research article

The racialisation of sexism: how race frames shape anti-street harassment policies in Britain and France

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Femonationalism, that is, the use of women's rights rhetorics to further racial stigmatisation and promote nationalism, has been of growing interest to social scientists on European contexts. While previous studies have provided insights on the racialisation of sexism in gender equality policymaking, there is still a limited understanding of how policy frames in particular national contexts can either exacerbate or mitigate femonationalism in the making of anti-gender-based violence policy. In particular, how do frames on race and racism impact the framing of anti-street harassment policies and, by extension, the ability to prevent femonationalism?

The article explores this issue by comparing the cases of France and Britain through empirical data with policymakers and activists intervening in policymaking against street harassment in France and Britain. Findings suggest that, even though French state actors claim their colour-blindness allows them to avoid a racist framing of the problem, it actually enables it. This in turn favours a racialised framing of street harassment and leads to an inability to address the potential risk of racial targeting in the criminalisation of street harassment. Conversely, the acknowledgment of racism in Britain favours an intersectional framing of street harassment and leads to greater consideration of the risk of racial targeting. By analysing how race repertoires unfold in policy pre-adoption phases, the article therefore suggests that nationally embedded assumptions about race have a significant impact on the framing of anti-gender-based violence policy and, in turn, on femonationalism.

Key words racialisation of sexism • femonationalism race repertoires • public policy •
gender-based violence • racism • ethnic profiling • street harassment

Introduction

'We have to stop talking about stigmatisation all the time. When the law on street harassment was passed, we were told that "it would stigmatise those who harass women on the street". Well, let's stigmatise, I do not have any

problem with that.' (Marlène Schiappa, former French Minister for Women's Rights, cited in Descours, 2021)

Despite its provocative tone, the response of the former Minister for Women's Rights, Marlène Schiappa, to feminists' criticisms of the risk of racial stigmatisation in policing street harassment[1] is representative of French policymakers' approach to the problem. This follows the public announcement of the enforcement of the law criminalising public sexual harassment in France,[2] through the mapping of 'red zones' of street harassment where plainclothes brigades would be deployed to fine street harassers. The former minister's rejection of the criticism on stigmatisation and her silence on race while referring to the risk of racial stigmatisation is in line with the prevailing race repertoire in France: race is implicitly referred to but not named. In the words of Sarah Mazouz, who borrows Michael Taussig's concept, it is a 'public secret' (Taussig, 1999; Mazouz, 2021).

In a European context witnessing the rise of femonationalism – that is, the increasing use of women's rights rhetorics to promote nationalism (Farris, 2017) – the political discussion around street harassment has put forward its complex entanglements to immigration and integration policy, policing and racial exclusion. This article intends to analyse how Britain and France differ in this regard by focusing on the policymaking process against public sexual harassment. It more specifically focuses on the pre-adoption phases, as encompassing both problem definition and policy formulation phases, considered as critical moments of political struggles over the definition of causes and solutions to a policy problem (Schattschneider, 1960; Cobb and Elder, 1971; Zittoun et al, 2021). In France, the problem of street harassment has been framed in a racialised way in both media covering and, to some extent, in policy discourses, while in Britain, it has mostly been framed in an intersectional way and has not been subject to salient forms of racialisation of sexism. In line with the conceptualisation of intersectionality, which refers to the interconnectedness between different systems of oppression such as gender, race and class (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Hancock, 2016), an intersectional framing of public sexual harassment centrally acknowledges the interlocking nature of gender and race (among other dimensions) in victims' experience of it. In contrast with France, the problem of public sexual harassment has been defined through an intersectional lens by British feminists leading the campaign but also by policy actors involved in this fight, who highlight its potential racist dimensions and acknowledge the issue of the racialised outcome that the criminalisation could entail.

This article analyses the contrasting framing of street harassment in France and Britain by exploring the role of ideas on race and racism, raising the following questions: How do race repertoires shape the policy framing against public sexual harassment? How do they contribute to pre-empting or fuelling femonationalism? To answer these questions, the article explores, in a comparative perspective, how policy actors involved in the making of anti-street harassment policy in both contexts conceive the problem of street harassment, its causes and the solutions to tackle it. It pays particular attention to the racialisation of sexism that underlies femonationalism and aims to demonstrate that a blind spot on racism in policymaking against gender-based violence is more likely to fuel femonationalism.

The article is structured as follows. The first section exposes the theoretical framework, while the second section describes the background, methods and data on which the article relies. The third section of the article elaborates on how race

repertoires have contributed to framing the problem of public sexual harassment in very contrasting ways in France and Britain. The fourth section focuses on the ways of addressing the risk of racial targeting in the criminalisation of public sexual harassment. It aims to show that the contrasting race repertoires in both countries have led to different framing and attitudes towards this risk of racial targeting and, by extension, to different abilities to prevent femonationalism.

Researching the effects of race repertoires on anti-gender-based violence policy in the context of rising femonationalism

Political scientists and sociologists have emphasised the role of ideas and frames in policymaking (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Hall, 1993; Finnemore, 1996; Béland, 2005; 2009; Béland and Cox, 2011), including the impact of race ideas in anti-discriminatory policies on the one hand (Bleich, 2000; 2003; Bertossi, 2012b), and the effects of gender conceptions on gender equality policies on the other (Verloo, 2007; Lombardo et al, 2010; 2009; Ciccia and Lombardo, 2019). While developing research on the role of race ideas, scholars have particularly explored the effects of race frames on policies against racial discrimination (Bleich, 2000; 2003), on integration policies (Favell, 2000; Bertossi, 2012b) and citizenship (Anthias et al, 2005; Joppke, 2019). This article proposes to focus on the effects of race repertoires on policies which are not *a priori* race-related: specifically, it investigates how race frames can shape policies aimed at addressing gender-based violence, particularly in relation to femonationalism.

The strategic use of women's rights rhetorics to foster anti-immigrant discourses and policies – or femonationalism (Farris, 2017) – has been subject to growing interest in social sciences (Farris and Scrinzi, 2018; Lépinard, 2020; Onasch, 2020; Colella, 2021; Sifaki et al, 2022). Scholars have shown how such a phenomenon relies on the racialisation of sexism, whereby 'others', that is, migrant and racialised men, are constructed as a threat to women's and LGBTQI+ rights due to a culture considered backward (Fassin, 2006; Puar, 2007; Farris, 2017; Bader and Mottier, 2020; Rahbari, 2021). While gender equality rhetorics are increasingly intertwined with nationalist concerns, extending the analysis of the effects of race repertoires to policies against gender-based violence seems much needed.

Studies in social sciences have provided important insights on the complex articulations of gender and race in the framing of gender equality policies, including with regard to the racialisation of sexism. For instance, Montoya and Agustín (2013) have explored the framing of gender-based violence in EU policy, distinguishing between two types of intersectionality framing: inclusionary intersectionality, which acknowledges the different positionalities and experiences in order to improve equality in policymaking, and exclusionary intersectionality, which emphasises cultural differences to account for different experiences of violence. In doing so, they highlighted how particular framing of gender-based violence can reinforce the frontiers between 'us' (the ethnic majority) and 'them' (ethnic minorities), thereby othering gender-based violence. On the Swedish context, Paula Mulinari has shown how policymaking around the integration of migrant women within care work reproduced colonial and racialised discourses on migrant women and how it fostered femonationalism (2018). In a similar vein, Korteweg and Yurdakul's work explores how conceptions of 'gender equality' influence immigrant integration policies in the Netherlands, Britain and Germany by 'becom[ing] a tool of stigmatisation' (2009: 212). Further analyses have provided useful insights on the policy framing of gender-based

violence as 'cultural' (Volpp, 2000; Roggeband and Verloo, 2007; Standke-Erdmann et al, 2022). While previous research has primarily focused on the effects of various conceptions of gender in the framing of gender-based violence, this article proposes to focus on the effects of race frames on anti-gender-based violence policy, with an emphasis on how they may foster or hinder femonationalism.

On the very topic of women's safety in public spaces, Marylène Lieber (2018) shows that the way in which gender-based violence and women's safety are defined in public action impacts the inclusiveness of the policy outcome. Her work highlights how urban planning measures from the Paris municipality excludes certain groups of women such as Muslim veiled women and sex workers, and how they contribute to stigmatising men from working-class, migrant and racialised backgrounds (2021). In the same vein, geographer Claire Hancock (2021) has stressed the exclusion dynamics at play in urban planning measures of the Paris municipality. While these studies provide important insights into the social and racialised dimensions of gender equality policies and gentrification dynamics, they primarily focus on urban planning measures and on the Paris region. Mischa Dekker's work has taken a different approach: while focusing on raising-awareness campaigns and their implementation in France and the Netherlands, he argues that French policymakers' apprehensions of racially stigmatising shaped the policy outcome (2022).

This article expands upon these existing perspectives by proposing a comparative analysis of the policy framing of street harassment related to national legislative reforms; specifically, the French law criminalising street harassment and the subsequent campaign for a similar law in Britain. It thus bridges the insights on the role of race frames in policymaking with those on femonationalism to explore how the former might potentially reinforce the latter.

Building on Bleich's extensive work on the role of race ideas in policymaking (2003), I propose to define race repertoires as a set of frames and representations around race issues and racism that orient policy actors to assign them different levels of priority in policymaking. The dominant French race repertoire is often described as a 'race-neutral' or 'colour-blind' one (Bleich, 2000; Sabbagh and Peer, 2008; Bertossi, 2012b; Mazouz, 2021; Escafré-Dublet et al, 2023), built a republican universalist and assimilationist conception (Brubaker, 1992; Favell, 2000; Chapman and Frader, 2004), while the British race repertoire is more conscious about racial differences, closer to a multiculturalist approach (Bleich, 2003; 2006; Solomos, 2003; Kymlicka, 2003; Modood, 2005). The main policy implications of these varying race repertoires lie in the absence of official race categories in French institutional discourse and policy, including in demographic statistics and census (Simon, 2008; Möschel, 2009), and, conversely, in the use of race categories in British census and policies. It also leads to different approaches to antiracism and integration policies. This article does not imply that national models are self-explanatory frameworks (Bertossi and Duyvendak, 2012; Bertossi, 2012a), but, rather, it looks at how race repertoires unfold in the policymaking process against public sexual harassment. As Bleich recalls in the words of Risse-Kappen, 'ideas do not float freely' (Risse-Kappen, 1994: 187) but are carried out by actors intervening in the policymaking process, within specific institutional and political settings.

Context, methods and data

The British and French cases offer an interesting opportunity to explore this issue for two main reasons. First, the French 2018 anti-street harassment policy has circulated

and inspired British feminists to advocate for a similar criminalising law in Britain. Feminists behind the campaign to criminalise public sexual harassment in Britain were indeed explicitly inspired by the 2018 French policy, claiming that 'France has shown that criminalising street harassment works. Now it's the UK's turn!'[3] Yet, this circulation resulted in very different policymaking processes, including different framings of the same problem. In both countries, feminists have been denouncing the detrimental impact of public sexual harassment on victims' lives and have called for public action in recent years. In France, the centre-right government under Emmanuel Macron seized the problem in a top-down manner and introduced a bill resulting in the 2018 law criminalising street harassment. Before that, centre-left government and elected officials under François Hollande had launched awareness-raising campaigns, especially in the Paris region. In Britain, while street harassment was already discussed via the campaign to make misogyny a hate crime in 2016, feminist activists have begun mobilising since 2018 to obtain a similar law to that in France, mainly through campaigning and lobbying MPs from the bottom up. They have obtained the backing from the government in December 2022 for a new penal offence criminalising public sexual harassment. The transnational circulation of the policy also explains these different timelines and the different stages of the policymaking process in both contexts.

Second, the two countries share a common colonial past, which is manifested today by a significant proportion of their population being second or third generation citizens from former colonies. This also results in Britain and France being leading countries in the development of race policies in Europe, by establishing anti-discriminatory legislation and institutions to deal with racism in the 1960–1970s (Bleich, 2003). The contrasting ways in which these policies have been developed in each country have led to very different race frames, which are likely to generate particular frames in other policy fields, such as anti-gender-based violence policy. It has also led to different institutionalisations of intersectionality of gender and race, with a rather weak adoption in France (Hermanin and Squires, 2012; Lépinard, 2014; 2019; Bassel and Emejulu, 2017) and a more advanced institutionalisation in Britain (Squires, 2009; Walby et al, 2012; Strid et al, 2013). Furthermore, the forms and degree of the institutionalisation of feminism in both countries vary, with a feminist movement organised mainly outside the state in Britain (Strid and Verloo, 2019) and a stronger state feminism in France (McBride et al, 2010; Revillard, 2016; Delage, 2017; Bereni and Revillard, 2018). This impacts the ways in which anti-gender-based violence policy is developed, particularly in terms of the role and participation of feminist activists in the process. Although the effects of these institutional settings on the framing process will be stressed in line with a neo-institutionalist approach (Béland, 2009; Béland and Cox, 2011), this article will primarily focus on ideational dimensions by exploring the effects of race repertoires.

To investigate this issue, the article draws on several types of data. First, it relies on 54 semi-structured interviews with actors involved in policymaking against public sexual harassment in both countries (N=54). I conducted these interviews between 2019 and 2022 with two types of actors involved in policymaking against public sexual harassment: (1) institutional actors and policymakers, and (2) feminist activists and campaigners.

The first category includes policy actors involved in the policymaking process and institutional actors in a position to influence it. It comprises Members of Parliament

(MPs), institutional actors in charge of women's rights and gender equality, 'femocrats' (Eisenstein, 1989), women's rights institutions or government offices (n=23; 11 for France, 12 for Britain). They have mostly been recruited through an analysis of policy documents related to public sexual harassment and have therefore played a central role in the policymaking process, namely as rapporteur of the French law or as MPs central in the drafting of the law (France), or as central actors in pushing for the law (Britain).

The second category of interviewees includes feminist activists, campaigners and associative actors involved in the fight against street harassment in both countries (n=32; 17 for France, 15 for Britain). They have been recruited for interviews whether because they intervened in the policymaking process during consultation phases or because they have been central in organisations raising awareness on the problem of public sexual harassment and calling for public action. Considering this data alongside the interviews with institutional policymakers is key as feminist activists have intervened in the policymaking process in both countries, although in different manners and to different extents. Their interactions with policy actors contributed to shape the framing of anti-street harassment policies.

This data is completed by a long-term participant observation as a volunteer in a feminist collective against public sexual harassment in Britain. The collective called *End PSH*[4] focuses on legislative change by campaigning for the criminalisation of public sexual harassment. Being in this volunteer position for six months has therefore enabled me to observe how public sexual harassment was framed both by feminists leading the campaign but also by the policy actors they lobby. While having conducted participant observation in a British organisation and not in a French one may affect my data collection, it was also a way to compensate for my familiarity with the French context. This position within the collective has also enabled me to expand my fieldwork contacts and to obtain interviews with policymakers in Britain. On the one hand, being a young French woman positioned me as an 'outsider' to the British context, which allowed me to access more information as well as representations that were made explicit by interviewees, who did not assume that I was aware of the contextual specificities. On the other hand, participating in the collective's activities as a volunteer brought me into an insider position with feminist campaigners, who seemed comfortable sharing insider information as well as their opinions, views and feelings with me.

Finally, the material is supplemented by an analysis of several sources of official and unofficial documents from both national contexts, such as legislative texts and reports; policy documents produced by public institutions, NGOs and activists (N=23; 11 for France, 12 for Britain).[5]

Interviews were subsequently transcribed, analysed and coded using MaxQDA software to identify key frames, as were field notes and documents. The names and identifying details of the interviewees have been altered to protect their anonymity, in accordance with consent forms and agreements. The data collected was analysed using critical frame analysis (CFA) (Verloo, 2007; Haar and Verloo, 2016) in order to explore how policy actors represent and conceive the problem of public sexual harassment. In particular, the analysis focused on how dimensions of race and racism were involved in the framing; this included the intersectional aspects that consider both the sexist and racist dimensions of street harassment, the racialisation of sexism, and how policy actors addressed or conceived the risk of racial targeting. Data

was coded using both deductive and inductive approaches. In the first stage of the coding process, three broad codes were used to identify whether street harassment was framed (1) in an intersectional way (with a focus on gender and race), (2) in a gender-only framing, or (3) as a racialised problem that attributed responsibility for street harassment to immigrant and racialised men. The second coding phase involved two main steps to refine the analysis. First, to capture the variety of racialising frames used by policy actors to implicitly refer to race, I coded the references to *culture*, *religion* and *territoriality* made in their diagnosis and prognosis of street harassment. Second, I have incorporated two codes to identify how policy actors conceived the risk of racial targeting in both contexts (*acknowledgment* or *disregard of this risk*).

Throughout the article, the notion of 'frame' and framing will thus be used to refer to the ways in which policy actors represent and conceive the problem of public sexual harassment. The wider notion of 'race repertoires' will be used to refer to the set of frames and representations around race and racism that prevail in a given context.

How race repertoires shape the framing of public sexual harassment in Britain and France

The following section explores the effects of the varying race repertoires on the framing of street harassment in both countries. It first nuances the common notion of a 'colour-blind' or race-neutral repertoire in France by showing how some policymakers summon racialised representations of perpetrators while ignoring the racialised dimensions of street harassment faced by some victims. Contrastingly, the race-conscious repertoire has contributed to the framing of public sexual harassment as an intersectional problem in Britain, highlighting its racialised dimensions faced by some victims.

French policymakers' framing of street harassment: a race-neutral repertoire?

This section stresses two dimensions of policymakers' framing of public sexual harassment in France: first, the racialised and territorialised framing, which is likely to fuel femonationalism; second, the gender-only framing, which highlights the absence of intersectionality. Both these dimensions reveal a disregard for racism in the framing of the problem. Some central policy actors' representations of the perpetrators are not race-neutral although they are mainly expressed in non-ethnic terms, while at the same time revealing a blind spot on the racialised dimension of public sexual harassment faced by ethnic minorities.

First, some policymakers central to the drafting of the law hold racialised conceptions of public sexual harassment and their perpetrators. Although this is rarely expressed in explicit racial terms, policymakers refer to race in different ways during the fieldwork interviews: by naming culture, religion or territories. During our interview, an MP who was the then vice-president of the Women's Rights Delegation to the National Assembly and member of the centre-right party *La République en Marche* (LREM), stressed that the problem was 'confessional', about religious differences. Referring to a place in his constituency, in a large French city, he says:

> It's a public square that's a bit… it's a very… multi-coloured place, where there
> are very different religious denominations, it's… Muslim denominations,

more than Catholic, and women don't go through that square. The women told me: 'As long as we are with you, it's fine. As soon as you leave and we come back, it won't be fine at all.' You see? We must also give the woman the means to be able to… to really be surrounded. And we will securitise the woman only by engaging in dialogue.

When I asked him if he insists on some neighbourhoods rather than others, he replied:

Yes, I have the nerve to do that, yeah [laughs sarcastically]… I do tell the things… Yes, I emphasise that in neighbourhoods with a high… dense and difficult population, let's say… so, we don't have the right in France to express ourselves in denominational or ethnic figures… but in these cases, the places are more delicate, yes. In some areas, I'm sorry… You won't pass like that. You won't go by in a miniskirt, or even a skirt for that matter, or even a dress. (Interview, 2020)

The expression of 'dense and difficult population' and the mention of the ban of 'denominational and ethnic figures' implicitly refers to racialised populations, but without mentioning it, in line with the prevailing race-neutral repertoire in France. Although the ban of ethnic statistics does not apply to a discursive use, the conception according to which one cannot express oneself in terms of race is widely spread especially among political and institutional actors. As illustrated through this MPs' words, that does not preclude the expression of racialised conceptions or reference to social groups in terms of race, as including cultural, religious or ethnic differences. This bypass through territoriality, implicitly referring to immigrant and racialised populations, is also reflected in political actors' interventions on the bill at the Women's Rights Delegation to the national Assembly. A former MP from the French traditional right-wing party also mentioned the inability for women to wear a skirt, referring to some territorial areas:

In some neighbourhoods, women cannot wear skirts any more […]. We also learnt that there were cafés, two hours from Paris, where women were not welcome. We also know that there are neighbourhoods where they cannot dress the way they want […]. Who would have thought, twenty years ago, that we would have to fight again for the wearing of the skirt and, more widely, for our rights and those of our children? I cannot accept that, in our country, we create a feeling of guilt in women who wear a skirt or who simply want to live their lives. (Assemblée Nationale, 2018: 61)

Later in her intervention, she mentioned the problem of 'religious fanaticism' and the 'radical view of Islam, hostile to women's emancipation'. In response to this female MP's inquiry, the then Secretary of State for women's rights, Marlène Schiappa, concurred and stated that she was actively working, with the Home Office, 'on what [they] have called the 'quartiers de reconquête républicaine' [districts of republican reconquest, my translation], where 10 000 security police officers will be in charge of repressing street harassment' (Assemblée Nationale, 2018: 62). This territorial frame was also echoed in Marlène Schiappa's hearing at the same Delegation, when she declared that 'the French Republic does not tolerate street harassment, it prohibits it,

and [it] stand[s] with women to fight against these phenomena of street harassment that prevent some from frequenting certain neighborhoods' (Assemblée Nationale, 2017: 10).

Frames on territory, religion and culture are often articulated in some policy actors' representations of the problem. For example, the MP mentioned before from the majority party (LREM), also referred to the role of family in educating men to respect women, by mentioning the wider gender equalities in some families, implicitly referring to their Muslim background and culture:

> I think we need to think more about how to get it into the heads of these young people. […] But I think the convincing part will only be in the family, and… [laughs] really… in the family, well, the man and the woman have different tasks, it's very different… So, we have in the street what we also see at home.

He then suggests how the 'group effect' may, on the street, reinforce this implicitly cultural sexism inherited from the family sphere:

> It even becomes more acute in the street because, in addition of that, there is the group effect. So when there is a single person… Whether it's Muslim or whatever… If there's a girl passing by, he's not going to call her out. It's a group effect, a mass effect that will sharpen their male side. So, if we don't explain it to them, they'll think it's natural!

This MP played a central role in the drafting of the 2018 law criminalising public sexual harassment. He was heard by the cross-party parliamentary working group on the criminalisation of street harassment in his quality of vice-president of the Women's Rights Delegation, and participated in its report on the bill. His discourse puts the onus of public sexual harassment on Muslim men in specific territories, thereby racialising sexism, or, in Volpp's words, 'blaming culture for bad behaviour' (Volpp, 2000). While more MPs central to the bill territorialise the problem of street harassment rather than express more explicit forms of racialisation, it should be noted that in a 'colour-blind' context (Bleich, 2000; Amiraux and Simon, 2006; Sabbagh and Peer, 2008), talking about popular neighbourhoods is often tantamount to talking about race. It functions as a means to designate racialised populations living in these areas (Tissot and Poupeau, 2005). This is also illustrated in an interview with another MP central to the law who refers to the critiques from feminists during the consultative auditions:

> Some associations said […] that we were particularly targeting neighbourhoods where there are many people of immigrant origin. But in certain neighbourhoods, we had done it, not because they were of immigrant origin, but because there was a high density of men. When there are people, especially where there are a lot of… of refugees, or people like that… who are in a precarious situation, on the street and who are in the public space a lot, it creates a lot of men in the public space and therefore it's more complicated for women to feel at ease. (Interview, 2022)

The argument of the 'high density of men' in particular areas thus refers here to the presence of working-class, immigrant and refugee men, and is aimed at justifying that some territories are more targeted than others. The Paris guide 'Gender and public space' also points to the working-class neighbourhood of *La Goutte d'Or* as a district 'where men are overrepresented'.[6] These rhetorics are echoed in the work of Escafré-Dublet and Lelévrier on Paris urban policies, who suggest than 'urban policy interventions is a way to deal with ethnic concentration in deprived neighbourhoods without naming it' (2019: 284).

Consequently, although racialisation is not expressed in terms of ethnic differences per se, the bypass through culture, religion or geographical origin works as a way to refer to racially minoritised populations. In this case, men from African and North-African descent are seen as responsible for the harm done to women in the streets, all the more so when they are Muslim or from working-class neighbourhoods. Race is not named, yet racialised representations persist in the policymaking process, which nuances the 'colour-blind' or 'race-neutral' characterisation of the French race repertoire.

While racialisation discourses may be more acute at the right side of the political spectrum, they were not limited to it. This bypass through territorialisation has been frequent for left-wing actors who were involved in anti-street harassment policies before the 2018 law. For instance, the socialist mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo (PS), proposed a very localised and exceptional solution to tackle the problem of street harassment in the deprived neighbourhood of *La Chappelle-Pajol*, characterised by an overrepresentation of immigrant and racialised populations.[7] Marylène Lieber has particularly highlighted that policy developments from the socialist actors of the Paris municipality (prior to the 2018 law) implied forms of racialisation and territorialisation of street harassment (Lieber, 2018; 2021). Similarly, Claire Hancock noted that the Paris municipality 'systematically associates gender issues with issues of migrant integration' (2021: 3).[8]

Second, street harassment is framed in a gender-only axis by policy actors: the potential racist dimensions of the problem are ignored. Some intersectional dimensions of public sexual harassment have been considered (such as homophobia and age), yet race is absent in the discussions during the policymaking process. This silence on race and racism during the policymaking process has been shared by actors throughout the political spectrum. For instance, the cross-party parliamentary working group on the criminalisation of street harassment is composed of five MPs from different political parties (from the centre-right to the left), who shared similar conceptions. The group released a report with recommendations for the bill in 2018, defining street harassment as follows:

> The working group thus considers that […] any behaviour or remarks on the grounds of a person's sex, sexual orientation or supposed or actual sexual identity, which either undermines his or her dignity […] should be targeted. This definition identifies the gender of the person as the cause of the offence in the first place and thus places it within the fight against sexism. It also identifies LGBT persons as potential victims of this offence.

While this definition considers LGTB persons as possible victims of public sexual harassment, racism is not in the scope of the definition. During our interviews, none of

them considered the potential intersection of sexism and racism in the phenomenon of street harassment. Additionally, an analysis of nine selected key documents[9] was conducted to assess the occurrences of the following terms: 'racism', 'stigmatisation' and 'intersectionality'. The results reveal that none of these terms occur in the policy documents with regard to the racism faced by victims of public sexual harassment. The term 'racism' appears three times in these documents (but not directly in relation to public sexual harassment), while the two others are absent. This finding aligns with previous research on the widely shared silence on race in the French republican context (Bleich, 2000; Möschel, 2009; Bertossi, 2012; Mazouz, 2021; Beaman, 2022).

This racism-blindness is strongly reflected in the resulting law, which includes a list of aggravated factors: street harassment, named 'sexist outrage', is criminalised on a higher scale when it is committed on a person who is a minor, or is vulnerable due to that person's old age, disability, illness, pregnancy or socio-economic situation, and when it has a homophobic motivation. Race is therefore not in this list of aggravated factors, which excludes situations in which street harassment is motivated by both sexism and racism.

The framing of street harassment by French policymakers is therefore characterised by more or less explicit forms of racialisation of the perpetrators – which sometimes pass through a territorialisation of this form of violence – and by a blind spot on the racialised dimensions of street harassment faced by racially minoritised women.

British policymakers' intersectional framing of public sexual harassment

In contrast, while Britain is not exempt from forms of racialisation of sexism as scholars have already shown, for example on the subject of 'grooming gangs' (Cockbain, 2013; Tufail, 2015; Britton, 2019), the political discussion around public sexual harassment has not implied such frames of racialisation of the perpetrators. Feminist activists and political actors leading the campaign in Britain mainly framed the problem of public sexual harassment in an intersectional way, emphasising its racist dimension for racialised women who experience this form of violence.

The tragic murder of Sarah Everard by a Metropolitan police officer after he kidnapped her in the streets of South London in March 2021 has also sparked the campaign against public sexual harassment and has triggered the attention of political actors. The latter have mainly borrowed the intersectional framing of public sexual harassment that had first been brought to the fore by feminist campaigners. The collective *End PSH*, which has been leading the campaign for the criminalisation of public sexual harassment in Britain, defines it as various forms of unwelcomed and unwanted sexual attention in public spaces and as an 'intersectional issue'. In their online websites and platforms, they insist on this intersectional lens, stating that experiences of public sexual harassment can be aggravated by the ways in which the characteristics of a victim, such as gender, race and sexuality, intersect one with another. This feminist organisation campaigning for the criminalisation of public sexual harassment has played a leading role in framing the problem and in imposing the terms to deal with it.

Sexist harassment in the public space was already partly discussed via the Nottinghamshire's trailblazer local policy recording misogynistic hate crime (Legg and Citizens, 2019). A campaign spread nationally after Nottingham instituted this local policy in 2016 and has shown positive impact evaluation

(Mullany and Trickett, 2018). From the outset, the local organisers, including feminists and the local police, have framed this issue as an intersectional one. The survey reports and documents highlight two recurrent dimensions of hate crime: misogyny and islamophobia (Samanani and Pope, 2019). It must be noted that, in the current hate crime legislation, listed protected characteristics are race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity.[10] Hate crimes motivated by sexism are thus not included in the legislation, hence the campaign and criticisms calling for a change in the current legal framework (Zempi and Smith, 2021).

On the side of British policymakers, the intersectional dimensions of public sexual harassment are also often mentioned, both in policy documents and during the fieldwork interviews. According to our lexical document analysis, the term 'intersectionality' appears 32 times in the 12 documents selected for the British case. Intersectionality is indeed considered a central aspect of policymaking against gender-based violence, at least on a discursive level. In the London Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2018–2021 'A Safer City for Women and Girls', intersectionality is highlighted as essential in how institutions must handle gender-based violence:

> We have a responsibility, as key agencies to ensure that our strategies and policies enable services to work together to address the intersectionality of women's needs. To do so, attention should be paid to the ways in which these issues are commonly handled by services, the ways in which these issues tend to be separated out and dealt with in isolation of each other.[11]

This stresses the importance brought to intersectionality in the ways of addressing intersecting inequalities from the part of public institutions in Britain (Squires, 2009; Strid et al, 2013), although this might not be fully achieved in practice or might cover complex and varied interpretations of intersectionality (Bassel and Emejulu, 2010; Hankivsky and Cormier, 2011; Christoffersen, 2021). In the same vein, the government's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy of July 2021 shows, in its section on 'Sexual and other forms of harassment', that 'in 2020 the police recorded 219,661 harassment offences and 4,810 racially or religiously aggravated harassment offences'.[12]

During our interview, the then Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities and Labour MP also displayed an intersectional framing of public sexual harassment, and raised a concern on the situation of Black women facing high rates of unwanted sexual attention in public spaces. Another feminist Labour MP shared an intersectional understanding of public sexual harassment and gender-based violence in general. She mentioned a piece of legislation that she pushes forward to establish 'a specific firewall between immigration control and victimisation because any victim should not feel that when they report that that will be of harm to their migration status' (Interview, 2022).

She also developed on the Valerie's law, named after Valerie Forde, a Black woman murdered in 2014 after 'the police basically failed to listen to Black women's voice' (Interview, 2022). She then referred to her cooperation with Black women's organisations on the criminal justice system's treatment of Black, migrant women, and women with unsettled status:

> We're fighting for various different pieces of legislation that, when they are put in place, would enable… I mean I'm not naive enough to say that it would solve it, our institutions are provably institutionally sexist and racist… And why are our institutions like the police? [laughs]

This intersectional framing seems to remain beyond political lines and divides. Female MPs from the Conservative party also highlight the experience of racially minoritised women, as illustrated by the words of this MP and chair of the Women and Equalities Committee at the Houses of Parliament:

> The sad reality is we know that Black women are perhaps the most likely to experience public sexual harassment. There's an age dimension, there's also homophobia, etc. So, I think you could perhaps make it an aggravating factor if a particular characteristic is brought into flag.

When I mentioned to her that the French law criminalising street harassment includes aggravating factors but that race is not part of the list, she reacted with a lot of surprise:

> Not race?! Wow… I would have thought that was going to be the most obvious one! (Interview, 2022)

This surprised reaction further illustrates the gap between the prevailing race repertoires in both countries: taking into account the experiences of racially minoritised women facing sexist and racist forms of public sexual harassment is considered evident by British policymakers (at least discursively at this stage), while it constitutes a totally blind spot in the French policymaking process and in the resulting law.

The fact that feminist activists launched the campaign and undertook lobbying strategies towards MPs and political actors in Britain to put forward the bill that they prepared[13] partly explains that their framing of the problem has been more widespread than that of feminists in the French case. As the main initiators of these policy discussions, British feminists indeed played a more central role in framing the policy problem than their French counterparts. Contrastingly, French feminist activists mobilised against public sexual harassment were not supportive of the criminalising law that was put on the agenda by the government, and they framed the problem in an intersectional perspective that was not adopted by policymakers.

Finally, in contrast with the French case, public sexual harassment was not framed as a territorialised or racialised problem putting the onus on migrants and racially minoritised men in Britain. This does not, however, imply that there has never been a racialised representation of public sexual harassment, but rather that this has not been the dominant framing of the problem as observed in France.

Tackling the risk of racial targeting in the criminalisation of street harassment: the effects of a racism-blind vs racism-conscious repertoire

This second section aims to address how the two contrasting race repertoires in France and Britain have contributed to different attitudes and frames regarding the risk of racial targeting in the criminalisation of public sexual harassment.

A racism-blind repertoire in France: the active ignorance of the risk of racial stigmatisation

French policymakers central to the bill did not address the potential risk of racial targeting and ignored the critique brought up by feminists during consultation phases. Policymakers' active inattention paid to this critique of the potential racialised outcome of the reform is reflected in most of the interviews conducted with them, essentially legislative actors responsible for drafting the law. The rapporteur of the law, an MP from LREM, told me that one of the criticisms from feminists heard by the MPs was that 'it is going to be another stigmatisation and that we are going to certain places or neighbourhoods to stigmatise, which turns out to be totally false'. She completes:

> There would be no more fines if we started from this principle that the police necessarily made racist choices, because this is what was sometimes suggested in certain political groups, that is what was said! I cannot start from the false assumption that the police will necessarily commit racial profiling. Starting from this assumption equates to discriminating against the police. Police are those who fight against discrimination against women! And not all police officers are racist people who judge where to go in certain areas. I think that we have to trust our police. So, for me, these are false excuses to do nothing, and again, there you go, to stigmatise the police. We can't live in a society that stigmatises. That's what we're fighting against! (Interview, March 2020)

The words of the law rapporteur illustrate a denunciation of the feminist and anti-racist critique that points out the potential racial bias of the police. She expressed outrage at the assumption that the police would engage in racial-profiling and defines it as a discrimination against police as an institution. By instantaneously rejecting this possibility, she ignores the critique made by these feminists and, as an essential actor in the drafting of the law, she also dismisses any possibility of seriously addressing the issue of racial stigmatisation. At a later stage, this MP was also responsible for evaluating the law for which she had been a rapporteur. As a result, the evaluation of the law criminalising public sexual harassment contains no mention of this potential risk or of the critique made on this ground.[14]

Another policymaker, from the centrist party MoDem, played a central role as one of the five MPs heading the parliamentary working group and also downplayed the feminists' criticism. When I asked him about the hearings conducted by the working group with feminist activists, he referred to it in these terms:

> In any case, when we advance on a project, for a certain number of associations which are rather… sometimes militant, we never go far enough according to them. The problem is there! And, at the beginning, there wasn't a real expectation on the part of the feminist community that street harassment would be criminalised. Some of them even thought that it would stigmatise, people who talked about something like 'You're going to target certain neighbourhoods rather than others…' etc. (Interview, 2020)

The MP's comments minimise the issue raised by these feminists and, like the rapporteur of the law, he refers to their political and activist background to disqualify it. Another MP who was also part of the cross-party parliamentary working group on the criminalisation of street harassment, reacts very defensively when I mention the feminists' critique of the risk of racial targeting during our interview. This MP has been part of the centre-right party LREM since 2017, after having been a member of the centre-left PS (*Parti Socialiste*, Socialist Party) for 27 years. Since 2019, she has also been serving as the general secretary of the governmental institution in charge of the fight against discrimination.[15] During our interview, she first downplays the critique by referring to the political orientation of these activists, and by denying any form of racial bias in police work:

> Yes, I've heard this critique, but very clearly, I can see which feminist associations you're talking about. I don't think a priori that the police act by profiling in the public, I do not think so! […] I don't believe that when we give a legal tool to the police to fight against street harassment, that they are going to use it to discriminate against people according to their origin. I don't believe this, I'm opposed to it, I have a republican vision of the police. For me, the police are republican. Nothing, nothing attests to these racist behaviours that the associations are absolutely full of all the time, nothing attests to and nothing justifies not protecting women against this harassment [in an angry tone]!

When I inquired about the details of the discussions on this issue during the auditions she conducted as a member of the parliamentary working group, she reacted very defensively and suggested that we talk about street harassment and not racism in policing institutions:

> Is this a study on racist behaviour in the police or on street harassment [in an accusatory tone]? Because if it is a study on racist behaviour in the police, that is another subject. You write me the solicitation email on that and we talk about it. If you ask me about street harassment, I gave you my answer. My answer was that there was nothing that could be used to attest to this, that we could not create a system of fines that protects women, that protects the equality of women under the pretext that the police would behave in a discriminatory way. That's it, I have nothing more to say on that subject!

This MP's reaction reveals the difficulty of talking about race and racism with French institutional and policy actors. Despite her position at the head of the anti-discrimination institution and the role she played in drafting the bill criminalising street harassment in France, she stated that these were two strictly different subjects, which illustrates the gender-only axis approach taken in this policy. The tense tone she employs in her answers and her representations of race-related issues within the police as contrary to the value of universalism further exemplifies the racism-blind repertoire prevailing in France. The repeated refusal to address the subject of the potential risk of racial targeting on the grounds that the police is a republican institution shows how this racism-blindness is to a certain extent linked to national constructs of republican and universalist values, and, therefore, informed by a particular race repertoire. When

I develop the case of Britain during the interview in order to justify my questions and my comparative approach, she expressed her critical representation of Britain's approach to race:

> Moreover, Britain does not have the same universalist vision of the Republic. It's a much more community-based vision, which may be respectable, but in any case, it's not part of a universalist vision of the Republic to which I'm particularly attached. We don't live in the same way in Britain or in France, this history of… of communities [in a demeaning tone]. For me, there is no community! There is a national community in France, and this is the way in which I think we should live in France! (Interview, 2022)

These comments highlight the acknowledgment of different citizenship models prevailing in both countries, and reveals the critical view of many French institutional and political actors towards Anglo-Saxon multiculturalist models. It also stresses the inability to deal with race and racism in France, as this would often be considered an affront to universalism. The rhetoric of 'communitarism' is often put forward when race-related debates are brought to the fore.

The policymakers' handling of the criticisms made by feminists intervening in the consultation phases indeed appears to be an active inattention to racism rather than a neutral attitude towards race issues, thus revealing the racism-blind ideas that were in play. The 'colour-blind' race repertoire in this context functions more as a racism-blindness. This, combined with the racialised framing of public sexual harassment by some MPs, suggests that this repertoire is not racially neutral. In this light, the paradoxical race frames in France can be characterised both by a low recognition of racism and inequalities on the one hand, and by a high perception of cultural differences towards gender on the other hand.

The attention towards racism leads to acknowledging the potential risk of racial targeting in Britain

In Britain, in line with the prevailing race-conscious repertoire, the idea of institutional racism is well established. This leads to a discursive frame that acknowledges the risk of racial targeting in dealing with public sexual harassment. While feminist activists leading the campaign for a new legislation to criminalise public sexual harassment have considered this risk and have to some extent adapted the campaign according to it, policymakers' framing also displays a certain awareness of this risk of racial targeting, at least discursively. As feminist activists and NGOs have played a central role in the campaign and in the first stages of policymaking on this issue in Britain in a more bottom up approach than in France, their framing and how it echoes in policymaker's views and discourses is insightful.

While, in France, policymakers have reacted to feminists' critique over the risk of racial stigmatisation by rejecting any potential risk and by denying any racial bias in police work, British policymakers involved in the policy discussions believe in the existence of institutional racism. This leads some policymakers to consider more monitoring of police work if a criminalisation of public sexual harassment eventually reached the status of law across the UK.

The awareness of institutional racism was indeed more apparent in the British fieldwork, where the use of racial categories is firmly rooted in institutional discourse and policy (Banton, 1994; Bleich, 2003). This is evidenced by the frequent use of the term 'racism' in the selected documents, which appears 88 times, with 15 instances directly related to public sexual harassment. This observation was further confirmed through interviews with British policymakers involved in policy discussions on public sexual harassment. When I asked the then Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities and Labour MP to share her thoughts about the risk of racial stigmatisation in the criminalisation of public sexual harassment, she told me that 'there's been evidence of appalling behaviour by the police, which has been very racialised' (Interview, 2022). She particularly elaborated on the policing practice of Stop and Search, mentioning it has been 'used very disproportionately towards Black men'. She then focuses on the criminalisation of Public sexual harassment, adding:

> Given the nature of policing in the UK, there probably would be a bit of a disproportionate impact, I think. We would need to make sure then that there was strong monitoring of it, that the police were using like CCTV or that they had some kind of evidential basis […] and that there is a proper checking of the process.

The awareness of the risk of racial targeting from the police is also reflected in my exchange with this other Labour MP, although in a more mitigated way. When I asked her thought about the feminist critique of the risk of racial bias in criminalising public sexual harassment, she told me that 'over-policing no doubt is absolutely an issue' and that 'a concern of feminist organisations is surely around racial profiling'. Despite her awareness of the risk of racial targeting, she also expressed a concern and mentions that she 'won't ask women to take the fall for institutional racism within the police'. She added:

> Whilst I recognise that there is a concern about over-policing in certain communities, why the f[…] on Earth is it women's responsibility then to take the floor fall for that? Why is it all with us? We say 'They're going to do something wrong, so you can't have this.' Maybe the thing we should be saying is stop them doing that wrong. [Over-policing] is a concern without question. It's a concern, but it's not one that is the burden that must be carried by women at the expense of their […] I would spend my life fighting to make sure that police aren't institutionally racist, but that doesn't mean I have to sacrifice advancing feminism.

While this shows that the stance of British femocrats is not clear-cut and reflects a difficulty in handling feminist and anti-racist positions simultaneously, it also illustrates the contrast with French femocrats who mostly deny the risk of racial targeting. This feminist MP also added that 'without question, it would need to be under review whether [over-policing] was happening' if public sexual harassment was to be made a criminal offence in Britain. She also expressed once again a concern that the voices of Black women in Britain were not heard by the police when they report, and mentioned to me that 'in fact, the institutional racism work both ways: under-policing of crimes against Black women, over-policing of crimes perpetrated

by Black men'. The intersectional framing of this MP also contrasts with the French legislative actors' representations. The easy use of racial categories and the awareness of racism issues by British policymakers is in line with the dominant race-conscious repertoire and anti-racist institutional machinery in Britain.

This is also echoed in the interview conducted with the chair of the Women and Equalities Committee, a Conservative MP, who highlight the institutional misogyny and racism within the police institution, and the need for them to change this. She first insists on the 'institutionalised misogyny in our police force', mentioning the intense scrutiny that has been directed at the police since the Everard case. When I asked her thoughts about the problem of racism in police work, she answers by stressing the need to improve policing institutions:

> I mean, how many years are we on from the Macpherson report[16] where we discussed that the police are institutionally racist? Now we're discussing whether they're institutionally sexist, you know. The police genuinely have a great deal of work to do to improve their attitudes and their reputation.

Hence, the risk of racial profiling or of disproportionate impact of the criminalisation of public sexual harassment on racialised men is part of the framing of the problem in Britain. Not only is public sexual harassment framed as an intersectional issue affecting people on the grounds of sexism and racism (among other things), but the concern around the potential racialised outcome of a policy reform is also part of the picture.

Conclusion

Prevailing race repertoires in Britain and in France have had a significant impact on the policy framing of public sexual harassment. Through an empirical analysis conducted with actors involved in policy formulation in both countries, the article has shown that race repertoires can foster or hinder the use of frames that racialise sexism as well as the ability to address the risk of racial targeting. In particular, it argues that a blind spot on racism during policymaking against gender-based violence is more likely to lead to femonationalist frames.

In France, what is often called a 'colour-blind' repertoire has rather operated as a racism-blind repertoire in the making of the law criminalising street harassment, leading to an inability to prevent femonationalism. This passes through the active ignorance of the potential risk of racial targeting and stigmatisation in the criminalisation of street harassment. In contrast, the race and racism-conscious ideas in Britain have contributed to framing public sexual harassment as an intersectional issue both by policymakers and feminist campaigners and to acknowledge the potential risk of racial targeting in the criminalisation of street harassment.

This article has contributed to the literature on policy analysis in three ways. First, it has shown the importance of examining how nationally embedded ideas on race intersect with policy discussions on gender-based violence in the context of growing femonationalism. By highlighting how race repertoires generate particular frames during anti-gender-based violence policymaking, this article underscores the need for an empirical analysis of how frames circulate from one policy field to another.

Second, by analysing how race repertoires may affect the ability to address potential risks of racial targeting, the article has argued that they can foster or hinder the

development of femonationalism. It has stressed the importance of studying how policymaking on gender equality may, under certain circumstances, contribute to the development of femonationalism. In doing so, the study adds to the growing field of research on femonationalism and highlights the need for further examination of cross-national variations in the development of this phenomenon.

Third, the article suggests that, instead of reifying national cultures on race and racism, an empirical analysis of how they unfold in policymaking can offer valuable insights into the ways in which these ideational dimensions concretely impact policies. Furthermore, such empirical analyses can also, in return, deepen our understanding of these repertoires. For example, the article has shown that while the French race repertoire is often conceptualised as 'colour-blind', an empirical investigation of its actualisation in policymaking suggests that it may instead operate as a racism–blind repertoire. In this perspective, empirical and comparative analyses of how race repertoires are translated into policy frames can further advance their conceptualisation.

While this article has primarily focused on ideational dimensions and how they impact policy framing, it has also underscored the important role that institutional settings play in the framing process. In particular, it has exposed the varying forms of policy process in both contexts, highlighting the distinct roles played by feminist activists in the policy pre-adoption phases. To further analyse how cross-country variations may facilitate or hinder the development of femonationalism, future research could further articulate the ideational perspective to an institutionalist approach.

Notes
1. The expressions 'street harassment' and 'public sexual harassment' are used interchangeably throughout the article. Both refer to unwanted sexual attention in public spaces.
2. Law No. 2018–703 of August 3rd 2018 Reinforcing the fight against sexist and sexual violence, III, art. 15–18.
3. Excerpt from the petition launching the campaign to criminalise public sexual harassment in Britain in 2018, one year after the law was passed in France. Feminist campaigners also frequently mentioned the example of France during my fieldwork in Britain.
4. The acronym 'PSH' stands for 'public sexual harassment'.
5. Some of these documents are not listed in the references to maintain the anonymity of the organisations.
6. Guide 'Gender and the City', Mayor of Paris, 2016: 48
7. She proposed to create a 'local group for the treatment of delinquency' and heightened police controls in this district.
8. Hancock and Mobillion (2019) notably elaborates on the case of a socialist mayor of a Parisian arrondissement who evoked women's rights to stigmatise immigrant and Muslim men.
9. See the list of documents in the references.
10. Although with no equal protection for all of these existing characteristics.
11. Mayor of London, 'A Safer City for Women and Girls. London Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2018–2021', March 2018.
12. HM Government, 'Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy', July 2021.
13. With the help of specialised lawyers who worked for the campaign.

[14] Impact evaluation of the law of 3 August reinforcing the fight against sexist and sexual violences, December 2020.

[15] DILCRAH [Délégation Interministérielle à la Lutte Contre le Racisme, l'Antisémitisme et la Haine anti-LGBT].

[16] The Macpherson report was published in July 1997 by the UK Home Secretary following the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, a young Black British man, in April 1993. It aimed at improving policing institutions in the investigation of racist crimes and in reducing the disproportionate use of some police practices such as Stop and Search towards Black and minority ethnic communities.

[17] All the titles of the documents listed here are my translation.

Conflict of interest
The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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