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ARTICLE

Family Politics in Contemporary Fascist Propaganda

Multimodal Entanglements of National Socialist Ideals, Populist Rhetoric, and Image Bank Semiotics

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Abstract: *This article delves into a recurring dilemma facing contemporary fascist movements: how to communicate ideological purity to its hardcore base and at the same time appeal to imagined new voters and recruits? By analyzing how the most prominent fascist movement in Sweden, the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), publicly communicates its ideas about family issues and the role of women, we shed light on the semiotic work done by the far right to merge common social conservative tropes with an extremist discourse. Using the tools of social semiotics and multimodal critical discourse studies, the article shows how the NRM uses a range of semiotic resources as it interweaves mainstream conservative discourses about the nature of women and men, recognizable to a broader public (not least to supporters of the Swedish right-wing populist party, the Sweden Democrats), with Nazi keywords appealing to ideological in-groups. The analysis also reveals how the NRM uses image bank semiotics, which connote values associated with commercial lifestyle media and genres, as they communicate their views on family issues. In its use of such imagery, the NRM simultaneously draws on the fascist myth of palingenesis. Using gender and family politics as an empirical focal point, the article illustrates that linguistic and semiotic methods provide powerful tools to scrutinize the efforts of contemporary fascist movements to present themselves as ideologically pure and at the same time speak to a broader audience of potential voters and recruits.*

Keywords: Right-wing extremism, fascism, family politics, multimodal discourse analysis, social semiotics, recontextualization, stock images

In recent years, radical nationalist movements in Europe and the Global North have become increasingly influential. Sweden is no exception (Westberg 2021; Westberg and Årman 2019; Expo 2023). Extremist right-wing groups continue to make their

presence known by carrying out violent acts and protests in public spaces. In tandem with these developments on the far right, the more mainstream right-wing populist party Sverigedemokraterna (the Sweden Democrats, SD), with its historical roots in fascism and neo-Nazi movements from the 1990s (Ekman and Poohl 2010), gained significant electoral success in the 2022 national election, winning 20.54 percent of the vote share.

In political science, researchers have traditionally characterized the difference between radical nationalist groups in Europe by categorizing them as either "extreme right" or "radical right" (e.g., Mudde 2000). The first category signifies groups that work outside the democratic system, while the second category is reserved for those political groups that try to gain political influence by running in public elections. However, one distinct trend in Sweden is that the gap between these types of political actors is closing (Expo 2023). Strengthened by its electoral success, the right-wing populist party SD has sharpened its rhetoric, making it more similar to extremist groups. On the other side of the spectrum, extremist groups like Nordiska Motståndsrörelsen (the Nordic Resistance Movement, NRM) have attempted to reach a broader audience with their propaganda; the NRM in fact contested the 2022 election, and they strategically targeted those regions in Sweden where the electoral support for SD is significant.

This trend creates new dynamics between groups in the (radical) nationalist environment but also new tensions within such organizations. As will be described in more detail below, the decision to run in the election caused internal fragmentation in the NRM as some supporters found the new strategy to be too much of a departure from the group's revolutionary agenda. This demonstrates that changes in strategy and rhetoric create a dilemma for extreme right organizations that are seeking to reach a broader audience of potential voters and future supporters. As highlighted by Billig (1978), such groups need to find a way to appeal to both ideological insiders and a broader public that is not (yet) invested in National Socialist ideology. Using Richardson's (2017) terms, NRM rhetoric needs to balance *esoteric* appeals targeting the radical cadres within the organization with *exoteric* appeals aimed at building a mass movement. This dilemma, and the way the NRM semiotically manages it, is the focus of this article.[1]

Using the NRM as a case study, the article aims to explore the semiotic work that contemporary extreme right groups do when communicating ideological purity while simultaneously striving to appeal to new voters and recruits. The article explores how such semiotic work entangles National Socialist rhetoric with populist rhetoric, as well as with mainstream lifestyle-oriented communication, through analyzing the coarticulation in extremist propaganda of National Socialist discourse, common social

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conservative tropes on gender roles, and neoliberal aesthetics. The empirical focus of our analysis is the NRM's thematization of the family. This is partly motivated by the fact that this is a key site in which esoteric and exoteric appeals overlap. This empirical focus is also an attempt to enter into dialog with research that uses gender as a lens to study contemporary fascist discourse (Burnett and Richardson 2022).

In the scholarly literature, radical nationalism and fascism are repeatedly characterized in terms of hypermasculinity, misogyny, and male bravery. Such characterizations are associated with the self-image of fascist movements, which portray themselves as among the heroic few destined to save their nation from decay, despair, and humiliation, and as defenders of the nation as a racially demarcated community. This idea unifies contemporary radical nationalism across the globe (Miller-Idriss 2017; Richardson 2017; Kølvraa 2019; Westberg 2021; Burnett 2022) but is also consistent with the imaginaries of historical Nazism (Theweleit 1987, 1989) and propagandistic images of fascist leaders as an incarnation of manliness and heroic courage (see Kershaw 1987).

However, as researchers have pointed out (e.g., Burnett and Richardson 2022; Blee 1996; Miller-Idriss and Pilkington 2019), issues of gender in fascist discourse are not confined to images of hypermasculinity. Burnett and Richardson (2022) argue that sex, sexuality, femininity, and fecundity are equally central to historical and contemporary fascist discourse and that such themes are fruitful entry points in the study of continuities and discontinuities in the articulation of fascist ideology. Along the same vein, Miller-Idriss and Pilkington (2019) call for research that nuances our understanding of the role that gender and femininity play in contemporary fascist movements. In her seminal work on the role of women and notions of feminitity in the Third Reich, Koonz (1988) demonstrates that women did not merely survive in silence but actively carved out a feminine *Lebensraum* that contributed to the stability of Hitler's regime. In a similar vein, Gottlieb (2002) demonstrates that women engaged in the British Union of Fascists during the 1930s conceived of their political engagement as empowering and emancipating. Building on such insights, this article continues the exploration of fascism as a gendered ideology. The empirical focus of the article allows us to study how the NRM drew on gendered ideals beyond hypermasculinity as it thematized family issues in texts that were distributed in connection with the Swedish general election in 2022. More specifically, the analysis will show how the NRM reinvents family issues as way of practicing fascism by weaving three intertextual threads together: historical National Socialist ideas about the white race; far-right populist ideas about gender; and finally, contemporary lifestyle ideals that are associated with the commodification of family relations. Such an analysis enables us to highlight how historical fascist tropes—such as the myth of *palingenesis*, the idea that a new fascist civilization will rise from the ashes of contemporary society—find new expressions in contemporary National Socialist discourse. *Palingenesis* means "rebirth from the ashes" (Richardson 2017, 28) and comes with a perceived need for a revolutionary overthrow of the social order.

In addition to the empirical aim of this article, we also set out to demonstrate how a careful analysis of multimodal texts provides a sound basis for critical knowledge of

the discursive production of extremist ideology (Forchtner 2023). To this end, we will demonstrate how a restricted set of powerful tools and methods from social semiotics (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; Van Leeuwen 2005) and multimodal critical discourse studies (Machin and Mayr 2012; Machin 2016) can be applied to conducting careful and detailed analyses. Most notably, we apply the concept of *recontextualization* (Wodak and Fairclough 2010) to highlight the intertextual facets of meaning making. Before we go about this, we outline the context of the NRM in the first section. In connection with this, we also give a more thorough introduction to the dataset. We then introduce the theoretical foundations, concepts, and methods we use to conduct our multimodal analysis, which is presented in the subsequent sections. Lastly, we reflect on the article's empirical and methodological contributions.

Fascism, a Mass Base, and the Role of the Family: The Case of the NRM

The NRM is the most prominent radical nationalist movement in Sweden and the Nordic countries (Vergara 2018). It was founded through a merger of three neo-Nazi and fascist organizations in the 1990s, namely Vitt Ariskt Motstånd (White Aryan Resistance), the journal *Folktribunalen* (The People's Tribunal), and Nationell Ungdom (National Youth) (Lööw 2015; Mattsson 2018). The organization has branches in Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland, and the Swedish branch operates as the organization's leading node. Although fascist parties have never dominated elected governments in the Nordic countries, fascist organizations have played an active part in the political history of the region. The NRM exemplifies the success of inter-Nordic collaboration between fascist movements, a strategy aimed at revitalizing fascism in the postwar era (Karcher and Lundström 2022). The NRM explicitly regards Hitler as its ideological inspiration and puts antisemitism at the core of its ideological beliefs. Its overall political aim is to bring down the democracies of the Nordic countries and replace them with a single National Socialist state comprising all the Nordic countries. Along with being explicitly antisemitic, the NRM identifies capitalism, feminism, communism, LGBTQ communities, and multiculturalism as its ideological enemies. Like other fascist movements (see Richardson 2017; Griffin 1993), it strongly believes that its ideological enemies and the current societal order need to be combated with violence. Tellingly, the movement proudly reports on its website the acts of violence that are perpetrated by its members against the NRM's ideological enemies, as well as on the ensuing legal processes. All in all, the NRM's agenda is to crush democracy and build a new, utopian fascist-led state on the ruins of the current societal order. This phoenix-like ideological vision makes the NRM consistent with the definition of fascism as "a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism" (Griffin 1993, 24).

The NRM strives to attract a broader mass of supporters. To become a popular movement or *folkrörelse* (see Griffin 1993; Mosse 1980), it ran in the Swedish general elections in 2018 and again in 2022. This tactic caused internal fragmentation. Several

prominent members (including the former leader) perceived this as a departure from the movement's radical nationalist and revolutionary agenda, and they have consequently organized a breakaway faction aiming to stay true to the ideals of fanatical violence and revolution, rather than striving to become a mass-based popular movement (Expo 2019).

In connection with the Swedish general election in 2022, the NRM employed a new strategy to achieve electoral success: it campaigned in Swedish regions in which support for the SD is particularly strong.[2] The SD, for its part, packages its politics as value-conservative but ethno-pluralist and is thus not nearly as openly extreme as the NRM (Lodenius 2022; Mulinari 2016; Ekman and Poohl 2010). On the NRM's official website (motståndsrörelsen.se), its leader commented on this strategy as follows:

> What we can accomplish in the Sweden Democrats' strongest region in the entire country, Örkelljunga, will also be really interesting to witness. You would think that some people would be tired of its [SD's] tameness and accommodation by now. (Vad vi kan åstadkomma i Sverigedemokraternas starkaste ort i hela landet, Örkelljunga, ska också blir riktigt intressant att skåda. Några stycken tänker man ju sig borde vara trötta på deras tamhet och anpassning vid detta laget.) (Lindberg 2022)[3]

The strategy to recruit voters and sympathies in regions in which the SD has gained electoral success puts the NRM in a communications dilemma, namely, "the conflict between ideological purity and the desire for a mass basis" (Billig 1978, 124). This is also explicitly addressed in the NRM's party program:

> The result is a very thoroughly prepared party program in which literally every word has been scrutinized. . . . Throughout the process, we have set several goals that we have been working toward. One of these goals is to make the program easy to understand, explaining much of what we want to achieve but doing so in a concise and pithy way. *Our aim has been that each sentence should be understood by all, but at the same time to have a deeper meaning that reveals an underlying vision.* (Resultatet är ett mycket grundligt utarbetat partiprogram där bokstavligen talat varje ord i det har synats. . . . Under processens gång har vi satt upp ett antal mål som vi strävat mot. Ett av dessa mål är att göra programmet lättfattligt där vi förklarar mycket av det vi vill åstadkomma men ändå gör det på ett koncist och kärnfullt sätt.

2 This strategy was clearly not an effective one, as their votes declined from 2,016 in 2016 to 947 in 2022 (Expo 2022).

3 All translations from Swedish into English are by the authors.

> *Vi har strävat efter att varje mening ska förstås av alla men samtidigt ha en djupare innebörd som avslöjar en bakomliggande vision*.) (Vejdeland 2020, emphasis added)

In the excerpt, the NRM addresses its need to show hard-line insiders that it is staying true to its revolutionary Nazi ideals while also using a more mainstream rhetoric that appeals to potential recruits and voters who are not already invested in National Socialist ideology. Billig (1978, 24) has described how this can be managed by political organizations through "the partial concealment of the ideology and the specific creation of propaganda designed for mass circulation, which may not accurately reflect the demands of the ideology's inner logic." This concealment of ideology and the reinvention of symbols and visual expressions is particularly important in contexts in which National Socialist organizations are banned. For example, Miller-Idriss (2017) has shown how neo-Nazis in Germany, where it is illegal to be a member of a National Socialist organization and display its symbols, invent new symbols to convey their political standpoints and to "say the unsayable" (see Wodak 2015, 98–110). Recent studies on antisemitic content online show that these expressions are not coded to avoid legal repercussions but rather to circumvent the algorithms designed to prevent the spread of hate speech in various social media (Amadeu Antonio Foundation et al. 2021; Becker and Troschke 2022; Hübscher and Von Mering 2022). Tellingly, on social media without content management algorithms, antisemitism thrives and is expressed in more open and less coded ways

In Sweden, National Socialist organizations and symbols have not been banned. The NRM's main symbol, for example, the Tyr rune, which was historically used by the Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth) and the paramilitary Sturmabteilung (Stormtroopers, SA) in Nazi Germany, is legal. The need for the NRM to code or cipher its political propaganda might thus seem to be less urgent. The organization does indeed straightforwardly and publicly describe its National Socialist ideology. At the same time, the NRM also makes use of expressions in its propaganda that are not necessarily interpreted as signifiers of National Socialism. For those readers with core-ideological knowledge, however, these can play the role of insider identification. The basic dilemma highlighted by Billig (1978) is still highly relevant for the NRM's attempts to build a broader base and is also explicitly echoed by the metadiscourse in the party program, which is crafted with a wider audience in mind while simultaneously communicating the movement's ideological depth and purity.

The coexistence of a hard-line National Socialist discourse with more populist tropes and mainstream aesthetics becomes particularly salient when the NRM communicates its family politics. However, this article's focus on family politics is not simply empirically motivated. As mentioned above, there is a need for more scholarly work that focuses on the gendered discourse of the extreme right and that goes beyond a focus on masculinity. Writing on the NRM, Askanius (2021, 14) argues for a "close-up

and sustained qualitative inquiry which allows us to address the complexities involved in the intricate relationship between gender and right-wing extremism."

Research on both historical and contemporary fascism reveals that family issues are ideologically associated with ideas about the survival of the white race, and that the role of women is primarily confined to being responsible for bearing "pure-bred" children (Durham 1998). This image is both confirmed and problematized in research focusing on what women who engage in radical nationalist movements actually do. For example, Askanius (2021) reveals that female members of the NRM are ascribed a position that is defined by men and confined by arguments claiming that women are biologically destined to engage in childcare and homemaking. In addition to this, Askanius (2021, 5) observes that "the discourses produced by these women—as social media influencers, podcast hosts, and lifestyle columnists—are saturated by ideas of female empowerment, sisterhood, the importance of women in the reproduction of the 'white race' and the emancipative powers of being part of the movement on a personal level for women." The position of a female NRM member is thus shaped by a mixture of internalized misogyny and female empowerment (see Gottlieb 2002; Koonz 1988). In this vein, we argue that it is insufficient to merely confirm that misogynist and gender-conservative discourses underpin the way family issues are represented in the NRM's public propaganda. Rooted in the objective of multimodal critical discourse studies, we argue it is crucial to pay close attention to *how* ideas regarding family issues are semiotically manifested in propaganda because it permits a heightened understanding of how gendered issues are negotiated in the processes of reinventing fascism as a contemporary ideology (see Richardson 2017; Westberg 2021).

In terms of data, we investigate through analysis of a two-part corpus how the NRM merges different semiotic resources to speak both to ideological insiders and to a broader audience. Firstly, we analyze how family issues are presented in the NRM's 2017 party program *Vår väg: ny politik för en ny tid* (Our way: New politics for a new time).[4] The choice to use the party program as data is motivated by the NRM's recurring use of the text in different campaigns and online communication during the election period. For the NRM, its website serves as the main channel of public communication. During the election campaign, the party program was referenced as a clickable link whenever the NRM published online texts on its political vision, including family matters. Additionally, when visiting the permanent tab "Ideology and Politics" on the website, one finds that the party program is consistently referred to as the source document, along with a link for viewers who want to read more. Accordingly, the party program can be characterized as a discourse-formative text that shapes NRM's overall public communication (see Reisigl and Wodak 2016 on criteria for choosing relevant data for critical discourse analysis).

4 See *Vår väg: ny politik för en ny tid* (Grängesberg, Sweden: Nordfront Förlag, 2017), https://xn--motstndsrrelsen-llb70a.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/V%C3%A5r-v%C3%A4g2017-03.pdf.

Figure 1 shows the front cover and table of contents of the party program. The party program covers a total of sixty written pages with no images or illustrations, apart from the front cover and the back, which is a simple variation on the front. In our analysis, we conducted detailed and systematic analysis of the section "Family politics and the role of the woman" (pp. 40–42). While the findings presented below draw on the analysis of the full section, we cite only the relevant text fragments that illustrate our analysis. The second part of our corpus is what the NRM terms "online propaganda," that is, digital leaflet-like texts that its members and sympathizers are encouraged to distribute online. These multimodal texts are available on the NRM's website under the tab "Online Propaganda."[5]

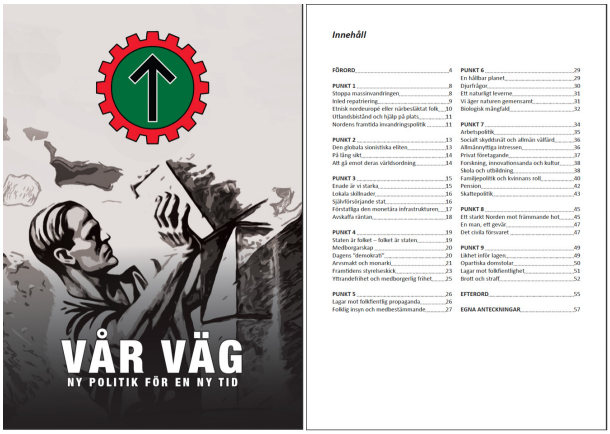

Figure 1. The cover and table of contents of the NRM's party platform. Source: note 4.

Under this tab, sixty-five multimodal propaganda texts are provided. Out of these, we have singled out the ones dealing with family matters, leaving us with twelve texts on which detailed and systematic semiotic analysis has been conducted. The findings presented in the results section are based on these twelve texts, though we present only four exemplary cases. An example of the texts analyzed in detail in the results section is presented in figure 2. The following section presents the tools and methods we apply to analyze the written parts of the party program and the semiotic resources in the NRM's online propaganda.

5 "Nätpropaganda," Nordiska Motståndsrörelsen, updated October 26, 2023, https://xn--motstndsrrelsen-llb70a.se/natpropaganda/.

Figure 2. An example of the NRM's online propaganda. Source: note 5.

Theoretical Vantage Points and Methodological Tools: Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Recontextualization

As stated above, one of the aims of this article is to illustrate how the perspectives and tools found in social semiotics (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; Van Leeuwen 2005) and multimodal critical discourse studies (Machin and Mayr 2012; Machin 2016) can be useful for analyzing gender in contemporary far-right discourse. A basic tenet of social semiotics is that meaning making is multimodal, which means that meaning is produced at the intersection of different semiotic forms such as image, language, color, and sound. Multimodal critical discourse studies build on these insights. Whereas previous discourse analysis often focused on written or spoken discourse in isolation, multimodal critical discourse studies acknowledges that text and talk are always embedded in a larger nexus of meaning-making practices. This interplay between different modes of meaning making, along with the ideological work they perform, is what a multimodal critical discourse study seeks to capture.

Another core assumption is that meaning is not an inherent trait in communicative acts, texts, or parts thereof. Instead, the resources that constitute different communicative acts must be studied in terms of how they are involved in producing or contesting social relations, societal issues, and political problems (Van Leeuwen 2005). This implies that communication must always be studied as a situated practice, with a focus both on how particular *semiotic resources*—the actions and artefacts we use to communicate—are used in specific social and historical contexts, and on how the deployment of these resources relates intertextually to both historical and present semiotic practices. Multimodal critical discourse analysis assumes that meaning making is always intertextually accomplished, and, in the present study, we use this vantage point to launch a semiotic enquiry into how—that is, using which semiotic resources—the NRM articulates its family politics in its propaganda. To investigate this, we work with *recontextualization* as our main methodological tool, which will be applied using a three-pronged social semiotic methodology (see Machin and Van Leeuwen 2016).

Recontextualization refers to the spatial and temporal reappearance of past and present texts and the semiotic resources that constitute them, such as arguments,

style figures, tropes, imagery, genre features, designs, particular words, expressions, and myths (Wodak and Fairclough 2010; Richardson and Wodak 2009; Wodak and Richardson 2013). We apply the concept to reveal how, in its propaganda, the NRM recontextualizes semiotic resources with different spatial and temporal origins that speak to both ideological insiders and imagined potential recruits.

The first stage of recontextualization analysis focuses on which semiotic resources are used in the communication. In analyzing how the NRM coarticulates fragments of texts stemming from different historical and contemporary origins, we begin by describing the readable and visible evidence that the texts provide. We do so by focusing only on the semiotic resources used to thematize the family. This means that the analysis pays particular attention to how the NRM recontextualizes *discourse keywords*, *legitimizing strategies*, and *photographic representations*, concepts that will be elaborated as the analysis unfolds. The goal of this inventory is not to provide thorough descriptions of all semiotic resources and their distinctive features in the dataset, but to provide a sound empirical basis for the next stage of the recontextualization analysis.

The second stage of recontextualization analysis addresses the meaning potentials of the recontextualized elements identified in the first stage. More precisely, we investigate the *provenance* of the recontextualized resources, which refers to the contextual origin of the recontextualized semiotic resources and, importantly, the connotative meaning potentials that these origins carry (Westberg and Årman 2019; Van Leeuwen 2022, 202). By tracing the provenance of the semiotic resources that the NRM employs in its party program and in the propaganda texts, we can interpret how esoteric and exoteric appeals are coarticulated through the recontextualization of resources from different domains to signify family issues via association with these other domains. To identify these domains, we conduct *intertextual cross-readings* (see Westberg and Årman 2019) of historical Nazi and fascist rhetoric, the political rhetoric of the Sweden Democrats, whose supporters the NRM wants to attract, and the semiotic conventions that characterize photographic representations in image banks. Thus, the concept of recontextualization allows us to explore the diverse trajectories of contemporary fascist discourse (see Billig 1978; Wodak and Richardson 2013). We will argue that the very same resource can carry different connotations related to its provenance, and thus can function as an ambiguous sign.

The third stage of recontextualization analysis focuses on the wider significance and social force of the NRM's multimodal discourse, and here we seek to increase the understanding of what Billig (1978, 97) has referred to as "ambiguities in contemporary fascist ideology." At this stage, we discuss how the NRM's multimodal recontextualization of family matters is underpinned by ideological ambiguity and dissension. We conclude the article by arguing that this ambiguity and dissension is key to understanding the attractiveness of contemporary fascism as a gendered ideology, and also to explaining how multimodal propaganda works to attract potential recruits who are not (yet) initiated into National Socialist ideology.

Entanglements of Nazi Ideology and Exoteric Appeals to the Masses

This section presents our analysis of the two-part corpus. First, we turn to the party program and focus on how explicit expressions of National Socialist ideals are entangled with value-conservative and right-wing populist rhetoric. We then turn to the NRM's online propaganda and focus on how esoteric appeals to Nazi ideology are coarticulated with neoliberal lifestyle ideals, primarily through the recontextualization of photographic representations drawn from image banks.

Family Matters in the Party Program: Entanglements of Nazi Ideology with Value-Conservative and Right-Wing Populist Ideals

In the party program section "Family politics and the role of women," the NRM presents its view on gender roles and the family. We present in-depth analysis of the first two paragraphs of this section (pp. 40–41) below. We focus on how esoteric and exoteric appeals are entangled through the recontextualization of *discourse keywords* with a distinct provenance in the language of historical Nazism, along with articulations of "truths" about women and the nature of the sexes that can be found in more mainstream political discourse of the conservative and populist right. Discourse keywords are semantically salient lexical units that play a key role in a specific discourse by being closely associated with important themes, tropes, and myths in a particular ideology (Mautner 2005; Fairclough 2000). We also pay attention to what kind of *rationalizing truths*, with reference to the nature of the sexes, are recontextualized to provide legitimizing answers to why women and men ought to engage in certain practices (Van Leeuwen 2008, 116). In the extract below, we italicize the resources we pay close attention to.

> Contemporary liberal democracy propagates a career mindset in which both men and women sacrifice much that is important. In the case of women, it means renouncing children and family. Many women who want to stay at home with their children are forced into the labor market too early. Other women have no children at all because they feel that they must choose between family and career. (Dagens liberala demokrati propagerar för ett karriärstänk där såväl män som kvinnor gör avkall på mycket som är viktigt. I kvinnornas fall handlar det om att göra avkall på barn och familj. Många kvinnor som vill vara hemma med sina barn tvingas in i arbetslivet för tidigt. Andra skaffar inga barn alls eftersom de känner att de måste välja mellan familj och karriär.)
>
> Of course, we do not want to fetter women to the stove, nor are we part of some so-called patriarchal structure in which women are conceived of as a threat to men. Nothing could be further from the

> truth because we are as opposed to this kind of chauvinism as we are to feminism. Feminism does the same thing as chauvinism in that it puts man and woman against each other instead of as *nature created them*, as a *complement to each other*. Both these strains of thought not only pose a threat to the *people's community* but have also resulted in mental illness in women being higher than ever before. (Självklart vill vi inte kedja fast kvinnor vid spisen och vi ingår inte heller i någon så kallad patriarkalisk struktur där kvinnan ses som ett hot mot mannen. Inget kunde vara längre från sanningen eftersom vi är lika stora motståndare till denna typ av mansschauvinism som vi är till feminism. Feminismen gör samma sak som mansschauvismen, det vill säga ställer mannen och kvinnan mot varandra—istället för som *naturen* skapade dem, *som ett komplement till varandra*. Båda dessa idéströmningar utgör inte bara ett hot mot *folkgemenskapen* utan har även resulterat i att den psykiska ohälsan bland våra kvinnor är högre än någonsin.)

On the descriptive level, we observe that the party program criticizes how, in liberal democracy, feminism and chauvinism force women to act and make choices that contradict an allegedly natural order. Women are represented as victims of "contemporary liberal democracy," "feminism," and "chauvinism," all of which are said to force women to sacrifice children and family and thus deny the complementarity of the sexes. Nature is evoked as a foundation upon which "truths" about men, women, and the current social order can be articulated. This kind of ideological argumentation is not unique to the NRM or fascist movements. Rather, it taps into a pattern of legitimizing practices observable elsewhere in the political landscape. Notably, we find similar rhetoric with reference to biological determinism among value-conservative parties that legitimize ideas about the social role and function that men and women ought to fulfill. In the Swedish political landscape, this idea is most prominently represented by the SD. As an example, we cite the section on "The Sweden Democrats, the family, and equality" (p. 15) from the SD's *Principprogram* (Program of principles), published in 2019. Again, we italicize the language of interest to us.

> As previously mentioned, it is the conviction of the Sweden Democrats that *there are inherent differences between most men and women that go beyond what can be observed with bare eyes*. We also believe that *male and female qualities in many cases complement* each other and therefore partially believe that all children have the right to have both a maternal and a paternal figure in their lives. (Som tidigare nämnts är det Sverigedemokraternas uppfattning att *det existerar medfödda skillnader mellan de flesta män och de flesta kvinnor som går bortom det som kan observeras med blotta ögat*. Vi är också av

> den uppfattningen att de *manliga och kvinnliga egenskaperna i många fall kompletterar varandra* och av bland annat den orsaken anser vi att alla barn bör ha rätt till både en moders- och en fadersgestalt i sina liv.)[6]

Through a cross-reading between the NRM's party program and the SD's program, it becomes evident that the NRM and the SD recontextualize the same legitimizing strategy. In the NRM's and the SD's programs, their respective strategies explain and legitimize the role of men and women with reference to a presumed inherent—that is, natural and eternal—binary and complementary constitution of the sexes. The analysis confirms Burnett and Richardson's (2022) observation that the gender ideology of the far right should not be seen as isolated but as intertwined with the traditional values of conservative and populist movements. However, in the NRM's party program, the legitimizing truth about nature and the sexes is coarticulated with words and phrases that function as discourse keywords that also link the text intertextually to historical National Socialism. We will focus on the lexical items "nature" and "people's community," which have provenance in historical National Socialist rhetoric.

Volksgemeinschaft (people's community) was a key concept in the propaganda of the Third Reich. As Victor Klemperer (2006) observed, *Volks-* (people's) was an extremely frequent prefix in the language of the Third Reich. It was the Nazis' most important social concept; it channeled the Nazi Party's view of the German nation as a community demarcated by race, in which individuals were subordinated to the interest of the nation (Welch 2004; Steber and Gotto 2014). While "nature" is a key resource to legitimize ideas about gender in value-conservative politics, it also carries connotations that derive from the ideological role that it plays in historical Nazism. As noted by Klemperer (2006, 218–19), the language of the Third Reich consistently connected National Socialism to the laws of nature to associate it with eternal values. The trope of nature further becomes ideologically powerful in Nazi discourse as a *structural opposition* (Machin and Mayr 2012, 39–40). In the NRM's adaptation of Nazi ideology, nature is one half of the opposing concepts of "natural" versus "unnatural" and "superficial" (Westberg and Årman 2019). Although the latter half—the unnatural and superficial—is not spelled out explicitly here, it still performs crucial ideological work. In Nazi ideology, the natural order is equivalent to the National Socialist order of the world, and in such a worldview, unnatural and superficial signify the "Jewish" and "parasitical" ways of organizing social life (Klemperer 2006, 174; Musolff 2010, 23ff.). In fascist ideology, family politics and the role of women are considered key in the struggle for racial purity and domination (Burnett and Richardson 2022). And as we can see, by legitimizing its view on family issues by invoking discourse keywords recontextualized from Third Reich propaganda,

6 See *Principprogram: Sverigedemokraternas Principprogram 2019* (n.p.), https://sd.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/sverigedemokraternas-principprogram-2019.pdf.

the NRM not only draws on widespread value-conservative ideals about the sexes but also articulates a worldview in which family politics and gender are inseparable from issues of race, ideas of racial hierarchy, and perceived threats to the racial purity of Swedes.

Although "nature" and "people's community" have a clear provenance in historical Nazi ideology, "the people" is also a key concept in the politics and rhetoric of the SD. At the core of the SD's politics is the right-wing populist trope that Swedish people are a culturally demarcated community whose values, ideals, welfare, and interests are threatened by "others" from abroad (e.g., immigrants, particularly Muslims). At the same time, the people are also being betrayed and let down by the elite "up there" (e.g., politicians, authorities, researchers, and journalists) (see Wodak 2015). In fact, the introduction (p. 2, emphasis added) to the SD's program explains, "We are committed to law and order, community-building traditions, society-bearing institutions, and proven *natural communities such as the family and the nation*" (Vi bejakar lag och ordning, gemensamhetsskapande traditioner, samhällsbärande institutioner och bevisat välfungerande *naturliga gemenskaper i form av familjen och nationen*). It can thus be argued that when the NRM speaks of the people's community, it taps into both a historical use of the National Socialist idea of *Volksgemeinschaft*, and into contemporary political discourses of Sweden as a "natural community" demarcated by the national identity of the Swedish people.

To sum up the first part of our analysis: when the NRM thematizes family matters in its party program, linguistic resources with different and partly ambiguous provenance are recontextualized. Returning to the dilemma for contemporary fascist groups identified by Billig (1978), we see how, through this process of recontextualization, ideals shared with populism and value-conservatism are entangled with radical Nazi tropes about the natural differences and hierarchies between the sexes and races. Thus, the NRM combines esoteric with exoteric discourses that signal ideological purity and at the same time tap into mainstream tropes. Through the rise and momentum of far-right populism, value-conservative views on men and women have become increasingly salient in contemporary political discourse (Norocel and Pettersson 2022; Mulinari 2016), and this provides the NRM with fertile ground to—as Aldous Huxley (1936) puts it—give "force and direction to the successive movements of popular feeling and desire as they attempt to speak to potential recruits and voters." In line with Welch's observation that effective propaganda preaches to the partially converted and is "about confirming rather than converting public opinion" (Welch 2004, 214), the ideological work conducted by the NRM's party program is not so much to convert supporters as to appeal to voters by confirming mainstream ideals surrounding family politics and gender roles. The next section continues this line of argumentation by exploring how esoteric and exoteric appeals are entangled visually in the NRM's online propaganda.

Family Matters in Online Propaganda: Entanglements of Lifestyle Semiotics and Nazi Myths

This section moves on from the party program to the NRM's online propaganda. This means that we shift our analytical attention from written to multimodal communication. Overall, we pursue the analytical argument that the NRM's multimodal propaganda on family matters is underpinned by connotative ambiguity. That is, by analyzing the visual and linguistic resources recontextualized in the online propaganda, we argue that these resources derive from a *canon of use* (Ledin and Machin 2018) with provenance in image bank photography, as for example those managed by *Getty Images*, *iStockphoto*, *Shutterstock*, or *Pixabay*. As will be demonstrated in the analysis below, this provenance carries mainstream connotations of lifestyle identities, attitudes, and values associated with the global and neoliberal economy, while the motifs in the recontextualized images simultaneously convey appeals to the fascist myth of palingenesis.

Following our social semiotic methodology, we start by describing the visual resources that are employed in the online propaganda that thematizes family matters. To illustrate the results and analytical work, we pay close attention to the four texts in figure 3.

Figure 3. Four NRM online propaganda texts. Source: note 5.

Texts 1–4 share a similar multimodal design. By considering the denotative layer of the visual representations in figure 3 (i.e., what we see), we can observe that they all include visual representations of participants that metonymically index meanings related to "family" as a semantic category. In text 1, two arms embracing a pregnant stomach metonymically represent a "mother" and "pregnancy." In text 2, a father and child are represented as silhouettes on a shore. In text 3, a small child's hand holds the left forefinger of an adult's hand, together indexing a child and its parent. In text 4, a smiling girl peeks out from behind a tree. In addition to the visual representations, all the texts include written messages. In texts 1 and 2, the written elements are artfully laid out as bundles of words that are visually integrated with the images, whereas the written elements in texts 3 and 4 are laid out as banners on top of the images. All the texts also include links to the websites of the Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish branches

of the NRM, as well as the NRM's logo (except for text 1). The dominant language used is English (texts 1, 3, and 4), whereas the bundle of words in text 2 includes English, Swedish, German, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, and Icelandic.

The visual resources recontextualized in the NRM's online propaganda have their provenance in stock photography. More specifically, the images in texts 1–4 draw on a semiotic repertoire that has developed over time to make it possible to recontextualize images over and over again to express desirable identities, lifestyles, and ideals in diverse commercial contexts. To analyze what connotative meaning potentials this provenance carries (i.e., the wider cultural associations of what we see), we draw on Machin's (2004) inventory of the semiotic characteristics of stock photography. Complementing this, we also conduct an intertextual "scan" of how the images in the NRM's online propaganda are recontextualized in other online contexts. We then discuss how these resources convey ambiguous meanings when used in this specific strand of fascist discourse, and the implications of this.

In terms of semiotic resources, we can observe that the images in the online propaganda to a lesser or greater extent are *decontextualized*, meaning that the people represented in the images are depicted in a contextual void (Machin 2004, 320). In texts 1, 3, and 4, the background is black. In text 2, the background is a shore, water, mountains, and sky, with the sun breaking through the clouds, but it is out of focus and filtered through a lens of green misty light. As an effect of the images being decontextualized, the participants (men, women, and children) are represented as *generic* types or typical examples instead of as particular individuals situated in time and place (324–25), even when an individualizing face is represented (text 4). This representational pattern invites the reader to interpret the persons represented as typical examples of a heterosexual family, in other words, as "mother," "father," "son," and "daughter."

Text 2 represents a background, but it is represented as a *generic* setting (Machin 2004, 320). We see a shoreline, a sea, and mountains on the horizon, but there are no visual cues that allow us to determine exactly what shore, sea, or mountain this is. Similarly, the people depicted are *generically* represented. This is most striking in text 2, in which the individualizing traits of the man and child are totally eliminated by being represented as black silhouettes. The same can be said for the pregnant stomach in text 1 and the hands in text 3; there are no traits that allow us to determine the individuals to whom the stomach and hands belong. Rather, they are generic representations of "a pregnant woman" and "a father and child." Similarly, in text 4 the use of low contrast smothers the individualizing traits of the child, whereby she is represented as a generic (white) "blond and blue-eyed child." The girl's blue eyes are also salient in the otherwise black-and-white image.

Together, the decontextualization and representation of generic settings and persons in texts 1–4 afford connotative meaning potentials and make low denotative claims of representing the world as we see it with our bare eyes (Machin 2004, 326–27). In a study of silhouettes, Hariman (2022, 10) also argues that the kind of semiotic work we see in texts 1–4 "evokes a more active spectatorship, an invitation to enter into the

image." However, as Machin argues, the kind of meaning potentials realized through image bank semiotics is rather restricted, and the scope for "active spectatorship" is ideologically framed by its provenance in the global and neoliberal economy. The "image bank is an ideologically pre-structured world. The categories that are available are restricted in terms of all the clichés and marketing categories" (Machin 2004, 334–35).

To provide empirical understanding of how the recontextualization of image bank semiotics carries connotative clichés and marketing categories, we have analyzed how the images in texts 1–4 are recontextualized in other consumerist and lifestyle-oriented online contexts. To conduct this intertextual analysis, we used the Image Search Function (ISF) provided by Google, which allows users to trace the reappearance of online images. This is an explorative and novel way to use the affordances provided by search engines such as Google as a part of a recontextualization analysis. Since we use a tool provided by Google, it is imperative to mention that our analysis, in part, is in the hands of the algorithms that generate the search results. This means that the technical procedure of tracing the recontextualizations is black-boxed to us. Accordingly, the reliability of using ISF is not absolutely solid; if the algorithm were changed, there is a chance other results would be returned. However, we believe the benefits of using ISF outweigh this caveat.

Image Search Function helps us pinpoint how similar or identical images to those in figure 3 are recontextualized to convey meanings in other contexts. By pinpointing this, we can provide empirical support for the investigation of how the NRM reinvents fascism in semiotically ambiguous ways in its attempt to broaden its audience. By using ISF, we can trace both the provenance in certain image banks as well as the provenance in how the images are used in online settings. By tracing the exact image banks from which the images derive (as we do for text 2), we can further investigate what meaning potentials the image banks themselves ascribe to the images and thereby how these meaning potentials become part of fascist propaganda when the NRM recontextualizes the images. Such findings are crucial for sensitizing our understanding of how connotative meaning making is accomplished empirically.

As an illustrative example of how ISF was used, we account below for the image search procedure regarding texts 1 and 2. Using ISF, we inserted the current propaganda texts and cropped the images by only marking the stomach and right hand from text 1 and the silhouettes of the man and child from text 2 (see figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4 presents the search results for text 1. Although we were not able to trace the exact image bank from which the image originated, the ISF showed that identical and nearly identical images are used online in a variety of commercial and lifestyle contexts. Figure 4 shows how the results of the ISF search are presented as clickable links in the center interface and in the right "Google Lens" interface. The clickable results primarily lead to companies for whom mothers are the main target group, marketing lifestyle services such as diets, photographic services, and massage and spa treatments. In the postmodern and neoliberal age, parenting in general and motherhood in particular have developed into a social practice that, like other lifestyle projects, manifests in

different types of self-reflective choices: being a good, legitimate mother in our time is very much about making informed and conscious consumer choices (Westberg 2016; Krzyżanowska 2020). Thus, when the NRM recontextualizes the current image, it carries connotations that appeal to a mass audience familiar with how these kinds of images are used in a neoliberal marketing context in which motherhood is conceptualized as a lifestyle project. This idea, in turn, is afflicted with a neoliberal idea that society and its social relations are best developed on the basis of economic-transactional relationships.

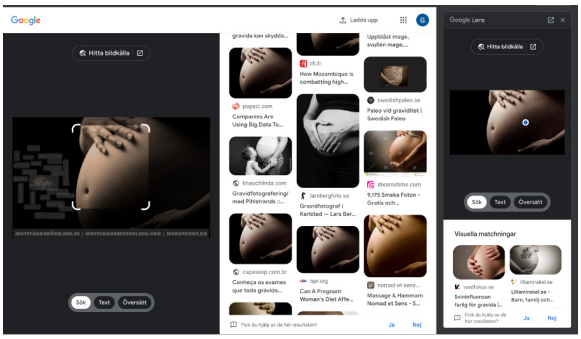

Figure 4. Image Search Function result for text 1. Source: authors' photo.

Figure 5 presents the ISF results for text 2. In this case, we narrowed the visual search by cropping the image to only include the silhouettes and left the elements apparently added by the NRM outside the search. Again, we were able to trace how the same image, or almost identical images, are used in a variety of consumerist and lifestyle contexts, but also the specific provenance of the image.

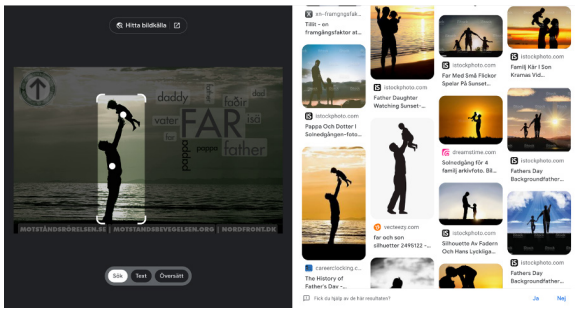

Figure 5. Image Search Function result for text 2. Source: authors' photo.

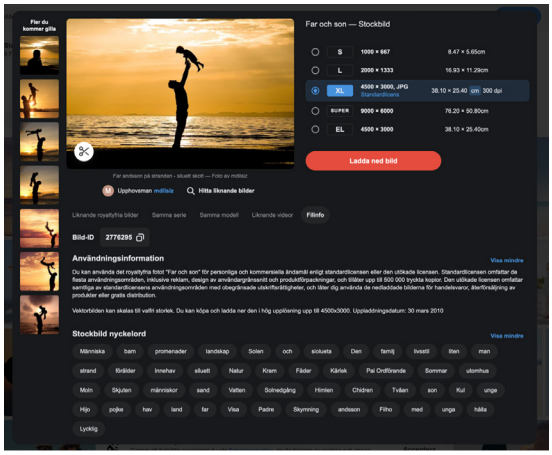

Figure 6. Search tags for text 2. Source: authors' photo.

The image used in text 2 originates from the depositphoto.se image bank. However, the original image was not filtered through a green misty light but is in a warm, saturated, and sunset-yellow color. When visiting the image bank and looking at the meta-info of the image, we see it is annotated with tags such as "child," "sun," "family," "lifestyle," "parents," "hug," "love," "sunset," "boy," "father," and "happy" (figure 6). These are the meaning potentials ascribed by the image bank to the image (see Machin 2004, 328). This observation motivates us to expand the intertextual analysis of the market-based conventions and clichés of image banks, because the way in which depositphoto.se has tagged the current image taps into a larger pattern regarding the way image banks ascribe meaning potentials to desired identities, values, and ideals. To provide further evidence for this argument, we visited one of the world's largest image banks, Getty Images, and searched for images using "father," "son," "sunset," and "happiness" as search words. The search rendered images that clearly resonate with the image in text 2 (see figure 7). We conducted a similar search using "pregnant," "harmony," and "hope," which resulted in images that are more or less identical to the image in text 1 (see figure 8). Thus, when the NRM recontextualizes image bank semiotics in its online propaganda, the images carry connotations of ideals and identities in diverse lifestyle contexts characterized by economic-transactional relationships.

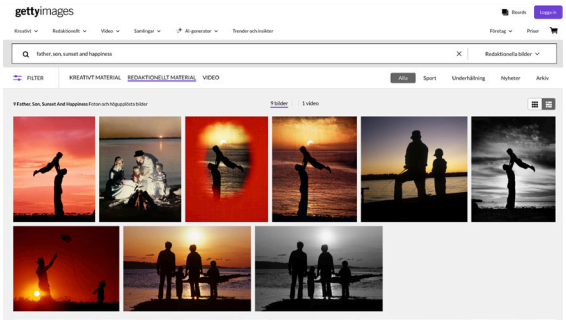

Figure 7. Image Search on Getty Images using "father," "son," "sunset," and "happiness" as search words. Source: authors' photo.

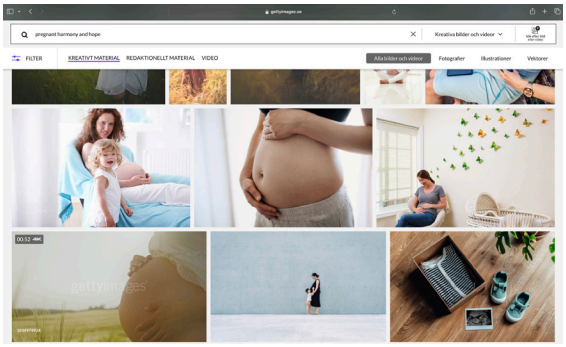

Figure 8. Image Search on Getty Images using "pregnant," "harmony," and "hope" as search words. Source: authors' photo.

This connotation of consumerist and lifestyle identity is augmented by the bundles of words in texts 1 and 2. The layout of these bundles of words has its provenance in what we call *linguistic decoration*, recognizable from home-styling genres such as decorative posters and painting words of wisdom on interior walls (e.g., carpe diem). Taking a close look at the words constituting the bundle in text 1, we see how these words cluster in two separate semantic domains that point to different ideological origins. Firstly, we find a cluster of words—hope, youth, culture, family, faith, spirit, children—that points to a provenance in a mainstream and lifestyle-oriented discourse on family issues and motherhood. In fact, these kinds of words could be used as search words on Getty Images to return the kinds of images used in texts 1 and 2. Yet, the other cluster of words—race, civilization, strength, discipline, morals, tradition, heritage, and blood—points to the trope of "blood and soil," with its provenance in racist and radical nationalist discourse. Here, we can see how the values connoting neoliberal ideals are entangled with and set up a dialogue with ideals rooted in fascist ideology.

The use of different languages is also worth noting since it contributes to the entanglement of neoliberal and fascist ideals. In text 2, the bundle of words contains lexical units that signify a male parent in Swedish (*far*, *pappa*), Danish and Norwegian

(*far*), English (*father*, *dad*, *daddy*), German (*vater*), Finnish (*isä*), and Icelandic and Old Norse (*faðir*). Together, these lexical units allude to the kinship between Nordic and northwestern European countries and (with the exception of Finland) their common Germanic heritage, thereby appealing to ideological insiders who are familiar with ideas about the alleged ethnic origins of the Aryan/Nordic race. The use of English, which is the dominant language choice in texts 1, 3, and 4, also points to a different transnational community and kinship, one not demarcated in terms of blood and race. Rather, English is the lingua franca for transforming artefacts, lifestyles, and values into globally mobile commodities (Jaworski 2015; Archer and Westberg 2020). In tandem with image bank semiotics, the use of English augments an appeal to a mainstream idea about how to practice parenthood as a consumption-based lifestyle project (Westberg 2016). As Androutsopoulos (2012) points out, the use of English should not only be analyzed on the level of lexical meaning. The textual position of English is also worth noting. In the propaganda texts, English is placed "on top" (Androutsopoulos 2012) of the other languages, which enhances its function of framing and legitimizing the messages communicated in other languages or modes. In texts 1–4, this use as English on top pushes to the foreground the intertextual links to modern day lifestylization and the commodification of family life.

The semiotic ambiguity of the propaganda is furthered by some of the words and concepts that have a more ambiguous provenance, that is, they are similar to the ideological workings of lexical units in the party program. For example, the use of "hope" in connection with family issues and children is not unique to fascism or radical nationalism. Rather, using children to symbolize hope is a conventional rhetoric trope, not least within politics (Sherr 1999). Burnett and Richardson (2022, 353) further note that children in fascist discourse are repeatedly used to represent "purity, beauty and innocence." In the specific context we are analyzing, children carry connotations of hope, purity, and innocence that derive from their provenance in the myth of palingenesis. Once the social order has been overthrown, it is believed that a new nation and generation will be reborn from the ashes (Griffin 1993). In a previous study, Westberg (2021) reveals that the NRM's recruitment propaganda uses this myth as a structural axis, not least to make potential recruits feel hopeful in relation to the future and to the violent fulfillment of the myth of palingenesis. In light of this, we argue that the children represented in texts 1–4 symbolize a mythical new dawn, a future where the current social order and the ideological opponents of the NRM have been reduced to ashes, from which it is imagined a new, pure, and innocent generation will rise. Accordingly, the myth of palingenesis anchors the meaning potentials of the visual aspects of the propaganda texts. Based on this, we argue that the visual representations of children and the heterosexual family in texts 1–4 are ambiguous. This ambiguity is the result of how the images convey meanings through a conflation of diverse and seemingly contradictory connotative provenances: the use of image bank semiotics connotes a lifestyle identity rooted in consumerism and neoliberal market rationality, whereas the generic participants that are represented through this semiotic canon carry

connotations that derive from the myth of palingenesis. In the propaganda, children are used as a mythological reference to futurity (see Burnett and Richardson 2022).

The appeal to the myth of palingenesis is further signaled in the written banners in texts 3 and 4. In text 3, the bolded lexical unit "**Some things are worth fighting for!**" refers to children. To the ideological insiders it is the rebirth of society that "is worth fighting for." In the NRM's adaptation of the myth of palingenesis, this fight is conceived of as a violent elimination of "the Jewish system," feminism, capitalism, and liberal democracy (Westberg 2021). The ideological enemies of the NRM are also implicitly referred to in text 4 by *structural oppositions* (Machin and Mayr 2012, 39–42). In the "humorous" banner, teeth are metaphorically used as a source domain to signify the target domain of Nordic children: "Nordic children should be like teeth—white, straight and strong!" Here, *white* is a reference to the Nordic/Aryan race (Heller 2000, 66–67), and its structural opposition are those groups of people who do not belong to this imagined category. Secondly, *straight* refers to heterosexuality, thus disqualifying other kinds of sexuality from the community of the nation. Finally, *strong* praises strength, of course, whereby those who are conceived of as being weak are disqualified from the imaged community of the Nordic/Aryan race. In the context of the image of the child the structural opposition of strong/weak should not be understood in terms of mere physics. As shown elsewhere (Westberg 2021), strength or weakness in NRM propaganda are personal traits, where a *strong* person is someone who lives an honest, upright life of struggle against the decadence of contemporary society. On the other hand, *weakness* in Swedish men and women is explicitly blamed for perceived societal decay (Westberg 2021, 222). Taken together as structural oppositions, these lexical units in combination with the visual representation of the child imply that if the revolutionary overthrow of the current society is not fulfilled, a "hopeless," non-white, non-straight, and weak generation will be fostered.

Thus, when the NRM recontextualizes family issues in its online propaganda, it coarticulates visual and linguistic resources, whose provenance carries ambiguous connotations. On the one hand, the propaganda uses image bank semiotics, which have evolved within the logic of neoliberalism and global capitalism to make images as profitable as possible. On the other hand, the motifs depicted alongside these image bank semiotics in the bundles of words carry connotations of the myth of palingenesis and an urge to combat the current social order—including global capitalism and commercial lifestyle ideals—with violence, and to replace it with a Nazi utopia.

In short, the analysis points to the ambiguity of the NRM's multimodal propaganda. At the level of representation, we can observe that the NRM uses image bank semiotics as a canvas on which it projects its ideological message and revolutionary beliefs. At the same time, the canvas used (the image bank semiotics) is not completely devoid of content but in itself carries connotations of a logic of neoliberal commodification and the lifestylization of family issues. Does this imply that supporters of the NRM are stuck inside a hegemonic neoliberal subjectivity? We believe not. Rather, we argue that the NRM strategically uses mainstream semiotics when appealing to political insiders

and potential new recruits precisely in relation to family issues. This is an empirical finding that is reinforced by the fact that the NRM uses other conventions elsewhere in its multimodal communication. As we saw in figure 1, the cover of the party program recontextualizes the iconography of historic fascist propaganda, whereas digital propaganda texts on topics other than family matters draw in turn on yet other semiotic conventions. For instance, virtues of masculinity are propagated using folkloric drawings of Vikings recognizable from fantasy fiction, whereas propagandistic representations of the NRM's ideological opponents are done in collage-like texts that resemble the do-it-yourself-techniques recognizable from subversive contexts such as fanzines and punk culture. This allows us to conclude that for the NRM, the use of image bank semiotics is a socially motivated choice that they make to convey meaning in relation to specific themes and target groups.

Conclusion

In Sweden, the gap between extremist organizations such as the Nordic Resistance Movement and right-wing populist parties such as the Sweden Democrats is closing (Expo 2023). Considering this, the current article investigated in detail how the NRM recontextualizes linguistic and visual resources that have different provenances, producing propaganda texts that intertextually connect to historical National Socialism, right-wing populism, and contemporary mainstream neoliberal conceptualizations of family life. The results show the recontextualization and coarticulation of discourses that, in part, come across as ambiguous or even contradictory. By weaving different threads together, family life is articulated by the NRM as a pivotal arena in the attempt to create a life that is in accordance with National Socialist ideals. In the NRM's propaganda, children and heterosexual families symbolize hope of a new dawn in the fascist myth of palingenesis. At the same time, National Socialist family politics are communicated using a visual genre intimately associated with global marketing and the commercialization of family life. According to the NRM, global capitalism and the "unnatural" and "Jewish" commodification of human relations lie at the very core of the contemporary social order, which the NRM is attempting to violently overthrow. Yet, as the analysis shows, the visual genres of global capitalism can also be utilized to frame the National Socialist discourse on family politics in a way that is more recognizable and relatable to a broader public.

The narrowing gap between extremist and populist rhetoric has created a discursive space in which extremist organizations can draw on tropes that have been made more mainstream by the advancement of populist parties. As we have shown above, the NRM's rhetoric about the people's community and the notion that women in liberal and capitalist societies are forced to renounce having children or sacrifice time with family do indeed resonate with mainstream value-conservative nationalist ideas about the natural community of the Swedish nation and the inherent differences between the sexes.

Following Burnett and Richardson (2022), we argue that an analysis that engages with the gendered facets of the fascist imaginary beyond hypermasculinity can shed new light on continuities and discontinuities within fascist discourse. As shown in the analysis, far-right tropes are entangled with mainstream notions of gender in how contemporary fascist groups use a range of linguistic and visual resources to speak both to ideological insiders as well as possible recruits. We would further argue that the analytical toolbox of social semiotics (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; Van Leeuwen 2005) and multimodal critical discourse studies (Machin and Mayr 2012; Machin 2016) is useful to grapple with gender in fascist discourse. Different modes of communication convey ideological work on gender in different ways, and discourse on family matters finds its meaning in relation to historical and contemporary discursive formations. Hence, a multimodal perspective and a focus on the intertextual facets of meaning making and recontextualization of semiotic resources enables an analysis that both historicizes contemporary fascism and highlights the shifting ways it expresses itself in the present day.

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