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Daring to vote right: Why men are more likely than women to vote for the radical right

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INTRODUCTION

“A COMPLEX AND INTRIGUING PUZZLE”

Men are more likely to vote for Radical Right parties than women. In fact, gender is the only sociodemographic variable that is relevant across virtually all Radical Right parties at every election (Norris, 2005). This feature has led Mudde (2007: 90) to label the party family “*Männerparteien*” – men’s parties. The electoral male bias is not without consequences: limited success among female voters can substantially constrain the Radical Right’s electoral fortunes. However, more than two decades after Betz (1994: 146) first documented this “complex and intriguing puzzle”, we still do not fully understand the mechanism behind the most consistent and universal gender gap in voting in contemporary democracies. Not only does this leave us puzzled about the origins of this gap, it also suggests that our conventional models of Radical Right voting leave important variation unexplained. The aim of this dissertation is to systematically investigate the causes of the Radical Right gender gap, in a range of European countries, from the point of view of various models of voting behavior. This, in turn, sheds light on the role played by gender in shaping vote choices more generally, as well as on hitherto overlooked determinants of Radical Right voting.

This is not to say that the Radical Right gender gap has not yet attracted insightful scholarship. On the contrary, a number of studies has furthered our understanding of the gap in various contexts. Among these are several case studies, including Hungary (Montgomery, 2015), Switzerland (Fontana, Sidler, & Hardmeier, 2006) and Canada (Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais, & Nevitte, 2005). Next to drawing attention to relevant country-specific factors – for instance, the role of post-communist heritage in Hungary (Montgomery, 2015) – and election-specific events – such as leadership change in France (Mayer, 2013) –, these studies aim to explain the gender gap by generally established models of Radical Right voting. However, with the exception of Canada, where the gender gap in voting for the *Canadian Alliance* could be traced to gender differences regarding “the appropriate role of the state, law and order, and traditional moral values” (Gidengil et al., 2005: 1171), none of these country studies have been able to identify a combination of factors which fully explains the gap.

These conclusions have been confirmed in comparative studies employing cross-national data (Givens, 2004; Immerzeel, Coffé, & van der Lippe, 2015). In some countries, the gender gap could be explained by a broad set of structural and attitudinal explanatory variables. At the same time, in most countries, the gender gap persists; and where it does not, the relevant set of explanations differs between countries. In short, the literature provides several relevant insights in factors contributing to the gender gap, but as of yet no clear solution for Betz’ “complex and intriguing puzzle” has been found.

However, should we even expect to find one? Howell and Day (2000: 859) note that if “[n]o single explanation has been generally accepted”, they “possibly [...] all contribute a piece of the puzzle”. Still, there is reason to continue investigating the Radical Right gender gap. Several socio-structural and attitudinal factors can account for *part of the gap in most of the cases, or most of the gap in some of the cases*. However, for a phenomenon as consistent and universal as the Radical Right gender gap, one would expect common underlying mechanisms to be at work. Furthermore, the scope of the studies above often necessitated their authors to limit themselves to the study of a small number of cases. Moreover, some potential explanations of the gender gap, especially those pointing to the deterring role played by the controversial reputation of parties, have remained untested. The aim of this dissertation is, therefore, to contribute to our knowledge of the Radical Right gender gap by expanding upon the existing literature both theoretically and empirically.

More specifically, I hope to make two main contributions. The first is to *explore a novel set of explanations* starting from a socio-psychological point of view. Partly by collecting new data, I test to what extent gender differences in social sensitivity and latent anti-prejudice motivations explain the gender gap, showing that men are across the board substantially less deterred by the Radical Right’s social stigma and ‘toxic’ reputation. This does not only improve the understanding of the gender gap, but also reminds us of the importance of the social and normative context of voting.

A second contribution is to *incorporate the supply side*: investigating how factors at the party-level determine the size and nature of the gender gap. Regarding many aspects, Radical Right parties are a rather diverse party family, and it is unlikely that the features responsible for the gender gap characterize all parties to the same extent. However, few gender gap studies have introduced measures of differences *between* Radical Right parties (for an exception, see Immerzeel et al., 2015). I show that the gap and its variation cannot be fully understood without taking crucial interactions between characteristics of parties and voters into account. What parties propose, do, and say, but also the way in which they are portrayed by other actors in society, affects the composition of their electorate – including its gender balance. I show this is especially relevant with regard to parties’ extremism and socio-economic ideology.

Gender is generally acknowledged as a factor affecting political behavior. At the same time, its inclusion in studies of voting is often not strongly defended theoretically. Our understanding of the role of gender in voting is growing (Abendschön & Steinmetz, 2014; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Studies have traced the origin of electoral gender gaps to factors such as men’s and women’s workforce participation, religiosity, employment in the private versus public sector, support for violence, or post-material values, to name a few. Particularly well-documented is the development, in industrialized societies, from a ‘traditional’ (Duverger, 1955) to a ‘modern’ gender gap (Inglehart & Norris, 2000): in contrast to the immediate postwar period, men are now more likely than women to vote for conservative parties in most countries. Still, across the board, gender gaps in voting are probably less well studied (and understood) than many other sociodemographic cleavages, such as education or class. By investigating the Radical Right electorate,

I focus on one of the most prominent gender gaps in voting. At the same time, I will take a step back where possible to see whether and how this particular gap improves our understanding of the role played by gender in shaping vote choices more generally.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will first briefly sketch the size and development of the gender gap in Radical Right voting. After that, I discuss the theoretical framework that guides this dissertation. Subsequently, I elaborate on definitions, case selection, and methodological choices. Finally, I present a more detailed chapter-by-chapter outline of the dissertation.

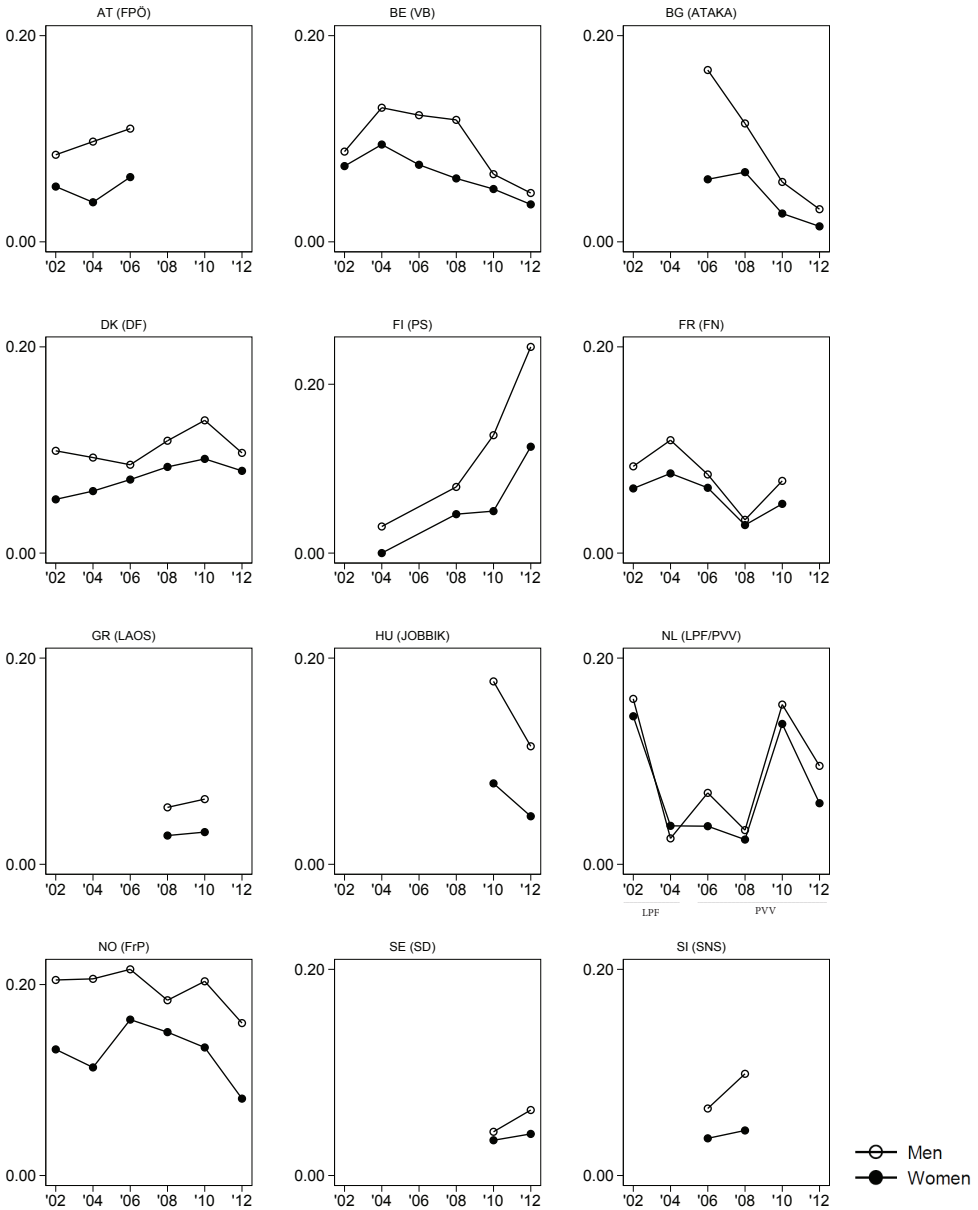
“MÄNNERPARTEIEN”

As Abendschön and Steinmetz (2014: 315) note, “even though the act of voting itself is fairly equally distributed, women and men seem to show different preferences when it comes to filling out the ballots.” Gender gaps in vote choices have been studied systematically since at least Duverger (1955). As noted, the most established finding in the literature is probably the trend from a ‘traditional’ to a ‘modern’ gender gap. Until the 1980s, women were more likely to cast a conservative vote than men in most industrialized democracies (e.g. Campbell et al. 1960), reflecting their higher religiosity and lower labor market participation. Since then, a process of dealignment and realignment has been ongoing, leading to the modern situation of a systematic overrepresentation of women among left-wing parties in most (Inglehart & Norris, 2000) or by now possibly all (Abendschön & Steinmetz, 2014) countries.

While these studies provide relevant insights in general patterns of left-wing and right-wing voting among men and women, gender gaps at the level of individual party families are less well understood. In the case of the Radical Right, the gender gap is particularly noticeable (Betz, 1994; Mudde, 2007; Norris, 2005). To get a first overview of the size and consistency of the phenomenon under study, Figure I.1 shows the percentage of men and women who indicated to have voted for a Radical Right party in 12 European countries for which sufficient data is available in the *European Social Survey*.¹

1 To ensure reliability, the graph includes only those waves in which at least 10 men and 10 women voted for a Radical Right party, and only those countries in which at least two of such waves were available (ESS, 2002; ESS, 2004; ESS, 2006; ESS, 2008; ESS, 2010; ESS, 2012).

Figure I.1 Percentage of Radical Right voters among men and women



A first striking feature of Figure I.1 is the universality of the gender gap: men are more likely to vote for a Radical Right party in all countries. Moreover, Figure I.1 shows that this is a highly consistent feature of the Radical Right electorate: while gaps grow and shrink from year to year, the parties' popularity among men is always greater than

among women.² A third feature is that the gap is *substantial*: it is not at all uncommon for the percentage of votes among men to be twice as large as its percentage among women. This corresponds to gaps found in other data sources, including Givens (2004), Spierings and Zaslove (2015), Norris (2005) and Immerzeel et al. (2015). Most of these previous studies found that men are up to two times as likely to vote for a Radical Right party.³ Even earlier evidence for the existence of this gap can be found in Betz (1994).

THEORETICAL APPROACH

How can this universal, consistent and substantial phenomenon be explained? In this section, I will sketch the theoretical framework guiding this dissertation. I will elaborate how the gender gap can be studied starting from this framework, and also briefly discuss the evidence previous studies have contributed. Table I.1 provides a systematic overview of this framework.

Any hypothesis regarding a gender gap in voting should be grounded in theories of what the relevant determinants of vote choices are. A first element structuring this dissertation therefore consists of models of vote choices. In particular, three models for understanding political behavior are central to this dissertation: a *socio-structural*, an *attitudinal*, and a *social-psychological* model. Each of these stresses a different explanation of political behavior, and their respective literatures do not always speak to each other. At the same time, it is important to note that they emphasize different causal stages of voters' decision-making process. For instance, social-structural conditions can be responsible for the formation of particular attitudes, which in turn can remain unexpressed because of fears of negative social costs. The theoretical models discussed throughout this dissertation are therefore not mutually exclusive. That being said, the gender gap might arise mostly at one level – structural, attitudinal, or psychological – rather than others.

2 The one exception is voting for *List Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) in the Netherlands in 2004. As I will discuss later, this exception might be insightful, given the program and reputation of the LPF.

3 Of course, the question still remains whether the gap is exceptional. Do other party families show a similar universal, consistent and substantial overrepresentation of one of the sexes? Spierings and Zaslove (2015) argue that the overrepresentation of male voters is less remarkable when taking into account that mainstream right parties also attract more male than female voters. Still, the Radical Right gender gap is larger – and more consistent – than those for the mainstream right almost all their cases.

Table I.1 Theoretical framework

	Demand side	Supply side
Socio-structural model	Socio-economic position	Ideology
Attitudinal model	Attitudes	
Socio-psychological model	Motivations, Dispositions	Reputations, Conduct, History

A second relevant structuring element consists of the two sides of demand and supply. Investigating the *demand* side is crucial because it can tell us which characteristics of male (female) voters are responsible for their stronger (weaker) support for the Radical Right. This is – rightly – the starting point of most of the existing literature on the gap. These studies share the notion that the gap should have its origins in aggregated differences between men and women on variables correlated with Radical Right voting. As discussed below, the nature of such variables is usually hypothesized to be socio-economic (e.g. men being more often employed in precarious blue-collar private sector jobs) or policy-attitudinal (e.g. men being more often opposed to immigration). Finding the relevant individual-level correlates provides insights in the individual-level mechanism involved.

I argue that, next to studying the demand, an investigation of the *supply* is necessary – in other words, to incorporate variation in what parties have on offer. This sheds light on the question *which aspects* of the Radical Right are responsible for the gender gap. Of course, at the end of the day, supply side explanations always remain grounded in individual-level characteristics of men and women. However, taking the supply side into account provides a fuller picture because crucial interactions are likely to be at work between factors at the individual and party level. For instance, as I will investigate later in this dissertation, the extent to which socio-structural characteristics shape the gap is conditional on the content of parties' socio-economic ideology. Few gender gap studies have introduced measures of differences *between* Radical Right parties. This dissertation investigates the supply side in a systematic way, aiming to investigate – as far as possible – all three models at both the demand and supply side.

Theories and expectations

In this section, I will discuss the three models, from the point of view of both demand and supply, in more detail. The *socio-structural* model assumes vote choices to be – ultimately – an expression of voters' structural position in society. In spite of the alleged decline of class-based voting (Clark & Lipset, 2001), a link still exists between

citizens' socio-economic role and their vote choice. This is not less true when it comes to Radical Right parties, whose electorates show a consistent overrepresentation of voters with a particular employment status, job type, and work logic (Rydgren, 2012). Next to small entrepreneurs, working class voters – often 'blue-collar', less skilled, less educated, and working in the private sector – are relatively overrepresented among many Radical Right electorates. While this is not true for each party to the same extent (Van der Brug, Fennema, de Lange, & Baller, 2012), the general pattern suggests that Radical Right parties cater disproportionately to voters with this specific socio-structural profile.

From the point of view of the demand side, there are good reasons to expect a gender gap in Radical Right voting to emerge. European economies and job markets are (still) to a substantial extent stratified among gender lines (Coffé, 2012; Flabbi, 2012). This is true with regard to many crucial variables such as occupation, income and (for older generations) education, as well as other socio-economic factors which have been found to be correlated with Radical Right voting. Indeed, such differences have been found to account – though usually not fully – for various other gender gaps in voting (Bergh, 2007; Inglehart & Norris, 2000; Knutsen, 2001). For that reason, it could be very well possible that the gender gap in Radical Right voting follows from the simple fact that men are dominantly present in the sort of precarious blue-collar work that make up the Radical Right's core constituency. According to this argument, women are less attracted to the Radical Right because they are relatively more often beneficiaries of state provisions, and more often employed in the public sector. Longer longevity and higher religiosity might further tie women to the 'old' right (Betz, 1994; see also Mayer, 2013). At any rate, the socio-structural model suggests that men's social and demographic positions in society make them more likely to vote for the Radical Right (Coffé, 2012). In short, men would more often be 'losers of globalization' (Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, & Dolezal, 2008). At the same time, evidence for this assertion in previous studies has – at best – been mixed (Gidengil et al., 2005; Givens, 2004; Immerzeel et al., 2015).

At the supply side, Radical Right parties differ in the extent to which they actually attract 'losers of globalization'. In economic terms, several Radical Right parties move towards the left, adopting the new 'winning formula' of welfare chauvinist nativism (Azmanova, 2011; De Lange, 2007; McGann & Kitschelt, 2005). This is likely to be both cause and consequence of an increasing dependence on voters with a precarious working class profile. If the gender gap reflects the extent to which Radical Right parties attract exactly these voters, then parties with a pro-redistributionist profile can be expected to have a relatively large gap.

A second approach to the gender gap comes from the attitudinal model. This works from the supposition that party support is rooted in voters' distance towards parties on one or more issues or ideological dimensions (Downs, 1957). In ideological terms, the ascent of the Radical Rights has been dubbed a "silent counter-revolution" (Ignazi, 1992) against the issues of the New Left. In this view, the rise of the Radical Right is seen as a backlash against the "politically correct" liberal and cosmopolitan values and policies of the New Left. In a similar vein, the Radical Right can be seen as the defender

of the “heartland” (Taggart, 2004), the homogeneous good old days, unspoiled by mass immigration and other threats. Mudde (2007) defines the ideology of the Radical Right as nativist, authoritarian and populist. Indeed, research has repeatedly established nativist views as the strongest predictor of Radical Right voting (Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002; Mughan & Paxton, 2006; Van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2000). Authoritarianism, euroscepticism and right-wing self-affiliation are other recurring determinants. This suggests ideological congruence between Radical Right voters and parties. Another strand of studies argues that Radical Right voting originates (partly) in attitudes towards the political system, especially discontent with elites (a ‘protest vote’). This resonates with the Radical Right’s critique of corrupt elites (Rooduijn, 2013).

A demand side approach to the gender gap would consist of studying whether such attitudes and values are distributed differently among men and women. As Mudde (2007) notes, the notion that men would somehow be ideologically closer to the Radical Right is a latent assumption underlying part of the (older) literature on gender and Radical Right voting. This would reflect the idea that “female morality tends to be more cooperative, caring, and nurturing” (Howell & Day, 2000: 859), leading to less opposition to immigration and less support for authoritarian policies. Others arguments stress that immigration itself would be a “male-dominated activity” (Givens, 2004: 40), leading to more anti-immigrant sentiments among men.⁴ Alternatively, the Radical Right gender gap might be a “feminism gap” (Bergh, 2007): if pro-gender equality stances are more often endorsed (or deemed salient) among female voters, allegedly “ideologically sexist” Radical Right parties (Mayer & Sineau, 2002: 50) might attract more male voters. While it would obviously be mistaken to simply assume that all (or even most) women have pro-emancipatory stances, and men don’t, there is some evidence in support of a gender gap in views on emancipation (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). Whatever the origin, the attitudinal model would assume stronger ideological congruence – with regard to policy issues or evaluations of the political system – between men and the Radical Right than between women and the Radical Right.

At the supply side, ideological differences between Radical Right parties can further determine the size and nature of their gender gaps. Of course, Radical Right parties share an ideological core, but substantial variation remains. One currently dynamic element of Radical Right ideology that is likely to be relevant for the gender gap is these parties’ view on gender equality and emancipation. While Radical Right parties have traditionally been regarded as culturally conservative in their outlook, favoring traditional, national values over an individual’s right to individual emancipation, scholars have recently nuanced this classification (Akkerman, 2015; de Lange & Mügge, 2015). To the extent that liberal values are considered integral part of the national tradition, a liberal stance might in fact be equally well-defendable from – or at least instrumental to – a nationalist point of view. Several parties have therefore taken up the

4 This is a clear example of the overlap between the socio-structural and attitudinal model.

cause of women's emancipation against allegedly "backwards" immigrants (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007). If women are indeed more supportive of such pro-emancipatory views, the gender gap can be expected to be a function of the Radical Right's stance on such issues.

As noted earlier, combinations of these first two models – the socio-structural and attitudinal one – have been at the core of most existing research on the Radical Right's gender gap. However, with the exception of Canada, few studies have been able to identify a combination of structural and attitudinal factors which satisfactorily explains the gap (Fontana et al., 2006; Gidengil et al., 2005; Montgomery, 2015). Givens (Givens, 2004: 30) shows that the relative importance of "structural, situational, and political factors" differ between Germany, France and Austria, but that they do not fully explain the gender gap in any of the countries. Studying five European Radical Right parties, Rippeyoung (2007) concludes that the gap cannot be traced to value differences, while men's higher propensity to be a blue-collar worker provides only a partial explanation. A similar conclusion is drawn by Immerzeel et al. (2015), who study a broad set of European cases. In some of the countries in their study, gender is no longer a significant predictor of Radical Right voting after controlling for a broad set of structural and attitudinal explanatory variables. At the same time, in most countries, the gender gap persists; and where it does not, the relevant set of explanations differs between countries. In short, the literature provides several relevant insights in factors contributing to the gender gap, but socio-structural and attitudinal models of voting do not appear to provide a comprehensive and consistent explanation. Furthermore, these models have only been applied from the point of view of the *demand side*. As discussed above, potentially relevant differences exist between parties, and this might result in overlooking explanations that work only – or to a larger extent – among subsections of the Radical Right.

Still, it seems that the dominant explanatory variables of Radical Right electoral research leave substantial variation unexplained. It is necessary to broaden the set of approaches – to fully understand the gender gap, but also to improve our theories of Radical Right voting in general. This dissertation therefore also explores the gender gap from a third, *social-psychological model*. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore all possible aspects of this broad tradition that might potentially clarify the Radical Right gender gap. Rather, I focus on mechanisms that are most likely, in light of the literature, to affect this phenomenon. At their core lies the expectation that elements of the *reputation* of Radical Right parties are more deterring to women than to men. Because this is the most novel contribution of this dissertation it will be covered most extensively.

After all, research shows that – to a larger extent than other party families – Radical Right parties experience denouncement by both elites and masses. Many parties experience cordons sanitaires, media boycotts (Art, 2007), or prosecution of leaders (Van Spanje & De Vreese, 2015). For many citizens, voting for Radical Right parties would cause normative concerns (Ivarsflaten, Blinder, & Ford, 2010). There is dispersed

evidence that this shapes the electoral fortunes of the Radical Right to a considerable extent. The breakthrough and persistence of Radical Right parties can be seriously hindered by perceptions of illegitimacy (Ignazi, 1992). As Ivarsflaten (2006b: 2) notes, it is “nearly impossible for minor parties to make credible appeals to voters on the immigration issue” unless they can “fend off accusations of racism and extremism”. This underlines the delicate position of Radical Right parties. It has indeed been established that not all voters perceive the Radical Right as ‘normal’ parties (Bos & Van der Brug, 2010). A poll shows that from the 1990s through early 2000s, about 70% of French respondents considered the *National Front* a “threat to democracy” (Le Monde 2013). By 2013, however, this figure had dropped to 47%, showing that parties can make credible attempts at increasing their perceived legitimacy. For other parties, such attempts have proven more difficult (Goodwin, 2013).

This does not mean that Radical Right parties are a *sui generis* phenomenon for which voting is in need of a completely different set of accounts. Rather, the party family constitutes a ‘pathological normalcy’ (Mudde, 2010), for which explanations that can also be at work among other parties appear in a more pronounced form. For instance, Communist parties have historically, too, been depicted as illegitimate, or connected to violence; corruption scandals can inflict a stigma on perfectly mainstream parties or candidates; and in some milieus support for – say – a Conservative party can be a utterly taboo. In Radical Right parties, many of these factors come together.

How could these ‘toxic’ elements of the Radical Right’s reputation result in a gender gap? Gilligan (1982: 16) notes that “[s]ensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgment other points of view”. This leads to the overarching expectation that *controversial parties will experience a larger gender gap*. Building on insights from the psychological literature on gender, it will be argued that there are two related but theoretically distinct ways in which a controversial reputation might bring about a gender gap: due to the *social unacceptability* of supporting such a party, and/or due to *normative concerns about legitimacy*. The former would mean that men are less likely to be deterred by *how others judge a party*; the latter that men are less likely to be *motivated to avoid associations with extremism or prejudice*. While in practice these two elements can be expected to often affect support for the same parties, I will cover their respective mechanisms in separate chapters.

The first mechanism implies that men are more likely to support Radical Right parties because they are less strongly deterred by these parties’ (varying levels of) *social stigma*: the cue voters derive from their social context that parties are not an acceptable option. This would imply that parties with a substantial social stigma – in voters’ close social context or in society more generally – attract more male voters, regardless of the ideological substance of these parties. Indeed, research suggests that such social cues are indeed less likely to affect men’s behavior than women’s (Bond & Smith, 1996; Carlsson, García, & Löfgren, 2010; Croson & Gneezy, 2009; Dalton & Ortegren, 2011; Goldsmith, Clark, & Lafferty, 2005). Because Radical Right parties are to different

degrees controversial among substantial parts of the electorate, men are generally less likely to be dissuaded from voting for them by such social stigma.

According to the second mechanism, women might on average be more strongly deterred by *normative concerns about extremity and prejudice* resulting from parties' legacies, rhetoric, or symbols. This can potentially explain why a consistent gender gap in voting for Radical Right parties occurs, even if as many women as men agree with the Radical Right's policy positions. Men have been found to be more supportive of violence, to oppose ideologies based on strict social hierarchies (Sidanius, Levin, Liu, & Pratto, 2000), and to be on average less motivated to avoid prejudice (Ratcliff, Lassiter, Markman, & Snyder, 2006). Importantly, this is fully compatible with the earlier assertion that men and women might not differ substantially in their views on immigration policy. Support for such policies strongly depends, in the words of Ivarsflaten (Ivarsflaten, 2006a: 6), "not [in] the message itself but rather the credibility of the actor who delivers it". While as many men as women might agree with anti-immigration policies, men are more likely to pursue this by voting for a party with an absent or weak 'reputational shield' that upholds the parties' legitimacy.

At the supply side, this model suggests parties' reputation and image will determine their gender gap. The more controversial a party is, the larger the gender gap is likely to be, *ceteris paribus*. More specifically, the gender gap is a function of – first – a Radical Right party's *social stigma* (a characteristic produced in voters' social context), and – second – its *extremism and reputational shield* (reflecting a party's program, conduct and history). The former can more easily vary over time and between social contexts, whereas the latter is likely to be more enduring (although, as we will see, it is possible for parties to enhance their reputation). At the same time, extremist parties will usually experience more stigma, and hence the two elements are likely to be correlated. An important implication of this argument is that if Radical Right can credibly distance themselves from allegations of extremism, racism, prejudice, and discrimination, they are likely to experience a "feminization" of their vote.

In this dissertation, I examine to what extent (a combination of) these three models of Radical Right voting can explain why men are more likely to vote for the Radical Right than women. The first two models have received most attention in previous research on the gender gap. For that reason they will be tested less extensively than the social-psychological model, though this does in no way disqualify their relevance.

Alternative explanations

Obviously, this choice of models means some potential explanations are emphasized over others. One of the explanations not covered in this dissertation concerns the characteristics of Radical Right *leaders and party elites* – especially their gender. Given that men are overrepresented among not only the Radical Right voters but also their members and (possibly) representatives (Mudde, 2007: 100-111), the gender gap might reflect homophilous voting on the basis of gender. This has especially been suggested in the context of the shrinking gender gap in France after Marine le Pen's ascension to power in the *National Front*. However, leadership changes often coincide with programmatical

or reputational adjustments (in the case of the *National Front*, ‘de-demonisation’), which makes it difficult to isolate leadership gender effects. Moreover, experiences in Scandinavia show that female party leadership can go together with substantial gender gaps in voting. Studying this is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but for a discussion of gender and Radical Right leadership, see Meret, 2013.

Another argument that could be made is that the gap is a *methodological artifact* rather than a social reality. According to this argument, social desirability – which has been found to be more conspicuous among female respondents (Chung & Monroe, 2003) – would lead women to underreport Radical Right support more strongly than men. While this is a possibility, it seems unlikely that the reported gap – which is a consistent finding over time in a multitude of contexts – can be fully attributed to this phenomenon. An analysis of a sub-sample of German ballot papers that bear marks of gender and age shows that the *self-reported* gap reflects an *actual* voting gap for the *German Democratic Party* (Arzheimer, 2009). Moreover, it is relevant to note that a male overrepresentation is not only present among the voters of the Radical Right, but also among its members and representatives (Mudde, 2007: 97-111). The phenomenon thus seems to be more than an artefact of using surveys.

DEFINITIONS AND CASES

Radical Right

In defining and classifying the Radical Right, I follow Mudde’s (2007: 20-23) influential maximum definition of Radical Right Populist ideology as consisting of *nativism*, *authoritarianism*, and *populism*. Because I do not include any of the small non-populist Radical Right parties he discusses, the addition “populist” is less informative in this dissertation. I will therefore label the parties under research Radical Right. At the same time, at several occasions I do include borderline cases. This includes, for instance, the Norwegian *Progress Party*, which Mudde classifies as ‘Neoliberal Populist’, but which is denoted as Radical Right by others (Norris, 2005). I also include parties that, although categorized as Radical Right by Mudde (2007), are sometimes referred to as Extreme Right – most importantly the *British National Party*. I think a broad definition – and thus an extensive selection of cases – is warranted in this dissertation. First of all, because my primary interest lies with explaining voting behavior, the ideological diversity *within* the party family is of less direct importance to answering the research question. The gender gap is consistently present even when employing a broad definition. A broad selection of cases also has the methodological benefit that it allows to observe sufficient variation, which is crucial to study the role of supply side factors.

Following the majority of studies on the Radical Right gender gap, this cases investigated in this dissertation are usually European. For an important part this is the result of the choice for comparative cross-national data sources, which – for the indicators studied in this dissertation – were mostly confined to Europe. A European perspective also ensures some level of comparability across contexts, although substantial cross-

cultural differences remain. Of these, I pay special attention to the distinction between the post-communist countries of East-Central and Western European countries. Important differences exist between these two groups of countries, both regarding the political system in general and the Radical Right party family specifically (Dahlberg, Linde, & Holmberg, 2015; Minkenberg, 2002; Van der Brug, Franklin, & Tóka, 2008). This warrants special attention to possible differences between “East” and “West”.

Furthermore, in the last chapter, I broaden the view by investigating gender gaps in voting for *all* parties. The reason for this is twofold. First, in some relevant respects – most clearly their reputation and stigma – Radical Right parties are quite unlike many (though not all) other parties. Methodologically, this means that regarding these factors most variation exists *between* Radical Right and other parties, rather than *within* the Radical Right party family. This cannot be uncovered by only studying the latter. Second, I expect the Radical Right gender gap to be the result of mechanisms that are also at work among the electorates of other parties. By including more cases, I can assess how far the conclusions travel outside of the present case.

The most prominent case in this dissertation is Sweden, because it is the source of the experimental and survey data collected especially for this dissertation. It could be argued that Sweden is a least-likely case to find support for the social-psychological hypotheses. Gender differences are the product of a complex interplay of personal, behavioral and environmental factors (Eagly, Beall, & Sternberg, 2005). Children socialized in traditional patterns of gender roles are most likely to internalize the accompanying traits and, through this, to reassert these patterns. It follows from this that individual gender identities and characteristics reflect the extent to which traditionally gendered norms are dominant within a society. At arguably the most ‘de-gendered’ end of the scale, Sweden is a least-likely case to find the hypothesized gender differences in Radical Right demand.

Gender

Customarily, *gender* is used in relation to characteristics that are socially constructed as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’, while *sex* refers to the biological categories of men and women. Many studies about the ‘gender gap’ rely on the latter in their operationalization, and are therefore not truly about gender (for a discussion, see Spierings, Zaslove, Mügge, & de Lange, 2015). However, because the term ‘gender gap’ has become firmly established, this convention will be followed throughout the dissertation. In this dissertation I define a ‘gender gap’ as *a difference in the number of men and women among the electorate of a party*.

Still, given that the mechanisms I discuss are strongly shaped by cultural norms, it is very likely the gender gap in Radical Right voting could be better captured using a more refined measure of gender. Relatedly, it is beyond the scope and aim of this dissertation to focus on the *origins* of many of the gender differences in socio-economic positions, values, and psychological correlates which are hypothesized to be responsible for the gender gap in Radical Right voting. Instead, gender differences already established in earlier research are taken as independent variables.

That being said, political choice making is a multifaceted process, and the differences *within* each of the groups of men and women are much larger than the differences *between* the two groups (Costa et al., 2001). Hence, it is important to emphasize at the onset that any statements about gender differences should not be mistaken for stereotypical images. For instance, that men have been found to be on average less responsive to social cues than women does not tell us much about individuals. Still, the fact that men and women have been found to differ *on average* on such characteristics can help us to better understand *aggregate* gender gaps in voting.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

The data employed in various chapters mostly consists of large-N, quantitative survey data. This allows for (1) investigating gender gaps in a wide range of contexts; (2) measuring Radical Right voting with relatively little social desirability bias; and (3) establishing explanatory factors of voting in an indirect way without (excessively) relying on voters' own interpretation of their vote decisions. An obvious limitation of this strategy is the limited opportunity for inductive insights into the phenomenon under study. However, given the deductive aims of this dissertation as well as the substantial social desirability and likely post-hoc rationalization surrounding Radical Right voting, this strategy is in my view the most fruitful for explaining the gender gap.

Some of the hypotheses can be tested using existing data. Chapters dealing with socio-structural and attitudinal demand side factors rely (for a large part) on the *European Election Study* (EES). In contrast to national election studies, this data source has the benefit of including a broad range of items – many of them referring to national elections – in a large number of countries at the same time point. The data on motivation to control prejudice (MCP), central to Chapter 4, are derived from three different data sources: the Swedish Citizen Panel, the Norwegian Citizen Panel, and the British version of the *Comparative Campaign Analysis Project* (CCAP). More information on each dataset can be found in the respective chapters. In Chapter 5, to obtain reputations of parties, data of the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES) provides perceptions of respondents of a large number of parties, which among others led to the construction of a novel way of measuring social stigma in a way comparative across countries and elections. To obtain supply-side measures of parties' policy positions, Chapter 2 relies on the *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* (CHES), which contains experts' views on a range of European parties (Bakker et al., 2015).

Because most existing research has been conducted with regard to socio-economic and ideological determinants of Radical Right support, the third – socio-psychological – model involves new data collection for this dissertation. An innovative survey experiment was conducted among two large samples of Swedish citizens, in which the social cue regarding fictitious parties was manipulated. This is complemented by a set of new survey questions, including measures to directly measure levels of stigma surrounding political parties.

OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Table I.2 summarizes the chapters of this dissertation, ordered along the two structuring elements (models and approaches). Below, I shortly discuss them in turn.

Table I.2 Overview of chapters

		Demand side	Supply side
Socio-structural model		Chapter 1	Chapter 2
Attitudinal model			
Socio-psychological model	Social cues	Chapter 3	Chapter 5
	Extremity	Chapter 4	

Part I: Conventional theories

In the first part (Chapters 1–2), the gender gap is assessed on the basis of the most conventional theories of voting behavior: the socio-structural and attitudinal models. Most existing studies of the gender gap have investigated these two. Next to replicating the findings of these studies on a larger set of cases, I also argue and show that it is important to take two additional aspects into account: conditional effects on the demand side, as well as variation on the supply side.

Chapter 1 investigates the two models from the point of view of the demand side. Can differences between men and women in terms of the ‘classic’ determinants of Radical Right voting – most importantly socio-economic position, discontent with elites, or opposition to immigration – explain why women are less likely to support the Radical Right? This question is studied by looking at the distribution of such determinants (and their effect on Radical Right voting) in 16 Western and East-Central European democracies, using *European Election Study* data. I do not only look at the extent which men are more often nativist, discontented, unemployed, etcetera (compositional effects); I also test whether these ‘usual’ explanations are more important in driving men’s votes than in women’s (conditional effects). While compositional effects leading to the gender gap have been studied earlier, I argue that conditional effects also need to be taken into account.

In Chapter 2, I turn to another understudied aspect of these conventional theories: variation on the supply side. I argue that two important ideological shifts can be observed, both with potential relevance for the gender gap. In economic terms, several Radical Right parties move towards the left (Ivaldi, 2015), adopting the ‘new winning formula’ (De Lange, 2007; McGann & Kitschelt, 2005). In cultural terms, some parties have embraced liberal values such as gender equality in an attempt to preserve the principles of the Enlightenment against immigrants (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007). While the latter has been argued to increase the Radical Right’s electoral success among women, the former (‘welfare chauvinism’), which leads to an inflow of generally

male-dominated vulnerable economic groups, is likely to decrease it. I map the relation between economic and emancipatory values on the one hand, and the gender balance on the other, using expert data on party positions as well as survey data on voters at two time points in 17 countries.

Part II: Socio-psychological models

In the second part (Chapters 3–5), I turn to the third, socio-psychological, approach. This part contains most theoretical contributions and new data. In Chapters 3 and 4, I investigate two mechanisms at the demand side. In Chapter 5, I test both mechanisms at the supply side.

The hypothesis guiding Chapter 3 is that the negative social cues associated with many Radical Right parties, while deterring to many voters, are less likely to influence men's support. I investigate this on the basis of data collected especially for this purpose in Sweden. I examine indicators aiming to measure the extent to which men and women perceive the Radical Right as acceptable in the eyes of others. This is complemented by a survey experiment in which the social signal about a Radical Right and a Green party is manipulated. This allows me to investigate directly whether men and women differ in their perception of the social stigma of the Radical Right, how this affects their vote, and whether an exogenous increase in stigma deters men less strongly than women. The Green party is included in the experiment to see whether social stigma deters voting for all parties, or only in the context of existing concerns about legitimacy.

Chapter 4 investigates the role of normative concerns more extensively. I focus on the aspect of Radical Right parties that is most strongly associated with such concerns: their alleged prejudice against minorities. After all, despite the existence of latent and manifest xenophobia, a norm against prejudice is firmly rooted in Western societies. While the anti-immigrant message of Radical Right parties resonates with many voters, internalized norms against prejudice prevent some from pursuing these policy preferences by voting for Radical Right parties (Blinder, Ford, & Ivarsflaten, 2013). Building on earlier findings (Ratcliff et al., 2006), I hypothesize that women, while possibly as often opposed to immigrants as men, are more likely to be deterred from translating this into a vote for the Radical Right because these parties are considered 'toxic'. When Radical Right parties 'trigger' the perception that the anti-prejudice norm is at stake, this will result in a gender gap. I expect such motivations to be responsible for creating a gap for two parties that have been least able to diffuse normative concerns – the *British National Party* and the *Sweden Democrats* – but not for a party that has been successful at overcoming such concerns – the *Norwegian Progress Party*. This is tested on the basis of measures of motivations to control prejudice in Sweden, Norway and the UK.

In Chapter 5 I investigate the supply side in light of the psychological models. Do differences in the extent to which Radical Right experience social stigma and have an extreme image affect how large their gender gap is? At this point it is important to note that while Radical Right parties show substantial variation in an ideological sense, their denouncement by sizeable fractions of elites and the general public seems a relatively

widespread feature. As a result, these factors might above all set Radical Right parties apart from many other parties, rather than distinguishing them from each other. In this chapter, I therefore first 'zoom out' and look at the effect of social cues on *all parties* – rather than the Radical Right parties alone – in 30 countries at elections over a period of 15 years. This also allows for an assessment of the external validity of the psychological argument. The findings of Chapter 3 results in the hypothesis that widely denounced parties – of whatever ideology – will attract relatively more male voters. The illegitimacy mechanism demonstrated in Chapter 4 leads to the expectation that extreme parties – of both the Left and the Right – will be electorally male-dominated, too. After studying the effect of stigma and extremity on the gender balance of *all parties*, this chapter zooms in to study variation within the Radical Right party family.

Finally, in the Conclusion chapter, the findings will be summarized and discussed, leading to suggestions for further research.