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The gender gap in populist radical-right voting: examining the demand side in Western and Eastern Europe

EELCO HARTEVELD, WOUTER VAN DER BRUG,
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ABSTRACT In most countries, men are more likely to vote for parties of the populist radical right (PRR) than women. The authors argue here that there are two mechanisms that might potentially explain this gender gap: *mediation* (women's attitudes and characteristics differ from men's in ways that explain the PRR vote) and *moderation* (women vote for different reasons than men). They apply these two mechanisms to general theories of support for PRR parties—the socio-structural model, the discontent model, and the policy vote model—and test these on a large sample of voters in seventeen Western and Eastern European countries. The study shows that the gender gap is produced by a combination of moderation and mediation. Socio-structural differences between men and women exist, but the extent to which they explain the gender gap is limited, and primarily restricted to post-Communist countries. Furthermore, women generally do not differ from men in their level of nativism, authoritarianism or discontent with democracy. Among women, however, these attitudes are less strongly related to a radical-right vote. This suggests that men consider the issues of the radical right to be more salient, but also that these parties deter women for reasons other than the content of their political programme. While the existing research has focused almost exclusively on mediation, we show that moderation and mediation contribute almost equally to the gender gap.

KEYWORDS European radical right, gender, gender gap, populist radical right, populism, voting behaviour

A striking finding of most studies of electoral support for parties of the populist radical right (PRR) is that men are more likely to support them than women.¹ While the existence of this 'gender gap' in support for the populist radical right has been repeatedly observed, few studies have tested explanations for the phenomenon, and those that have yield contradictory

1 Terri E. Givens, 'The radical right gender gap', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2004, 30–54 (32); Pippa Norris, *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005), 145.

results. In the Canadian case, for example, the gap might be explained by differences between men's and women's political attitudes, especially concerning law and order.² In Western Europe, however, various (case) studies have not been able satisfactorily to explain the gap by attributing it to men's and women's structural positions or their political views on issues such as immigration.³ Furthermore, studies of this phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe are scarce. Since the evidence is limited to a few studies yielding contradictory results, there is clearly an absence in the literature on differences between men and women in their political behaviour, as well as in the literature on support for the populist radical right. Our study helps to fill this space. We investigate the nature of the gender gap by proposing a framework to explain the observed difference in the electoral appeal of PRR parties for men and women. We apply this framework to a large sample of voters in seventeen countries, which enables us to assess the robustness of the findings. By investigating whether the distribution and relative weight of the usual explanations for radical-right support are gendered, we aim to identify whether and how the electoral potential of PRR parties differs between men and women (as discussed in the introduction to this issue). Because our aim is to develop and test general hypotheses, providing in-depth analyses of individual countries is beyond the scope of this paper. However, we do investigate whether patterns differ between the post-Communist Central and Eastern European countries and the countries of Western Europe, given that the nature and context of PRR parties differs in the two groups of countries.

We argue that two separate mechanisms might conceivably explain the gender gap in the electoral support for the radical right, one of which has been largely overlooked in the literature. First, men and women might differ on key characteristics and attitudes that influence a person's propensity to vote for PRR parties. This mechanism of *mediation* has hitherto been the primary explanation for the gender gap. It is usually implicitly assumed that the gap indicates that fewer women than men agree with radical-right ideology. However, empirical evidence for this explanation is weak. Summarizing research on this topic, Cas Mudde concludes that most studies show

- 2 Elisabeth Gidengil, Matthew Hennigar, André Blais and Neil Nevitte, 'Explaining the gender gap in support for the New Right: the case of Canada', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 38, no. 10, 2005, 1171–95.
- 3 Marie-Christine Fontana, Andreas Sidler and Sibylle Hardmeier, 'The "New Right" vote: an analysis of the gender gap in the vote choice for the SVP', *Swiss Political Science Review*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2006, 243–71; Givens, 'The radical right gender gap'; Tim Immerzeel, Hilde Coffé and Tanja van der Lippe, 'Explaining the gender gap in radical right voting: a cross-national investigation in 12 Western European countries', *Comparative European Politics* (Advanced Online Publication), 1 July 2013, doi:10.1057/cep.2013.20; Phyllis L. F. Rippeyoung, 'When women are right: the influence of gender, work and values on European far-right party support', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2007, 379–97.

'no significant gender gap in terms of radical right attitudes'.⁴ Gender differences in economic and social positions do continue to be substantial in most European societies, but these factors have generally been found to be only a partial explanation of radical-right support,⁵ which is why the puzzle remains.

We propose a second possible explanation for the gender gap, one that has been largely overlooked: men and women might evaluate parties on the basis of different considerations. To the extent that certain issues are less (or more) salient to women than to men, this might lead to differences in the electoral appeal of PRR parties. This mechanism of *moderation* could potentially provide a better explanation of the gap. Although tentatively explored,⁶ moderation has not yet been systematically investigated.

To study processes of *mediation* (differences in the distribution of men and women on the predictors of support) and *moderation* (differences in the effects of predictors of support), we need theories about the appropriate predictors of PRR support. Building on existing knowledge of PRR voting, we will present the three most common explanatory models—the socio-structural model, the discontent model and the policy vote model—and subsequently theorize on how these might produce a gender gap by means of mediation or moderation. To a great extent, we build on existing work on radical-right voting, as well as on the literature concerning sex differences in political attitudes and behaviour. Even though we do not develop a new theoretical model to explain the gender gap, we think our study is an important contribution to the literature: in an area that is often characterized by stereotypes, we provide a systematic test of a broad range of explanations in seventeen European countries.

We demonstrate that moderation is at least as important as mediation (the explanation assumed by most scholars). Women are less likely to support the populist radical right *even* if they agree with its ideology. This suggests that the issues raised by PRR parties are more often deemed salient by men, and also that these parties deter women for reasons other than the content of their political programme. At the same time, while the general pattern applies to all European parties, we note that sex differences in social-structural position are (still) responsible for a substantial part of the gender gap in Central and Eastern Europe.

4 Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 113.

5 Wouter van der Brug and Meindert Fennema, 'The support base of radical right parties in the enlarged European Union', *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 31, no. 5, 2009, 589–608; Niels Spierings and Andrej Zaslove, 'Gendering the vote for populist radical-right parties', in these pages.

6 Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais and Nevitte, 'Explaining the gender gap in support for the New Right'.

Theory

One of the most consistent findings about the electorate of PRR parties is that these parties are more popular among men than among women in virtually all countries and elections.⁷ This over-representation of men is also apparent among the members and representatives of these parties.⁸ In line with most of the studies on differences in political behaviour between men and women,⁹ this phenomenon has been dubbed the 'gender gap' in PRR voting. However, it should be noted that the term 'gender' is not entirely appropriate. As discussed in the introduction to this issue,¹⁰ 'gender' is related to characteristics that are socially constructed as 'masculine' or 'feminine', while 'sex' refers to biological categories of male and female. Almost all of the studies about the 'gender gap' rely on the latter in their operationalization, and are therefore not truly about gender. However, because the term 'gender gap' has become firmly established in studies of political behaviour, we follow this convention in the current paper.

As stated above, we argue that two mechanisms can potentially explain why we observe differences between men and women in their support for the PRR: mediation and moderation. Mediation would occur if gender had an *indirect* effect. If men and women differ in the characteristics and attitudes that correlate with voting for PRR parties, this might explain the gap in support for these parties.¹¹ Finding these 'missing links' between sex and the PRR vote is where most studies have concentrated their attention, but no conclusive (set of) mediator(s) has been found.¹²

However, differences between men and women in party choice might also be caused by differences in the weight they give to various considerations. In that case, sex moderates the effects of various predictors of support for the populist radical right. Although explored in case studies,¹³ this mechanism

7 Norris, *Radical Right*; Immerzeel, Coffé and Lippe, 'Explaining the gender gap in radical right voting'; Spierings and Zaslove, 'Gendering the vote for populist radical-right parties'.

8 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*.

9 Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, 'The developmental theory of the gender gap: women's and men's voting behavior in global perspective', *International Political Science Review*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2000, 441–63.

10 Niels Spierings, Andrej Zaslove, Liza M. Mügge and Sarah L. de Lange, 'Gender and populist radical-right politics: an introduction', in these pages.

11 This can also be understood as a composition effect; see Tyler J. Vanderweele and Stijn Vansteelandt, 'Conceptual issues concerning mediation, interventions and composition', *Statistics and Its Interface*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2009, 457–68.

12 The only exception is the Canadian Alliance, in which case the gap could be completely explained by differences in views on law and order, and anti-statism.

13 See, for example, Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais and Nevitte, 'Explaining the gender gap in support for the New Right'; and Fontana, Sidler and Hardmeier, 'The "New Right" vote'.

has not been systematically investigated with regard to a wide selection of cases.

Below we discuss three broad sets of explanatory models of support for the PRR: the socio-structural model, the discontent model, and the policy vote model. For each of these, we discuss the theoretical plausibility of mediation or moderation effects, in view of the literature.

The socio-structural model

According to socio-structural explanations, voters rely on their social position as a cue to determine their vote. Indeed, research has shown that radical-right voters tend to share certain social characteristics,¹⁴ and persistent sex differences in these characteristics point to an expectation of mediation. In one of the early accounts of the PRR gender gap, Hans-Georg Betz drew attention to four such social factors: religiosity, age, labour force participation, and occupational stratification.¹⁵ Radical-right support is generally lower among the religious and the elderly, and women are more likely to be both.¹⁶ Kai Arzheimer and Elisabeth Carter show that churchgoers are less likely to vote for the PRR due to their strong ties to traditional conservative or Christian democratic parties.¹⁷ At the same time, the electorates of PRR parties tend to be relatively young, and women are over-represented among older age-groups.¹⁸

Many of the earlier radical-right parties relied on the *petit bourgeoisie*, the small-scale self-employed, but the social base of the PRR has broadened to

14 Marcel Lubbers, Mérove Gijsberts and Peer Scheepers, 'Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2002, 345–78; Jens Rydgren (ed.), *Class Politics and the Radical Right* (London and New York: Routledge 2012).

15 Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press 1994).

16 We acknowledge that this formulation implies that women rather than men are the exception that needs to be explained. An alternative (though equivalent) approach would be to describe how men are *more* likely to vote for the populist radical right. However, because men *are* the largest group among the PRR electorate, we follow the bulk of previous literature in taking the former approach (for a similar discussion, see Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, n12).

17 Kai Arzheimer and Elisabeth Carter, 'Christian religiosity and voting for West European radical right parties', *West European Politics*, vol. 32, no. 5, 2009, 985–1011.

18 Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*; Kai Arzheimer, 'Electoral sociology: who votes for the extreme right and why—and when?', in Uwe Backes and Patrick Moreau (eds), *The Extreme Right in Europe: Current Trends and Perspectives* (Göttingen and Oakville, CT: Vanderhoeck & Rupprecht 2012), 35–50; Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais and Nevitte, 'Explaining the gender gap in support for the New Right'.

include the working and lower-middle classes, as well as the unemployed.¹⁹ Additionally, PRR voters tend to share a lower or middle level of education and higher levels of job insecurity. These ‘losers of modernity’ or ‘angry white men’—notice the gendered connotation—feel threatened by rapid changes in post-industrial societies, and their support for the PRR stems from resentment of immigrants and political elites. The over-representation of voters from lower social strata might explain why combining nativist ideology with a centrist or even centre-left economic policy has been dubbed the new ‘winning formula’ for PRR parties.²⁰ This ‘proletarianization’ appears to be an ongoing trend, for instance in France, where many new PRR voters have migrated from left-wing parties.²¹

In many European countries, women still differ from men with regard to important socio-structural characteristics, such as occupation, income and education (the latter among older generations). Women are more frequently employed in the public sector and less likely to be blue-collar workers. This could make them less likely to vote for PRR parties. Phyllis Rippeyoung found evidence for this, while Elisabeth Gidengil *et al.*, Terri Givens, and Marie-Christine Fontana *et al.* did not find convincing evidence for socio-economic conditions as mediators of gender.²² Hilde Coffé summarizes research on this topic and concludes: ‘Most of these studies found that . . . gender differences in class positions and patterns of employment fail to account for the gender gap in radical right voting.’²³ Nevertheless, because socio-structural gender differences continue to be sizeable, we cannot rule out the possibility that they function as mediators.

Moderation might also be present here. More specifically, we expect the effects of socio-economic status and education to be stronger for men than for women. As a group, men have generally been part of the paid workforce for a longer period, and it is therefore likely that class identities have become more deeply rooted for men. Class might therefore play a larger role in men’s voting than it does for women. Moreover, in the context of PRR parties, it is relevant that a majority of (economic) migrants to Europe are male, and they are disproportionately represented in low-skilled jobs that have traditionally been male-dominated. To a greater extent than women, more poorly educated

19 Norris, *Radical Right*; Arzheimer, ‘Electoral sociology’; Elisabeth Ivarsflaten, ‘The vulnerable populist right parties: no economic realignment fuelling their electoral success’, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2005, 465–92.

20 Sarah L. de Lange, ‘A new winning formula? The programmatic appeal of the radical right’, *Party Politics*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2007, 411–35.

21 Nonna Mayer, ‘From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: electoral change on the far right’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 1, 2013, 160–78.

22 Rippeyoung, ‘When women are right’; Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais and Nevitte, ‘Explaining the gender gap in support for the New Right’; Givens, ‘The radical right gender gap’; Fontana, Sidler and Hardmeier, ‘The “New Right” vote’.

23 Hilde Coffé, ‘Gender, class, and radical right voting’, in Rydgren (ed.), *Class Politics and the Radical Right*, 138–55 (138).

and working-class men compete with immigrants. This makes it plausible that men would be more sensitive than women to their economic position and consequently attach more weight to these factors when deciding which party to vote for. Furthermore, evidence suggests that 'pocketbook voting' is in general more prevalent among men than among women.²⁴ Indeed, Coffé finds that, among men, class is a better predictor of radical-right voting than among women in eight Western European countries.²⁵ However, the differences are not very large. We will further investigate the interaction between gender and class on a larger number of cases.

The discontent model

According to the discontent model, voters support PRR parties mainly to express discontent with the political elite.²⁶ PRR party voters have indeed shown higher levels of distrust of and dissatisfaction with the political system.²⁷ If European men are more dissatisfied with the political elite than women, this might explain why men feel more attracted to PRR parties. However, we have no theoretical or empirical reasons to expect political discontent to be higher among men than women. Mediation by discontent is thus unlikely to cause the gap.

With regard to moderation, we *do* expect that the evaluation of politics has a different impact on the male and female vote. The tendency for men to have higher levels of internal political efficacy has already been noted in *The American Voter*,²⁸ and has historically been attributed to men's higher levels of education and participation in the workforce. However, in spite of higher female participation on the labour market and tertiary education, gender differences in political efficacy and interest have not disappeared.²⁹ Cas

24 Carole Kennedy Chaney, R. Michael Alvarez and Jonathan Nagler, 'Explaining the gender gap in U.S. presidential elections, 1980–1992', *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 2, 1998, 311–39; Susan Welch and John Hibbing, 'Financial conditions, gender, and voting in American national elections', *Journal of Politics*, vol. 54, no. 1, 1992, 197–213.

25 Coffé, 'Gender, class, and populist radical right voting'.

26 Eric Bélanger and Kees Aarts, 'Explaining the rise of the LPF: issues, discontent, and the 2002 Dutch election', *Acta Politica*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2006, 4–20; Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau, 'Why do they vote for Le Pen?', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1992, 123–41.

27 Herbert Kitschelt with Anthony J. McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1995); Lubbers, Gijssberts and Scheepers, 'Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe'; Peter Söderlund and Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen, 'Dark side of party identification? An empirical study of political trust among radical right-wing voters', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2009, 159–81.

28 Angus Campbell, Philiip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley 1960).

29 Inglehart and Norris, 'The developmental theory of the gender gap'.

Mudde argues that lower levels of political efficacy could explain the disproportionately low representation of women among the PRR electorate.³⁰ Along the same lines, we argue that it takes political self-confidence—which is relatively more often found among men—to vote for radical parties for anti-system reasons. Conversely, less internally efficacious voters—more often women—are less likely to make such a protest vote. Indeed, Elisabeth Gidengil *et al.* found that political cynicism was a more important factor for men than for women in explaining the vote in the case of the Canadian Alliance.³¹ We therefore expect discontent to be a less important determinant of the PRR vote for women than for men.

The policy vote model

Last but not least, the policy vote model assumes that citizens vote for a party because they agree with the party on those issues they consider to be important. Since most voters lack detailed information about positions of parties, they rely on information shortcuts, such as party labels or ideological profiles in left-right terms. Electoral research has provided substantial support for the policy vote model, because the policy preferences of voters—especially regarding immigration—have been shown to be the strongest predictors of support for radical-right parties.³²

Although PRR parties are a heterogeneous group, their programmes are commonly believed to have (at least) two aspects in common: nativism and authoritarianism. In ideological terms, these parties are seen by most voters as representing the far-right pole of the left-right spectrum. So, the policy vote model predicts that voters are most likely to support a PRR party if they see themselves as being right-wing, if they hold nativist attitudes—a combination of in-group preferences (or nationalism) and out-group fears (or xenophobia)—and if they hold authoritarian views, ‘the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely’.³³

30 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 115.

31 Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais and Nevitte, ‘Explaining the gender gap in support for the New Right’.

32 Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*; Van der Brug and Fennema, ‘The support base of populist radical right parties in the enlarged European Union’; Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers, ‘Extreme right-wing voting in Western Europe’; Anthony Mughan and Pamela Paxton, ‘Anti-immigrant sentiment, policy preferences and populist party voting in Australia’, *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2006, 341–58; David Cutts, Robert Ford and Matthew J. Goodwin, ‘Anti-immigrant, politically disaffected or still racist after all? Examining the attitudinal drivers of extreme right support in Britain in the 2009 European elections’, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2011, 418–40; Spierings and Zaslove, ‘Gendering the vote for populist radical-right parties’.

33 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 23.

There are reasons to expect women to agree more than men with the positions of the PRR on authoritarianism,³⁴ and nativism.³⁵ However, recent cross-country studies cast doubt on the existence of a universal and constant gender gap *vis-à-vis* the core ideology of the PRR. With regard to perceived group threat (which is one of the most important predictors of prejudice), some did find,³⁶ while others did not,³⁷ such a gap. Mudde summarizes the research on nativism by noting that 'the difference between men and women in terms of nativist attitudes is far from striking, if at all present'.³⁸ In an analysis of twenty-two countries, Marcel Coenders, Mérove Gijsberts and Peer Scheepers even found that women have a slightly greater resistance towards immigrants than men.³⁹ Likewise, there is only limited empirical evidence to expect women to be more authoritarian than men.⁴⁰ Existing research thus yields contradictory predictions as to whether gender differences with regard to attitudes on either nativism or authoritarianism might explain the gender gap in PRR support, in terms of mediation.

We also investigate voters' general ideological positions in left-right terms. Wouter van der Brug and Meindert Fennema found left-right distances between voters and PRR parties to be the strongest determinant of support for such

- 34 Jim Sidanius, Shana Levin, James Liu and Felicia Pratto, 'Social dominance orientation, anti-egalitarianism and the political psychology of gender: an extension and cross-cultural replication', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2000, 41–67; Ann M. Beutel and Margaret Mooney Marini, 'Gender and values', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1995, 436–48.
- 35 Nazar Akrami, Bo Ekehammar and Tadesse Araya, 'Classical and modern racial prejudice: a study of attitudes toward immigrants in Sweden', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2000, 521–32; Timur Kuran and Edward J. McCaffery, 'Sex differences in the acceptability of discrimination', *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2008, 228–38.
- 36 Lincoln Quillian, 'Prejudice as a response to perceived group threat: population composition and anti-immigrant and racial prejudice in Europe', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 60, no. 4, 1995, 586–611.
- 37 Peer Scheepers, Mérove Gijsberts and Marcel Coenders, 'Ethnic exclusionism in European countries: public opposition to civil rights for legal migrants as a response to perceived ethnic threat', *European Sociological Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2002, 17–34; Lauren M. McLaren, 'Anti-immigrant prejudice in Europe: contact, threat perception, and preferences for the exclusion of migrants', *Social Forces*, vol. 81, no. 3, 2003, 909–36; Spierings and Zaslove, 'Gendering the vote for populist radical-right parties'.
- 38 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 113.
- 39 Marcel Coenders, Mérove Gijsberts and Peer Scheepers, 'Resistance to the presence of immigrants and refugees in 22 countries', in Mérove Gijsberts, Louk Hagendoorn and Peer Scheepers (eds), *Nationalism and Exclusion of Migrants: Cross-National Comparisons* (Aldershot, Hants and Burlington, VT: Ashgate 2004), 97–120.
- 40 Richard Lippa and Sara Arad, 'Gender, personality, and prejudice: the display of authoritarianism and social dominance in interviews with college men and women', *Journal of Research in Personality*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1999, 463–93 (and the research cited therein); Bart Duriez and Alain Van Hiel, 'The march of modern fascism: a comparison of social dominance orientation and authoritarianism', *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 32, no. 7, 2002, 1199–213.

parties.⁴¹ Robert Inglehart and Pippa Norris describe how, on average, across a large number of countries, women have moved towards the left of men over recent decades.⁴² Since left-wing voters are less likely to support the populist radical right than right-wing voters, a gender gap could simply be the result of a difference between men and women in their left-right positions. We therefore incorporate voters' self-placement on an overall ideological left-right scale, as well as the distance between voters and PRR parties on the left-right scale. This captures agreement with parties in a general ideological sense, in addition to our indicators of the specific themes of nativism and authoritarianism.

Again, moderation rather than mediation might be the explanation. Evidence suggests that women assign more importance to issues that are secondary to the populist radical right, such as health and education, whereas men tend to attach more weight to issues such as crime.⁴³ Even if many people agree with the positions of PRR parties on issues such as crime and immigration, the policy vote model would predict most support for these parties among people who give much weight to these issues. So, if men base their vote more strongly on their views on these issues than women, they will be more likely to support the populist radical right.

In most countries, positions on the left-right spectrum are associated with socio-economic issues as well as with sociocultural issues such as crime and immigration. We are not familiar with research showing whether the effect of left-right position on party support is gendered. However, if the general left-right concept is more strongly associated with the issues that men find important than women, left-right distances to parties would matter more for men than for women. In that case, we would also expect the effect of left-right to be moderated by gender.

East v. West

We argue that the three theoretical explanations discussed so far can potentially explain the gender gap in all countries where such a party exists. This does not preclude, of course, that country-specific factors influence individual parties' support (among men and/or women) at individual

41 Van der Brug and Fennema, 'The support base of radical right parties in the enlarged European Union'.

42 Inglehart and Norris, 'The developmental theory of the gender gap'.

43 Chaney, Alvarez and Nagler, 'Explaining the gender gap in U.S. presidential elections, 1980–1992'; Elisabeth Gidengil, 'Economic man—social woman? The case of the gender gap in support for the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1995, 384–408; Karen M. Kaufmann and John R. Petrocik, 'The changing politics of American men: understanding the sources of the gender gap', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 43, no. 3, 1999, 864–87; Rosie Campbell and Kristi Winters, 'Understanding men's and women's political interests: evidence from a study of gendered political attitudes', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2008, 53–74.

elections. Rather, we suggest that the gender gap in PRR support is universal and so consistent that it makes sense to investigate general factors at work in all countries. However, we do distinguish between the post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Western European countries. As party systems are generally less consolidated in the East, ideologies have become rooted in the political terrain to a much less extent, and do not yet exert the strong force they so in older democracies.⁴⁴ Lenka Bustikova and Herbert Kitschelt argue that the legacy of Communism has impacted the playing field for the radical right; in many of these countries, the mainstream right has already adopted exclusionary appeals.⁴⁵ As a result, the radical right in Central and Eastern European countries have arguably often been ideologically more extreme and, organizationally, more of a social movement phenomenon.⁴⁶ For these reasons, it is likely that our explanatory models impact PRR-voting differently in the two groups of countries and, as a result, different patterns might influence the gender gap.⁴⁷

Methodology

We tested the mediation and moderation models using data from the 2009 European Election Studies (EES).⁴⁸ This allowed us to examine the support for PRR parties in seventeen European countries.⁴⁹ For each country, roughly 1,000 respondents were questioned on several topics. Although the data were collected at the time of the 2009 European parliamentary elections, many questions—including those concerning party support used in this paper—explicitly relate to national politics and national elections. An overview of the selected parties, as well as the size of the gender gaps, is presented in [Table 1](#).⁵⁰

44 Wouter van der Brug, Mark Franklin and Gábor Tóka, 'One electorate or many? Differences in party preference formation between new and established European democracies', *Electoral Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4, 2008, 589–600; Stefan Dahlberg, Jonas Linde and Sören Holmberg, 'Democratic discontent in old and new democracies: assessing the importance of democratic input and governmental output', *Political Studies* (Early View), 28 October 2014, doi: [10.1111/1467-9248.12170](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12170).

45 Lenka Bustikova and Herbert Kitschelt, 'The radical right in post-Communist Europe: comparative perspectives on legacies and party competition', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2009, 459–83.

46 Michael Minkenberg, 'The radical right in postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe: comparative observations and interpretations', *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2002, 335–62.

47 Separate analyses of East and West are provided at the end of the empirical section.

48 Marcel H. van Egmond, Eliyahu V. Sapir, Wouter van der Brug, Sara B. Hobolt and Mark N. Franklin, *EES 2009 Voter Study Advance Release Notes* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam 2010).

49 For an overview of the selected parties, see [Table 1](#).

50 A list of descriptive statistics of all variables, as well as the distribution of key variables, can be found in [Appendix A](#).

We used the propensity to vote (PTV) for a PRR party as the dependent variable. For each party surveyed, respondents were asked to indicate how likely they would be—on a scale of 0 to 10—to *ever* vote for that party.⁵¹ These items are strongly correlated with party sympathy scores (thermometer scores), but the propensity to vote questions are more closely linked to the actual vote.⁵² As most respondents answered this question, this measure allowed us to make reliable inferences on the basis of a large number of voters experiencing different levels of attraction towards the PRR.⁵³ To check the robustness of our findings, we also conducted logistic regressions on a dummy variable that indicated whether the respondent would vote for the PRR party ‘if elections were held today’. We discuss these findings in the robustness section below.

To establish the size of the gender gap, a key variable in our model is a ‘gender dummy’ with values 0 for men and 1 for women. The size of the coefficient of this variable reflects the difference between men and women in the propensity to support a PRR party. A negative coefficient of the gender dummy indicates that women are *less* likely to support a PRR party.⁵⁴

We used the following predictors of support for PRR parties as part of the socio-structural model: age; a dummy for church attendance (more than once a year); a dummy for the poorly educated (measured as lower secondary or lower);⁵⁵ a dummy for the working and lower middle

51 The word ‘ever’ was included in the survey question to ensure that voters who were already certain about which party they would vote for in the upcoming election could give a high score to their second or third choice of party. When this measure was employed as a dependent variable in a multivariate model, it was found to provide valid estimates of the determinants of party choice.

52 Cees van der Eijk, Wouter van der Brug, Martin Kroh and Mark Franklin, ‘Rethinking the dependent variable in voting behavior: on the measurement and analysis of electoral utilities’, *Electoral Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2006, 424–47.

53 We have no reason to believe that this measure itself is gendered, that is, that men report different propensities than women, even with similar voting preferences: an aggregation of men’s and women’s PTV scores for all parties, not only those for the PRR, shows that men and women report almost equal propensities in terms of means and standard deviations. So we believe this measure to be equivalent for men and women, which makes the sex differences we find for PRR parties meaningful.

54 It has been argued that the gender gap is a methodological artefact rather than a real finding because social desirability would lead women to underreport PRR support more often than men. We admit this possibility, although we think it is not likely that the entire gap—which is a consistent finding over time and place—can be attributed to this phenomenon. An analysis of a subsample of German ballot papers that bore marks of gender and age showed that the gap existed in actual voting, at least in that case (Arzheimer, ‘Electoral sociology’, 44). Furthermore, the gender gap is also noticeable among actual PRR memberships and party elites (Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 97–108). Even when the gender gap is overestimated in the data, the analyses here can still explain the mechanisms behind it.

55 As an alternative operationalization, we used education in years. This had comparable, though slightly less strong, effects.

classes;⁵⁶ a dummy for the unemployed; a dummy for both unskilled and semi-skilled workers; a dummy for the self-employed; and finally a dummy for public sector workers.

To operationalize the discontent model, we combined the two most appropriate items available in this data set: a four-point scale of the extent of respondent satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in their country, and a dummy indicating whether the respondent approved of the government. While these measures could not capture every dimension of political dissatisfaction, it could be argued that, for many voters, dissatisfaction with the political elite coincided with dissatisfaction with the democratic system that produced and sustained such an elite. Furthermore, it was found that, empirically, this measure was more strongly related to a particular government's performance than to the assessment of democracy as an abstract ideal.⁵⁷ At the least, these indicators allowed us to assess tentatively the importance of political discontent. We synchronized both scales, added them, and subsequently rescaled them to a 0 to 1 scale to facilitate comparability.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, no measure of efficacy was available.

Finally, for the policy voting model, we used nativist and authoritarianism policy preferences and positions on an overall left-right scale. The EES asks respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with twelve statements regarding policy issues. As a measure of nativism, we combined the following policy statements: 'immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of [the respondent's country]' and 'immigration to [the respondents' country] should be decreased significantly'. For authoritarianism, we combined the following items: 'people who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days' and 'schools must teach children to obey authority'. Respondents indicated their position on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'; we added and rescaled the items, resulting in a 0 to 1 measure for both nativism and authoritarianism.⁵⁹ Though probably secondary for the populist radical right,⁶⁰ economic issues continue to be important in the political arena. We therefore also included an item on the welfare state, using the item 'income

56 As an alternative operationalization, we used a five-point scale of socio-economic status as an interval measure. Again, this yielded comparable but less strong results.

57 Norris, *Radical Right*, 155.

58 In a principal component analysis, the variance explained by the underlying component was 0.69, with factor loadings of 0.71.

59 A principal component analysis of the nativism and authoritarianism resulted in an explained variance of 0.70 and 0.69, respectively; factor loadings were 0.71 for both. Analysis of the separate items yielded similar results to the analysis using the scale; because moderation could more easily be assessed using a single scale, we reported the latter.

60 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, ch. 5; but also Anthony J. McGann and Herbert Kitschelt, 'The radical right in the Alps: evolution of support for the Swiss SVP and Austrian FPÖ', *Party Politics*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2005, 147–71.

and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people'. This item, too, was rescaled to a 0 to 1 scale.

To measure ideological distance, we used a question asking respondents where they would position themselves on an 11-point left-right scale, ranging from 'left' (0) to 'right' (10). Respondents were not only asked to place themselves on this scale, but also to indicate where parties are to be located on it. In the policy vote model, we included a measure of the distance (as measured by the absolute difference) between the respondent's own position on the left-right scale and his or her perception of the position of the PRR party on the same scale. Left-right position and left-right distance to the PRR were rescaled to a 0 (left) to 1 (right) and a 0 (minimum distance) to 1 (maximum distance) scale, respectively.

As most variables contained missing values, we applied multiple imputation to obtain an equal number of cases in each model.⁶¹ Analyses of our models on the basis of actual observations yielded substantially similar results to those based on multiple imputation.

We tested the mediating models as follows (for a comparable procedure, see Gidengil *et al.*⁶²). We started with a model in which the propensity to vote for a PRR party is explained by the gender dummy only. The size of this coefficient reflects the average difference between men and women's propensity to support each of these parties. Subsequently, we added the indicators of each of the explanatory models in turn. If the effect of gender is indeed indirect and channelled through one or more of these differences in characteristics and attitudes, the (direct) effect of the female dummy should decrease, or even become insignificant, once these mediating variables have been added to the model.

The moderation models were tested by including interaction effects (with centred variables). If men and women support PRR parties on the basis of different considerations, the effect of these variables should differ between men and women. In that case, we would expect to find significant interaction effects between the female dummy, on the one hand, and each of the predictors of support for PRR parties, on the other.

We estimated a generic model across seventeen countries. Because of the hierarchical structure of the data, we applied multilevel modelling with citizens (the first-level unit) nested within countries (the second-level unit).⁶³ As the effect of gender was assumed to differ between countries, the models were estimated with a random slope for the sex dummy. All analyses were

61 We performed five imputations, filling in missing values on the basis of multivariate regression using all other independent variables, as well as the dependent variable. See J. L. Schafer, *Analysis of Incomplete Multivariate Data* (Boca Raton, FL: Chapman & Hall/CRC 1997).

62 Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais and Nevitte, 'Explaining the gender gap in support for the New Right'.

63 T. A. B. Snijders and Roel Bosker, *Multilevel Analysis: An Introduction to Basic and Advanced Multilevel Modeling* (London: Sage 1999).

performed using the STATA 12 package. We repeated the analysis on the subsamples of both Western-European and post-Communist Central and Eastern European countries,⁶⁴ and discuss this in the 'Robustness' section below.

Results

We first describe the distribution of relevant characteristics and values among men and women. Subsequently, we turn to a test of the moderation and mediation mechanisms.

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows voting preferences of men and women as well as the size of the gender gap for each party included in our analysis. The sizes of the gender gaps were calculated as follows. In terms of the 0-to-10 propensity to vote (PTV) question, we subtracted the average PTV among men from the average PTV among women (which usually resulted in a negative score, reflecting higher propensities to vote for the PRR among men), divided this by the average PTV score among men and multiplied by 100 (resulting in a percentage). For instance, in Denmark, women's average PTV score was 16 per cent lower than men's. In terms of actual votes, we applied the same procedure on the fraction of actual radical-right votes among men and women. In the case of Denmark, this means that women reported 34 per cent less often than men that they intended to vote for the Danish People's Party. It is important to note that, even though the percentages in both columns differ in absolute terms, they are strongly correlated ($r = 0.82$). This strengthens our confidence in using the PTV questions. Surprisingly, and contrary to empirical findings in other studies, the British National Party has a *positive* gender gap in the questions concerning both the propensity to vote and the actual vote. We were unable to establish the origin of this deviation. However, robust analysis shows that in- or excluding this case does not alter the results. Table 1 generally confirms that the PRR is more popular among men.

To assess the electoral potential of both sexes, Figure 1 shows the percentage of men and women in categories of economic and social conditions that have been found to be related to PRR voting. Apart from levels of unemployment and self-reported membership of the working and lower middle classes, men and women differ significantly on all indicators, though not always substantively. The most important differences can be found in the share of public sector workers and regular churchgoers, which are notably higher among women. Important differences can also be noted in the nature of work: men more often are semi-skilled workers or self-

64 The EU-member states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, except Malta and Cyprus.

Table 1 Electoral appeal of PRR parties

| Country | Party | Actual vote | | | | Propensity to vote | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------|------|--------------------|------|-------|------|
| | | Electorate | Men | Women | Gap | Electorate | Men | Women | Gap |
| Sweden | Swedish Democrats | 1.7% | 2.7% | 0.5% | -80% | 0.70 | 0.86 | 0.53 | -39% |
| Bulgaria | Attack | 9.9% | 13.9% | 7.3% | -48% | 1.61 | 2.11 | 1.32 | -37% |
| Hungary | Jobbik | 12.5% | 14.7% | 10.3% | -30% | 3.19 | 3.66 | 2.76 | -25% |
| Belgium | Flemish Interest | 5.4% | 6.4% | 4.3% | -32% | 1.84 | 2.08 | 1.58 | -24% |
| France | National Front | 1.6% | 1.7% | 1.5% | -9% | 0.93 | 1.06 | 0.83 | -22% |
| Romania | Greater Romania Party | 11.1% | 14.8% | 7.8% | -47% | 2.32 | 2.62 | 2.07 | -21% |
| Finland | Finns Party | 10.1% | 14.2% | 6.5% | -55% | 3.47 | 3.87 | 3.12 | -19% |
| The Netherlands | Party for Freedom | 9.1% | 11.6% | 6.7% | -42% | 1.82 | 2.02 | 1.64 | -19% |
| Malta | National Action | | <i>not available</i> | | | 0.81 | 0.91 | 0.75 | -17% |
| Greece | Popular Orthodox Rally | 6.2% | 8.6% | 4.3% | -50% | 2.07 | 2.28 | 1.91 | -16% |
| Denmark | Danish People's Party | 11.2% | 13.5% | 8.9% | -34% | 2.43 | 2.64 | 2.22 | -16% |
| Slovakia | Slovak National Party | 6.5% | 8.5% | 5.3% | -38% | 2.76 | 2.90 | 2.67 | -8% |
| Austria | Freedom Party | 10.5% | 10.7% | 10.3% | -3% | 2.30 | 2.40 | 2.22 | -8% |
| Slovenia | Slovenian National Party | 4.9% | 7.3% | 3.0% | -58% | 2.74 | 2.85 | 2.66 | -7% |
| Italy | Northern League | 12.6% | 11.0% | 14.2% | 29% | 3.05 | 3.09 | 3.01 | -2% |
| Lithuania | Order and Justice | 12.6% | 12.6% | 12.6% | 0% | 3.36 | 3.22 | 3.47 | 8% |
| United Kingdom | British National Party | 2.1% | 1.2% | 3.1% | 160% | 1.14 | 0.94 | 1.30 | 38% |

Note: Grey italics indicate a non-significant gender gap at the 5% level. No gap could be calculated in Malta because only one respondent indicated an actual vote for PRR party.

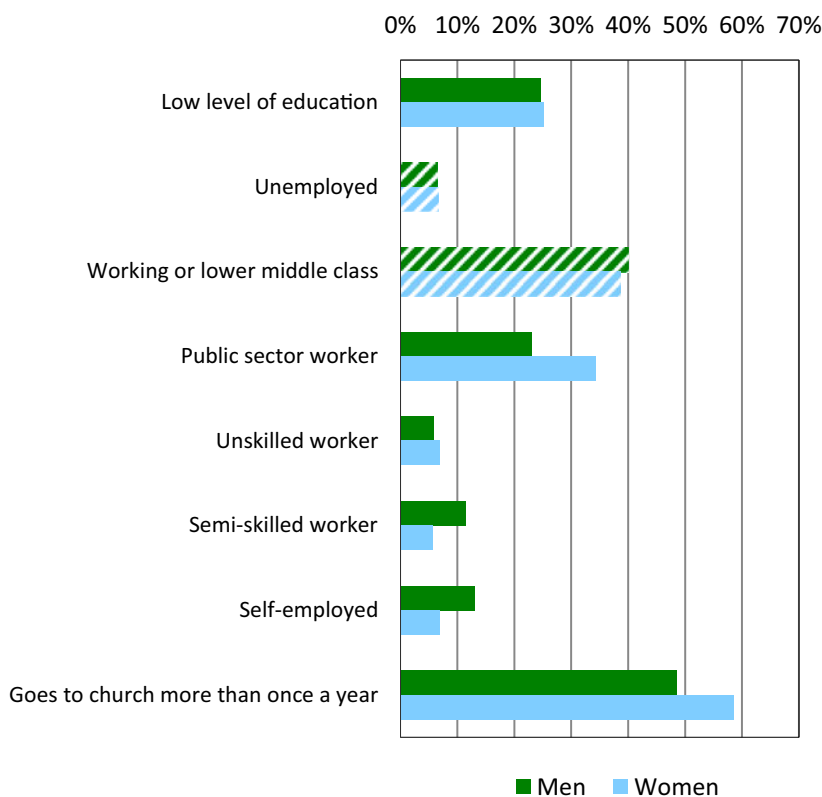


Figure 1 Men and women scoring positively on a selection of socio-structural factors

Note: Striped bars indicate non-significant differences between men and women at the 5% level.

Source: European Election Studies 2009

employed, circumstances that relate positively to PRR voting. The ingredients for socio-structural mediation are thus present.

Figure 2 reports the mean scores of men and women on synchronized ideological scales from 0 to 1. The dissimilarities in nativism and authoritarianism are by no means substantive, and suggest that women are *at least* as nativist and authoritarian as men. Furthermore, women turn out to be slightly *more* discontented than men. Interestingly, their average left-right position does not differ significantly from that of male voters. The evidence does not refute Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris's conclusion that women are more often inclined to be left-wing, as it concerned post-industrial (mainly western) societies.⁶⁵ Indeed, in the post-Communist countries under study, women are somewhat more right-wing than men, whereas in the established democracies

65 Inglehart and Norris, 'The developmental theory of the gender gap'.

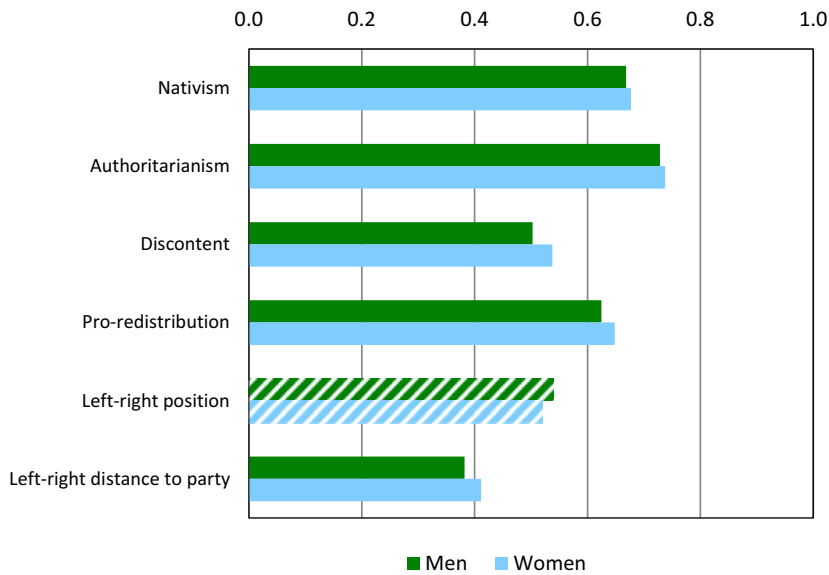


Figure 2 Mean scores of men and women on uniform ideological scales

Note: Striped bars indicate non-significant differences between men and women at the 5% level.

Source: European Election Studies 2009

women are slightly more left-wing. Furthermore, the distribution of self-placement scores (see [Appendix A](#)) shows that, across the board, slightly more women than men assign themselves a far-right position (10) on the left-right scale (on positions 8 and 9, the sexes score the same). Again, the potential for PRR voting is at least as strong among women as among men. Replication on our subsamples shows that this is the case in both Western and Eastern Europe.

We therefore conclude that [Figure 2](#) leaves little room for mediation: across the board, men and women do not differ with regard to PRR ideology. If anything, women would be expected to show slightly higher rather than lower support for the PRR. We now turn to a test of moderation and mediation.

Mediation

[Table 2](#) shows the results of several regression models. The dependent variable is the propensity to vote for a PRR party. In the first model, gender is the only explanatory variable. This coefficient reflects the nominal difference in PTV score between men and women. This turns out to be -0.32. On average, across the seventeen countries and parties, the support for PRR

Table 2 Regression models with propensity to vote for the PRR as dependent variable

| | Gender only | | Age and religion | | Socio-structural model | | Discontent model | | Policy preference | | Left-right position and distance | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------|------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|----------------------------------|--------|
| Gender | -0.32 | (0.08) | -0.33 | (0.08) | -0.28 | (0.08) | -0.33 | (0.08) | -0.37 | (0.07) | -0.19 | (0.07) |
| Age | | | -0.01 | (0.00) | | | | | | | | |
| Church attendance | | | 0.19 | (0.05) | | | | | | | | |
| Low level of education | | | | | 0.40 | (0.06) | | | | | | |
| Working or lower middle class | | | | | 0.21 | (0.06) | | | | | | |
| Unemployed | | | | | 0.34 | (0.10) | | | | | | |
| Unskilled worker | | | | | -0.01 | (0.11) | | | | | | |
| Semi-skilled worker | | | | | 0.20 | (0.10) | | | | | | |
| Self-employed | | | | | 0.05 | (0.09) | | | | | | |
| Public sector worker | | | | | -0.31 | (0.06) | | | | | | |
| Discontent | | | | | | | 0.25 | (0.08) | | | | |
| Nativism | | | | | | | | | 2.85 | (0.12) | | |
| Authoritarianism | | | | | | | | | 0.81 | (0.13) | | |
| Pro-intervention in economy | | | | | | | | | 0.06 | (0.08) | | |
| Left-right position | | | | | | | | | | | 0.85 | (0.09) |
| Left-right distance | | | | | | | | | | | -3.83 | (0.09) |
| Intercept | 2.32 | (0.22) | 2.33 | (0.22) | 2.30 | (0.22) | 2.33 | (0.22) | 2.33 | (0.21) | 2.26 | (0.17) |
| Explained variance at L-1 | 0.3% | | 0.7% | | 1.2% | | 0.3% | | 6.8% | | 14.7% | |
| Change in gap | | | 3% | | -11% | | 2% | | 15% | | -40% | |
| n | 15723 | | 15723 | | 15723 | | 15723 | | 15723 | | 15723 | |

Note: Regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Grey italics indicate non-significance of the effect at a two-tailed 5% level.

Source: European Election Studies 2009

parties is 0.32 higher among men than among women, on a scale ranging from 0 to 10. For men, the average propensity is 2.32; for women, it is 2.00. Although the difference might seem small, it is likely to produce the differences in actual radical-right voting that have been observed in many countries. In terms of the actual vote, the average percentage of male PRR voters is 9 per cent male while, among females, it is 6 per cent. This 3:2 ratio corresponds to the magnitude reported in earlier studies.

We now add independent variables in separate blocks. Controlling for age and religion provides no explanation of the gap: if anything, the gap increases rather than decreases when controlling for differences between men and women on these factors. This is due to the fact that, on average, women are more religious than men, while, at the same time, higher levels of religiosity are associated with a higher propensity to vote for PRR parties. This positive connection is especially strong in the eastern part of the continent, whereas in Western European countries churchgoing is mostly weakly (if at all) negatively related to the PRR vote. The link between church attendance and PRR voting is thus different in East and West, but provides no substantial explanation of the gender gap in either. Adding the indicators for work, class and education does reduce the size of the gender gap by 11 per cent. Additional analyses show that this is due mainly to the share of public sector workers among women, rather than differences in unemployment, class or education. Although socio-structural characteristics thus partly function as mediators of the female vote, this is only a minor explanation of the gap.

The discontent model does not diminish the gap either: male-female differences in discontent cannot explain the gap. This is not surprising as we noticed earlier that—on average—discontent is not higher among men. Controlling for nativism, authoritarianism and redistribution attitudes increases rather than decreases the gap. Nativism is a core predictor for PRR voting, with authoritarianism being less so though still strongly related. Given their views on these topics, women would be expected to express *more* rather than less support for the populist radical right. The gap clearly does not originate in sex differences in the level of agreement with the core of the PRR's programme.

The single best predictor of PRR-voting is the left-right distance to the PRR party. This effect is remarkably strong compared to that of the actual left-right position. Taken individually, left-right *distance* reduces the gap almost by half, from -0.32 to -0.19, whereas left-right *position* brings about a much smaller reduction (to -0.30). Additional analyses (not shown here) demonstrate that women report a greater distance between themselves and PRR parties *even when controlling for* differences in their position on the left-right scale or on concrete policy positions. Rather than being based on ideological disagreement, the gender gap in PRR voting originates partially in sex differences in the *perceived distance* between their own ideological position and that of PRR parties. This suggests that, regardless of their ideology, PRR parties seem

especially remote to female voters.⁶⁶ This is further underlined in [Appendix A](#), which shows that many more women than men assign an extremely low propensity to vote for these parties (0). All in all, it seems that PRR parties share characteristics other than their core ideology that, for many women, discredit them.

The last column of [Table 2](#) shows the results of a full model including all variables. Obviously, some of our indicators are causally prior to others: socio-economic indicators explain attitudes, which in turn explain voting. It is therefore not surprising that many variables of the socio-structural model lose significance once controlling for attitudes. The most important explanations for PRR support—nativism and left-right distance—remain strong predictors, which shows that the correlations observed in earlier models are not spurious. The gender gap is somewhat less reduced compared to a model with only left-right position and distance, because the inclusion of nativism and authoritarianism boosts rather than explains the gap. Again, we conclude that—controlling for all sorts of background indicators—the gender gap seems to be the result of differences between men and women in the perceived distance to the radical right.

Moderation

To assess whether men and women employ different considerations when deciding on their party preferences, [Table 3](#) reports the size of the effects for men and for women per model. To save space, [Table 3](#) reports only those variables that exert a significant effect among men, women or both. The last column reports the *p*-value of the difference between the effects for men and women, obtained by estimating the interaction between sex and the other coefficients in separate models. All main effects are significant unless otherwise indicated.

If we compare the coefficients of the social-structural indicators in both regressions, some differences are noticeable between men and women. Especially, as expected, the coefficients of the lower classes and more poorly educated are substantially lower among women. However, none of the interactions between gender and socio-structural indicators are significant, which means that these factors predict support for PRR parties equally well

66 It could be argued that, to avoid cognitive dissonance, voters who are less likely to vote for a party will also position that party further away from their own position (also known as assimilation and contrast effects, see Donald Granberg, 'Political perception', in Shanto Iyengar and William J. McGuire (eds), *Explorations in Political Psychology* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press 2012), 70–112), resulting in an endogenous relation between these variables. However, although this might boost the correlation between propensity to vote for, and left-right distance to, a PRR party, it does not explain why this would be more robustly so for women.

Table 3 Separate regressions for men and women

| | Effect among men | Effect among women | <i>p</i> -value of difference |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Age | -0.01 | -0.01 | 0.89 |
| Church attendance | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.96 |
| Low level of education | 0.44 | 0.36 | 0.47 |
| Lower classes | 0.27 | 0.20 | 0.44 |
| Unemployed | 0.29 | 0.39 | 0.63 |
| Public sector worker | -0.35 | -0.26 | 0.48 |
| Discontent | 0.43 | 0.16 | 0.09 |
| Nativism | 3.13 | 2.74 | 0.05 |
| Authoritarianism | 1.00 | 0.65 | 0.11 |
| Left-right position | 1.01 | 0.73 | 0.10 |
| Left-right distance | -4.20 | -3.58 | 0.00 |

Note: A grey font indicates non-significance of the effect at a two-tailed 5% level.

for men and women. When deciding what party to support, socio-structural background characteristics play a similar role for both genders.

Interestingly, all of the policy vote indicators, as well as the measure of discontent, have a stronger impact among men than among women. These differences are in most cases significant at the two-tailed 5 per cent level (nativism, left-right position and left-right distance), and in the case of authoritarianism and left-right position at a two-tailed 10 per cent level. Although the difference in the effect of discontent between men and women is insignificant, its coefficient does not significantly differ from zero for women, while it does so for men. We therefore conclude that *the usual determinants of PRR voting predict men's preferences better than women's*. As anticipated, discontent—although equally present among both sexes—has a stronger effect among men than among women with regard to support for PRR parties. Nativism and a general right-wing stance are also less likely to generate support for the populist radical right among women than among men. Even though the nominal differences are small for most indicators, taken together they could well explain the gender gap. In the next section we investigate the extent to which they do.

Attributing the gender gap to mediation and moderation

Having explored patterns of moderation and mediation, the question remains to what extent these explain the gender gap. We answer this question by means of counterfactual reasoning. In the first step we calculated the predicted values on the dependent variable for the respondents with no missing values on any indicator ($n=9808$) on the basis of our regression model. We then computed the average propensity to support a PRR party for men and women. Table 4 shows the results of this exercise. The predicted average difference

Table 4 Counterfactual prediction of the gap

| | Predicted male PTV for PRR | Predicted female PTV for PRR | Size of the gap | % of gap explained |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Actual model | 2.41 | 2.12 | -0.28 | 0% |
| Values forced to be equal (mediation) | 2.41 | 2.22 | -0.19 | 34% |
| Effects forced to be equal (moderation) | 2.40 | 2.23 | -0.18 | 37% |
| Effects and values forced to be equal (moderation and mediation) | 2.40 | 2.34 | -0.06 | 68% |

is .28, which is almost equal to the observed difference of .32 for the full sample. In the second row of Table 4, we re-estimated all these predicted values on the dependent variable, but with one important modification: the distributions on all of the predictors were simulated to be the same for men and women.⁶⁷ On average, this can be said to give men and women (artificially) the same jobs, education, attitudes and so on, which allows us to assess the impact of mediation. This calculation shows that, if men and women were to have *equal scores* on the core predictors of PRR support, women's predicted propensity to vote for these parties would be closer to that of men. In this way, we estimate that roughly a third of the gap can be explained by mediation.

To estimate the impact of moderation, we took the regression coefficients from a regression model among men only and forced all coefficients (except the intercept) in a model among women to be equal to these. This gave us a prediction of women's likelihood to support PRR parties *if they were to base their support on the same considerations as men*. The third row of Table 4 shows that, if the core predictors of PRR support were to have the *same effect* for men and women, the gap would decrease by about 37 per cent. This means that, although most accounts of the gap focus on sex differences in attitudes or structural positions, moderation tells an equally important part of the story. Combining both modifications results in a decrease of the PTV gap of 68 per cent (see bottom row of Table 4).

Differences between Western and Central Eastern Europe

We also had a closer look at the differences between Western European countries and the former Communist countries of Central and Eastern

67 We transformed women's scores on all indicators by 1) adding the average difference between men and women (resulting in equal means) and 2) dividing women's scores by women's standard deviation and multiplying by men's standard deviation (resulting in equal variances).

Table 5 East *v.* West: size of gender gap while controlling for blocks of variables

| | Gender only | | | Socio-structural | | Discontent | | Attitudes | | LR position and distance | |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------|--------|------------------|--------|------------|--------|-----------|--------|--------------------------|--------|
| | <i>b</i> | <i>b</i> | % expl | <i>b</i> | % expl | <i>b</i> | % expl | <i>b</i> | % expl | <i>b</i> | % expl |
| Pre-1989 democracies | -0.28 | -0.27 | 4% | -0.27 | 2% | -0.29 | -5% | -0.13 | 53% | | |
| Post-Communist countries | -0.40 | -0.33 | 18% | -0.38 | 5% | -0.42 | -5% | -0.28 | 30% | | |

Europe, because different historical experiences have resulted in different social and political dynamics in these two regions. Table 5 shows the reduction of the gender gap by each model for the two groups of countries separately. It shows that the gap is larger in the post-Communist countries. The part of the gender gap that can be explained by socio-structural differences is also much larger in those countries compared to the others (17 per cent *v.* 5 per cent, respectively), while controlling for left-right distributions brings about a smaller reduction in the eastern part of the continent than in the West. This probably reflects the fact that the trend among women to move to the left is more pronounced in established democracies than in newer ones,⁶⁸ but also that ideological position is a generally weaker explanation of voting in former Communist countries.⁶⁹ Gender differences in employment and public *v.* private sector employment are relatively important drivers of the gender gap in these countries. On the other hand, differences between men and women in nativism, authoritarianism or redistribution attitudes cannot explain the gender gap in either part of the continent.

In terms of moderation, the ideological indicators are stronger predictors among men than among women in both groups of countries. Three-way interactions show that levels of moderation do not differ substantially or significantly between the former Communist countries and the West. The general conclusions are thus generally replicated in both parts of the continent, with the important exception that gender differences in employment and public *v.* private sector employment are more important for the gender gap in Central and Eastern Europe than in other countries.

Robustness checks

Jack-knife analyses

Because the PRR party family is not a monolithic block, individual parties may differ from the general pattern found here. An in-depth investigation of

68 Inglehart and Norris, 'The developmental theory of the gender gap'.

69 Van der Brug, Franklin and Tóka, 'One electorate or many?'.

the differences between parties in patterns of mediation and moderation that produce a gender gap is beyond the focus of this study. However, we do test the robustness of our conclusions. To rule out the possibility that our results are biased due to overly high leverage of individual parties, we conducted jack-knife analyses, using the parties as sampling clusters. Since this did not substantially alter the results, we are confident about the robustness of the findings presented here.⁷⁰

Alternative data: CSES

To the extent that this was possible, we replicated the analyses on the Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems (CSES) dataset in twenty countries.⁷¹ The dependent variable in these analyses is the party sympathy score, which is also strongly related to party choice, albeit less strongly than the propensity to vote questions included in the EES. Unfortunately, this data set lacks indicators for nativism and authoritarianism. However, for most other mediating and moderating models, we can replicate our analysis in slightly simplified form (see [Appendix B](#)). The results are highly comparable to the EES analysis. With regard to mediation, CSES analyses also shows that left-right distance (rather than left-right position) is the most important indicator. Discontent plays no mediating role, and neither do most economic variables, except (again) public sector employment. Moderation is also present. Left-right position is significantly less important for women than for men. Again, discontent is not a significant indicator for women, while it is for men. Even though the sets of cases do not completely overlap, the replication thus yields comparable results.

Alternative dependent variable: actual vote intention

We re-analysed our models using actual vote intention, a dichotomous dependent variable indicating whether the respondent would vote for a PRR party ‘if there were elections tomorrow’. [Appendix C](#) shows the results of this multilevel logistic analysis. Because the number of respondents in the sample that would actually vote for such a party is small (on average only about 50 per country), we should be cautious in drawing strong inferences on the basis of this indicator. However, we can assess whether the conclusions point in a similar direction. We first assess mediation. Socio-economic differences explain part of the gap, to an even stronger extent than it did when the continuous dependent variable was used. Controlling for nativism and

70 The results of the jack-knife analyses are available on request.

71 The data in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) modules 1, 2 and 3 were collected in 1996–2001, 2001–4 and 2006–11, respectively, during post-election surveys. Data can be downloaded from www.cses.org.

authoritarianism increases the gap, while including left-right distance decreases it, but more modestly. The general picture is thus in line with our earlier findings.

With regard to moderation, we again find a stronger effect of left-right positions for men. However, while most of the effects are stronger among men than among women, none of them are significantly so. This is probably to a large degree due to technical reasons: logistic regression with a highly skewed indicator can lead to high standard errors. Alternatively, it might indicate some difference in the transition from willingness to vote PRR to actually doing so. We therefore conclude that this analysis largely confirms the mediation results, and neither confirms nor falsifies our moderation findings.

Understanding the gap: from demand to supply

Women have been found to be less likely to vote for PRR parties in many countries. Although empirically consistent, this finding has been noted rather than explained in most studies on support for these parties. We investigated the extent to which this gender gap can be attributed to mediation (sex differences on key characteristics and attitudes) and to moderation (sex differences in the relative importance of these characteristics and attitudes). Three models were explored that could potentially explain the gap: a socio-structural model, a discontent model, and a policy vote model. An analysis of the 2009 European Election Studies data enabled us to test these mechanisms and models. We were able to explain a substantial part of the gender gap in the propensity to vote for PRR parties by a combination of moderation and mediation. While research so far has focused almost exclusively on mediation, we find that moderation is at least as important.

The evidence for the classic account of the gender gap as a result of socio-structural differences between men and women is mixed. On average, gender differences in (mainly) occupational position explain a part of the gap, especially in the former Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Most importantly, the large share of public sector workers among women can explain why some of them are less supportive of the populist radical right. Male-female differences in vulnerability due to unemployment or a lower levels of education provide little insight into the gap.

Conventional theories that link the gender gap to some inherent female resistance to PRR ideology are not confirmed. Although the empirical evidence for such theories is contradictory at best,⁷² many accounts of the populist radical right assume that women are somehow more 'peaceful' and, for that reason, less likely to support PRR parties. However, we show that

72 See, for example, Coenders, Gijsberts and Scheepers, 'Resistance to the presence of immigrants and refugees in 22 countries'.

most men are *not* more nativist or authoritarian than women: across the board they are even slightly less so. As a result, these attitudes do not explain the gap in support for the PRR among men and women. However, we also show that these values predict women's support for the populist radical right less strongly than men's.

The same goes for discontent. Women are not more satisfied than men with the workings of democracy or the performances of government: in fact, they are slightly less so on average. However, among women, discontent does not translate into PRR support as strongly as it does among men. This is in line with Elisabeth Gidengil *et al.*'s study on support for the Canadian Alliance.⁷³ To the extent that the PRR indeed attracts 'angry white men', they are exactly that: *men*. Again, moderation is at least as important as mediation in understanding male and female support for the populist radical right. Although searching for mediators is the most well-known approach to explain voting differences between groups such as men and women, we conclude that in leaving moderation out some scholars might overlook crucial mechanisms.

In the current study, this raises the question of *why* women decide whether to support PRR parties on the basis of other considerations than men. Our study suggests two likely answers. First, even if men do not agree more often with PRR parties on their programmatic core, they are more likely to attach high *salience* to these topics. Even if men and women are to the same extent 'tough' on issues such as immigration and law and order, such attitudes are more likely to be translated into a willingness to support the PRR among those voters for whom these topics are *most* important; and these are most often men. This might also be a tentative explanation for our finding that women report a systematically larger ideological distance between themselves and PRR parties. If left-right positions are constructed on the basis of the issues one finds most important, a party that does not campaign on such issues will be perceived as not being close to one's preferred position.

Second, we argue that the fact that we find strong moderation should redirect our search for the origin of the gender gap to party characteristics *other* than ideology. After all, the strong interactions lead us to ask why women are less likely to support PRR parties *even if they agree with them*. This suggests that women are more strongly deterred than men by other characteristics shared by PRR parties, such as their political style, occasional association with historic violence, stigmatization by parts of the elite and the general public, or ideological issues not studied here. Further research can thus benefit from taking such factors into account.

Our robustness checks demonstrate that the results obtained in this study do not depend on the inclusion or exclusion of single cases. Therefore, we are

73 Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais and Nevitte, 'Explaining the gender gap in support for the New Right'.

confident about the validity of the conclusions that we draw on the basis of the general patterns observed in this study. However, we also noticed some interesting cross-country and cross-party variations. Exploring the origins of these differences is beyond the scope of this study, but could be an important avenue for future research.

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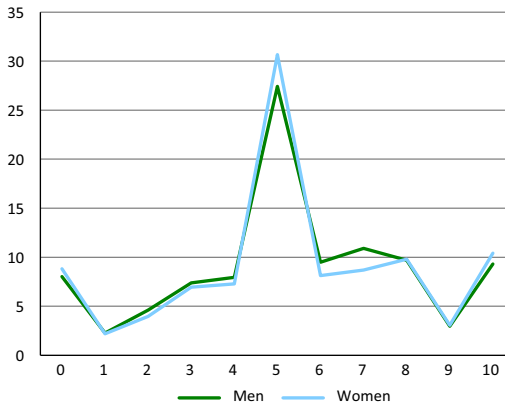
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Appendix A Variable overview

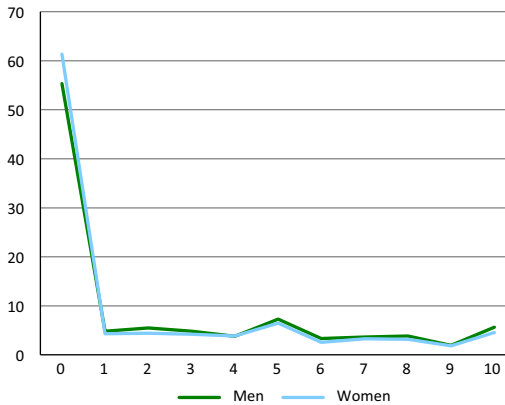
Descriptive statistics of variables

| Variable | n | Mean | SD | Min | Max |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| Age | 26763 | 50.29 | 16.91 | 18 | 99 |
| Churchgoing | 26549 | 0.55 | 0.50 | 0 | 1 |
| Low level of education | 26206 | 0.27 | 0.44 | 0 | 1 |
| Working or lower middle class | 26128 | 0.40 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 |
| Unemployed | 26902 | 0.07 | 0.25 | 0 | 1 |
| Unskilled worker | 27069 | 0.07 | 0.25 | 0 | 1 |
| Semi-skilled worker | 27069 | 0.08 | 0.27 | 0 | 1 |
| Self-employed | 26902 | 0.08 | 0.27 | 0 | 1 |
| Public sector worker | 22550 | 0.28 | 0.45 | 0 | 1 |
| Discontent | 24191 | 0.54 | 0.33 | 0 | 1 |
| Nativism | 25490 | 0.68 | 0.24 | 0 | 1 |
| Authoritarianism | 26018 | 0.75 | 0.23 | 0 | 1 |
| Pro-Redistribution | 25670 | 0.64 | 0.30 | 0 | 1 |
| Left-right position | 47567 | 0.51 | 0.27 | 0 | 1 |
| Left-right distance to party | 12669 | 0.40 | 0.28 | 0 | 1 |

A: distribution of left-right position (%)



B: distribution of propensity to vote (%)



Appendix B Replication using CSES data

Dependent variable: party sympathy (details available on request)

Mediation

| Model | Size of female coefficient |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Gender only | -0.32 |
| Economic variables (education, unemployment, public sector worker) | -0.32 |
| Satisfaction with democracy | -0.32 |
| Left-right position | -0.27 |
| Left-right distance | -0.21 |

Moderation

| Variable | Size of effect | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | Men | Women | Difference |
| Education | -0.20 | -0.25 | Significant |
| Unemployment | 0.17 ns | 0.28 ns | Significant |
| Public sector | -0.37 | -0.32 | Not significant |
| Satisfaction democracy | -0.12 | -0.04 ns | Not significant |
| Left-right position | 0.38 | 0.34 | Significant |

Appendix C Replication on actual vote intention

Dependent variable is a dummy indicating whether the respondent would vote for a PRR party if there were elections tomorrow.

Mediation

| | Gender only | | Age and religion | | Socio-economic characteristics | | Discontent model | | Policy preference | | Left-right position | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------|------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|------------------|------|-------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| Gender | -0.46 | 0.10 | -0.43 | 0.10 | -0.42 | 0.09 | -0.48 | 0.11 | -0.49 | 0.11 | -0.43 | 0.10 |
| Age | | | 0.00 | 0.00 | | | | | | | | |
| Church attendance | | | -0.25 | 0.08 | | | | | | | | |
| Low level of education | | | | | 0.43 | 0.10 | | | | | | |
| Working or lower middle class | | | | | 0.28 | 0.09 | | | | | | |
| Unemployed | | | | | 0.34 | 0.14 | | | | | | |
| Unskilled worker | | | | | 0.17 | 0.16 | | | | | | |
| Semi-skilled worker | | | | | 0.17 | 0.14 | | | | | | |
| Self-employed | | | | | 0.19 | 0.13 | | | | | | |
| Public sector worker | | | | | -0.32 | 0.10 | | | | | | |
| Discontent | | | | | | | 1.49 | 0.13 | | | | |
| Nativism | | | | | | | | | 3.05 | 0.22 | | |
| Authoritarianism | | | | | | | | | 0.89 | 0.24 | | |
| Pro-intervention in economy | | | | | | | | | 0.19 | 0.14 | | |
| Left-right position | | | | | | | | | | | 0.85 | 0.17 |
| Left-right distance | | | | | | | | | | | -3.65 | 0.21 |
| Intercept | -2.55 | 0.23 | | | -2.75 | 0.23 | -3.41 | 0.25 | -5.65 | 0.32 | -1.95 | 0.22 |

Moderation

| | Effect for men | Effect for women | <i>p</i>-value of difference (two-tailed) |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Age | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.70 |
| Church attendance | -0.20 | -0.31 | 0.51 |
| Low level of education | 0.55 | 0.24 | 0.05 |
| Lower classes | 0.34 | 0.18 | 0.58 |
| Unemployed | 0.31 | 0.37 | 0.64 |
| Public sector worker | -0.34 | -0.32 | 0.53 |
| Discontent | 1.48 | 1.49 | 0.82 |
| Nativism | 3.07 | 2.98 | 0.78 |
| Authoritarianism | 0.87 | 0.91 | 0.64 |
| Left-right position | 0.93 | 0.79 | 0.47 |
| Left-right distance | -3.89 | -3.36 | 0.19 |