysis presented. Section 4 explains the methodology used for the data collection and analysis, respectively. Section 5 presents and discusses the results, followed by a conclusion in Section 6.

2 Pajubá

Although there is no certainty regarding the exact moment that Pajubá emerged, it is clear that the dialect derived from the African culture from the colonial period (Araújo 2022, Barroso 2017). Brazil was the last American country to abolish slavery on May 13, 1888. During its slave trade from 1502 to 1860, it received more than 10 million enslaved Africans (Gomes 2019) who forcibly worked in land cultivation and mining (Mattoso 2001). In the aftermath of that period, African languages influenced BP (Castro 2005), and Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé consolidated in the country (Araújo 2022).

Previous research showed that Candomblé has been an important channel for the survival of African linguistic and cultural heritage in Brazil since the religion has fostered a cultural and linguistic dialogue between the country and Africa. At times, African traditions and languages have been re-contextualized, re-invented, and re-imagined on Brazilian grounds (Araújo 2022, Capone 2007) – as in the case of Pajubá discussed in this paper. Such dialogue promoted the linguistic contact between BP and African languages of Yoruba or Bantu origins, given that practitioners of Candomblé used these languages during the religious ceremonies (Araújo 2022).

African traditions and religions have been marginalized in Brazil since colonial times because of more conservative ideologies, which, for example, link them to "evil" practices such as voodoo or "black magic" (Alves Vieira 2022; forthcoming). Despite this stigmatization, Candomblé has attracted LGBTQIA+ people to its temples (*terreiros* in Portuguese) due to its openness to sexual diversity, welcoming people from the LGBTQIA+ community who wanted to practice their faiths (Araújo 2022; Fry 1982; Matory 2005). This open-mindedness toward dissident sexualities and non-hegemonic gender identities allows the claim that Brazil's Candomblé has replicated the precolonial Yoruba cultural acceptance of same-sex sexual attraction (Onanuga 2022).

Lima (2017) explained that Candomblé became the place of contact between BP and African languages such as Yoruba – influencing

[3] See Alves Vieira (2022 and forthcoming) for more information.

how individuals from the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community spoke. Some LGBTQIA+ individuals who were practitioners of Candomblé acquired an African lexicon during the religious ceremonies that influenced their queer dialect. By codeswitching BP and Yoruba, they created Pajubá, "a practice of queer articulation proper of the Black Atlantic" (Araújo 2022: 297). In other words, the African vocabulary used in the Candomblé temples by those folks can be traced to the origins of Pajubá, also known today as the national LGBTQIA+ dialect.

Barroso (2017) and Cruz & Tito (2016) explained that Yoruba speakers in Brazil used their language in secrecy because of people's prejudice against their cultural and religious identities. In Brazil, Pajubá was also used in secret when it was first articulated during the military dictatorship in 1964 by *travestis* (Lima 2017), a Brazilian non-normatively gendered community whose embodiment of the feminine gender in a male body is similar to that of trans women but whose linguistic identity is different (Borba & Ostermann 2007, Zimman 2018). These individuals were the first to use the dialect as "secret" or an "anti-language," which Cameron & Kulick (2006) also described as a linguistic code that those who need to be secretive use to exclude outsiders. Given that the dictatorship's ideology was homophobic, deeming homosexuals as "harmful, dangerous, contrary to the family, to prevailing morals, and to 'good manners'" (Araújo 2022: 298), Pajubá was then used to fight against the state's discriminatory practices and policies (Lima 2017). For example, according to Caio Araújo's (2022) readings of Gabriela Araújo (2018) and Florentino (1998), *travestis*, sex workers used Pajubá strategically on the streets to ensure in-group communication and exclude outsiders, such as the police, who could not understand what they were saying. Some of these linguistic strategies of illegibility were constructing a clandestine and creative system of meaning, using the African lexicon, inventing hybrid words, resorting to slang, and reassembling these elements through figures of speech (Florentino 1998 as mentioned in Araújo 2022). At the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s, readers of *O Lampião da Esquina*, the first Brazilian gay newspaper, popularized Pajubá (Trevisan 2018). In the 90s, the LGBTQIA+ community began to label "gay" slang and expressions by the name *Pajubá*, and magazines such as *G Magazine*, widely known in the country, and *Meio Termo*, popular in the city of Manaus, also helped the popularization and recognition of the dialect as innately LGBTQIA+ (Barroso 2017). In sum, the *terreiros* of Candomblé have served as a religious breathing space for marginalized LGBTQIA+ individuals, concomitantly fostering a codeswitch between BP and African languages. More specifically, this cultural and linguistic exchange has provided LGBTQIA+ folks with the opportunity to learn and incorporate the Yoruba lexicon into their dialects, which has then been taken to the streets (Araújo 2022).

Regarding the secretive aspect of Pajubá, previous studies also suggested that the word *pajubá* itself originated in West African Yoruba-Nago languages, meaning 'secret' or 'mystery' (Barroso 2017). Nonetheless, as Barroso (2017) clarifies, Yoruba words can have different meanings when used in BP. For example, according to the author, the word *pajubá* also means 'news' or 'gossip'. I echo Araújo's (2022) concern that proving the soundness of these assertions is challenging because there is no clear explanation of the etymology and evolution of the lexical item *pajubá*. After consulting the lit-

erature used in this project, I again must agree with Araújo (2022: 295), who claims that the word *pajubá* "[…] has no specific meaning preceding and outside of the queer language practices that it names. Yet […] the connotation of *pajubá* with 'secret' and 'mystery' may be productive if interpreted in relation to its social history, rather than as a result of its linguistic genealogy."

While earlier studies have enhanced the understanding of Pajubá, a definitive agreement on whether it should be classified as a more intricate linguistic code, a dialect, a sociolect, a speech style, a register, or simply the slang used by the LGBTQIA+ community has not yet been reached (Alves Vieira forthcoming). Discussing the precise classification is outside the focus of this paper. For the sake of simplicity, I use the term dialect , following common usage in everyday speech and media (Pati 2018).

Previous studies also gathered information on the lexical items, slang, and expressions of Pajubá. For instance, Vip & Libi published in 2013 a Pajubá dictionary titled *Aurélia: the sharp-tongued dictionary* (my translation of the original title in Portuguese *Aurélia: a dicionária da língua afiada*), which brings 1,300 Pajubá entries. Given that the dialect keeps evolving, for instance, including words from different languages like English (Lima 2017), it is crucial to promote more studies about Pajubá to document its evolution and how it influences the linguistic repertoire of BP speakers, whether LGBTQIA+ or not.

As for more contemporary uses of the dialect, previous research demonstrated that Pajubá continues to acquire new forms and occupy new settings. In 2018, Pajubá made headlines in the Brazilian media after it was featured in one question on the National High School Exam (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio* in Portuguese, also known as *ENEM*[4]). The multiple-choice question asked what gives Pajubá, the secret dialect of gays and *travestis* of Yoruba origin, the status of a dialect and linguistic heritage. The inclusion of the question was considered controversial by conservatives such as former President Jair Bolsonaro and his family, who discredited *ENEM's* 2018 edition on social media, claiming that a question on Pajubá had no use in the exam and only served to groom the youth for becoming interested in "that particular language of those people," the LGBTQIA+ community (Pati 2018).

In two different papers, I present the results and analysis of data subsets from the abovementioned project (Alves Vieira 2022; forthcoming), providing examples of Pajubá expressions used by cisgender straight women in Brazil and people who identify as LGBTQIA+, respectively. The first paper aims to show that because linguistic barriers are permeable, those with hegemonic gender and sexual identities also know and use Pajubá – and not only individuals of the LGBTQIA+ community. Interestingly, the 387 cisgender straight women surveyed for this paper had positive opinions toward Pajubá and how it fosters language variation in BP (Alves Vieira 2022).

The second text is a book chapter on the language ideologies toward the dialect (Alves Vieira forthcoming). This chapter offers three main reasons why people use Pajubá: Because

[4] *ENEM*'s final grades can give students an advantage by being added to the final grade of the *vestibular*, a competitive examination and entrance system used by Brazilian universities to select students.

it is funny, to socialize, and to create a sense of belonging among members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Remarkably, among the least chosen reasons is to hide their LGBTQIA+ identity from family members and from non-LGBTQIA+ people. These results corroborate what the literature has shown; if Pajubá was used before to conceal people's sexual and gender identity, being used as a secret and anti-language, its usage now indexes funniness and enjoyment, socialization, and belonging. This chapter's results also show the widespread use of Pajubá on (social) media.

Silva (2018) showed that Pajubá users also create internet memes illustrating queer linguistic practices that display LGBTQIA+ representation and how the dialect fosters language variation in BP. Additionally, the dialect is used in TV shows, social media, and podcasts (Barroso 2017; Lau 2017), helping to spread Pajubá online within Brazil and elsewhere.

The online presence of Pajubá in/across (social) media is precisely what motivates the present study, whose objective is to understand how the uses of Pajubá in/across (social) media can explain the dialect's current developments and uses, including the participants' linguistic attitudes toward the dialect. Before presenting and discussing the results of this research, I will now describe the theoretical framework used to analyze the data.

3 Theoretical framework: Language attitudes and Queer Linguistics

The study of language attitudes has its roots in the 1900s (Dragojevic 2017) and has garnered significant attention from scholars across the behavioral and social sciences as well as the humanities since the early 1930s (Kircher & Zipp 2022), becoming a fundamental aspect of the social psychology of language, sociology of language, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and communication studies (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). In recent decades, there has been a notable increase in the volume of studies on language attitudes (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). In the current climate of rapidly escalating globalization and migration, where interactions among diverse linguistic groups are increasingly commonplace, this line of research holds even more prominence (Kircher & Zipp 2022). The highly interdisciplinary framework governing the study of language attitudes has also led to a remarkable trend; researchers increasingly concur that 'cross-fertilization is desirable' in both theoretical and practical applications (Kircher & Zipp 2022). Following these assertions, this paper builds on theories and ideas surrounding language attitudes, encompassing individuals' beliefs, emotions, and actions regarding languages, dialects, varieties, and registers. Additionally, this study applies concepts from QL, a field that examines the interplay between sexuality, gender, and language, to investigate how Pajubá can illuminate ideas regarding Brazilian LGBTQIA+ identities while also examining potential conflicts with cisgender heterosexual counterparts and more conservative perspectives on sexual and gender diversity.

3.1 Language attitudes

Language attitudes refer to how individuals think about, feel toward, and respond to different languages, dialects, registers, and, most significantly, their respective speakers (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). These attitudes

reflect the evaluative reactions of individuals to a language variety, "a loosely bundled 'set of linguistic items [e.g., lexical items, sounds, constructions] with similar social distribution'" (Hudson 1996: 22 as cited in Dragojevic 2017). The formation of these attitudes is linked to a two-step cognitive process involving social categorization and stereotyping (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). First, individuals use linguistic cues, such as sounds and lexical items, to identify the social group to which a speaker belongs (Dragojevic 2017). After this identification, they assign stereotypical characteristics associated with those group memberships (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022).

Language attitudes can be examined through two evaluative dimensions: status, which includes traits like intelligence and educational background, and solidarity, which encompasses attributes such as friendliness and warmth (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). Additionally, according to the tripartite perspective on attitudes articulated by Dragojevic (2017), language attitudes consist of three fundamental components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive dimension pertains to individuals' beliefs concerning various language varieties. The affective dimension encompasses their emotional responses towards these varieties, whereas the behavioral dimension relates to individuals' tendencies or intentions in response to the use of different language varieties. A person's attitude towards a specific language variety may encapsulate any combination of these components, which may manifest with varying prominence at different times. Furthermore, as asserted by Dragojevic (2017), prior studies have predominantly focused on the cognitive dimension of language attitudes, a tendency that is evident within the literature on language attitudes and the analysis proposed in this paper.

According to Dragojevic (2017) and Kircher & Zipp (2022), language attitudes are socially constructed and developed through experience, typically occurring in early life and from multiple sources. Some examples are family, peers, neighbors, and those we meet as online acquaintances, journalists, and television personalities. Moreover, language attitudes can be expressed in multiple ways, one of which is through the representation of languages in media. This representation radically influences the development and manifestation of individuals' attitudes toward languages, their varieties, and speakers. Given that language is a crucial marker of social identity, alterations in linguistic behaviors can reflect changing perceptions of specific groups. Due to this inherent relationship, individuals often respond to language as if it reflects the personal and social attributes of the speaker.

With this in mind, this paper contends that Pajubá, a once-secret dialect that developed as a means for communication among the LGBTQIA+ community in Brazil, is experiencing a transformation in both its recognition and applications, becoming increasingly acknowledged and utilized by a variety of social groups beyond that community (Alves Vieira 2022; forthcoming). As the dialect has evolved from a state of historical marginalization to one of increased acceptance and visibility, particularly evident across various media, it becomes crucial to analyze how this transformation is reflected in the language attitudes of individuals interacting with Pajubá. Furthermore, this examination reveals insights into the broader attitudes of Brazilians toward their LGBTQIA+ communities.

3.2 Queer Linguistics

Among its various projects and initiatives, QL investigates the construction of normativities, including cis-heteronormativity (Leap 2021), homonormativity (Duggan 2002), and trans-normativity (Zimman 2018). These normative frameworks establish regimes of intelligibility that shape the understanding and recognition of bodies, genders, and sexualities (Butler 2003). Considering that these normativities establish categorization and stereotyping of sexually and gender diverse groups, integrating QL with the theories explained above concerning language attitudes can illuminate the sociolinguistic processes that influence the changing perceptions of Pajubá and its speakers in Brazil. Furthermore, QL promotes intersectional frameworks in the examination of language, sexuality, and gender. This perspective underscores the importance of recognizing the interactions among various social categories and their effects on linguistic behaviors and attitudes.

In addition to analyzing the discursive construction of normativities, QL emphasizes the subversive potential of language (Motschenbacher & Stegu 2013). It particularly focuses on how marginalized groups, including the LGBTQIA+ community, strategically utilize linguistic resources and variables to contest hegemonic ideologies and affirm their identities. In other words, research in QL covers various themes, such as investigating how social experiences relate to normative practices and the regulatory limitations that come with them (Leap 2021). It recognizes that language, along with desire and different aspects of sexuality, acts as a crucial platform where normativity and regulatory influence appear in daily life (Leap 2021).

Since its inception, Pajubá has served as a linguistic resource for self-expression, community affiliation, and resistance against cis-heteronormative ideologies within Brazilian society (Alves Vieira 2022, forthcoming; Araújo 2022). Given its historical function as a coded language for LGBTQIA+ communities in the country, Pajubá's evolving use and recognition offer a critical lens through which to explore how marginalized groups leverage language to navigate sociopolitical landscapes and confront normative perceptions toward sexual, gender, and linguistic diversity (Alves Vieira 2022, forthcoming; Araújo 2022).

In sum, this study also uses QL as a theoretical framework to analyze language attitudes toward Pajubá across media, recognizing the intricate relationship between language visibility in online settings and the construction of social identity (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). This theoretical cross-fertilization between QL and language attitudes scholarship allows this paper to emphasize how those dynamics influence not only the recent development of Pajubá but also the perceptions and representations of its users, particularly LGBTQIA+ communities in Brazil.

4 Methodology

4.1 Data collection

An online survey was used to collect data on the project *Is Portuguese becoming queer?*. It was created on Qualtrics, an online platform that helps with the design and distribution of questionnaires and the analysis of the data, which also possesses an interface suitable for smart-

phone and PC users. This method was chosen because of its broad reach and ability to garner both quantitative and qualitative data (Sue & Ritter 2012).

Sue & Ritter's (2012) three-step Survey Process Flow was essential for the design of the survey: 1) delineating the objectives of the study; 2) revising the literature on the case study; and 3) launching and advertising the survey on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp), via email, and to personal contacts. Before launching the survey, a few colleagues who are native speakers of BP tested the questionnaire to ensure its validity, and the Ethics Committee of Leiden University reviewed and approved the methodology proposed.

To design the Qualtrics survey, I adapted some of the questions Kinyua (2017) used to analyze a queer community in Nairobi, Kenya. The author provides three main reasons for how such a community use their dialect(s): to create a sense of belonging; to conceal their identity from straight people; and to conceal their identity for fear of being arrested, oppressed, and stigmatized. Some of Kinuya's results reiterate the secretive aspect of languages and dialects like Pajubá in Brazil. However, the results presented in the publications mentioned above (Alves Vieira 2022; forthcoming) indicate that Pajubá is mainly used for different purposes in Brazil.

The survey starts with an introduction to the overall project, including an overview of the factors that influence the use of Pajubá in BP and how it helps to queerize the language. Additionally, before answering the survey items, survey takers were required to consent to their participation, which was anonymous and voluntary.

The first section of the questionnaire asks participants to share information about their background, such as age, gender, sexuality, and region/country of residence. The second section contains questions regarding their knowledge of Pajubá, its usage, and opinions toward the dialect, for example: 1) if participants know any Pajubá expressions typically used by the LGBTQIA+ community; 2) how often they or people they know use Pajubá; 3) why they think people use Pajubá; and 4) if they consider Pajubá expressions offensive in any way – this to name just a few. Specifically, this paper examines the qualitative output from question 22 of the online survey, which asks participants to provide reasons why people use Pajubá across media.

Methodological triangulation was applied in the survey with closed and open-ended questions to increase the internal validity of the research. The open-ended questions come in the last part of the survey, which was predominantly quantitative, with the aim of discouraging participants from dropping out prematurely.

The participants answered questions that applied to their individual situations, with follow-up questions aligned with their answers. For example, the first question after the consent screen concerned participants' ages. Only participants aged 18 and/or older were allowed to complete the questionnaire. If a participant gave their age as younger than 18, they were immediately directed to the last page, thanking them for their interest in participating. Besides being aged 18 or older, participants were required to be native speakers of BP, independent of the place of residence.

4.2 Participants

From February 2 to 16, 2021, Qualtrics registered 910 complete responses, which were used in the project. The results presented here broadly represent these participants' opinions. Participants were required to provide their gender or sexual identity during the survey. However, in this paper, I analyze everyone's responses regardless of their gender and sexual identities. As such, the responses discussed below comprise a generalized view of the participants in this regard. This includes all participants regardless of any other identity markers given other than age and native-speaker status. I am not cross-analyzing the data, for example, according to the different age categories or any other demographics.[5]

4.3 Thematic analysis

Employing Braun and Clarke's (2006) model, an inductive approach was applied to describe the themes within the data extracted from question 22 of the online questionnaire. The six steps proposed by the authors were also followed: 1) familiarization with the data; 2) coding; 3) generating themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) writing up. Section 4 also presents the data semantically and latently for theming, with the latter level applied only if further explanation of participants' ideas is required. [6]

The thematic analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti, a computer-assisted software that aids in analyzing qualitative data for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research. First, I used Atlas.ti's artificial intelligence coding feature, available in languages like Portuguese, to identify main and sub-themes within the data. Then, I checked all the codes and recategorized them when necessary for accuracy. Each central code/theme was divided further into sub-codes/themes for more specificity. For example, *casual/informal*, *offensive/mockery*, and *digital communication*, to name a few.

5 Results and discussion

In this paper, I report on a data subset of the project to highlight views on the use of Pajubá on (social) media, specifically. I do not distinguish between the opinions of Pajubá users and non-users because although one may not use the dialect, they can still verify its presence on (social) media and beyond. Consequently, the discussion below comprises answers from all participants to the primary research question of this study: What are the language attitudes of BP native speakers toward the use of Pajubá on (social) media?

Of 910 participants who completed the survey, 11 left this question unanswered, and 32 wrote: 'I do not know.' From the participants reporting not knowing, some provided extra pieces of information. For example, one respondent mentioned that although they did not have an answer to this specific question, they wanted to participate in the survey to learn

[5] As explained before, I already reported on the Pajubá knowledge, usages, and linguistic attitudes and ideologies toward the dialect by two groups, cisgender straight women and people who identify as LGBTQIA+, respectively, in Alves Vieira 2022 and forthcoming. Although the data presented here also comprises the answers from those participants, it has not been published anywhere, given that the present study focuses on the reasons why people use Pajubá on (social) media, specifically.

[6] See Braun & Clarke (2006) for more information on every step of thematic analysis.

more about Pajubá and help [the project, the researcher]. Despite 'not knowing,' another participant suggested that people use Pajubá on (social) media to mark group identity, in this case, the LGBTQIA+ community or because the dialect is already part of Brazilian people's lives. The following analysis includes more specific answers.

5.1 Pajubá's informality as a communicational purpose on (social) media

To the question, *Why do people use Pajubá slang and expressions on (social) media?*, a minority of respondents answered that they have not seen the dialect on such channels. However, most participants reported seeing people use Pajubá expressions on (social) media and further offered that because these channels allow for more informal communication, informality is an intrinsic trait of the dialect. These responses indicate that Pajubá is well adapted to the digital world precisely because of its informality, implying that people expect Pajubá to be used in informal contexts such as the entertainment online/digital world. For example, (social) media communicators who identify as LGBTQIA+ use the dialect more than their non-LGBTQIA+ counterparts.

(1) "Porque o Pajubá é uma linguagem que se adaptou bem ao meio digital. Algumas palavras não seriam tão expressivas se ditas de outro jeito."
'Because Pajubá is a language that adapted well to the digital medium. Some words would not be that expressive if said in a different way.'[7]

(2) "Para demonstrar uma forma de comunicação informal e descontraída."
'To demonstrate an informal and casual form of communication.'

(3) "Para descontração de determinados assuntos."
'To relax certain subjects.'

5.2 Quick channels, quick language

The participants also emphasized that using expressions from Pajubá or any other (informal) dialect is quicker to convey information, making it more suitable for digital environments that require faster communication, such as social media platforms. Likewise, some participants reported that using slang and expressions generally can be more effective than expressing ideas with more formal and complex sentences.

(4) "[…] Nas redes, vejo usos mais democráticos; gírias são úteis e divertidas porque condensam muitas infos, então, trazem agilidade à comunicação nas redes sociais."
'[…] On social media, I see more democratic uses; slang is useful and funny because it condenses much information, so it brings agility to communication on social media.'

5.3 Pajubá's funniness as a stylizing linguistic tool

Some participants reported that Pajubá is a funny, warm, welcoming "language" that

[7] For the sake of legibility, I corrected the punctuation, accentuation, and orthography. No words were added or substituted by synonyms in the original quotes. Additionally, I translated all the sentences into English.

makes communication "lighter" and "more relaxed," which relates to its informal aspect shown above. The funniness/enjoyment that Pajubá brings to communication became evident in the data, with participants reporting that it helps them to stylize themselves comically, for example, in their writing or speaking. The humor of Pajubá can also be found in viral social media posts, spread through memes and LGBTQIA+ videos to users with different levels of fluency as well as to non-users across the country and beyond.

(5) "Porque são bem conhecidas e em sua maioria são engraçadas."
'Because they are very well-known, and most of them are funny.'

(6) "Porque é um dialeto que possui algumas gírias que são engraçadas e geram comentários cômicos."
'Because it is a dialect with some funny slang and generates comical comments.'

(7) "Essas gírias deixam o assunto mais leve ou até mesmo mais divertido, deixando claro quem é o locutor do assunto."
'This slang makes the subject lighter or even funnier, making clear who the speaker of the subject is.'

(8) "Para sinalizar que são/simpatizam com LGBTQIA+, porque falam assim normalmente, para tentar criar identificação com o público, porque dá estilo ou humor à escrita."
'To signal they are/sympathize with LGBTQIA+ [people/topics], because they normally talk like this, to try to create identification with the public, because it gives style or humor to the writing.'

(9) "Acho que elas utilizam mais por influência de memes ou vídeos LGBTQIA+ que viralizam, porque acham divertidas/engraçadas as expressões."
'I think that they use it mostly because of the influence of LGBTQIA+ memes or videos that go viral; because they think the expressions are funny.'

The language attitudes that highlight Pajubá's humorous use in various media provide valuable insights into humor's role as a form of identity expression. As mentioned in my previous work (Alves Vieira forthcoming), the humor of Pajubá enables its users to navigate intricate social environments and challenge linguistic conventions, yet it can also reinforce harmful stereotypes and ideologies concerning the LGBTQIA+ community, as discussed below. While Pajubá's humor can make "the subject lighter or even funnier," it is essential to critically assess it to prevent the endorsement of prevailing power dynamics. In the end, the humor inherent in Pajubá reflects both a challenge to oppression and the potential risk of upholding dominant narratives about LGBTQIA+ identities in Brazil. Such duality also relates to the questions of stereotypes and normativities that both the language attitudes and QL literature discuss.

5.4 Pajubá, media, and stereotypes

According to these participants, people also use Pajubá in other media like TV, news programs, soap operas, series, and films with an LGBTQIA+ thematic – which sometimes portray stereotypical, pejorative ideas of LGBTQ-ness. As exemplified in the responses below, Pajubá is also used to mock or offend LGBTQIA+ individuals. For example, Pajubá is used to create a caricature of these people,

which is sometimes an artificial portrait of their identities. One participant mentioned that some non-LGBTQIA+ people overuse the verb *lacrar* 'to slay'[8] to ridicule queer people.

(10) "Acredito que, na maioria das vezes, para compor personagens, no caso de filmes, séries e novelas. Porém, acaba sendo quase sempre um instrumento de reafirmar estereótipos e não de retratar a comunidade."
'I believe that most of the time, to compose characters, in the case of films, series, and soap operas. However, it almost always ends up being an instrument of reaffirming stereotypes and not of portraying the community.'

(11) "Eu acho que é para estigmatizar a comunidade LGBT. Eu nunca vi um programa de TV utilizar Pajubá sem ser em um contexto discriminatório."
'I think it is to stigmatize the LGBT community. I have never seen a TV program utilize Pajubá without it being in a discriminatory context.'

(12) "É comum em filmes, principalmente ligados a temática LGBTQI+. E, infelizmente, em programas humorísticos."
'It is common in films, mainly linked to the LGBTQI+ theme. And, unfortunately, in comedy programs.'

(13) "Normalmente, como uma forma de chacota, construção de personagem caricato."
'Normally, as a form of mockery, construction of a caricatured character.'

(14) "Na mídia, geralmente, observo a utilização para identificar um indivíduo homossexual, de forma a esteriotipar este grupo."
'In the media, generally, I observe its use [as a way] to identify a homosexual individual, as a way to stereotype this group.'

(15) "Pessoas LGBTQ+ usam por fazer parte de sua maneira de falar. Héteros usam, muitas vezes, para estereotipar."
'LGBTQ+ people use it because it is part of how they speak. Straight people use it, many times, to stereotype.'

(16) "Para parodiar as gays, estereotipá-las."
'To parody the gays, to stereotype them.'

(17) "Para reforçar estereótipos da comunidade LGBTQIA+."
'To reinforce the stereotypes of the LGBTQIA+ community.'

(18) "1- Para se comunicar com o público LGBTQI+. 2- Para debochar das ações desse público (muito claro no uso do termo 'lacrar' atualmente). 3- Em alguns casos, até para dar um tom cômico à fala."
'1- To communicate with the LGBTQIA+ public. 2- To mock this public's actions (currently very common in the use of the term 'lacrar'). 3- In some cases, even to give a comical tone to the speech.'

The earlier discussion on language attitudes (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022) reveals that minority groups utilize in-group language to foster unity, identity, and a sense of community. Conversely, the dominant group might exploit these same language varieties to ridicule, stereotype, and discriminate. This trend can be observed in the responses regarding the use of Pajubá in media and popular culture.

[8] Similar to the verb 'slay' in English, *lacrar* is used to express admiration and to praise someone who has done something exceptionally well. For example: *Ela lacrou naquela dublagem.* [She slayed in that lip sync].

Overall, participants indicate that Pajubá serves dual functions in the Brazilian media environment, being used for both empowerment and stigmatization. When people do not know each other well, their assumptions about how the other person is likely to communicate can influence their perceptions (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). Using a less esteemed language style than expected typically results in harsher evaluations, while using a more esteemed language variety than anticipated generally results in more favorable assessments (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). Consequently, the ambiguous usage of Pajubá in media illustrates the intricate social dynamics related to linguistic diversity. Additionally, it illustrates broader language ideologies that favor certain communication practices – and the individuals who use them – as more valid and appealing than others (Alves Vieira forthcoming).

Dragojevic (2017) also suggests that regular exposure to stereotypical media representations can affect the development of language attitudes in at least two ways. First, such media exposure can contribute to the formation of language-related stereotypes by influencing how viewers perceive the typical traits linked to different linguistic communities and by providing concrete examples through characters that embody various language forms. Second, it can reinforce pre-existing language stereotypes by making them more readily retrievable from long-term memory. Media acts as a significant socializing influence for individuals who are beginning to establish or have yet to create stereotypes concerning various linguistic communities, including the LGBTQIA+ groups discussed here. For many individuals, media may serve as their main or sole means of encountering a particular language variety, in this case, Pajubá. Consequently, it holds substantial significance in shaping stereotypes about language varieties that individuals may not frequently encounter daily; in this case, it is assumed that if one identifies as LGBTQIA+, one must speak and act in a certain way.

5.5 Pajubá in vogue: "everybody uses it"

The survey takers also explain that using Pajubá can index trendiness and modernity. Moreover, the dialect is used online to catch people's attention because it is "cool" and "in vogue."

(19) "Virou moda."
'It became trendy.'

(20) "Por diversão, por achar que isso as torna 'cool', descoladas e pertencentes a um grupo social diferenciado."
'For fun, to believe that this makes them […], cool and belonging to a different social group.'

(21) "Pra se sentirem em comunidade e estar em vogue."
'To feel they are in a community and be in vogue.'

(22) "Para se sentir ou se mostrar como parte de uma comunidade 'descolada'."
'To feel or show themselves as part of a 'cool' community.'

(23) "Para atingir a todos os públicos, parecerem descolados, modernos e não se identificarem como preconceituosos."
'To reach every public, to look cool, modern and to not identify themselves as prejudiced.'

(24) "Para se reconhecerem como 'pessoas descoladas'."

'To recognize themselves as 'cool people'.'

(25) "Para parecerem descoladas, especialmente se forem hétero. Os LGBTs usam como forma de pertencimento/identidade (todo mundo usa)."
'To look cool, especially if they are straight. The LGBT [people] use it as a matter of belonging/identity (everybody uses it).'

In addition to the communicative functions of Pajubá discussed earlier, two significant social-structural factors influence how language attitudes toward a language variety develop and are expressed: standardization and vitality (Ryan et al. 1982 as cited in Kircher & Zipp 2022). Standardization involves creating formal norms that define the 'correct' use of a language, often outlined in dictionaries and grammar books recognized by the relevant speech community (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). This process is frequently supported and legitimized by institutions like the government, educational systems, and mass media (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). Consequently, the standard language becomes associated with these institutions, the typical interactions that occur within them, and the values they represent (Kircher & Zipp 2022). Furthermore, the degree of linguistic similarity between the standardized variety and the emerging standard significantly affects speakers' attitudes (Kircher & Zipp 2022). The second structural factor affecting language attitudes, vitality, refers to the level of interaction networks that employ a specific variety for essential purposes (Dragojevic 2017; Kircher & Zipp 2022). As explained by Ryan et al. (1982 as cited in Kircher & Zippe 2022), "[t]he more numerous and important the functions served by the variety for a large number of individuals, the greater its vitality."

Regarding Pajubá's standardization, one could argue that this dialect exists outside the recognized frameworks and institutional support that confer status and prestige to standard BP and its various dialects. Nevertheless, the development of *Aurélia*, the Pajubá dictionary, Pajubá's inclusion in the ENEM exam, and its increasing presence in media and popular culture indicate efforts to document and legitimize the dialect. Regarding vitality, the survey findings highlight that both LGBTQIA+ communities and individuals beyond these groups commonly use Pajubá. Although Pajubá does not possess the formal recognition or widespread use that standardized dialects of BP enjoy, and despite facing opposition from more conservative branches of Brazilian society, including institutional politics, it still retains importance and relevance for those who speak it. As a result, when participants indicate that Pajubá is in vogue and that everyone uses it, they refer to its linguistic vitality and its increasing presence within the broader linguistic landscape of Brazil, more specifically (across) media.

Regarding the theoretical perspectives from QL, the data discussed here indicates that linguistic diversity can be utilized either to challenge or reinforce existing social hierarchies. For instance, while the use of Pajubá may signal trendiness and modernity for some individuals, it can also lead to the marginalization and stereotyping of gender and sexual minorities, particularly when controversially adopted by individuals from the dominant group, such as those who are non-LGBTQIA+. Interestingly, the perceptions of Pajubá as fashionable illustrate a complicated interplay of language, identity, and power within Brazilian society, as

these perceptions represent broader and more nuanced language ideologies that cannot be simply categorized as straightforward (Alves Vieira forthcoming).

5.6 Pinkwashing, pink money, and misappropriation

Given that Pajubá is considered trendy, modern, current, in vogue, and cool, it is frequently appropriated by companies and organizations for the purposes of seeking profit by targeting the purchasing power of LGBTQIA+ individuals, also known as "pink money." Indeed, companies worldwide try to attract pink money through "pinkwashing," which entails presenting businesses as supportive and inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ community in marketing or public relations while also supporting or engaging in policies and activities that directly compromise LGBTQIA+ rights. Survey participants were critical of using Pajubá in such a performative manner,¬ which is very common during Pride Month (Kane 2022).

(26) "Para ganhar dinheiro. Pink money."
'To earn money. Pink money.'

(27) "Pink money/engajamento."
'Pink money/engagement.'

(28) "Para atraírem o público LGBTQIA+, o famoso pink money."
'To attract the LGBTQIA+ public, the famous pink money.'

(29) "Para atingir o público LGBTQIA+. Porém, alguns usam para conscientizar e trazer informação, enquanto outros buscam somente o Pink Money."
'To reach the LGBTQIA+ public. However, some use it to raise awareness and bring information while others only look for the Pink Money.'

(30) "Se por pessoas gays: representatividade e sensação de pertencimento. Se por pessoas héteros ou empresas: tentativa de chamar atenção (vergonha alheia) da comunidade ou gerar lucro."
'If [used] by gay people: representation and sense of belonging. If [used] by straight people or companies: to try to draw attention (vicarious embarrassment) from the community or generate profit.'

Additionally, the resignification of some Yoruba lexical items commonly used in the *terreiros* of Candomblé is mentioned in the data, raising controversies concerning religious uses and cultural misappropriation. One participant reported that, at times, the original meanings of some Yoruba words can change outside the *terreiros* when used as Pajubá, and this makes them uncomfortable. The example provided here is the word *padê*, which in Yoruba refers to one of the Candomblé's rituals that offers food and drinks to Exu, a Candomblé deity. According to the participant, *padê* is used outside the *terreiros* of Candomblé by some Pajubá speakers as a synonym for drugs, specifically cocaine.

(31) "Para mostrar que conhecem, que estão por dentro, que são irreverentes, mesmo sem conhecer. Muitas dessas gírias são usadas em terreiros de candomblé […] quando vejo alguém falando padê, que é oferenda a Exu, como se fosse droga, a cocaína, eu fico um pouco desconfortável."
'To show that they know, that they are on top of the situation, that they are irreverent, even if they don't know. Many of these

expressions are used in the temples of candomblé […] when I hear someone saying *padê*, which is an offer to Exu, as if it was a drug, cocaine, I get a little uncomfortable.'

The literature on language attitudes discussed above explains that language attitudes are acquired and thus susceptible to change. These attitudes can shift due to alterations in intergroup dynamics or due to the social context in which they are activated. When these attitudes are triggered, they can lead to various behaviors, often resulting in negative outcomes such as prejudice, discrimination, and challenging social interactions. This reflection sheds light on the ambivalence and complexities surrounding how Pajubá is perceived within Brazilian society. For instance, the literature reviewed for this paper (Section 2) indicates that Pajubá has faced both appreciation and stigma since its historical roots in Candomblé temples and its popularization by *travestis* on the streets of Brazil during the dictatorship, resulting in a variety of uses and attitudes towards the dialect and consequently its users. The participants surveyed for this research recognize the ambivalence and complexities involved as they deal with the conflicting feelings of celebrating the linguistic innovation promoted by Pajubá while also criticizing the misappropriation, stereotyping, and commercialization of the dialect in present Brazilian society. It seems that since its emergence, Pajubá has been a site of contestation, where language attitudes, identity affirmation, and dynamics of power have intersected in complex and various ways (Alves Vieira forthcoming).

5.7 Welcome to the valley!

Aside from being used for socialization and to attract individuals of the LGBTQIA+ community through controversial means, as in the case of pink money, Pajubá is used on (social) media as a way to increase the community's visibility. In other words, the use of the dialect is interpreted as a conscious political choice to bring awareness to LGBTQIA+ issues. Some Pajubá speakers use the dialect to communicate and reaffirm their queerness online, for instance, by showing that they proudly "belong to the valley," a phrase in Pajubá which means to identify as LGBTQIA+ (*pertencer ao vale* in Portuguese). Trans folks and *travestis* were also reported to be at the forefront of such a fight for identity recognition and promotion, which the specialized literature of this project has confirmed (Araújo 2022, Barroso 2017, Lima 2017).

(32) "Mostrar que fazem parte do vale."
'To show that they belong to the valley.'

(33) "Por se sentirem incluídos no vale e para se comunicar com os iguais, além de desmistificar a comunidade."
'To feel they are part of the valley and to communicate with their equals, besides demystifying the community.'

(34) "Vejo como resistência. É um dialeto que carrega todo um histórico cultural da vivência LGBT+, em destaque as trans e travestis que carregam esse movimento nas costas."
'I see it as resistance. It is a dialect that carries an entire cultural history of the LGBT+ experience, especially trans [women] and *travestis* who carry this movement on their shoulders.'

Some participants also suggested that LGBTQ-ness is more acceptable online, in contrast with the offline world. This suggestion becomes more evident when consulting the literature used in the project that described Brazil as one of the most LGBTQIA+phobic countries worldwide and the most violent place for transgender folks specifically (Simpson 2022). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that some LGBTQIA+ individuals feel safer expressing their sexual and gender identities online.

(35) "Usualmente nas redes sociais e em círculos sociais onde há uma forte presença da comunidade LGBTQIA+. Por serem parte da identidade da comunidade e por estreitar os laços sociais dos indivíduos da comunidade e também daqueles que simpatizam com ela."
'Usually on social media and in social circles where there is a strong presence of the LGBTQIA+ community. For being part of the community's identity and to strengthen the social bonds of individuals of the community and also of those who sympathize with it.'

(36) "Acho que as pessoas da comunidade estão alcançando um lugar de fala e saindo dos próprios círculos, então, suas gírias estão chegando a outros grupos de pessoas. Assim, na internet, as pessoas pegam as expressões que fazem sentido pra elas e as incorporam no seu vocabulário. Talvez uma forma de acolher ou ser acolhido pela comunidade LGBTQIA+!"
'I think that people in the community are reaching a 'place of speech'[9] and leaving their own circles, so their slang is reaching other groups of people. So, on the internet, people take the expressions that make sense to them and incorporate them into their vocabulary. Maybe, a way to welcome or be welcomed by the LGBTQIA+ community!'

The survey answers also highlight the secretive aspect of Pajubá. Participants reiterated that Pajubá users sometimes do not want outsiders to understand what is being communicated or discussed.

(37) "Para truncar a comunicação e selecionar apenas um pequeno grupo que vai entender o que está escrito."
'To restrict communication and select only a small group of people that will understand what is written.'

5.8 Pajubá building bridges between LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+ speakers

If Pajubá was a secret language before, used only "in the valley," it is now a cultural and linguistic heritage available to any BP speaker,

[9] The Portuguese meaning of *lugar de fala* cannot be translated accurately into English, for example, as 'place of speech', although this is a possible translation. Djamila Ribeiro, a Black Brazilian feminist philosopher, popularized the Portuguese term. In short, Ribeiro proposes that *lugar de fala* refers to a social locus in the world 'inhabited' by a speaker/social subject, discursively constructed by their own lived experiences, which allows them to share such experiences the way they perceive it. For instance, the *lugar de fala* of queer folks gives them the authority to narrate their firsthand experiences, such as what it means to be a Brazilian LGBTQIA+ person and how to deal with prejudice, LGBTQ-phobia, stigmatization, etc. Contrarily, non-LGBTQIA+ folks who have not lived those experiences cannot discuss them with the same level of knowledge and accuracy, given that they have never 'inhabited' that *lugar de fala*. The term has connotations similar to 'positionality', 'standpoint', and 'point of view' in English.

as I showed in Alves Vieira (2022). According to some answers, the interaction between LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+ cultures has become more fluid, and in particular, the increased interest that (presumably) non-LGBTQIA+ people have in learning Pajubá facilitates this. In other words, Pajubá helps to connect both groups.

(38) "O Pajubá, nascido no meio LGBTI+ tem a cada dia conquistado espaço e respeito, assim como a própria comunidade. Acredito que também seja uma das formas de aceitação pela sociedade. Uma forma não apenas de aceitar/respeitar o indivíduo, mas como também seu mundo. A disseminação/uso do Pajubá tem ajudado a aproximá-los."
'Pajubá, born in the LGBTI+ community, has gained space and respect each day, as the community itself. I believe it is also a form of acceptance by society. A way of not only accepting/respecting the individual but also their world. The dissemination/use of Pajubá has helped bring them closer.'

As previously discussed, on the one hand, participants highlight that the dialect is intrinsically LGBTQIA+ and, therefore, used by the LGBTQIA+ community to create a sense of belonging (online), asserting that the community is "coming out of its circle" because there is more acceptance and tolerance "outside of it." Moreover, it is used to interact with friends and family who also opt to use the dialect as a way to make LGBTQIA+ folks feel welcome and comfortable. In other words, using Pajubá can construct a (queer) identity that embraces sexual and gender diversity, even if it is not always "consciously"[10] adopted for this purpose. Those who know Pajubá, whether users of the dialect or not, have always understood it to be the "language" of the LGBTQIA+ community.

On the other hand, participants also reported that Pajubá expressions are already part of the day-to-day communication of BP speakers regardless of gender and sexuality, suggesting that using the dialect across media has become natural and inevitable. For instance, the participants suggest that some Pajubá expressions are easy to learn and understand, and these represent examples that "everyone" uses the most. One participant provided a specific example with the word *viado* (similar to 'faggot' in English), affirming that cisgender straight men no longer take offense when addressed with such a word. Elaborating on the answer, this participant demonstrated awareness of the semantic and pragmatic evolution of the term *viado*, explaining that its use is contextual and may vary depending on the interlocutors' relationship, sexuality, and gender identity. In sum, one can use *viado* to either offend someone or show closeness, familiarity, intimacy, and friendship. This participant's answer raises interesting questions regarding the evolution of Pajubá and its pragmatics, such as if other slang and expressions have expanded

[10] The participant here used the word *racionalmente* 'rationally', but based on the context of their answer, I translated it into 'consciously'. The exact words in Portuguese are: *É uma questão de construção identitária, de se sentir parte de um grupo e por isso adotar, nem sempre racionalmente, a linguagem que o identifica.* Translated into English as: 'It is a matter of identity construction, to feel that one belongs to a group and therefore adopts, not always consciously, a language that identifies such a group.'

upon their original meanings and uses; and if so, which ones?

(39) "[…] Viado, utilizado na comunidade gay, soa diferente do usado na comunidade hétero. Já vem sendo usada como forma de chamar, principalmente, homens amigos e héteros. Tenho percebido isso no dia a dia, porém, não afeta/gera revolta no caso de ser conhecido."
'[…] Faggot, used in the gay community, sounds different from how it is used in the straight community. It has already been used as a way to address, mainly, male friends and straights. I have noticed this on a daily basis, however, it does not affect/generate anger in the case of [the interlocutor] being an acquaintance.'

Some non-LGBTQIA+ Pajubá users use the dialect in allyship with the LGBTQIA+ community by embracing sexual and gender diversity. However, a few participants showed discomfort in seeing non-queer people using Pajubá because it can sometimes come off as an appropriation of queerness. They suggest that some non-LGBTQIA+ people use the dialect to convey open-mindedness while also holding prejudice against LGBTQIA+ individuals; this practice resembles the performative allyship employed by companies and organizations during Pride month, as discussed earlier.

Kircher & Zipp (2022: 11) state that when studying language attitudes, it is crucial to recognize that they typically encompass two primary evaluative aspects: status and solidarity. Kircher and Zipp, drawing on the insights of Woolard (1989) and Ryan et al. (1982), clarify that the difference between status and solidarity is rooted in the inclination to progress somehow (status) versus the wish to be accepted by a social group (solidarity). In other words, a prestigious language variety is inherently associated with power, enhanced economic opportunities, and the possibility of social mobility. As a result, perceptions regarding the status of such a variety are linked to its tangible advantages. Conversely, a variety that is positively regarded in terms of solidarity tends to evoke sentiments of connection and belonging, encapsulating significant social connotations. It serves as a symbol of the social group with which individuals align themselves. Therefore, attitudes pertaining to the solidarity dimension are closely related to a sense of loyalty within the group. This theoretical framework allows for an analysis of how both LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+ individuals perceive and use Pajubá through the concepts of status and solidarity. For LGBTQIA+ individuals, employing Pajubá may serve to affirm their identity, foster community ties, and demonstrate their relationship with a queer culture, which reflects group solidarity. Conversely, when non-LGBTQIA+ individuals use Pajubá, it may be seen as a way to showcase their progressive attitudes and acceptance, highlighting status-driven reasons for their language choices. This is particularly relevant as Pajubá is linked to marginalized sexual and gender identities and has been increasingly recognized in Brazil, appearing not only in everyday conversations but also in national educational assessments and notably on social media.

The participants stressed that social media platforms are democratic spaces where anyone can express themselves as they wish, allowing Pajubá and other dialects to flourish. In their words, Pajubá and other dialects are no longer restricted to in-group settings, and social media

makes language variation more evident and approachable. Interestingly, these participants substantiate their answers by naming different communities that also contribute to the language variation of BP, such as youth, 'punks,' 'preppy boys,' 'playboys,' 'straight boys,' *caipiras* ('from the countryside' in English, which can also be derogatory, similar to 'hillbilly' or 'redneck'), and those from the *quebrada* (similar to the 'hood' in English). One participant who mentions the *quebrada* offers the word *mano* as an example (the short for *hermano* in Spanish, and similar to *bro* in English). The participant explained that the word *mano* is no longer used only by people from the *quebrada*; its use has been popularized, and the same has happened with Pajubá expressions. By discussing how a dialect can travel online, reaching different parts of the country, these participants explained that anyone from any region could use any dialect, such as Pajubá.

(40) "Talvez pelo mesmo motivo que punks, por exemplo, se comunicam de acordo com seus próprios termos. Fomenta uma relação de correspondência e familiaridade."
'Maybe for the same reason that punks, for example, communicate among themselves according to their own terms. It fosters a relationship of correspondence and familiarity.'

(41) "Acredito que seja uma forma de comunicação e de identidade, assim como os jovens tem gírias que fazem parte do cotidiano de suas 'tribos'."
'I believe it is a form of communication and identity, as the youth have slang that is part of their daily lives and their 'tribes'.'

(42) "São gírias, como outras quaisquer. Conheço pouco, eu me perco nessas conversas, mas acho natural que isso exista. Há gírias de 'playboy' e de 'hétero-padrão' também."
'They are slang, as any other. I know a little; I get lost in these conversations, but I think it is natural that this exists. There is the 'playboy's' slang and 'conventional straight man's,' too.'

(43) "Acredito que utilizam como marca identitária de um grupo, já que o pajubá é uma variante social, da mesma forma que em contextos adequados o grupo de certas regiões interioranas utiliza a variante caipira, por exemplo."
'I believe they use it as a group's identity marker, given that Pajubá is a social variety, the same way that, in adequate contexts, the group from certain countryside regions use the *caipira* variety, for example.'

(44) "Pq acham engraçado e acabam trazendo o universo glbt para fora do grupo... ex: quando alguém que não é da 'quebrada', 'mano', usa uma gíria deste grupo."
'Bc they think that it is funny and end up bringing the glbt universe outside of the group… i.e.: as when someone that is not from the *'quebrada'*, *'mano'*, use a slang from this group.'

(45) "O dialeto Pajubá já se tornou parte da expressão oral da população. LGBTQIA+ utilizam por fazer parte de sua identidade."
'The Pajubá dialect has already become part of the population's oral expression. LGBTQIA+ [people] use it because it is part of their identity.'

(46) "Mostrando mais respeitos pelas pessoas, podendo demostrar que qualquer pessoa, independente de região, pode falar."
'Showing more respect to people, being able to demonstrate that anyone, regardless of [their] region, can speak it.'

(47) "Porque elas se tornaram parte da linguagem nacional."
'Because they have become part of the national language.'

(48) "Em geral, para se expressarem na sua comunidade de amigos e familiares? Eu não vejo muito na mídia, apenas em personagens caricatos, o que parece artificial. Mas no dia a dia, nas redes, várixs amigxs e amigues usam naturalmente, como acontece com qualquer outra gíria cujo uso remete suas relações de linguagem cotidianas. Eu cresci na favela e muitas gírias que fazem parte do meu vocabulário cotidiano só são entendidas no morro mesmo. Então é uma forma de se comunicar com seu grupo, mas não se restringe a ele."
'In general, to express themselves in their community of friends and family? I don't see it much in the media, just in caricatured characters, which seems artificial. But in everyday life, on social media, many friends[11] use it naturally, as with any other slang whose use reflects their everyday language relationships. I grew up in the *favela*,[12] and many expressions that are part of my daily vocabulary are only understood in the *morro*[13] itself. So, it is a way to communicate with one's group, but it is not restricted to it.'

As the literature and analysis of the results showed, Pajubá's uses have changed throughout the years, and (social) media has contributed to the evolution and diffusion of the dialect. Whether in more open or conservative settings, Pajubá has undeniably occupied its place as a dialect of Brazil, marked by social controversies such as discrimination and exclusion but also by acceptance due to its current, vibrant, humorous aspects and various communicational purposes (Alves Vieira 2022). Given its history and the fact that it is no longer used exclusively by LGBTQIA+ folks, could we think of the dialect as a linguistic performance that expresses a non-conformist progressive identity in a broader sense? In pursuit of an answer, future research could investigate how Pajubá indexes progressiveness beyond the realm of sexual and gender identities.

6 Final considerations

This paper described linguistic attitudes toward the use of Pajubá, the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ dialect, on social media. It explained that after being subjugated as a minority anti-language throughout its history, the dialect established itself in the country, firstly in LGBTQIA+ communities and, more recently, in non-LGBTQIA+ ones. Such establishment has been further strengthened by the use of the dialect across media.

This paper utilized a theoretical framework that integrates perspectives from Pa-

11 Please note that the participant used the inclusive form of the word *amigos/as*, including in their discourse non-binary identities that are usually neglected by Portuguese grammatical gender binarism. Such practice is common amongst the Brazilian LGBTQIA+ community, allies, and speakers of Pajubá.

12 Similar to *shantytown* in English, *favela* is a Portuguese word used to describe low-income neighborhoods in the peripheries of Brazil. Some people dislike the word due to its association with criminality and stigmatization. Nowadays, many Brazilians prefer the word *comunidade* ('community') instead to refer to such neighborhoods, a word with more positive connotations.

13 'Hill' in English, a synonym of *favela.*

jubá literature with language attitudes and QL research. It examined the transformation of Pajubá from a subcultural code into a wider linguistic phenomenon that reflects more progressive sociolinguistic and cultural values in Brazil. Through an online survey and a thematic analysis, this study investigated the language attitudes of BP speakers toward using Pajubá on (social) media, given that, to my knowledge, no studies to date have provided more substantial information on the matter in Portuguese or English. Particularly, informed by the theoretical perspectives offered by QL (Leap 2021; Motschenbacher & Stegu 2013; Zimman 2018), this analysis helped uncover the intricate relationship among language usage, the formation of sexual and gender identity, and power dynamics within the Brazilian context.

The data illustrates how sexual and gender minorities utilize language to construct and express their identities while some members of dominant groups (i.e., cisgender straight people) exploit the same linguistic practices to marginalize and stereotype these individuals (Alves Vieira forthcoming). This aligns with QL's emphasis on understanding how language functions as a mechanism for affirming or challenging social identities and structures of power, reflecting the discussions proposed in the literature concerning language attitudes.

According to the participants, the dialect is used in (social) media for different communicational purposes, ranging from creating a sense of belonging to LGBTQIA+ folks to establishing a dialogue between these and non-LGBTQIA+ communities. Additionally, using the dialect online index humor/funniness, coolness, and trendiness due to its modern aspects that help spread the dialect within Brazil and beyond.

Some participants reported negative attitudes towards the uses of Pajubá in (social) media, such as for marketing and commercial purposes and appropriating the dialect through pinkwashing and other forms of disingenuous allyship. However, most of the survey responses reported positive attitudes toward it.

According to the above analysis, the participants accept that language, in this case, BP, constantly changes, and embracing it is the most reasonable response. Different dialects foster such a change. Pajubá is no exception because it has become popular among Brazilians, occupying informal settings such as social media platforms and formal ones like the National High School Exam, *ENEM*.

This study also showed that anyone can use Pajubá, regardless of their location, since it is spread nationally and quickly diffused via (social) media in LGTBQIA+ memes, videos, podcasts, and other sources of information. These findings lead to a few unanswered questions that deserve greater attention. For instance, is Pajubá present in other Portuguese-speaking countries and Lusophone communities? Do speakers of Portuguese as a second language use Pajubá? If so, how and for which purposes? What is its reach if Pajubá can travel online as any other dialect? Does it influence LGBTQIA+ and non-LGBTQIA+ communities beyond Brazil? In other words, studying Pajubá is a promising endeavor within a variationist or linguistic anthropological project.

On this note, I end this study with one participant's answer to the primary research question of this paper, which, in my opinion, symbolizes the struggle to recognize Pajubá as a dialect and linguistic heritage as proposed in the *ENEM*'s question. Although the dialect is not fully accepted in Brazilian society and cre-

ates a stir when it enters more formal and institutional spaces due to ongoing prejudice against sexual and gender diversity, it is undeniable that Pajubá is a part of the Brazilian linguistic landscape and "graças a deusa, estamos lentamente naturalizando o uso" ('thank goddess, we are slowly naturalizing its use').

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06

Simplemente te casas con un alemán y ya tienes tu residencia:

Verbal violence, interactive positioning, and the stereotype of the opportunistic marriage migrant in Latin American migration contexts in Germany

06

Simplemente te casas con un alemán y ya tienes tu residencia:

Verbal violence, interactive positioning, and the stereotype of the opportunistic marriage migrant in Latin American migration contexts in Germany

Silke Jansen

After all, a way to get people very upset is to tell them
(explicitly or implicitly) that they are not who they
claim to be or think they are.
(Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2013: 17)

This contribution focuses on the role of gender stereotypes in the emergence of verbal violence. Drawing upon selected examples from the VIOLIN corpus, a collection of narratives of problematic communicative encounters by Latin American migrants residing in Germany, we apply a combination of Narrative Analysis and Positioning Theory in order to elucidate how the perception of verbal violence can emerge from a sense of being unfairly positioned by members of the mainstream society. For this purpose, we use the stereotype of the "opportunistic female marriage migrant" as a case example. This widespread stereotype, prevalent in both German and many Latin American societies, suggests that women from economically-disadvantaged countries take advantage of their German husbands to secure residency and a better life. As emerges from our analysis, Latin American women often find themselves being positioned as "opportunistic marriage migrants", but vehemently reject such positioning in their narratives. However, they still tend to reassert and perpetuate the stereotype by using it as a foil to construct their own positions as honest, well-educated and independent, and thus as members of a distinct, and morally superior, category of migrant women in Germany.

1 Introduction

> Eh, los hombres se me acercaban pensado como <<imitating> ay es latina, llena de fuego> y así ellos me decían: "fuego tú eres" , entonces la gente e penSAba eso, como ah tu eres latina y, m, como diríamos en México, eres más fácil ¿no? ellos pensaban que: si ellos, no sé, me coqueteaban un poco yo iba a decir que sí por, por el pasaporte, y ese estereotipo todavía está [...] y yo dije ¿qué? ((laughter)) o sea para mí [...] es super doloroso.
>
> Yeah, the men would approach me thinking like they <<imitating> saying, Oh, she's a Latina, full of fire> and so they would say to me: "you're fire", so, people THOUGHT that, like, oh, you're a Latina and, um, as we would say in Mexico, you're easier, right? they thought: if they, I don't know, flirted with me a bit I was going to say yes because of, you know, the passport, and that stereotype still exists... and I said, what? ((laughter)) I mean, for me... it's super painful.

This excerpt is drawn from an interview with a young Mexican woman living in Germany, in which she shares her experiences as a migrant. It touches upon a familiar stereotype that circulates in Germany and also globally which portrays Latin American women as "hot" — implying that they are particularly passionate and sensual. Moreover, conventional clichés suggest that migrants from Latin America and other regions in the Global South are more susceptible to the advances of men from European countries, motivated by their desire to obtain a European passport. This, in return, grants German men a perceived sense of control over these women. However, the Mexican

woman rejects these notions as stereotypical and describes her reaction to the men's behavior in terms of distress (cf. *super doloroso* 'super painful'). Her response leads us to infer that she perceives the men's behavior as invasive, or even violent and aggressive.

This paper investigates the interconnections between gendered stereotypes about migrants and the emergence of verbal violence and aggression. Our analysis is based on a selection of so-called "critical incidents" from the VIOLIN corpus, a corpus of narratives in Spanish chronicling the experiences of Latin American migrants in Germany. Proposing a new framework that combines Speech Act Theory and Positioning Theory, we aim to examine how the imposition of stereotyped identities onto migrants contributes to the emergence of perceived verbal violence and aggression. As we intend to demonstrate, based on the example of what we call the "opportunistic marriage migrant", these stereotypes frequently blend gender, class and ethnicity-based perspectives about migrants, which clash with their self-perceived identities. Nevertheless, it can also be observed that the resistance to having gendered stereotypes applied to themselves does not necessarily prevent migrants from reproducing and reinforcing these same stereotypes.

The structure of our contribution is outlined as follows: Following the introduction, we provide an overview of the VIOLIN corpus in section two. Section three introduces the theoretical framework for our analysis, clarifies some essential concepts for studying verbal violence and aggression, and presents the stereotype of the "opportunistic marriage migrant". In section 4, we analyze two critical incidents under the perspective of verbal violence (and, to a lesser extent aggression) which emerge from reference to this stereotype. We end with the overarching conclusions from our study, reflecting on the role of positioning at the interplay between sexism, racism and classism in the emergence of verbal violence and aggression.

2 The VIOLIN corpus

This study is based on the VIOLIN corpus, which was established within the context of the Verbal Violence against Migrants in Institutions (VIOLIN) project, conducted at the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (Germany) from 2019 to 2022 (cf. Jansen & Romero Gibu 2021, 2022). For the purpose of this study, we adopt a wide definition of violence, including any kind of behavior against individuals or groups that has negative consequences on their physical or mental integrity and health (cf. Iadicola & Shupe 2013; Barak 2003: esp. 26).

Following the methodology of the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan 1954), we conducted interviews with Spanish-speaking migrants from different Latin American countries who currently reside in Germany. Using a combination of a narrative stimulus and a semi-structured questionnaire, respondents were encouraged to share personal accounts of incidents or situations related to their migration experience in which they underwent negative emotional impacts (such as feeling offended, hurt, intimidated, threatened, annoyed, etc.) due to the manner in which others communicated with them, particularly in institutional settings. The corpus used for this study comprises 60 interviews (one of them with two participants), which span approximately 30 to

90 minutes. The majority of participants migrated for professional or educational reasons. They originate from 11 Latin American countries, with Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela being the most prominently represented. Additionally, one participant is from Spain, and another from the USA. Despite an age range of 19 to 62 years, the bulk of participants were in their (late) 20s or (early) 30s at the time of the interview. Of the 61 interviewees, 41 identified as women and 20 as men.

These interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and subjected to coding. A total of 192 critical incidents were identified within the broader interview data. Further, the Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) was employed to identify content categories that naturally emerged from the data. The discussion of gendered identities and gender difference emerged as a relevant category in 21 of the 192 critical incidents. In these cases, a verbal behavior that was directly or indirectly evaluated as sexism-in-action, sometimes intersected with racism and/or classism, was presented as a source of verbal violence.

Remarkably, nearly all of the critical incidents in our corpus in which gender is presented as a relevant factor are in some way connected to stereotypical images of Latina women. With the exception of one critical incident in which a male participant defended himself against a racist verbal attack by performing a hypermasculinized Latino masculinity, all the incidents revolve around stereotyped femininities, intertwined with clichéd ideas of Latin Americans as more sensual and sexual, but also more adhering to traditional patriarchal gender roles.

These ideas partly reflect perceived gendered immigration patterns in Germany and other industrialized countries. While men are frequently considered to migrate as labor migrants, female migration, particularly from the Global South to the Global North, is ideologically linked to 'caretaking work' (both paid and unpaid) in a broader sense. This can include being a sexual or romantic partner, a housewife, a mother, or a homemaker, but also a nannie, a maid, or even a sex worker (Zara & Mendoza 2011: 366; see also Moré 2015). All these roles are grounded in a traditional patriarchal understanding of femininity and gendered division of labor, although some are understood in emotional terms (particularly lover, housewife and mother), while others are related to a more professional function (among them nannie, maid, and sex worker). In this context, it is often assumed that Latin Americans (as well as other migrant groups in Germany) adhere to patriarchal family structures, traditional gender roles, and pre-modern values of female submission, in contrast to supposedly more "modern" and egalitarian gender norms in Germany and other Western countries (Gemende, Munsch & Weber-Unger Rotino 2007: 9-10; cf. also Robinson 1996; Magee 2023: 16).[1]

In line with these notions, the 21 incidents from our corpus in which verbal violence is related to gender depict scenarios in which participants are ascribed one of the aforementioned

[1] The contrasting of migrants' alleged "traditional", i.e. patriarchal home countries with "modern" gender arrangements in Germany in migration discourses has been explained as a means of discursively erasing gender inequality within German society (Gemende & Munsch & Weber-Unger Rotino 2007: 11, 21-22; Rommelspacher 2007: 51). Interestingly, many informants express their disappointment with the limited progressiveness of gender arrangements in Germany, which contradicts the notions they had of Germany as a modern and progressive country before emigrating.

fixed roles based on their gender and national origin. Such situations arise, for instance, when women are overly sexualized and presented as available sexual partners, as illustrated in the initial example. This also occurs when au pairs or Latin American spouses of German men feel they have been reduced to functional roles as domestic workers, rather than being recognized as family members and individuals with unique thoughts, abilities and personalities. For instance, one of the participants, who worked as an au pair in a German family, described feeling like "a vacuum cleaner that talks" ("una aspiradora que habla"). Another participant arrived in Germany after marrying a German, only to later experience exploitation, verbal abuse, and even domestic violence in her new home. She initially had the expectation of being treated as a family member, but soon realized that she was regarded as a Latin American domestic worker ("creo siendo yo que ellos buscaron que una mujer latinoamericana viniera a limpiarle la casa y atenderles a ellos como quisieron" 'I believe that they sought for a Latin American woman to come and clean their house and attend to them as they wished.').

In these stereotypes, the notion that women from the Global South are economically desperate and therefore easily controllable, or that they deceitfully take advantage of men's feelings also plays a role. When such stereotypical gender, ethnicity and class-based identities clash with the participants' self-conceptions, these situations leave them feeling offended, angry, or otherwise adversely impacted. Simultaneously, however, it can be observed in our corpus that the very participants who are subject to stereotypical role attributions also inadvertently reinforce these stereotypes by consistently referencing them in their own identity constructions, albeit dissociating themselves from them. In the following section, we will propose a theoretical framework that explains how referencing stereotypes can have detrimental effects on the emotional well-being of migrants, leading to the perception of verbal violence.

3 Research approach

In this section, we turn our attention to the research approach adopted for this study. We introduce narrative as a discourse genre, provide a short overview of previous approaches in research into verbal violence, outline positioning theory as a means of constructing identities in narratives, and clarify the notions of verbal violence and aggression in relation to identity positioning. Furthermore, we introduce the stereotype of the "opportunistic marriage migrant", which serves as a key case example for this study.

3.1 Narrative

We adopt a social-constructivist perspective, assuming that reality is constructed and negotiated in social interactions. One particular kind of knowledge-producing activity through language is narrative. While telling a story, speakers do not only convey a sequence of events or experiences, but also make sense of these events and experiences, constructing storylines that involve personal opinions and perceptions about what kind of persons they are, as well as about other people's identities and the motives for their actions. Verbal violence and/or aggression as we consider it (cf. section 2) is not an objectively observable phenomenon that exists independently of human percep-

tions and interpretations but rather emerges from subjective constructions of reality. Narratives are perfectly suited to observe these phenomena, not only because they provide empirical insights into migrants' lived experience, but also because they grant access to their feelings, attitudes and interpretations. This allows us to observe how in a critical situation their genuine self-conceptions are challenged or even contradicted through the imposition of stereotyped gendered (and often racialized) identities, as well as the individual meanings and emotions attached to these identities and the impact that such identity assignment has on them.

Traditional narrative approaches, particularly Labov and Waletzky 1967 (cf. also de Fina 2003: 12), have revealed that narratives possess specific structural properties, including the following key components: an orientation providing context about the setting and main characters, a complicating action, its subsequent resolution, and a coda that both concludes the story and links it to the present. The "skeleton" of the story is constituted by a chain of events that are presented in a chronological order, with the complicating action as its climax. The complicating action normally revolves around a "tellable" event, characterized by its unexpected, dramatic, or otherwise compelling nature. In addition to presenting events in a temporal order, to which Labov and Waletzky refer to as "referential information", the narrator also provides so-called "evaluative information". This kind of information is particularly important in the production of knowledge through narrative, as it offers subjective interpretations, evaluations, or judgments regarding the chain of events and the characters involved (for instance regarding their intentions and feelings). Thus, it serves to contextualize the referential information and to produce a consistent story.

In addition to evaluative information, inferences are particularly important for the semantic cohesion of the story. According to Grice (1975), speakers cooperate to make sure that communication is successful. This "cooperation principle" embraces four conversational maxims: Speakers should be 1. informative, i.e. not give more or less information than needed (maxim of Quantity); 2. truthful, i.e. not say anything they believe to be false (maxim of Quality); 3. relevant, i.e. say only things that are pertinent to the ongoing situation (maxim of Relation); and 4. clear, i.e. make their contributions brief and orderly to avoid ambiguity (maxim of Manner). In narrative analysis, deliberate violations of these maxims are particularly significant, as these violations guide the hearer to make inferences about implied meanings of the utterance. Grice refers to this as a "conversational implicature". Given that the speaker anticipates the hearer's inferences, meaning in conversation is co-constructed in a cooperative process between the participants. This of course also applies to the interview situations in which critical incidents were elicited. As we will see, widespread stereotypes about Latin American migrants are largely available as a discursive resource for inferences.

As the VIOLIN corpus consists of narratives about situations of verbal violence, the complicating event typically takes the form of a verbal utterance expressed by a character in the story, who is often depicted as an antagonist. The significance of this utterance is frequently underscored by presenting it in direct speech, a narrative technique referred to as "constructed dialogue" (Relaño Pastor 2014: 77). This term

emphasizes that these quoted statements should not be regarded as literal reproductions of the exact words spoken in the reported situation but constitute creative reconstructions of the original statements. In the following sections, we will discuss some theoretical concepts and approaches that are helpful to understand how an utterance can act as a stimulus for verbal violence.

3.2 Previous studies on verbal violence and aggression: Speech Act Theory

To date, research into verbal violence has largely drawn on Speech Act Theory (SAT), modeling verbal aggression and violence in similar terms to impoliteness (cf. Bonacchi 2017, Havryliv 2017). In this context, interpersonal verbal violence and/or aggression is analyzed in terms of a threat or damage to the hearer's face (understood as "an image of the self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes", Goffman 1967: 5) as a result of a particular speech act. It is generally assumed that the threat or damage to the hearer's *face* is perceived as more serious and harmful in the case of verbal violence/aggression as compared to mere impoliteness.

Havryliv (2017: 43) proposes an analytical distinction between verbal aggression and verbal violence. If the speaker has the intention to harm their interlocutor and deliberately selects linguistic strategies for this purpose, the speech act can be called aggressive. In contrast to this, verbal violence occurs when the interlocutor feels hurt because of the speech act, independently of whether this effect was intended or not. Within this approach, verbal aggression functions as a cover term for speech act types intended to harm, regardless of the actual effect on the interlocutor. In contrast, verbal violence refers to actual harmful effects that a speech act has on a hearer, regardless of the speaker's intention. Thus, within this model, verbal violence and aggression are situated on the level of the intended illocutionary force and the actual perlocutive effects respectively. While this model acknowledges that verbal violence and verbal aggression operate to a certain extent independently from each other, it does not theorize on the way in which verbal violence can emerge from non-aggressive speech acts. The aim of this contribution is to reduce this gap by incorporating Positioning Theory in a speech act theoretical framework, to which we turn our attention in the next section.

3.3 Verbal violence from a Positioning Theory perspective

Although we have previously applied Speech Act Theory to the VIOLIN corpus (Jansen & Romero Gibu 2020, 2021), our ongoing research has revealed a consistent interplay between the emergence of verbal violence and the assignment of undesired identities to the participants, rather than specific speech act types. As our research focuses on migration contexts, these imposed identities are often related to the depicting of migrants as the nationally, racially, ethnically and/or culturally "others", and tend to be highly stereotyped and disparaging in character. For instance, we encounter portrayals such as the "parasite" migrant who is perceived as living at the expense of the German state, or the "chaotic" and "undisciplined" Latin American, among others. In light of these findings, we adopt a slightly different approach for this contribution, incorporating Positioning Theory (cf. Davies & Harré 1990;

Talbot et al. 1996; Bamberg 1997) as an additional analytical tool. This framework posits that during discursive interactions, speakers position themselves and others in relation to one another, as well as within broader social configurations and ideologies, constructing themselves and others as social personae of a specific kind. In the process, they perform self-chosen identities, and either align with or resist the positioning imposed upon them by others. In this context, Davies and Harré (1990) distinguish between interactive positioning, "in which what one person says positions another" (Davies & Harré 1990: 48), and reflexive positioning, "in which one positions oneself" (ibid).

Against this backdrop, we argue that positioning is achieved through various forms of verbal actions, which may or may not belong to the realm of verbal aggression. For example, when a speaker uses an ethnic slur to insult another person, such as *maldito haitiano* 'damned Haitian' which is conventionally used in the Dominican Republic to denigrate Haitian immigrants, the illocutionary act directly implies positioning the addressee as both other (*haitiano* as opposed to *dominicano*) and inferior (*maldito*) compared to the insulter (cf. Jansen 2022). However, in the incidents contained in the VIOLIN corpus, positioning is mostly conveyed implicitly through different kinds of speech acts that fulfill different kinds of illocutive function while simultaneously positioning their addressees based on inferences, presuppositions, or implicatures.

Let us illustrate the importance of inferences based on the question "Where are you from?", which has been the subject of extensive debate in the German press and public due to its potential to be seen as exclusionary or even racist, when directed at someone whose appearance or accent does not conform to the stereotypical image of a German person. From the perspective of Speech Act Theory, it can be classified as a directive speech act in the first place, as the speaker seeks specific information from the hearer. However, simultaneously, this speech act accomplishes another action through inference, namely, assigning to the hearer the position of a foreigner and outsider, in comparison to the group that the speaker associates with. Depending on the hearer's individual self-identity, they may experience various perlocutive effects on a psychological level. For instance, if the hearer identifies with the speaker's group, they may experience feelings of exclusion, independent of whether the positioning was maliciously intended. Obviously, perceptions and interpretations of the same speech act can vary across situations and individuals. Expressed in a context where being from other places is part of the shared knowledge among the participants in a conversation (for instance in a meeting of international exchange students, or a migrant association), or towards a person who identifies as a non-German, the same question may not be perceived as violent (although it still positions the hearer in terms of origin).

This example thus shows that positioning is not entirely congruent with the notion of illocution, as it may be a secondary outcome rather than the central focus of the speaker's intention. Nor does it overlap with the notion of perlocutive effects, due to its relational nature, as opposed to the perlocution being limited solely to the hearer's thoughts, emotions, or actions. Thus, we propose that in addition to the locutionary, propositional, illocutionary and perlocutive act typically cited in Speech Act Theory,

there is a fifth force, which we refer to as the positioning act. Positioning acts can be performed referentially, for example when positioning someone relative to ethnic categories by using ethnic slurs, or to gender categories by using particular pronouns or terms of address. It can also be based on social indexicalities. For instance, addressing someone in a particular language positions this person as a speaker of this language, while addressing somebody in "foreigner talk" or English positions them as a non-speaker of the language that would be considered as the unmarked choice, and potentially, as an outsider. Finally, positioning can also be based on inferences, presuppositions, or implicatures, such as in the example above and in examples discussed in section 3.

The notion of positioning act can fill a gap that traditional Speech Act Theory leaves open, by capturing the relational, interactional and co-constructive dimension of negotiating identities in verbal encounters that mediate between the illocution (situated within the speaker) and the perlocution (situated within the hearer).

Positioning involves a minimum of two individuals who are positioned in relation to one another. In narrative discourse, positioning acts are observed on different levels, as outlined by Bamberg (1997). While telling a story, narrators not only position various characters with respect to one another within the story world (level 1), but they also position themselves in relation to the audience (which, in our case, includes the interviewer) within the interactional context (level 2). In our analysis, we distinguish these levels by using terms such as *protagonist* and *antagonist* for level 1, and *participant* and *interviewer* for level 2. Finally, narrators respond to culturally available knowledge, often referred to as "master narratives" in Positioning Theory (Talbot et al. 1996: 225). These "master narratives" encompass discourses and ideologies that delineate the available roles (positions) within a given society and their associated norms and expectations. On the third level of positioning, narrators position themselves and others relative to stereotypical images of social personae that circulate within a community. This happens both within the story world (level 1) and the interactive world (level 2). In the next section, we delve into a gender-based stereotype, namely the "opportunistic female marriage migrant", which serves as a distinctive "master narrative" that operates in the kind of positioning that can lead to verbal violence.

3.4 Gender stereotypes in positioning and verbal violence: the example of the "opportunistic female marriage migrant"

Although positioning is locally constructed in interactions and thus ephemeral, it draws on broader social meanings and processes. While positioning themselves and others, speakers necessarily react to a set of positions that are available within a given social framework, in order to be "readable" to their interlocutors:

> any narrative that we collaboratively unfold with other people thus draws on a knowledge of social structures and the roles that are recognisably allocated to people within those structures. Social structures are coercive to the extent that to be recognisable and acceptable a person we must operate within their terms. (Davies & Harré 1990: 52)

These social roles are often referred to as "enregistered identities" (Agha 2007; de Fina 2003), both in sociolinguistics and nar-

rative analysis. We can understand them as decontextualizable, often stereotypical images of seemingly stable social personae that circulate within a given society and are used as a discursive resource in positioning. Speakers bring them into interactions and index them or refer to them while negotiating their own identities and those of others within a localized context. Such enregistered identities are often encapsulated in group labels (e.g. "mother", "nurse", "women") and organized in pairs or complex configurations that define reciprocal roles (e.g. "mother/father/child", "doctor/nurse/patient", "women/man" in a marital relationship, etc.; Davies & Harré 1990: 50; Agha 2007: 243). They also encompass representations of the appearance, attitudes and behavior considered normal or appropriate for individuals occupying a particular role (ibid.). For instance, being placed in the category of "woman" or "migrant", or both, tends to trigger a default interpretation of one's identity, based on commonplace beliefs about what migrant women typically do or think. Often, this also implies a moral evaluation, for example when it is assumed that migrants are "backward-minded" because they are believed to support traditional patriarchal norms, allegedly lacking modern social advancements (cf. section 2 and section 4.2.). In this regard, enregistered identities are inherently linked to prevailing moral orders (Davies & Harré 1990: 48; Bamberg 1997). Due to their nature as taken-for-granted knowledge, enregistered identities are not always explicitly articulated, but are often simply implied through presuppositions or inferences.

German migration discourses allocate particular positions to migrants from the Global South, in which gender stereotypes intersect with ethnicity and class (Gemende, Munsch & Weber-Unger Rotino 2007: 9-10). The enregistered identity we focus on in this contribution is what we call the "opportunistic marriage migrant". This stereotype portrays women from economically weaker countries who enter marriages with EU or US citizens or residents, primarily for the purpose of obtaining immigration documents and economic benefits (Rushchenko 2016; Kim 2010: 718-719). It finds its most clichéd expression in highly derogative stereotypes such as the "mail-order bride"[2], whose marriage is arranged through an international matchmaking agency, or as the "purchased bride" who finds her partner in the context of so-called sex or romance tourism (Brennan 2001).

Two fundamentally different interpretations of the stereotypical female marriage migrant exist which ironically contradict each other - both carry sexist, class-based and racist connotations. Academic (particularly feminist) discourses often portray female marriage migrants as economically desperate and powerless victims of exploitation. In contrast, popular portrayals view these women as opportunistic tricksters who play with European men's emotions to gain material comfort and personal

[2] Alternative group labels for this enregistered identity include *money-grabbing trophy wife*, *gold-digger* (Rushchenko 2016: 14), *green-card sharks* (Schaeffer-Grabiel 2006: 345), or *cyberbride* (Starr & Adams 2016: 954). In the German context, common labels encompass *Importbraut* 'imported bride' or *Katalogbraut* 'catalogue bride'. Likewise, Branner (2001) refers to German men who travel to the Dominican Republic in order to find a girlfriend or wife as *bride shoppers*. All these terms are obviously biased and demeaning, emphasizing the perceived selfish economic interests associated with marriage migrants, or dehumanizing them by reducing them to commodities (Westphal & Katenbrink 2007: 139-140, 146). For this reason, in this contribution, we choose to use the term *female marriage migrant*.

benefits[3] (cf. Kim 2010: 718; Magee 2023: 15; Mendoza 2010: 367ff; Robinson 1996: 55; Rushchenko 2016; Starr & Adams 2016: 959). Correspondingly, marriage migrants' partners are either painted as unscrupulous exploiters of impoverished and powerless women, or as naïve victims who succumb to the charm of the "exotic".

Both perspectives portray marriage migrants as uneducated women who rely on their husbands for financial support. They are not viewed as pursuing working careers; and if they are viewed as working at all, they are typically imagined engaging in domestic tasks traditionally associated with femininity, such as childcare and housekeeping. These ideas align further with a belief that women from the postcolonial world, especially those from Latin America, are less "emancipated" than women from industrialized countries (cf. section 2). Overall, there seems to be "a strong association [in German society] of female migration and dependency, as opposed to work and autonomy" (Rushchenko 2016: 26; cf. Rommelspacher 2007: 51; Al-Rebholz 2015: 60).

The stereotypes associated with marriage migrants also carry important moral implications. On the one hand, the female migrant is construed as a "traditional" woman, devoid of feminist sentiments or interests, who thus supports masculine patriarchal sovereignty and control, embodying "a revision to the gender arrangements […] of a prefeminist past" (Starr & Adams 2016: 971; cf. also Schaeffer-Grabiel 2006: 334). On the other hand, she is depicted as undermining Western conceptions of romantic love according to which the only acceptable motive for marriage is pure and disinterested affection, devoid of materialistic considerations (cf. Kim 2010: 721; Robinson 1996: 64; Rushchenko 2016: 28, 111). Such attributions and moral condemnations are further reinforced by immigration laws, which put non-EU spouses in a vulnerable and dependent position because they rely upon their partners for residence or citizenship (Schäfter & Schultz 1999: 100), and also serve to portray marriages that do not correspond to the ideal of "romantic love" as fraudulent. Representing a transgression of both the ideals of romantic love and female empowerment, the female marriage migrant "operates as the ideal juxtaposition to archetypes of Western women" (Starr & Adams 2016: 963; cf. Rushchenko 2016: 31).[4]

The significance of the female marriage migrant figure as an enregistered identity that circulates globally, whether portrayed as an opportunistic trickster or a victim, is substantiated by studies that have examined the discursive representations of this stereotype across different countries worldwide. Among the most important arenas where these stereotypes are constructed and reproduced, we can cite media coverage of (often sensational) cases of arranged marriages or intimate partner violence in binational couples (Robinson 1996) as well as coverage of sex tourism (Brennan 2001: 643-47). The websites of international matchmaking agencies where women are advertised in a highly stereotypical way contribute to these portrayals (Magee 2023: 20; Schaef-

[3] This notion can be interpreted as one manifestation of the "parasite" view on migrants, which recurrently appears in our corpus.

[4] However, depending on the value standards applied, the "traditional" femininities attributed to Latin American women can also be interpreted in positive terms, making them "ideal" partners in the eyes of conservative Western men (Robinson 1996; Magee 2023: 16).

fer-Grabiel 2006; Starr & Adams 2016). Internet forums where Western men discuss romantic experiences with women from the Global South also play a role in shaping and perpetuating these perceptions (Branner 2001), as well as films and TV series featuring so-called "mail-order brides" (cf. Zara & Mendoza 2011; Sizaire & Ricordeau 2015), or men engaging in sex or romance tourism (e.g. the German TV show *Auf Brautschau im Ausland*, meaning 'In search of a bride abroad', Rushchenko 2016).

Needless to say, these stereotypes offer a reductionist and superficial view of marriage migration which oversimplifies the complex realities faced by female migrants, with their varying motives and forms of agency.[5] In this sense, they rely heavily on the semiotic process of erasure (Irvine & Gal 2000), through which information which is inconsistent with ideological construction is either ignored or explained away in order to present a homogeneous image of the group in question. Through the simplistic binaries of love vs. economic interests, victim vs. victimizer, and tradition vs. modernity to name just a few (Rommelspacher 2007: 59; Westphal & Katenbrink 2007: 149) female marriage migrants are presented as the pathetic or morally reprehensive "other" in comparison to Western women:

> Within the economy of knowledge-production about this group of women, racism, sexism, class-prejudice, and colonialist thinking combine to marginalize and stigmatize these women, effectively constituting them as 'Others' vis-a-vis the mainstream. (Zara & Mendoza 2011: 366)[6]

The pervasive presence of these stereotypes in the media and within broader society engenders ongoing suspicion of individuals from the Global South who reside in industrialized countries, being viewed as possible sex workers or marriage scammers (Brennan 2001: 644; Geoffrion 2018; Rushchenko 2016). Also in the VIOLIN corpus, participants report to have encountered doubts regarding the "authenticity" of their relationships. In the next sections, we analyze two examples in which the positioning of the participants as stereotypical "opportunistic marriage migrants" resulted in the perception of verbal violence.

4 Analysis

4.1 Example 1

The first example was provided by a 28-year-old student from Mexico, who recounts an incident with a German friend:[7]

[5] Indeed, research has provided a more nuanced perspective on marriage migration, revealing it to be a potential source of agency and empowerment (Hondagneu 1994; Kim 2010; Magee 2023). Quite often, even migrant women who advertise themselves on websites are not seeking mere financial support; rather, they aspire to establish a more egalitarian partnership with a "modern" husband, pursue career opportunities, and experience a sense of independence and adventure. Many of them belong to the middle class and are professionals, often holding higher educational qualifications and occupying more prestigious positions than their foreign husbands (Rushchenko 2016; Schaeffer-Grabiel 2006: 332; Starr & Adams 2016: 958).

[6] It goes without saying that the husbands are also painted in negative terms, assuming that they "failed" on the local marriage market, as they were unable to find a partner within their own society, for example for being too "ugly" or too "old".

[7] For the purpose of this study, which aims to analyze oral speech through the lens of narrative analysis, we use a basic transcript using GAT 2 notations, in order to provide essential linguistic information while ensuring readability.

PART: sí, ah un día una persona incluso me dijo | eh, cuando me preguntó "¿cuáles son tus planes a futuro?" | y yo le comenté pues | quedarme en Alemania ((laughter)) quiero después de estudiar seguir viviendo aquí | y esta persona me dijo "ah no te preocupes | tú no vas a tener ningún problema | para, para quedarte seguro encuentras a un alemán, te casas y ya tienes tu: | residencia permanente"
INT: okay
PART: y eso me dolió en lo más profundo ((laughter)) porque: |yo vine aquí como una persona | educada ((laughter)) no vine aquí a, a quitarle na nada nadie, ¿no? entonces sentí como si: | si yo (estuviera) aprovechándome de los alemanes, incluso del | de la sociedad alemana lo cual es nunca fue mi intención ((laughter))
INT: ¿te lo dijo en ese tono?
PART: sí ((laughter))
INT: ¿o sea, no, no fue un co= o sea? | ¿dirías que había cierta malicia, o fue un comentario torpe o:?
PART: no, malicia no | simplemente, siento que fue como honesto, que es lo que pensaba | eso de verdad piensa
INT: ¿y que:, era una amistad, al=alguien?
PART: sí | sí er= era un alemán | que, que era mi amigo, m | estábamos aprendiendo, yo aprendí alemán con él, y él español conmigo | y, m, sí, lo sentí como: | simplemente expresando su opinión, no sentí que dijo | a claro tú sólo quieres abusar, NO | simplemente así es su percepción | ah ya, como compartiendo algo que es así según él, de lo más normal | sí ((laughter))
INT: ya, ya, y: | y ese tipo comentarías me has explica= sea
PART: para mí también es claro porque: puede ser bastante ofensivo. ¿no? esto, esta idea
INT: y, y, claro | tú, tú eres una persona también con una formación fuerte, entonces te debe haber chocado un comentario así más, ¿no?
PART: sí, sentí si, me ha aparecido justamente eso, como | si yo quisiera, de veni=, e, de aprovecharme ¿no? de alguien | o sea la única razón por la cual yo quisiera casarme con alguien es para tener una residencia en Alemania
INT: ¿y, y a qué le atribuyes también en el plano interpretativo el que esta persona tenga esas ideas? | ¿ya es una idea que tienen (de) los, las latinas en general, o es algo que?
PART: sí, yo creo que tiene: | amistades que han hecho eso, ¿no?, gente:, ehm | sí, el mismo me dijo, ¿no? colombianas que, que han, que hacen eso, o: | o, y yo también misma conozco | mexicanas que se vinieron | porque tenían una pareja alemana en México por ejemplo
[...]
INT: sí sí | ya, así a mí, a mí entiendo lo que me cuentas, a mí alguna vez me felicitaron | yo ya estoy casada y me felicitaron por ca=, me <<f> me felicitaron> ese

41 sería el verbo, por casarme con un alemán, un alemán que la había hecho muy bien
42 PART: sí, sí
43 INT: imagínate es como <<imitating> que bueno te superaste> | ya te casaste con un
44 alemán ((laughter)) | sí, sí, ya se cumplió el objetivo de tu vida | ((laughter))
45 PART: sí, sí, sí | sí, un objetivo de vida más cumplido | sí, sí, entiendo

The incident starts as an informal conversation about the protagonist's future plans. Although the question "¿cuáles son tus planes a futuro?" 'What are your plans for the future?' (lines 1-2) is not explicitly related to residence status, her response ("quedarme en Alemania", 'stay in Germany', line 2) introduces the topic into conversation. The antagonist seems to infer that she may have concerns about the viability of her plans and raises the possibility of marrying a German citizen as a potential way to obtain a residence permit, given her non-EU nationality. Emphasized through a relatively long stretch of constructed dialogue (lines 3-5), this response constitutes the complicating event of the story.

However, the participant does not frame the complicating event as an aggressive utterance. Rather, the expressions "no te preocupes" 'don't worry' (strongly conventionalized in Spanish as a reassurance), "tú no vas a tener ningún problema" 'you won't have any problems', the adjective *seguro* 'sure' and the adverb *ya* 'already' (emphasizing the immediate and easy availability of the solution) can be interpreted as cues signaling the antagonist's intention to inspire confidence and provide comfort to the listener. Thus, the critical statement is presented as a directive speech act meant to make the hearer feel at ease rather than to cause distress. This is confirmed later in the interview when, in response to the interviewer's inquiry (lines 13-14), the participant affirms that she does not ascribe any malicious intentions to her friend. Instead, she acknowledges that he was merely expressing his taken-for-granted perspective on her situation as a migrant (lines 15-16).

Nevertheless, despite its sympathetic illocution, the speech act is presented in the narrative as a trigger for verbal violence as the participant describes its perlocutive effects in terms of emotional pain ("me dolió en lo más profundo", 'this hurt me really deeply', line 7) and, later in the interview, offense ("puede ser bastante ofensivo, ¿no?" 'this can be really offensive, can't it?', line 24).

As becomes clear in the second part of the narrative, these perlocutive effects emerge from her perception of the underlying positioning act in the antagonist's question. In lines 7 to 10, the participant depicts herself as a well-educated woman with no intentions of exploiting German men. Through the conjunction *porque* 'because', these representative speech acts are presented as an explanation for her emotional reaction to the antagonist's comment. Here, there is a violation of Grice's maxim of Relation, as topics concerning the participant's education or possible exploitative intentions do not seem to be directly related to her feeling of pain, and had not been previously addressed in the conversation. In order to make sense of them, the interviewer must infer that she perceived the antagonist's inquiry as an act of interactive positioning, categorizing her according to the enregistered identity of the uneducated third-world woman who unfairly utilizes German

men for personal advantages, such as attaining legal residence status. This enregistered identity is not explicitly referred to but is assumed to be part of the shared knowledge between the participants in the interview. The use of verbs such as *aprovechar* 'take advantage of' and *abusar* 'abuse', which carry strong moral connotations, suggests that the participant perceives this interactive positioning primarily in terms of ethics, feeling as though morally reprehensible behavior was being attributed to her. This is confirmed at a later point of the interview (lines 28-30), where she refutes the notion that she would marry solely for strategic reasons, aligning herself with the cultural ideals of honesty as well as of romantic, disinterested love – a behavior that, as we can infer based on Grice's maxim of Relation, she ascribes to the figure of the opportunistic marriage migrant. In general, her self-description in lines 7 to 10 and her alignment with the ideal of romantic love in lines 28 to 30 function as a means to resist what she perceives as the unjustified imposition of an identity onto her as a potential marriage scammer. She counter-positions herself as an educated and honest person, deliberately distancing herself from the enregistered identity of the marriage migrant and the immoral practices typically associated with this identity.

Overall, this incident demonstrates that verbal violence can emerge independently from verbal aggression, as the participant explicitly denies any aggressive intentions from her interlocutor. Further, it reveals that verbal violence can originate from the act of positioning implied in a speech act, rather than from its illocution. Lastly, it underscores the significance of enregistered identities in positioning acts perceived as violent.

While the incident proper spans only from lines 1 to 10, it is worthwhile to examine the subsequent development of the interview, as this allows us to observe how both the participant and the interviewer collaboratively contribute to the construction of the stereotype of the opportunistic marriage migrant and to negotiate their respective identities in relation to it. After discussing some further details of the incident (lines 13-24), the participant returns to the harmful perlocutive effects caused by the antagonist's comment. Using the tag question *¿no?* (line 24), she encourages the interviewer to align with her perspective. In response, the interviewer not only validates the participant's self-positioning as an educated woman ("tú, tú eres una persona también con una formación fuerte", 'you are also a person with a strong education', line 26), but also acknowledges the potential face-threatening nature of the antagonist's comment ("entonces te debe haber chocado un comentario así más", 'so this must have shocked you even more'). Consequently, the interviewer reinforces both the participant's identity construction and the stereotype of the uneducated marriage migrant.

In her reaction (lines 28-30) the participant shifts the focus back to the moral implications of the positioning act, which seem to have particularly affected her. The interviewer speculates about potential reasons behind the antagonist's perspective toward her, suggesting that it might be influenced by stereotypical notions of Latinas (lines 31-33). In response, the participant presents the existence of opportunistic migrant women as an empirical reality, supported by the personal experience of both her and her friend with Colombian and Mexican women who allegedly married

German men for the sole purpose of obtaining legal residency (34-37).

The last part of the extract functions as a coda that relates the reported incident to the present, particularly to the shared migration experience between the two participants in the interview, both Latin American women who moved to Germany to study. The interlocutors rely on their previous collaborative construction of female marriage migrants in order to build solidarity, and they construct a positive migrant identity by distancing themselves from the negatively depicted other. Reversing the communicative roles intended for the interview setting, the interviewer now recounts an episode in which she was congratulated (as we can infer, by fellow Latina migrants) for having "succeeded" to marry a German. At this point, she reveals her identity as a Latina married to a German ("yo ya estoy casada", 'I'm already married', line 40), a condition previously unknown to the participant. This is interpersonally delicate because of the negative image of Latina spouses of German men which had been discussed previously in the interview. However, the interviewer distances herself from the enregistered identity of the marriage migrant and expresses solidarity towards the participant in several ways. Firstly, she conveys her solidarity with the phrase "entiendo lo que me cuentas" ('I understand what you are telling me', line 39). She further empathizes by sharing her own story, which corroborates key aspects of the participant's narrative: the belief that numerous migrant women seek marriage with German men for papers and that such attitudes and behavior are objectionable, and the personal experience of being positioned as an opportunistic marriage migrant. In this context, the manner in which the interviewer rephrases the congratulations from other migrants in the form of constructed dialogue, specifically "que la había hecho muy bien", 'that I did an excellent job' (line 41) and "te superaste", 'you overcame yourself' (line 43), can be seen as parodic constructions of migrant women who see marriage "as a fast track to economic success" (Brennan 2001: 629). Here, the interviewer refers to notions which are stereotypically attributed to the enregistered identity of female marriage migrants: Their view of marriage (rather than career) as a personal achievement in life and the motivation to marry for economic reasons as opposed to genuine emotional bonds. Although these utterances potentially position the addressee as an opportunistic marriage migrant, they are not framed as problematic or face-threatening within this context, but they serve as a discursive strategy to portray other Latin American migrants in a negative light. By using sharp irony, the interviewer marks the utterances in constructed dialogue as "foreign" voices, distancing herself from her fellow migrants and positioning them as professionally unambitious and morally wrong others. In the last line of the extract, the participant aligns with the interviewer's view by engaging in the construction of Latina migrants who see marriage as a goal in life, and by expressing explicit understanding.

The second part of this excerpt reveals that while the topic of stereotyping briefly emerges during the interview, neither the participant nor the interviewer ultimately challenges the empirical validity of the stereotype of the "opportunistic marriage migrant", nor do they address stereotyping in itself as a problematic practice. Instead, they simply reject that the stereotype can be applied to their own situation, thus perpetuating and reasserting

the stereotype by using it as a foil to co-construct their own position as members of a distinct and morally superior category of migrant women in Germany. Consequently, this enregistered identity operates as an unquestioned and readily accessible role that shapes how they perceive the social world around them, interpret the actions and words of others in specific situations, and assign roles to both themselves and others.

4.2 Example 2

The second example comes from an interview with a 31-year-old Colombian woman, married to a German man, who works as a professional in an international company. It is important to mention that she explicitly positions herself as a feminist at the beginning of the interview. While the extract begins with a specific critical incident related to interactive positioning as an opportunistic marriage migrant, the participant portrays this form of positioning as a recurring experience for her and other Latin American women in Germany. As the interview unfolds, she recounts various stories to illustrate this phenomenon and gradually refines her discursive construction of the stereotype.

PART: por ejemplo la primera vez que viajé a | [NAME OF A GERMAN CITY] [...]
pues mi esposo me llevó a | [NAME OF A GERMAN CITY] | como a una:=a una
reunión familiar con los amigos de los papás y=y todo, ¿sí? =esto fue hace nueve años,
¿no? entonces: me acuerdo que: me acuerdo que hubo=uno una de las amigas de los
papás ¿sí? que ahora es un amor pero pues en ese entonces yo me acuerdo que
llegamos= estábamos ahí como en un asado, era verano, todo el rollo ¿sí? y yo estaba
fumándome un cigarrillo y ella también se estaba fumando un cigarrillo y en un
momento me dice =me dice, bueno y tú: ¿qué es lo que quieres con él? entonces yo
quedé como, ¿what?, ¿sí? eh, pero pues igual me lo tomé como super tranqui porque
pues ya sabes=o sea estaba como saliendo con e= con él, todo el rollo o sea como que
me gustaba ¿sí? ehm: pero fue=o sea obviamente quedé como=como fría, ¿sí? y yo
como=como nada, ¿a qué te refieres?, no, pues sí, o sea ¿qué=qué quieres con él?=o sea,
¿qué quieres con él? ¿sí? entonces:: me acuerdo que | me volteé super tranquila y le
dije, no pues yo creo que tú deberías preguntarte, él qué quiere conmigo, ¿sí? porque
él todavía estaba en la universidad, ¿no? y pues yo ya, ya me había graduado, ¿sí? o
sea le dije como yo soy | [JOB TITLE] | ya terminé mis estudios o sea en teoría, ¿sí?,
porque en latinoamérica como tenemos otro tipo de:: de diploma universitario pues
yo ya había terminado, yo no tenía que hacer un máster, ¿sí? entonces: le dije no, yo
creo que tú deberías preguntar a él qué quiere conmigo, ¿sí? o sea porque pues yo
llegué acá a trabajar y eso, o sea por=¿le has preguntado eso a él? y entonces ella=ella
se quedó mirándome como, ¿esta vieja qué? ((laughter)) ¿sí? pero obviamente fue=fue
incómodo, ¿sí? porque de algún modo
INT: [¿como qué]=como qué edad tenía ella más o menos?
PART: no pues, vieja, o sea por=pues por ahí como que cincuenta, cincuenta y cinco

INT: ok
PART: sí, una
INT: ¿[(qué te)) dio=qué te dio la sensación de qué=de qué quería=de qué quería escuCHAR como de respuesta? porque te hizo esta pregunta tan extraña
PART: no yo creo que era una=creo que era una situación como de:=como de tú eres latina y estás saliendo con: el alemán, como, ¿qué es lo que buscas?, ¿sí? pero entonces digamos creo que, o sea creo que lo que=lo que es interesante es que eso pasó ( ) o sea hace nueve años, lo que te digo ya estamos casados, ya esta=pues esta persona es un amor conmigo todo el rollo, ¿sí? ehm:: pero, pero siento que es algo como que=como que sigo estando ahí, ¿sí? | yo por ejemplo digamos en | [NAME OF A EUROPEAN COUNTRY] | no lo tenía, ¿sí? | en [NAME OF A EUROPEAN COUNTRY] | tal vez no lo tenía porque como te digo estaba en esa burbuja en la que todo el mundo trabaja en | [NAME OF PROFESSIONAL FIELD] algo que pues | [NAME OF A EUROPEAN COUNTRY] y [NAME OF A EUROPEAN CITY] | sobre todo es= pues está lleno de ese tipo de:=de profesionales | pero como que sigue=sigue ese= sigue habiendo como esa=esa sensación de=de tú eres latina, o sea y estás con el alemán o sea te, te pongo el ejemplo, por ejemplo eh, cuando | nos acabábamos de mudar a [NAME OF A GERMAN CITY] | ¿sí? | o sea pues obviamente al principio Alemania no es tan fácil como de hacer amigos, ¿cierto? y:: y además, ehm: por eso | o sea no sé como que en, en | [NAME OF A EUROPEAN COUNTRY] | está la burbuja [NAME OF PROFESSIONAL FIELD] | pero pues acá NO, o sea acá tienes la burbuja de otros, ¿no? | [NAMES OF GERMAN COMPANIES] | eh ese rollo, ¿sí? pero pues=no es= no es como tan fácil entrar ahí si tú no trabajas ahí | entonces me acuerdo que bueno empezamos= o sea nos hicimos amigos de:::=de una colombiana y:: <<acc> el novio es alemán> y estábamos en el cumpleaños de ella, ¿sí? y:: estaban como muchos amigos alemanes de él entonces era pues también o sea como un:=como un grill y todo el rollo y me empezaron=o sea como empezamos a hablar con los amigos, ¿sí? y entonces alguien me preguntó como, ah, tú eres colombiana, ah sí, chévere, y no se qué y alguien me dijo como=como, ay, pero tú estás acá pues POR ÉL, ¿sí? | y mi amiga, ¿sí? o sea mi amiga colombiana conoció al alemán en Colombia y en algún punto pues el alemán hizo lo posible para que ella pudiera venir a Alemania, ¿sí? o sea no se la trajo=no se l a trajo pero digamos en Colombia uno diría coloquialmente <<acc>como se la trajo>, ¿sí me entiendes? pero pues no fue tan así, o sea ella vino a hacer como au pair, aprender alemán, todo el rollo, ahora está en la universidad, todo el cuento, ¿no? pero entonces como que está esa idea del estereotipo de mujer latina que entonces o sea uno va | ¿puedo decir groserías en esta entrevista? bueno no sé, pero uno va a
INT: [sí, claro]
PART: [ah bueno], porque, o sea uno=uno va como al culo del man, ¿no? o sea uno va al culo del man | entonces=entonces, cuando me= o sea me acuerdo que era= me decía como o sea tú estás acá en | [NAME OF A GERMAN CITY] | por=por él,

claro=entonces yo, yo me volteé y le dije como=como, no, o sea, él está acá por mí, ¿sí? o sea porque la que se= la que consiguió el trabajo en | [NAME OF GERMAN CITY] | fui YO o sea mi= o sea mi esposo trabaja desde la casa desde siempre, ¿sí? |
[...]
PART: [...] te da la sensación a veces de que: la gente asume de que te viniste=de que estás en Alemania por=porque tu marido es alemán | sí y eso me fastidia sobremanera porque digamos cuando yo empecé a salir con él y vivíamos en | [NAME OF A EUROPEAN COUNTRY] | también desde= o sea desde=desde cierto= sobre todo desde latinos o sea pero eso fue al principio, ¿no? desde latinos era como esta idea de ah, con razón estás saliendo con el alemán, ¿sí? por el pasaporte <<ironic tone of voice> ha ha ha>
INT: ah::
PART: (¿sí?) | y eso me= o sea me fastidiaba hartísimo y perdí muchas amistades pues lo que te digo hace nueve años cuando empecé a salir con | [HUSBAND'S NAME] | o sea como esos comentarios así hartos que yo decía como como no pues, come mierda, ¿sí? o sea esto no es así ¿sí? pero entonces también todavía lo siento desde= o sea a pesar de todos estos años y pues de que yo me he desarrollado profesionalmente | o sea para mí mi carrera es super importante, o sea tengo treinta y uno que tú sabes que en Latinoamérica es como bueno, <<irritated tone of voice> ¿y los bebés? ¿y él bebé? y ya estoy casada y todo el cuento, entonces el bebé>
INT: [mhm]
PAR: y: y para mí digamos sí quiero tener hijos y quiero tener pues una familia y todo el rollo pero mi carrera es muy importante, ¿sí? entonces como que el hecho que me digan eso de que estoy acá en Alemania por él, o sea no pues, come mierda ((laughter)) ¿si me entiendes? o sea porque pues no es=no es fácil como decidir=además porque yo decidí, o sea yo llegué a| [NAME OF A EUROPEAN COUNTRY] | a trabajJAR / ¿sí? o sea trabajar, eh, pensando en en: pues ¿qué hago en [NAME OF PROFESSIONAL FIELD] en Colombia? o sea hace nueve años hubiera terminado como eh, dando clases, por ejemplo, ¿sí? que pues no es que estuviera mal porque yo quería como explorar esa parte práctica de mi carrera, ¿sí? | y pues todo está acá en el:: pues en el global north ¿no? eh, pero eso es como =esos son como=como contextos privados ¿sí?
[...]
PART: pero yo vine pues por una cuestión profesional, ¿sí? porque en Colombia ¿qué hubiera hecho? ¿sí? sencillamente porque las mejores escuelas de | [NAME OF PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE] | pues están en el su= en el=en el norte global, ¿sí? entonces como= como se el entendimiento eh por ese lado que fue la verdad muy muy incómodo ¿sí? o sea cuando además estaba en la mitad de un duelo, ¿no?
[...]
INT: entonces, más que como que cosas puntuales han sido como sensaciones que=que te=que te da la gente en reiteradas ocasiones, por así decirlo

105 PART: ¿en Colombia dices?
106 INT: eh: y=y en Alemania, por ejemplo eso de que: de que, no sé, de la imagen de la
107 latina dramática o de la imagen de la latina que se vino a Europa por su esposo.

At the outset of the interview, the participant establishes her identity as a professional, who relocated to Germany from another European country due to an enticing job opportunity within an international company. This construction of her identity as a professional, marked by a strong sense of personal initiative and autonomy, is evident throughout the interview. For instance, while she met her German husband in the first European country in which she lived it was upon her initiative that they settled in Germany.

The initial incident (lines 1-22) occurred at a family gathering. In the orientation (lines 1-7) of the narrative, two facts are introduced that, on the surface, may not appear directly connected to the incident: the revelation that it occurred nine years before, and the observation that the individual who is portrayed as the source of verbal violence can today be described as a "lovely person". These details serve as early indicators to the listener that the duration of her residency in Germany, the length of her marriage, and her relationship with her husband's family, are significant for grasping the essence of the main incident.

The complicating action begins when her interlocutor poses the question "¿qué es lo que quieres con él?" ('What do you want from him?', line 8). In the subsequent section, the narrator shares referential information about her verbal responses through constructed dialogue, along with insights into her internal and external reactions. Her initial reaction is one of profound astonishment, perhaps even bordering to outrage, emphasized discursively through constructed dialogue (which has to be understood here as an internal dialogue) and her switch to English (*¿what?*, line 9). Interestingly, she does not explicitly elaborate on why the question elicited this response from her, possibly assuming the reason to be self-evident within the context of the interview. However, considering that the antagonist is well aware of the protagonist's role as the partner of her friends' son, one can infer based on Grice's maxim of Manner that the antagonist assumes a deviation from the conventional expectations of a romantic relationship, and is actually realizing a directive speech act, asking the participant to provide further details on this presumed deviation. As the interview progresses, it will become increasingly explicit that the participant interprets the question as an unjustified positioning act that assigns to her the role of an opportunistic marriage migrant.

Although the description of her internal reaction reveals that the protagonist experiences the situation as verbal violence, her external responses are consistently described in terms of self-control and composure ("me lo tomé como super tranqui" 'I took it really easy', line 9; "obviamente quedé como fría" 'I obviously came across as cool', line 11, "me volteé super tranquila" 'I turned around very calmly', line 13, etc.). This recurrent emphasis on her cool demeanor, which violates Grice's maxim of Quantity, suggests that her response is remarkable. We can thus infer that a much more emotional, possibly an irritated or furious reaction would be considered normal in this situation, an inference that underscores the gravity

of the positioning act. This is confirmed later in the interview, when she describes her reaction to similar situations in terms of anger (*me fastida(ba)* 'that annoys/annoyed me'), lines 70 and 77). Her intense emotional response becomes notably evident in lines 87-89, where she constructs a hypothetical response to anyone who positions her as an opportunistic marriage migrant ("que el hecho que me digan eso de que estoy acá en Alemania por él, o sea no pues, come mierda" 'the fact that they say this to me, that I'm here in Germany because of him, well, no, eat shit'). The use of the vulgar and offensive slang expression *come mierda*, employed here to convey what could be considered an appropriate but socially unacceptable reaction, indicates a strong sense of disapproval and anger. Together with her declaration that she felt discomfort ("fue=fue incómodo" 'it was uncomfortable', lines 21-22; "fue la verdad muy muy incómodo ¿sí?" 'it was really very, very uncomfortable, right?', lines 100-101), this reaction clearly characterizes the incident as an instance of verbal violence. However, the participant does not explicitly ascribe harmful intentions to the antagonist, leaving us in uncertainty as to whether she perceives the situation as verbal aggression or not.

Returning to the complicating action, it can be observed that within the story world, the protagonist resists the positioning implied in the antagonist's question. Although the expectable reaction to an inquiry for information would be to supply this information, she actually responds with a counter-inquiry ("¿A qué te refieres?" 'What do you mean?', line 12). When the antagonist repeats her question twice, persisting in her quest for information (and, consequently, in her interactive positioning act), the protagonist counters by suggesting that it should be her husband who is asked what he wants from her, rather than the other way round (line 14). This response again diverges from the expected reaction to the speech act "question", thus violating Grice's principle of Relation. While refusing to provide the information the antagonist asked for, she rectifies what (as we can infer) she perceives as a wrong depiction of the reciprocal role relationship between her and her husband, and thus an unjustified positioning of her depending on him. All this shows that she is not primarily reacting to the illocutive force of the speech act (quest for information), but to the relational gender roles that are implied in its propositional dimension (*she* wants something from *him*), suggesting an alternative relationship (*he* wants something from *her*). In other words, the exchange can be understood as maximally cooperative under Grice's Principle of Cooperation if we understand it as an adjacency pair of positioning acts (interactive positioning that is perceived as unjustified, and reflexive counter-positioning), rather than illocutive acts. This underscores the usefulness of integrating Positioning Theory in a Speech Act Theory framework.

In the subsequent section, the protagonist provides information about her and her husband's educational backgrounds, clarifying that he was still a student while she had already completed her degree. Once again, this violates Grice's maxim of Relation since this topic had not been previously introduced. Together with the statement "pues yo llegué acá a trabajar y eso" 'I came here to work and all that' (lines 19-20), we can interpret this as another act of reflexive positioning. The protagonist portrays herself as an individual with higher education, greater professional ambitions, and more opportunities in comparison to her husband,

thus establishing herself as the more independent and powerful of the two. Through this and her previous positioning act, she counter-positions herself relative to the traditional patriarchal gender order implicitly assumed by the antagonist, where men serve as breadwinners and make migration decisions, while women depend on their husband's income and decisions (Hondagneu 1994). She also counter-positions herself against patriarchal practices such as hypergamy and patrilocality (Kim 2010: 721-722), i.e. the tendency for women to marry men of higher socioeconomic status, and to follow them to the place where they live.

When the interviewer prompts the participant to explain what exactly her interlocutor wanted to hear as a response in the recounted situation, she starts to provide more details that link her experience to the stereotype of the opportunistic marriage migrant. To begin with, she underscores the ethnic and national difference between herself as a Latina woman and her husband as a German man, implying that these differences typically raise questions about the Latina's motivations ("era una situación como de:= como de tú eres Latina y estás saliendo con: el alemán, como ¿qué es lo que buscas?" 'It was a situation like, you being Latina and dating a German, like, what are you looking for?', lines 29-30). As she does not provide an answer to this rhetorical question, the interviewer must rely on her understanding of the enregistered identity of the opportunistic marriage migrant to infer that the speaker alludes to stereotypical images of Latina women marrying German men for personal benefits.

Implicit reference to the enregistered identity of the opportunistic marriage migrant becomes even more evident in lines 33-34, when the respondent emphasizes again that the incident happened nine years ago, and that the person involved is much more friendly with her now, because she is "still there" ("como que=como que sigo estando ahí, ¿sí?"). Based on Grice's maxim of Relation, in combination with knowledge about the enregistered identity, the interviewer can infer that the antagonist finally understood that the protagonist is not a marriage scammer, based on the fact that her relationship continues, even though she could have left her husband a long time ago without losing her residence permit.[8] By presenting objective evidence supporting the legitimacy of her marriage, the participant also asserts her position as an honest person within the interview situation.

Starting from line 39, the participant becomes increasingly explicit about the enregistered identity of the opportunistic marriage migrant. She reiterates that mixed German-Latin American couples arouse suspicion, though she refrains from specifying the nature of these suspicions. However, the expression "sigue habiendo como esa sensación" ('that feeling still exists', line 39-40) suggests that she is referring to a stereotypical view that one could believe had been overcome in the past, but still in fact exists.

In lines 46 to 60, the interviewee shares another story which suggests that Colombian women continue to be positioned as opportunistic marriage migrants. This closely parallels the first incident, the primary difference being

[8] According to German law, a foreign partner must have been married for at least three years to obtain independent residency rights.

that the main character in this story is not her, but rather a Colombian friend of hers.[9] While the question that constitutes the complicating action is nearly identical to the one from the first incident ("ay, pero tú estás acá pues POR ÉL, ¿sí?" 'Oh, but you're here BECAUSE OF HIM, right?', line 53), the connection to the enregistered identity of the marriage migrant is more explicit because the nationality of the main character is emphasized ("ah, tu eres colombiana, ah sí, chévere" 'Oh, you're Colombian, ah yes, cool", line 52). Although no perloctionary effects are described, it can be inferred from the subsequent evaluative segment from line 53 onwards that the question is framed as an unjust act of positioning.

The description of her friend's relationship and migration trajectory (lines 57-58) directly addresses key components of the enregistered identity of the opportunistic marriage migrant. She underscores that her friend and her German partner had a true love story, in alignment with the ideal of romantic love and in contrast with the attitude stereotypically attributed to marriage migrants ("mi amiga colombiana conoció al alemán en Colombia y en algún punto pues el alemán hizo lo posible para que ella pudiera venir a Alemania" 'my Colombian friend met the German in Colombia, and at some point, the German did everything possible for her to be able to come to Germany', lines 54-55[10]). Furthermore, she highlights that her friend supported herself by working as an au-pair, and pursued her own career aspirations based on academic studies, thus challenging the widely-held stereotype of the economically dependent and uneducated marriage migrant. Based on Grice's maxim of Relation, these speech acts, although primarily representative in terms of illocution, can be interpreted as positioning acts through which the participant counters the identity imposed onto the main character.

This following segment of the interview is particularly intriguing as the participant becomes increasingly forthright in her depiction and rejection of the enregistered identity of the opportunistic marriage migrant. She uses colloquial and even vulgar expressions such as "se la trajo" ('he brought her along', lines 55-56) and "uno va al culo del man" ('one goes to the man's ass', line 62) which, while not entirely transparent, are highly conventional in some varieties of Spanish to describe the behavior of men and women to whom the stereotype is applied. Importantly, these expressions convey a disapproving attitude, explicitly referencing the two core stereotypical traits associated with opportunistic marriage migrants: dependence and lack of agency ("se la trajo"), as well as qualities like aggressiveness, cunningness and hypersexualization ("uno va al culo del man"). In lines 69 and 70 she becomes unequivocally explicit about the enregistered identity that has been subtly underlying the entire narrative. She explains "te da la sensación a veces de que: la gente asume de que te viniste=de que estás en Alemania por=porque tu marido es alemán" 'At times, you get the feeling that people assume that you came to Germany because your husband is German'. Later, she reinforces the same notion in constructed dialogue, paro-

[9] However, it is interesting to observe that the participant punctually uses the first person when telling her friend's story, what signals to which extent she identifies with it (lines 52 and 53).

[10] Cf. also Geoffrion (2018) on the efforts partners from wealthier countries have to spend to make their foreign partners come to their country as a proof for real love.

dying fellow Latin American's voices saying "ah, con razón estás saliendo con el alemán, ¿sí? por el pasaporte" 'Oh, I understand why you are dating the German guy, right? For the passport' (lines 74). This adds a dramatic effect and alludes to potential moral connotations regarding marriage migrants, as the use of the adverbial phrase "con razón" 'with reason' suggests that dating a German only seems logical if one's interest lies in obtaining a European passport.

As this comment is attributed to fellow Latin Americans and not to Germans, it marks a shift in perspective that parallels the example discussed in the previous section. We could interpret it as a kind of coda that links the complicating action of the two stories – a speech act perceived as an unfair positioning as a marriage migrant – to the wider context of Latin American culture, as well as to differences between the Global North and the Global South.

First, the participant expresses a stronger sense of disparagement regarding interactive positioning as an opportunistic marriage migrant when carried out by fellow Latin American migrants rather than by Germans (lines 72-73). One might speculate that this is a deliberate strategy to create a distinction between herself and the "general Latin American community in Germany".[11] In doing so, she positions herself as a unique type of migrant who does not conform to the prevailing stereotype – a highly educated professional leading a cosmopolitan and independent life, in contrast to the stereotypical uneducated and dependent migrant women. In fact, in this final part of the extract, several characteristics of what the participant perceives as Latin American culture are brought to the forefront and depicted in a negative light when contrasted with the Global North.

The participant articulates her dissatisfaction with being consistently positioned within traditional gender roles, even after years of professional development (lines 80-81). What follows is another story which illustrates her point, this time based on stereotypical views of women as mothers and caretakers, and men as professionals and breadwinners. In the orientation, the participant positions herself as a career-oriented woman, stating "o sea para mí mi carrera es super importante" ('I mean for me my career is very important', line 82). Furthermore, we can infer from her reference to her age ("o sea tengo treinta y uno" 'I mean, I'm thirty-one', line 82), in accordance with Grice's maxim of Relation and against the backdrop of prevalent discourses about age-related fertility decline and its tension with professional careers, that she is introducing the topic of being a potential mother.

The complicating action arises with the utterance in constructed dialogue "¿y los bebés? ¿y él bebé?" ('What about babies? What about a baby?', line 83), which is attributed to Latin American people in a very general sense. The evaluative statement "y ya estoy casada y todo el cuento, entonces el bebé" ('and I'm already married and all that, so the baby', line 84) contextualizes the inquiry "¿y los bebés? ¿y él bebé?" by linking it to the stereotypical female gender identity of being a wife and mother, where one implies the other. Thus, at this point, she refers to gender expectations according to

[11] This is also consistent with her explanation to have ended many friendships with Latin American friends, and her distancing herself from fellow migrants by framing their voices as "different" (cf. also section 4.1).

which as a married woman she is assumed to take the normative feminine role in the nuclear family. Despite the fact that these expectations are prevalent in Germany as well, she explicitly attributes them here to Latin America.

In her subsequent turn, she articulates a series of representative speech acts through which she positions herself as someone who indeed desires to have children but still places great importance on her career. Based on Grice's maxim of Relation and the contrast between having a family and valuing one's career constructed through the adversative conjunction *pero* 'but', we can infer that she feels unfairly positioned as a wife and, by extension, a potential mother (as these are seen as synonymous within the enregistered identity).

In the final segment of the extract, the participant goes into greater detail about her primary motive for emigrating, emphasizing career advancement, and frames her migration trajectory within the identity she has been constructing throughout the course of the interview. Once again, she underscores the disparities between Latin America (specifically, Colombia) and the Global North, highlighting the limited opportunities in her home country, as evident in the question "pues ¿qué hago en [NAME OF THE PROFESSIONAL FIELD] en Colombia"? ('so what do I do in [NAME OF THE PROFESSIONAL FIELD] in Colombia?', lines 91-92). She contrasts this situation with the prospects offered by the Global North, stating "y pues todo está acá en el:: pues en el global north ¿no?" 'and well, everything is here in the:: well, in the global north, right?', lines 94-95; "las mejores escuelas de [NAME OF PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE] pues están en el su= en el=en el norte global, ¿sí?" 'the best schools for [NAME OF PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE] are in the south= in the=in the global north, right?', lines 98-99). In doing so, she once again positions herself as a cosmopolitan professional. It's worth noting that, despite her deep and enduring dissatisfaction with being positioned as a "trailing wife" (Kim 2010: 721-722), she also perpetuates some of the very ideologies that underlie these positioning acts. Namely, she reinforces stereotypical views of Latin American societies being bound to "traditional" concepts of femininity and characterized by backwardness and a lack of modernity and professionalism.

Overall, it becomes evident in this extract that the participant constructs the recurring experience of being positioned as an opportunistic marriage migrant as an enduring source of verbal violence (as also evident in the final line of the excerpt). Unlike in the previous example, her reaction primarily addresses the implications of this stereotype in terms of economic dependency, the absence of professional ambitions, autonomy and agency stereotypically attributed to marriage migrants, rather than its moral contradiction with the ideal of romantic love. She also contextualizes this specific enregistered identity within broader discourses on femininity not necessarily related to migration, encompassing patriarchal norms like hypergamy and patrilocality, as well as the prescribed role of women as mothers. The participant adopts a more critical stance towards gender stereotypes circulating in society in comparison to the example discussed in the previous section. Still, she uses the stereotype of the "opportunistic marriage migrant" as a negative reference point for her own identity construction, positioning herself as its complete antithesis. In doing this, she reproduces clichéd perceptions of Latin American migrants and the overarching assumptions about

disparities and hierarchies between the Global South and the Global North on which the stereotype relies.

5 Conclusions

The objective of the present paper was to introduce new perspectives for comprehending how language can function as a vehicle for violence, with a special focus on gender. It was argued that, at least in some instances, it is the act of positioning inherent in a speech act, rather than the illocutionary act, that can be held accountable for the emergence of verbal violence. Within verbal exchanges, participants are in a continual process of negotiating their subject positions, attributing positions to others, and claiming positions for themselves. As this happens through different kinds of illocutive acts, but also indexicalities and inferences that are not directly related to a speech act's illocution, we suggested to incorporate the notion of "positioning act" into the framework of Speech Act Theory. While positions are locally constructed within the verbal interaction, speakers also bring more enduring concepts of selfhood into the conversation, both in terms of their own self-perception and that of others. These are typically connected to a set of relatively fixed positions available within a given society, which, in line with Agha (2007), we have referred to as "enregistered identities". These enregistered identities are utilized as a discursive resource in positioning acts. Verbal violence can originate from acts of positioning when individuals have identities imposed upon them that are in tension or even conflict with their personal self-concept.

In order to illustrate the role of positioning acts in verbal violence, we have chosen to focus on the enregistered identity of the "opportunistic marriage migrant". This stereotypical role is characterized by the intersection of gender, migrant status, and social class. It repeatedly appeared in our dataset as an involuntary identity that was ascribed to female migrants across various everyday situations. Thus, Rushchenko's (2016: 114) finding that "[b]i-national couples where one of the spouses comes from an economically weak country are always under the suspicion of marrying each other with the sole purpose of providing one of the parties with a residence permit" finds empirical support in our corpus.

The two case examples we presented depict the experience of two young Latin American women who report that being labeled with the enregistered identity of the "opportunistic marriage migrant" had a detrimental effect on them, leading to feelings of pain and anger. Consequently, this labeling triggered perlocutive effects that can be categorized as forms of violence under the definition used here. However, given the absence of a direct link between these effects and the illocutionary force of the critical speech acts, traditional Speech Act Theory falls short in explaining the mechanism that gives rise to verbal violence in such instances. Instead, the perlocutive effects originate from the acts of positioning which can be inferred to have occurred through the critical utterances, along with the tension they create in relation to the listeners' self-identification. In the cases analyzed here, this tension arises primarily from perception of marriage migrants as antipodes of Western notions of feminism that emphasize women's agency and economic autonomy, as well as the ideal of ro-

mantic love. These findings underscore the significance of integrating Positioning Theory into the analysis and modeling of verbal violence and aggression.

The analysis substantiated a central tenet of Positioning Theory: that society shapes the available positions. These tend to be relatively stable; only their assignment to specific individuals within verbal interactions is subject to negotiation. As for the interviews analyzed here, the stereotype of the "opportunistic marriage migrant" seems to be so deeply engrained in the participants' representations of the social world that it is often implicit and goes unmentioned but is always available for inference without the need for explicit mention. Participants systematically use it to construct not only the identities of others but also their own. This may be further facilitated by the fact that not only the participants, but also the interviewers are female Latin American migrants, a setting that fosters an environment of assumed shared knowledge. Although empirical studies reveal a more complex reality than the stereotype suggests (particularly as demonstrated by Rushchenko 2016), its validity is never questioned. What the participants challenge is not the stereotype itself, but rather its applicability to their own circumstances, heavily relying on the semiotic process of erasure (Irvine & Gal 2000). As we have seen, they even confirm the stereotype by employing the enregistered identity of the opportunistic marriage migrant as a significant "other". This enables them to construct their own identities through discourses of romance, autonomy and professional success. In doing so, the participants also perpetuate negative discourses about female marriage migrants, placing them in a subordinate position within the moral and professional hierarchy in comparison to themselves. Within this context, a dichotomy is constructed between their own behavior and that of others, based on perceived differences in levels of education, moral values, professional commitment, willingness to perform and contribute, and more. These differences are thought to reflect general disparities between Latin America and Germany, or more broadly, the Global South and the Global North.

Rushchenko's explanation for the prevalence of negative stereotypes about marriage migrants is that the influence of mass media is so potent that these stereotypes permeate individual representations and "eventually become the lens through which individuals view themselves" (Rushchenko 2016: 101). However, we have also observed that the participants (including one of the interviewers) use Western concepts of female emancipation as a means of distinguishing themselves from allegedly "backward" and non-emancipated marriage migrants. This mirrors discourses of distinction that circulate in German society regarding gender arrangements among migrants deemed "backward" (Rommelspacher 2007: 52; Al-Rebholz 2015). Simultaneously, it reflects what Patiño-Santos and Márquez Reiter (2019) refer to as "banal interculturalism":

> Banal interculturalism emerges within discursive semiotic processes that allow the participants to display their (cultural) knowledge about co-ethnics and their practices, to position themselves in opposition to the 'others' within diaspora, and to justify their, typically negative, views towards other migrants. Sources of that knowledge can be experiential, though in most cases consist of hearsay evidence.

Thus, the cases analyzed here emphasize the joint involvement of both "victims" and "perpetrators" of verbal violence, encompassing migrants and members of the receiving society, as well as various genders, in upholding colonial and patriarchal ideologies and practices through unexamined reliance on enregistered identities. All of this underscores the pervasive and deeply rooted nature of sexist, racist and classist ideologies and practices within global societies.

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07

Gender stereotypes and social normativity: Insights from the Great Chain of Being metaphor in proverbs

07

Gender stereotypes and social normativity: Insights from the Great Chain of Being metaphor in proverbs

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Recent studies (e.g., Caldas-Coulthard 2020) have shown that while feminist linguistic activities have been successful to some extent in mitigating gender discrimination in language, the successes achieved have been mainly at the lexical level whereas discursive practices that indicate underlying sexist beliefs continue to endure in most societies around the globe. Proverbs are an instance of discursive practices which, as the result of a sexist society, perpetuate harmful gender beliefs. Within the Spanish context, quite a number of them reflect gender-related stereo-

types and ideologies which were common not only in Spain, but also in many parts of medieval Europe (Garrido 2001; Crida Álvarez 2001). This paper seeks to examine how Spanish proverbs preserve gender stereotypes and influence social normativity using Lakoff and Turner's (1989) Great Chain Metaphor Theory, Glick and Fiske's (1997) Ambivalent Sexism Theory, and principles of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as proposed by Lazar (2005). Particular attention is paid to how ideals of masculinities and femininities are perpetuated through language use. The findings reveal that proverbs and other types of popular literature remain significant sources for gender ideologies and can serve as channels for institutionalizing sexism.

1 Introduction[1]

Proverbs are an interesting field of manifestation of gender stereotypes and worldviews that inform the attitudes and behaviors of a community. They are considered true reflections of morality or social thought. Such sayings are endowed with a great power of illustration of mental or conceptual representations and are usually precise and brief sources of advice that also serve to support, license, or authenticate one's own opinion.

This immense source of knowledge and 'wisdom' provides an unavoidable and inexhaustible pool of matter to study the history and culture of a given society (Poncela 2012). Spanish proverbs reveal the collective subconscious of medieval Spanish society (see Garrido 2001; also, Crida Álvarez 2001)—its mythical consciousness. According to Martínez Garrido (2001: 83), "the rhetorical and pragmatic effectiveness of proverbs [...] is due to its highly persuasive linguistic nature, halfway between oral and written".[2] She adds that "[p]roverbs are persuasive texts, shared and known by an entire community, whose moral and behavioral content is proposed as a model of conduct" (Martínez Garrido 2001: 83). However, a critical analysis reveals that gender-related proverbs are often generalizations which serve as an effective tool for gender politics through the propagation of gender stereotypes and ideologies.

The objective of this paper is to examine how Spanish proverbs conserve gender stereotypes and influence social normativity. To do this, we draw on Lakoff and Turner's (1989) Great Chain Metaphor Theory, Glick and Fiske's (1997) Ambivalent Sexism Theory and principles of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as proposed by Lazar (2005). The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents a review of pertinent existing literature and clarifies some key terms such as 'proverbs' and 'ideologies' while elucidating the connection between them. The data collection methods

[1] The following paper is an adaptation of parts of my doctoral thesis entitled *El sexismo lingüístico e implicaciones reformistas para la lengua: una perspectiva crítica del español y un estudio colateral del ga* (https://www.academia.edu/66338597/El_sexismo_ling%C3%BC%C3%ADstico_e_implicaciones_reformistas_para_la_lengua_una_perspectiva_cr%C3%ADtica_del_espa%C3%B1ol_y_un_estudio_colateral_del_ga, accessed December 2025).

[2] All translations mine except otherwise indicated.

and analytical frameworks as well as the theoretical background of the current study are explained in Section 3. The findings from the analysis of the sample proverbs are presented in Section 4. The paper ends with a conclusion in Section 5.

2 Proverbs and ideology

Most of the Spanish proverbs regarding women can be interpreted as possible weapons to control and subjugate them. As Schwarz points out, proverbs are "popular wisdom" that "reflect myths, beliefs and traditions that have been perpetuated in different cultures from generation to generation" and they are "pillars that have allowed inequality and discrimination between genders, as well as sexism, to be perpetuated in the same way" (Schwarz 2013: n.p.). It can be said that, with proverbs, a series of psychological and cognitive aspects come into play. Since society often accepts them as true, proverbs can have a strong psychic effect on language users—this is basically because they are convincing and persuasive tools.

In his contrastive studies on English and Kazakh folk proverbs, Syzdykov (2014: 318) describes folk proverbs and sayings as "an integral part of the spiritual treasures of the culture and language of the people, the age-old wisdom and skills used by them—an important part of the culture of human language" which "can artistically embody various aspects of life, social experience, outlook, the originality of artistic attitudes and tastes, mental and ethical and aesthetic values". Indeed, proverbs are valued not only for being channels of 'wisdom,' but also for their aesthetic value. They have rhythmic characteristics due to their sentence construction which usually involve the use of literary figures such as metaphor, repetition, rhyme, pun, and irony. It is because of these features that they become invaluable sources of entertainment as well as instruction. According to Ankra Nee-Adjabeng (1996: 3), "speeches without proverbs or elegant sayings are like soup without salt". Additional evidence of how language users are affected psychologically as a result of using or hearing a proverb can be found in Yolanda Lastra de Suárez (1992: 405). She affirms:

> Language acquisition is part of cultural acquisition and part of the knowledge, attitudes and skills that are transmitted from one generation to the next. Language is the main means of transmitting other aspects of culture and is also a means of exploring and controlling the social context and establishing one's status and role within relationships with other members of the group. Because of the different social contexts, learning to speak is also learning to be a man or a woman, rich or poor, Chinese, Buddhist or whatever.

Each language is an instrument shaped by its history and patterns of use. In language learning, verbalization is only one part. Acquisition has to do with the language heard, the interaction situation, the variety or register used in a communicative event, the language itself, and the social structure within which the interaction takes place. Proverbs are linguistic structures which constitute an important aspect of cultural interaction and continuity within a social structure. As Pavlopoulos, Louridas, and Filos (2024: n.p.) observe, proverbs (paroemia), which are "popular sayings" do not only offer "general advice or wisdom" but

additionally, they have "been guiding social interactions of people for thousands of years" and "continue to do so today". Indeed, by being "passed as expressions of wisdom and truth from generation to generation" (Hrisztova-Gotthardt & Varga 2014: 1), proverbs are able to serve valuable didactic, communicative as well as gender hegemonic purposes by projecting stereotypes and ideologies. This makes them central to gender normativity. Proverbs are usually interpreted according to the sociological and pragmatic context in which they appear.

Spain has a rich paremiological culture—a large number of which deal with women. In fact, Fernández (1999: 131) argues that "almost a sixth of all Spanish proverbs that exist or have existed take as a proverbial motif the female gender". In her seminal work *Sexismo lingüístico: Análisis y propuestas ante la discriminación sexual en el lenguaje*, Fernández (1999) maintains that, of all the proverbs on women that she has gathered (i.e., 10,884), eighty-five defects of women are referred to and only sixteen positive qualities are mentioned—a detail that turns out to be striking. She also points out that in these proverbs women are usually associated with clerics and Jews—that is, groups that are also frequently stereotyped negatively in Spain. It is worth pointing out that this pattern is not unique to Spain. Kochman-Hałady j (2020: 73) observes that "[b]eyond any conceivable doubt, the female image emerges more precisely [in proverbs], since women's roles and status constitute the core subject of many proverbs, regrettably of negatively-coloured perception, both at a European and a universal level".

Through the analysis of proverbs, the function of ideology in achieving and maintaining this gender imbalance is revealed. According to Fairclough (2003: 9), ideologies are "representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation". He states that "language is a material form of ideology, and language is invested by ideology" (Fairclough 2010: 59). Sexism in proverbs is thus a clear means of achieving hegemony, i.e., when a powerful group succeeds in oppressing another group with its consent (Gramsci 1971).

3 Methods

3.1 Data collection

44 proverbs that manifest sexism in the Spanish language were gathered from Martínez Kleiser's *Refranero General ideológico Español* (1978)[3], Fernández (1999) and other existing literature. Relevant data were identified for the analysis by searching for specific keywords such as 'woman,' 'man,' 'wife,' 'husband,' and other lexical manifestations of gender. The purpose of the current study was to examine the manner in which the convergence of culture and tradition in patriarchal systems constructs and defends the gender *status quo*. It is worthy to note that the aim was not to examine whether the proverb samples are still being used in contemporary society,

[3] First published in 1953.

but rather to analyse the ideologies they convey.[4] Specifically, the objective, as indicated in Section 1 above, was threefold and can be explicated as follows:

i. To analyse gender stereotypes and ideologies in Spanish proverbs.
ii. To examine the construction and sustenance of masculinities and femininities within and through proverbs; and
iii. To discuss the connection between masculinities, femininities, and social normativity.

3.2 Analytical frameworks

The contributions of Lakoff and Turner (1989), considered as two highly influential figures in cognitive linguistics (Buljan & Gradečak-Erdeljić 2013), were instrumental in the examination of the cultural as well as the cognitive aspects of proverbs, i.e., their psychological functions. Lakoff and Turner's (1989) cognitivist theory of metaphor interpretation—the Great Chain Metaphor (henceforth GCM) — was employed as an analytical framework for the selected proverbs (see also Lakoff 1987, Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Specifically, four cognitive tools subsumed in this paremiological theory (GCM) were applied, namely, 1) the naive theory of the Nature of Things; 2) the Great Chain of Being metaphor, which is qualified as a cultural model; 3) the "Generic Is Specific" metaphor; and 4) the Maxim of Quantity.

The naive theory of the Nature of Things holds that our perception of ourselves and the world we inhabit is shaped by a collection of beliefs embodied in the cultural model of the Great Chain of Being (GCB). In other words, The Great Chain of Being Metaphor and language users' practical knowledge about "the nature of things," enable them to develop theories on how the world operates.

The Great Chain of Being has its origins in medieval Christianity. This hierarchical structure was thought to have been ordained by God. On the hierarchical scales of the GCB metaphor are God, angels, human, animal, plant, and inorganic objects. It is characterized by higher beings possessing the properties of lower levels. Kieltyka (2015: 313) describes the GCB as

> a model of the organization and perception of the surrounding reality which is deeply rooted in the European tradition and which relies on the fact that all the material/physical and spiritual entities create a hierarchy ranked from the lowest entities/beings to those occupying the highest level of the hierarchy.

In proverbs, these properties of lower-level beings are captured as metaphoric properties and they flow up the hierarchy, not down, meaning they are unidirectional. For instance, it is alright to say "Dela is a fox" but not "This fox is a Dela".

The "generic is specific" metaphor enables proverb users and interpreters to apply their understanding of the specific scenario depicted in the proverb to comprehend various analogous situations that share a common generic structure. Finally, the principle of verbal economy (Maxim of Quantity) asserts

[4] It has been argued that quite a number of these misogynistic sayings are no longer in use. Yet, the ideologies they convey persist in current times.

that when a specific entity is referred to, the speaker is assumed to be alluding to its top-level characteristics, unless additional information suggests otherwise (also, see Buljan & Gradečak-Erdeljić 2013). For example, lions are associated with courage, dogs are associated with loyalty, and foxes are associated with cleverness (also, see Krikmann 2007).

These cognitive tools reveal the "conceptual architecture" of proverbs, that is, "the specific imagery behind the proverbs' linguistic form" (Buljan & Gradečak-Erdeljić 2013: 68). They show not only how proverbs are interpreted but also how language users are affected psychologically as a result of using or hearing a proverb being used. In other words, they reinforce language users' acknowledgement of "the nature of things". Kieltyka (2015: 313) points out the following in relation to the prevalence of the GCB:

> The theoretical bases of the concept of the Great Chain of Being were developed in Antiquity by such ancient philosophers as Plato and Aristotle (cf. Nisbet 1982: 35), and it is worth mentioning that the GCB has not merely survived into our times but—more importantly – elements of its mechanism are reflected in various evolutionary theories and, recently, also in semantic investigations of natural languages.

As Kieltyka (2015: 314) further explains, this model (GCB) "is rooted in the consciousness of language users as a cultural model indispensable to our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our language". It thus provides deep insights on the metaphorical construction of the gender order in proverbs and its prevalence.

The selected proverbs in the current study were also analyzed using the various indices of Glick and Fiske's (1996/1997) Ambivalent Sexism Theory (AST), namely dominative paternalism, protective paternalism, competitive gender differentiation, complementary gender differentiation, heterosexual hostility, and heterosexual intimacy. Glick and Fiske (1996/1997) categorize these sexist attitudes into 'hostile' and 'benevolent' sexism. Dominative paternalism, competitive gender differentiation, and heterosexual hostility fall within the category of hostile sexism, whereas protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and intimate heterosexuality belong to benevolent sexism. Glick and Fiske (2001: 109) explain the connection between hostile and benevolent sexism as follows:

> Hostile sexism is an adversarial view of gender relations in which women are perceived as seeking to control men, whether through sexuality or feminist ideology. Although benevolent sexism may sound oxymoronic, this term recognizes that some forms of sexism are, for the perpetrator, subjectively benevolent, characterizing women as pure creatures who ought to be protected, supported, and adored and whose love is necessary to make a man complete […] Despite the greater social acceptability of benevolent sexism, our research suggests that it serves as a crucial complement to hostile sexism that helps to pacify women's resistance to societal gender inequality.

Sexist stereotypes and ideologies were also analysed from the perspective of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), which seeks to critique unequal gender relations (Lazar 2007). FCDA argues that "issues of

gender, power, and ideology have become increasingly more complex and subtle" (Lazar 2007: 141).

FCDA was a useful analytical approach because it provides an effective lens for the scrutiny of the subtle manifestation of power and control in language. Proverbs are examples of discourse which are complex and subtle since they are often indirect and thus can be a means for the sustenance of the gender order. FCDA is an extension of CDA and, as Fairclough (1993) explains, discourse analysis involves a "critical" element which can reveal hidden links and sources within texts (as cited in Rasul 2015). The AST was also considered appropriate for the current study because it provides a comprehensive analytical tool for the examination of the nature of sexism.

Although the GCB has been the subject of extensive debates among cognitive linguists, philosophers, and other scholars (see Krikmann 1996), we bypass these discussions since the main interest of this paper is how the GCB applies to metaphors and proverbs, not the GCB itself. Certainly, the GCM provides a lens for the exploration of cognitive-psychological explanations of the effects of proverbs on human behaviour, i.e., how the figurative use of language in proverbs affects our worldview and actions. Additionally, the GCM provides evidence for Talbot's (2003: 470) description of ideologies as "the result of stereotypes that involve simplification, reduction and naturalization". The figurative use of language in proverbs, especially metaphors, enhances the simplification, reduction, and naturalization of characteristics associated with men and women and consequently, the birth of ideologies which play a key role in making proverbs channels of power control.

In the following sections we will examine, using the GCM, AST, and FCDA, the misogynistic substratum of systemic gender prejudices—sometimes burning or corrosive—concealed within these linguistic practices. Before proceeding, it is worth adding that the GCB allows for a cognitive-linguistic perspective, the AST is a socio-psychological theory, whereas FCDA offers a sociolinguistic lens for the examination of gender-related issues of power in discourse.

4 Findings

4.1 Androcentrism and paternalism in proverbs

Many gender-related proverbs in Spanish manifest androcentric and paternalistic ideologies. Androcentrism involves the perpetuation of male-centered worldviews whereas paternalism entails promoting male dominance or belief systems that encourage men to undermine women's autonomy. These can be analysed in light of Glick and Fiske's (1996/1997) dominative paternalism paradigm. According to these authors, dominative paternalism is the belief that women are not adequately competent and consequently need to be controlled by men. This category of proverbs reflects the belief that men have control and authority, and they also project a general androcentric perspective. They suggest that there is a differential hierarchy between women and men and that it is of utmost importance to maintain this social structure. In line with this, some Spanish proverbs such as the following highlight the image of the female figure as not adequately competent and, hence, that needs

a man as a superior male figure (Glick & Fiske 1997):

(1) Cada hombre es un mundo. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'Every man is a world.'

(2) A la mujer, el hombre la ha de hacer. (Fernández 1999: 187)
'It is men who make women who they are.'

(3) La mujer y el huerto, no quieren más que un dueño. (Fernández 1999: 188)
'The woman and the garden only need a master.'

(4) Hijo de viuda, bien consentido y mal criado. (Fernández 1999: 188)
'The child of a widow is over pampered and badly brought up.'

The proverb "Cada hombre es un mundo", for example, presents an androcentric perspective which supports dominative paternalism. Likewise, proverbs 2-4 also illustrate the ideology that the world revolves around men, that they must be in control, and that the course of a woman's life depends on the influence of a man. These proverbs suggest that the female figure lacks autonomy and agency and consequently, in the absence of a man's authority cannot be efficient. This is signaled by the use of the words "viuda" and "mal criado" in proverb 4.

An analysis of proverbs demonstrates how these ideologies force men and women to shape the roles and functions that society dictates to them according to the "asymmetrical meaning of 'man' and 'woman'" (Lazar 2008: 90). These proverbs confirm Lazar's (2005) contention that the discursive construction of gender is an ideological structure that can foster the gender *status quo.* For instance, in proverb 4, femininity is associated with incompetence whereas masculinity is associated with capability in the family domain. Ideologies are thus constructed, maintained, and perpetuated across generations; and through proverbs, one observes how the transfer of such ideologies are negotiated between individuals in a society. Since ideologies arise as a result of social interaction, beliefs of dominative paternalism are easily propagated and, unfortunately, may encourage and lead to domestic violence (Lomotey 2019; Martínez Garrido 2001) since women are placed on a lower level of the GCB human scale, one that is subordinate to men.

Another aspect of paternalism, as identified in the AST, is protective paternalism. According to Gick and Fiske (1996/1997), protective paternalism reflects the belief that men should protect and care for women, since the former have more authority, power, and physical strength. It is an assumption that, logically, implies that women, being the 'weaker sex,' must depend on men (the 'stronger sex') and this can also be observed in proverbs.

(5) Quien mujer no tiene, a palos la muele; pero quien la tiene, bien la cuida y defiende. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'The one who has no wife, beats her; but the one who has one, takes good care of her and defends her.'

(6) El hombre ha de tener tres cosas codiciadas: su mujer, su caballo y su espada. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'Man must have three coveted things: his wife, his horse and his sword.'

Proverb 5 is an interesting example of a discourse which conveys both hostile and benevolent sexism. While it appears to transmit

positive beliefs because it criticizes hostile sexism, specifically violence against women, it projects ideas of benevolent sexism by presenting an image of women as the weaker sex. As Glick and Fiske (2001: 109) point out, the "idealization of women" through benevolent sexism "simultaneously implies that they are weak and best suited for conventional gender roles; being put on a pedestal is confining, yet the man who places a woman there is likely to interpret this as cherishing, rather than restricting her (and many women may agree)".

In contrast, proverb 6 promotes the ideology of women as possessions through the imagery of chivalry. Men are presented with authority, power, and physical strength symbolized by the word "espada". These samples depict the image of men as the stronger sex, 'macho' and reflect male dominance through violence ("a palos la muele") or protective paternalism ("bien la cuida y defiende"). From an FCDA and GCM perspective, they demonstrate the subtlety and complexity of sexism in proverbs. Lakoff and Turner (1989: xi) explain how this subtleness is achieved through metaphors as follows:

> Metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it. It is omnipresent: metaphor suffuses our thoughts, no matter what we are thinking about. It is accessible to everyone: as children, we automatically, as a matter of course, acquire a mastery of everyday metaphor. It is conventional: metaphor is an integral part of our ordinary everyday thought and language. And it is irreplaceable: metaphor allows us to understand our selves and our world in ways that no other modes of thought can. Far from being merely a matter of words, metaphor is a matter of thought—all kinds of thought: thought about emotion, about society, about human character, about language, and about the nature of life and death. It is indispensable not only to our imagination but also to our reason.

The discriminatory undertones in some gender-related proverbs are taken as "ordinary" due to the metaphorically created "conceptual architecture" of images of women and men in proverbs. For instance, in proverb 6, an automatic connection is made between the sword, which is normally used as a metonymical representation of weapons, and men, since they have traditionally been associated with it. Consequently, bravery is understood as a characteristic of men whereas, by placing women in the same semantic camp as "espada" and "caballo", women become "cosas", that is, belonging to a lower scale than men on the GCB. Through the lens of FCDA and GCM, we observe the diverse forms in which power relations are exercised and maintained.

4.2 Gender differentiation in proverbs

In addition to the subordinate position of women on the GCB hierarchy, there are other indices of gender differentiation in proverbs that show how the GCM has metaphorically constructed the gender-related "conceptual architecture" not only of Spaniards but also of many other European societies. Glick and Fiske (1996/1997) identify two types of gender differentiation—competitive and complementary gender differentiation (see section 3.2). Competitive gender differentiation is the belief that men "are better than the other half of the population" (Glick & Fiske 1997: 122)

whereas complementary gender differentiation is the belief that women should conform to traditional gender roles which are complementary to those of men.

These beliefs on gender differentiation are reflected in the Great Chain of Being which, as explained in Section 3.2, was believed to have been decreed by God. Indeed, an analysis of gender-related proverbs shows how religion, tradition, and nature function as the authorities that dictate the superiority of men and the subordination of women. Examples of such proverbs are:

(7) Dios se hizo hombre, y no mujer. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'God made himself a man, and not a woman.'

(8) Dios, que es el *non plus ultra* del saber, se hizo hombre, y no mujer. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'God, who is the wisest, made himself a man, and not a woman.'

(9) Dios, que, como Dios, pudo escoger, quiso hacerse hombre, y no mujer.
'God, who, being God, could choose, wanted to become a man, not a woman.'

(10) Antes que Dios se hiciese hombre, el diablo se había hecho mujer. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'Before God became a man, the devil had become a woman.'

(11) Dos hijas y una madre, tres diablos para un padre. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'Two daughters and a mother, three devils for a father.'

(12) Matrimonio de buena fortuna: siete varones y de hembras sólo una.
'A marriage of good fortune: seven males and only one female.'

By making references to the supernatural and divine, proverbs 7-10 project gender imbalance, and consequently gender discrimination, as providential, incontestable, and inevitable. In other words, they project the gender order as arranged by God or a spiritual power and suggest that women are destined to be inferior to men. These ideologies, which are based on religion, attribute the positive to males and the negative to females.

Such beliefs are metaphorically captured in proverbs through the GCB metaphor because within the category of 'human' on the GCB scale, distinctions are made between women and men, and the latter is hierarchically placed above the former. As Krikmann (2007: 1) clarifies, the Great Chain of Being was believed to have "[t]he highest level […] occupied by God, [...] followed by the angels, *various classes of people*, animals etc" (my emphasis). Additional evidence can be found in the observation that kings and princes are given prominence on the chain, this is not the case for queens and princesses. The Encyclopædia Britannica Online notes that the chain "had a pervasive influence on Western thought, particularly through the ancient Greek Neoplatonists and derivative philosophies during the European Renaissance and the 17th and early 18th centuries" (as cited in Krikmann 2007: 22). This sociohistorical "notion" which, as Krikmann (2007: 22) observes, "died out in the 19th century but was given renewed currency in the 20th by Arthur O. Lovejoy" throws light on the gender order. The perception of women as inferior to men permeates human thought and successfully influences language users' behaviour because it has largely been accepted as "the nature of things".

On the one hand, proverbs 7-10 epitomize man as close to God by separating man from

woman (within the GCB) and thus striking some kind of an affinity between God and man. This contrast between man and woman can be seen especially in proverbs 7- 9 with the negation 'no' ("hombre, y no mujer") which sets man apart from woman and makes him competitively distinctive and superior. On the other hand, proverb 11 degrades women in this category, makes her subhuman, and additionally, places her on the same rank as the devil. Man and woman are thus juxtaposed with the supernatural categories God and devil respectively. It is worth mentioning that demons (including fallen/renegade angels, and by implication the devil) are placed on a higher level than humans on the chain. Yet, the asymmetry between women and men lies in the competitive juxtaposition between good, derived from an association with God, and evil, derived from an association with the devil, for men and women respectively. Consequently, through the power of religion, the authority of the dominant group (males) over the subordinate group (females) is rationalized.

The justification of how things are done in a particular social order and the acceptance of such explanations as legitimate are defined by Fairclough (2003) as 'legitimation' (cf. the cognitive tool "Nature of Things" in the GCM). As Fairclough points out, legitimation is done by rationalization, which is to make mention of the "utility of institutionalized action, and to the knowledges society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity" (Fairclough 2003: 98). Rationalization serves as a justification for social stratification between women and men (Fairclough 2003). From the AST perspective, the above proverbs are also a reflection of competitive gender differentiation. This perception is captured numerically in proverb 12 which suggests that males are seven times better than females ("siete varones y de hembras sólo una").

An observation of Lakoff and Turner's (1989) cognitive theory of metaphor interpretation—the Great Chain Metaphor—reveals the foundations of this belief, as well as the basis of the rationalization that serves to justify social stratification between women and men. In other words, the Great Chain of Being can be identified as the background of magnification and devaluation metaphors in gender-related proverbs.

In FCDA, a key point is the examination of ways through which legitimation is achieved. Legitimation structures and strategies of dominance are maintained by the creation of some perceptions generally accepted as 'truth' or 'facts' to perpetuate control. The GCB is an avenue par excellence for establishing the 'truth' about the superiority of man. Indeed, ancient 'civilization' is one of the various factors that have been the initiators and perpetuators of sexism (through education, history, and religion). There are some important classical scholars, with their doctrine often imbued with the sexist views of their time, who have influenced the history of the human race. One observes countless sexist patterns in the works of some Greek philosophers. These include statements such as the following: 'If a man was not just in this life, he would be a woman in the next reincarnation'; 'I thank God that I was not born a woman, but a man, that I was not born a slave but free' (Plato); 'To do great things one must be as superior as man is to woman, father to children, and master to slaves' (Aristotle, in Sardá 2012). Aristotle is also quoted as saying in his *Politics* "as regards the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject" (cited in Smith

1983: 467). The difficulty in solving the problem of sexism is explained by the fact that most people have come to terms with these assertions, accepting it as a natural occurrence.

In the above proverbs, the belief that men are superior to women is presented as a truth—a fact—and legitimized by the pairing of men with God versus the equation of women with the devil. This crafting of gender-related 'truths,' 'facts,' and 'norms' can lead to the acceptance of gender differentiation as natural and demonstrates the complexity of gender and power relations. As Lazar (2008: 91) argues, "the effectiveness of modern power (as with hegemony) is that it is mostly cognitive […], based on an internalization of gendered norms and acted out routinely and 'naturally' in the texts and talk of everyday life".

In line with the construction of superiority vs. inferiority as a strategy of dominance, some Spanish proverbs tend to equate women with animals and objects (cf. the GCB), describing them as being at the disposal of men, and this favors and invites the maltreatment of women. Some examples of such proverbs in Spanish are the following:

(13) La mujer es animal que gusta del castigo. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'The woman is an animal who likes punishment.'

(14) A la mujer y a la burra cada día una zurra. (Fernández 1999: 187)
'Women and donkeys are to be given a spanking each day.'

(15) La mujer y el raso, o prensado, o acuchillado. (Martínez Kleiser 1978: 489)
'Women and satin, pressed, or stabbed.'

(16) La nuez y la mujer, a golpes se han de vencer. (Martínez Kleiser 1978: 489)
'Walnuts and women, are conquered through beating.'

(17) Al papel y a la mujer, sin miedo de romper. (Martínez Kleiser 1978: 489)
'Papers and women, break them without fear.'

(18) Asnos y mujeres, por la fuerza entienden. (Martínez Kleiser 1978: 489)
'Donkeys and women, understand through force.'

The above proverbs relate to the maltreatment of women because they trivialize females, present them as subhuman, and lead to their marginalization. A critical discourse analysis reveals that some of the words that have been used to express these concepts are 'animal' ('burra', 'asno'), and these, as well as other vocabulary objectify women by equating them to items such as 'raso', 'nuez', and 'papel'. Along the same lines, it is interesting to note that some proverbs reflect the idea that women belong to men.

(19) ¿De qué cuidad sois? De la de mi marido. (Fernández 1999: 188)
'What city are you from? From that of my husband.'[5]

This perception of 'belonging' in proverb 19 reflects the idea that women belong to men, and it dates back to the time when women were part of their fathers' or husbands' possessions. In that era women were infantilized,

[5] See also proverb 6 in relation to the use of the verb 'tener' to express possession. Here, women are actually referred to as 'things': tres cosas codiciadas.

and a woman was perceived as under the care of her husband if married (thus, the adoption of the husband's surname), her father, if she had no husband, or her son(s). Thus, many of these proverbs belong to a period which predates the onset of feminism. They reflect the ideologies of those times, namely, the medieval period. In Spain, these ideologies were reinforced during the Franquismo, i.e., the rule of Francisco Franco. Fernández (2022: 78) describes the period of Franco's regime as "a time during which a specific worldview was imposed on society" and proverbs "might have helped legitimate the government's stance with regards to certain issues, in this case, the position that women were expected to occupy in society". Although feminist activities have been successful to some extent in mitigating gender discrimination, notions of male superiority, the perception of men as the centre, societal expectations regarding gender roles and male power continues to persist (Freed 2020).

It is worth noting that such notions are not always outright 'hostile,' to use the words of Glick and Fiske (1996/1997). As explained above, gender differentiation does also have a benevolent component (i.e., Complementary gender differentiation). This belief was observed in the data. Two main imageries about women which are related to the division of labour were identified, namely, women as caregivers and women as child bearers. The image of the good woman and/or mother emphasizes the belief that it is women who must take care of the home. Smith (1983: 467) provides invaluable information on the historical development of this belief by explaining how Aristotle, in his *Politics*, "returns women to their traditional roles in the home, subserving men". Additionally, the ideal prototype of the female figure, according to the expectations of society, is that she must be a virgin and chaste, or wife and mother. These ideas are reflected in the following Spanish proverbs:

(20) Para casta, con un hombre basta. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'A married woman needs only her husband.'

(21) La mujer y la sartén, en la cocina están bien. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'The woman and the frying pan are fine in the kitchen.'

(22) Gatos y mujeres, en la casa; perros y hombres, en la plaza. (Fernández 1999: 188)
'Cats and women, in the house; dogs and men, in the square.'

(23) Para el labrador, vaca, oveja y mujer que no paren, poco valen. (Fernández 1999: 188)
'For the farmer, cows, sheep and women who do not give birth are of little value.'

(24) Mujer infiel: puta; hombre infiel: héroe.
'Unfaithful woman: whore; unfaithful man: hero.'

Proverb 23 is another example of how women are equated with animals, and it also reflects female traditional gender roles (e.g., childbearing) which are complementary to those of men. Here, women are equated to animals which enhance the financial status of their owners through procreation. Moreover, the words 'casta' in proverb 20 and 'puta' in proverb 24 reflect the sexual decorum expected of women whereas words such as 'sartén' and 'cocina' reinforce the stereotypical role of women as caregivers. As Lazar warns, it is difficult for women to 'articulate and challenge' the discontent they suffer as a result of societal expectations. They are forced to sacrifice their

well-being to care for their husbands and children in "the labor of love" (Lazar 2008: 97). The above proverbs suggest that this societal expectation of women reflects, and may encourage, an unfair division of labour. Friedan's (1962) study about middle-class Americans between 1950 and 1960 shows that this tendency was not germane to Spain alone. Indeed, these beliefs are rooted in patriarchal ideologies and practices that have spread with religion, so that we can find them all over Europe and the colonized world. Women around the world are forced to obey the "voices of tradition" (Friedan 1962) and to submit to this hegemonic social order. This social order, thanks to the Great Chain of Being, is hegemonic "since it seems natural and complementary, and innocuous and consensual, mystifying the current hierarchical relations of power" (Lazar 2008: 91). Women endure and suffer from this unfair dichotomy of a sociocultural order hierarchically determined by gender.

On the other hand, many proverbs referring to men reflect the quality of courage that traditionally typifies virility. This is reflected in proverb 22, which equates women to a domestic animal (cat) which is relatively docile as compared to 'dog' which is aggressive and generally perceived as reflecting the bravery of men. As Kochman-Haładyj and Kiełtyka (2023) explain citing Diez Velasco (2001), the "generic structure of the source domain of a metaphor" is understood as "consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain" (as cited in Kochman-Haładyj & Kiełtyka 2023: 72). Additionally, in relation to masculinities, philandering is represented as a positive desired characteristic of men. This is achieved through the use of the word "héroe" which is contrasted with a word that has negative connotations ("puta") for females in proverb 24.

Another aspect of gender roles is the fact that playing the roles typically performed by the other sex is severely criticized. It is interesting to note that this 'infringement' is even more abominable and degrading when it is a man who assumes the roles associated with women. Although in current times, this stereotypical attitude has evolved positively to a certain extent thanks to modernity, this cultural presumption persists. Being tough and rejecting the roles or behaviors associated with femininity continues to be a crucial manifestation of masculinity (Rice et al. 2021). Deviation from these social conventions leads to negative evaluations. For instance, assuming the gestures and attitudes of the other sex would lead to one being branded with derogatory labels—e.g., 'maricas,' 'mariposas,' 'julandrón / julandras,' (used to refer to effeminate men or homosexuals) and 'hembrimacho' (a female who behaves like a male) among others (García Meseguer 1984). Similarly, women who assume the behaviors of men are rebuked in the following proverbs:

(25) Mujeres con voz hombruna, nunca me fié de ninguna. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'Women with a masculine voice, I never trusted any.'

(26) Mujer que silba y mea en pie, hembrimacho es. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'A female who whistles and pees while standing, is a female male.'

(27) Mujer que fuma, jura y orina en pie, no será hombre, pero no es mujer. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)

'A woman who smokes, swears and urinates while standing will not be a man, but she is not a woman.'

(28) A la mujer que fuma o bebe, el diablo se la lleve; y si además mea en pie, libera nos, Domine. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'May the devil take away the woman who smokes or drinks, and if she also pees on her feet, set us free, Domine.'

As Hellinger and Bußmann (2001: 16) point out, proverbs, as well as metaphors and idioms, are "frozen expressions" with "the implicit discursive negotiation of gender"—thus they serve to constantly reiterate gender stereotypes and ideologies.

4.3 Heteronormativity: an element of social normativity for homologating sexism

Heteronormativity, the privileging of heterosexuality as natural, forms a central component of social normativity in many countries around the world. It therefore constitutes a scale for judging or criticizing others and, regarding gender relations, provides an avenue for discrimination. Glick and Fiske (1997), for example, identify heterosexual intimacy as a component of the Ambivalent Sexism Theory. Indices of heterosexual intimacy – "viewing a female romantic partner as necessary for a man to be 'complete'" (Glick & Fiske 1997: 122) – were identified in the proverbs analyzed for this study. Indeed, quite a number of proverbs project heterosexual intimacy as exigent for men as well as women. The implication of the following examples is that an individual's successes matter little, as one cannot consider himself or herself an accomplished person without having a partner of the opposite sex. These ideologies are demonstrated in the following Spanish proverbs:

(29) Sin una mujer al lado, el hombre es un desdichado. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'Without a woman by his side, a man is wretched.'

(30) Quedarse para vestir santos. (Pérez Moreno 2016)
'Remain a spinster to dress saints.'

(31) Nave sin timón es mujer sin varón. (Fernández 1999: 18)
'A woman without a man is a ship without a rudder.'

(32) En la vida, la mujer, tres salidas ha de hacer: al bautismo, al casamiento y a la sepultura o monumento. (Fernández 1999: 188)
'In life, the woman must make three departures: to baptism, to marriage and to burial or monument.'

The above proverbs maintain the importance of marriage. They stress that one must marry to avoid contempt from society. Marriage and childbirth turn out to be the decisive milestones that define the relevance of the prototypical woman in many societies.

Another facet of heteronormativity that promotes sexism as postulated by Glick and Fiske (1996/1997) is heterosexual hostility. Heterosexual hostility refers to the merging of sex and power, the sexual objectification of women, and the belief that feminine sexuality enables women to gain control over men. In Spanish there are many proverbs that reproach women for their sexual behavior, whether decorous or liberated. Women are expected to be young and beautiful but very demure, and female sexual activity is reproached.

(33) Mujer que al andar culea, bien sé yo lo que desea. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'A woman who shakes her backside when she walks, I very well know what she wants.'

(34) Mujer que al andar culea, cartel en el culo lleva. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'A woman who sways her backside while walking, carries a signpost on her backside.'

(35) Una mujer hizo a un obispo cerner. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'A woman made a bishop fall.'

(36) La mujer puede tanto que hace pecar a un santo. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'A woman is so powerful that she can make even a saint sin.'

These proverbs may negatively influence the social order by encouraging aggression against women since they emphasize the 'threats' women pose with their sexuality.

(37) No hay mejor cuchillada que a la mujer y al fraile dada. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'There is no better stab than that given to the woman and the friar.'

(38) A las mujeres, o matarlas o dejarlas. (Martínez Kleiser 1978)
'Women should either be killed or left alone.'

(39) Mujer que llora, judío que jura y zorra que duerme, malicia tienen. (Fernández 1999: 187)
'A crying woman, a swearing jew, and a sleeping vixen are malicious.'

(40) Los enemigos del hombre son tres: tabaco, vino y mujer. (Fernández 1999: 188)
'The enemies of man are three: tobacco, wine and women.'

(41) A la mujer, el diablo le dio el saber. (Fernández 1999: 188)
'The devil gave woman knowledge.'

(42) Donde mujer no hay, el diablo la trae. (Fernández 1999: 188)
'Where there is no woman, the devil brings one.'

(43) Naipes, mujeres y vino, mal camino. (Fernández 1999: 185)
'Cards, women and wine, bad path.'

(44) La mujer da dos días buenos: el de su boda y el de su entierro.
'The woman gives two good days: her wedding day and her burial day.'

As in the examples provided in Section 4.2, in the above proverbs, an association is made between women and the devil (proverbs 41 and 42). They are thus depicted as deceitful (proverbs 39 and 43) and synonymous with temptation (proverb 43). By associating women with items or habits that cause addiction ('naipes', 'vino'), proverb 43 advises men to be wary of women in order not to lose control of their lives. Reference to feminine sexuality as destructive—a means used by women to deceive and gain control over men—can be observed in proverbs 35 and 36. Women are therefore described as men's enemies (40) and violence is encouraged (proverbs 37, 38 and 44) as a means of overcoming the 'deceits and malicious' influence of women.

5 Conclusion

Using the GCM, AST and FCDA, the current study set out to i) analyse gender stereotypes and ideologies in Spanish proverbs; ii) examine the construction and sustenance of masculinities and femininities within and through

proverbs; and iii) discuss the connection between masculinities, femininities, and social normativity. The findings show that gender-related stereotypes and ideologies that can be identified in these "frozen expressions" (Hellinger and Bußmann 2001: 16) are not always hostile. For instance, paternalism as reflected in the samples is sometimes dominative (hostile)—suggesting that women need to be controlled by men—and other times protective (benevolent)—built on the weaker vs. stronger sex dichotomy. Gender differentiation, or polarization as Bem (1993) puts it, is mostly competitive, projecting women as inferior and men as superior (hostile). On the other hand, instances of complementary gender differentiation also exist whereby women are seen to have positive traits when they conform to traditional gender roles such as mother or wife (benevolent). The heteronormative basis of ambivalent sexism was also uncovered in the proverb samples. Some of the proverbs showed heterosexual hostility which entails the sexual objectification of women and the belief that women are dangerous since they use their sexuality to gain control over men. In contrast, other proverbs also dictate the necessity of heterosexual intimacy (benevolent). This study has also shown that the antecedents of such chauvinist beliefs can be traced to the Great Chain of Being which, thanks to the "omnipresent, accessible, conventional" and "irreplaceable" (Lakoff and Turner 1989: xi) nature of metaphor, have permeated into our times.

These findings reveal that proverbs, as containers and reflectors par excellence of gendered ideologies, can police gender conformity and social normativity. This is achieved fundamentally through 1) advising generations on what it means to be a man or a woman, 2) persuading society on the legitimacy and justification of the gender order, 3) rebuking and ridiculing people who step outside their boundaries, and 4) reinforcing the assumptions and ideology that gender polarization is natural and necessary.

However, as the current study has shown, gender stereotypes are often inaccurate generalizations that have possible adverse social consequences. It is for this reason that gender activism through language analysis is needed in order to create an awareness of the powerful effects of gender ideologies and curtail their deleterious ramifications in society.

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08

...celles qui ne rêvent que d'une chose: être libérées et s'affranchir du voile...

Unravelling the discursive dynamics of sign making in the French Senate's debates on the hijab and the burkini

08

...celles qui ne rêvent que d'une chose: être libérées et s'affranchir du voile...

Unravelling the discursive dynamics of sign making in the French Senate's debates on the hijab and the burkini

Miriam Zapf

This contribution is concerned with the discourse on the hijab and the burkini within the French Senate. It explores the processes leading to the construction of these garments as socially meaningful signs and their implications for the discursive construction of "the Muslim woman." For this purpose, a corpus containing 18

debates regarding legislation on wearing a hijab or a burkini, held in the French Senate between 2018 and 2023, was compiled and analyzed, drawing from an intersectional approach that takes into consideration both gender and religious adherence. The analysis reveals that the hijab and the burkini are constructed as indexical signs of an affiliation to Islam in general, but also to a specific politico-religious ideology and as an instrument to impose this ideology. The depiction of alleged "Islamic" values – most notably gender inequality – standing in sharp contrast with "French" values suggests a need for France to defend "its" values against the perceived threat posed by Islam and/or Islamism (with the distinction between the two often being blurred), for which restrictions on wearing a hijab and a burkini seem to be the solution. From this, two images of hijab/burkini-wearing women are constructed: the oppressed woman suffering from (Muslim) patriarchy and unable to protect herself, and the militant woman refusing to take off the hijab or the burkini, thereby imposing her ideology on others. In the debates about the hijab, another image of the Muslim woman is drawn as a positive counterexample to and as a model for hijab-wearing women: the emancipated woman who has "freed" herself from the hijab. Both images of hijab/burkini-wearing women are depicted as deviating from Western norms or conventions of female behavior, either for not being emancipated or for not acting in a moderate way. Hence, Muslim women are othered, due to being both Muslim and female. In this reasoning, the only way to be accepted as French appears to be to remove the hijab/the burkini, that is, to fully assimilate and thus conform to Western conventions.

1 Introduction

In October 2021, the Council of Europe launched a social media campaign aimed at promoting tolerance and respect for diversity in general and hijab-wearing women in particular. This campaign was sharply criticized after its publication and finally withdrawn by the Council in November 2021. What led to a particularly strong controversy was the slogan "Beauty is in diversity as freedom is in hijab," displayed alongside a picture showing half the face of a woman with a headscarf and half the face of a woman without a headscarf.[1] Several right-wing French politicians accused the campaign of promoting the veiling of young wom-

[1] The poster, although deleted on the official Twitter (now X) account of the Council of Europe, has been reproduced by several newspaper articles and can, among others, be found in the following BBC article from November 3, 2021: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59149035 (accessed September 2023).

en.[2] However, critique also came from other political directions. In a debate in the French Senate, then Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian (*Parti Socialiste*) described the campaign as "choquante" ('shocking'),[3] and Sarah El Haïry (Secretary of State for Youth, *Mouvement démocrate*) said in an interview that it promotes the hijab as an element of identity.[4]

The debate generated by this campaign exemplifies a whole series of controversies around the hijab in France and other countries with high immigration from Muslim-majority countries. Questions of integration in these countries often deal with the role of perceived religious signs – among which the hijab seems to be the most prominent one – in public. In these debates, the hijab is attributed a high symbolic value, and the (supposed) position of Muslim women in society seems to be a yardstick for measuring the success of integration efforts. However, most of the time, the discourse is *on* Muslim women, rather than *with* them (cf. Amir-Moazami 2007: 18, Fredette 2014: 155): Women wearing a hijab are depicted as differing from Western conventions of dressing, i.e., as "Other." This raises questions about the processes which enable the interpretation of the hijab as a sign that refers directly to the Islamic religion and about the implications of this interpretation for the portrayal of women who wear it. These questions will be explored in more detail below.

For this purpose, debates within the French Senate (the upper house of the French parliament) regarding legislation on wearing a hijab and a burkini are analyzed, with a focus on the following questions: 1) How are the hijab and the burkini discursively constructed as socially meaningful signs, and what kind of signs are they?; and 2) How are women who don a hijab or a burkini – often perceived as the prototype of "the Muslim woman" – depicted and how does this connect to the meanings attributed to the hijab and the burkini?

The first question presupposes a constructivist perspective on signs, following Gal & Irvine (2019: 85) who assert that "[h]uman beings make signs by conjecturing – guessing, hypothesizing – about the meanings of everyday phenomena." How the hijab and the burkini are discursively filled with meaning will be examined in the following. The second question, which pertains to the consequences of this process for the discursive construction of "the Muslim woman," suggests an intersectional approach (cf. Crenshaw 1989) that takes into account the dimensions of gender and religion,

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[2] Cf., e.g., the following tweet by Eric Zemmour (founder and leader of the nationalist political party *Reconquête*): "L'islam est l'ennemi de la liberté. Cette campagne est l'ennemie de la vérité. Elle promeut le voilement des européennes. C'est du djihad publicitaire financé par vos impôts." 'Islam is the enemy of freedom. This campaign is the enemy of truth. It promotes the veiling of European women. It's a public advertising jihad financed by your taxes.' (https://twitter.com/ZemmourEric/status/1455504974708944898) Marine Le Pen (president of the far-right political party *Rassemblement National*, former *Front National*, from 2011 to 2022) commented the campaign in a similar way: "Cette communication européenne en faveur du voile islamiste est scandaleuse et indécente alors que des millions de femmes se battent avec courage contre cet asservissement, y compris en France. C'est quand les femmes retirent le voile qu'elles deviennent libres pas l'inverse !" 'This European communication in favor of the Islamist veil is scandalous and indecent, especially while millions of women are courageously fighting against this subjugation, including in France. It's when women remove the veil that they become free, not the other way round!' (https://twitter.com/MLP_officiel/status/1455511516019625997?lang=de, accessed July 2024)

[3] Cf. here: https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/282335-jean-yves-le-drian-03112021-laicite (accessed July 2024)

[4] Cf. here: https://twitter.com/i/status/1455621245781819393 (accessed July 2024)

assuming that discourses on this topic – often entailing processes of Othering of Muslims or even anti-Muslim racism – cannot be analyzed without considering both dimensions.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the social and ethno-religious meanings typically attributed to the veil in Western countries and calls them into question from a postcolonial and feminist perspective. Section 3 provides an overview of the legislation in France regarding (perceived) religious signs, along with key events that led to a reevaluation of the legislation. Section 4 introduces the corpus and the method employed for the analysis, and section 5 presents the results. This section is further divided into two parts: an examination of the discursive processes in the debate which lead to the perception of the hijab and the burkini as socially significant signs (section 5.1), and the implications of these processes vis-a-vis the portrayal of "the Muslim woman" (section 5.2). Finally, section 6 summarizes the findings and underscores the necessity of an intersectional approach to explain the discursive Othering of "the Muslim woman."

2 Meanings attributed to the veil[5]

In Western societies, the veil often features in debates about Islam in general and the integration of Muslim immigrants in particular. This can be attributed to the veil being perceived as a visible sign of adherence to the Islamic religion, and, from a Western perspective, as a "sign of difference" (Chakraborti & Zempi 2012: 270), insomuch as veiling violates (contemporary) Western conventions according to which women do not cover their hair.

In many instances, this perceived difference is framed negatively by interpreting the veil as a sign of women's oppression (cf., e.g., Bullock 2002: 122–133, Macdonald 2006: 8, Fredette 2014: 12), under the assumption that Muslim women do not cover voluntarily, but rather are forced to do so by Muslim men. In this way, the veil appears to challenge Western ideals of gender equality, which often leads to the stance that its wearing in public should be restricted (cf. Keaton 2006: 4). Additionally, veiling is often associated with the promotion of fundamentalism and terrorism (cf., e.g., Freedman 2007: 30, Perry 2014: 10, Gidaris 2018: n. pag.). This, again, is frequently presented as a reason for limiting its wearing in public spaces. Consequently, the veil is interpreted simplistically as a sign of negative values and interests commonly associated with Islam, or even Islamism, "reinforc[ing] the monocular representation of that religion" (Macdonald 2006: 8; cf. also Karim 1997: 156).

These portrayals of the veil shape common images of Muslim women often encountered in Western discourse on veiling, for example in mass media. On the one hand, Muslim women are attributed a passive role: They are assumed to be coerced into veiling against their will by Muslim men or their (Muslim) social environment; this portrays them as some kind of puppets and deprives them of agency (cf., e.g., Bullock & Jafri 2000: 36, Jiwani 2005: 63, Freedman 2007: 37, Dhamoon 2009: 134–135, Golnaraghi & Dye 2016: 148, Durrani 2020: 355). On the other hand, Muslim women are por-

[5] 'Veiling' can cover a wide range of different clothing, from the headscarf (e.g., *hijab*) to the face-veil (e.g., *niqab*) to the full-body veil (e.g., *burqa*) (cf., e.g., Mir 2021: 436), 'veil' often being used as an umbrella term.

trayed as dangerous extremists who threaten the Western world (cf., e.g., Bullock & Jafri 2000: 36, Freedman 2007: 30, Khiabany & Williamson 2008: 77).

These two images, although partly contradicting each other (cf. Shooman 2014: 29, Gidaris 2018: n. pag.), present Muslim women as a counterimage to the ideal of Western women. Additionally, they homogenize Muslim society, especially Muslim women, by attributing the same experiences to all women (cf. Freedman 2007: 31, Chakraborti & Zempi 2012: 275, Golnaraghi & Mills 2013: 166, Fredette 2014: 8). Consequently, as Bilge (2010: 10) puts it, "the veiled Muslim woman has been turned into an allegory of undesirable cultural difference."[6]

Many researchers have called into question this simplistic interpretation of women's veiling. Historically, veiling was not exclusively linked to Islam or to women; additionally, it has fulfilled a variety of functions for Muslim women in the course of history and according to their cultural and socio-economic situation (cf. Hoodfar 1997, el Guindi 1999). In sharp contrast to the current conventional Western interpretation of veiling as a sign of a lack of agency, the veil came to be seen as a tool of resistance: During the colonization of Algeria, French colonizers regarded Algerian women as the guardians of Algerian culture (and thus of Algerian society), and viewed the veil as emblematic of their status (cf. Fanon 1965 [1959]: 36–38). In this context, the unveiling of Algerian women could be seen as a metaphor for conquering Algerian society: "[H]aving access to [Algerian women] and their bodies symbolized the means for a successful penetration to the heart of the colonized culture." (Yeğenoğlu 2005: 141) As a result, veiling was interpreted as women's refusal to submit to French domination: "[F]or the colonial gaze, just wearing the veil was a sufficient sign of resistance" (Yeğenoğlu 2005: 142, cf. also Golnaraghi & Dye 2016: 140–141).

Studies conducted in Western countries among Muslim women who cover reveal that they ascribe a variety of meanings or functions to the veil, including self-determination, empowerment, affirmation of ethno-religious identity, modesty, resistance, and agency (cf., e.g., Gaspard & Khosrokhavar 1995, el Guindi 1999, Bullock 2002, Amir-Moazami 2007, Freedman 2007, Golnaraghi & Dye 2016). Hence, the reductionist Western view on veiling has been criticized from diverse angles, most notably from postcolonial and feminist perspectives.[7]

From a postcolonial perspective, common Western interpretations of the veil are highly problematic for two reasons. Firstly, they portray Islam as backward and uncivilized, culturalizing the religion and implying a superiority of Western cultures (cf. Barskanmaz 2009: 366, Ahmed 2021: 152–155); this perpetuates Orientalist (cf. Said 1978) and colonial narratives. Secondly, they legitimize Western intervention and imposition of their own norms, e.g., through legislation that restricts veiling in public; this suggests that Muslim women need to be protected (cf. Abu-Lughod 2002: 788–789, Golnaraghi & Dye 2016: 140, Panighel 2022: 158–

[6] This strongly reminds Huntington's (1996) highly criticized notion of a "clash of civilizations," which suggests that future global conflicts will primarily revolve around cultural differences. The Western and the Islamic civilization are among the major civilizations he identifies.

[7] Scholars have pointed out that, if Muslim women's voices are heard in this discourse, only those opposed to the veil are taken into consideration, while women who defend veiling are largely ignored (cf., e.g., Bilge 2010: 16).

159) – a narrative Spivak (1988: 296) resumes (albeit in a slightly different context) with the sentence "White men are saving brown women from brown men."

Portraying Muslim women as helpless victims is also criticized from a (non-Western or intersectional) feminist perspective. As many studies have shown (cf. above), veiling can be a means of agency and resistance, most notably against Western norms and Western hegemony – and, as such, also against Western men. In this respect, veiling could be interpreted as a feminist statement, an opposition to (Western) patriarchy. Moreover, veiling has been described as a "means of protection from the male gaze" (Zine 2006: 243, cf. also Read & Bartkowski 2000: 404–406), hence as "an empowering move that represents a feminist stance for resisting the hegemony of sexualized representations of the female body" (Zine 2006: 243).[8] Framing the veil as a sign of oppression thus draws from a specific Western perspective on feminism.

The arguments above suggest that in order to understand the Western construction of "the Muslim woman," it is crucial to take into consideration both gender and religion. This reasoning has led to the concept of 'gendered Islamophobia,' according to which the notion of Islamophobia[9] alone, describing a gender-neutral form of cultural racism against Muslims, cannot account for specific forms of discrimination against Muslim women, who may encounter forms of violence or hatred stemming from their dual identity as a Muslim and a woman (cf. Chakraborti & Zempi 2012, Perry 2014, Alimahomed-Wilson 2020, Durrani 2020).

Previous studies have examined the meanings associated with veiling (cf., e.g., the studies cited above) but have hardly explored the specific processes through which the veil was constructed as a meaningful sign, or the specific type of connection established between the veil and the meanings attributed to it. Studies on the discourse about Muslim women have typically focused on media debates (e.g., Bullock & Jafri 2000, Jiwani 2005, Schiffer 2007, Khiabany & Williamson 2008, Byng 2010, El-Menouar 2019) and few concentrate on debates within political institutions (e.g., Terray 2004, Halm et al. 2007, Roggeband & Lettinga 2016). Additionally, many of the studies were carried out more than fifteen years ago, which calls into question whether their results are still applicable today. Furthermore, previous studies on this topic stem mainly from areas such as sociology, anthropology, and political sciences, while linguistic scholars have focused on this subject to a lesser extent. As a result, the linguistic devices employed in this discourse have not been fully examined – a research gap that the present study aims to address.

3 Legislation on veiling in France in the light of *laïcité*

Article 1 of the French Constitution stipulates:

[8] Of course, it has to be mentioned that in this interpretation, it is the women's responsibility to protect their bodies from the male gaze (cf. Zine 2006: 243) which, in turn, can be seen as an anti-feminist stance.

[9] The concept of Islamophobia itself has faced criticism, most notably because {phobia} pathologizes hatred/racism and because it implies that it is the religion itself that is feared/hated rather than individuals who adhere to it. Moreover, the lack of a precise definition for the concept has raised concerns, as it is applied to encompass a wide range of phenomena, from mere critiques of Islam to overt racism against Muslims (cf., e.g., Halliday 1999, Kahlweiß & Salzborn 2012, Pfahl-Traughber 2012). Additionally, Amir-Moazami (2007: 19) points out that the concept portrays Muslims as passive victims, thereby perpetuating an Orientalist narrative.

> La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale. Elle assure l'égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion. Elle respecte toutes les croyances.[10]
>
> 'France is an indivisible, secular, democratic, and social Republic. It guarantees equality before the law for all citizens without distinction of origin, race, or religion. It respects all beliefs.'

The fact that the principle of *laïcité* – often translated as 'secularism' into English – is mentioned in the Constitution's very first article shows that it holds a special place in France, and current legislation on veiling must be seen in this light.

The *Loi concernant la separation des Églises et de l'État* ('Law on the Separation of the Churches and the State'), enacted in 1905, is seen today as the law introducing *laïcité* in France, although the word 'laïcité' is not explicitly mentioned. It guarantees religious freedom and neutrality of the state in religious issues.[11] However, it was preceded by several laws concerning religious neutrality in public schools, namely the *Lois Ferry* (1881, 1882) and the *Loi Goblet* (1886). The *Lois Ferry* made public primary education secular, free of charge, and compulsory for boys and girls. Most notably, the influence of religious institutions was limited, and religious instruction was removed from the official curriculum.[12] The *Loi Goblet* expanded secularism in schools, stipulating that the staff at public schools must be secular.[13] The principle of *laïcité* has been reinforced several times throughout the years, for example via the *Charte de la laïcité à l'école* ('Charter of *laïcité* in schools'), published in 2013, or the *Charte de la laïcité dans les services publiques* ('Charter of *laïcité* in public services'), published in 2021.[14]

Legislation within the framework of *laïcité* and its interpretation frequently sparks controversial debates in France, most notably regarding the hijab in schools, the full-body veil in public spaces, and the burkini at public beaches and in swimming pools (cf. Mir 2021). The hijab came under debate in 1989, when

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10 Cf. here: https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/le-bloc-de-constitutionnalite/texte-integral-de-la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958-en-vigueur (accessed July 2024)

11 The first two articles of this law read as follows: "Article 1. La République assure la liberté de conscience. Elle garantit le libre exercice des cultes sous les seules restrictions édictées ci-après dans l'intérêt de l'ordre public. Article 2. La République ne reconnaît, ne salarie ni ne subventionne aucun culte. […]" ('Article 1. The French Republic ensures freedom of conscience. It guarantees the free exercise of worship under the sole restrictions set forth below in the interest of public order. Article 2. The French Republic neither recognizes, nor subsidizes, nor wages any religion.') Cf. here: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000000508749 (accessed July 2024)

12 Cf. here: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000877118 (*Loi du 16 juin 1881 établissant la gratuité absolue de l'enseignement primaire dans les écoles publiques* 'Law of June 16, 1881, establishing the absolute exemption from costs of primary education in public schools') and here: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGITEXT000006070887 (*Loi du 28 mars 1882 portant sur l'organisation de l'enseignement primaire* 'Law of March 28, 1882, regarding the organization of primary education', accessed July 2024)

13 Cf. here: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGITEXT000006070886 (*Loi du 30 octobre 1886 portant sur l'organisation de l'enseignement primaire* 'Law of October 30, 1886, regarding the organization of primary education'), particularly Article 17: "Dans les écoles publiques de tout ordre, l'enseignement est exclusivement confié à un personnel laïque." ('In public schools of all levels, education is exclusively entrusted to secular staff.' accessed July 2024)

14 Cf. here: https://www.education.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2024-03/charte-de-la-la-cit-a4-43565.pdf and here: https://www.info.gouv.fr/upload/media/organization/0001/01/sites_default_files_contenu_piece-jointe_2022_12_charte_de_la_laicite-.pdf (accessed November 2025)

three students in Creil (a French commune in the Oise department) refused to take it off in school and were consequently expelled. This was followed by a series of similar incidents in different places in France (cf. Killian 2003: 567–568). Finally, with the *Loi encadrant, en application du principe de laïcité, le port de signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les écoles, collèges et lycées publics* ('Law regulating, in accordance with the principle of *laïcité*, the wearing of symbols or clothing indicating religious affiliation in public schools'), enacted in 2004, students in public primary and secondary schools were forbidden to wear conspicuous religious symbols,[15] which was interpreted to refer primarily to the hijab. Since then, debates on donning a hijab in public schools have repeatedly flared up, for instance whether the ban also applies to school trips. Additionally, the hijab has been under discussion in several other contexts, for example, whether donning a hijab should generally be prohibited to underage girls.[16]

Another important law in this context is the *Loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public* ('Law prohibiting the concealment of the face in public space'), adopted in 2010, which prohibits the wearing of clothing that covers the face in public spaces.[17] While it was officially framed as a measure to ensure public security, it was particularly debated with regard to Muslim women, since it was interpreted to refer mainly to the full-body veil (cf. Fornerod 2016).

In recent years, another item of clothing worn by some Muslim women has attracted public attention, namely the burkini, a swimsuit that covers the head and the body, but not the face, the hands, or the feet. In 2016, several French municipalities banned burkinis from public beaches, which, once again, led to controversies across the country (cf. Almeida 2018). The topic came up again several times, for instance in 2019, when a controversy arose about whether wearing a burkini should be allowed or forbidden in public swimming pools in Grenoble, which even led to the involvement of the *Conseil d'État* (Council of State).[18]

Topics related to clothing associated with being Muslim and supposedly challenging the principle of *laïcité* are repeatedly discussed in France, both in media and in politics. In what follows, some of the political debates on this matter are examined in more detail, focusing on depictions of the hijab/the burkini and portrayals of "the Muslim woman" in debates in the French Senate.

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15 Cf. here: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000417977/ (accessed July 2024). Literally, the law stipulates in its first article: "Dans les écoles, les collèges et les lycées publics, le port de signes ou tenues par lesquels les élèves manifestent ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse est interdit." ('In public primary and secondary schools, the wearing of symbols or clothing through which students visibly demonstrate religious affiliation is prohibited.')

16 Cf. also the debates in the corpus analyzed in this paper.

17 Cf. here: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000022911670 (accessed July 2024). Article 2 also clarifies what is considered "public space": "[L]'espace public est constitué des voies publiques ainsi que des lieux ouverts au public ou affectés à un service public." 'The public space consists of public roads as well as places open to the public or dedicated to a public service.'

18 For more details, cf. here: https://www.conseil-etat.fr/actualites/le-conseil-d-etat-confirme-la-suspension-du-reglement-interieur-des-piscines-de-la-ville-de-grenoble-autorisant-le-port-du-burkini (accessed July 2024). Cf. also the debates on this issue in the corpus.

4 Corpus and method

The corpus used for the following analysis consists of debates in the French Senate on the hijab[19] and the burkini which took place between April 2018 and June 2023. It was compiled via the Senate's website, which contains videos and transcripts of its public sessions,[20] using the search terms 'hijab,' 'foulard,' 'voile islamique,' and 'burkini.' The parts of the debates discussing issues related to these topics were then extracted from the provided transcripts, resulting in a final version of the corpus which consists of 15 debates on the hijab and three debates on the burkini, with a total duration of 8:07:25h (6:58:33h on the hijab and 1:08:52h on the burkini).[21] The debates on the hijab predominantly deal with the application or extension of existing laws, for instance, regarding the questions of whether mothers accompanying school trips should be allowed to wear a hijab, or whether wearing a hijab should be tolerated during sports events. One debate also addresses the campaign of the Council of Europe mentioned in section 1. The debates on the burkini revolve around the questions of whether the burkini should be banned from public swimming pools and how the French Government should react to a group of women who resisted the ban of the burkini in a swimming pool in Grenoble in 2019.

The corpus compilation was followed by an in-depth analysis. To this end, passages containing both explicit and implicit depictions of the hijab and the burkini were examined to unravel the dynamics of "sign making" (Gal & Irvine 2019: 89) in these debates. It became evident that some of the meanings associated with the hijab and the burkini are directly or indirectly contrasted with values considered "French" in the corpus, and that this contrast forms part of the process through which these garments are constructed as signs; therefore, passages referring to these values were analyzed in more detail as well.

Subsequently, to retrace how the image of "the Muslim woman" is drawn in the debates, statements about women and girls who wear a hijab or a burkini were scrutinized. In doing so, aspects of gender as well as of religion were taken into consideration. These findings were related to the uncovered processes which construct the hijab/the burkini as a sign; this helped to explain the portrayal of "the Muslim woman" in the corpus.

As is evident from the proportions in the corpus (more than 85 % of the debates deal with the hijab, cf. above), the analysis primarily focuses on statements about the hijab, while those about the burkini were analyzed with the intention to complement the findings. The construction of the hijab and the burkini as socially meaningful signs occur in a similar manner. For this reason, statements about the hijab and the burkini are not analyzed separately. However, noteworthy differences in the attributed symbolic meanings are acknowledged when present.

The analysis of the processes of sign making in these debates is based on Gal & Irvine's (2019) theoretical framework on the construction of difference through language. As

[19] In order to avoid ambiguity in this article, the term 'hijab' is used to refer to the headscarf used by some Muslim women to cover their hair, which is under discussion in the analyzed Senate's debates.

[20] Cf. here: https://videos.senat.fr/videos (accessed July 2024)

[21] More information on the corpus is provided in the appendix.

mentioned above, they state that signs are always created as such: "Nothing is a sign in itself, but any phenomenon recognizable by participants can (potentially) be taken as a sign." (Gal & Irvine 2019: 89) They call this process of sign making 'conjecturing' and describe it in the following way: "The conjecture connects a phenomenon posited as a sign to some other phenomenon conjectured to be its object." (Gal & Irvine 2019: 90) Hence, the analysis will focus on the processes that make the hijab and the burkini a socially meaningful sign.

In this process of sign making, only specific elements are highlighted, while others are ignored. Gal & Irvine (2019: 20) describe this as an 'erasure':

> *Erasure* is that aspect of ideological work through which some phenomena […] are rendered invisible. Whatever is inconsistent with the ideologized schema either goes unnoticed or is explained away.

Importantly, it often goes unnoticed that a sign was (discursively) made. According to Gal & Irvine (2019: 107), this is also a form of 'erasure': "Perhaps most consequential is the systematic forgetting – erasure – of the metasemiotic step by which conjecture itself creates the link between sign and object."

According to Gal & Irvine (2019), another important step in establishing differences between groups is comparison, a process which can create an "axis of differentiation":

> Contrasting, complementary qualities – formulated as defining each other in some socio-historical imaginary – constitute an axis. Axes usually consist of large clusters of paired, contrasting qualities that make two contrasting multidimensional images. Since the qualities of these contrasting pairs are complementary, one "side" of the contrast is ideologically defined as what the other is not. […] Any axis of differentiation is a totalizing schema. When invoked it divides a whole world of phenomena into qualitatively contrasting images or "sides." (Gal & Irvine 2019: 118)

The notions of 'conjecturing,' 'erasure,' and 'axis of difference' thus provide the framework for the following analysis.

It is important to mention that, for the analysis, the political affiliation of the respective speakers was not considered because the research question did not pertain to whether the hijab and the burkini are depicted differently according to political beliefs. Rather, the aim is to understand the overall discursive construction of the signs under discussion as well as the image of "the Muslim woman" that emerges from the contributions in the Senate's debates. However, during the analysis, it became evident that it is largely conservative and right-wing politicians who shape the discourse on these topics; critical statements towards this dominant discourse, in turn, usually come from left-leaning politicians. In order to be transparent in this regard, the faction affiliation of the speaker is indicated for each quote. In cases where the speaker is not a member of the French Senate, the political position that they held at the time is indicated instead.

5 Results

5.1 The process of sign making

5.1.1 Constructing the hijab and the burkini as an index

The hijab and the burkini as an index for religious adherence

In numerous comments in the debates, the hijab and the burkini are described in a direct manner by adjectives and subject complements. In these descriptions, the nouns *signe* 'sign' and *symbole* 'symbol' are used particularly often. Not surprisingly, in many of these statements, the hijab is first labeled as a sign of the Islamic religion:[22]

(1) […] le voile, quel qu'il soit, est non pas un simple accessoire de mode, un simple élément vestimentaire, mais **un signe ostentatoire d'appartenance religieuse**.
'the veil, regardless of its type, is not a mere fashion accessory, a mere piece of clothing, but **an ostentatious sign of a religious affiliation**.' (Sylvie Goy-Chavent, groupe Les Républicains, 05/15/2019)

(2) L'école publique doit demeurer un espace où les élèves ne sont exposés à aucun **signe religieux ostentatoire**.
'Public schools must remain a space where students are not exposed to any **ostentatious religious sign**.' (Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, groupe Les Républicains, 05/15/2019)

The burkini is also explicitly labelled as a symbol. However, there is a difference insofar as it is associated with Islamism rather than with Islam in general. This is illustrated, among others, by the following statement:

(3) Le burkini est **un symbole** non pas de l'islam – nous sommes tous d'accord sur ce point –, mais de **l'islamisme**, c'est-à-dire d'**un projet totalitaire**.
'The burkini is **a symbol** not of Islam – we all agree on this point – but of **Islamism**, that is to say, of **a totalitarian project**.' (Max Brisson, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021c)

In such comments, the hijab and the burkini are discursively made signs by labelling them as such and by connecting them to a specific meaning, namely the adherence to the Islamic religion. It is crucial to notice that this process of conjecturing is highly arbitrary: Instead of the hijab, for example, one could also interpret women's (visible) hair as a sign (cf. the discourse on women in Iran described in section 5.2, where showing their hair is associated with freedom). However, the choice of what is made a sign reveals what is perceived as a deviation from the norm, and consistently (re)constructing this sign in discourse might also perpetuate this norm. In the present case,

[22] The quotes are presented as they appear in the transcripts provided on the French Senate's website; comments related to proceedings during the speeches, such as applause or interruptions, have been excluded. The relevant words or passages in each quote are highlighted in bold; all bold formatting in the quotes of this paper has been applied by the author. Additionally, if it is not clear from the comment whether it refers to the hijab or the burkini, an indication is provided in square brackets. The respective debates are identified via the date when they took place, indicated in the MM/DD/YYYY format. For more information, see appendix.

showing hair is considered "normal" behavior for women, aligning with what the majority of European women do, and covering one's hair is viewed as an exception. The same process can be observed with the burkini. Here, considering the burkini as a sign implies – and perpetuates – a (highly arbitrary) norm in which a bikini is the standard swimwear.

A closer examination of how the hijab and the burkini are discursively linked to Islam, or even Islamism,[23] reveals that this relationship is based on contiguity. Both the hijab and the burkini are perceived as garments worn by women of Muslim faith (or, in the case of the burkini, by women following a radicalized and politicized version of Islamic beliefs), and this contiguity is interpreted in such a way that the hijab and the burkini come to index the religion of its wearers. Thus, both are constructed as indices in the Peircean sense. As mentioned above, this process of conjecturing occurs in a very direct manner since the speakers explicitly designate the hijab and the burkini as a *signe* 'sign' or a *symbole* 'symbol'. However, the speakers depict the hijab and the burkini as if they were "objectively" an index of the Islamic religion. Hence, the signs are not perceived as constructed, but rather as "natural," which indicates that a form of 'erasure' (cf. Gal & Irvine 2019: 107) has occurred here.

At the same time, an adherence to the Islamic religion is negatively framed in these statements, particularly by highlighting the visibility of the hijab (cf. "signe ostentatoire" in (1) and (2)). If the hijab is perceived as indexing a religious adherence, and if the visibility of this sign is deemed undesirable (cf. (2), where the negative qualities associated to the hijab are indicated by the verb *exposer* 'expose'), one can deduce that it is, in fact, an adherence to the Islamic faith that is considered undesirable. Hence, veiling is not only depicted as a deviation from Western norms, but also as a deviation from a normative ideal. Furthermore, these statements contain an implied accusation that women wearing a hijab or a burkini are somehow showing them off. Considering the discursively established relation between these garments and the Islamic faith, the speakers implicitly accuse these women of flaunting their religion. In this reasoning, it appears to be impossible to wear a hijab or a burkini in an unobtrusive way, which finally suggests that only a private, or even secret, adherence to the Islamic religion would be tolerated.

The hijab and the burkini as an index for a specific ideology

This negative framing of the Islamic faith is made more explicit in numerous statements, in which the hijab and the burkini are not only constructed as an index of the religion itself, but further as an index of a specific ideology in terms of gender roles and social control. They are labelled, among others, as signs or symbols of gender inequality, as well as of totalitarianism, communitarianism, and terrorism.

[23] While 'Islam' refers to a faith, 'Islamism' denotes a politico-religious ideology. As Ṭībī (2012: 1) explains: "In the case of Islamism, the religionization of politics means the promotion of a political order that is believed to emanate from the will of Allah and is not based on popular sovereignty. Islam itself does not do this. As a faith, cult, and ethical framework, it implies certain political values but does not presuppose a particular order of government. Islamism grows out of a specific interpretation of Islam, but is not Islam: it is a political ideology that is distinct from the teaching of the religion of Islam." However, in the debates analyzed here, Islam and Islamism are often not clearly distinguished.

This becomes clear in statements like the following ones:

(4) Il est de notre responsabilité de dire haut et fort que nous ne pouvons pas accepter que, en France comme ailleurs, une petite fille porte **ce signe d'infériorisation**. [in reference to the hijab]
'It is our responsibility to say loudly and clearly that we cannot accept that, in France as elsewhere, a little girl wears **this sign of inferiorization**.' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 10/05/2022)

(5) […] le hijab, **pire symbole de l'infériorisation, de l'enfermement** et **de la négation du corps de la femme** […].
'the hijab, **worst symbol of inferiorization, confinement,** and **the negation of the woman's body**' (Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, groupe Les Républicains, 07/08/2020)

(6) Dans le temple du savoir et de la connaissance qu'est l'université, on ne saurait tolérer **un tel symbole d'asservissement de la femme**.
'In the temple of knowledge and learning that is university, **such a symbol of women's subjugation** cannot be tolerated.' (Stéphane Ravier, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique,[24] 03/30/2021a)

(7) […] il faut une réponse globale aux **dérives communautaristes**. À l'évidence, dans ce domaine, le port du voile est **un élément emblématique** […] ! [in reference to the hijab]
'we need a global response to the **communal deviations**. Clearly, in this domain, wearing the veil is **an emblematic element**' (Jean Louis Masson, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique, 10/29/2019)

(8) On voit donc bien qu'il y a derrière ces accoutrements non pas tellement un signal religieux, mais **le signe d'une contre-société sexiste**, qui dit aux femmes qu'elles sont inférieures aux hommes et qu'elles doivent se soumettre, et qui veut séparer une communauté des croyants de la communauté des citoyens, de la communauté nationale. [in reference to the burkini]
'So we can clearly see that behind these outfits, there is not so much a religious signal, but **the sign of a sexist counter-society**, telling women that they are inferior to men, that they must submit, and aiming at separating a community of believers from the community of citizens, from the national community.' (Bruno Retailleau, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021c)

This link between the hijab and the burkini on the one hand, and interests or values like gender inequality and totalitarianism on the other, can be understood as a secondary form of conjecture. As Gal & Irvine (2019: 101) note, a previously established link between a sign and an object (in the broadest sense) can be the basis for further links: "[W]herever one starts, a chain of abductions unfolds through acts of conjecture, metasemiotically building on previous conjectures, typifications and sign relations of both iconicity and indexicality." In the present case, the hijab and the burkini can be constructed as indices for gender inequality and totalitarianism because Islam itself is

[24] This term refers to the 'administrative grouping of senators who do not appear on the list of any political group'.

commonly associated with them. Hence, the indexical connections *hijab/burkini → Islam/Islamism* and *Islam/Islamism → gender inequality and totalitarianism* are blended, resulting in a connection *hijab/burkini → gender inequality and totalitarianism*. Consequently, the construction of the hijab and the burkini as an index for these interests or values works through the intermediary step of constituting them as an index for Islam (or, in the case of the burkini, of Islamism).[25] This is possible because, as mentioned above, a process of 'erasure' has taken place, which means that the hijab and the burkini are not recognized as arbitrary and discursively constructed signs of the Islamic religion, but rather perceived as "natural" signs. In the same vein, the hijab and the burkini are now represented as "natural" signs of a particular ideology, which shows that, as before, the process of conjecturing is 'erased.'

Once again, the visibility of these (supposed) religious signs is negatively evaluated by implying that wearing them means flaunting them. This becomes clear in statements where the hijab is labelled as an *étendard*, a 'banner,' which is displayed publicly, like in the following examples:

(9) Le voile doit être interdit dans l'espace public parce que, outre son caractère discriminant, il sert aujourd'hui d'**étendard aux revendications communautaires et islamistes**.
'The veil must be prohibited in public spaces because, in addition to its discriminatory nature, it serves today as **a banner for communitarian and Islamist demands**.' (Stéphane Ravier, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique, 03/30/2021b)

(10) Alors que le voile semble être la pierre angulaire du régime des mollahs en Iran, le Gouvernement va-t-il enfin admettre qu'il s'agit d'**un étendard politico-religieux** ?[26]
'While the veil appears to be the cornerstone of the regime of the mullahs in Iran, will the French government finally admit that it is **a politico-religious banner**?' (Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, groupe Les Républicains, 10/05/2022)

[25] However, some speakers do criticize this direct association between hijab or burkini and Islam/Islamism, for example in the following statement which is made in one of the debates about the burkini: "Mais réduire, dans tous nos discours, le fait religieux et les croyances religieuses à des considérations textiles, cela n'a aucun sens !" 'But reducing, in all our speeches, religious facts and religious beliefs to textile considerations, this makes no sense!' (Jean-Pierre Sueur, groupe Socialiste, Écologiste et Républicain, 03/30/2021c)

[26] Note the suggestive wording here: It presupposes that the hijab is an *étendard politico-religieux* ('a politico-religious banner'), and the question at hand is merely whether this is admitted or not.

Hence, through linking the hijab not only to the Islamic faith, but to a specific, negatively evaluated ideology, women wearing a hijab are accused of propagating "their" ideology.[27] This accusation becomes even more evident in the statements analyzed below.

The hijab and the burkini as an instrument to impose a specific ideology

In other statements, the hijab and the burkini are not only labelled as a sign or symbol but are even depicted as an instrument for the implementation of what is considered to be the interests of Muslims (or, more specifically, Muslim men). This becomes evident in numerous examples, among which the following ones:

(11) […] personne ne m'a jamais prise en défaut lorsqu'il s'est agi de qualifier le voile islamique[28], l'abaya, le hijab, tous ces oripeaux, pour ce qu'ils sont: **les outils d'un projet religieux et politique**, qui tous portent en eux l'oppression et la domination des femmes […].
'no one has ever found fault with me when it came to describing the Islamic veil, the abaya, the hijab, all these garments, for what they are: **the tools of a religious and political project**, which all carry within them the oppression and domination of women' (Laurence Rossignol, groupe Socialiste, Écologiste et Républicain, 10/05/2022)

(12) Monsieur le Premier ministre, le voile est-il, oui ou non, **un instrument d'oppression des femmes** ?
'Mister Prime Minister, is the veil, yes or no, **an instrument of women's oppression**?' (Céline Boulay-Espéronnier, groupe Les Républicains, 03/07/2019)

(13) […] fondé sur le jugement que les femmes seraient impudiques, ou, pire encore, impures, et qu'elles seraient susceptibles d'éveiller chez les hommes des pulsions incontrôlables, le voile est **une arme politique**, bien évidemment contraire à nos valeurs.
'based on the judgement that women would be immodest, or, even worse, impure, and that they could awaken uncontrollable impulses in men, the veil is **a political weapon**, obviously contrary to our values.' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 11/03/2021)

(14) […] on sait de quoi le burkini est le nom : c'est **un interdit de fraternité, un interdit d'égalité,**

[27] These comments characterize adherents of the Muslim faith rather indirectly by referring to the values or interests they supposedly stand for. However, although to a small extent, there are also some comments in the corpus in which Muslims are more openly discriminated against. In the following example, in which the us/them-dichotomy is particularly pronounced, the speaker accuses Muslim immigrants not only for a lack of will to adapt to French norms, but also of being radical terrorists: "Monsieur le Premier ministre, par le passé, les immigrés qui venaient en France voulaient s'intégrer dans notre société. Aujourd'hui, les flux migratoires sont différents. Ils conduisent à des noyaux communautaristes qui rejettent notre façon de vivre. Or les terroristes musulmans trouvent leur vivier de recrutement dans le communautarisme radicalisé. Cette radicalisation recrute elle-même dans le communautarisme ordinaire. Il est urgent de réagir." 'Mister Prime Minister, in the past, the immigrants who came to France wanted to integrate into our society. Today, the migratory flows are different. They lead to communitarian cores that reject our way of life. So, the Muslim terrorists find their recruiting pool in the radicalized communitarianism. This radicalization, in turn, recruits in the ordinary communitarianism. It is time to react.' (Jean Louis Masson, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique, 10/16/2019) A bit later in his speech, he adds: "C'est aux gens qui viennent dans notre pays de s'adapter à nos règles de vie et non à nous de subir les leurs !" 'It is for the people who come to our country to adapt to our rules of life and not for us to endure theirs!', distinguishing once again very clearly between the in- and the outgroup.

[28] The common designation 'voile islamique' makes evident that the hijab is perceived as a "natural" index of the Islamic faith, which underscores that the process of conjecturing has been 'erased.'

un interdit de liberté. Il est là pour **séparer les hommes des femmes** […].

'we know what the burkini represents: it's **a prohibition of fraternity, a prohibition of equality, a prohibition of freedom**. It is there to **separate men from women**' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021c)

(15) Or, en réalité – ce n'est pas la peine d'être naïf ! –, tout le monde sait que le burkini est devenu pour des associations islamistes **un élément de combat et de provocation permanente**.

'However, in reality – there is no need to be naïve! – everyone knows that the burkini has become for Islamist associations **an element of combat and of constant provocation**.' (Roger Karoutchi, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021c)

In these statements, the hijab and the burkini are not depicted as indexing a religious adherence or a particular ideology anymore, but seem to assume an active role, insofar as they are perceived as a means to impose this ideology on others. Hence, they are ascribed a performative force. According to such comments, simply by wearing these garments, it is possible to enforce Islamist interests. Additionally, wearing them is presented as an inherently provoking or aggressive act (cf. especially (15)), which suggests that the hijab and the burkini are not only perceived as possible instruments to impose these interests, but that imposing these interests might even be their sole purpose. Alternative reasons for which women might wear a hijab are thus ignored, which constitutes a process of 'erasure' in the sense of "explaining away" (Gal & Irvine 2019: 21) aspects that do not fit.

Interestingly, it is the hijab and the burkini that are the focus in these statements; the women who wear them are often not even mentioned, which creates the impression that the hijab and the burkini are somewhat independent of them – it is not the women, but the garments that unfold the performative force. Thus, Muslim women become literally invisible behind the hijab/the burkini.[29]

5.1.2 Opposing "French" values to "Islamic" values

A France/Islam axis of differentiation

The construction of the hijab and the burkini as socially meaningful signs occurs not only through direct descriptions of these garments, as analyzed above, but also by depicting some values as specifically French, thereby creating a sharp opposition between "French" and supposedly "Islamic" values. In the debates, speakers frequently make references to what they label *valeurs républicaines* 'republican values,' implying that wearing a hijab or a burkini – and, against the backdrop of the established link between hijab/burkini and Islam, an adherence to the Islamic religion in general – is not compatible with these values. This becomes evident when speakers point to these values as an argument for strict laws against the hijab, like in the following examples:

[29] In this context, cf. the following comment in which the speaker criticizes that the focus is on the hijab rather than on women: "Où est l'humain dans cet amendement ? Je me le demande. Une maman voilée n'est-elle plus une maman ?" 'Where is the human being in this amendment? I wonder. Is a veiled mother no longer a mother?' (Daniel Salmon, groupe Écologiste - Solidarité et Territoires, 03/30/21a)

(16) L'école, à mon sens, doit rester un sanctuaire, un abri pour permettre à tous les enfants de grandir avec **les valeurs républicaines**.
'School, in my opinion, must remain a sanctuary, a refuge to allow all children to grow up with **the republican values**.' (Colette Mélot, groupe Les Indépendants - République et Territoires, 10/29/2019)

(17) […] pour nous, l'école est un sanctuaire, un sanctuaire républicain ! Nous n'y accepterons aucune atteinte **aux valeurs de la République**.[30]
'for us, school is a sanctuary, a republican sanctuary! We will not accept any infringement on **the values of the Republic**.' (Sarah El Haïry, Secretary of State for Youth, 10/10/22)

Not further specifying these values creates the impression that wearing a hijab or a burkini does not enter into conflict with a specific value, but rather with French society as a whole. What makes this contrast with French values seem even more pronounced is the portrayal of French society as standing unitedly behind these values, which are allegedly threatened by the hijab and the burkini. Speakers often refer to French citizens without using partitives or hedges; this suggests that the entire (non-Muslim) French population holds the same opinion. This is enforced by pronoun use. Speakers frequently use the first-person plural pronoun *nous* 'we,' seemingly in reference to all non-Muslims. In the same vein, when addressing "French" values, speakers regularly use the first-person plural possessive *notre* 'our':

(18) **Nous** sommes **tous** très heureux, me semble-t-il, d'**avoir en commun** l'héritage républicain ; il est ce qui **nous unit tous ensemble** et ce qui **fonde notre contrat social**.
'**We** are **all** very happy, it seems to me, to **have in common** the republican heritage; it is what **unites us all together** and what **forms the basis of our social contract**.' (Jean-Michel Blanquer, Minister of National Education and Youth, 10/16/2019)

(19) Il revient à votre gouvernement de défendre les principes qui **nous fondent** et qui **nous portent**.
'It is the responsibility of your government to defend the principles which **found us**, and which **carry us forward**.' (Hugues Saury, groupe Les Républicains, 10/05/2022)

(20) Ce n'est pas l'ambiguïté qui contribuera au réarmement moral **de notre pays** et au respect des principes qui **font la France** et qui **unissent les Français**.
'It is not ambiguity that will contribute to the moral rearmament **of our country** and to the respect of the principles that **found France** and that **unite the French**.' (Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, groupe Les Républicains, 10/16/2019)

Such statements open up two contrasting worlds, with France on the one hand, and Islam on the other. As such, an "axis of differentiation" (Gal & Irvine 2019: 118) is created. Importantly, the two worlds are not only con-

[30] Note the wording in both statements, where school is described using terms stemming from a religious frame. This is surprising, especially in the context of the repeated emphasis on the principle of *laïcité* in this debate, and further highlights a good/bad dichotomy.

trasted, but also evaluated, so that "French" values are perceived as positive and "Islamic" values as negative, as will be exposed in more detail below.

This axis is illustrated particularly by referring to two concepts, namely gender equality and *laïcité*. These are depicted as specifically French (or, more broadly, Western) values, thus placed in direct opposition to "Islamic" values.

Gender equality is repeatedly presented as a value supported by all French citizens. The fact that gender equality might not have been fully achieved within French society and that not all French citizens may embrace the notion of gender equality is disregarded, 'erased.' Once again, the use of first-person plural pronouns and possessives is particularly noticeable because it fosters the notion of a strong sense of community within French people, reinforcing the impression of a fully united society. This becomes evident in the following examples:

(21) **Le statut de la femme**, sa place dans la société, la mixité, **l'égalité entre hommes et femmes** sont parmi **nos points cardinaux**.
'**The status of the woman**, her place in society, the mixing of genders, **gender equality** are among **our cardinal points**.' (Olivier Paccaud, groupe Les Républicains, 01/08/2020)

(22) Ce n'est qu'un exemple, mais je crois que l'entrée par **l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes** doit **nous mobiliser**.
'It is only an example, but I believe that the entry point through **gender equality** should **mobilize us**.' (Christophe Castaner, Minister of the Interior, 01/08/2020)

(23) Je le dis au nom du principe d'**égalité entre les hommes et les femmes**, comment peut-on soutenir **dans notre pays** l'existence de telles tenues, qui sont contraires **à nos principes constitutionnels** ?
'I say it in the name of the principle of **gender equality**, how can one support **in our country** the existence of such clothing, which goes against **our constitutional principles**?' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021c)

By invoking gender equality, France is directly opposed to Islam, which, as described above, is discursively associated with gender inequality. The opposition between "French" and "Islamic" values is evident in the specific word choice. The speakers repeatedly use the noun *égalité* 'equality' to describe supposedly "French" values, and antonyms like *infériorisation* 'inferiorisation' (cf. (4) and (5)) or *oppression* 'oppression' (cf. (12)) for "Islamic" values. Furthermore, the incompatibility is explicitly stated in (14), where the burkini is said to be contradictory to what are taken to be French core values: *liberté, égalité*, and *fraternité.* Considering that the hijab and the burkini are depicted not only as indices of these values, but even as instruments to impose them, it becomes clear that, according to this reasoning, wearing these garments endangers French values, hence French society.

The second aspect frequently addressed in the debates (especially in those about the hijab) is the principle of *laïcité*. It is not only described as a uniting factor for all French citizens, but also as a feature characterizing French society specifically, thus distinguishing French citizens from citizens of other countries. As before, the use of first-person plural pronouns and possessives creates a sense of community and contributes to the homogenizing effect in depicting

French society. This becomes evident, among many others, in the following comments:

(24) **La laïcité** […] nous est très utile : dans la société d'aujourd'hui, en effet, nous avons besoin d'**une République une**, de citoyens égaux. Ce point est très important – **c'est ce qui nous différencie d'autres pays**, y compris de pays voisins.
'***Laïcité*** is very useful to us: in today's society, we indeed need **a united Republic**, equal citizens. This point is very important – **it is what sets us apart from other countries**, including neighboring countries.' (Jean-Michel Blanquer, Minister of National Education and Youth, 10/16/2019)

(25) […] la France est une République **laïque**. Cette règle, **fruit de notre histoire**, a longtemps divisé notre nation, mais, aujourd'hui, **elle la rassemble** et elle doit la rassembler !
'France is a **secular** Republic. This rule, **born of our history**, has divided our nation for a long time, but today, **it unites it**, and it must unite it!' (Pascale Gruny, groupe Les Républicains, 10/29/2019)

(26) **La laïcité** est **au cœur du pacte républicain**.
'***Laïcité*** is **at the heart of the republican pact**.' (Amélie Oudéa-Castéra, Minister of Sports and Olympic and Paralympic Games, 06/28/2023)

(27) Monsieur le ministre, ma question est simple : quand le Gouvernement définira-t-il un cap clair et ferme pour défendre le principe de **laïcité** ? Quand le Président de la République s'exprimera-t-il en faveur de **ce pilier fondateur de notre République** ? Saura-t-il prendre les responsabilités qui lui incombent pour faire triompher ce qui **nous rassemble** sur ce qui nous divise ?
'Mister Minister, my question is simple: when will the Government set a clear and firm course to defend the principle of ***laïcité***? When will the President of the Republic speak in favor of **this foundational pillar of our Republic**? Will he be able to take the responsibilities that fall upon him to make triumph what **unites us** over what divides us?' (Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, groupe Les Républicains, 01/08/2020)

(28) Au pays de Marianne, dans notre patrie qui fut celle de Marie quand la France était la fille aînée de l'Église, **la laïcité** est **un socle du contrat social**, permettant que **nos différences ne deviennent pas distances**.
'In the country of Marianne, in our home country which was once Mary's when France was the eldest daughter of the Church, ***laïcité*** is **a cornerstone of the social contract**, which allows that **our differences do not become distances**.' (Olivier Paccaud, groupe Les Républicains, 01/08/2020)

French *laïcité* stands in sharp contrast to the perceived ostentation of their religion that Muslims are accused of (cf., e.g., (11) and (15)), as well as to *communautarisme* 'communitarianism' (cf., e.g., (7) and (8)). This further expands the axis of differentiation between France and Islam and highlights the supposed incompatibility between "French" and "Islamic" values.

In addition to implicitly contrasting French and Muslim society, an opposition between them is even directly mentioned in comments like the following ones:

(29) Mais il prend tout son sens dans les quartiers où les gens sont exaspérés de voir **le communautarisme** se développer au quotidien, **mettant à mal les valeurs qui fondent la République**.
'But it becomes highly relevant in the districts where people are exasperated to see **communitarianism** develop day by day, **undermining the values that form the basis of the French Republic**.' (Philippe Pemezec, groupe Les Républicains, 04/19/2018)

(30) Ce qui est en question, dans cette affaire, c'est **la remise en cause régulière des valeurs de notre société et de notre vivre ensemble** par les tenants d'une vision de l'islam **communautariste et radicale**.
'What is at stake in this matter is **the regular challenge of the values of our society and of our living together** by the proponents of a **communitarian and radical** vision of Islam.' (Philippe Pemezec, groupe Les Républicains, 10/29/2019)

(31) La France, **ce n'est ni le communautarisme ni le multiculturalisme**.
'France is **neither communitarianism nor multiculturalism**.' (Jérôme Bascher, groupe Les Républicains, 05/24/2018)

Overall, these statements depict France as a country defined by specific, positively connoted values, which are juxtaposed against negatively connoted values or interests associated with the Muslim community, implying (or stating explicitly, as in (31)) that France stands in antithesis to Islam. With these comments, the French society as well as the Muslim community are homogenized, which eventually paints a picture of two distinct groups, each with their own values. Consequently, within this axis of differentiation, France as a nation deeply committed to human rights, gender equality, and religious neutrality, appears to stand diametrically opposed to and incompatible with Islam.[31] Considering that the hijab and the burkini are depicted as indexing (or even as an instrument to impose) "Islamic" values, living together peacefully doesn't seem to be possible if women wear a hijab or a burkini.

This impression is strengthened by comments that imply that the garments under discussion pose a danger to French society, especially to supposedly more vulnerable members of society, like children. In the debate about the hijab, this becomes particularly evident through the frequent association of the hijab with *communautarisme* 'communitarianism' and *terrorisme* 'terrorism' (as described above) as well as through verbs like *protéger* 'protect' (or *exposer* 'expose' in (2)), as in the following examples:

(32) De ce point de vue, il est utile de rappeler que le voile, comme toute autre tenue inspirée par la religion, à condition qu'elle ne trouble pas l'ordre public, n'est pas interdit en France. Son usage, en revanche, est encadré, notamment pour préserver la neutralité dans les services publics et **protéger**

[31] The argument according to which wearing a hijab or a burkini challenges *laïcité* presupposes a very specific understanding of this principle, which Amir-Moazami (2007: 47–59) examines in more detail.

l'enfant dans l'école alors que sa conscience n'est pas encore formée.[32]

'In this perspective, it is useful to remind that the veil, like any other clothing inspired by religion, provided it does not disturb public order, is not prohibited in France. Its use, however, is regulated, especially to preserve neutrality in public services and to **protect** children in school while their conscience is not formed yet.' (Laurent Lafon, groupe Union Centriste, 10/29/2019)

(33) Parce que les enfants sont en croissance, le corps et l'esprit en évolution, ils ont besoin qu'on les **protège**.

'Because the children are still growing up, with their body and their mind evolving, they need to be **protected**.' (Jean-Marie Mizzon, groupe Union Centriste, 10/29/2019)

As before, women wearing a hijab are hardly ever mentioned, and the danger seems to originate rather from the hijab itself. This shows again the extent to which the hijab is ascribed a performative force. Apparently, it itself can lead astray people, disturb public order, or manipulate young students, and not banning its wearing in public spaces poses a risk of supporting an Islamic or even Islamist ideology.

It is noteworthy that the two sides of the axis of differentiation – France and Islam – are situated on vastly different levels. France is a single country and is even differentiated from other European countries (cf. (24)), while Islam is an entire religion and refers, to some extent, to a whole cultural sphere. This portrayal makes the ingroup – French citizens – appear much more distinguishable than the outgroup – Muslims –, enhancing the image of an external danger, an aspect further analyzed in the subsequent section.

A war between French and Islamic values

The frequent use of war- or fight-related lexemes in this context is particularly remarkable. According to the comments, French society or politics must fight for "their" values; this creates a sense that French values are being threatened by Islamic values, which enhances the good/bad-dichotomy between the ingroup and the outgroup. While "French" values are good and must be protected, "Islamic" values are bad and must be combatted. The following examples illustrate this depiction:[33]

(34) **Mener la bataille** contre le voile islamiste, c'est **mener une bataille** pour l'humanité et pour la liberté. Car en enlevant aux femmes leur identité, leur visage, on leur enlève leur humanité.

'**Fighting** against the Islamist veil is **fighting** for humanity and for freedom. Because by taking away women's identity, their face, one takes away their humanity.'

[32] However, clothing or symbols typically associated with religions other than Islam are not subject to the same type of scrutiny. The kippah, for instance, is occasionally mentioned in the Senate's debates, but primarily in two contexts: either when proponents of stricter regulations on the hijab preempt critiques that debates over "ostentatious religious symbols" disproportionately target the hijab, or when critics of such regulations draw comparisons to other religious symbols to highlight the differing treatment of the hijab.

[33] Cf. also, among others, "combat" in (15), "réarmement" in (20), "mobiliser" in (22), "embrigadement" in (39), "rempart" in (51), and "offensive" in (56).

(Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 10/05/2022)

(35) Nous voulons **lutter** contre le totalitarisme islamique ; il faut **combattre** ce qui en est le symbole.
'We want to **fight** against Islamic totalitarianism; we must **combat** what is the symbol of it.' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021b)

(36) […] il est essentiel de rappeler que **le combat** pour une véritable égalité hommes-femmes passe aussi par **le combat**, sur notre territoire, contre toute forme de fondamentalisme, dont le voile est souvent un étendard.
'it is essential to remind that **the fight** for true gender equality also involves **a fight**, within our territory, against any form of fundamentalism, of which the veil is often a banner.' (Céline Boulay-Espéronnier, groupe Les Républicains, 03/07/2019)

(37) Nous sommes une nation ouverte, mais une nation ferme dans ses principes et qui **lutte sans relâche** contre la radicalité et le communautarisme.
'We are an open nation, but a firm nation in its principles and who **fights relentlessly** against radicality and communitarianism.' (Sibeth Ndiaye, Secretary of State to the Prime Minister and Government Spokeswoman, 10/16/2019)

(38) **Le combat** pour la liberté au titre de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes est, à mon avis, essentiel dans **la lutte** contre le communautarisme et l'islamisme rampant dans certains quartiers.
'**The fight** for freedom in the name of gender equality is, in my opinion, essential in **the fight** against communitarianism and Islamism which creep in certain areas.' (Christophe Castaner, Minister of the Interior, 01/08/2020)

(39) […] nous continuerons de **mener un combat sans ambiguïté et sans faiblesse** contre l'embrigadement religieux et le repli communautaire, et nous **poursuivrons notre lutte sans merci** pour l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes.
'we will continue to **fight without ambiguity and without weakness** against religious indoctrination and communitarian withdrawal, and we will **pursue without mercy our fight** for gender equality.' (Michel Savin, groupe Les Républicains, 12/01/2021)

(40) Nous serons **intransigeants sur la lutte** contre toutes les formes de prosélytisme et de radicalisme. Nous serons également déterminés à garantir **la défense** de l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes.
'We will be **uncompromising in the fight** against all forms of proselytism and radicalism. We will also be determined to guarantee **the defense** of gender equality.' (Amélie Oudéa-Castéra, Minister of Sports and Olympic and Paralympic Games, 06/28/2023)

(41) [I]l est de la responsabilité de l'État de ne pas laisser les maires seuls **en première ligne**.
'It is the responsibility of the State not to leave the mayors alone **on the front lines**.' (Michel Savin, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021c)

In order to fully grasp the process of sign making taking place in this debate, it is instructive to observe how the banning of the hijab and the burkini is equated to averting the risk of an Islamist ideology being propagated

(cf. particularly the explicit equation in (34)). According to this reasoning, the hijab and the burkini are not only possible instruments for imposing politico-religious interests, but their presence appears to be a condition for imposing these interests, insofar as banning them can supposedly prevent this imposition. Thus, the relationship between the hijab/the burkini and the mentioned politico-religious interests appears to be very strong.

The war metaphor evident in such statements is expanded by repeatedly calling for characteristics that are important in combat, especially courage and determination. This becomes evident, among others, in the following statements:[34]

(42) Pour cela, il faut du **courage**. Il faut, pour une fois, avoir **le courage** d'entendre ce que disent les Français[35] et comprendre ceux qui voient leur quartier et leur commune s'enfoncer peu à peu dans le communautarisme, leur environnement se transformer et les propos se radicaliser.
'For this, **courage** is needed. It is necessary, for once, to have **the courage** to hear what the French are saying and to understand those who see their district and community gradually sinking into communitarianism, their environment transforming, and the rhetoric radicalizing.' (Philippe Pemezec, groupe Les Républicains, 10/29/2019)

(43) Alors, agissons **sans avoir peur** et interdisons-le [= le voile] ! […] Ayons **le courage** de la [= la liberté] protéger à l'heure où les islamistes la remettent en cause ! Accepter le voile à l'université, c'est laisser le champ libre aux revendications islamiques de tous ordres; c'est la première reculade avant la capitulation ! […] Tout accepter, c'est concéder la victoire à nos ennemis, c'est-à-dire les islamistes ![36]
'So let's act **without fear** and let's ban it [= the veil]! Let's have **the courage** to protect it [= freedom] in a moment when Islamists are challenging it! To accept the veil in university is to leave the field to Islamic demands of all kinds; it is the first step back before capitulation! To accept everything is to concede the victory to our enemies, that is to say, the Islamists!' (Stéphane Ravier, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique, 03/30/2021a)

(44) Face aux extrémistes, **nous ne pouvons pas avoir la main tremblante** !
'In the face of the extremists, **we cannot have trembling hands**!' (Jérôme Bascher, groupe Les Républicains, 10/29/2019)

As a result, those not in favor of stricter laws against the hijab or the burkini are accused of being cowardly and hypocritical, or even of fostering a division within French society and making Islam – or rather Islamism, the distinction, as mentioned above, not always being clear – stronger through their inaction. This emphasizes again the impression of an imminent danger posed by Islamism that must

[34] Cf. also "sans faiblesse" and "sans merci" in (39).

[35] Note the use of "les Français" here, which creates, once again, the impression that all French citizens hold the same opinion.

[36] In this quote, the war metaphor is particularly evident by referring to the *battlefield* and to the danger of *retreat* and *surrender* to the *enemy*.

be fought with all available means, like in the following examples:[37]

(45) [S]top à **l'hypocrisie** et au **manque de courage politique** de ce gouvernement face à la radicalisation de certaines organisations et à la multiplication de ces dérives religieuses !
'Stop **the hypocrisy** and **the lack of political courage** of this government in the face of the radicalization of certain organizations and of the proliferation of these religious deviations!' (Michel Savin, groupe Les Républicains, 06/28/2023)

(46) Sans cela, vous **laisserez perdurer**, malheureusement avec une **lâche complicité**, un flou qui accentue les tensions dans notre pays.
'Without this, you will **allow**, unfortunately with a **cowardly complicity**, tensions **to persist** in our country.' (Michel Savin, groupe Les Républicains, 07/09/2019)

(47) Vous ne voulez donc pas combattre ce totalitarisme, et finalement **vous en êtes complices** !
'You do not want to fight this totalitarianism, and in the end, **you are complicit**!' (Max Brisson, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021c)

The idea evident in some of these comments according to which a reluctance to legally restrict the wearing of the hijab or the burkini automatically strengthens what are perceived to be Islamic goals once again highlights the notion that wearing a hijab/a burkini is tantamount to imposing particular politico-religious interests.

In summary, these comments create the impression that there exist two internally homogeneous but externally distinct groups – one consisting of the adherents of "French" values, and the other of the adherents of Islam (or rather of Islamism) – which stand in opposition. The war metaphor suggests that France – a united nation whose citizens share and uphold common values – is in an ongoing war against an outside community which is actively trying to impose "its" values, which are incompatible with "French" values, onto French society. In addition, the wearing of a hijab or burkini is equated to active participation in this "war." To this end, anyone who wears a hijab or a burkini, or who does not wish to restrict their use, is portrayed as an enemy to "French" values. This suggests further that Muslims who choose to openly show their religious belonging are conceptually separated from French society, and are instead seen as members of an ideological Other, namely Islamists. Apparently, the axis of differentiation does not allow for an intermediary position. Given that wearing a hijab or a burkini is interpreted as an act of displaying one's religion, this is, of course, particularly relevant for Muslim women. For this reason, it is crucial to investigate what kind of images of "the Muslim woman" emerge from such statements. This will be exposed in the following.

[37] Cf. also the following statement: "Si Mahsa Amini a été tuée, ce n'est pas pour un simple bout de tissu. Accepter cette prétendue mode, c'est conforter le communautarisme dans notre pays." 'If Mahsa Amini was killed, it is not because of a simple piece of fabric. To accept this alleged fashion is to reinforce communitarianism in our country.' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 10/05/2022)

5.2 The images of "the Muslim woman"

The passive victim

As described above, the hijab and the burkini are framed as inherently negative. They are portrayed as instruments for imposing Islamic, or rather Islamist, interests, and therefore as a threat to French society in general. The danger seems to emanate not from the women wearing a hijab/burkini, but rather from the garments themselves, or else from the men allegedly forcing these women to wear them. This creates the impression that Muslim women who wear a hijab or a burkini are instrumentalized and rather act as some kind of puppets. As such, they appear as passive victims of male (Muslim men's) dominance. This is evident in the following comments:

(48) Chez nous aussi, **la pression** des quartiers et des familles ne laisse en réalité que **peu de choix** aux femmes voilées, en particulier aux plus jeunes d'entre elles.
'Here, too, **the pressure** from communities and from families actually leaves only **little choice** to the veiled women, especially to the youngest ones amongst them.' (Céline Boulay-Espéronnier, groupe Les Républicains, 03/07/2019)

(49) **La pression** qui est exercée sur les femmes est insupportable, et c'est à nous de les **défendre**. [in reference to the burkini]
'**The pressure** which is exerted on women is unbearable, and it is up to us to **defend** them.' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021c)

(50) Par défaut, le voile serait un rempart contre la violence : plus d'une musulmane sur quatre le porte pour se sentir en sécurité. Il s'agit non plus de séparatisme, mais d'une véritable **domination** exercée par les islamistes. Ceux-ci ne veulent pas vivre en dehors de la République, ils veulent que la charia supplante nos lois, en commençant par **l'asservissement des femmes**.
'By default, the veil would be a shield against violence: more than one in four Muslim women wear it to feel safe. This is no longer about separatism, but about a real **domination** exerted by the Islamists. They do not want to live outside the French Republic, they want Sharia to replace our laws, starting with **the subjugation of women**.' (Stéphane Ravier, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique, 03/30/2021b)

(51) Je peux vous dire, chers collègues de gauche, que, dans leurs quartiers, dans leur vie, certaines d'entre elles **subissent des pressions** pour porter ce type de vêtement. [in reference to the burkini]
'I can tell you, dear colleagues of the left, that in their communities, in their lives, some of them **face pressures** to wear this type of clothing.' (Michel Savin, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021c)

(52) Que comptez-vous faire pour **protéger** toutes ces femmes qui, sur le territoire français, **sont contraintes** de le porter ? [in reference to the hijab]
'What do you intend to do to **protect** all these women who, on French territory, **are forced** to wear it?' (Céline Boulay-Espéronnier, groupe Les Républicains, 03/07/2019)

In such statements, women who wear a hijab or a burkini are often not in an agent, but in a patient semantic role: They have been forced

into something and are not given a choice; therefore, they are in need of protection.[38] Furthermore, the speakers repeatedly mention the *pression* 'pressure' put upon Muslim women. All this indicates that Muslim women do not wear a hijab or a burkini voluntarily; consequently, women who do wear them are assumed to do so under coercion.

In the debates about the hijab particularly, this impression is further strengthened by comments that depict the wearing of a hijab as a limitation of women's individual freedom. This becomes evident through verbs such as *être libérée* 'be freed,' *se libérer* 'free oneself,' or *se débarasser* 'get rid of' when talking about women who do not wear or do not wish to wear a hijab, like in the following examples:

(53) Nous devons tendre la main à toutes celles qui ne rêvent que d'une chose : **être libérées** et **s'affranchir** du voile.
'We must reach out to all those [fem.] who only dream of one thing: **to be liberated** and **to free themselves** from the veil.' (Stéphane Ravier, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique, 03/30/2021b)

(54) […] qui a vu les jeunes femmes se mettre à porter le voile sous la pression, alors que leurs mères s'en **étaient libérées**.
'who has seen young women start wearing the veil under pressure, whereas their mothers **had liberated themselves** from it.' (Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, groupe Les Républicains, 10/16/2019)

(55) En Iran, des femmes risquent leur vie pour **se débarrasser** du voile.
'In Iran, women risk their lives **to get rid** of the veil.' (Claude Malhuret, groupe Les Indépendants - République et Territoires, 10/05/2022)

It is especially important to notice that these statements homogenize Muslim women. When speaking about them, speakers often use demonstrative or definite articles or pronouns (cf. "aux femmes voilées" in (48), "toutes ces femmes" in (52), or "les jeunes femmes" in (54)). Concerning the hijab, it is not taken into consideration that women associate various meanings to the hijab (cf. section 2). The reasons why women wear a hijab can, for example, be dependent on the legal circumstances in a country (i.e., whether it is compulsory, optional, or forbidden to wear a hijab); however, no differentiation is made between

[38] Some speakers do criticize this image of passive and suffering Muslim women, for example in the following comment: "Ce sont des femmes libres, pour la plupart, de choisir. Il ne faut pas les infantiliser ainsi !" 'These are women who are, for the most part, free to choose. They should not be infantilized like this!' (Sophie Taillé-Polian, Groupe Écologiste - Solidarité et Territoires, 10/29/2019)

women from countries which differ in this regard (e.g., France and Iran) – instead, they are all part of a seemingly homogeneous group of women who wear hijabs against their will.[39] In the same vein, with regard to the burkini, the idea that women might wear a burkini because they want to do so is not even mentioned. For instance, Evolvi (2019: 475) describes in her study on narratives about the burkini ban that Muslim women "frame the burkini as a garment that allows them to enjoy public life rather than excludes them from society." Hence, the perspectives of Muslim women themselves are ignored; rather, the burkini, as well as the hijab, are interpreted from a specific Western perspective.

Paradoxically, these speakers frame a hijab or burkini ban as a way to ensure freedom for Muslim women, overlooking the fact that such a ban actually limits their freedom of choice[40] – another instance of 'erasure' –, like in the following comment:[41]

(56) [U]ne très grande majorité des femmes est très heureuse d'**avoir la liberté** de se vêtir dans les piscines d'une manière qui correspond aux conquêtes des libertés féminines accomplies au vingtième siècle.

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[39] Cf., e.g., the comment "Nous devons aux femmes iraniennes de ne pas laisser se répandre chez nous ce qu'elles veulent tant voir disparaître chez elles." 'We owe it to the Iranian women to no let what they so desperately want to see disappear in their countries spread in ours.' (Hugues Saury, groupe Les Républicains, 10/05/2022) and the comment quoted in footnote 37 "Si Mahsa Amini a été tuée, ce n'est pas pour un simple bout de tissu. Accepter cette prétendue mode, c'est conforter le communautarisme dans notre pays. C'est choisir le camp des oppresseurs. C'est choisir le camp des islamistes. C'est abandonner les femmes d'Iran, d'Afghanistan et d'Arabie, qui sont obligées de se voiler, mais aussi celles d'Algérie, de Tunisie, de Syrie ou d'ailleurs, qui cèdent à la pression sociale, comme celles de nos quartiers !" 'If Mahsa Amini was killed, it is not because of a simple piece of fabric. To accept this alleged fashion is to reinforce communitarianism in our country. It is to choose the side of the oppressors. It is to choose the side of the Islamists. It is to abandon the women from Iran, from Afghanistan, and from Saudi Arabia, who are forced to veil, but also those from Algeria, from Tunisia, from Syria, or from elsewhere, who yield to social pressure, like those from our communities!' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 10/05/2022)

[40] Lyon and Spini (2004: 341) make this contradiction explicit: "However, and crucially, the answer to one constraint (the religious obligation to wear the *foulard*) cannot be another constraint (the obligation not to wear it): *an effective process of liberation cannot be based on a prohibition*." (emphasis in the original) Cf. also Zine (2006: 244): "Whether the veil and burqa is a mandated form of dress for women in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan, or if it is outlawed in secular public institutions in countries like Turkey, the effect is essentially the same; namely that these practices of disciplining and regulating women's bodies are imposed by state authorities and thereby challenge the political and spiritual autonomy of Muslim women to make reasoned choices about their bodies." This position is reflected in one comment in the corpus as well: "Je crois, madame Boyer, que, pour protéger ou faire avancer l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes, il y a beaucoup de choses extrêmement urgentes à faire. La mesure proposée ne me semble pas en faire partie. Pourquoi ? Parce que le sexisme consiste, aussi, à dire aux femmes ce qu'elles doivent porter ou non." 'I believe, Mrs. Boyer, that, in order to protect or advance gender equality, there are many extremely urgent things to do. The proposed measure does not seem to be part of them. Why? Because sexism also consists of telling women what they should or should not wear.' (Sophie Taillé-Polian, Groupe Écologiste - Solidarité et Territoires, 03/30/2021c)

[41] On the other hand, some of the speakers do argue that women should be free to decide whether they want to wear a hijab or not, for example in the following statements: "Je crois que nous devons respecter également la volonté de chacun de porter ou non les attributs vestimentaires qu'il souhaite dans l'espace public." 'I believe that we must also respect everyone's will to wear or not to wear the clothing items they wish in public spaces.' (Geneviève Darrieussecq, Secretary of State, 03/07/2019) and "Quant à la question du voile à l'université, je considère que des adultes – les étudiants à l'université sont bien des adultes – ont leur libre conscience et peuvent assumer leur libre choix." 'Regarding the question of the veil at university, I consider that adults – university students are indeed adults – have their own free conscience and can make their own free choice.' (Christophe Castaner, Minister of the Interior, 01/08/2020) However, these comments are significantly less numerous than those in favor of limiting the wearing of the hijab and the burkini.

> 'A vast majority of women are very happy to **have the freedom** to dress in swimming pools in a way that corresponds to the achievements of women's freedom accomplished in the twentieth century.' (Jean-Michel Blanquer, Minister of National Education, Youth and Sports, 06/30/2021)

> [I]f the Muslim woman is oppressed and a victim of patriarchal power, the western woman is liberated and free from gender constraints. […] The construction of liberated vs oppressed women is central to the production of an empowered western self through its non-western other. (Scharff 2011: 130)

Considering that a hijab/burkini ban is presented as a necessary measure to ensure women's freedom, it can also be argued that women's rights are instrumentalized for political purposes[42] and from a specifically Western perspective – a strategy Crosby (2014: 47) labels as "faux feminism" and defines as "the specious, 'faux', appropriation of feminist sentiment by Westerners to promote Orientalist policies." This portrayal of the oppressed Muslim woman as a countermodel to the supposedly progressive and liberated Western woman is a narrative often found in Western discourses about Islam (cf. Bullock & Jafri 2000: 35). Such statements clearly aim for self-affirmation by representing Western societies as societies that have achieved gender equality, as Scharff (2011) argues (cf. also Shooman 2014: 87):

In addition to this, implying that Muslim women are in need of saving reinforces the image of weak women in general. Such statements are echoes of a paternalist colonialist ideology, as they suggest that Muslim women need Western men to liberate them from the constraints of their male social environment (cf. Spivak 1988: 296, mentioned in section 2).[43]

The militant extremist

The second image drawn of the Muslim woman stands in contrast to the above-mentioned image of the passive woman. This is the woman who supposedly wears a hijab or a burkini by her own choice. She is still depicted in a negative way and also attributed with the intention to threaten French society. The combativeness represented in the word choice is particularly pronounced in the debate about

[42] Cf. also the following comments in the corpus: "Vous instrumentalisez la cause des femmes pour parler du burkini !" 'You are instrumentalizing the women's cause to talk about the burkini!' (Esther Benbassa, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique, 03/30/2021c) and "En vous arc-boutant sur cette mesure, c'est vous qui incarnez la police des vêtements. C'est vous qui dites aux femmes ce qu'elles doivent porter ou non. Vous vous moquez de l'émancipation de ces femmes. Ce qui vous intéresse, c'est de mettre au ban une religion et ses pratiquantes." 'By stubbornly holding to this measure, you are the ones who embody clothing police. You are the ones who tell women what they should or should not wear. You disregard the emancipation of these women. What interests you is to ban a religion and its practitioners [fem.].' (Thomas Dossus, groupe Écologiste - Solidarité et Territoires, 02/16/2022)

[43] Neocolonialism is also called out by a member of the Senate who expresses her views as follows: "Voilà donc une droite faisant mine de lutter contre l'islamisme en enlevant leur voile aux mères accompagnatrices, quand d'autres, dignes héritiers de la vision paternaliste des colonisateurs d'antan, prétendent les émanciper des chaînes de l'oppression masculine musulmane." 'So here we have a right-wing group pretending to fight against Islamism by removing their veils from accompanying mothers, while others, worthy inheritors of the paternalistic vision of the colonialists of yesterday, claim to emancipate them from the chains of the Muslim male oppression.' (Esther Benbassa, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique, 10/29/2019)

the burkini. Here, these women are often labeled as *militantes* 'militant,' and their acts as a *provocation* 'provocation'. This image of "the Muslim woman" is evident, among others, in the following statements:

(57) Si le Conseil d'État suit l'avis du rapporteur public, ne soyons pas naïfs, cela se traduira par une victoire pour **celles qui souhaitent fragiliser, avec cette offensive religieuse, l'un des piliers de notre société** et, par là même, par une défaite politique pour notre République.
'If the Council of State follows the opinion of the public reporter, let's not be naïve, this will result in a victory for **those [fem.] who wish to weaken, with this religious offensive, one of the pillars of our society**, and consequently, in a political defeat for our Republic.' (Michel Savin, groupe Les Républicains, 06/28/2023)

(58) A-t-on jamais forcé un parent d'élève à accompagner une sortie scolaire ? Si, pour une mère de famille, retirer son voile et montrer ses cheveux est insupportable, **elle peut rester chez elle, mais qu'elle ne prétende pas collaborer à un service public laïque et démocratique sans en accepter les règles**. Car il faut être lucide, **c'est un véritable bras de fer qui est engagé par ces femmes brandissant le voile comme un étendard**, appuyées par un communautarisme islamiste, politique […].[44]
'Has one ever forced a student's parent to accompany a school trip? If, for a mother, removing her veil and showing her hair is unbearable, **she can stay at home, but she should not pretend to be collaborating with a secular and democratic public service without accepting its rules**. Because one must be clear, **these women wielding the veil as a banner are engaged in a real power struggle**, supported by an Islamic, political communitarianism.' (Philippe Pemezec, groupe Les Républicains, 10/29/2019)

(59) À deux reprises, **des femmes militantes**, qui ont la volonté d'**aller contre les interdits**, ont fait le choix de **défier l'autorité publique** en venant se baigner en burkini dans les piscines municipales, ce qui est pourtant interdit par les règlements intérieurs.
'On two occasions, **militant women**, who are determined to **challenge prohibitions**, have made the choice to **defy public authority** by swimming in municipal swimming pools wearing burkinis, which is, however, prohibited by the internal regulations.' (Michel Savin, groupe Les Républicains, 07/09/2019)

(60) Toutefois, vous avez raison de le souligner, ne soyons pas naïfs, cette action est d'abord **un acte militant** à grand renfort de communications de presse. C'est aussi **une provocation**, pour voir jusqu'où vont les limites de notre République, jusqu'où nous sommes capables de résister.
'However, you are right to emphasize it, let's not be naïve, this action is primarily **a militant act** with extensive press coverage. It is also **a provocation** to see where the limits of our Republic are, to see how far we can resist.' (Laurent Nunez, Secre-

[44] Here, once again, the accusation against Muslim women of imposing their interests only by wearing a hijab, discussed in section 5.1, is remarkable.

tary of State to the Minister of the Interior, 07/09/2019)

Such statements clearly show that these women are presented as an enemy. They are depicted as aiming at provoking public authorities or French society by violating the laws and as seeking to impose their values on their fellow human beings (cf. also the accusation of ostentation described in section 5.1). Again, alternative forms of conjecturing (i.e., alternative explanations for donning a hijab or a burkini) are not taken into consideration.[45] Hence, women who take initiative but do not follow French norms and French or Western ideas of women's emancipation are not accepted.

Consequently, wearing a hijab or a burkini for personal reasons without making a political statement, and even imposing one's values on others, is held as something impossible. In some comments, this is made even more explicit:

(61) Par **son essence même**, arborer un voile est **un acte séparatiste**.
'By **its very nature**, displaying a veil is **a separatist act**.' (Stéphane Ravier, réunion administrative des Sénateurs ne figurant sur la liste d'aucun groupe politique, 03/30/2021b)

(62) J'estime que le port de certains vêtements, quels qu'ils soient, par les parents accompagnant les sorties scolaires peut être considéré comme relevant d'**une forme de prosélytisme passif**.
'I think that wearing certain clothing, whatever it may be, by the parents accompanying the school trips can be considered **a form of passive proselytism**.' (Françoise Laborde, Groupe du Rassemblement Démocratique et Social Européen, 05/15/2019)

This, once again, demonstrates the extent to which the hijab and the burkini are not perceived as mere indices for the Islamic faith or specific politico-religious interests anymore, but rather as a means for imposing them, and imposing them is even interpreted as their only purpose.[46]

The positive counterexample: The emancipated woman

As illustrated above, women wearing a hijab or a burkini are portrayed in a negative way.

[45] More moderate positions in this debate are rare. However, some speakers do call into question this image of the burkini-wearing "militant extremist," for example: "Comment définir un burkini ? Doit-on le définir exclusivement selon la personne qui le porte ? Et sous-entend-on que cette personne, dès lors qu'elle le porte, a nécessairement et obligatoirement des arrière-pensées ?" 'How to define a burkini? Should it exclusively be defined according to the person who is wearing it? And does one imply that this person, as soon as she wears it, necessarily and inevitably has ulterior motives?' (Didier Marie, groupe Socialiste, Écologiste et Républicain, 03/30/2021c) A bit later, the speaker makes his position even more evident by adding: "Ce n'est pas la manifestation de convictions au travers d'un vêtement ou de tout autre signe qui permet de définir la radicalité." 'It is not the expression of conviction through clothing or through any other sign that allows to define radicalism.'

[46] However, some speakers do take a counter position, for example in the following statement: "Il est caricatural de penser que la totalité de ces Françaises musulmanes utilisent le foulard comme l'étendard d'un projet islamique. Plus simplement, elles veulent vivre dans une société ouverte, tolérante, respectueuse de toutes les religions, en préservant des traditions familiales." 'It is caricatural to think that all these Muslim French women use the headscarf as a banner of an Islamist project. More simply, they want to live in an open, tolerant society that respects all religions while preserving family traditions.' (Colette Mélot, groupe Les Indépendants - République et Territoires, 10/29/2019) Here, it is also noticeable that Muslim women – unlike in most of the other statements in the corpus – are described as 'Françaises,' hence, as part of the French society.

Either they are passive victims of Muslim men who coerce them into wearing it, or they willingly choose to wear it, and, with this, assertively seek to impose their interests on others. A counterexample to these images appears in particular in the debates about the hijab: the Muslim woman who rejects wearing it. This becomes evident through descriptions of women rebelling against either their regime or their social environment that (actually or supposedly) impose wearing a hijab. They are characterized by adjectives denoting positive qualities, like *courageuse* 'brave,' *heroïque* 'heroic,' or *admirable* 'admirable':

(63) Nous le devons à toutes ces femmes à travers le monde qui risquent leur vie **avec courage** en refusant de porter le voile.
'We owe it to all these women around the world who risk their lives **courageously** by refusing to wear the veil.' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 10/05/2022)

(64) Derrière, il y a des femmes **courageuses** qui dénoncent le voile comme un instrument d'oppression.
'Behind this, there are **courageous** women who denounce the veil as an instrument of oppression.' (Céline Boulay-Espéronnier, groupe Les Républicains, 03/07/2019)

(65) D'ailleurs, pendant que des Iraniennes **héroïques** arrachent leur voile pour sentir le vent dans leurs cheveux,[47] des adolescents revêtent des tenues islamistes dans nos écoles.
'Moreover, while **heroic** Iranian women are tearing off their veil to feel the wind in their hair, adolescents put on Islamist clothing in our schools.' (Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 10/05/2022)

(66) Puissent les **admirables** femmes iraniennes, les héroïques soldats ukrainiens et les courageux dissidents chinois nous convaincre de nous rallier à leur cri : «Liberté !»
'May the **admirable** Iranian women, the heroic Ukrainian soldiers, and the courageous Chinese dissidents convince us to join their cry: "Freedom!"' (Claude Malhuret, groupe Les Indépendants - République et Territoires, 10/05/2022)

Hence, not wearing a hijab is equated with being free, and women who make this decision seem to be presented as role models to women who don a hijab (cf. also Bilge 2010: 16). Consequently, wearing or not wearing a hijab comes with clear judgement. Muslim women who wear it (whether under compulsion or by their own choice) are cast in a negative light, and those who do not wear it are positively

[47] Note how feeling the wind in the hair is stylized here as a symbol of freedom. This image is also drawn elsewhere by the same speaker ("Nous devons le dire aux Français, à ces jeunes filles et même à toutes ces femmes qui, à travers le monde, risquent avec courage leur vie en refusant de porter un voile, afin de sentir le vent dans leurs cheveux." 'We must say it to the French, to these young girls and even to all those women who, around the word, courageously risk their lives by refusing to wear a veil, in order to feel the wind in their hair.', Valérie Boyer, groupe Les Républicains, 03/30/2021b) and once again highlights that wearing a hijab is depicted as extremely unpleasant.

appraised.[48] It is also remarkable that in these examples, the women are not characterized as being Muslim. Instead, they are characterized either only as women (like in (63) and (64)) or by their nationality (like in (65) and (66)). This indicates that those who do not wear a hijab are not perceived as Muslim women at all; this once again confirms the direct link established between these garments and the Muslim faith. Hence, if a woman decides not to wear a hijab, she is considered to be emancipated:

(67) […] quand on sait le combat que mènent les femmes musulmanes dans leurs pays pour **s'émanciper**, on ne peut pas éluder le débat sur le voile.
'when one knows the struggle that the Muslim women are waging in their country to **emancipate**, we cannot avoid the debate on the veil.' (Philippe Pemezec, groupe Les Républicains, 04/19/2018)

(68) L'interdiction pour les mineurs de porter dans l'espace public tout signe religieux ostensible aurait pu constituer un signal fort envoyé à notre jeunesse. Celle-ci aurait pu y voir une garantie de la préservation de son insouciance et de **sa liberté**. Dans quelle mesure une République laïque peut-elle tolérer que des enfants manifestent des signes religieux au su et au vu de tous ? Ce n'est pas aux parents d'imposer des dogmes aux enfants. Aussi, il est essentiel qu'existent **des espaces protecteurs, vecteurs d'émancipation**, pour ces derniers. Le présent amendement vise à interdire, dans l'espace public, le port par des mineurs de signes ou de tenues manifestant ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse. Dans cette perspective, il est indispensable d'empêcher **tout moyen d'infériorisier l'enfant, notamment la jeune fille, au travers d'un vêtement qu'on lui impose**.[49]
'The prohibition of minors to wear in public spaces any ostentatious religious symbol could have constituted a strong signal sent to our adolescents. They could have seen it as a guarantee of preserving their insouciance and **their freedom**. To what extent can a secular Republic tolerate that children display religious symbols for all to see? It is not for parents to impose dogmas on children. Also, it is essential that **protective spaces, vectors of emancipation**, exist for these children. This amendment aims to prohibit, in public spaces, the wearing by minors of symbols or clothing that conspicuously manifest a religious affiliation. In this perspective, it is indispensable to prevent **any means of subjugating the child, particularly the young girl, through clothing that is imposed upon her**.' (Christian Bilhac, groupe du Rassemblement Démocratique et Social Européen, 03/30/2021b)

[48] According to Freedman (2007: 38), "[t]his type of response is typical of a post-colonial discourse current in France which divides women of Muslim (mainly North African) origin into two types: those that have assimilated into French society and adopted French modes of dress, behaviour and so on, and those that remain faithful to their traditional, Islamic cultures." Cf. also the following comment in the corpus, which explicitly juxtaposes women in Iran fighting against the obligation to wear a hijab and women in France fighting for their right to wear it: "Alors qu'en Iran des femmes risquent leur vie pour vivre sans le voile, en France, certaines se battent pour pouvoir l'imposer sur un terrain de football." 'While in Iran, women are risking their lives to live without the veil, in France, some are fighting so that they can impose it on a football field.' (Dany Wattebled, groupe Les Indépendants - République et Territoires, 06/28/2023)

[49] Note here that, once more, the visibility of the hijab is problematized repeatedly (cf. "tout signe religieux ostensible," "des signes religieux au su et au vu de tous," and "de tenues manifestant ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse").

These comments underscore the axis of differentiation between France and Islam as described in section 5.1.2: French/Western women are emancipated; Muslim women are not. However, Muslim women who do not wear a hijab are an exception to this: In the analyzed debates, they do not appear to represent the prototypical image of "the Muslim woman," hence are seemingly perceived as being emancipated as well (cf. especially (64) and (67)). This shows that the differentiation between 'emancipated' and 'oppressed' is, in a sense, re-enacted within the group of Muslims here – a process Gal & Irvine (2019: 73) describe as 'fractal recursivity.' Consequently, emancipation is closely linked to obeying Western conventions of clothing and it appears to be impossible for an emancipated woman to wear a hijab.[50]

6 Conclusion: "The Muslim woman" as a deviation from Western norms

In the Senate's debates analyzed in this paper, both the hijab and the burkini are constructed as socially meaningful signs. This process of "conjecturing" (Gal & Irvine 2019: 85) unfolds through several steps that lead to the specific depiction of these garments. Firstly, the hijab/the burkini are conjectured to Islamic or even Islamist beliefs, due to a (perceived) contiguity between them. Hence, they are constructed as indices in the Peircean sense, and this construction is 'erased' (cf. Gal & Irvine 2019: 107) by presenting them as "natural" signs. Based on a supposed contiguity between Islam and specific politico-religious interests, particularly the subjugation of women and the establishment of a totalitarian regime, the hijab and the burkini are perceived as directly indexing these interests, which constitutes a form of secondary conjecture. Once again, the process of conjecturing is erased, resulting in the impression that the hijab and the burkini objectively index this ideology. However, the hijab and the burkini are described as more than a mere index: Ultimately, they are ascribed a performative potential, insofar as they are depicted as an instrument to impose this ideology. The repeated accusation of flaunting their religious beliefs when wearing a hijab or a burkini shows that imposing "Islamic" interests is even suggested to be the only purpose of these garments.

The interests or values attributed to the hijab and the burkini are juxtaposed with those deemed as specifically French, notably gender equality and *laïcité*. This sets up an "axis of differentiation" (Gal & Irvine 2019: 118) between France and Islam, where "French" values are positively evaluated, while "Islamic" values are portrayed negatively. As the latter are depicted as a danger for French society, the need to fight for the former is emphasized, highlighted by the frequent use of war-related lexemes. Furthermore, the reasoning that limiting the wearing of the hijab and the burkini means fighting for "French" values underscores the remarkably strong relationship established between the hijab/the burkini and "Islamic"

[50] While the hijab appears to be the most prominent marker of difference in these debates, Western perceptions of Muslim women likely do not rely solely on the hijab but also take into account other visible markers, such as phenotypic traits. Hence, the binary distinction between 'wearing a hijab = oppressed' and 'not wearing a hijab = emancipated' is an oversimplification that emerges from the debates analyzed here. This oversimplification, however, might not accurately reflect broader societal discussions on the topic.

values, insofar as these garments are even presented as a condition for imposing them. Hence, the relationship between the hijab/burkini and the mentioned interests or values is no longer recognized as a mere indexical one.

This specific interpretation of the hijab and the burkini helps to understand the portrayal of Muslim women in this debate. On the one hand, as both hijab and burkini are depicted as garments that women usually do not wear by personal choice, Muslim women are portrayed as "passive victims" who wear a hijab or a burkini because they are allegedly forced to do so by Muslim men or by their Muslim social environment. On the other hand, from the equation of wearing a hijab or a burkini with imposing "Islamic" values results the portrayal of Muslim women as "militant extremists" who don a hijab or a burkini to provoke and to threaten French society. The counterexample to these negative images is the seemingly emancipated woman who has "freed" herself from the hijab, which indicates that she has also freed herself from the negative values associated with Islam. Against the backdrop of this intense politization of both the hijab and the burkini, it appears to be impossible for a Muslim woman to wear or not to wear a hijab/burkini without making a political statement. Either she embodies (or even imposes) what is associated with Islam and/or Islamism, particularly gender inequality, communitarianism, and terrorism, by wearing a hijab or a burkini in public spaces, or she stands up for "French" values, notably gender equality and religious neutrality, by not wearing them. This shows very clearly that "the Muslim woman" – more specifically, her body – is at the heart of these debates.

Considering that the debates are embedded in discussions about integration and social cohesion in an immigration country, it becomes evident that the role of Muslim women is deemed to be crucial to this endeavor. The extent to which Muslims must adapt to French norms is thus finally negotiated through Muslim women's ways of dressing, which comes down to the question whether they cover or reveal their hair and body. Importantly, women who are discernible as being Muslim are depicted in a negative way, whether they are taking proactive steps (by deciding on their own to wear a hijab or a burkini) or seemingly adopting a passive stance (by not refusing to wear a hijab or a burkini). In both cases, these women are portrayed to represent and pass on characteristics associated with Muslim society or, more specifically, with radical Muslim men.

Ultimately, "the Muslim woman" is othered because she does not conform to specific norms or conventions that are valid in French society (or, more generally, in Western societies). The woman supposedly forced to wear a hijab or a burkini – the "passive victim" – is in sharp contrast to Western ideals of women's emancipation because she seems to follow Muslim men's orders and wears what is considered to be a sign of her oppression. However, the woman who decides to wear a hijab or a burkini against the will of (parts of the) French society – the "militant extremist" – does not follow Western ideals of good female behavior, like reserve, modesty, and politeness. One could even go one step further and argue that she then actually challenges the Western man's notion of a good woman. Hence, the way "the Muslim woman" is described is a result of her being both female and Muslim. Neither a non-Muslim woman nor a Muslim man could be depicted under this perspective.

The positively connoted image of the Muslim woman who has "freed" herself from the hijab/the burkini is also revealing in this regard. She is positively evaluated, even glorified, because she conforms to Western conventions of dressing. Only women who do not want to wear a hijab or a burkini are thus perceived as emancipated individuals. Paradoxically, according to this reasoning, French politics can contribute to or achieve Muslim women's emancipation through a form of coercion (more precisely, a ban), which demonstrates that colonial paternalism persists in society, and this paradox is overlooked – 'erased' – by many of those who participate in this debate. In contrast to this, one could argue that true emancipation will only be achieved when Muslim women are actually free to decide whether they want to wear a hijab/burkini or not – free from both Muslim men and Western norms.

These findings show that the image of "the Muslim woman" is discursively constructed along Western norms, resulting in an effect of Othering of those who do not conform to these norms. They also hint at the necessity of an intersectional approach in research on discrimination in general and on discrimination of Muslim women in particular. Since the discursive construction of "the Muslim woman" could only be unraveled when considering the dimensions 'Muslim' and 'female' together, the analysis clearly shows the usefulness of the notion of 'gendered islamophobia' (cf. section 2) and suggests that it should even be extended by not only examining phenomena of discrimination, but also phenomena of Othering, like in the cases analyzed here. In order to fully understand the mechanisms behind Othering under an intersectional perspective, more research is needed, both on discursive strategies of Othering in general and on the particularities of the phenomenon when two or more dimensions by which Othering can take place (e.g., disability, sexual orientation, race, socioeconomic status, etc.) are involved.

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Appendix: Information on the corpus

As described in section 4, the transcripts available on the French Senate's website were used to compile the corpus. The transcripts sometimes deviate from the actual spoken words (as evident in the video records) because they do not include hesitation phenomena, slip-ups, self-corrections, etc., and the text has obviously been "smoothed" for readability. However, for practical reasons and considering that these adjustments do not significantly modify the core content, the analysis is solely based on the transcripts. Below, the topics of the debates analyzed in this paper are indicated, along with the date when they took place (in the MM/DD/YYYY format), the timestamps of the relevant segments, and the hyperlink to the respective video recordings and transcripts. The descriptions of the topics in the first column are taken from the Senate's protocols (available on the Senate's website).

A Debates on the hijab

Topic	Date	Timestamp	Hyperlink
Accompagnatrices voilées en sortie scolaire	04/19/2018	15:39:14 – 15:43:24	https://videos.senat.fr/video.638461_5ad88b1e0e80b.seance-publique-du-19-avril-2018-apres-midi
Communautarisme et respect de la laïcité	05/24/2018	15:56:58 – 16:01:36	https://videos.senat.fr/video.662898_5b06a3d25f606.seance-publique-du-24-mai-2018-apres-midi

Journée de la femme	03/07/2019	15:43:13 – 15:48:05	https://videos.senat.fr/video.1069249_5c81174fd2d6f.seance-publique-du-7-mars-2019-apres-midi
Projet de loi « Pour une école de la confiance » [extract: Amendement n° 100, voile pendant les sorties scolaires]	05/15/2019	17:30:15 – 18:09:54	https://videos.senat.fr/video.1153266_5cdbf9c79bd0f.seance-publique-du-15-mai-2019-apres-midi
Port du voile & Politique gouvernemental	10/16/2019	15:39:25 – 15:44:35 & 16:18:23 – 16:23:05	https://videos.senat.fr/video.1334952_5da708064ccbf.seance-publique-du-16-octobre-2019-apres-midi
Proposition de loi « Service public de l'éducation et neutralité religieuse » [extract: motion n° 13, neutralité religieuse des personnes concourant au service public de l'éducation]	10/29/2019	15:06:47 – 15:22:26	https://videos.senat.fr/video.1356117_5db832bcc5b14.seance-publique-du-29-octobre-2019-apres-midi
Débat sur le thème : « La laïcité, garante de l'unité nationale » [extracts]	01/08/2020	18:20:21 – 18:30:32 & 18:53:32 – 18:57:39 & 19:11:41 – 19:20:42	https://videos.senat.fr/video.1477010_5e15d30a55ca3.seance-publique-du-8-janvier-2020-apres-midi
Élections municipales et communautarismes	07/08/2020	15:58:29 – 16:03:01	https://videos.senat.fr/video.1699808_5f05b571787b4.seance-publique-du-8-juillet-2020-apres-midi
Projet de loi « Respect des principes de la République », Discussion des articles [Débat de l'après-midi, extract]	03/30/2021a	18:54:36 – 20:29:54	https://videos.senat.fr/video.2208683_60630d4944d02.seance-publique-du-30-mars-2021-apres-midi

Projet de loi « Respect des principes de la République », Discussion des articles (suite) [Débat du soir, extract]	03/30/2021b	23:53:32 – 00:09:43	https://videos.senat.fr/video.2211457_60637a6773649.seance-publique-du-30-mars-2021-soir
Campagne du Conseil de l'Europe sur le voile	11/03/2021	15:50:15 – 15:54:59	https://videos.senat.fr/video.2573410_61828ee2ae06a.seance-publique-du-3-novembre-2021-apres-midi
Application aux fédérations sportives de la loi confortant les principes de la République	12/01/2021	16:11:23 – 16:16:09	https://videos.senat.fr/video.2633088_61a7756c4a87e.seance-publique-du-1-decembre-2021-apres-midi
Port de signes religieux dans les compétitions sportives & Nouvelle lecture Proposition de loi « Démocratiser le sport en France »	02/16/2022	15:11:09 – 15:16:11 & 17:32:22 – 19:13:47	https://videos.senat.fr/video.2816524_620cfdee3c3a5.seance-publique-du-16-fevrier-2022-apres-midi
Port du voile à l'école & Débat d'actualité sur le thème : « Atteintes aux droits des femmes et aux droits de l'homme en Iran »	10/05/2022	15:42:44 – 15:46:40 & 16:31:33 – 17:43:15	https://videos.senat.fr/video.3012603_633d6fe2e24ef.seance-publique-du-5-octobre-2022-apres-midi
Hijab dans le sport	06/28/2023	15:27:39 – 15:36:27	https://videos.senat.fr/video.4011095_649c1f7021980.seance-publique-du-28-juin-2023-apres-midi

B Debates on the burkini

Topic	Date	Timestamp	Hyperlink
Burkini	07/09/2019	17:04:51 – 17:09:32	https://videos.senat.fr/video.1253659_5d247f862c6cc.seance-publique-du-9-juillet-2019-apres-midi
Projet de loi « Respect des principes de la République » [extract: Amendement n° 236, burkini dans les piscines]	03/30/2021c	22:50:17 – 23:50:30	https://videos.senat.fr/video.2211457_60637a6773649.seance-publique-du-30-mars-2021-soir
Port du burkini dans les piscines	06/30/2021	15:52:46 – 15:56:44	https://videos.senat.fr/video.2396449_60dc5c8d6c208.seance-publique-du-30-juin-2021-apres-midi

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https://journals.ub.uni-koeln.de/index.php/the_mouth/index