

Changing Attitudes? A Comparative Study of the Role of Politics and Political Discourse in the Development of Attitudes towards the LGBTQ Movement in the United Kingdom and France in the 21st Century.



By Paul BARTHOLOMEW

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Supervisor: Tobias BÜTOW
Member of the Jury: Matthias WÄCHTER

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GLOSSARY

Bisexual	A man or a woman sexually attracted to both sexes.
Gay	A man sexually attracted to another man. Also, an adjective used to mean homosexual.
Homosexual	A man or a woman sexually attracted to a person of the same sex. Includes gay men and lesbians.
Intersex	A person who has physical features of both sexes.
Lesbian	A woman sexually attracted to another woman.
Pansexual	A person sexually attracted to another regardless of gender.
Queer	A person who does not conform to conventional heterosexual norms.
Transgender /	A man or woman who does not have the same sex as assigned by birth.
Transsexual	

ACRONYMS

LGB	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Plus (Asexual, Intersex, Queer, Questioning)

Note: Various combinations of these acronyms are employed in academic literature and by the media. For the purposes of this thesis, LGBTQ will be most commonly used and will be representative of all sexual minorities inclusively.

INTRODUCTION

“When people’s love is divided by law, it is the law that needs to change”¹. This statement, made by the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Cameron in 2014, reflects the changing attitudes of politicians and the general public towards LGBTQ sexual minorities, especially in the Western world. Since the end of the twentieth century, legislation allowing same-sex couples initially to participate in civil unions and then to marry and adopt children has become increasingly common, with Western Europe, in particular the Nordic and Benelux countries, typically being the forerunners. The UK and France are among the states that have legalised same-sex marriage and adoption in the twenty-first century.

France introduced same-sex marriage and adoption simultaneously in 2013 under the presidency of the *Parti Socialiste*’s François Hollande. Meanwhile, the UK also adopted legislation on same-sex marriage in 2013, with the first ceremonies taking place in 2014. However, the situation in the UK is more complicated than in France. Indeed, the same-sex marriage law initially applied only to England and Wales. Scotland later adopted similar legislation in 2014, although Northern Ireland still to this day has not accorded same-sex partners the right to marry. In Northern Ireland, only same-sex civil unions are currently allowed. Additionally, same-sex adoption has been legal in England and Wales since 2005, in Scotland since 2009, and in Northern Ireland since 2013. This particularity is explained by the UK’s devolved powers to its different constituent nations, meaning Scotland and Northern Ireland are allowed to make their own legislature for same-sex marriage separate from decisions made in Westminster.

This thesis will compare the situations in the UK and France for several reasons. First, both countries are located within Western Europe and both are members of the

¹ David Cameron, “David Cameron: When People’s Love is Divided by Law, it is the Law that Needs to Change,” *Pink News*, March 28, 2014, <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2014/03/28/david-cameron/>.

European Union and the Council of Europe². As such, they are both subject to rulings by the European Court of Human Rights located in Strasbourg, which has dealt with multiple cases concerning LGBTQ rights. In addition, the two countries (with the exception of Northern Ireland) introduced legislation on same-sex marriage in relatively quick succession and parliamentary debates on the issue began at similar times. They can therefore be compared against a common contemporary background. Furthermore, both countries are part of a 7-state coalition that “has launched an appeal to the European institutions that ‘an ambitious European strategy’ should be set up in the area of fundamental rights of LGBT persons”³, alongside Belgium, Finland, Latvia, the Netherlands and Sweden. LGBTQ rights thus remain a salient priority issue for France and the UK as they seek to implement a European-wide strategy to combat anti-LGBTQ discrimination and promote equality for sexual minorities.

What’s more, according to statistics presented by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) in 2019, the proportion of LGB people is similar in France and the UK. In France, 1.8 percent of the total population identify as LGB (of which 0.8 percent are homosexual and 1.0 percent are bisexual), whilst in the UK, 2.3 percent of people identify as LGB (1.3 percent are homosexual and 1.0 percent are bisexual)⁴. No statistics are presented for transgender people. However, without official census data on sexual orientation, these figures vary. Indeed, Chaney notes that “some official estimates put the total at between 5 and 7%, or 3.1 to 4.4 million individuals (16+ years)”⁵ in the UK. Meanwhile in France, Rault tells us that, “Concernant l’attirance pour une personne de même sexe, 6,2 % des femmes et 3,9 % des hommes déclarent avoir déjà été attirés par une personne de même sexe. Ces pourcentages sont

² The UK still remains a member of the EU at the time of writing, although it is in the process of negotiating a deal to leave the union.

³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *EU LGBT Survey: European Union Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Survey*, (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014), 7.

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, “Le défi LGBT : comment améliorer l’intégration des minorités sexuelles et de genre ?” in *Panorama de la société 2019 : les indicateurs sociaux de l’OCDE*, ed. OECD, (Paris: OECD, 2019), 6-7.

⁵ Paul Chaney, “Institutionally Homophobic? Political Parties and the Substantive Representation of LGBT People: Westminster and Regional Elections 1945-2011.” *Policy & Politics* 41, no. 1 (2013): 101.

nettement plus faibles si on exclut les personnes qui se déclarent homosexuelles”⁶. Regardless of the official numbers, the two countries are still comparable, and the LGBTQ community represents a significant minority.

Politics inevitably plays an important role in the evolution of LGBTQ rights, as laws contribute to greater overall LGBTQ inclusion. This thesis will therefore ask the question:

To what extent have perceptions of the LGBTQ movement in the UK and France been influenced by politics and political discourse in different ways in the twenty-first century?

In spite of increased legal rights for LGBTQ people, this does not necessarily reflect true public opinion, and homophobia remains an underlying problem in both countries, which can be accentuated by political discourse.

In order to answer this, the thesis will be divided into three main chapters. The first will examine the relationship between political discourse and public opinion. Beginning with a general theoretical background, this work will proceed to discuss statistics related to tolerance levels towards LGBTQ people and related issues such as same-sex marriage in both the UK and France. Then, the increasing levels of homophobia and anti-LGBTQ discrimination will be studied.

I will then consider two in-depth comparative case studies in the second and third chapters. The first case study will be the United Kingdom. To start, I will take a closer look at the expansion of legal LGBTQ rights under the Labour Party-led governments of 1997-2010, which included the introduction of civil partnerships for same-sex couples. Then, the divisions between social traditionalists and social liberals within the Conservative Party-led coalition government (alongside the Liberal Democrats) under David Cameron after 2010 will be examined. Far-right discourse,

⁶ Wilfried Rault, “Les attitudes ‘gayfriendly’ en France : entre appartenances sociales, trajectoires familiales et biographies sexuelles,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 213 (2016): 45.

notably that of the United Kingdom Independence Party and the British National Party, which opposed same-sex marriage, will then be studied, before scrutinising the two contrasting situations in Scotland and Northern Ireland, which both have devolved powers. Whilst Scotland adopts a mostly progressive outlook towards LGBTQ people, the highly religious Northern Ireland has yet to introduce marriage equality for same-sex couples.

The second case study will concern France, where same-sex marriage and adoption were introduced under the presidency of François Hollande with a political rhetoric based more on liberalist views. Yet, this proved to be a controversial issue for the French public, and mass demonstrations were organised under the name *La Manif pour Tous*, which promoted traditional family values. The far-right *Front National* party (known as *Rassemblement National* since 2018) also played a significant role, especially given its growing influence on the French political scene, notably during presidential elections in the last decade. As such, this thesis will compare the role of political discourse in the two neighbouring countries.

CHAPTER 1

PUBLIC OPINION AND SENSE OF BELONGING

To begin with, it is important to assess the levels of tolerance and acceptance of the LGBTQ community in the UK and France. The first section will examine the theoretical relationship between political discourse, legislation and public opinion with regards to the LGBTQ issue. Next, statistics on tolerance towards LGBTQ people in the UK and France will be presented, and the general attitudes of the public will be discussed. The final section of this chapter will consider how and why anti-LGBTQ discrimination and violence appears to be on the rise in spite of the generally more liberal approach to LGBTQ matters both on a political and societal level.

1.1. POLITICAL DISCOURSE, LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC OPINION

Political discourse plays an important role when discussing the LGBTQ issue, as new legislature leading to more rights can influence the public's attitudes towards LGBTQ people. In the past few decades, LGBTQ rights have become a more salient issue for the general public, and they have become more visible in society. This section will thus examine the relationship between political discourse and public opinion.

First, Phillip Ayoub concludes that "resistance opens doors for internalization"⁷ of more tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality and LGBTQ matters, noting in particular the effect of homophobic political rhetoric. As such, the initial reluctance of politicians to implement legislation allowing more rights for LGBTQ people went against the trend of increased liberalism and tolerance towards this sexual minority. However, the dawn of the twenty-first century marked a turning point for LGBTQ rights, as

⁷ Phillip M. Ayoub, *When States Come Out: Europe's Sexual Minorities and the Politics of Visibility*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 44.

numerous countries began introducing same-sex civil unions, followed by same-sex marriage, in some cases in quick succession.

Although countries like France, the UK and Germany are considered the great powers of Europe on both a political and economic level, they were not the first to introduce new LGBTQ legislation. Indeed, the Nordic and Benelux countries, as well as Spain and Portugal, were among the forerunners of legislation on same-sex unions and marriage in the world. Denmark was the first ever country to introduce same-sex registered partnerships in 1989⁸ and the Netherlands was the pioneer for same-sex marriage, where legislation came into effect in 2001⁹. For Ayoub, because of the French, British and German conviction in their democratic and human rights prowess, they “could comfortably wait longer to make advances”¹⁰. Consequently, they were better able to resist external pressures from other European neighbours. However, it has also been suggested that France was one of the countries affected by Spain’s decision to become the third country in the world to introduce same-sex marriage. The Spanish legislation was “crucial internationally”¹¹, especially as Spain, unlike the Benelux and Nordic countries, was not traditionally a leader for liberal policies on social issues like the LGBTQ one. As such, having seen Spain’s 2005 LGBTQ policy on same-sex marriage, France adopted a similar bill under François Hollande’s presidency in 2013. The effect of legislation in other countries therefore played a role in accelerating the process of increased LGBTQ rights, particularly within Western European Union states because of their strong political ties. Noticeable examples of this are “Belgium following the Netherlands and Portugal following Spain”¹², both close neighbours in geographical, political and cultural terms. However, the impact on other nations is also affected by the “perceived legitimacy of international norms”¹³, which helps to explain why many

⁸ *ibid.*, 111.

⁹ *ibid.*, 117.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 111.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 118.

¹² Marc Hooghe, and Cecil Meeusen, “Is Same-Sex Marriage Legislation Related to Attitudes Toward Homosexuality? Trends in Tolerance of Homosexuality in European Countries Between 2002 and 2010,” *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 10, no. 4 (2013): 265.

¹³ *ibid.*, 265.

countries in Eastern Europe have failed to follow their Western neighbours' example over LGBTQ rights.

Hooghe & Meeusen propose two alternative hypotheses to explain the relationship between political discourse and public attitudes. The first is a responsive government theory, whereby "liberal public opinion and media have an agenda-setting function and that, subsequently, the topic is placed on the political agenda"¹⁴. This suggests that policies are decided by public attitudes on certain issues. On the other hand, "the causal argument might go the other way around, as it is expected that some individuals in countries where same-sex marriage or some form of registered partnership is adopted will gradually develop a more tolerant attitude toward homosexuality"¹⁵. This argues that the public learns to accept certain things because they have become law. Thanks to the convincing correlation between legislation and public opinion on LGBTQ issues, Hooghe & Meeusen conclude that it "is not just an elite phenomenon, which can be explained by processes that occur within the political decision-making structures without too much involvement of public opinion"¹⁶. Hence, they posit that there are close ties between political decision-making and the views of the general public. Nonetheless, "political elite actors still have to be convinced to use [the] opportunity"¹⁷ created by the public's liberalism. Without this willingness to be persuaded on an issue, politicians will simply not introduce a new legislation. Linked to this is Brewer's assertion that "public opinion about gay rights [...] may also shape other political attitudes and behaviors, including voter turnout and vote choice, under some circumstances"¹⁸, particularly if LGBTQ rights are on the political agenda.

As such, there is an inherent link between political discourse, legislation and public opinion on LGBTQ matters. However, given the relatively few countries that have

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 259.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 259.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 266.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 266.

¹⁸ Paul R. Brewer, "Public Opinion About Gay Rights and Gay Marriage," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 26 no. 3 (2014), 280.

actually implemented legislation on same-sex marriage – just 29 countries and jurisdictions to date¹⁹ – it has not yet been determined to what extent this is true.

1.2. TOLERANCE IN THE UK

The UK is considered among the most tolerant countries in Europe towards the LGBTQ community. Indeed, in 2010, ILGA Europe (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association) awarded the UK a Rainbow Europe Country Index rating of 8 out of a maximum 10, behind only Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain, which are all regularly revered for their attitudes towards LGBTQ people²⁰. However, acceptance levels in the UK, like any other nation, depend on the survey and the particular questions being asked, and this will be examined in this section.

Tolerance in the UK towards legal recognition of LGBTQ people has risen at a rapid rate in the past few decades, especially since the start of the twenty-first century. Indeed, Brewer refers to the fact that “a number of nations have witnessed ‘sea changes’ in public opinion about gay marriage”²¹, to which he includes the UK. Support for same-sex marriage in the UK has risen from 16 percent in 1975 to 69 percent in 2014 according to data from Ipsos MORI²². This represents a significant change in public attitudes, especially given the AIDS crisis that affected the LGBTQ community during the 1980s and 1990s, which damaged progressive attitudes that were starting to form in some circles.

In 2012, a campaign known as *Out4Marriage* was launched to show support for the same-sex marriage legislation proposal. This campaign produced a series of

¹⁹ David Masci *et al.*, “5 Facts About Same-Sex Marriage,” *Pew Research Center*, June 24, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/24/same-sex-marriage/>.

²⁰ Anabel Kuntz *et al.*, “Human Values, Legal Regulation, and Approval of Homosexuality in Europe: A Cross-Country Comparison,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 45, no. 1 (2015): 132.

²¹ Brewer, “Public Opinion About Gay Rights,” 279.

²² *ibid.*, 279.

YouTube videos with famous faces announcing their support of same-sex marriage. Those featuring in these videos included influential businessmen such as the founder of the Virgin Group, Richard Branson, British politicians such as the Liberal Democrats' Lynne Featherstone (then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Equality) and Labour's Yvette Cooper (then Shadow Home Secretary), popstars such as The Saturdays, and even religious leaders like Rabbi Ariel Friedlander of Liberal Judaism²³, a less conservative denomination of the Jewish religion. This campaign encouraged increased awareness of the LGBTQ cause, with a particular focus on same-sex marriage. Through backing from various celebrities of different ages from a variety of backgrounds, the campaign hoped to increase support among the general public by appealing to as wide an audience as possible.

When asked about same-sex relationships in general regardless of legal recognition, public support is even higher in the UK. In a British Social Attitudes (hereafter BSA) survey carried out in 2016, findings showed that acceptance of same-sex relationships had increased particularly quickly in the four years previously, corresponding to the beginning of debates and the subsequent adoption of legislation to legalise same-sex marriage in the UK. Indeed, it shows that British attitudes have become "significantly more liberal"²⁴. The proportion of people saying same-sex relationships are *not wrong at all* grew from 47 percent in 2012 to 59 percent in 2015 and even 64 percent in 2016²⁵. These results were in response to the question "What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex? [Always wrong, Mostly wrong, Sometimes wrong, Rarely wrong, Not wrong at all]"²⁶. As such, although the percentage is lower than Brewer's aforementioned statistic on same-sex marriage, this

²³ Laurence Watts, "Virgin Billionaire Sir Richard Branson Comes Out4Marriage (VIDEO)," *Huffpost*, May 21, 2012 (updated December 6, 2017), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/richard-branson-out4marriage_b_1526280?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLnNvLnVrLw&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAA77J91kb0V7MplfyVfsAOpPwEWecAIEVZQkn3ECbaCkyfvmFNG6u2VV7jijJ7ZuAsBu9pFCDKAXe2ctRtTFGQ-5UkbbT3fUU9ZYbyZ7MOuML_4QLptayW5oApqKDxVLDhZUdHF21-a16_q70X6K7LbLE7GNRAGny89W8n7JSmwP.

²⁴ K. Swales, and E.A. Taylor, "Moral Issues: Sex, Gender Identity and Euthanasia," *British Social Attitudes* 34 (2017): 2.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 2.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 4.

result only shows those who say it is *not wrong at all* and does not include others who said it was *rarely wrong*. The survey also found that the gap between acceptance levels of same-sex relationships and pre-marital sex also “narrowed substantially from 26 percentage points in 2005 to 11 percentage points in 2016”²⁷, thus suggesting that the public is quickly becoming increasingly open-minded about LGBTQ issues. Figure 1 below shows that younger generations are notably more tolerant of same-sex relationships, although the study also observed that “people born in all cohorts from the 1940s onwards have become more accepting of same-sex relationships since the early 1990s”²⁸. Consequently, the overall trend is growing liberalism irrespective of age, even though younger people remain the most tolerant. Meanwhile, the highest level of tolerance is towards homosexuality in general. According to Pew Research in 2013, this was 76 percent in the UK²⁹.

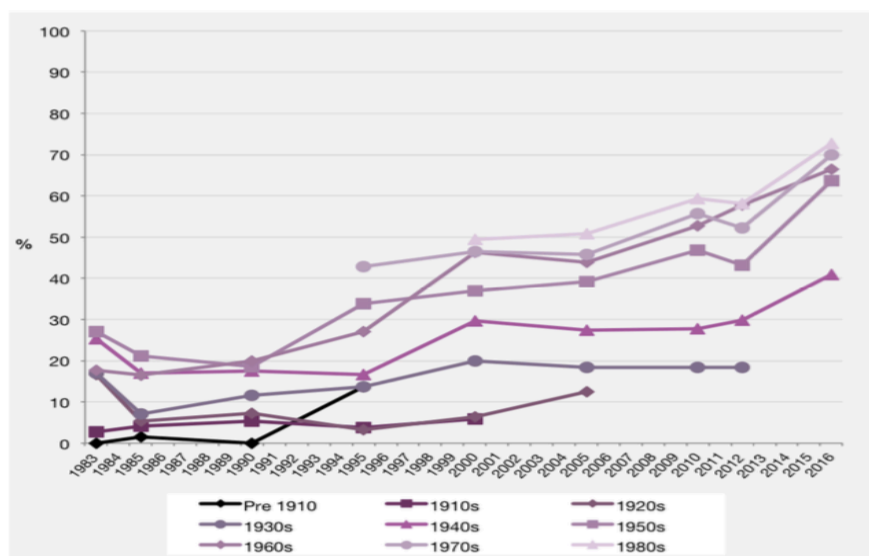


Figure 1: Proportion of the UK population saying same-sex relationships are *not wrong at all*, by generation, 1983-2016³⁰

Conservative members of society in the UK, and in particular supporters of the Conservative Party, show increased negativity towards same-sex marriage. Hayton &

²⁷ *ibid.*, 5.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 8.

²⁹ Brewer, “Public Opinion About Gay Rights,” 280.

³⁰ Swales, and Taylor, “Moral Issues,” 10.

McEnhill write, "Opinion polls suggested that only 27.8 per cent of Conservative supporters were in favour of same-sex marriage, compared with 42.8 per cent of the electorate as a whole"³¹. As such, there was a divide along party lines over support for same-sex marriage between more conservative and more liberal members of the public. However, with regards to same-sex relationships, the 2016 BSA survey rejects this idea, as 69 per cent of Labour supporters accepted same-sex relationships compared to 60 per cent of Conservative supporters. They conclude that "the gap is not so large and it has narrowed since 2012 (from 13 to 9 percentage points)"³². Relationships towards partisan attitudes in the UK will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2.

One area where tolerance is less present in the UK is towards transgender people. The BSA survey points out that there are contradictions in attitudes towards transsexuals. Indeed, although 82 percent said they were *not prejudiced at all*, only 43 percent said they should work as a police officer if they were qualified, and the figure was only 41 percent for primary school teachers³³. As a result, it reveals a lack of consistency in attitudes towards transgender people, because there is indeed prejudice towards the work people feel they can do. However, some progress is being made. In their 2018 annual report, ILGA Europe stated, "One of the most notable trends during 2017 was the increased visibility and public discussion of trans and intersex issues in the UK"³⁴. Yet, this was "accompanied by a rise in transphobic commentary across traditional media platforms and online"³⁵, highlighting the fact that this remains the key issue at present, and that work needs to be done still to increase awareness and tolerance of transgender and intersex people.

Thus, although the UK public has made big leaps forward in its attitude towards lesbians, gay men and bisexuals on several issues, transgender people are still

³¹ Richard Hayton, and Libby McEnhill, "Cameron's Conservative Party, Social Liberalism and Social Justice," *British Politics* 10, no. 2 (2015): 138-139.

³² Swales, and Taylor, "Moral Issues," 10.

³³ *ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ ILGA Europe, "ILGA-Europe: Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe 2018," *ILGA Europe* (2018): 130.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 130.

discriminated against on a more regular basis, meaning equality for the LGBTQ community has still to be fully achieved.

1.3. TOLERANCE IN FRANCE

As another Western European country that accords a similar set of legal rights to LGBTQ people as the UK, France often records comparable levels of tolerance. However, the situation is not necessarily clear cut, as indeed, in the same aforementioned ILGA Rainbow Europe Country Index dating back to 2010, France only scored 5 out of 10, on a par with Germany and Portugal³⁶.

When it comes to same-sex marriage, as in the UK, public support has grown at a relatively considerable pace in France, from 51 percent in 1995 to 65 percent in 2012 according to IFOP (or *The Institut Français d'Opinion Publique*)³⁷. However, in spite of this progress, people speaking out against same-sex marriage were much more vocal in France than their British counterparts, as they took part in a movement called *La Manif pour Tous*. The aim of *La Manif pour Tous* was to protest against the government's proposals to introduce same-sex marriage and adoption. These demonstrations took place from 2012 onwards and were held across the country. Although there were no mass rallies in the UK, which would imply more acceptance there than in France, it could be suggested that this is simply a way of life for members of the French public to react in this manner. Indeed, French people tend to demonstrate more often on various social, economic and political issues than their British counterparts. It has even been claimed by some that "mass-participation social action is in their DNA"³⁸. Consequently,

³⁶ Kuntz *et al.*, "Human Values," 132.

³⁷ Brewer, "Public Opinion About Gay Rights," 279.

³⁸ Hugh Morris, "The French Strike: What it Means and How Transport is Affected," *The Telegraph*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/france/articles/why-do-the-french-always-strike/>.

it is perhaps predictable that the French response to the introduction of same-sex marriage was a much louder affair than the reaction of their British neighbours.

In addition, when asked their views on homosexuality in general in a 2012 IFOP survey, the French public responded with the most favourable option in the majority of cases. 90 percent of respondents said homosexuality was *une manière comme une autre de vivre sa sexualité*, 7 percent believed it was *une perversion sexuelle que l'on doit combattre* and just 3 percent thought it was *une maladie que l'on doit guérir*. In 1996, the same survey revealed 67 percent, 15 percent and 16 percent for the same three options respectively. Ten years previously in 1986, it was 54 percent, 16 percent and 25 percent respectively³⁹. As such, public acceptance of homosexuality has risen to nine out of ten people from just over half in less than thirty years, suggesting there are much more liberal attitudes towards LGBTQ issues in France nowadays.

However, one potential flaw worth mentioning comes from the data collection method of these surveys. It may therefore be necessary to question whether some respondents simply preferred to select the politically correct option in 2012, as they were no longer given the option of not answering. They may not have wanted to admit that they believed homosexuality was a form of sexual perversion or an illness when surveyed. What's more, the fact that in 2012 the survey was carried out by Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (i.e. face-to-face interviews via the Internet)⁴⁰, as opposed to by telephone in 1996⁴¹, could lead to a biased set of results. It has already been found in other polls that social desirability is more commonplace if the interviewer is present than if the survey is carried out by telephone or via an online anonymous questionnaire⁴². To emphasise the discrepancies in some of these results, with a different question, 77 percent of French people questioned said *society should accept*

³⁹ Institut Français d'Opinion Publique, "Les Français et la perception de l'homosexualité : Résultats détaillés : Décembre 2012," IFOP, December 15, 2012, https://www.ifop.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2082-1-study_file.pdf.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 2.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, 5.

⁴² Patrick Sturgis *et al.*, *Report of the Inquiry into the 2015 British General Election Opinion Polls*, (London: Market Research Society and British Polling Council, 2016), 41.

homosexuality in 2013⁴³. Whilst the exact numbers revealing true support of homosexuality in France may be unknown, it is clear to see that there is a general trend that favours more tolerance towards LGBTQ people, and that the majority of the population does indeed have a positive attitude.

It is interesting to note that the 2012 IFOP survey found differences between supporters of different political parties and presidential candidates. As to be expected, supporters of left-wing political parties are more likely to say that homosexuality is *une manière comme une autre de vivre sa sexualité*, with 95 percent of those supporting left-wing parties choosing this option⁴⁴. Meanwhile, for the right-wing, 85 percent support homosexuality, with the centre-right UMP at 82 percent and the far-right *Front National* (FN) at 89 percent⁴⁵. The figures for the right-wing parties may seem surprising as the FN typically has an even more conservative stance than the UMP. This can nevertheless be explained by the mass social movement known as *La Manif pour Tous*, which implicated large numbers of centre-right UMP supporters. Another striking figure is that fewer FN supporters believed homosexuality was a disease (1 percent) than backers of the left (2 percent), who are ordinarily more liberal. However, a far higher percentage of FN supporters felt it was a sexual perversion (10 percent compared to 4 percent for the *Parti Socialiste*)⁴⁶. When respondents were asked who they voted for in the first round of the 2012 presidential elections, results were similar. Voters of left-wing candidates Jean-Luc Mélenchon and François Hollande had the highest support for homosexuality at 95 percent, whereas the supporters of far-right Marine Le Pen and centre-right candidate Nicolas Sarkozy were in favour 87 and 85 percent of the time respectively⁴⁷. As such, it reflects divisions along party lines, which were particularly marked in France regarding the LGBTQ issue. Given the lower tolerance rate of homosexuality among the right-leaning public, the reluctance of right-wing parties to accept legislation promoting increased rights for LGBTQ people is understandable.

⁴³ Brewer, "Public Opinion About Gay Rights," 280.

⁴⁴ Institut Français d'Opinion Publique, "Les Français et la perception de l'homosexualité," 6.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 6.

France, therefore, whilst displaying similar statistics to the UK, was much less accepting of LGBTQ people in public, as the demonstrations across the country prove. There was more vocal opposition to proposals to introduce same-sex marriage in France, creating more tension for LGBTQ people.

1.4. ANTI-LGBTQ DISCRIMINATION

Although it can be said that tolerance levels have generally increased towards LGBTQ people across Europe and the Western world, it must also be highlighted somewhat paradoxically that reports of violent anti-LGBTQ crimes are also on the rise.

In the UK, despite the growing levels of acceptance of the LGBTQ community, discriminatory attacks still occur on a regular basis. Indeed, “the media still regularly report incidents where gay, lesbian and transgender people are beaten up on the street. Lesbian and gay couples are forced to move home when people in their neighbourhood harass them”⁴⁸. Even in 2019, there are violent incidents in the UK that shock the public. For example, a lesbian couple were insulted and subsequently beaten up for refusing to kiss in public in an attack that took place on a London bus on 30 May 2019⁴⁹. Hunte describes this attack as a “sobering reality check”⁵⁰ of why more still needs to be done to fight homophobia in the UK, even in large metropolitan cities like London. In the British capital alone, homophobic hate crimes have risen each year in the past five years: 2,308 homophobic hate crimes were recorded in 2018, compared to 1,488 in 2014⁵¹. Prior to the introduction of same-sex marriage in the UK in 2014, hate crimes decreased slightly between 2011-2012 (4,362 reports) and 2012-2013 (4,267 reports) across the

⁴⁸ Boris Dittrich, “Gay Marriage Does Not End Discrimination,” *The Independent*, July 17, 2013, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/gay-marriage-does-not-end-discrimination-8714202.html?amp>.

⁴⁹ Ben Hunte, “London Bus Attack: Arrests After Gay Couple Who Refused to Kiss Beaten,” *BBC News*, June 7, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-48555889>.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ *ibid.*

UK⁵². With the arrival of same-sex marriage, it appears to have reversed the trend and anti-LGBTQ crimes have in actual fact increased since, perhaps because of the greater visibility of LGBTQ people.

In France, the situation is similar. Each year, the French third sector organisation *SOS Homophobie* publishes a report on the homophobic acts reported to the association in France. In the 2019 report, we find the number of testimonies of homophobic acts in France has more than quadrupled since 2000⁵³. Figure 2 on the following page reveals a peak in 2013, when 3,517 cases were reported, shortly after the legalisation of gay marriage. The number of cases subsequently decreased; however, since 2015, they have been on the rise again, with 1,905 reports in 2018⁵⁴. Yet, what is particularly striking is that the number of cases of physical violence reported to *SOS Homophobie* in 2018 rose to 231 (an increase of 66 percent compared to 2017), which according to the report represents “une hausse alarmante”⁵⁵. In the last quarter of 2018, there was “une agression rapportée chaque jour”⁵⁶. Of interest too are the “hausse spectaculaires constatées en 2012 (+27 %) et 2013 (+78 %)”⁵⁷ of anti-LGBTQ acts. This took place during the protest movement *La Manif pour Tous* against the proposals to introduce same-sex marriage. This statistic was confirmed by Guillaume Chiche in 2018, an MP for *La République en Marche* (the political party created by current President Emmanuel Macron), who stated whilst addressing the organisers of *La Manif pour Tous*: “Pendant les treize mois de mobilisation que vous avez initiée contre le mariage pour tous, les actes homophobes ont augmenté de 78 pour cent”⁵⁸. The correlation between the protest movement and the increase in anti-LGBTQ acts must therefore be underlined.

⁵² David Harris *et al.*, “Legal Study on Homophobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: United Kingdom,” *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)* (2014): 53.

⁵³ Véronique Godet, and Joël Deumier, “Rapport sur l’homophobie 2019 : Dossier de presse 14 mai 2019,” *SOS Homophobie* (2019): 6.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁷ Joël Deumier, and David Raynaud, “Rapport sur l’homophobie 2018,” *SOS Homophobie* (2018): 16.

⁵⁸ Guillaume Chiche, “L’homophobie de La Manif pour tous dénoncée par ce député LREM,” speech, October 24, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkxblpXqGQY>.

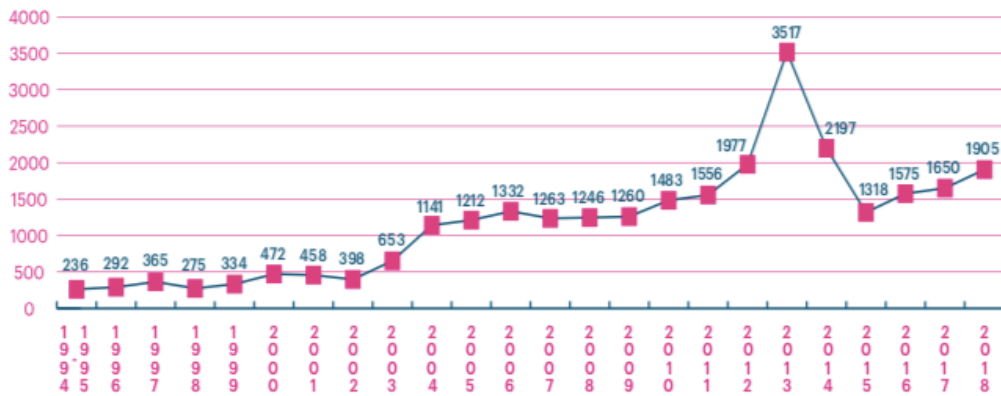


Figure 2: Number of anti-LGBTQ acts in France reported to SOS Homophobie, 1994-2018⁵⁹

A high-profile example of an anti-LGBTQ crime took place in the Marais district of Paris⁶⁰, where pedestrian crossings were painted with the rainbow flag initially on a temporary basis in order to commemorate the Gay Pride and Gay Games in 2018. However, within days, these were vandalised with homophobic insults such as “LGBT hors de France”⁶¹. In response, the Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo announced that these would remain permanently to act as a “signal positif et bienveillant”⁶². In spite of this, some feared that this would not necessarily have the positive effect the mayor had hoped for. For instance, one resident stated, “Je crains que cette mesure communautariste n’attise la haine et la violence”⁶³.

An additional common problem in both the UK and France is the bullying of LGBTQ schoolchildren “because they are perceived as being different”⁶⁴. In France, 7 percent of anti-LGBTQ incidents reported to *SOS Homophobie* in 2017 took place in a school or university environment, which represented a 38 percent increase on the

⁵⁹ Godet, and Deumier, “Rapport sur l’homophobie 2019,” 6.

⁶⁰ The Marais district is at the heart of LGBTQ culture in Paris.

⁶¹ Philippe Baverel, “Paris : des tags homophobes dans le Marais,” *Le Parisien*, June 26, 2018, <http://www.leparisien.fr/paris-75/paris-des-tags-homophobes-dans-le-marais-26-06-2018-7794525.php>.

⁶² Philippe Baverel, “Paris : la pérennisation des carrefours aux couleurs LGBT dans le Marais fait débat,” *Le Parisien*, July 3, 2018, <http://www.leparisien.fr/paris-75/paris-la-perennisation-des-carrefours-arc-en-ciel-dans-le-marais-fait-debat-03-07-2018-7805628.php>.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Dittrich, “Gay Marriage Does Not End Discrimination”.

previous year⁶⁵. In the UK, 95 percent of respondents to the 2014 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) LGBT survey stated they had seen or heard negative comments about LGBTQ people; in France, this was 90 percent⁶⁶. In Scotland, generally considered a tolerant place towards LGBTQ people, the situation was equally bad, with approximately 90 percent of LGBTQ teenagers experiencing homophobia at school⁶⁷. Dittrich also points out that “the suicide rate, among especially young lesbian and gay people, is much higher than that of their peers”⁶⁸. Indeed, in Scotland, “27% reported they had attempted suicide after being bullied”⁶⁹. This is representative of the situation across the UK and in France too. What’s more, for children with two same-sex parents, there is also discrimination at school, and depending on the place and type of school, many parents hide their homosexuality from the parents of their child’s classmates. Gross concludes, “Ce qui pousse une famille à rester en retrait sur la divulgation de l’homoparentalité, c’est plutôt l’âge de l’enfant, et/ou le lieu de scolarisation, que la volonté de passer pour hétéroparentale”⁷⁰. As a result, although the younger generation is often considered to be the most tolerant towards LGBTQ people, the paradox is that schools are among the places where the most homophobic language is recorded.

At this point, it must be noted that the rise in reported crime figures could also be attributed to the fact that victims are becoming increasingly likely to come forward to the police or to organisations like *SOS Homophobie*. Indeed, with the increasing support from the general public and diminishing stigmatisation surrounding LGBTQ people, victims of homophobic incidents are more likely to report these crimes. This in turn leads to crime statistics, which appear to show growing violence. Nonetheless, in

⁶⁵ Deumier, and Raynaud, “Rapport sur l’homophobie 2018,” 17.

⁶⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *EU LGBT Survey*, 19.

⁶⁷ Libby Brooks, “Scotland to Embed LGBTI Teaching Across Curriculum,” *The Guardian*, November 9, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/nov/09/scotland-first-country-approve-lgbti-school-lessons>.

⁶⁸ Dittrich, “Gay Marriage Does Not End Discrimination”.

⁶⁹ Brooks, “LGBTI Teaching”.

⁷⁰ Martine Gross, “Homophobie à l’école : Les stratégies des familles lesboparentales pour protéger leurs enfants,” *Dialogue* 194 (2011): 32.

some cases, where the increases have been significant, such as after the introduction of same-sex marriage in both the UK and France, it can be deduced that anti-LGBTQ discourse and violence is in fact on the rise. Whether this continues to be the case in future remains to be seen.

Discrimination at work also remains relatively commonplace in both France and the UK, where statistics are remarkably similar between the two countries. Indeed, in the FRA LGBT survey in 2014, France and the UK were regularly ranked alongside each other for workplace discrimination when compared to other EU countries. For instance, 44 percent of UK respondents felt they had been discriminated against or harassed in 2013-2014 based on their sexual orientation; in France, it was 41 percent⁷¹. Furthermore, 19 percent of Brits and 20 percent of Frenchmen and women felt discriminated against when looking for work or when at work⁷². Outside of employment, these figures were 32 percent for the UK and 31 percent for France⁷³.

Wage discrimination is a further issue. In France, Laurent & Mihoubi discovered in 2012 that homosexual men receive lower wages than their heterosexual counterparts. In fact, in the private sector they earn 6.3 percent less, whilst in the public sector, they make 5.6 percent less money⁷⁴. However, this was only found for homosexual men, as lesbians received 2.1 percent more than heterosexual women in the private sector⁷⁵. Meanwhile, a similar study in the UK by Reza Arabsheibani *et al.*⁷⁶ in 2007 found that there was “no significant penalty for gays and +6 % for lesbians”⁷⁷. As such, there is evident discrimination against homosexual men, although “the asymmetry observed [between gay men and lesbians...] reflects a diversity of

⁷¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *EU LGBT Survey*, 15.

⁷² *ibid.*, 16.

⁷³ *ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁴ Thierry Laurent, and Ferhat Mihoubi, “Sexual Orientation and Wage Discrimination in France: The Hidden Side of the Rainbow,” *Journal of Labor Research* 33 (2012): 508.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 507.

⁷⁶ G. Reza Arabsheibani, *et al.*, “Variations in Gay Pay in the USA and the UK,” in *Sexual Orientation Discrimination: An International Perspective*, ed. M.V. Lee Badgett, and Jefferson Frank (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁷⁷ Laurent, and Mihoubi, “Sexual Orientation and Wage Discrimination,” 507.

discriminatory practices, explained by the specificity of homophobia and the different nature of stereotypes associated with male and female homosexuality”⁷⁸. There are therefore differences observed between homophobia towards men and towards women, a trend present not only in the UK, but according to similar studies, in other countries too.

Finally, the OECD also highlighted discrimination in the UK against LGBTQ people during interviews. They note that homosexual men are less likely to be offered a job if the qualities required are typically masculine traits, “lorsque le candidat idéal est décrit comme ‘ambitieux’, ‘audacieux’ ou ayant une ‘mentalité de leader’”⁷⁹. Meanwhile, the same phenomenon is seen for lesbians if the job requires typically feminine characteristics, “comme ‘affectueux’, ‘enjoué’ ou ‘sensible aux besoins d’autrui’”⁸⁰. Whilst this clearly reveals underlying homophobia and anti-LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace in the UK, it also highlights ongoing sexism in the country, as there is no reason that a woman cannot be a leader or that a man cannot be sensitive to other people’s needs for instance. The fact that these stereotypes for men and women still exist underlines a deeper societal problem of patriarchy in the UK and across much of the world.

As a result of the arguments presented in this chapter, it is clear to see that homophobia and anti-LGBTQ discrimination remain a big problem to this day in both the UK and France. Statistics have shown us that homophobic acts increased significantly after debates began on same-sex marriage in both countries. This is in spite of the rising tolerance levels towards homosexuality and LGBTQ rights. Thus, the next chapter will examine in detail the role of political discourse in the UK on the public’s attitudes.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 524.

⁷⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, “Le défi LGBT,” 26.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 26.

CHAPTER 2

THE UNITED KINGDOM: A NATION DIVIDED

This chapter will examine the United Kingdom as a case study. Whilst the UK has often ranked highly for LGBTQ rights in recent years, this has not always held true, and even today, there are disparities between the four nations that constitute the kingdom. First, I will look at how the early 2000s under the Labour Party were notable for the gradual implementation of more legal rights that accompanied rising levels of tolerance in the country. Second, I shall consider the evolution under the Conservative Party government from 2010 onwards, which has been marked by divides among Members of Parliament over the introduction of same-sex marriage in particular. Third, I will study how the far-right have treated the LGBTQ issue this century, paying particular attention to the United Kingdom Independence Party (hereafter referred to as UKIP) and the British National Party (or BNP). In the fourth section, I will deal with how and why Scotland is today considered among the most forward-looking countries with regards to gay rights, before finally scrutinising the less progressive legal situation in Northern Ireland for LGBTQ people, which is closely tied to religion and divisions between the unionists and Irish nationalists.

2.1. NEW LABOUR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EARLY 2000s

The start of the twenty-first century saw substantial progress for LGBTQ rights in the UK under Tony Blair's New Labour left-wing government, which took a liberal approach to social issues. The Labour Party gained in popularity, thanks largely to Blair's persona that brought a fresh approach to the widely disliked politics of the Conservative Prime Minister John Major in the 1990s. As the youngest British Prime Minister in almost two centuries, Blair offered voters a clear alternative to the ageing traditional

Conservative Party. His cabinet even included an openly gay MP, Chris Smith⁸¹, highlighting the more inclusive nature of Blair's government compared to Major's Conservatives in the 1990s.

Numerous legislations were introduced in parliament to give LGBTQ individuals more legal rights in the early 2000s. Brown and Cocker point out the following laws all brought in during Blair's premiership: "the Equality Act 2006, the Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the repeal of section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988⁸² (2003) and bringing the age of consent in line with heterosexuals (2001)"⁸³. In addition, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2003⁸⁴, which forbade workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation, must not be forgotten, although as mentioned previously, this has not put a stop to all forms of discrimination against LGBTQ people. This "impressive"⁸⁵ series of new laws gave the LGBTQ community unprecedented rights in the UK in a very short period of time. It can therefore be deduced that policies under New Labour represented a very positive turning point for LGBTQ equality.

This increasing equality all stemmed from Labour's election campaign based around the values of human rights. It is worth noting though that there was no direct mention of LGBTQ rights in their manifesto⁸⁶. Consequently, Labour's LGBTQ policies developed rapidly after the government had already been elected, in part due to pressures from the EU. Indeed, the EU incorporated "'sexual orientation' into the anti-

⁸¹ Kelly Kollman, and M. Waites, "United Kingdom: Changing Political Opportunity Structures, Policy Success and Continuing Challenges for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Movements," in *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*, ed. M. Tremblay, D. Paternotte, and C. Johnson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 191.

⁸² Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 was introduced under Margaret Thatcher's premiership and stated that local governments "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship": *ibid.*, 188.

⁸³ Helen Cosis Brown, and Christine Cocker, "Lesbian and Gay Fostering and Adoption: Out of the Closet into the Mainstream?" *Adoption & Fostering* 32, no. 4 (2008): 22.

⁸⁴ Kollman, and Waites, "Changing Political Opportunity Structures," 190.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 192.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 191.

discrimination clause of [its] Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997”⁸⁷, meaning that the European Court of Human Rights was able to act on cases of discrimination against LGBTQ people. For Labour, this prompted them to implement legislation to allow LGBTQ individuals in the UK to have more rights before a high-profile case could be taken to the European Court of Human Rights. They preferred to take matters into their own hands, rather than being forced after a court ruling in Strasbourg.

There is some debate among scholars about the effectiveness of Labour’s discourse in the early twenty-first century. For Shipman and Smart, one particular area where New Labour were especially successful was through their ability to “ideologically [separate] the idea of stability from the normative assumptions surrounding the superiority of two parent and/or heterosexual households”⁸⁸. Instead of promoting the traditional model of one father, one mother and their children, they presented the modern family in its varied formats. Gay adoption and fostering were henceforth allowed under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. However, Glennon argued in 2007 that “rhetorical commitments to traditional family values, expressed in more positive New Labour terminology of ‘strengthening marriage’ continue to pervade political dialogue”⁸⁹. For her, new legislation was a mask for underlying pledges to traditions, even among the Labour Party. What’s more, in spite of the perceived legal step forward, Brown and Cocker remind us that “homosexuality [was] still seen by some as pathological. Even supporters of progressive changes were lukewarm because of their belief that homosexuality is a marginal identity”⁹⁰. Indeed, during the adoption of the bill in the House of Lords, the openly gay Muslim peer Lord Alli endorsed “the maintenance of a relationship hierarchy in which married heterosexuals remains the ‘gold standard’”⁹¹. Hence, it reveals a reluctance among certain Labour politicians to fully reject the hierarchy of families and to accept complete equality for LGBTQ people

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 189.

⁸⁸ Beccy Shipman, and Carol Smart, “‘It’s Made a Huge Difference’: Recognition, Rights and the Personal Significance of Civil Partnership,” *Sociological Research Online* 12, no. 1 (2007): 5.

⁸⁹ Lisa Glennon, “Strategizing For the Future Through the Civil Partnership Act,” *Journal of Law and Society* 33, no. 2 (2006): 246.

⁹⁰ Brown, and Cocker, “Lesbian and Gay Fostering and Adoption,” 22.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, 22.

in spite of the legislation that they helped to introduce. Simply because Labour were the ones to put forward this legislation, it does not mean that their intentions were purely to promote equality.

This somewhat reflects the contrasting discourse emanating from the public on the LGBTQ issue. Even within the LGBTQ community, there were differences in opinion. For instance, taking the example of civil partnerships, Shipman and Smart tell us that it was “not something that gays and lesbians were actively demanding”⁹². They go on to point out that LGBTQ lobby groups such as Stonewall, the Coalition for Marriage Equality and Outrage! had contrasting views on whether civil partnerships or same-sex marriage were preferable. Stonewall preferred civil partnerships over marriage, developing “a basic ‘equal’ but ‘different’ position in which [civil partnerships were] positioned as separate from marriage but equal to it, and with a more modern flavour”⁹³. Meanwhile, the Coalition for Marriage Equality promoted access to both civil partnerships and marriage for same-sex and opposite-sex couples⁹⁴. Finally, Outrage! called for a “‘queer’ rejection of marriage”⁹⁵. As such, the LGBTQ community disagreed over the best course of action for the future, as some believed that same-sex marriage would mean they lost a part of their unique community.

It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that whilst attempting to push through new legislation to encourage LGBTQ equality, the Labour Party encountered difficulties on how best to proceed in the early twenty-first century, especially given the divides within society, and even among the community concerned by the changes.

⁹² Shipman, and Smart, “It’s Made a Huge Difference’,” 3.

⁹³ *ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 7.

2.2. A DIVIDED CONSERVATIVE PARTY

The rifts continued after the premierships of the two Labour Prime Ministers, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, ended. The divides were even accentuated by the Conservative-led coalition government alongside the Liberal Democrats that were elected in 2010. This section will deal with the splits within the right-wing Conservative Party over LGBTQ rights.

When David Cameron was elected leader of the Conservative Party in late 2005, he promised to “modernise”⁹⁶ the right-wing party that had suffered heavy defeats to Blair’s Labour Party in 1997, 2001 and 2005. Cameron’s aim was to change the image of the Conservative Party, which in 1998 had even been described as a group of Mods and Rockers in an article published in *The Times*. This referred to the two opposing British youth subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s. The article made a distinction between “those sensitive to changing times [Mods] and those inclined to nostalgia [Rockers]”⁹⁷, highlighting the divides within the party at a time when Labour were going from strength to strength under Blair, gaining more seats in Parliament than ever before. The selection of David Cameron as Conservative leader confirmed the party’s intention to seek a different image from the traditional one beforehand and to take a more modern, twenty-first century approach to centre-right politics.

In order to bring the party into the twenty-first century, Cameron took a more socially liberal approach to politics in contrast to the party’s socially conservative traditionalists. He attempted to reignite the dwindling support for the Conservative Party by conveying a new modern image, much like Blair had done for Labour a decade earlier. In 2002, the then-Chairwoman of the Conservative Party, Theresa May, stated that many still viewed them as the “nasty party”⁹⁸. Cameron’s aim was to overturn this

⁹⁶ Hayton, and McEnhill, “Cameron’s Conservative Party,” 131.

⁹⁷ Richard Hayton, “Conservative Party Modernisation and David Cameron’s Politics of the Family,” *The Political Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2010): 493.

⁹⁸ Hayton, and McEnhill, “Cameron’s Conservative Party,” 135.

public perception through his new policies, which included a more liberal attitude towards family policy, and notably LGBTQ rights. There was a sense that the Conservative Party could finally be united again after years of in-fighting between the more liberal and more conservative branches, especially as Cameron was able to get the “support from across the ideological spectrum”⁹⁹. His leadership victory suggested the party as a whole was henceforth willing to take a more liberal standpoint on social issues.

Cameron promised to allow LGBTQ individuals more rights, including the introduction of same-sex marriage on an equal footing with heterosexual marriage. Hayton & McEnhill suggest that this “has proven to be a totemic issue for Cameron”¹⁰⁰, given the great deviation from traditional Conservative policies. In a speech delivered to the Conservative Party Conference in October 2011, Cameron rejected the notion that being a Conservative and a supporter of same-sex marriage were incompatible. He affirmed, “I don’t support gay marriage *despite* being a Conservative. I support gay marriage *because* I’m a Conservative”¹⁰¹. This display of support for the LGBTQ community confirmed his intention to unite the party over this issue. For many Conservatives, marriage is regarded as an important social pillar in Britain. Therefore, Cameron used a conservative argument to win his party members over, by suggesting that same-sex marriage would actually reinforce the “institution of marriage [...] with benefits for society as a whole”¹⁰². This contrasts with the more liberal assertion, which instead points out the right for equality between heterosexual and LGBTQ couples. Cameron’s approach is therefore interesting as he recognises the necessity to win over the more socially conservative supporters, by adapting to a line of reasoning that is more likely to garner support from a greater number of his own party members. Had he instead adopted a purely liberal discourse promoting equality, this may have isolated

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 135.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 132.

¹⁰¹ David Cameron, “Full Transcript: David Cameron: Speech to Conservative Party Conference 2011: Manchester: 5 October 2011,” *New Statesman*, October 5, 2011, <https://www.newstatesman.com/uk-politics/2011/10/world-economy-work-leadership>.

¹⁰² Hayton, and McEnhill, “Cameron’s Conservative Party,” 138.

the more right-wing supporters. His attempts to please all sides of the party were thus key to increasing overall support for his same-sex marriage proposals.

However, the same-sex marriage policy did indeed prove to be a very controversial one and “engendered considerable opposition”¹⁰³ from within the Conservative Party. It was criticised by some Conservative MPs as “it had not appeared in the coalition agreement or the Conservative or Liberal Democrat manifestos”¹⁰⁴. They felt that the government did not have an electoral mandate to pass the legislation, as the public had not elected the Conservatives or Liberal Democrats into government based on this policy. When the time came for MPs to vote on the legislation in parliament in 2013, Cameron did not call for a whipped vote, which would have compelled all Conservative MPs to back his bill. Instead, he allowed a free vote, meaning that his party’s MPs were not obligated to accept the bill. This resulted in more Conservatives opposing the bill at the second reading stage than those supporting it: “127 in favour, with 137 against”¹⁰⁵. This thus suggested that Cameron’s attempts to modernise the party had not been as successful as they appeared, and that there remained a “morality divide”¹⁰⁶. Given its somewhat controversial status, same-sex marriage was considered a moral issue for MPs and was the main reason Cameron did not push for a whipped vote that would have forced his party to toe the line. A whipped vote could have led to even greater repercussions within the Conservative Party, and may even have led to questions about his capabilities as leader of the party and as Prime Minister. Such was the moral importance of the issue for some Conservative MPs.

¹⁰³ Clements, Ben, “Partisan Attachments and Attitudes Towards Same-Sex Marriage in Britain,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 67 (2013): 232.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholas Watt, and Patrick Wintour, “Gay Marriage Row: UKIP Plans to Derail David Cameron,” *The Guardian*, December 12, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/dec/11/ukip-david-cameron-gay-marriage>.

¹⁰⁵ Philip Cowley, and Mark Stuart, “Cambo Chained: Dissension Amongst the Coalition’s Parliamentary Parties, 2012-2013: A Data Handbook,” *Revolts.co.uk* (2013): 9.

¹⁰⁶ Timothy Heppell, “Cameron and Liberal Conservatism: Attitudes Within the Parliamentary Conservative Party and Conservative Ministers,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 15 (2013): 343.

The divisions within the party reflected a similar split in public opinion amongst Conservative voters. Indeed, for Conservative MPs, there was “a fear of voter backlash in the constituencies – especially the rural shires”¹⁰⁷. The MPs for these particular rural constituencies in the South East of England worried that voting in favour of same-sex marriage would go against the general feeling of the public in these regions. Clements studies the results of two surveys examining public attitudes towards same-sex marriage conducted in 2008 by BSA and YouGov in 2012. He finds that in spite of a general increase in public backing for same-sex marriage between 2008 and 2012 in Britain, the support from those identifying as Conservative partisans has remained exactly the same at 27.8 percent. Meanwhile, both Liberal Democrats, up from 38.9 percent to 54.9 percent, and Labour supporters, up from 36.5 percent to 47.8 percent, were more likely to back the issue¹⁰⁸. It emphasises the fact that for the wider public, Cameron’s modernisation strategy through social liberalism seemed to have little impact on them. Clements concludes that for the 2012 poll results, “significant effects for partisanship are evident”¹⁰⁹. This reflects earlier findings about attitudes towards homosexuality by Hayes and Moran-Ellis that “party identification is a differential predictor [although] the impact [...] is both modest and variable over time”¹¹⁰. It can therefore be concluded that political affiliation has a varying degree of impact on public opinion on the LGBTQ issue in the UK. Yet it would appear that the correlation between political partisanship and attitudes towards LGBTQ people was particularly strong at this moment in time.

The role of the Liberal Democrats in the coalition government between 2010 and 2015 should also not be forgotten with regards to the advancement of LGBTQ rights in the UK. Even though Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg allowed his MPs the same free

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Reynolds, and Gabriele Magni, “Does Sexual Orientation Matter? The Impact of LGBT Candidate Identity on Vote Share in the UK Elections of 2015,” *LGBTQ Representation & Rights Research Initiative* (2017): 12, <https://lgbtqrightsrep.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/uk-lgbt-workingpaperargmapr17.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ Clements, “Partisan Attachments,” 236.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 240.

¹¹⁰ Bernadette C. Hayes, and Jo Moran-Ellis, “Party Identification and Attitudes Towards Homosexuals in Great Britain,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 7, no. 1 (1995): 35.

vote as Cameron on the same-sex marriage bill, only 4 Liberal Democrat MPs rejected it. It thus passed in parliament with a large majority, thanks to the overwhelming support (approximately 90 percent) of the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties¹¹¹. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition thus ensured a more socially liberal policy direction. The vote in the House of Commons was a source of embarrassment for David Cameron as his bill was passed without the full backing of his own party. It also caused much tension among the more socially conservative members of the Conservative Party after the 2010 election, as they were “worried about the policy concessions being made in order to enable a deal with the Liberal Democrats to be formed”¹¹². Some felt that Cameron should have insisted on the alternative option after the election results, namely forming a minority government without the support of the Liberal Democrats. Instead, Cameron’s deal with the Liberal Democrats made it easier for him to take his party down a more socially liberal path.

Hence, the same-sex marriage debate proved to be divisive for the Conservative Party in the early 2010s. Whilst it was certainly noteworthy that legislation was introduced under a right-wing government, albeit in a coalition with a liberal party, there were already clear signs beforehand that the Conservatives were moving in a more liberal direction on social issues under David Cameron. Nevertheless, the new approach was far from popular among all members of the governing party and reflected a greater lack of support from Conservative followers in general.

2.3. FAR-RIGHT DISCOURSE IN THE UK

Whilst the Conservative party were divided over the issue of same-sex marriage in particular, the far-right held a clearer, more assertive position against its introduction in the UK. UKIP, under former leader Nigel Farage, spoke out openly against allowing

¹¹¹ BBC, “MP-by-MP: Gay Marriage Vote,” *BBC News*, February 5, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-21346694>.

¹¹² Heppell, “Cameron and Liberal Conservatism,” 342.

same-sex marriage, although Farage did reassert that he was in favour of civil partnerships. Meanwhile, the more extreme BNP explicitly criticised both civil partnerships and marriage for same-sex couples.

In an interview on the BBC *Sunday Politics* TV show in December 2012, Farage cited a religious argument to defend his stance against same-sex marriage. He suggested that by legalising same-sex marriage, it would “force”¹¹³ churches and other religious places of worship to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies. He therefore positioned himself in alignment with the views upheld by the Anglican and Catholic Churches, who refused to support Cameron’s proposals on same-sex marriage. Farage used the Church’s standpoint to his advantage, hoping to gain support from Christians of different denominations. Clements points out the role of the media in reporting the Church’s position and its “influences on the views of their grassroots adherents”¹¹⁴. This can be seen incontestably in the results of the 2008 BSA and 2012 YouGov surveys, as Church of England religious followers had the lowest levels of support for gay marriage, at 21.5 percent and 24.4 percent in 2008 and 2012 respectively¹¹⁵. It is equally worth noting that Farage makes a reference to Islam in this interview. By appearing to show concern for Muslim leaders and followers, he seemingly looks to appease their fears about the consequences of same-sex marriage on their religious community. This stands in contrast with Farage’s repeatedly racist rhetoric over the years, which sought to isolate Muslims in particular. Clements’ results do not make reference to Muslims specifically, but non-Christians of other religions saw support drop from 40.2 percent in 2008 to 34.0 percent in 2012¹¹⁶. It is thus important to mention Farage’s ability to recognise the religious reticence surrounding the LGBTQ issue and his desire to quash the idea of same-sex marriage by embracing the beliefs of communities that he has at other times explicitly excluded.

¹¹³ Nigel Farage, “UKIP Leader Nigel Farage on Sunday Politics, Gay Marriage – Dec 12,” interview by Andrew Neil, *Sunday Politics*, BBC, December 2012, audio, 04:37, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjVj3Xr6cVI>.

¹¹⁴ Clements, “Partisan Attachments,” 237.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 236.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, 236.

In addition to the religious argument opposing same-sex marriage, Farage also used Euroscepticism in the UK towards Europe, and especially the European Union, to his advantage. He pointed out that if same-sex marriage went ahead, the European Court of Human Rights based in Strasbourg would at some point call upon churches in the UK to have to accept same-sex marriage ceremonies¹¹⁷. This therefore united religion with the party's other major damning rhetoric against the EU. Farage hoped to create fear amongst Eurosceptic voters in the UK that the country would no longer have any power over Europe to make this kind of decision on a national level. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no reports on the relationship between the way people voted during the Brexit referendum and their views on LGBTQ issues. It could be interesting to analyse whether Leave supporters, who were generally older and more conservative in their beliefs, are significantly less likely to favour LGBTQ matters, and whether Farage's political rhetoric has driven any potential correlations.

Farage also notes a contrast in public opinion between those living in large metropolitan cities and those living in "the Shires"¹¹⁸. It can be assumed that the Shires refer here to the counties surrounding London, also known as the Home Counties, and includes, among others, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Berkshire, Kent and Surrey. These areas are traditionally Conservative-supporting regions, and Farage suggests that the Conservative Party will suffer there because of Cameron's same-sex marriage policy. In another interview with *The Guardian* newspaper in December 2012, he stated, "David Cameron's proposal has the potential to rip apart the traditional rural Tory vote"¹¹⁹. Whilst there are no breakdowns of public support for LGBTQ rights by UK county or constituency, it is likely to reveal that public opinion in these areas is much lower as Conservative voters in general tend to be more opposed to same-sex marriage. The significance of this, however, is as of yet unknown.

¹¹⁷ Farage, interview.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Watt, and Wintour, "Gay Marriage Row".

However, whilst there is no data to confirm Farage's statement about isolating Conservative supporters in the Home Counties over the same-sex marriage proposals, it did raise fears within the Conservative Party that supporters may defect their allegiances to UKIP because of Cameron's social liberalism standpoint. If another conservative right-wing party was openly anti-same-sex marriage, then Conservative voters could defect to UKIP over the issue. UKIP hoped to "exploit [the] Tory divisions in the runup to the European elections in June 2014"¹²⁰, which they successfully managed by winning more seats than any other party. Although the same-sex marriage issue was almost certainly not the main one surrounding the 2014 EU elections, which were particularly marked by a rise in Euroscepticism in England and Wales, it potentially played a role, even if small, in UKIP's victory. However, if we look at the Conservative victory in the 2015 general election, in which they surprisingly extended their majority, introducing legislation on same-sex marriage and the overall transition towards social liberalism under Cameron did not appear to have a long-lasting effect on Conservative voters.

Although Nigel Farage openly approved of civil partnerships for same-sex couples, the other far-right party in the UK, the BNP, took a harder, more extreme stance against all legal recognition of LGBTQ partnerships. Nick Griffin, the leader of the party from 1999 to 2014, described civil partnerships as "the left's war against marriage and the family"¹²¹. The BNP has often been accused of homophobia and the party even called for homosexuality to be outlawed again. Griffin admitted the party has gay members, although it is on a "don't ask, don't tell"¹²² basis, reminiscent of the former policy in the US military, in which homosexual and bisexual soldiers were allowed to serve their country as long as they kept it a secret. Although the BNP has a far less wide-reaching influence on the public compared to UKIP or the *Rassemblement National* (formerly known as the *Front National*) in France, it nonetheless cannot be

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ Pink News, "Exclusive: Nick Griffin Claims to Have Made BNP More Gay-Friendly," *Pink News*, March 23, 2010, <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2010/03/23/exclusive-nick-griffin-claims-to-have-made-bnp-more-gay-friendly/>.

¹²² *ibid.*

discounted. To have a political party, albeit not a mainstream one, offering such strong homophobic discourse, in spite of claims from Griffin that they are “not drastically anti-gay”¹²³, can incite hatred and intolerance among the population.

As such, we can see that the far-right parties hoped to manipulate the differences within the Conservative Party to their benefit. By offering a clear position on LGBTQ issues such as gay marriage and civil partnerships, which reflected opinions of a significant proportion of the population, it gave them the opportunity to gain supporters from those unhappy with Cameron’s social liberalism.

2.4. SCOTLAND: A PROGRESSIVE NATION

The advances made by the far-right, in particular UKIP, concerned mostly England and Wales, where the aforementioned same-sex marriage legislation was proposed. The next section will look at how the situation developed in another of the UK’s constituent nations, Scotland.

Today, Scotland is regarded as one of the most tolerant places in Europe for LGBTQ people and offers the same legal rights as England and Wales. Scotland was even ranked first in Europe for LGBTI legal equality according to the 2015 Rainbow Europe Index produced by ILGA Europe, just ahead of the rest of the UK¹²⁴. Same-sex marriage was introduced in 2014 under the Scottish National Party (hereafter SNP) leadership, shortly after England and Wales. SNP MPs in Westminster abstained from the vote on same-sex marriage in 2013 because the legislation did not cover Scotland¹²⁵. However, it was a priority for the Scottish national parliament to pass similar legislation in Scotland

¹²³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴ The Guardian, “Scotland Tops League For Gay Rights,” *The Guardian*, May 10, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/10/scotland-tops-league-for-gay-rights>.

¹²⁵ The Public Whip, “Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill – Third Reading – 21 May 2013 at 18:59,” *The Public Whip*, May 21, 2013, <https://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=2013-05-21&number=11&display=allpossible>.

in order to ensure Scottish LGBTQ people had the same legal rights as in England and Wales. Unlike the Conservatives in Westminster, the leading party in Scotland, the SNP, backed the legislation with an overwhelming majority, with 56 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) in favour and just 7 MSPs against. Meanwhile, Conservative MSPs were just as split in Scotland as they had been in Westminster, with 7 supporting the proposal and 8 opposing it¹²⁶. This goes to prove the deep divide over LGBTQ rights within the Conservative Party across the whole of the UK at the time, as the party's situation in Scotland was almost identical to the UK-wide one. The bill passed with a much larger overall majority than in Westminster, with 105 votes to 18¹²⁷, mainly due to the higher number of socially liberal MSPs sitting in the Scottish parliament.

The fact that more socially liberal parties were even elected in Scotland suggests that the general Scottish public is more liberal on issues such as LGBTQ rights. However, this has not always been the case. Whilst Scotland has often been more left-leaning than England, "a mix of Calvinism and Catholicism meant that on issues like abortion, divorce and homosexuality, Scotland remained more conservative than England for decades"¹²⁸. Indeed, Scotland did not decriminalise homosexuality until 1980; in England and Wales, this took place in 1967¹²⁹. It has therefore been less than four decades since homosexuality has been legal in Scotland, yet nowadays, statistics reveal that Scots have become much more tolerant towards LGBTQ people. According to the Social Attitudes Survey in Scotland, "the proportion of people saying same-sex relationships are 'mostly' or 'always wrong' has fallen from 48 percent of people in 2000 [one year after the creation of the Scottish Parliament] to a mere 18 percent of people in 2015"¹³⁰. Likewise, Libby Brooks tells us in *The Guardian* that "the proportion who held the view that [gay and lesbian relationships] are 'not wrong at all' [increased] from 29% in 2000

¹²⁶ BBC, "Scotland's Same-Sex Marriage Bill: How MSPs Voted," *BBC News*, February 4, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-26041921>.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ Katrin Bennhold, "Scotland Embraces Gay Politicians in a Profound Cultural Shift," *The New York Times*, October 22, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/23/world/europe/scotland-gay-politicians.html>.

¹²⁹ Chaney, "Institutionally Homophobic?" 116.

¹³⁰ Peter Matthews, *et al.*, "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Experiences of Homelessness and Identity: Insecurity and Home(o)normativity," *International Journal of Housing Policy* (2018): 2.

to 59% in 2015”¹³¹. Brooks also mentions that the over-65s have seen a large increase in positive mind-sets towards LGBTQ people¹³². There has therefore been a sharp rise in acceptance of same-sex relationships in a relatively short period of time since the beginning of the twenty-first century from people of all generations.

Bennhold suggests that this swift change in Scottish attitudes is “reinforced by a remarkable transformation in [Scotland’s] political culture”¹³³. What is particularly interesting to note here is that there are multiple high-level politicians in Scotland who are either gay, lesbian or bisexual. Four of the six largest parties in Scotland were even led by members of the LGBTQ community simultaneously between 2015 and 2017: Kezia Dugdale, the former head of the Scottish Labour Party from 2015 until 2017, is a lesbian; Ruth Davidson, leader of the Scottish Conservative Party, is also a lesbian; Patrick Harvie, the co-leader of the Scottish Green Party, is bisexual; and David Coburn, the former leader of Scottish UKIP, is gay. Furthermore, there have been multiple openly gay ministers in the Scottish parliament¹³⁴. Overall, Scotland has the “highest known proportion [of openly LGBTQ politicians] for a national legislature”¹³⁵, at almost 8 percent. As such, there is a pronounced level of representation and a high visibility of the LGBTQ community within Scottish politics. This is similar to the UK as a whole, where almost 7 percent, or 45 out of 650 MPs elected in 2017 were LGBTQ¹³⁶. The number of LGBTQ MPs in the UK ranks among the highest in the world and “far exceeds the levels of representation in countries where gay rights have been entrenched for decades”¹³⁷, such as Sweden or the Netherlands. Consequently, there is a greater inclusion of the LGBTQ community in Scottish (and British) politics than elsewhere in Europe and the

¹³¹ Libby Brooks, “Scotland Survey Shows Greater Acceptance of Same-Sex Relationships,” *The Guardian*, September 30, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/sep/30/scotland-survey-shows-greater-acceptance-of-same-sex-relationships>.

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ Bennhold, “Scotland Embraces Gay Politicians”.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Tom Batchelor, “Election Results: Record Number of LGBTQ MPs Elected to Parliament,” *The Independent*, June 9, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/lgbt-mps-election-results-final-seats-record-numbers-gay-lesbian-bisexual-trans-a7782831.html>.

¹³⁷ Reynolds, and Magni, “Does Sexual Orientation Still Matter?” 16.

world. This is important for helping raise public awareness of LGBTQ people and could facilitate our understanding of why approval ratings of LGBTQ issues in Scotland have increased so rapidly in the twenty-first century.

Another reason Scotland is considered one of the most liberal places for LGBTQ rights is the introduction of legislation in 2018 to include LGBTI classes in the Scottish curriculum. Under the new law, Scottish state schools will have to “teach pupils about the history of LGBTI equalities and movements, as well as tackling homophobia and transphobia and exploring LGBTI identity”¹³⁸. The Scottish government called this a “world first”¹³⁹, putting Scotland ahead of other countries by implementing a policy with “no exemptions or opt-outs”¹⁴⁰, meaning that it is compulsory for all children in Scotland to be educated on this issue. The Scottish parliament’s decision to include LGBTI rights in the Scottish education system reveals the recognition that greater tolerance and acceptance of LGBTQ people comes from educating the younger generation. As a result, it could help combat bullying and discrimination against LGBTQ pupils in Scottish schools. What’s more, it is a far cry from Margaret Thatcher’s Section 28 law introduced in the 1980s. This policy therefore reveals the desire to create enduring tolerance in Scotland. It contrasts with other countries in the European Union, such as Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary, where LGBTQ rights are “moving backwards”¹⁴¹. It also shows Scottish MSPs have a long-term commitment to continue the progress surrounding LGBTQ rights for many years to come.

Consequently, it is therefore evident that Scotland is one of the most progressive countries in Europe for LGBTQ rights, with large strides being made in the twenty-first century, both in terms of legal recognition and increased public tolerance. With a high representation of LGBTQ politicians in the Scottish parliament, Scotland has

¹³⁸ Brooks, “LGBTI Teaching”.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ ILGA Europe, “Rainbow Europe 2019,” accessed June 7, 2019, <https://www.ilga-europe.org/rainboweurope/2019>.

implemented a series of laws to ensure long-lasting tolerance and acceptance in the country.

2.5. THE NORTHERN IRISH EXCEPTION

Having looked at the progressive nature of Scottish attitudes towards the LGBTQ community, this section will examine another of the United Kingdom's constituent nations, Northern Ireland, where the situation today is drastically different.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK where same-sex couples are yet to be legally permitted to marry. Whereas England, Wales and Scotland have all passed legislation to allow same-sex marriage, Northern Ireland so far has not. The only legal recognition for same-sex couples in Northern Ireland is through civil partnerships, which have been legal since 2005 with the introduction of the UK-wide Civil Partnership Act 2004 passed in Westminster¹⁴². What is interesting to note is that for civil partnerships, legislation was directed from Westminster on a UK-wide basis, yet for the introduction of same-sex marriage, the issue has been devolved to the sub-national parliaments (i.e. the Northern Ireland Assembly). Chaney infers that "the UK's post-1998 move to quasi-federalism"¹⁴³ through devolution of certain powers to regional parliaments has contributed to the inequalities of LGBTQ rights in the UK as a whole. Of all the constituent nations of the UK, this phenomenon is the most evident in Northern Ireland. Why is it then that Northern Ireland is so reluctant to accept same-sex marriage in comparison to the other nations in the United Kingdom, especially when public acceptance of the issue is increasing rapidly? Indeed, after the Republic of Ireland's referendum on same-sex marriage in 2015, support in Northern Ireland rose from 50.5

¹⁴² Glennon, "Strategizing For the Future," 268.

¹⁴³ Chaney, "Institutionally Homophobic?" 115.

percent in 2014 to 68 percent in July 2015¹⁴⁴. This is therefore compelling evidence for changing attitudes in this part of the UK.

One of the major arguments cited for the continuing difference between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK is the “seemingly universal moral conservatism”¹⁴⁵ among Northern Irish politicians and the public alike. Northern Ireland remains a highly religious nation, divided between both Protestants and Catholics, where religious “discourse is integral to ‘communal identity’”¹⁴⁶. In particular, the Democratic Unionist Party (hereafter referred to as the DUP) uses much religious rhetoric when discussing moral issues such as homosexuality. For instance, in the 1960s, they led a campaign called ‘Save Ulster from Sodomy’ and, according to Glennon, their discourse has not changed much since. Their stance on civil partnerships is “expressed in overtly puritan terms with many biblical references”¹⁴⁷. Indeed, for one DUP councillor in 2005, “hurricane Katrina was sent by God to punish the New Orleans gay community for holding a gay pride festival as a warning to nations ‘where such wickedness is increasingly promoted and practised’”¹⁴⁸. As such, they bring religious arguments directly into their politics, which justifies their reluctance to accept civil partnerships imposed by Westminster and to introduce new legislation on same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland. However, the DUP’s rhetoric “is becoming marginalized in public discourse”¹⁴⁹, with increasing levels of condemnation from the media and other political parties. The link between the Church and the Northern Ireland Assembly thus remains particularly strong and dissociable, especially for the DUP, although public attitudes are changing and the DUP’s position on LGBTQ matters is coming under increasing scrutiny.

¹⁴⁴ Caroline Mortimer, “Northern Ireland Same-Sex Marriage Vote Vetoed by DUP,” *The Independent*, November 2, 2015, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/northern-ireland-same-sex-equal-marriage-vote-vetoed-by-dup-a6718061.html>.

¹⁴⁵ Glennon, “Strategizing For the Future,” 276.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 262.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 272.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 272.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 273.

However, although religion surely has some impact on views towards LGBTQ people in Northern Ireland, Hooghe and Meeusen point out that this should not necessarily prevent same-sex marriage legislation from being implemented. Indeed, they cite the examples of same-sex marriage being legalised in both “traditionally Protestant but highly secularized countries like Sweden (in 2009) and in traditionally Catholic countries like Portugal (in 2010)”¹⁵⁰. It thus shows that just because a country has religious traditions, it does not necessarily mean that it is impossible to pass same-sex marriage legislation. Moreover, Quinn asserts that “identities based on sexual oppression can counter-weigh religious or cultural grievances and create agendas which compete with ethnic identifications”¹⁵¹. It shows the importance of the sense of community among LGBTQ people, which can overcome religious or cultural divides in Northern Ireland. Thus, religion cannot be the only reason for Northern Ireland’s rejection of same-sex marriage.

Furthermore, for many years, there has been a significant divide within Northern Irish politics between the unionists who want Northern Ireland to remain a part of the UK (the DUP and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)) and nationalists who want Ireland to be united again (Sinn Féin and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)). The same-sex marriage issue is no different. The SDLP voted in favour of civil partnerships in Westminster, whilst Sinn Féin’s policy approves civil partnerships and same-sex marriage. Meanwhile, the DUP and the UUP both rejected the civil partnerships bill¹⁵². Glennon suggests that “nationalists have always been more comfortable with the language of human rights and equality”¹⁵³. She asserts that the rights of LGBTQ people can actually be included within the equality agenda and because of the historical discrimination towards the Catholic minority, “Northern Ireland has a long pedigree in

¹⁵⁰ Hooghe, and Meeusen, “Is Same-Sex Marriage Legislation Related to Attitudes Toward Homosexuality?” 258.

¹⁵¹ Vincent Quinn, “On the Borders of Allegiance: Identity Politics in Ulster,” in *De-Centring Sexualities: Politics and Representations Beyond the Metropolis*, ed. Richard Phillips *et al.* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), 272.

¹⁵² Glennon, “Strategizing For the Future,” 269.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 271.

using rights-based strategies to tackle discrimination and inequality”¹⁵⁴. This could rationalise why the nationalists tend to be more willing to open discussions on same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland than unionists. Indeed, if we look at same-sex marriage debates in the Northern Ireland Assembly, we can see that for the fifth vote in 2015, 50.5 percent of politicians voted in favour of introducing same-sex marriage. However, “the ‘petition of concern’ tabled by the DUP at the outset of the debate means the proposal could only succeed if a sufficient number of both unionist and nationalist MLAs [Members of the Legislative Assembly] backed it”¹⁵⁵. Petitions of concern are used in certain cases in order to ensure laws are not just passed because of the support of one community (i.e. unionists or nationalists). This case therefore reveals the extent to which the DUP in particular and the nationalists diverge in their opinion over LGBTQ rights, as this technicality effectively prevented the legislation from being passed in Northern Ireland.

When examining all proposals and pledges on LGBTQ issues in regional elections between 1998 and 2011, 57 percent came from the SDLP, much more than any other Northern Irish party¹⁵⁶. However, when compared to Wales and Scotland, the overall number of pledges in Northern Ireland was very low, representing just 13 percent of all regional proposals in the UK, compared to 57 percent in Scotland and 30 percent in Wales¹⁵⁷. According to Chaney, this underlines the “worryingly low levels of attention afforded to [LGBTQ] matters in Northern Ireland”¹⁵⁸. Northern Irish politicians are therefore much slower at bringing in new LGBTQ-related policies to reflect changes in public opinion than their counterparts in Westminster and Holyrood, the seat of the Scottish parliament. Despite growing public support for LGBTQ people, policies and positions are not being taken by Northern Irish politicians, underlining their reluctance to afford more rights to LGBTQ people.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 270.

¹⁵⁵ Mortimer, “Northern Ireland Same-Sex Marriage”.

¹⁵⁶ Chaney, “Institutionally Homophobic?” 114.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 112-114.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 115.

Thus, despite the fact that attitudes towards the LGBTQ community appear to be growing more tolerant in Northern Ireland, the DUP remains steadfast in its opposition to increased legal rights for LGBTQ people. With the Conservative Party's informal agreement with the DUP in Westminster after the 2017 UK elections, which enables the Conservatives to reach a majority in the House of Commons, the DUP's influence has grown. Consequently, it appears even more unlikely that legal recognition of same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland will come in the near future.

In this chapter, it has been argued that the UK is not united in its approach to LGBTQ rights. Whilst the Labour governments introduced a series of pro-LGBTQ legislations in the early 2000s, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition struggled to gain the support of all Conservative MPs for same-sex marriage in the following decade. The moral divide within the Conservative Party was clear, and the far-right capitalised on this to their advantage. Meanwhile, although Scotland is among the most tolerant places in Europe, Northern Ireland remains somewhat reluctant in its approach to LGBTQ rights, with few policies proposed and no marriage available yet to same-sex couples.

CHAPTER 3

FRANCE: A COUNTRY OF PROTESTS

Having assessed the situation in the United Kingdom, the following chapter will study France's position on the LGBTQ issue, drawing comparisons between the two countries. France was the first country in Western Europe to abolish the crime of sodomy, thus decriminalising homosexuality between consenting adults in 1791¹⁵⁹. Yet, the LGBTQ community were not offered equal rights for over two centuries. The first section will examine the role of President François Hollande in introducing same-sex marriage and adoption in France in 2013, a decade after the left-wing government had introduced civil partnerships. Second, I will look at the reactions of the public to the proposed legislation, notably the protests that erupted across France. Finally, the position of the far-right, in particular the *Rassemblement National* party, towards this issue will be analysed.

3.1. HOLLANDE'S PROMOTION OF EQUALITY AND *LE MARIAGE POUR TOUS*

Unlike the Conservative Party in the UK, François Hollande was chosen as the French President in 2012 on the back of a presidential election campaign, during which he promised to legalise same-sex marriage in France¹⁶⁰. Indeed, included among Hollande's sixty commitments if he were to become president, were three related to the fight against discrimination. These sought to combat racism, homophobia and discrimination against disabled people. Hollande's thirty-first campaign engagement simply stated, "J'ouvrirai le droit au mariage et à l'adoption aux couples

¹⁵⁹ Jacques Pezet, "L'homosexualité a-t-elle été dépénalisée en 1791 ou en 1982 ?" *Libération*, June 18, 2018, https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2018/06/18/l-homosexualite-a-t-elle-ete-depenalisee-en-1791-ou-en-1982_1660079.

¹⁶⁰ Phillip M. Ayoub, *When States Come Out*, 120.

homosexuels”¹⁶¹. This short one-sentence promise would change the legal rights of LGBTQ people in France forever, by enabling them access to two areas that had previously been closed off to them: marriage and adoption. The use of the future tense rather than the conditional here underlines Hollande’s assertiveness with regards to the LGBTQ issue. Consequently, unlike David Cameron, François Hollande had an electoral mandate to adopt legislation on these two major LGBTQ policies. As such, he was able to push through any legislation in spite of criticism from many, by emphasising that he was simply acting on what he had promised before he was elected president. He was therefore in a stronger position politically than David Cameron. Nonetheless, Hollande was under no illusions that this issue would be an easy one, even denoting it as a “bataille”¹⁶² in his autobiography.

Reforms on the LGBTQ issue had already begun at the end of the twentieth century under a left-wing government led by Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. It is important to note that in France, the president and the government do not necessarily come from the same side of the political spectrum. Indeed, at that time, the French President was the right-wing Jacques Chirac. Yet, it was the government that voted on political issues. Consequently, debates about the *pacte civil de solidarité* (hereafter referred to by its common name *PACS*), or civil solidarity pact in English, took place during Jospin’s premiership, and entered into law in 1999. However, unlike the UK, Germany and many Nordic countries, “la France et le Luxembourg, de leur côté, ont créé un partenariat accessible à tous les couples non mariés, qu’ils soient de sexe différent ou de même sexe”¹⁶³. This was referred to as the “Dutch model”¹⁶⁴ (Ayoub 2016, 117) by Ayoub. In fact, the majority of *PACS* were and still are between heterosexual couples. By opening the *PACS* up to heterosexual couples as well, it meant that there was not such a clear delimitation between same-sex and opposite-sex couples in France

¹⁶¹ François Hollande, “Les 60 engagements de Hollande,” *Libération*, January 26, 2012, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2012/01/26/les-60-engagements-de-hollande_791303.

¹⁶² François Hollande, *Les leçons du pouvoir* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 2018), 236.

¹⁶³ Patrick Festy, “Légaliser les unions homosexuelles en Europe : innovations et paradoxes,” *Population & Sociétés* 424 (2006): 1.

¹⁶⁴ Ayoub, *When States Come Out*, 117.

compared to the UK, where civil partnerships were for same-sex couples only. All people were thus able to commit themselves to a civil union, without having to undergo the next more formal and traditional step of marriage. Hence, it put same-sex couples on a more equal footing than the UK civil partnership scheme as it was not created especially for LGBTQ people, but rather for the population as a whole. Thus, the *PACS* was a more inclusive union for all people that discriminated neither against same-sex nor opposite-sex couples.

Just over a decade later, debates about same-sex marriage started to become more frequent in France and they became a key issue after the 2012 presidential elections. Contrary to the political situation in the UK, the same-sex marriage bill was passed in France under a left-wing government headed by the *Parti Socialiste*. It was referred to as a “grande réforme de société qui doit [selon Hollande] marquer le [...] quinquennat”¹⁶⁵. In his autobiography, Hollande goes on to compare this historical policy with François Mitterrand’s decision to abolish the death penalty in the 1980s¹⁶⁶, underlining the importance of this policy not only for Hollande’s presidential term, but also for the future of French society as a whole. Whilst Cameron defended same-sex marriage by declaring that the greater institution of marriage would be reinforced, the political discourse from the French government was far more typically liberal. The Keeper of the Seals, Christiane Taubira, after whom the law is named, argued that the reform would “partage et étend les libertés”¹⁶⁷. This reinforces the importance of the idea of liberty and freedom in France. It must not be forgotten that the national motto of France is *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (liberty, equality, fraternity). As such, it has been engrained within French society since the origins of the motto during the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. Every French citizen is made aware of this tripartite motto from an early age, and as such it remains a significant part of French society. It is thus considered a particularly strong argument in France if liberty and

¹⁶⁵ Hollande, *Les leçons du pouvoir*, 236.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 236.

¹⁶⁷ Gouvernement.fr, “Le mariage pour tous,” last modified May 15, 2017, <https://www.gouvernement.fr/action/le-mariage-pour-tous>.

equality are mentioned in defence of same-sex marriage because it protects the values of the French Republic.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the voting patterns in the French National Assembly were different to those in the House of Commons in the UK. Same-sex marriage legislation was passed in France on 23 April 2013 with 331 votes in favour and 225 against the bill¹⁶⁸. This was a much smaller majority than in the British parliament and was in particular due to the partisan divisions in France. The two major right-wing political groups in the parliament, the *Groupe de l'Union pour un mouvement populaire* (hereafter referred to as UMP) and the *Groupe de l'Union des démocrates et indépendants* (or the UDI) both voted in high numbers against the bill. 6 UMP politicians voted for it, whilst 183 opposed it; meanwhile, 5 UDI politicians voted in favour and 25 rejected the bill¹⁶⁹. Therefore, the bill passed almost solely with the votes from the left-leaning groups within the parliament, which at the time held the majority. The right was far less divided over the same-sex marriage issue in France than the Conservative Party had been in the UK. The French right's position was much more conservative in nature on this issue and reflects the fact that there had been no conscious move towards social liberalism in France for the UMP or the UDI like there had been in the UK under David Cameron. Even the left had fewer politicians going against the party line than Labour or the Liberal Democrats in the UK, where, as mentioned previously, approximately 10 percent voted against same-sex marriage. In France, just 4 out of 285 votes (or less than 1.5 percent) from the government's *Groupe Socialiste, républicain et citoyen* (or SRC) opposed the bill¹⁷⁰. There was thus a much clearer direction for each political group within the parliament and a noticeable divergence in opinion across the political spectrum between the left and the right in France. Whereas there appeared to be a moral divide, particularly within the Conservative Party in the UK, this was minimal within French political parties, as almost all politicians voted in favour of their party's

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Assemblée Nationale, "Analyse du scrutin n° 511 : Deuxième séance du 23/04/2013," accessed June 12, 2019, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/scrutins/jo0511.asp#Groupesocialisterépublicainetcitoyen>.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

position. This surely had an impact on the reactions of the public towards same-sex marriage in France. The whole issue appeared to be much more contentious than in the UK with many more demonstrations across France, particularly among supporters of right-wing parties.

One UMP politician who did nevertheless vote in favour of the same-sex marriage bill was Franck Riester, in spite of his party's stance in opposition. As an openly homosexual politician, he announced his support for the bill in the debates leading up to the parliamentary vote¹⁷¹. In an interview with the French newspaper *Libération* in October 2012, several months after Hollande's election, Riester argued against the position invoked by other members of the right, who said that same-sex marriage would destabilise the Catholic Church. Riester emphasised *laïcité*, the fact that France is a secular state, meaning that religious and civil issues are kept separate. He stated, "Il y a le champ civil et le champ religieux. On n'est pas en train d'imposer à l'Église le mariage homosexuel ! [...] On ne peut pas revendiquer la laïcité seulement dans certains cas"¹⁷². Whilst the religious case was presented in both the UK and in France, the UK is not a secular state, so Riester's counter-argument could not have been valid in the UK. Furthermore, religion played a major role in the debate over same-sex marriage in France, even within parliament. Béraud tells us, "ce sont des élus qui, en auditionnant les représentants des cultes, leur donnent l'occasion de s'exprimer devant les commissions des lois leur désapprobation au sein même de l'arène parlementaire : à l'Assemblée nationale le 29 novembre 2012, puis au Sénat le 12 février 2013"¹⁷³. As such, in spite of the secular nature of the French state, religion was a key factor in political decision-making, even having a place in parliamentary debates. It appeared that on such a potentially controversial issue like this, religion was of major importance,

¹⁷¹ Jean-Yves Le Talec, "Sortir des placards de la République : Visages de l'homosexualité dans le monde politique français," *L'Homme & la Société* 189-190 (2013): 137.

¹⁷² Franck Riester, "Franck Riester (UMP) sur le mariage pour tous : 'On n'enlève aucun droit, on en donne à d'autres'," interview by Pascale Nivelles, *Libération*, October 10, 2012, https://www.liberation.fr/societe/2012/10/10/franck-riester-ump-a-propos-du-mariage-pour-tous-on-n-enleve-aucun-droit-on-en-donne-a-d-autres_852274.

¹⁷³ Céline Béraud, "Un front commun des religions contre le mariage pour tous ?" *Contemporary French Civilization* 39, no. 3 (2014): 339.

heavily involved in influencing both politicians and the general public. In spite of France's secular system, it ended up being unavoidable to talk about religion with regards to this subject.

Additionally, Jean-Yves Le Talec argues that there is a difference in the way that the public views LGBTQ politicians in France compared to other countries in Northern Europe in particular. For him, "la plupart des homosexuels visibles se retranchent derrière une frontière gardée étanche : d'un point de vue *people*, ils n'ont pas de vie privée du tout"¹⁷⁴. He identifies several 'out' gay politicians in France, who do not make reference to their private life. These include Frédéric Mitterand, Minister of Culture during Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency, who "[ne] parle pas de sa vie personnelle"¹⁷⁵ in an interview with *Gai Pied*. Another is Roger Karoutchi, who in 2009 declared, "Ma vie, elle n'a rien d'extravagante, rien d'extraordinaire, je vis avec un compagnon, point"¹⁷⁶. This contrasts with Northern European countries where "les hommes et femmes ouvertement homosexuel-le-s ont une 'vie privée' connue du public, d'abord parce que l'identité de leurs compagnes ou compagnons est souvent connue"¹⁷⁷. This gives rise to the view that the private life of LGBTQ politicians is a somewhat taboo subject in France. Le Talec claims that by allowing the media to divulge information about their private lives, LGBTQ politicians in other countries "encourage la légitimation d'une homosexualité donnée à voir dans l'espace public et confère une épaisseur et un vécu au *coming out* qui, en France, reste largement désincarné"¹⁷⁸. This is certainly a thought-provoking observation and indeed reveals an insight into the effect LGBTQ politicians in France have on public opinion of the LGBTQ community as a whole. By not reporting on the private lives of LGBTQ politicians, it does not normalise the process. If their private lives were discussed more, it would lead the public to realise that this is just one of many ways to live one's life. Instead, by failing to mention it in the media, it creates a distinction between heterosexual and LGBTQ politicians, and suggests that LGBTQ

¹⁷⁴ Le Talec, "Sortir des placards de la République," 142.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 132.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 141.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 142.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 142.

politicians may somehow be inferior, as their private lives are not worth discussing. It does not give them the legitimacy in the eyes of the public, and could lead to decreased tolerance towards LGBTQ people in general.

As such, whilst Hollande succeeded in passing the same-sex marriage and adoption bill relatively early on during his presidential term, it was not without difficulties and staunch opposition from the right. In an interview carried out after his presidency, he admitted, “Et si j’ai parfois eu un regret, c’est d’avoir laissé le débat durer trop longtemps, presque un an [...] au Parlement il y a eu des manœuvres d’obstruction et de retardement qui ont tendu les relations dans le pays plutôt que de les apaiser”¹⁷⁹. Indeed, not only was there hostility towards the proposed bill in parliament, but also across France amongst the general public, which took the form of *La Manif pour Tous*.

3.2. LA MANIF POUR TOUS

In France, there were widespread demonstrations against Hollande’s proposals to introduce same-sex marriage and adoption after his election. These protests went by the name *La Manif pour Tous*, in reference to Hollande’s proposed *mariage pour tous* (or ‘marriage for all’) bill. *La Manif pour Tous* was founded in late 2012 by a group of associations with the common aim of preventing the proposed legislation on same-sex marriage and adoption. Among the organisers of the movement was Frigide Barjot, “dont l’apparence ne la renvoie pas *a priori* vers l’intégrisme religieux”¹⁸⁰. This atypical leader arguably encouraged more people to join the movement, as it appeared not to have a typical religious aspect.

¹⁷⁹ François Hollande, “François Hollande et le mariage pour tous : ‘Si j’ai un regret, c’est d’avoir laissé le débat durer trop longtemps,” Interview by Assma Maad, and Stéphane Jourdain, *Buzzfeed News*, April 22, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/fr/assmamaad/francois-hollande-et-le-mariage-pour-tous-si-jai-un-regret>.

¹⁸⁰ Hollande, *Les leçons du pouvoir*, 238.

What began “au départ comme mouvement d’opposition au mariage pour tous”¹⁸¹ evolved over time. However, the organisation’s aims were to defend “avant tout les institutions du mariage et de la famille, perçues comme les fondements anthropologiques de la société, bien plus qu’il ne s’opposait à l’homosexualité”¹⁸². The aim was not to isolate the LGBTQ community by protesting against them, rather they wanted to protect traditional conservative family values. Indeed, the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) report in 2014 states that, “Demonstrators repeat that they are not homophobic but focus on the ‘best interest of the child’”¹⁸³. Nonetheless, the LGBTQ community did in truth feel under attack by the movement. In fact, in 2018, the MP for *La République en Marche*, Guillaume Chiche highlighted the homophobia within the movement, stating, “vous [la Manif pour Tous] véhiculez la haine crasse qu’est l’homophobie”¹⁸⁴. He stressed this by mentioning the use of homophobic language uttered by members of *La Manif pour Tous*, such as “le problème, c’est pas que les pédés”¹⁸⁵. As such, despite the claims that the movement was not homophobic, the use of discriminatory language like *pédé* (the French equivalent of *faggot*) towards the LGBTQ community from this prominent movement contributed to the normalisation of this type of language among the general public, and thus the acceptance and promotion of greater homophobia within society.

The protests had clear traces of French conservatism and were “idéologiquement marquées à droite, se présentant comme les garantes conservatrices d’une certaine représentation de la famille et du mariage”¹⁸⁶. Parallels can be drawn here with the UK, as the definition of family and marriage also created debates there, particularly within the Conservative Party. Fracchiolla goes on to write that “la manif

¹⁸¹ Béatrice Fracchiolla, “Violence verbale dans le discours des mouvements antagonistes : le cas de ‘Mariage pour tous’ et ‘Manif pour tous’,” *Argumentation et Analyse du Discours* 14 (2015): 4.

¹⁸² Mickaël Durand, “Une mobilisation ‘contre-nature’ ? Le cas d’homosexuels opposés au mariage pour tous en France,” *Genre, Sexualité & Société* 18 (2017): 2.

¹⁸³ Thomas Dumortier, and Maria Romanova, “Legal Study on Homophobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: France,” *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)* (2014): 39.

¹⁸⁴ Chiche, speech.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Fracchiolla, “Violence verbale dans le discours des mouvements antagonistes,” 5.

pour tous est identifiée par le Front National comme porteuse d'un discours UMP [...] qui chercherait à gommer le soutien, pourtant nombreux, des frontistes"¹⁸⁷. There was clear backing of *La Manif pour Tous* by FN supporters, although the centre-right UMP did not want to be associated with the far-right on this issue. They thus attempted to gain influence across the whole political right by dismissing the participation of FN supporters. The protests managed to unite people who believed in traditional family values and who feared the effect same-sex marriage would have on the vision of the French family, which is particularly entrenched in Catholic views. The movement was deeply entangled with the discourse from the Catholic Church in France, who stated that same-sex marriage would mark a "rupture de société"¹⁸⁸. The Catholic Church's outspoken position was not the only religious denomination to take this view. In fact, "la désapprobation du projet de loi dépasse le seul champ chrétien"¹⁸⁹. Included among those publicly speaking out against same-sex marriage were representants of Judaism and Islam, as well as the Protestant Church. Religion was thus a key factor in France, as in the UK, in taking a strong stance against the introduction of more rights such as marriage and adoption for LGBTQ people.

It is key to point out that there were some rather unexpected participants of *La Manif pour Tous* demonstrations. One such example was the Homovox group, who were a group of between 25 and 30 homosexuals protesting against the introduction of same-sex marriage. Although this is only a small group of demonstrators, they have often been overlooked and are thus key to understanding that *La Manif pour Tous* was not simply a homogenous group made up of homophobic individuals. It might be argued that this may seem "contre-nature"¹⁹⁰ for the Homovox group, yet they had their own strong reasons for not wishing to have the right to marry accorded to them. They had a similar aim to the other protestors in *La Manif pour Tous* movement, wanting to defend the institution of marriage and protect children. However, what makes this group stand out

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸⁸ Béraud, "Un front commun des religions," 337.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 338.

¹⁹⁰ Durand, "Une mobilisation 'contre-nature' ?" 1.

was “le rejet, non pas de leur homosexualité qu’ils assument bel et bien, mais du ‘milieu gay’, de l’activisme qui y est rattaché, et d’un certain style de vie qui peut s’y déployer”¹⁹¹. This denunciation of the gay circle comes from the fact that they do not identify as being defined by their sexuality. One member interviewed made a distinction between the word ‘homosexual’ and ‘gay’. For him, homosexual, “c’est ma sexualité, qui regarde que moi, voilà. En revanche gay, c’est habiter le Marais, de dire ‘putain je préfère que mon charcutier et mon boulanger soient gais parce qu’au moins ils vont me comprendre”¹⁹². He criticises the gay communities that have formed in areas like the Marais in Paris and rejects the need to belong to a wider community as a homosexual individual. Furthermore, the Homovox group was also standing up against LGBTQ militant groups, which were calling upon more rights for the LGBTQ community, to bring them in line with their heterosexual counterparts. Durand notes, “Dans leur représentation, le ‘milieu’ gai est contrôlé par ces militants et leurs organisations qui constituent ce qu’ils appellent ‘la LGBT’, un véritable lobby ‘devant qui les politiques sont à genou”¹⁹³. They believe that these militant groups do not represent the typical everyday “homos lambdas”¹⁹⁴, but instead have their own agenda to force their LGBTQ combat on all members of the community. For Homovox, this is unacceptable and underlines their reasons for joining *La Manif pour Tous* movement. It is interesting to note their belief that French politicians are bowing down to the demands of the LGBTQ organisations, even though there are growing levels of tolerance across French society in general. As such, there was a feeling that same-sex marriage could divide the LGBTQ community, as not everybody was in favour of being awarded these rights. The militant groups promoting LGBTQ equality were the loudest proponents of the new laws, yet they did not necessarily represent every member of the community. Homovox’s involvement in *La Manif pour Tous* underlines this.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹² *ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 7.

It can therefore be seen that the social movement *La Manif pour Tous* played a major role in the lead up to the proposals, something which did not have an equivalent in the UK. In spite of this, Hollande remained firm in his conviction to introduce the legislation for both same-sex marriage and adoption, which turned out to be the most controversial of the two. Indeed, Hollande recounts a meeting with representatives for the movement in his autobiography: “Curieuse équipe bâtie pour l’occasion qui m’interpelle tout sourire pour me demander de renoncer, si ce n’est à l’ensemble du projet, au moins à la possibilité pour les couples de même sexe d’obtenir le droit d’adopter. Je leur oppose un refus tout aussi courtois. Le mariage et l’adoption vont de pair, céder à leur demande n’aurait en rien apaisé la protestation. Tout recul aurait encouragé leur mouvement”¹⁹⁵. There was thus a sharp divide amongst the left and the right across the political spectrum.

3.3. FAR-RIGHT DISCOURSE IN FRANCE

Much like the far-right discourse in the UK, the French far-right also took a strong position against same-sex marriage and adoption. The main far-right party in France is the *Rassemblement National* (or RN), which was known by the name *Front National* (or FN) until June 2018. The RN is headed by Marine Le Pen, who took over as leader from her father Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2011, just one year before the 2012 presidential elections, during which the debate about same-sex marriage began to gain momentum.

Whilst the far-right has had limited success in national parliamentary elections in the UK, the FN, and subsequently the RN, have garnered increasing levels of support in France, especially in presidential and European elections. In the past decade, the FN/RN has consistently produced one of the best-performing candidates in presidential elections. In the 2012 presidential elections, Marine Le Pen was eliminated after the first round of voting in third place behind François Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy with

¹⁹⁵ Hollande, *Les leçons du pouvoir*, 238-239.

almost 18 percent¹⁹⁶. This was the FN's best result to date in the first round, beating the percentage gained by her father in 2002, although he managed to reach the run-off against Jacques Chirac in the second round¹⁹⁷. However, Le Pen managed to better that in 2017 by reaching the second round with a "staggering, historic high"¹⁹⁸. In the first round, she was second, less than three percentage points away from Emmanuel Macron (21.3 percent). In the run-off, Le Pen won over 10 million votes; however, this represented just 33.9 percent, meaning the gap to Macron widened significantly¹⁹⁹. Nonetheless, in the recent 2019 EU elections, France (the RN) was one of three countries, where the far-right won the most seats in the European parliament, alongside Italy (*Lega Nord*) and the UK (Farage's Brexit Party)²⁰⁰. Le Pen and the FN/RN's success is no longer a surprise for the French public, and indeed, the 2017 presidential result "was not met by the shock and mass street protests that greeted her father's reaching the final in 2002"²⁰¹. All this therefore exposes a substantial level of growing support for the far-right in France and underlines the major, wide-reaching impact of far-right discourse on the French public. As such, far-right discourse cannot be discounted when considering the role of political discourse surrounding the LGBTQ issue in France because of the great numbers of followers of this particular political party. Even within the LGBTQ community, support for Le Pen is high, and one poll even showed LGBTQ support was greater than the overall public. Indeed, "support for the FN climbed to 16.5 percent among gay and lesbian respondents in November 2016, compared to 14.5 percent in the general population"²⁰². This is perhaps surprising given the party's positions on LGBTQ issues, yet it underlines the power and the intelligent strategy of

¹⁹⁶ Hugh Schofield, "Marine Le Pen: Is France's National Front Leader Far-Right?" *BBC News*, March 14, 2017, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/marine_le_pen.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Angelique Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen Defeated but France's Far Right is Far from Finished," *The Guardian*, May 7, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/07/marine-le-pen-defeated-front-national-far-from-finished>.

¹⁹⁹ France 24, "French Presidential Election 2017 Results – 2nd Round," *France 24*, accessed June 14, 2019, <http://graphics.france24.com/results-second-round-french-presidential-election-2017/>.

²⁰⁰ Matthew Karnitschnig, "Populist Tide Rises but Fails to Flood EU," *Politico EU*, May 27, 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/populist-tide-rises-but-no-flood-eu-elections-2019/>.

²⁰¹ Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen Defeated".

²⁰² Scott Siegel, "'Friend or Foe? The LGBT Community in the Eyes of Right-Wing Populism,'" *Europe Now*, July 6, 2017, <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2017/07/05/friend-or-foe-the-lgbt-community-in-the-eyes-of-right-wing-populism/>.

the far-right's discourse in France to involve everyone, even those who appear to be discriminated against.

Le Pen explicitly opposed same-sex marriage and adoption in her 2012 election campaign. In her manifesto, she stated, "Nous nous opposerons donc à toute demande de création d'un mariage homosexuel et/ou d'une adoption par des couples homosexuels"²⁰³. What instantly stands out when compared to Hollande's 2012 manifesto, apart from the difference in political position, is the way Le Pen refers to same-sex marriage. Hollande's use of the formulation *mariage pour tous* is inclusive to all members of the public, regardless of their sexuality. It thus favours a more tolerant approach to the LGBTQ community. Meanwhile, Le Pen's employment of the term *mariage homosexuel* immediately creates a distinction between marriage for homosexual and heterosexual couples, thus revealing less acceptance and an exclusion of the LGBTQ community. Le Pen's unequivocal rejection of LGBTQ rights to marry and adopt therefore has an effect on the attitudes of her voters, who are becoming increasingly numerous across France, but especially in certain regions like Hauts-de-France and Grand Est in the North East and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur in the South East of the country. As such, there is the potential for anti-LGBTQ positions to grow because of Le Pen's rhetoric on this issue.

Le Pen's policy on same-sex marriage and adoption was situated under the heading "Protéger et valoriser la famille"²⁰⁴. This argument about the composition of a family was also raised by the campaigners of *La Manif pour Tous* following the presidential elections. As such, there is certainly a link between the claims made by Le Pen and the movement that incited thousands of people to take to the streets to protest against same-sex marriage and adoption. Le Pen's manifesto specifies that family is an "institution irremplaçable, la famille représente le caractère central de la société, la

²⁰³ Marine Le Pen, "Programme de Mme Marine Le Pen, candidate du Front national à l'élection présidentielle de 2012, intitulé : 'Mon projet, pour la France et les Français' : le 14 janvier 2012," *Vie-Publique.fr*, January 14, 2012, <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/123000632.html>.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

famille doit se fonder exclusivement sur l'union d'un homme et d'une femme et accueillir des enfants nés d'un père et d'une mère"²⁰⁵. This rejection of all other types of family, including single-parent families, creates a hierarchy, which was also noted in the UK. Even after the legislation was passed, Le Pen continued to defend her idea of the family in the lead up to the 2017 presidential elections. In a television interview on France 2, she said, "Je suis contre le mariage [homosexuel] tout simplement parce que précisément je souhaite que la filiation reste le fait d'un papa et d'une maman"²⁰⁶. As such, in spite of the new legislation, Le Pen's argument remained the same and her position remained clear that she would revoke the law if she were elected in 2017. This strong position encouraged her supporters to follow her ideals and thus contributed to a rising homophobia in society. By repeatedly speaking against the LGBTQ community, it encouraged a certain level of hatred towards and distrust of LGBTQ people.

In a similar vein to Nigel Farage and UKIP in the UK, Le Pen avoided a particularly extreme stance on the LGBTQ issue. Like Farage, Le Pen backed the right for LGBTQ individuals to have access to PACS ceremonies. Her 2012 manifesto stated that "le PACS apporte une solution suffisante et ne sera pas remis en cause"²⁰⁷ in an effort to appeal to a wider public, which had by 2012 largely accepted PACS for same-sex couples. By 2017, although Le Pen's position on same-sex marriage remained unchanged, her position on PACS had evolved: "Je pense qu'il faut qu'il y ait une union civile, c'est-à-dire une amélioration du PACS"²⁰⁸. This "union civile (PACS amélioré) qui viendra remplacer les dispositions de la loi Taubira [*mariage pour tous*]"²⁰⁹ also appeared in written form as the 87th point in her 2017 presidential manifesto. Thus, by favouring some kind of civil union for LGBTQ couples, Le Pen moved away from a hard-line homophobic position, which blocks all LGBTQ rights. Siegel points out that, "Because

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen supprimera le Mariage pour Tous si elle est élue (F2, 09/02/2017, 22h)," interview, *L'Émission Politique*, France 2, February 9, 2017, audio, 00:41, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnPM1rj9tZo>.

²⁰⁷ Le Pen, "Programme de Mme Marine Le Pen".

²⁰⁸ Le Pen, interview.

²⁰⁹ Marine Le Pen, "144 Engagements Présidentiels : Marine 2017," *Rassemblement National*, accessed June 14, 2019, <https://rassemblementnational.fr/pdf/144-engagements.pdf>.

homosexuality and equal treatment for gays and lesbians are more socially acceptable, RWP [right-wing populist] parties in Western Europe try to avoid appearing as unacceptable or outside the mainstream”²¹⁰. It thus underlines the trend of far-right parties across Europe, who appear to be less homophobic because of their strategy to accept certain rights in order not to isolate themselves from overriding general opinion. Yet, the effect remains that by not supporting full equality, they contribute to increased levels of distrust towards LGBTQ people within wider society.

Le Pen attempted to avoid being potentially associated with homophobia by continuing to employ this strategy of distancing herself from extreme views. This can be seen strikingly through her refusal to join *La Manif pour Tous* movement²¹¹. Whilst the movement was essentially associated with the right, Le Pen decided not to be a part of it. Her openness to LGBTQ individuals has also been underlined by the fact that “she has several gay advisors, notably Florian Philippot”²¹². Le Pen was also very careful “de ne se prononcer que très rarement sur ces sujets”²¹³. As such, when she did discuss LGBTQ matters, it carried greater weight because it was not repeated over and over. Yet, some within the party felt that LGBTQ rights were no longer a key policy for them, pointing out other issues that took precedent instead. Indeed, “Sébastien Chenu, the founder of GayLib and former Socialist, joined the FN and argued that same-sex marriage and gay rights were no longer an important issue for the FN. Instead, immigrants and Muslims are to blame for French society becoming ‘less free, and when one is gay, one has very much to lose,’ if Islamic fundamentalism takes a hold in French areas”²¹⁴. Consequently, they appear to show support for the LGBTQ cause by pointing out that Muslim immigrants are a danger to the LGBTQ community. This shows the FN’s adaptability to the situation, as LGBTQ rights were no longer on the political agenda as much as immigration after the 2015 European migrant crisis.

²¹⁰ Siegel, “Friend or Foe?”.

²¹¹ Schofield, “Marine Le Pen”.

²¹² *ibid.*

²¹³ Julie Baret, “Abrogation du mariage pour tous : Marion Maréchal-Le Pen enfonce le clou,” *Têtu*, May 2, 2017, <https://tetu.com/2017/05/02/marion-marechal-le-pen-sassurera-de-labrogation-du-mariage-pour-tous/>.

²¹⁴ Siegel, “Friend or Foe?”.

Nevertheless, Siegel argues that “open homophobia was also tolerated within the party”²¹⁵. Within the far-right party, there were members who did join *La Manif pour Tous* protests, including Le Pen’s niece, the outspoken Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, who even made a speech during *La Manif pour Tous* in October 2016. Furthermore, during a visit to Italy in 2016, Maréchal-Le Pen “qualifiait mariage pour tous, mères porteuses et études de genre de ‘délires et fantasmes LGBT’”²¹⁶. This harder approach to LGBTQ matters sometimes put her at odds with her aunt, who did not want to isolate the LGBTQ community entirely by calling for another form of recognised union for same-sex partners. Yet, there was no official rebuttal of Maréchal-Le Pen’s discourse, leading many to believe that this was an acceptable opinion to have within the party, which thus impacted on behaviours within the general public by providing a high-profile example of an outspoken, homophobic politician.

The far-right in France are thus significant and influential, especially given the good performances in presidential and European elections in the last decade. As such, by offering a position which does not grant full equality to LGBTQ couples through marriage and adoption, it sows divisions within society and encourages anti-LGBTQ sentiments. Although Marine Le Pen officially takes an anti-homophobia stance, other members of her party are more outspoken in their critiques of the LGBTQ community, notably her niece Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, which thus impacts on public perception of LGBTQ people. When influential politicians are speaking out against LGBTQ rights, whether it is in an outwardly homophobic manner, or in a more covert way, it creates tensions within the public between LGBTQ people and followers of the party, as the elite discourse is promoting the fact that LGBTQ are inferior. As such, the far-right has a major role to play in affecting public opinion in France.

It has thus been argued in this chapter that the centre-right and the far-right have played a key role in France in opposition to LGBTQ rights. In particular, *La Manif*

²¹⁵ *ibid.*

²¹⁶ Baret, “Abrogation du mariage pour tous”.

pour Tous movement garnered much media and political attention in its promotion of traditional family values and its rejection of same-sex marriage and adoption. However, despite their best attempts to halt proceedings, François Hollande successfully managed to pass the legislation during his presidential term with almost the full support of his *Parti Socialiste*. Yet, the parliamentary split between the left and the right was highly visible, and it reflected a divided society.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the following research question has been asked: *To what extent have perceptions of the LGBTQ movement in the UK and France been influenced by politics and political discourse in different ways in the twenty-first century?* It has been argued that the political right-wing has played a major role in speaking out against same-sex marriage, although the Conservative Party in the UK was more divided than the centre-right UMP in France. Through the responses of the centre-right and far-right parties in both countries, it has encouraged debate about whether LGBTQ rights should be tolerated, and this has therefore had an impact on public attitudes. This effect was particularly noticeable in France, with the nationwide *La Manif pour Tous*. Consequently, negative political discourse has contributed to increased levels of violence and discrimination against LGBTQ people in recent years.

The importance of politics and political discourse in shaping perceptions of LGBTQ matters is thus evident in both France and the UK. Of course, both countries have undergone major developments in LGBTQ legislation in the past fifteen to twenty years, introducing same-sex registered partnerships (civil partnerships in the UK and PACS in France), same-sex marriage (with the exception of Northern Ireland), and same-sex adoption. This has been coupled with growing levels of tolerance towards LGBTQ people among people of all ages, social backgrounds, religions and political partisanship. Even in Northern Ireland, where same-sex marriage has yet to be introduced, support for it has increased significantly. However, somewhat paradoxically, homophobic crimes and anti-LGBTQ discrimination have also increased in recent years in both countries, with particular spikes in hate crimes occurring after same-sex marriage was introduced, which can in part be explained by greater visibility of the LGBTQ question in society.

If we compare the mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties in the UK and France, there are indeed similarities, but also differences. In both countries, the greatest support for LGBTQ rights came from the centre-left parties (Labour in the UK and the

Parti Socialiste in France). However, the centre-right was far more divided over same-sex marriage in the UK, as the Conservative Party was torn between David Cameron's social liberals and the party's social traditionalists. If we compare with France's centre-right, the UMP took a much firmer stance against same-sex marriage and adoption, with just a few MPs rebelling against the party line. Furthermore, it is important to note the contrasting arguments used by the governments of both countries when debating same-sex marriage. France adopted a more conventional liberal line of argumentation, much in line with the national motto *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, whilst the UK government suggested that it would strengthen the institution of marriage, in order to convince the Conservative Party members to back the bill. This was adapted to the audience whose support was required.

The far-right has an important function in both the UK and France. However, it is perhaps in France, where the effect of far-right political discourse is felt the most strongly. This is due to the much greater number of voters for the *Front National/Rassemblement National* in French national presidential elections compared to UKIP or the BNP in UK general elections. Whilst UKIP and Nigel Farage's subsequent Brexit Party have performed well in European elections in the past decade, this has more to do with rising Euroscepticism in the UK than their policy on LGBTQ rights. On the other hand, the French vote for Marine Le Pen in large numbers in both national and European elections, and as such when she or other members of her party give their opinion on LGBTQ matters, greater weight is given to it. Although "il n'est cependant plus possible d'argumenter [l']opposition par un discours ouvertement discriminatoire"²¹⁷, this does not stop these parties from finding other means to declare anti-LGBTQ rhetoric in their political discourse.

The reaction of the public in the two countries must also not be forgotten. Although there were certainly debates about proposed legislation on same-sex marriage in the UK, it did not dominate society in the same way as in France, where

²¹⁷ Le Talec, "Sortir des placards de la République," 136.

mass protests took place across the country. *La Manif pour Tous* movement was a significant actor, with leaders even being invited to speak with President François Hollande at the Elysée Palace, although this had no impact on the final decision taken by the government. However, we must not forget that the French are more likely to take to the streets over social issues like this than the British. Nonetheless, it still served to show the underlying homophobia among the general public in France, which was not visible in survey results.

This simmering homophobia among the public is quite clearly a growing issue, and transphobia has become a key topic worthy of discussion in recent years too. Thanks to the rise in anti-LGBTQ political rhetoric from certain sectors of the political spectrum in response to the increased legal rights accorded to LGBTQ people, homophobia is also beginning to increase, in spite of official figures revealing more tolerance. Le Talec wrote, “ce n’est plus l’homosexualité qui pose problème, mais bien l’homophobie”²¹⁸, arguing that nowadays legislation fights against homophobic acts rather than homosexual acts. Yet, I suggest that we can reuse this quotation to support the idea that today although homosexuality is largely accepted by most in the UK and France, statistics show that homophobia poses a great problem within our society. Homophobia, and no longer homosexuality, is a contemporary societal issue. The struggle for equality for LGBTQ people, not just in terms of legal rights, but rather in terms of complete acceptance without any form of discrimination, is far from over, much like the fights for equality based on gender and race.

This thesis has focused on political discourse and its impact on the British and French public. Yet, as it has been previously mentioned, religion was an important factor too, as religious arguments were used to defend traditional family values. What’s more, the Protestant and Catholic Churches, as well as other religions, spoke out against same-sex marriage and adoption. Another area that has not been discussed here, but that would also be interesting to analyse in further research, is the role played by the media

²¹⁸ *ibid.*, 136.

when reporting on LGBTQ matters, as the media can heavily influence public attitudes depending on how the issue is presented. These could both be potential future fields of research.

To conclude, if Europe continues along its path towards populism, it could mark a negative turning point for the LGBTQ community. Although France and the UK have both flirted with populism, with Marine Le Pen reaching the second round of the 2017 presidential elections in France, and the votes for UKIP and the Brexit Party in 2014 and 2019 European elections in the UK and the Leave vote in the 2016 Brexit referendum, the governments in both countries have managed to withhold the rise of populists, unlike some other European states. France and the UK have both been heralded as positive models of democracy. However, if a populist party does manage to come to power in France or the UK, the fear of the other could arise once more and homophobia could increase dramatically.

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