

The Exclusion of Conservative Women from Feminism:

A Case Study on Marine Le Pen of the National Rally¹

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¹ Note name change from National Front to National Rally in June 2018

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Abstract

There is a lack of civil discourse and collaboration among women of different feminist identities in the United States and abroad. This is somewhat puzzling, especially because historically, feminism has never really assumed a definitive identity. It has been molded and shaped not only by political movements and interpretations of them, but also

by women's subjective and highly personal experiences. This lack of civil discourse in the feminist arena has excluded women who identify with traditional first or second-wave feminism. What has become a somewhat radical idea is that women who do not favor modern-day, progressive, left-wing, fourth-wave feminism, the wave that the majority of American society is currently in, may still actually favor improving the lives of women. The advocacy of women's rights on the basis of gender equality is at the core of feminism, although not entirely explicatory of feminism, regardless of what iteration of it is in practice. It is, therefore, not irrational to claim that advocacy of women's lives may come in different forms, which leads to the idea that it may perhaps still be worth listening to women who identify as traditional feminists. Thus, an important conversation must be started in the academic community about the demonization of the right-wing when it comes to women's issues. In this thesis, I identify a gap in the academic community: the lack of academic literature connecting right-wing politics and women's rights issues via a neutral, academic lens. Through a case study on Marine Le Pen, I contend that the phenomenon of Marine Le Pen – her rise to power, her shifting of the National Rally rhetoric on women's issues from the time of her father's leadership to her current leadership as part of her rebranding campaign, her stances on women's issues and how they fit into a more conservative feminist framework, and the resulting support she has received from the female electorate in France – may be an indication that conservative women have been excluded from feminism. This serves as an academic attempt and initial step to mitigate the demonization of conservative feminist tenets.

Part 1

Introduction

The substantial lack in civil discourse and collaboration among women of different feminist identities in the United States and abroad is somewhat puzzling, especially

because historically, feminism has never really assumed a definitive identity. It has been molded and shaped not only by political movements and interpretations of them, but also by women's subjective and highly personal experiences. The scope of feminism is always developing and changing. Independent scholar and feminist commentator Elisabeth Griffith states, "I'm not even sure how to define the women's movement anymore. It was easier in the '60s and the '70s because you had single goals."² This lack of civil discourse in the feminist arena has substantially hurt women who identify with more conservative, first or second-wave feminist values. What has become a somewhat radical idea socially is that women who do not favor modern-day, progressive, left-wing, fourth-wave feminism, the wave American society is currently in, may still actually favor improving the lives of women. The advocacy of women's rights on the basis of gender equality is at the core of feminism, although, as was mentioned, not entirely explicatory of feminism, regardless of what iteration of it is being practiced. It is, therefore, not irrational to claim that advocacy of women's rights may come in different forms, which leads to the idea that it may perhaps still be worth listening to women who identify as conservative feminists.

The essence of all feminism, namely the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of gender equality, has become obscured by the tenets of modern-day, progressive, left-wing, fourth-wave feminism. In fact, to many conservatives, the term "feminist" has become a dirty word.³ According to *The Economist*, based on a 2013 study conducted in the United States, one in three Republicans regarded "feminist" as an insult. The study

² "Donald Trump Is the Best -- and Worst -- Thing That's Happened to Modern American Feminism." *CNN*, Cable News Network, www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/politics/state/womens-movement-donald-trump/.

³ "Has 'Feminist' Become A Dirty Word?" *YouGov*, today.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2013/05/01/has-feminist-become-dirty-word.

found that most men who identify with the Republican party rejected associating themselves with feminism, and only 14% of GOP women called themselves “feminist.”⁴

There are many reasons for this notoriety of feminism among the right-wing populace. Despite the ever-changing and somewhat ambiguous definition of feminism, in Western society, which includes countries such as the United States and France, feminism has become associated with many specific beliefs that today are considered to be at the core of feminism. This means that if a woman, or anyone for that matter, does not hold at least a majority of these beliefs, she is not considered to be a feminist. Some of these beliefs include, but are not limited to, identifying as pro-choice and believing in a woman’s right to fully have control of her own body, opposing the pay gap, regardless of the circumstances (maternity leave, etc.) as a significant issue that hinders the professional development of women, aiming to wreck most, if not all, gender norms, extending all the way to postgenderism, believing in the sexist portrayal of women in the media as part of a patriarchal society, supporting female sexuality from lesbianism to transgenderism, promoting body positivity and obesity, placing a significant emphasis on intersectionality, fighting against rape culture and violence against women (sexual assault) at home and in the workplace, shunning “toxic masculinity” as it affects women (catcalling, etc.), and promoting a quota system in the political environment to mitigate lack of representation of women in politics. For all of these issues, there is essentially *one* acceptable stance in order to align with feminism. For example, one *must* be pro-choice if one is to receive the social recognition of being a “feminist.” The concept of being both a feminist and pro-life seems contradictory and socially unacceptable, especially among

⁴ The percentage increased ONLY AFTER they had read a definition of “feminist,” thus showing the reputation feminism has among men.

Generation Z in the United States. As evidence of this, one example is that the anti-abortion feminist movement, which includes the prominent NGO Feminists for Life (FFL), are considered to be part of the anti-abortion movement as opposed to part of the feminist movement.⁵

Pointing out that certain factors may contribute to the way we view the gender gap, believing that women and men are inherently better at different things, expressing a preference for women to look more “feminine” as defined by society, taking a stance against certain expressions of sexuality, such as female masturbation, criticizing obesity in women, criticizing the #MeToo movement, and questioning women’s accusations of sexual assault are some of many acts inconsistent with what has become the feminist norm in Western society. Yet, these acts are consistent with a more conservative take on feminism.

Ten years ago, Gallup Poll⁶ revealed that women are now more likely to identify as Democrats, regardless of age and within all major racial, ethnic, and marital status segments of society. The gender polarization has recently become stronger and somewhat translates to the political arena. With the exception of the women in Donald Trump’s cabinet and a few female Congresswomen, there are few conservative female politicians, even globally. Among the conservative female politicians who do exist, Marine Le Pen seems to be the most prominent, and also the most controversial. An important conversation must be started in the academic community about the demonization of the

⁵ Oaks, Laury. “What Are Pro-Life Feminists Doing on Campus?” *Oral History Review*, Oxford University Press, 1 May 2009, muse.jhu.edu/article/263661/pdf.

⁶ Gallup, Inc. “Women More Likely to Be Democrats, Regardless of Age.” *Gallup.com*, 12 June 2009, news.gallup.com/poll/120839/women-likely-democrats-regardless-age.aspx.

right-wing when it comes to women's issues. The conversation must include why the exclusion of conservative women from the feminist arena impedes the progress of women globally.

Less than 24 hours after Trump took the oath of office, millions upon millions of women marched on Washington in the largest single-day protest in United States history.⁷ The 2016 Presidential election, and Hilary Clinton's loss in particular, indirectly sparked significant ripples of the fourth-wave feminist movement, namely, Time's Up,⁸ the Weinstein effect,⁹ and the #MeToo movement,¹⁰ in addition to the Women's March.¹¹ Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood, stated in 2018 "None of us were prepared for this loss in the sense that we didn't have well-laid plans to mobilize. But that's what happened, it's been a year of channeling, catching up to the activism as much as trying to foment engagement."¹²

Jodi Enda, Editor-in-Chief of ThinkProgress, the Center for American Progress Action Fund, claims that "The election of a president whom detractors view as misogynistic and backward-thinking has done nothing less than spark a wholesale resurgence of feminism."¹³ She explains that the feminist movement has failed to excite

⁷Matt Broomfield @hashtagbroom. "2 Charts Which Show Just How Huge the Women's Marches against Trump Were." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 23 Jan. 2017, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/womens-march-anti-donald-trump-womens-rights-largest-protest-demonstration-us-history-political-a7541081.html.

⁸"TIME'S UP Now." *Time's Up Now*, www.timesupnow.com/.

⁹"The Harvey Weinstein Effect." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, www.usatoday.com/pages/interactives/life/the-harvey-weinstein-effect/.

¹⁰"Me Too. Movement." *You Are Not Alone*, metoomvmt.org/.

¹¹"Women's March." *Women's March*, Women's March, womensmarch.com/.

¹²Chozick, Amy. "Hillary Clinton Ignited a Feminist Movement. By Losing." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 13 Jan. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/01/13/sunday-review/hillary-clinton-feminist-movement.html.

¹³"Donald Trump Is the Best -- and Worst -- Thing That's Happened to Modern American Feminism." *CNN*, Cable News Network, www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/politics/state/womens-movement-donald-trump/.

younger generations of women for so long but has finally mobilized them as a result of Trump's win and Clinton's loss. The psychology behind this is the fear associated with Trump's rhetoric on women and how that rhetoric translates to actual policies concerning women's rights. For example, in the days after the election, there was a 900% increase of women trying to get into Planned Parenthood to get an intrauterine device (IUD) for fear that the Trump administration would prevent access to contraception. In previous years, the feminist movement has been centered around generally the goal of achieving equal legal rights for women, but there is something bigger that unites most feminists today: the fight against Trump. According to Gökarıksel and Smith, "Women and allies have been at the forefront of voicing opposition to Trumpism by organizing one of the largest marches in U.S. history on the day after inauguration and continue to resist through strikes, demonstrations, and other actions. They are raising their voices against the walls, hatred, and deportations embedded in the global turn to the right and attempting to embrace an intersectional feminism that recognizes racial, ethnic, religious, class, and other differences."¹⁴

The mobilization of feminists in response to Trump's victory is not just limited to the Women's March, #MeToo movement, Weinstein effect, or Time's Up. Within days of his election and still today almost three years in, feminists are showing up to town halls and protesting outside Congresspeople's offices, mailing letters to Washington, placing calls to the Capitol, lobbying city council members, marching on statehouses, volunteering and congregating. Pockets of feminists are mobilizing on college campuses,

¹⁴ Gökarıksel, Banu, and Sara Smith. "Intersectional Feminism beyond U.S. Flag Hijab and Pussy Hats in Trump's America." *Gender, Place & Culture*, vol. 24, no. 5, 2017, pp. 628–644., doi:10.1080/0966369x.2017.1343284.

standing up to the administrations and demanding the equal treatment of female students. Additionally, the numerous women who have come out as victims of sexual assault is further evidence of the mass mobilization of feminists. Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority Foundation, states “There’s never been anything like this. I believe the culture has dramatically changed,”¹⁵ in response to the millions of women who started marching, demonstrating, and organizing after Trump’s election. Since the election, feminist organizations have reported historic levels of donations and involvement. For example, Planned Parenthood has received more than 1 million new supporters since the election.¹⁶ The mobilization has even affected the composition of Congress with the newly elected female freshmen representatives, most of them democratic socialists and fierce feminists.

Interestingly enough, the back-and-forth between conservative political authorities and leftist feminists did not stop there, as there was also a response from the right to the feminists, who were in turn responding to Trump’s election. The “response to the response” started within Trump’s own cabinet. Kellyanne Conway, White House Counselor to the President and the first woman to successfully manage a winning presidential campaign, stated at the Conservative Political Action Conference that “It’s difficult for me to call myself a feminist in the classic sense because it seems to be very anti-male and it certainly is very pro-abortion, and I’m neither anti-male nor pro-abortion.

¹⁵ “Donald Trump Is the Best -- and Worst -- Thing That's Happened to Modern American Feminism.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/politics/state/womens-movement-donald-trump/.

¹⁶ “Donald Trump Is the Best -- and Worst -- Thing That's Happened to Modern American Feminism.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/politics/state/womens-movement-donald-trump/.

So, there's an individual feminism, if you will, that you make your own choices...I look at myself as a product of my choices, not as a victim of my circumstances."¹⁷

It is clear that Trump's victory in the 2016 Presidential election emboldened the populist movement throughout the world, as proven by the emergence of prominent populists after Trump, such as Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, and Viktor Orban.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Trump administration's rhetoric concerning women's rights and Trump's view of women in general has impacted global politics, specifically policies aimed at women. Considering that the United States sets the pace for global discussion on many prominent issues, including women's rights, this thesis is temporally grounded in the 2016 election and its influence on the rise of nationalist, right-wing political movements across the globe. This rise in political movements has changed the discourse surrounding feminism both in the United States and in Europe. The prominence and influence of #MeToo and Time's Up, for example, is not limited to the United States; these ripples of fourth-wave feminism have gathered significant followings of women all over the world. From Stockholm to Seoul, Toronto to Tokyo, and Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, and China, Indonesia and Russia, some of the many more prominent hubs for #MeToo activities, fourth-wave feminism is a global phenomenon.¹⁹ Feminist concerns have come

¹⁷ Scott, Eugene. "Trump Says He Rejects Feminism Because He Is 'for Everyone'." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 28 Jan. 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/01/28/trump-says-he-rejects-feminism-because-he-is-for-everyone/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e77630dcc20c.

¹⁸ Judis, John B. "Us v Them: the Birth of Populism | John B Judis | The Long Read." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 13 Oct. 2016, www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/oct/13/birth-of-populism-donald-trump.

¹⁹ Erickson, Amanda. "In 2018, #MeToo - and Its Backlash - Went Global." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 14 Dec. 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/12/14/metoo-its-backlash-went-global/?utm_term=.9285db53bdf8.

to the forefront and to the degree that feminists have asserted themselves in this heavily polarized political climate, they have received backlash and been challenged.²⁰

The sparking of this global populist movement as a result of the 2016 election is also an indication of an attempt, on the part of conservative feminists, to find their voice. With the increased mobilization of the feminist movement after the election came the increased ostracizing of more conservative brands of feminism. Marine Le Pen, a prominent right-wing populist, reacted to the 2016 election by employing rhetoric that is more pro-women, which means that what she says about women after the 2016 election cannot be considered in isolation from the 2016 election. In a 2016 interview with the BBC, Marine Le Pen said that Donald Trump's victory in the United States Presidential election would help her, saying that Trump had "made possible what had previously been presented as impossible."²¹

Purpose

There is a gap in the academic community – the lack of academic literature connecting right-wing politics and women's rights issues.²² Most, if not all, of the academic literature focuses exclusively on the positive contributions of left-wing movements to women's rights. The academic literature covering right-wing politics focuses on the rise of harmful nationalist alt-right movements. This thesis specifically focuses on several aspects of Marine Le Pen's political career and proposes that those aspects as a whole potentially may demonstrate one example of the exclusion of conservative women from

²⁰ Weyergraf, Clara. "The Holy Alliance: Populism and Feminism." *October*, vol. 16, 1981, p. 23., doi:10.2307/778372.

²¹ "Marine Le Pen: Trump Win Boosts My Chances." *BBC News*, BBC, 13 Nov. 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37964776.

²² For the purposes of this study, "women's rights issues" or "women's issues" or "women's rights" and "feminism" are interchangeable.

feminism. My decision to use Marine Le Pen as a case study is based on her being arguably the most famous right-wing female politician currently, especially because she is often considered in the context of the National Rally's notoriety. Marine Le Pen was ranked among the most influential people in 2011 and 2015, by the *Time* 100.²³ In 2016, she was ranked by Politico as the second-most influential Member of the European Parliament (MEP) in the European Parliament, after President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz.²⁴ Patrice Machuret, a political journalist and editorialist whose primary focus is right-wing politics and has been following the development of the National Rally since 2002, calls Marine Le Pen "*le phénomène Marine*" [the phenomenon Marine] in his book *Dans la peau de Marine Le Pen*. She is a phenomenon because she has, much like Donald Trump, managed to stir up a great deal of controversy and outrage among varied groups, such as feminists, but has also simultaneously attracted many voters, especially women.

In addition to the academic gap previously discussed, an overwhelming majority of academic and non-academic sources – books, academic articles, news articles and opinion editorials, social media platforms, interviews, speeches, and other types of political commentary – relating to Marine Le Pen and particularly her attitude towards women, express outrage and frame her as anti-women. What is of particular significance is the conflation of Marine Le Pen's stance on women and that of her father's, Jean-Marie Le Pen. Despite Marine Le Pen's major *dédiabolisation* [de-demonization] campaign – rebranding the National Rally to reflect a softer, more

²³ "The 2011 TIME 100." *Time*, Time Inc., content.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,2066367,00.html.

²⁴ Heath, Ryan. "The 40 MEPs Who Actually Matter - 2016 Ranking." *POLITICO*, POLITICO, 7 Nov. 2018, www.politico.eu/list/the-40-meps-who-actually-matter-european-parliament-mep/.

feminine image, severely breaking from her father's homophobic, Islamophobic, xenophobic, bigoted and anti-Semitic language – academics still see her in the context of the old National Rally led by her father. As an example, Gilles Ivaldi, political scientist at the National Center for Scientific Research at the University of Nice, states, "When people think of the National Rally, it's really about the policies and extremist background. The candidate doesn't really matter."²⁵ This one-sided view of Marine Le Pen is problematic.

Given that the goal of social science research is not only to fill gaps in the academic community, but also to change the way people think, or to at least challenge their crystallized perspectives, my aim is to present a new perspective on right-wing political parties and feminism. I uncover the rhetoric and policy platform of the phenomenon Marine Le Pen. *It is my contention that the phenomenon of Marine Le Pen – her rise to power, her shifting of the National Rally rhetoric on women's issues from the time of her father's leadership to her current leadership as part of her rebranding campaign, her stances on women's issues and how they fit into a more conservative feminist framework, and the resulting support she has received from the female electorate in France – may be an indication that conservative women, at least in France, have been excluded from feminism.*²⁶

My aim is to show how one controversial right-wing female politician's views on women and rhetoric surrounding feminism is being interpreted in a one-sided way. Academics should take phenomenal²⁷ figures such as Marine Le Pen seriously in order

²⁵ <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/how-being-a-woman-helped-marine-le-pen/522456/>

²⁶ The main argument of the thesis

²⁷ Exceptional in the sense of unusual or unprecedented

to understand where their undeniable popularity, particularly among marginalized groups, stems from. In the case of Marine Le Pen, it would be unproductive to ignore the fact that many people, particularly women, voted for her in the past decade. It is easy to dismiss these voters as unhinged fascists, one of many names they have been called for aligning themselves with the National Rally, but a larger consideration of the recent phenomenon of rising populist/nationalist movements would shed light also on the rhetoric surrounding controversial yet interestingly popular figures like Marine Le Pen, Donald Trump, Viktor Orban, and Geert Wilders. What is factual is there exist women who follow Marine Le Pen and it is important to understand why. Conservative feminism, or feminism that takes on conservative values, deserves serious critical analysis because it clearly speaks to a sizable group of people, including women.

The following are a few important disclaimers. First, the thesis does not discuss whether Marine Le Pen actually cares about women's issues. I am not judging her stance on women's issues nor am I arguing that she is using it as merely a political tactic. For the purposes of this thesis, that does not matter because her actual desires and motives are impossible to prove. Second, any connections made between conservative feminism and Marine Le Pen's rhetoric and stances on women's issues does not indicate that she fits into any conservative feminist framework perfectly. Third, while there is some discussion of feminist theory in order to situate conservative feminism, my thesis does not focus on feminist theory. Its focus is on feminist rhetoric and movements as opposed to feminist theory. Fourth, for the purposes of the main argument, American and French feminism will be largely conflated, although an explanation justifying this reasoning is also given later on.

Methodology and Terms

In seeking to explore the lack of a connection between right-wing politics and feminism, I first reviewed academic literature connecting politics and feminism and determined that very few, if any, scholarly works focused on the connection between right-wing politics and feminism. Then, I determined that the few scholarly works that did focus on this connection employed a negatively biased lens.

My primary sources consist of official social media accounts, specifically Marine Le Pen's official Twitter and Facebook accounts as well as the National Rally's official Twitter and Facebook accounts, the official websites of Marine Le Pen and the National Rally in order to gain insight into the party's platform, interviews with Marine Le Pen, and speeches of Marine Le Pen. My secondary sources included documentaries and newspaper articles (American, British, French). Finally, I did a literature review consisting of books and academic articles. Considering that very little academic scholarship focuses on Marine Le Pen and women, most of the research has been obtained from primary sources and newspaper articles.

For the purposes of this thesis, the following terms will be defined as such:²⁸

Feminism/women's issues: An all-encompassing umbrella term for any movements, formal or informal, organized or disorganized, that focus on women's issues and promote women's rights. The advocacy of women's rights on the basis of gender equality is at the core of feminism.

Conservative feminism: Explained in "Marine Le Pen" section

²⁸ Differences between the American and French versions of each term are discussed in the "Marine Le Pen" section

First-wave feminism: A period of feminist activity and thought that occurred during the 19th and early 20th century throughout the Western world. It focused on legal issues, primarily on gaining the right to vote.²⁹

Second-wave feminism: A period of feminist activity that began in the United States and spread to the Western world in the early 1960s and lasted until the 1980s. The major aim of the movement was to increase equality for women of all backgrounds by gaining more than just enfranchisement.³⁰ It concerns issues such as equality in the workplace, equality of opportunity, reproductive rights, and sexual assault issues. It is a general desire to advance the rights of women via policy, culture, and rhetoric, without necessarily promoting neo-feminist views like abortion and a rejection of a biological basis for gender identity.

Third-wave feminism: An iteration of the feminist movement that began in the United States in the early 1990s and continued until fourth-wave feminism began in 2012. The leaders of this movement sought to redefine what it meant to be a feminist and brought attention to issues such as access to contraception and the legalization of abortion, the creation and enforcement of sexual harassment policies for women in the workplace, child-care services, and women's studies programs.³¹

Fourth-wave feminism: An approach to feminism that began in 2012 and is grounded in the belief that all humans are equal, focusing heavily on intersectionality and the

²⁹ Henry, Astrid. *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 2004.

³⁰ Burkett, Elinor. "Women's Movement." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 9 Nov. 2017, www.britannica.com/topic/womens-movement.

³¹ Rivers, Nicola. *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave: Turning Tides*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

empowerment of marginalized groups in society.³²

Part 2

The National Rally and Women

Understanding why, historically, so few women have followed the National Rally and those few followers' motivations for joining the National Rally is integral to examining why Marine Le Pen is a phenomenon in attracting so many female voters in only a matter of a few years. There are two key points here: first, the portrayal of the older version of the National Rally and its attitude towards serves as a base for Marine Le Pen's rebranding campaign and highlights just how effective and significant the rebranding campaign has proven to be; second, the contrast between the low engagement of women in far-right politics in France in the 1990s with the relatively high level of engagement of women in far-right politics in France in the present day may shed light on the exclusion of conservative women from feminism.

The rise of the National Rally is undeniably long and tumultuous. According to Peter Davies, the National Rally represents a natural continuation of an omnipresent political tradition in French politics. Nationalism in France really found its roots in the 1950s. In the decade after World War II, the political landscape was not conducive to far-right political activity. However, small groups of ultra-nationalist political groups began to form. One of them was the Front National de Combattants, a French political party founded by Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1957. What ultimately paved the way for the rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the National Rally in the 70s was the Algérie Française, a colonial

³² "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?" *Feminism: A Fourth Wave?* | *The Political Studies Association (PSA)*, 5 Sept. 2013, www.psa.ac.uk/psa/news/feminism-fourth-wave.

right movement that emerged during the Algerian War (1954-1962). Algérie Française was tied to nostalgia for a long-lost age of French supremacy, which consisted of a belief in authoritarianism and extreme terror tactics. They used arch-revolutionary fervor and intransigent counter-revolutionary tactics. The behavior of the Algérie Française led to an upsurge in political agitation, which enabled the right to reclaim nationalism. After that, the rise of Poujadism, the violent and anarchic protest movement, was defined by nationalism that emphasized the grandeur of France. Some of their biggest beliefs were contempt for Parliament, extreme xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and a visceral contempt of communism. According to Davies, Poujadism was a significant stepping stone in the political career of Jean-Marie Le Pen. Jean-Marie is famous for uniting the right-wing under one party. Jean-Yves Camus, French journalist and political scientist specializing in the extreme-right, said that Jean-Marie brought “this political family out of the ghetto where it had been segregated since the war.”³³ He brought together everyone and anyone who could be characterized as “right-wing,” and that was what ultimately led to his success. The National Rally’s attraction of disillusioned right-wing members of society is a precursor to the attraction of female voters by Marine Le Pen.

In 1972, the National Rally was officially founded. In the years after 1972, it quickly evolved into a significant political force. Many thought of it as a neo-fascist movement in disguise. The turning point for the National Rally came in 1983, when it had its first major victory in a local election in Dreux. One of the first women to be involved formally in the National Rally was Marie-France Stirbois, who represented Dreux from 1989 to 1993 and was the only National Rally member to sit on the General Assembly. Twenty years later,

³³ Eltchaninoff, Michel. *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*. Hurst Et Company, 2018.

the National Rally reached its zenith in the mid-1990s. It polled 12% in the 1993 parliamentary elections and 10% in the 1994 European poll. According to Davies, the National Rally is a coalition of interests: neo-fascists, hardened Algérie Française veterans, ex-Poujadists, new right activists, integrist Catholics (those Catholics who opposed the modernists and sought to create a synthesis between Christianity and the liberal philosophy of secular modernity), and disillusioned conservatives. It is important to note that not all of the interested parties within the National Rally are neo-fascists; most of them are actually the disillusioned conservatives, as Davies points out.³⁴

In the mid-1990s, Jean-Marie Le Pen developed the National Rally doctrine, the Lepéniste doctrine, to include several main components: strong leadership, biological reproduction and the future, security and strength, tradition and heritage, patriotism, the core values of nation, family, religion, hierarchy, and nostalgia for the “old France,” when French grandeur was at its peak. The Lepéniste doctrine placed emphasis on the importance of all these values being fully in tune with nature and tradition. The National Rally believes in Europe as a historic civilization founded on Christian values and vital geo-political interests. It therefore opposes the globalist vision. Another important part of the Lepéniste doctrine is the critique of regionalism. Lepénisme established that regionalism is a good thing but must be controlled.

In 1992, the National Rally showcased one of its most contentious tenets: the return and expulsion of illegal immigrants. When Michel Eltchaninoff, French philosopher, journalist, and essayist, sat down with Jean-Marie Le Pen to interview him in 2017 about the National Rally and the theory/philosophy underlying the Lepéniste doctrine, Jean-

³⁴ Davies, Peter. *The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the Present: from De Maistre to Le Pen*. Routledge, 2002.

Marie said that the starting point for the Lepéniste doctrine is the idea of decline. He stated, “Our civilization is in a state of decadence. This can largely be attributed to the collapse of religious values in our society since the 1960s.”³⁵ He then said that France’s abandonment of Christianity is what led to this decline because the Christian religion frames all of human existence. When asked what caused the collapse of religious practice, Jean-Marie Le Pen responded with “demographic depression, which brought about the ruin of spiritual, moral, mental and psychological structures.” When asked what brought about this depression, Jean-Marie Le Pen responded,

*“The professional promotion of women outside the family, sexual egalitarianism. Although men and women are profoundly different, and although nature has programmed women to assure the reproduction of the species as their essential task, the feminization of society has encouraged women’s independence and turned them away from the vital function of reproduction. Women have taken the place of men during periods of great conflict, in 1914-18 or 1939-45. Women have made advances through necessity, have got used to it and enjoy it. Those who have studied feel the urge to have a child at around thirty-five, which is too late to ensure generational renewal.”*³⁶ Clearly, this was an anti-feminist tenet of the Lepéniste doctrine, which set the scene for the National Rally’s new leadership.

After forty years of Jean-Marie’s leadership in the National Rally, the Lepéniste doctrine was taken over by his daughter, Marine Le Pen. On this, Jean-Marie stated,

“I led a movement for forty years and then I found myself – an extraordinary state of affairs in politics – excluded from my own party by my daughter who is my successor,

³⁵ Eltchaninoff, Michel. *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*. Hurst Et Company, 2018.

³⁶ Eltchaninoff, Michel. *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*. Hurst Et Company, 2018.

*at precisely the moment that the planned growth in strength was happening, as I had envisaged it. It was at the moment that I was proven right that they thought things would happen quicker without me. It was a sin of pride. The individuals who are not at the head of the movement take the credit for its electoral successes, when really those successes are the culmination of a long march and the coming together of events predicted long ago.*³⁷

Marine Le Pen's takeover of the National Rally is where the shift in platform comes in. This shift in platform, image, and rhetoric will be discussed later on in the thesis, but here I note that given the history and trajectory of the National Rally described above, associating the National Rally with *both* Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen in the same way is erroneous, especially when examining Marine Le Pen's stance on women.

Even before Marine Le Pen's takeover, there had been somewhat of a feminine presence in the National Rally. In 2002, there was a significant gap between men and women's votes for the National Rally. The National Rally's electorate was 60% male and in the 1995 presidential elections, 19% of men and only 12% of women voted for Jean-Marie Le Pen. In the 1997 legislative elections, 18% of male voters and 12% of female voters chose the National Rally.³⁸ The reason for this gap was that women were less receptive to "the physical and verbal violence, which often has sexual and macho connotations, that surrounds the far right," according to Nonna Mayer.³⁹ Mayer also concluded that more female homemakers vote for the National Rally than do wage-

³⁷ Eltchaninoff, Michel. *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*. Hurst Et Company, 2018.

³⁸ Baccheta, Paola, et al. *Right-Wing Women: from Conservatives to Extremists around the World*. Routledge, 2002

³⁹ Baccheta, Paola, et al. *Right-Wing Women: from Conservatives to Extremists around the World*. Routledge, 2002.

earning women. Young women with college degrees and professional jobs are more dedicated to defending women's rights and find the National Rally's antifeminism to be unbearable. In 1990, according to a study of delegates to the National Rally's congress, 82% of the delegates were men and only 18% were women. This ratio is very similar to those of other political parties in France. Even fewer women are present higher up in the National Rally's hierarchy and there is a significant lack of women in the development of the National Rally's theory and platform. In its party program, the National Rally demands that French families have priority in or exclusive rights to state family allowances, social aid, and housing. The family is the basis of social order and also of the nation. Thus, the National Rally believes French women have a fundamental role in biological reproduction and strengthening national identity. The platform views relations between men and women as complementary. According to Paola Bachetta, the two high-profile women in the National Rally before Marine Le Pen's time were Martine Le Hideux and Marie-France Stirbois. In August 1998, Stirbois stated, "Let us be neither men's 'equals,' 'superiors,' nor 'inferiors,' but rather 'their indispensable complements who know how to comfort and support them but also sometimes overtake them,'"⁴⁰ which was considered by many to be extremist antifeminist. A 1990 survey showed that 87% of readers of National Hebdo, the National Rally's unofficial newspaper, were men while only 13% were women. In 1990, Birgitta Orfali conducted a study to analyze the motivations of National Rally members and found that women National Rally members often became involved through the membership of a man. She concluded that women participate in a strictly impersonal way

⁴⁰ Baccheta, Paola, et al. *Right-Wing Women: from Conservatives to Extremists around the World*. Routledge, 2002.

without truly asserting their place. Admiration for the leader and following family traditions plays an essential role in female membership.

As to the National Rally's view on women's issues, the National Rally has advocated pro-natality measures benefiting families with many children and financial measures, such as maternal income which was amended to "parental income" in 1993, encouraging women to engage in motherhood and domestic work full-time. Some other measures to encourage women to fulfill a more traditional role have included the creation of an official status for non-working mothers and the familial vote, proposing that parents be allowed to vote as many times as they have children, control of sex education in schools, and control of pornography. The National Rally has also traditionally taken a stance against abortion. Once women assumed more prominent roles within the party, the stances taken on women's issues started to soften, although not significantly. In 1985, the National Circle for European Women (CNFE) was formed as part of the National Rally to promote the importance of the family structure as the basis of the nation. The CNFE was anti-abortion, pro-natality, anti-pornography, anti-homosexuality, and pro-youth, and they did a lot of charitable work. Then, in 1990, CNFE amended its position on the role of women and began advocating for women to "choose" between work and family, reconciling domestic responsibilities with employment.⁴¹ In the 1990s, qualitative studies of women's participation as part of the CNFE in the National Rally were carried out, and according to Francesca Scrinzi, these studies shed light on the tension between the

⁴¹ Scrinzi, Francesca. "Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: from 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?" *New Formations*, vol. 91, no. 91, 2017, pp. 87–101., doi:10.3898/newf:91.05.2017.

National Rally's sexist ideology and the aspirations of working women and single women without children who were party members.

Marine Le Pen

Background

Marine Le Pen was born in 1968 in Neuilly-sur-Seine to Pierrette Lalanne and Jean-Marie Le Pen. She had a very rough childhood. As a result of her father's inflammatory nature and extremely controversial political views, her family was attacked in 1976 when the family apartment in Paris was blown up by a bomb. She was almost smothered to death. According to Cecile Alduy, "She traces her worldview actually, about how violent the world is, back to this event that was so traumatizing." In her autobiography, *Against the Flow*, Le Pen writes: "That night I went to sleep like all little girls my age. But when I woke, I was no longer a little girl like the others."⁴² Her parents would go away for weeks at a time, leaving Marine and her siblings with nannies. Then, Marine Le Pen went through her parents' bitter divorce and had a very hard time trying to communicate with her teachers and peers because she was the daughter of a bigot and racist. After the brutal divorce of her parents, Marine Le Pen shunned her mother and it was not until recently that they attempted to rekindle their relationship.⁴³ When Marine was only 16, before the bitter divorce between her parents took place, her mother suddenly left to run away with another man. Marine did not see her mother once for the next 15 years. This was an extremely difficult time for Marine, and as a result, she stopped eating and developed an eating disorder. Le Pen wrote in her autobiography that the

⁴² Beardsley, Eleanor. "Marine Le Pen's 'Brutal' Upbringing Shaped Her Worldview." *NPR*, NPR, 21 Apr. 2017, www.npr.org/2017/04/21/525110143/marine-le-pens-brutal-upbringing-shaped-her-worldview.

⁴³ Machuret, Patrice. *Dans La Peau De Marine Le Pen*. Éd. Du Seuil, 2012.

effect was "the most awful, cruel, crushing of pains of the heart: my mother did not love me."⁴⁴

After her parents' bitter divorce in 1987 gained significant media attention, Marine realized that she needed to become stronger and find her own path in life.⁴⁵ Therefore, it can be said that Marine Le Pen's mother did not directly impart feminist values on Marine when she was younger. However, it is noted that women's first exposure to feminist values is very personal and subjective. Not all women are exposed to feminism in the same way, and not all young girls grow up to be feminists as a result of their mothers' feminist parenting. In fact, even though Marine's mother had a profoundly negative effect on Marine, perhaps this is why one of the first things Marine said when she ran during the recent Presidential election was "I'm a French woman, a single mother, and a candidate for the presidency." She used her traumatic experience of growing up without a mother to assert herself as a strong woman in a patriarchal society. At the very least, it can be objectively agreed upon that Marine is no stranger to at least some of the struggles of many women all over the world. Her unique experience growing up without a mother and in the shadow of her misogynist father provides important context for some of the conservative feminist stances she has taken, discussed later in the thesis.

Marine Le Pen has been divorced several times. She had a hard time starting a career in law, the name "Le Pen" making it very difficult to attract clients, even though she represented immigrants pro bono if they had experienced discrimination and injustice. Jean Claude Martinez, a former senior leader of the National Rally, states

⁴⁴ "Marine Le Pen." *BBC*, BBC, www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/marine_le_pen.

⁴⁵ Beardsley, Eleanor. "Marine Le Pen's 'Brutal' Upbringing Shaped Her Worldview." *NPR*, NPR, 21 Apr. 2017, www.npr.org/2017/04/21/525110143/marine-le-pens-brutal-upbringing-shaped-her-worldview.

“This political family has suffered since 1945 from a stigma that it carries like a convict’s iron chains.”⁴⁶ Alduy states "Her last name was always a burden. She has described how being the daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen as the National Rally was emerging as a new controversial force on one hand lead her to idealize her father, who was greatly criticized. But she also suffered."⁴⁷ Marine Le Pen’s niece, Marion Maréchal, recently shed the “Le Pen” name from her name officially.

In 1995, Marine Le Pen married a prominent member of the National Rally and had three children. In 2000, she was divorced and raised her three kids alone as a single mother. Thus, Marine Le Pen is no stranger to trauma and discrimination. Her name’s reputation and association with her father, Jean-Marie, an anti-Semitic, racist, xenophobic misogynist, has followed Marine Le Pen her entire life. Many say she grew up wealthy and privileged, and her material wealth is undisputed. However, emotionally, Marine Le Pen suffered from a lack of adequate parental attention and initial professional hardships.

Rise to Power and Takeover of National Rally

Marine Le Pen took control of the National Rally in 2011 after being a member of the party since age 18. About 10 years earlier, she had led *Generations Le Pen*, an organization aimed to de-demonize the National Rally, which led to her being the Vice President of the party in 2003 and then leading her father’s presidential campaign in 2006. Before taking control in 2011, she had stated that she wanted to run for the

⁴⁶ Eltchaninoff, Michel. *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*. Hurst Et Company, 2018.

⁴⁷ Beardsley, Eleanor. “Marine Le Pen's 'Brutal' Upbringing Shaped Her Worldview.” *NPR*, NPR, 21 Apr. 2017, www.npr.org/2017/04/21/525110143/marine-le-pens-brutal-upbringing-shaped-her-worldview.

party's leader in order to "make the party a big popular party that addresses itself not only to the electorate on the right but to all the French people."⁴⁸

She won the leadership in 2011 with 67.65% of the vote, defeating Bruno Gollnisch⁴⁹ and taking over leadership from her father, the leader since 1972. Immediately, she "inserted a whole series of corrections into the National Front's traditional discourse."⁵⁰ While Marine Le Pen tried to reach out to those who had most suffered from France's economic crisis and draw in more young people and women, Olivier Beaumont says her father's xenophobic and anti-Semitic outbursts were really taking a toll on her mentally. "There's a big difference between Jean-Marie and Marine Le Pen," Beaumont says. "The father only wanted to provoke. The daughter aspires to real power." Therefore, after expelling the most controversial members of the party, she finally expelled her father in 2015 and has not talked to him since. "She can't stand his provocations about Nazi gas chambers and [World War II Vichy France leader] Marshal Petain, and she thinks he's trying to sink her," says Beaumont. In addition to the expulsions, she also immediately relaxed some of the party's political positions, advocating for civil unions for same-sex couples instead of her party's previous opposition to legal recognition of same-sex partnerships, accepting unconditional abortion, and withdrawing the death penalty from her platform.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "Marine Le Pen in Bid to Head France's National Front." *BBC News*, BBC, 13 Apr. 2010, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8617647.stm.

⁴⁹ Erlanger, Steven. "Marine Le Pen Prepares to Lead France's Far Right." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 21 May 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/05/22/world/europe/22lepen.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2&sq=Marine%2BLe%2BPeen%2BFrance&st=cse&scp=1.

⁵⁰ Eltchaninoff, Michel. *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*. Hurst Et Company, 2018.

⁵¹ "The De-Demonisation of the National Front." *Policy Network*, 26 Mar. 2013.

Marine Le Pen's rise marked the beginning of the National Rally's journey toward mainstream French politics. She tried to "de-demonize" the party (*dédiabolisation*) and soften its image, despite her father opposing all of her efforts. "It's really hard to become president if public opinion considers you an extremist radical that might break the country," Marine Le Pen says. A 2015 poll in France taken four years after Marine Le Pen took control revealed that 57% of those polled saw the National Rally as a mainstream party and not part of the extreme-right.⁵²

Popularity

Marine Le Pen continued to gain popularity after taking control of the National Rally. Right before she took over, in the 2010 French regional elections, Marine Le Pen was ranked fourth in terms of most watched debates. She was viewed by 3.4 million people, placing her just after Nicolas Sarkozy.⁵³ In 2012, one year after taking over, she placed third in the presidential election with almost 18% of the vote, behind François Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy, garnering a tremendous amount of support from the female electorate. One year after she took control of the National Rally, for the first time, women were almost as likely as men to vote for the National Rally.⁵⁴ According to Nonna Mayer, Marine Le Pen scored 17% from women and 19% from men. Her score from men was lower than the 20% male support that Jean-Marie Le Pen obtained in 2002, but the reason why her total score was better is because of her ability to draw in more women voters. She achieved better results, in both percentage vote-share and number of votes,

⁵² Bastow, Steve. "The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a Mainstream Political Party?" *French Politics*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2017, pp. 19–37., doi:10.1057/s41253-017-0052-7.

⁵³ Machuret, Patrice. *Dans La Peau De Marine Le Pen*. Éd. Du Seuil, 2012.

⁵⁴ Eltchaninoff, Michel. *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*. Hurst Et Company, 2018.

than Jean-Marie Le Pen in the 2002 presidential election. In Gard, a department in Southern France, Le Pen had actually polled first, with Sarkozy and Hollande polling behind her. She also came first in her municipal stronghold of Hénin-Beaumont.⁵⁵ In the June 2012 parliamentary elections, Le Pen won about 42% of the vote, well ahead of socialist Philippe Kemel (23%) and far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon (21%).

The success of the National Rally did not stop in 2012. In 2014, the National Rally won the European elections in France, with 25% of the vote. Marine Le Pen came in first in her North-West constituency with 34% of the vote. After announcing her candidacy for the presidency of the regional council of Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie in the 2015 regional elections, she came in first with close to 41% of the vote.

In the 2017 Presidential election, Marine Le Pen ended up with close to 34% of the vote. The first round between her and Emmanuel Macron, the centrist candidate from En Marche!, was tight, with her obtaining 21% of the vote (a record 7.6 million votes) and Macron ahead of her with just 24%. In that election, according to an Opinion Way poll, Marine Le Pen won the support of 24% of all female voters, which was a larger share of support from women than any other candidate running.⁵⁶ Emmanuel Macron only earned the support of 21% of women voters.⁵⁷ According to “Statistica,” 65% of people in France in 2017 identified as “feminists” – “someone who advocates and supports equal

⁵⁵ *Razor Tie Artery Foundation Announce New Joint Venture Recordings | Razor & Tie*, Rovi Corporation, web.archive.org/web/20120425214414/http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/a_votre_service/resultats-elections/PR2002/FE.html.

⁵⁶ Jashinsky, Emily, and Frank Augstein. “Poll Finds French Presidential Candidate Marine Le Pen Won Plurality of Women, Young Voters.” *Washington Examiner*, 24 Apr. 2017, www.washingtonexaminer.com/poll-finds-french-presidential-candidate-marine-le-pen-won-plurality-of-women-young-voters.

⁵⁷ Jashinsky, Emily, and Frank Augstein. “Poll Finds French Presidential Candidate Marine Le Pen Won Plurality of Women, Young Voters.” *Washington Examiner*, 24 Apr. 2017, www.washingtonexaminer.com/poll-finds-french-presidential-candidate-marine-le-pen-won-plurality-of-women-young-voters.

opportunities for women.”⁵⁸ It is very unlikely that all of the French women who supported Marine Le Pen in the 2017 election were somehow part of the 35% that do not identify as feminists. Therefore, at least some of the women who voted for Marine Le Pen identify as feminists.

A French opinion poll found that 74% of the French populace polled describe Marine Le Pen as “courageous.”⁵⁹ According to another Opinion Way poll published in December 2015, the number of women National Rally voters has jumped three-fold since Marine Le Pen took the party from her father in 2011.

The *dédiabolisation* campaign of Marine Le is fascinating both from a psychological as well as academic perspective. Marine Le Pen has used her position as a single mother of three to push her image among women voters, especially struggling working-class women and housewives. Valerie Igounet, a historian who spent two years talking to National Rally voters told *The Huffington Post*, “The true novelty of Marine Le Pen’s National Front is the vote of women.”⁶⁰ This is what makes her a phenomenon. Besides Marine Le Pen’s stances on women’s issues and how they fit into a more conservative feminist framework, which is discussed later in this thesis, her large-scale, in-depth rebranding of the National Rally has played a huge role in her astonishing popularity.

Rebranding

⁵⁸ “Identifying as a Feminist 2017 | Survey.” *Statista*, Statista, www.statista.com/statistics/312161/define-self-feminist-advocates-supports-equal-opportunities-women/.

⁵⁹ Moutet, Anne-Elisabeth. “Marine Le Pen Becomes Front National Leader: A Pivotal Moment for French Politics?” *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 16 Jan. 2011, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/8261969/Marine-Le-Pen-becomes-Front-National-leader-A-pivotal-moment-for-French-politics.html.

⁶⁰ “Who Are the Millions of French Voters Backing Marine Le Pen?” *The Local*, The Local, 25 Apr. 2017, www.thelocal.fr/20170425/who-are-the-eight-million-voters-expected-to-back-le-pen.

Perhaps one of the most notable, explicit examples of Marine Le Pen's rebranding campaign, officially known as "*dédiabolisation*," or "de-demonization" of the National Rally, can be found in her official campaign video for the 2017 Presidential election. Marine Le Pen starts off with saying that she is a woman and a mother,⁶¹ with images of her children. The tone of the video is soft and feminine, yet strong and powerful.

When Marine Le Pen took over the National Rally in 2011, one of the first orders of business was to change its symbolism. Peter Davies calls the National Rally's discourse "symbol-dominated." According to Davies, it employs three main national symbols in its discourse: the people, the land, and Joan of Arc. In terms of "the people," Jean-Marie Le Pen always strived to be portrayed as an ordinary, authentic Frenchman sensitive to the preoccupations of other ordinary citizens. In terms of "the land," Davies argues that the earth and soil are a component of the national identity. Concern for nature, the environment, and the country's agricultural sector is concern for the nation. The idea of roots is used in both senses to mean the roots of plants as well as loyalty and fidelity to one's roots, consistent with the image of traditional France and the nostalgia for it. According to Davies, the National Rally's idolatry of Joan of Arc is based upon two main sentiments: the idea that Joan personifies France and French virtues and the notion held within the party that Jean-Marie Le Pen and Joan share common philosophical ground: the cleansing and purification of France.⁶² Keeping in line with the National Rally's tradition of employing symbolism to convey principle and tone, Marine

⁶¹ Pen, Marine Le, director. *YouTube*. *YouTube*, YouTube, 5 Feb. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYWnuQc5mYA.

⁶² Davies, Peter. *National Front in France: Ideology, Discourse and Power*. Routledge, 2014.

Le Pen abandoned the traditional blue, white, and red frame for a new logo: a rose without thorns. “Why did I choose it? Because it’s first and foremost a symbol of femininity,” she explained in a Twitter video.⁶³ In addition to changing the party’s main logo, she also got rid of the words “Le Pen” and “National Front” on her official campaign posters, using her wardrobe (a classy mini skirt) and body language (sitting down) to distance the National Rally from its incendiary past.⁶⁴

The two major shifts in rhetoric Marine Le Pen has focused on, related to the overall rebranding of the party, are discourse on Jews and on women. Some of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s most controversial statements were about Jews and the Holocaust. He said that the gas chambers were “a detail of the history of World War II,” while Marine Le Pen has described them as “the height of barbarism”⁶⁵ and said that she does not share the same opinion as her father. She has even framed the immigration issue in a way that champions the rights of Jews, stating that Islamism is a threat for freedom of Jews.⁶⁶ In 2011, shortly after taking over the National Rally, Marine Le Pen gave her first speech, in which she acknowledged the rights of women, non-Christians, and members of the LGBTQ community. The 2012 political program of the National Rally expresses tolerance of same-sex civil partnerships, and Marine Le Pen usually abstains from intervening in recent debates on same-sex marriages and has not taken part in any of the mobilizations against the 2013 law that made these same-sex civil

⁶³ “Marine Le Pen Et Les Femmes : Main Basse Et Rose Bleue Sur Les Droits Des Femmes.” *Prénom Mathilde : Signification, Origine, Fete*, Le Journal Des Femmes, www.journaldesfemmes.fr/people/marine-le-pen/.

⁶⁴ World, TRT, director. *YouTube. YouTube*, YouTube, 6 May 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nv1DCC2Du54.

⁶⁵ “Michel Thooris, L'homme Qui Veut Faire Voter Les Juifs Pour Marine Le Pen.” *Slate.fr*, 18 May 2016, www.slate.fr/story/117573/michel-thooris-juifs-marine-le-pen.

⁶⁶ Mayer, Nonna. “The Closing of the Radical Right Gender Gap in France?” *French Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2015, pp. 391–414., doi:10.1057/fp.2015.18.

partnerships possible.⁶⁷ Jean-Marie Le Pen often expressed that he considered a woman's place to be at home raising kids and not in the public realm. Marine Le Pen has tried to move the party away from its controversial perspective on women. For example, in addition to her softer views on abortion, which is discussed later, Marine Le Pen generally does not speak as frequently about abortion as her father, acknowledging that certain women's rights are already enshrined in the French public consciousness. Therefore, generally, the National Rally has taken on a more conservative feminist stance since the rise of Marine Le Pen as the party's leader.

The success of Marine Le Pen's *dédiabolisation* campaign is one factor out of several making up her image as a phenomenon that may explain why she has attracted so many female voters, particularly female voters that identify with more conservative values. For decades, the proportion of the population that saw the National Rally as a "danger for democracy" was significantly above 65%. Just in January 2012, the number dropped to 47%, the proportion of the sample seeing the party as "a patriot right defending traditional values." Opinion polls consistently show that she has become much more popular than her father ever was. According to Mayer, this could mean that it might make it "less difficult, less morally reprehensible and socially stigmatizing" to vote for her, especially if you are woman.⁶⁸

Just recently, in June 2018, Marine Le Pen officially changed the name of her party from National Front to National Rally – le Rassemblement National - as yet

⁶⁷ Scrinzi, Francesca. "Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: from 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?" *New Formations*, vol. 91, no. 91, 2017, pp. 87–101., doi:10.3898/newf:91.05.2017.

⁶⁸ Mayer, Nonna. "The Closing of the Radical Right Gender Gap in France?" *French Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2015, pp. 391–414., doi:10.1057/fp.2015.18.

another effort to improve its image and to help facilitate alliances with other parties as part of her rebranding campaign. This is one of her final steps to throw out the old name of the party because it was constantly being associated with Jean-Marie Le Pen's stances – racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, Islamophobia, xenophobia, and sexism.⁶⁹

Part 3

Conservative Feminism

Similar to feminism as a whole, there is not a specific, widely accepted conservative feminist framework or even movement in the United States or France. This is critical to understand because when it is stated that conservative women have been excluded from feminism, that means that the conception of conservative feminism that is explained below is not considered to be socially legitimate. Generally, the feminist movement in the United States has been divided into four waves: first-wave, second-wave, third-wave, and fourth-wave. While there is not a defined “conservative feminist” movement, there are pockets of conservative feminism that have arisen during all four waves and this is what is meant by the term “conservative feminism.” In other words, there has been a conservative reaction to almost every iteration of feminism since the concept officially (gaining social legitimacy) took form in the late 1960s. Conservative feminism can be explained historically and also academically. Historically, the first conception of conservative feminism arose around the time of the work of Elizabeth Cady

⁶⁹ Chris Stevenson International Editor. “Marine Le Pen Proposes National Front Changes Name to Rebrand.” *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 12 Mar. 2018, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/marine-le-pen-national-front-name-change-national-union-rally-far-right-vote-a8250676.html.

Stanton and Susan B. Anthony and the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), the more conservative American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA),⁷⁰ was organized by Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell, and Julia Ward Howe. During the same time, the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) was formed by the conservative members of the National Organization for Women (NOW). WEAL focused on employment and education for women, but took stances against contraception and abortion. In the early 20th century, before even the conception of first-wave feminism, American suffragist and feminist Alice Paul led the National Woman's Party, articulating "a conservative version of feminism."⁷¹ Prominent feminist figure and *Feminine Mystique* author Betty Friedan helped shape backlash feminism and new conservative feminism, which rejects the politicization of sexuality, supports families, gender differentiation, femininity and mothering, and deprioritizes opposition to male domination.⁷² In the 21st century, there are examples of many prominent female politicians who have called themselves conservatives. Theresa May, a leader of the UK's Conservative Party, wore a t-shirt by the Fawcett Society emblazoned with "This is What a Feminist Looks Like." Many British female conservative parliamentarians claim that they are feminists, include Conservative MP Nadine Dorries, who presented a feminist argument for restricting abortion.⁷³ Besides the female politicians, many independent conservative feminist scholars and

⁷⁰ "About This Collection | National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection | Digital Collections | Library of Congress." *Planning D-Day (April 2003) - Library of Congress Information Bulletin*, Victor, www.loc.gov/collections/national-american-woman-suffrage-association/about-this-collection/.

⁷¹ Freeman, Jo, and Alice Echols. "Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975." *Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1991, p. 186., doi:10.2307/2072891.

⁷² Stacey, Judith. "The New Conservative Feminism." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1983, p. 559., doi:10.2307/3177616.

⁷³ Swift, David. "From 'I'm Not a Feminist, but ...' to 'Call Me an Old-Fashioned Feminist ...': Conservative Women in Parliament and Feminism, 1979–2017." *Women's History Review*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2018, pp. 317–336., doi:10.1080/09612025.2018.1482659.

commentators are part of this quote-on-quote conservative feminist movement. For example, conservative columnist Katherine Kersten, Tammy Bruce, Christine Sommers, and Heather Mac Donald all identify as conservative feminists.

In addition to the political figures and conservative commentators, there are prominent conservative feminist organizations. In fact, according to Ronnee Schreiber, a handful of large and established women's organizations have proven to be the most effective promoters of the conservative agenda. In her book *Righting Feminism*, Schreiber shows that prominent conservative feminist organizations, such as Concerned Women for American and the Independent Women's Forum, have used feminist rhetoric for conservative ends: outlawing abortion, restricting pornography, and bolstering the traditional family. She also fights against misconceptions about conservatism and feminism, such as the idea that conservatism holds no appeal to women and that modern conservatism is hostile to women's activism.⁷⁴ Other prominent conservative feminist organizations include Feminists for Life of America, and ifeminists.net. All of these conservative feminist organizations draw on principles of first and second-wave feminism and take stances against radical, fourth-wave feminism. In general, conservative feminist organizations support the professional advancement of women in addition to the importance of motherhood and child-rearing. They support individuality and biological determinism.⁷⁵ Similarly, the Evangelical Protestant Christian movement supports women's liberation and views it as a necessary response to the oppression of women but criticizes efforts to eliminate gender differences, shuns the devaluation of motherhood

⁷⁴ Schreiber, Ronnee. *Righting Feminism Conservative Women and American Politics: with a New Epilogue*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁷⁵ Bailey, Courtney. "Taking Back the Campus': Right-Wing Feminism as the 'Middle Ground.'" *Feminist Teacher*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2006, pp. 173–188., doi:www.jstor.org/stable/40535471.

and homemaking, and condemns abortion.

Academically, some scholars have attempted to create a conservative feminist framework, although that has largely been a failed effort as no academic consensus has been arrived at. Richard Posner, American jurist and economist, argues that conservative feminism is the idea that women are entitled to political, legal, social, and economic equality to men, in the framework of a lightly regulated market economy. It is the libertarian approach to issues of feminist jurisprudence, provided that "libertarian" is understood to refer to a strong commitment to markets rather than to some natural-rights or other philosophical underpinning of such a commitment. The implications of such an approach are not limited to narrowly "economic" issues such as comparable worth, although those issues are important and some are neglected by other forms of feminism. According to Posner, "The implications extend to the headiest heights of jurisprudential speculation, where the question whether women have a fundamentally different outlook on law from men is being debated."⁷⁶ In relation to employment, Posner argues for sex being a factor in setting wages and benefits in accordance with productivity, health costs with pregnancy, on-the-job safety, and longevity for pensions. Ronnee Schreiber conducted a study based on in-depth interviews with women leaders in conservative movement politics and determined that conservative women open up debates over women's interests and the meaning of feminism. She says, "This allows conservatives – male and female – to argue that feminists do not speak for all women and that conservative politics can welcome and represent women. In sum, conservative

⁷⁶ Posner, Richard. "Conservative Feminism." *University of Chicago Law School: Chicago Unbound*, 1989.

women are ultimately advocating for conservative women's issues and interests which enables the broader conservative movement to fight its "war on women" image."⁷⁷

For the purposes of this study, the American feminist movement and its iterations will be largely conflated with French feminism. The woman's liberation movement began in 1970. Following the example of the American feminists, French feminists broke away from the New Left to form women-only groups, such as the Mouvement de libération de femmes (MLF)⁷⁸, focusing on the fight against rape and compulsory motherhood. Even before that, there were pockets of feminist activity that were later categorized into waves. French feminism can be divided into three waves: first-wave, which focused on suffrage and civic rights (culminating in the right to vote in 1944), second-wave (1940s to 1990s), which focused on the reevaluation of a women's role in society especially in relation to women's equal political status to men, and third-wave (2000s-present), which focuses on strong support for abortion, birth control, and a special emphasis on intersectionality and racism. Particularly notable is Ni Putes ni Soumises⁷⁹ (founded in 2002), an iteration of third-wave feminism, which focuses on social pressure and violence directed at Muslim women in France. The movement is heavily anti-right-wing and anti-moderate and can best be equated to certain aspects of the late fourth-wave feminist movement in the United States. Generally, American first-wave feminism overlaps with French first-wave and parts of second-wave feminism. French feminist

⁷⁷ Schreiber, Ronnee. "Is There a Conservative Feminism? An Empirical Account." *Politics & Gender*, vol. 14, no. 01, 2018, pp. 56–79., doi:10.1017/s1743923x17000587.

⁷⁸ De Fpicq. "The History of Feminist Movements in France." *Françoise Picq*, 24 Jan. 2019, francoisepicq.fr/the-history-of-feminist-movements-in-france/.

⁷⁹ "Association Le Mouvement Ni Putes Ni Soumises – Site Officiel." *Association Le Mouvement Ni Putes Ni Soumises – Site Officiel*, npns.eu/.

and founder of l'Association Nationale des Études Feminists (ANEF)⁸⁰ Françoise Picq states that the major goals of second-wave feminism, especially the individual liberties of women, were essentially the same everywhere globally.⁸¹ Therefore, the differences in feminist waves between the United States and France are not severely different. The biggest differences can be found within the scope of feminist theory, which is not the focus of this thesis.⁸² Beyond that, it is obvious that feminist movements differed based on the cultural traditions in which they were born as well as nuanced socio-political contexts. As an example, Picq argues that France's revolutionary history and mentality certainly contributed to the feminist movement in France. However, barring the differing contexts and histories, feminist movements, especially in the Western world, generally have a similar trajectory and purpose.

Conservative feminism is especially not prominent in France. There are more pockets of conservative feminists and more activity of conservative feminism in the United States than in France. Thus, the reasons why we are conflating American and French feminisms, with a general understanding of the nuances, are that first, the two are not especially different in the realm of feminist rhetoric and movements, as opposed to feminist theory, and second, iterations of fourth-wave feminism originating in the United States, namely, #MeToo, Time's Up, the Weinstein effect, etc., are global, as was discussed before. Trump's election did not solely influence American feminists; it

⁸⁰ "ANEF – Association Nationale Des Études Féministes." *Français*, www.anef.org/language/en/.

⁸¹ De Fpicq. "The History of Feminist Movements in France." *Françoise Picq*, 24 Jan. 2019, francoisepicq.fr/the-history-of-feminist-movements-in-france/.

⁸² To learn more about French feminist theory, see:

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195066081.001.0001/acref-9780195066081-e-0305>

influenced French feminists too. Marine Le Pen's rhetoric on women's rights and the support she has received from women does not exist in isolation of American feminist activity post-2016. When it is stated that Marine Le Pen's rhetoric may fit into "conservative feminism," that means it is similar to what is associated with the pockets of conservative feminists in the United States, which would not be radically different from France. In fact, the tenets of conservative feminists in the United States would be considered even more conservative in France, especially given that there are virtually no pockets of conservative feminist activity in France.

It is important to use this general historical and academic understanding of conservative feminism in order to grasp why women who identify with this brand of feminism have been excluded from mainstream feminism, namely, leftist, fourth-wave feminism. It is also important to understand this in the context of Marine Le Pen's rhetoric and stance on women's issues and why they resemble conservative feminism, as an explanation for why they would be attractive to women who identify as conservative feminists.

Marine Le Pen and Feminism

Marine Le Pen's platform on women's issues fits into a more conservative feminist framework, thus attracting conservative women disillusioned with the French political left and right's platform on women, which is essentially nonexistent given that most of the major political figures in France have been men.

As was discussed, the image of the National Rally has largely changed due to Marine Le Pen's rebranding efforts, largely based on a shift in rhetoric. It is important to understand how this shift in rhetoric and overall rebranding has given the National Rally

a conservative feminist aura, despite the fact that this has either been dismissed or not paid enough attention considering women are only mentioned twice in Marine Le Pen's 24-page, 144-point political manifesto.⁸³ When in 2012 Marine Le Pen was asked in an interview why the National Rally manifesto did not include virtually anything on women's rights, she claimed that the laws required to achieve gender equality are already in place and what is lacking is the political will to implement them. According to Rainbow Murray, Marine Le Pen capitalized on her softer and more modern image. She moved away from the anti-Semitic and chauvinist image of the National Rally and towards a more feminist image. "The symbolic value of a woman candidate can create the impression of greater sympathy for women's issues," states Murray.⁸⁴ Even though Murray determines that this is no more than a shallow impression, the point is that even the superficial symbolism of a woman candidate can be enough to reassure women and make them feel more at ease about their political party, as was seen in the United States with Hilary Clinton and all the women who voted for her merely because she is a woman. During National Rally academic Dorit Geva's four year research on the gender politics of the National Rally, she determined that young adherents described Marine Le Pen as a feminine symbol of the future because she cares for her party as she does for her children, and understands the challenges facing the young.⁸⁵ This goes back to the idea of the symbolism of Marine Le Pen's gender providing reassurance to women and youth. Besides just reassurance,

⁸³ "How Marine Le Pen Made a Party Co-Founded by Nazi Collaborators Mainstream | CBC Radio." *CBCnews*, CBC/Radio Canada, 5 May 2017, www.cbc.ca/radio/day6/episode-336-sidney-crosby-s-concussion-awesome-mix-vol-2-marine-le-pen-captain-canuck-and-more-1.4099052/how-marine-le-pen-made-a-party-co-founded-by-nazi-collaborators-mainstream-1.4099073.

⁸⁴ Murray, Rainbow. "Progress But Still No PrÃ©sidente: Women and the 2012 French Presidential Elections." *French Politics, Culture & Society*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2012, doi:10.3167/fpcs.2012.300303.

⁸⁵ "A Beautiful Night with Marine:" Marine Le Pen and Gender-Hegemonic Charisma." *EuropeNow*, www.europenowjournal.org/2017/07/05/untitled-2/.

according to Michael Köttig, Marine Le Pen's demands are often "unambiguously feminist."⁸⁶ For example, when demanding the reintroduction of the French franc, she argues that the new banknotes should feature the portraits of Joan of Arc and of the illustrious feminist Olympe de Gouges, who wrote the "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen" in 1791 during the French Revolution.

Francesca Scrinzi calls this new feminist aura "sexual modernity," which includes gender equality in the new and misogyny in the old. Misogyny is attributed to the enemies of the National Rally, with Marine Le Pen stating that the National Rally is actually the least sexist party in France. In fact, in her autobiography, Marine Le Pen refers to male politicians of the French Socialist Party as "éléphants machos du PS" (macho elements of the Socialist Party).⁸⁷ More importantly, Marine Le Pen has made the claim that women are one of the social groups which the left-wing has betrayed by giving up on the struggle of gender equality. To take this further, it is not really that the left-wing has given up on gender equality; it is that they employ *one* type of notion of gender equality that *they* feel is right, thus pushing away women who subscribe to more conservative values of feminism.

Marine Le Pen's cultivation of the new feminist aura of the National Rally has been somewhat translated into the party's official policy platform, especially on women's issues. In 2017, when Marine Le Pen gave her first major speech as a presidential candidate, she emphasized the legal framework of France and how it guarantees the

⁸⁶ Köttig, Michaela, et al. *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

⁸⁷ Scrinzi, Francesca. "Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: from 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?" *New Formations*, vol. 91, no. 91, 2017, pp. 87–101., doi:10.3898/newf:91.05.2017.

equality of all citizens, regardless of origins, race, religion, or gender.⁸⁸ Her 2017 presidential program, the 144 Commitments, called for the “guarantee of freedom of expression and numerical liberty through their inscription in the freedoms fundamentally protected by the Constitution,” for “respect for freedom of association to be ensured” and for “the defense of the rights of women.”⁸⁹

Delia Dumitrescu’s analysis of the National Rally’s visual campaign strategy can be used to better understand how some of the changed discourse under Marine Le Pen is reflected in the National Rally’s official campaign strategy. Political candidates in France use their visual campaign materials to convey valuable information about their party, qualities, and policy positions. Their campaign materials hold them accountable, to an extent. They represent promises that the electorate believes the candidates will keep because the candidates want a positive reaction from the electorate. The focus of Dumitrescu’s analysis is on the evolution of female candidates in the National Rally. In 2012, one year after Marine Le Pen took control of the National Rally, female National Rally candidates were more likely than men to invite a personal vote. What this means is that their pictures on the covers of their *profession de foi*, a document reflecting French candidates’ election pledges, were bigger than men’s. Their pictures made them appear closer to the voters than men appear. Meanwhile, back in 2007 before Marine took control of the National Rally, men actually portrayed themselves as being closer to voters.⁹⁰ This is a direct indication that Marine Le Pen’s rebranding campaign, largely founded upon a

⁸⁸ Eltchaninoff, Michel. *Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*. Hurst Et Company, 2018.

⁸⁹ Bastow, Steve. “The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a Mainstream Political Party?” *French Politics*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2017, pp. 19–37., doi:10.1057/s41253-017-0052-7.

⁹⁰ Dumitrescu, Delia. “Up, Close and Personal: the New Front National Visual Strategy under Marine Le Pen.” *French Politics*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1–26., doi:10.1057/s41253-016-0012-7.

shift in rhetoric, is accompanied by a change in the National Rally's campaign strategy, specifically their willingness to appeal to more women voters. The difference in the way female National Rally candidates portrayed themselves between the two elections indicates that the misogynist policies and the rhetoric of Jean-Marie's National Front, coupled with Marine's rise to power in 2011 and her subsequent feminist effect on the National Rally, motivated the female politicians of the National Rally to make an effort to appeal to women and minorities more. It gave them motivation to at least bring up women's issues in their political rhetoric.

National Rally women candidates' self-presentation strategy changed dramatically from 2007 to 2012 in other ways as well. For example, National Rally women in 2012 were more likely to use all the visual presentation features associated with a personal vote – they appeared larger on the cover and closer to the viewers. Dumitrescu's conclusion is that 2012 National Rally candidates, under Marine Le Pen's leadership, portrayed themselves significantly more like mainstream party candidates. They made personal choices that create the illusion of personal closeness to voters, and of personal importance, as they represent themselves as larger, more central and more to the top of their electoral materials. They used the visual tools to demand not just a party vote, but a personal vote as well. This indicates that women candidates of the National Rally have undergone a huge transformation since 2007, before Marine Le Pen's time. These substantial changes in the National Rally's visual strategy reflect the promises made by Marine Le Pen to open up the party more to women.⁹¹ A similar analysis of the National Rally's rhetoric was conducted by Daniel Stockemer. As was discussed before, while

⁹¹ Dumitrescu, Delia. "Up, Close and Personal: the New Front National Visual Strategy under Marine Le Pen." *French Politics*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1–26., doi:10.1057/s41253-016-0012-7.

traditionally, women have been less likely to vote for right-wing parties like the National Rally, empirical research over the past decade has shown that the gender gap in the radical right-wing vote has reduced. This has particularly been the case in France, and especially for the National Rally where the gender gap is no longer perceivable. While in 2007, four years before Marine Le Pen became the leader of the National Rally, the gender gap was present (men were more prone to vote for the National Rally than women), it gradually disappeared by 2012, one year after Marine Le Pen became the leader of the National Rally.⁹² This strong and significant appeal to women is brought up yet again to demonstrate that all these factors of Marine Le Pen's phenomenon – her rise to power, appeal to female voters, change in discourse, and conservative feminism – are connected and cumulatively point to the exclusion of conservative women from feminism.

Rebecca Amsellem, French feminist and founder of a women's group "Les Glorieuses," would say that the fact that Marine Le Pen's cultivation of the new feminist aura of the National Rally has been translated into the party's official policy platform on women is representative of her understanding that she needed more women to vote for her in order to be successful. Amsellem claims that Marine Le Pen decided to use the issue of women's rights to push her own agenda. Journalist and author Cathy Young explains this tendency of right-wing politicians to attract the female vote as a "new phenomenon." She calls it "the rise of the right-wing women."⁹³ Young, who interviewed

⁹² Stockemer, Daniel, and Abdelkarim Amengay. "The Voters of the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen: Continuity or Change?" *French Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2015, pp. 370–390., doi:10.1057/fp.2015.16.

Stockemer, Daniel, and Mauro Barisione. "The 'New' Discourse of the Front National under Marine Le Pen: A Slight Change with a Big Impact." *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2016, pp. 100–115., doi:10.1177/0267323116680132.

⁹³ News, ABC, director. *French Presidential Candidate Marine Le Pen and Europe's Far-Right Movement*. YouTube, YouTube, 21 Apr. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaJ-QllpgvE.

many women who voted for Donald Trump, admits that what was most surprising to her was how it was evident to her that these women are concerned about women's rights and were able to reconcile Trump's sexist tendencies with their own beliefs about feminism. In the case of Marine Le Pen and the National Rally, what may explain why so many female voters were drawn to Marine Le Pen is her stances on specific women's issues and how they fit into a conservative feminist framework.

Arguably one of the most contentious political issues in France is immigration and the National Rally's history of handling immigration has been largely defined by Jean-Marie Le Pen's blatant xenophobia. Although Marine Le Pen does not devote much time to migrant women in her speeches or statements, she and others in the party have linked immigration to delinquency and violence against women. For example, in 2010, she stated, "In certain neighborhoods, it is better not to be a woman, a homosexual, a Jew, or even French or white, and the party line on violence against women is that it is largely a consequence of the massive and continuous arrival of non-European foreigners who do not share the culture, mores, or customs of most French people."⁹⁴ The National Rally has always made an explicit association between sexual violence and migrant men.⁹⁵ In response to the mass sexual assaults and muggings by groups of men in Cologne in Germany during New Year's Eve celebrations in 2016, Marine Le Pen wrote an opinion piece describing immigration as a threat to women's rights, saying it risked bringing "social regression" to France. In the article, Marine Le Pen writes, "I am scared that the migrant crisis signals the beginning of the end of

⁹⁴ Morgan, Kimberly J. "Gender, Right-Wing Populism, and Immigrant Integration Policies in France, 1989–2012." *West European Politics*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2017, pp. 887–906., doi:10.1080/01402382.2017.1287446.

⁹⁵ Köttig, Michaela, et al. *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

women's rights."⁹⁶ In her opinion piece, she invoked Simone de Bouvoir and Élisabeth Badinter, both prominent French feminists.

Linked to that is Marine Le Pen's stance on the veil and Islam. The National Rally has traditionally supported the ban on wearing the burqa in the name of women's rights. In 2012, one year after taking over the National Rally, Marine Le Pen said in a campaign speech that radical Islam in the "quartiers" [neighborhoods] was to blame for the oppression of women there. She has said, on numerous occasions, that she wants to ban the hijab from all public spaces⁹⁷ and that every woman must be protected in their right, if they chose, to wear shorts or a miniskirt. According to "Public Sénat," Marine Le Pen gave a speech in 2017 in which she said "In France, women dress however they want and in France, we shake hands with women."⁹⁸ At another time in 2017, Marine Le Pen also said, "In France, we respect women. We do not challenge them in the street with outrageous rude words. We do not deny them public spaces. We do not hit them. We do not ask them to hide behind a veil because they would be impure."⁹⁹ Clearly, Marine Le Pen has established herself as against Muslim women wearing hijabs because she views them as oppressive. She also wants to ban the burkini on French beaches because she views it as a security threat. "In reality, the Burkini is a representation of radical Islam. Women do not want to put on this kind of swimsuit. It is the uniform of radical Islamists and radical Islamists will absolutely not have a voice in the country," she said in an

⁹⁶ "Marine Le Pen : « Un Référendum Pour Sortir De La Crise Migratoire »." *L'Opinion*, 11 Apr. 2017, www.lopinion.fr/edition/politique/marine-pen-referendum-sortir-crise-migratoire-94568.

⁹⁷ Morgan, Kimberly J. "Gender, Right-Wing Populism, and Immigrant Integration Policies in France, 1989–2012." *West European Politics*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2017, pp. 887–906., doi:10.1080/01402382.2017.1287446.

⁹⁸ Sénat, Public, director. *Marine Le Pen: « En France, on Serre La Main Des Femmes »*. YouTube, YouTube, 11 Mar. 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLd-dyBY6aQ.

⁹⁹ Médias, Actu, director. *Marine Le Pen "En France on Respecte Les Femmes"*. YouTube, YouTube, 18 Apr. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwdcXtwubXs.

interview with ABC News.¹⁰⁰ Marine Le Pen herself has personally internalized these views on Islam because when she went on a visit to Lebanon in February 2017, she made international headlines by refusing to wear a headscarf to meet Sheikh Abdellatif Deryan, the country's Grand Mufti.¹⁰¹ When she was offered a white shawl to cover her hair upon arrival to the meeting in Beirut, she stated "Je ne me voilerai pas" [I will not veil myself].¹⁰² Mufti's cabinet replied that this was "unseemly behavior."¹⁰³ Marine Le Pen replied with, "They wanted to impose this on me, to present me with a *fait accompli*. Well, no one presents me with a *fait accompli*."¹⁰⁴ Many modern-day, fourth-wave feminists might consider this issue of the veil to be Islamophobic and anti-women. However, this view of the veil as a symbol of oppression for women fits with the notion of conservative feminism. The Qu'uran instructs women to dress modestly. Fourth-wave feminists, on the contrary, encourage women to dress as they choose. Conservative feminists have stated that it seems a bit contradictory to advocate for both positions. There is also a conversation surrounding the pressure that Muslim women feel to wear the hijab. On October 16, 2016, Marine Le Pen said "The great danger that weighs on women's rights today is objectively Islamic fundamentalism."¹⁰⁵ Marine Le Pen has stated that she wants women to be free from that oppression, which is why she does not tolerate the veil. She holds on to the

¹⁰⁰ News, ABC, director. *French Presidential Candidate Marine Le Pen and Europe's Far-Right Movement*. YouTube, YouTube, 21 Apr. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaJ-QllpgvE.

¹⁰¹ Chrisafis, Angelique. "We Feel Very Close to Her': Can 'Fake Feminist' Marine Le Pen Win the Female Vote?" *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 18 Mar. 2017, www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/18/front-national-anger-marine-le-pen-female-supporters.

¹⁰² CNEWS, director. *Liban : Marine Le Pen Refuse De Porter Le Voile*. YouTube, YouTube, 21 Feb. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=62mmmM2I9fM.

¹⁰³ CNEWS, director. *Liban : Marine Le Pen Refuse De Porter Le Voile*. YouTube, YouTube, 21 Feb. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=62mmmM2I9fM.

¹⁰⁴ Serhan, Yasmeen. "How Being a Woman Helped Marine Le Pen." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 19 Apr. 2017, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/how-being-a-woman-helped-marine-le-pen/522456/.

¹⁰⁵ Brut, director. *Que Prévoient Les Candidats Pour Les Femmes?* YouTube, YouTube, 1 May 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=p86txswzifo.

traditional, second-wave feminist notion that certain behaviors, such as covering yourself out of shame propagated by the patriarchy, are oppressive. Mary Saliba, Australian Lebanese journalist who covered the Arab Spring for the Al Jazeera Network from Qatar says, “What Marine Le Pen has done is a great thing for women in the Arab world. Many Lebanese women would have seen it as a stance against male authority and patriarchy, which dominates not just Islamic sects but all faiths. Le Pen’s boldness would inspire young women in conservative societies and families to see that they do have a choice. Not just about how they dress but about how they live their lives”.¹⁰⁶ Saliba knows from experience there are still many women, of all religions, who are coerced or forced to dress live in a certain way: 15-year-olds in arranged marriages, facing a pressure to comply to which there is no safe or viable alternative.

In addition to her views on immigration and Islam, Marine Le Pen has also touched on arguably one of the most contentious issues for feminists of all identities: abortion. Generally, Marine Le Pen has not challenged the right to a legal abortion in France, which is ingrained in France’s legal (the 1975 Veil Act) and social culture. She has repeatedly said she is against repealing the Veil Act.¹⁰⁷ However, she has suggested that some women have multiple abortions as a method of contraception and is against reimbursing those cases, which she calls “l’avortement de confort.” This is an important issue to consider especially when access to abortion is limited, whether that be by limited facilities or limited staff. If women are taking advantage of the system, that can potentially hurt

¹⁰⁶ “Opinion: Refusing a Headscarf Was a Bold and Assertive Move.” *NewsComAu*, 23 Feb. 2017, www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/why-marine-le-pen-did-a-great-thing-by-refusing-to-wear-a-headscarf/news-story/0a8698d9276d1625e0f952974bf61cd2.

¹⁰⁷ Scrinzi, Francesca. “Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: from 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?” *New Formations*, vol. 91, no. 91, 2017, pp. 87–101., doi:10.3898/newf:91.05.2017.

women who are in serious need of abortions.¹⁰⁸ Marine Le Pen also wants women to first be offered alternatives such as pre-natal adoption, attempting to limit the number of abortion cases as much as possible.¹⁰⁹ Since her 2012 campaign, Marine Le Pen has continuously said that she is in favor of the free choice of women not to abort, signaling the social pressure in France for women to conform to France's third-wave feminism, which is heavily pro-abortion. At one point in 2012, she demanded a referendum to decide on the matter of paying for abortion, arguing that the costs of abortion are too much for normal health insurance to bear.¹¹⁰ This is a flip-flop from her previous stance on abortion, in which she said, "I am for free abortion."¹¹¹ Despite this demand for a referendum, Florian Philippot, Marine Le Pen's chief strategist, told *The Guardian*: "I don't know how many times I've heard young women say they voted against us in an election second round because they were – wrongly – convinced we're going to ban the pill or ban abortion. It's totally false and it's harmful for our second round vote."¹¹² Clearly, the National Rally's new stance on abortion significantly differs from that of Jean-Marie Le Pen's stance on abortion. He frequently threatened to repeal the Veil Act. If we try to transpose Marine Le Pen's view of the Veil Act to the United States, we would probably liken it to being in favor of *Roe v. Wade*. Considering that there are women in the United

¹⁰⁸ Murray, Rainbow. "Progress But Still No PrÃ©sidente: Women and the 2012 French Presidential Elections." *French Politics, Culture & Society*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2012, doi:10.3167/fpcs.2012.300303.

¹⁰⁹ Moutet, Anne-Elisabeth. "Marine Le Pen Becomes Front National Leader: A Pivotal Moment for French Politics?" *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 16 Jan. 2011, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/8261969/Marine-Le-Pen-becomes-Front-National-leader-A-pivotal-moment-for-French-politics.html.

¹¹⁰ Kottig, Michaela, et al. *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

¹¹¹ Brut, director. *Marine Le Pen Et Les Droits Des Femmes*. *YouTube*, YouTube, 8 Feb. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6g_6ZGt_cU.

¹¹² "Le Pen Must Overcome 'Fake Feminist' Label to Woo Female Voters." *South China Morning Post*, South China Morning Post, 20 July 2018, www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/2080151/marine-le-pen-targets-female-voters-can-she-overcome-fake-feminist.

States who identify as conservative feminists and who are pro-life and therefore in favor of overturning *Roe V. Wade*, namely, Susan B. Anthony (early 1900s), the American Enterprise Institute's Christine Hoff Sommers (early 2000s), and the 1972 "Feminists for Life" organization,¹¹³ it is not difficult to see how Marine Le Pen's stance on abortion, while nuanced, is not wholly anti-feminist, even for left-wing third-wave French feminists. Despite this legal stance on abortion, Marine Le Pen has commented that abortion is a serious moral issue and is too often regarded as "trivial" by French society. In fact, in France, abortion is more heavily normalized than in the United States. The point here is that this does not necessarily make her anti-feminist if a more conservative feminist framework were actually considered under the umbrella term of feminism. If conservative feminist tenets are not considered, then Marine Le Pen would indeed be considered anti-feminist, making it easy to see how the exclusion of conservative women from feminism is conflated with considering conservative feminists to be anti-women.

Despite this view on abortion, Marine Le Pen has simultaneously called for policies more conducive to the nurturing and raising of children, and favors policies aimed at increasing the birth rate.¹¹⁴ Her sympathy for abortion comes partially from her views on the economic empowerment of women. She claims that an unfavorable socioeconomic background is a key determining factor for the majority of women who have had an abortion. The economic empowerment and rights of women is not typically a major area of concern for fourth-wave feminists in the United States and third-wave feminists in France. However, Marine Le Pen has used considerable effort to craft an image of the

¹¹³ "About Us." *Feminists for Life*, www.feministsforlife.org/our-mission-organization/.

¹¹⁴ "Marine Le Pen's Statement about Abortion in *À Contre Flots*." *Nations Presse Info*, 25 Nov. 2010.

National Rally that empowers women economically. According to Francesca Scrinzi, one of Marine Le Pen's biggest aims in her rebranding campaign is to convey a modern image of herself as a working woman. In her autobiography, she highlights her struggles as a professional and twice-divorced single mother of three. She also mentions the unique "double burden" that women have to bear of working and taking care of their families. As a result of that, she claims to stand by working mothers who are negatively affected by economic globalization and neoliberal economic policies. According to Scrinzi, she declared that women are the biggest victims of the economic crisis in France and female workers are used as an "adjustment variable." She relates to this experience because of her own personal struggles. Scrinzi argues that the focus on issues such as social protection and the expansion of public services against economic globalization can be particularly appealing for women because studies find that women are traditionally underrepresented among the voters of populist radical right parties because, compared with men, they benefit more from welfare state services and are more often employed in public sector jobs. Working class men would instead be more likely to vote for these populist radical right parties because they are overrepresented in industrial jobs threatened by economic globalization and migrant labor.¹¹⁵

In terms of Marine Le Pen's views on policies aimed at nurturing and raising children and increasing the birth rate, she has continuously defended the parental salary, which would offer 80% of the minimum wage to mothers who choose to stay at home with their children. Marine Le Pen pointed out how it would give women the choice of whether

¹¹⁵ Scrinzi, Francesca. "Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: from 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?" *New Formations*, vol. 91, no. 91, 2017, pp. 87–101., doi:10.3898/newf:91.05.2017.

or not to be full-time mothers. If a woman prefers to stay home and be with her children, she would receive financial support.¹¹⁶ She also wants to restore the free allocation of parental leave between both parents¹¹⁷ and believes that women who want to work should be able to but often find it difficult because of the inadequate provision of crèches (nurseries). She calls herself “la présidente des crèches”¹¹⁸ [the president of nurseries] and has been particularly outspoken about this policy to provide more means of childcare for women who want to balance both professional work and family life, like she has done personally. In 2012, on the Day of the Woman, she officially expressed her support for letting women make the decision to work if they want to.¹¹⁹ The idea of professionalism as a choice for women has become quite controversial. The progressive fourth/third-wave feminist movement seems to look down on this traditional image of women being stay-at-home caregivers and cooks in the kitchen. Any suggestion of a strong connection between a woman’s role as a mother and homemaker, even if she is also simultaneously a professional, is immediately shut down as bigoted and misogynistic. This surely excludes women who prefer to be full-time mothers and/or homemakers from the feminist stage.

When it comes to the question of the pay gap, another popular feminist issue, Marine Le Pen has said that she wants to "put in place a national plan for equal pay woman/man and fight against job and social precariousness," as is written in her official

¹¹⁶ Murray, Rainbow. “Progress But Still No PrÃ©sidente: Women and the 2012 French Presidential Elections.” *French Politics, Culture & Society*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2012, doi:10.3167/fpcs.2012.300303.

¹¹⁷ Brut, director. *Que PrÃ©voient Les Candidats Pour Les Femmes?* YouTube, YouTube, 1 May 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=p86txswzifo.

¹¹⁸ Murray, Rainbow. “Progress But Still No PrÃ©sidente: Women and the 2012 French Presidential Elections.” *French Politics, Culture & Society*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2012, doi:10.3167/fpcs.2012.300303.

¹¹⁹ ELLE, director. *Marine Le Pen, La « Candidate Des Femmes » ? Mais Les DÃ©fend-Elles Vraiment ?* YouTube, YouTube, 21 Apr. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGZph94whxw.

2017 presidential program. The program also states that she will “restore real equality and meritocracy in rejecting the principle of ‘positive discrimination’ and restore genuine equality of opportunity by returning to the path of republican meritocracy.”¹²⁰ This is written in the program’s section on “Rebuilding France as a Country of Freedom.”¹²¹ When someone suggested that her father had wanted women to stay at home and that she wants the same, she dismissed it as absurd, stating “Not me, not I who have worked all my life...I want to give women a choice.”¹²²

According to Francesca Scrinzi, the National Front under Marine Le Pen’s leadership has moved from a “traditional” to a “more traditional” perspective on woman. Scrinzi points out that one of the biggest changes in the way women are viewed under the National Rally is in regards to motherhood itself. While my thesis has already established that Jean-Marie Le Pen often denounced women and wanted them to be traditional, stay-at-home mothers, Marine celebrates working mothers who care about their own professional development, as Marine does.¹²³ A “traditional” perspective on women entails the belief that the stereotypical image of women as mothers in the kitchen represents a woman’s “natural” role as a social reproductive worker. This was the position that Jean-Marie Le Pen held for many years. In 1996, Jean-Marie stated that women “do not have the property of their person” and that their bodies “belong to the nation and to

¹²⁰ “Le Match Macron - Le Pen Pour Les Droits Des Femmes.” *RTL.fr*, www.rtl.fr/girls/identites/macron-le-pen-le-match-des-programmes-pour-les-droits-des-femmes-7788256778.

¹²¹ Scrinzi, Francesca. “Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: from 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?” *New Formations*, vol. 91, no. 91, 2017, pp. 87–101., doi:10.3898/newf:91.05.2017.

¹²² Murray, Rainbow. “Progress But Still No PrÃ©sidente: Women and the 2012 French Presidential Elections.” *French Politics, Culture & Society*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2012, doi:10.3167/fpcs.2012.300303.

¹²³ Scrinzi, Francesca. “Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: from 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?” *New Formations*, vol. 91, no. 91, 2017, pp. 87–101., doi:10.3898/newf:91.05.2017.

nature.”¹²⁴ This was not just rhetoric. These views were reflected in the party’s agenda. For example, Scrinzi’s extensive analysis of National Rally records shows no documentation of programs designed exclusively for the advancement of women. Ever since Marine Le Pen took control, this discourse, and its reflection in actual policy, has dramatically changed to embrace a certainly more conservative feminist perspective on women.

Marine Le Pen has received a lot of criticism for her views on women. One of her most outspoken critics is ELLE, a feminist worldwide lifestyle magazine of French origin. ELLE has repeatedly criticized Marine Le Pen about voting against resolutions that are pro-women.¹²⁵ In 2012, Marine Le Pen responded to ELLE by inviting them to her Paris headquarters. One of the longest and most women’s rights-centered interviews of Marine Le Pen ensued. When they asked her what would be the first things she would do for women, she said that she would work on helping them through the economic crisis. She said she is in favor of putting in place “la politique familiale” in France, something she thinks is not functioning adequately currently. She also stated she is for prenatal adoption, a circumstance in which an individual or couple makes formal the adoption of a child that has not yet been born. She talked a lot about increasing the number of nurseries since there are not enough. All of this has already been established but most interestingly, she was asked about the obstacles that prevent more women from running for office. She responded that the hardest part is convincing them to be interested in politics or

¹²⁴ Scrinzi, Francesca. “Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: from 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?” *New Formations*, vol. 91, no. 91, 2017, pp. 87–101., doi:10.3898/newf:91.05.2017.

¹²⁵ ELLE, director. *YouTube*. *YouTube*, YouTube, 21 Apr. 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGZph94whxw.

convincing them to run. She said the most obvious problem is that political life is in direct confrontation with family life. She stated, “There is an enormous number of competent women and they obviously have their place in politics. It is necessary to say that they have a way of looking at politics that is a little different from the way men look at politics.”¹²⁶ She also talked about the importance of law enforcement when it comes to protecting victims of domestic abuse.

Through extensive data analysis on the National Rally, Nonna Mayer touches on the importance of analyzing Marine Le Pen’s women’s rights platform and how it fits into a conservative feminist framework in order to show that conservative women have been excluded from feminism. Mayer shows that the Radical Right Gender Gap (RRGG), the idea that more of the support for the right comes from men than women, is virtually nonexistent as a result of Marine Le Pen’s National Rally. Mayer starts off her study by stating that one of the best-established findings about electoral support for populist radical right-wing parties is that they attract more men than women, as evidenced by Jean-Marie le Pen’s National Rally in 2002 and the rejection of his leadership by French women. In fact, when Jean-Marie Le Pen chaired the National Rally, gender was the second-best predictor of his electoral support in every presidential election where he was candidate from 1988 to 2007. The reason for this RRGG in the first place is *the absence of feminist ideas*. Ten years later, in 2012, Marine Le Pen had almost the same score among women and men voters (regardless of any other factors studied, such as age, education, occupational group, political orientation, etc), meaning she had attracted significantly more women voters than her father, meaning that the RRGG had disappeared, meaning

¹²⁶ ELLE, director. *Marine Le Pen Répond à ELLE*. YouTube, YouTube, 10 Feb. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyb9QHKV3j4.

that she introduced feminist ideas into the party's platform. Now, it is important to note that this phenomenon is not just isolated to the political scene. In France, presidential elections are incredibly mobilizing elections, attracting almost 80% of the voters to the polls. This is an indication that this phenomenon extends beyond just politics – the feminization of the right-wing landscape has become a national phenomenon.¹²⁷

The Exclusion of Conservative Women

To take Mayer's conclusion one step further, I argue that this phenomenon described above, part of the Marine Le Pen phenomenon, is an indication of the exclusion of conservative women from feminism. Together with Marine Le Pen's rise to power and rebranding campaign, also factors that are related to her stance on women's issues and the resulting attraction of female voters, this overall phenomenon is an indication of conservative women's exclusion from feminism, which might explain why they are turning to the far-right and the National Rally in particular. There is a limited number of literature on the exclusion of conservative feminism to begin with, but there is an even more limited number of sources on the connection between the Marine Le Pen phenomenon and the exclusion of conservative women. In my research, I have encountered only one academic who even remotely makes such a connection: Francesca Scrinzi. Scrinzi claims the following:

“Women join the FN [National Front] for a variety of reasons which do not reflect their concerns as ‘mothers of the nation’ and are not only based on their attachment to traditional family values. Indeed, many newly recruited FN female activists are attracted

¹²⁷ Mayer, Nonna. “The Closing of the Radical Right Gender Gap in France?” *French Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2015, pp. 391–414., doi:10.1057/fp.2015.18.

*to the party because they can identify with the 'moder' femininity of Marine Le Pen: they claim that they did not approve of the sexist declarations and 'macho' style of the FN former leader. Conversely, some male FN members use 'modern' gender models to explain their affiliation, to racialize migrants and construct their national and political belonging. For example, some men identify with anti-immigration mobilisations through 'modern' models of masculinity and fatherhood, describing migrants as 'bad father.' The new generation of FN party members display a pragmatic attitude vis-à-vis abortion, contraception and homosexuality. But I claim that it's because they've been excluded.*¹²⁸

Due to this lack of sources, I suggest that there is such a connection between the Marine Le Pen phenomenon and the exclusion of conservative women. In this thesis, the scope is narrowed to just Marine Le Pen and the National Rally, but it could perhaps be applied globally.

The exclusion of conservative women from feminism is not a new concept. Pro-life feminist and academic Helen Alvaré states, "Often, these women¹²⁹ ignore or even abjure the "feminist" label because it is automatically associated with the primacy accorded to legal abortion by groups like Planned Parenthood and other national feminist groups. But many of these women are what I think of as "anonymous feminists" just the same."¹³⁰ During the second-wave era of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the tenets of the emerging group of anti-abortion feminists were rejected by mainstream feminists who held that for full participation in society, a woman's "moral and legal right to control her fertility must

¹²⁸ Scrinzi, Francesca. "Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: from 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?" *New Formations*, vol. 91, no. 91, 2017, pp. 87–101., doi:10.3898/newf:91.05.2017.

¹²⁹ Referring to conservative feminists

¹³⁰ Alvaré, Helen. "Open Your Eyes, pro-Life Feminists Are Everywhere." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 23 May 2018, www.cnn.com/2018/05/23/opinions/pro-life-feminism-alvare-opinion/index.html.

be a fundamental principle.”¹³¹ Even though anti-abortion feminists were clear in stating that mainstream feminists did not speak for all women, they failed to gain a respected position within feminism and instead aligned themselves with other anti-abortion and right-to-life groups. Laury Oaks argues that this placement has “eroded a feminist sense of identity separate from other anti-abortion groups, despite pro-woman arguments that are distinct from the fetal rights arguments put forward by other anti-abortion advocates.”¹³²

In more modern history, the 2017 Women’s March, at which millions and millions of women marched, is a great example of how conservative women were excluded from feminism. The march’s official platform stated “open access to safe, legal, affordable abortion and birth control for all people, regardless of income, location or education.” Nevertheless, there were many pro-life women and conservative feminists who wanted to make their disapproval of Trump known. Some pro-life feminist groups even asked to be included as partner organizations for the march, but they were immediately rejected. The march’s progressive, pro-choice platform turned many members of pro-life organizations away. For example, Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa, president of the Texan pro-life group New Wave Feminists, stated that “Many pro-life women consider themselves strong feminists — not just pro-lifers who are also feminists, but feminists first and foremost.” A proposal for partnership was rejected because there was immediate outrage against New Wave Feminists by pro-choice advocates who demanded to know why the organizers could take “such an uncompromising stance for full reproductive rights, and then turn around and partner with organizations that are devoted to the exact

¹³¹ Oaks, Laury. “What Are Pro-Life Feminists Doing on Campus?” *Oral History Review*, Oxford University Press, 1 May 2009, muse.jhu.edu/article/263661/pdf.

¹³² Oaks, Laury. “What Are Pro-Life Feminists Doing on Campus?” *Oral History Review*, Oxford University Press, 1 May 2009, muse.jhu.edu/article/263661/pdf.

opposite goal.” The organizers released statement stating that “from day one” the march had been pro-choice. “The anti-choice organization in question is not a partner of the Women’s March on Washington.”¹³³ In addition to the exclusion of pro-life feminists at the march, Trump supporter feminists also turned away when they realized that the march was more of an anti-Trump march than a pro-women march. Penny Young Nance, president and CEO of Concerned Women for America, a conservative organization that opposes abortion rights, stated “Our members have a hard time with the idea that they call it a Women’s March. Women are not monolithic. Pro-life women were not invited or welcomed at that march.... If they wanted to call it pro-choice women, fine. But we find it offensive that there’s this pretense that they speak for all women. They don’t.”

The exclusion of conservative women from feminism is a general trend, not just an issue at the 2017 Women’s March. Kelsey Harkness, staff writer for The Daily Signal, commented on the hashtag #UsToo, stating “It’s about an inclusive version of feminism, where I’m not just worrying about myself as a woman here in the United States. I’m worried about the women across the seas who are facing issues of female genital mutilation. And those women are never talked about.”¹³⁴ Similarly, Andrea Seastrand, conservative columnist of *The Tribune*, former representative for the 22nd Congressional District in California, and current president of the Central Coast Taxpayers Association, states

“Access to good paying jobs, freedom to choose the best school for our children to attend, keeping the cost of living affordable for families and religious freedom are

¹³³ Crockett, Emily. “Can You Be a ‘pro-Life Feminist’? The Women’s March on Washington Offered Some Insights.” *Vox.com*, Vox Media, 22 Jan. 2017, www.vox.com/identities/2017/1/22/14335292/womens-march-washington-abortion-pro-life-feminists.

¹³⁴ “Why the Current Feminist Movement Needs Conservative Women.” *Study Breaks*, 1 Mar. 2018, studybreaks.com/news-politics/conservative-women/.

important to millions of women across the country. However, under the banner of the Women's March these issues have no place. The concept of "tolerance" is a one-way street in modern progressivism. Either you agree with their views with no deviations or you are the intolerant one. It was telling when pro-life groups were denied an organizing role in the Washington, D.C., Women's March because it made it clear that there is an agenda far beyond uniting women and getting them elected to positions of importance. There are plenty of non-partisan issues that could unite us. We should be fighting against sexual harassment by the Harvey Weinsteins of the world. We should be promoting equal treatment for women in the workplace and in society. And there is no excuse for women to be paid less than men for the same work. These are things that all women would agree with and should be the focus of the Women's March movement — not divisive issues like abortion."¹³⁵

Author Sarah Quinlan of the National Review states,

"Though many aspects of third-wave feminism include laudatory goals, such as inclusivity and intersectionality, modern feminism often gives conservatives valid reasons to object to it. Third-wave feminists have promoted the movement as one attempting to include everyone, while simultaneously forcefully and harshly rejecting anyone whose views deviate even slightly from their preferred agenda. For example, many feminists today consider abortion-on-demand to be a fundamental human right and exclude pro-life women, criticizing them as traitors to their sex. Some feminists rush to ruin lives,

¹³⁵ Seastrand, Andrea. "No Room for Conservative Women in Women's March Movement." *Sanluisobispo, The Tribune*, 3 Feb. 2018, www.sanluisobispo.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/andrea-seastrand/article198212389.html.

careers, and reputations when someone misidentifies a person's gender, and others seem more intent on shouting people down than promoting discussion and debate."¹³⁶

The fact of the matter is that the exclusion of conservative women from feminism is happening. The bigger question is, how do we show it? And how do we concretely show the connection between the Marine Le Pen phenomenon and the exclusion? One way to start is to get statements from conservative women who voted for Marine Le Pen, explaining why exactly they support her. Reporter for The Guardian Angelique Chrisafis interviewed women who stated they would vote for Marine Le Pen in 2017. One woman, Christiane, a former TV freelancer, stated, "My path to the National Front came from anger, disillusionment, disgust, revolt. This party brings together people who have been disappointed – that's why they are progressing. I've got female friends who once said they would never vote National Front, but this time they are swayed. We don't have rights and benefits anymore; everything is given to outsiders." This shows an alignment with a more conservative stance on immigration as it relates to women's issues, a position that Marine Le Pen has made very clear. Sophie, a 32-year-old artist educated to a postgraduate level, was breastfeeding her four-month-old baby as she listened to Marine Le Pen's campaign director address a crowd of supporters. She used to live in a diverse area of Paris. When asked why she would vote for Marine Le Pen, she said, "As a woman I feel threatened by the rise in radical Islam. I was fed up with cat-calls when I walked down the street in a skirt. For some groups of men, if your head isn't covered and you dress as French, you're a prostitute. But it's difficult because I come from a left-wing

¹³⁶ Quinlan, Sarah. "Conservatives Are Wrong to Dismiss Feminism." *National Review*, National Review, 4 May 2018, www.nationalreview.com/2018/05/conservatives-benefit-listening-to-feminists-valid-concerns/.

family. I feel I can't talk to them about my vote." Sophie's reason for voting for Marine Le Pen is once again, in alignment with the more conservative stance on Islamic fundamentalism, a stance which Marine Le Pen has made very clear. Miriam, a 63-year-old secondary school teacher who worked in a diverse neighborhood of Paris said she felt more female teachers around her were becoming open to the National Rally. She said, "It feels like there is less security in the capital. For me the problem of immigration is essential. We're losing France and real French values. The fact that Marine Le Pen is a woman means she has a certain sensitivity. There's a community of spirit. We feel very close to her as a female candidate."¹³⁷ This references back to the idea that Marine Le Pen's rebranding campaign, with a special emphasis on the feminization of the National Rally, has really been effective in attracting female voters, in addition to the idea that Marine Le Pen being a woman herself has played a key role in that attraction.

Joanna Kakissis, a journalist for NPR, did the same thing as Angelique Chrisafis. She interviewed Marie da Silva, who is among the 25% of voters who were undecided ahead of the first round of voting in France's 2017 presidential election. She says, "Though I identify as a conservative, I have never voted for the far-right party, the National Front. But after watching its leader and presidential candidate, Marine Le Pen, give a red-meat speech against globalization, the European Union and immigration to a packed auditorium in Paris, I found a woman she can believe in. Marine has the strength and

¹³⁷ Chrisafis, Angelique. "We Feel Very Close to Her': Can 'Fake Feminist' Marine Le Pen Win the Female Vote?" *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 18 Mar. 2017, www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/18/front-national-anger-marine-le-pen-female-supporters.

charisma of a man. She raised her children. She's a superwoman, a responsible woman, a woman who charges in."¹³⁸

Of course, not all women have been persuaded by Marine Le Pen. FEMEN, a prominent feminist group in France, actually staged a protest during a National Rally conference in February 2017, shouting "Marine: fake feminist!" during her speech. FEMEN issues a statement, condemning Marine Le Pen for being a "fictitious Republican who platform neither promotes the emancipation of women nor advances equality between the sexes." *Les Glorieuses's* founder Rebecca Amsellem also criticized Marine Le Pen for invoking Simone de Beauvoir in her op-ed about immigration, saying that the goal of her op-ed was to "illicit a fear of foreigners and a hatred of immigrants." Similarly, French feminist group *Ossez le Feminisme* told Politico that Marine Le Pen is "a pretend feminist. The fact that she uses the right of women for racist purposes, and xenophobic, to express herself on migrants, we find that intolerable."¹³⁹

Despite this backlash, the exclusion of conservative women from feminism has at least started to be recognized by the larger academic and media community globally. In a January 2019 article published in *The Guardian*, Angelique Chrisafis of Paris, Kate Connolly of Berlin, and Angela Giuffrida in Rome state,

"Many working-class women feel just as 'left behind' as their male counterparts. Right-wing populist parties are specifically targeting women with a controversial and contested message that immigration, particularly from Muslim countries, brings with it

¹³⁸ Kakissis, Joanna. "The Far Right's Marine Le Pen Courts France's Female Voters." *NPR*, NPR, 20 Apr. 2017, www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/04/20/524849419/the-far-rights-marine-le-pen-courts-frances-female-voters.

¹³⁹ Serhan, Yasmeen. "How Being a Woman Helped Marine Le Pen." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 19 Apr. 2017, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/how-being-a-woman-helped-marine-le-pen/522456/.

*misogynistic cultures that threaten women's freedom in Europe – from catcalling women in short skirts to sexual assault. As Le Pen put it: 'I am scared that the migrant crisis signals the beginning of the end of women's rights.' These parties believe that 'left-wing feminism turns a blind eye to the consequences of immigration,' says Ann-Cathrine Jungar, from Sweden's Södertörn University. Le Pen's party, currently polling level with Emmanuel Macron's La République En Marche, hopes to harness the fury unleashed by the gilets jaunes (yellow jackets) movement – and court the high number of working-class women who have taken to the streets. These include single mothers and working mothers on low incomes.*¹⁴⁰

From their claims, it is evident that there is a growing understanding in the United States and Europe of why women who identify with tenets of conservative feminism are turning to parties like the National Rally and people like Marine Le Pen: their exclusion from mainstream feminism. Perhaps the phenomenon of Marine Le Pen was what brought attention to this exclusion.

Part 4

Conclusion

Through an analysis of four key components of the phenomenon of Marine Le Pen – her rise to power, her shifting of the National Rally rhetoric on women's issues from the time of her father's leadership to her leadership as part of her rebranding campaign, her stances on women's issues and how they fit into a more conservative feminist framework,

¹⁴⁰ Chrisafis, Angelique, et al. "The New Populism: How the Far-Right Appeals to Women Voters." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 29 Jan. 2019, www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jan/29/from-le-pen-to-alice-weidel-how-the-european-far-right-set-its-sights-on-women.

and the resulting support she has received from the female electorate in France – we have seen that there are solid grounds to draw a connection between this phenomenon and the exclusion of conservative women from feminism. The phenomenon is an indication that conservative women are being excluded and this is problematic. The larger point is that all of this indicates that not enough political parties and candidates in France, and perhaps globally, are speaking to women’s issues. If they are, they are not speaking to conservative women specifically, which is why conservative women are voting for far-right candidates like Marine Le Pen. All women on the spectrum of conservative feminism are not being heard because they are being excluded from feminism, now largely dominated by progressive, fourth-wave, left-wing feminists.

The reason why this is problematic is because first, it is not addressed enough in the academic community. And second, it prevents civil discourse. It is important to shatter this misconception that the only feminists are the ones who subscribe to third and fourth-wave feminist values, and if we shatter this misconception in academia, we can open the door to more civil discourse among feminists of all types, subscribing to all different kinds of ideologies and embracing different kinds of values. Perhaps this can also address the problem of women’s accessibility to politics. Currently, on a global level, there are very few women in politics. An overwhelming majority of women, regardless of their feminist type identification, can agree that there should be more women in politics. Normalizing conservative, traditional women in politics can encourage more traditional women who would normally be labeled as “anti-women” to run for office and work with fourth-wave, leftist feminists to pass bipartisan reforms that would advance women’s rights on a global level. Understanding why feminism needs conservatism, whether it is to point out

inconsistencies in mainstream feminism, to act as a sounding board for feminist ideas, or to merely contribute more ideas in order to arrive at some sort of truth that is representative of all different type of women's desires, is crucial for civil discourse and upholding the central tenet of all feminism, which is advocacy for women's rights based on gender equality.

Throughout my research, I encountered several limitations, which led to some weaknesses in my thesis. The first obstacle I encountered was the lack of academia available on Marine Le Pen in general. Much of the scholarship on her is outdated and temporally set before the rebranding of the National Rally. A further, related limitation is the lack of scholarship available on gender and the National Rally, specifically how it relates to conservative feminism. There is virtually no scholarship available on Marine Le Pen as a phenomenon and the exclusion of conservative women from feminism. Another weakness of the thesis is the ambiguity related to the feminist framework, as there are differences between American and French feminism. While I address this in my thesis, the differences are difficult to carry out throughout every aspect of the analysis. Finally, the biggest weakness is that this thesis merely touches on several important and substantive topics (aspects of the Marine Le Pen phenomenon): the *dédiabolisation* of the National Rally and the shift in rhetoric is a huge topic in and of itself, Marine Le Pen's rise to power and her stance on women are two separate, huge issues to tackle. Does she actually fit into a conservative feminist framework? If this thesis were to turn into something bigger, each aspect would be expanded and analyzed more in-depth. This thesis only gives a general overview and is meant to portray the phenomenon as a whole, with all of its components lightly covered. In

considering whether Marine Le Pen is a cause or effect of the exclusion of conservative women from feminism, it can be concluded that she is indeed, an effect. The cause was Trump's election and the mobilization of fourth-wave feminists discussed in the introduction. The effect is the attraction of conservative women to far-right political movements, such as the National Rally of Marine Le Pen.

Future Research

Considering how controversial Marine Le Pen and the National Rally have been for many decades, the first step in analyzing the Marine Le Pen phenomenon critically and objectively is to take a mental step back and consider her to exist in a sort of political box, separate from the rest of the National Rally and its history. This type of open-minded approach will allow for the further exploration of the connection between the Marine Le Pen phenomenon and the exclusion of conservative women from feminism. Some future research questions to ask are: What does all of this mean for female candidates? Will we see more right-wing female candidates running for office if we normalize the connection between right-wing politics and feminism? Running under right-wing labels, will this change the way the female electorate reacts? How are women reacting to the rise of nationalist, right-wing political globally, not just in France? Some other topics for further exploration are the reasons why conservative feminism is good for women, and if it is in the first place. How can conservative feminists actually help women and why are their values consistent with the notion of improving the lives of women? To make the claim that conservative women should have a seat at the feminist table, we have to look at *why*. Beyond that, addressing the civil discourse issue, what conservative feminism may bring

to the value of civil discourse, how that can affect political polarization, and how all of that is important for progress may be further avenues for research and exploration. While this thesis focuses on only France and somewhat on the United States, asking the same questions on a global level in developing, not just developed, countries is important. However, if there is a desire to limit the scope to France and the National Rally, it might make sense to analyze Marion Maréchal, the 29-year-old niece of Marine Le Pen, and whether she will continue in her aunt's footsteps to further soften the image of the National Rally in relation to feminism. In a few years, she might be more relevant as the National Rally draws in more young female voters. Whatever the desire, giving attention to conservative women who feel excluded from the feminist scene is a relatively new, interesting, and substantive issue that offers multiple avenues of exploration.

Afterword

From a young age, I have been grappling with my political identity and trying to place it into a context that makes sense. I was born, raised, and educated in New York, and am therefore an American, but my home environment has always been traditional Eastern European. My parents were born and raised in the northwestern part of Bulgaria in the 1960's. My mother was brought up on a farm in a small Bulgarian village, a village that holds many cherished memories of cool summers running around with friends and hiking in the breathtaking Balkan Mountains. The house my mother grew up in has my grandparents' remains in the backyard and is, without a doubt, my favorite place in the whole world. Living in extreme poverty and losing her father to alcoholism at an early age, my mother entered politics and became part of the core group of people in the Bulgarian

government who worked to bring down the communist Zhivkov¹⁴¹ regime in the 1980's. As one of the only women in politics in a very patriarchal society, she was discriminated against as she fought for what she believed in. Meanwhile, my father grew up surrounded by communist family members. He was not very interested in politics and instead studied mathematics and engineering at one of the most prestigious universities in the Czech Republic. Graduating with the highest honors, he went on to pursue a career as an engineer but had a lifelong dream to start a business, something that he could not do in the midst of Bulgaria's tense political climate.

For as long as I can remember, my family's dinner table conversations have echoed these experiences. My mother would often share stories about how she was not allowed to freely practice Christianity under the oppressive Soviet regime. At times, she had to run away from home to attend church, only to be caught and viciously beaten for practicing her religion. Similarly, my father would often share stories of waiting in line for hours to obtain simple household items that most people in Western countries today take for granted. These conversations indelibly shaped my political, social, and cultural lens as I was going through school and slowly coming to terms with my identity.

My parents immigrated to the United States after the fall of the Soviet Union because they experienced social, political, and economic oppression. They endured hardships in obtaining citizenship and had no money, no connections, and did not even speak English when they first came to the United States. Nevertheless, they overcame obstacles and gradually built up two successful businesses from scratch. While I have always had the freedom to learn and thrive in an open and diverse space, constantly

¹⁴¹ Crampton, Richard J. *A Concise History of Bulgaria*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010.

being exposed to diverse ideas, my parents' struggles and achievements played a critical role in shaping my outlook on the world. As a conservative Orthodox Christian, I strive to stay true to the values that have been passed down in my family for generations while also upholding my duty as a proud New Yorker and an empathetic human being. My mother's political activism in the midst of oppression has largely shaped my outlook on feminism. My nuanced identity – feminist, conservative, New Yorker, first-generation American – is the biggest inspiration for my desire to pursue bipartisanship in politics.

Feminism has become one of my primary academic interests. Several years ago, I got the opportunity to do an internship at CPASGhana,¹⁴² a small non-profit organization dedicated to educating girls in three government schools in Nsawam, Ghana. CPASGhana partners with other NGOs and community members to improve the lives of underprivileged young girls in the community. That experience strongly shaped my views on feminism in the United States, as it made me realize that the best thing American women can do for feminism is to fight for women in the world who do not have access to basic human rights – whether it is young girls in Africa who do not have access to a basic education, women in Eastern Europe who are victims of domestic abuse, or the women in the Middle East who experience religious, political, and social oppression every single day.

I identify as a conservative, second-wave feminist because I believe in equality for women of all backgrounds and identities, and I think feminism should extend beyond just legal equality and suffrage. Second-wave feminism is a period of feminist activity that began in the United States and spread to the Western world in the early 1960s and lasted

¹⁴² “Community Partnership of Akuapim South.” CPASGhana, www.cpasghana.org/.

until the 1980s. The major aim of the movement was to increase equality for women of all backgrounds by gaining more than just enfranchisement.¹⁴³ Second-wave feminism concerns issues such as equality in the workplace, equality of opportunity, reproductive rights, and sexual assault issues, all of which I believe are pertinent issues. However, recently, I have witnessed a departure, particularly among the younger generations, from these traditional, second-wave feminist values. I am interested in strengthening the common core values that exist among all feminists, despite differences and disagreement based on personal experiences and the cultivation of diverse values. The recent neo-feminist movement has adopted tenets of late third-wave feminism, early fourth-wave feminism. Third-wave feminism is an iteration of the feminist movement that began in the United States in the early 1990s and continued until fourth-wave feminism began in 2012. The leaders of this movement sought to redefine what it meant to be a feminist and brought attention to issues such as access to contraception and the legalization of abortion, the creation and enforcement of sexual harassment policies for women in the workplace, child-care services, and women's studies programs.¹⁴⁴ Fourth-wave feminism is an approach to feminism that began in 2012 and is grounded in the belief that all humans are equal, focusing heavily on intersectionality and the empowerment of marginalized groups in society.¹⁴⁵ While I certainly agree with the importance placed on some of these issues, in my view, many of these tenets have actually hurt women and contributed to a hateful narrative of men and a rejection of biology, among other things.

¹⁴³ Burkett, Elinor. "Women's Movement." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 9 Nov. 2017, www.britannica.com/topic/womens-movement.

¹⁴⁴ Rivers, Nicola. *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave: Turning Tides*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

¹⁴⁵ "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?" *Feminism: A Fourth Wave? | The Political Studies Association (PSA)*, 5 Sept. 2013, www.psa.ac.uk/psa/news/feminism-fourth-wave.

After the 2018 Congressional election, there are now 108 Democratic women and only 23 Republicans women in the new Congress.¹⁴⁶ I'm interested in countering this stigmatization of conservative female politicians because I think that stigmatization prevents us from making collective progress in favor of women's rights. There must be civil discourse among feminists of all identities and conservative women must be present at the political scene. Exploring the possibility of a positive connection between the political right-wing and feminism can be an important first step in sparking that civil discourse.

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¹⁴⁶ DeSilver, Drew. "A Record Number of Women Will Be Serving in the New Congress." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 18 Dec. 2018, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/18/record-number-women-in-congress/.

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