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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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“A PARTY ONE SIMPLY DOES NOT VOTE FOR...” THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CUES

INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter, it was established that women are generally less likely than men to support the Radical Right, *even* when they agree substantially with the platforms of these parties. It was further established that socio-structural gender differences play a role in shaping the gender gap, especially for socio-economically more left-wing parties (Chapter 2), but fail to fully explain the gender gap either. This suggests that the gender gap has its origins in still other features of the Radical Right than their substantive policy proposals. This theme will be elaborated in the second half of this dissertation. It is plausible that patterns of support for the Radical Right, including the gender gap in its support, can be better understood by studying the (negative) *social cues* that many voters receive regarding these parties. Specifically, I investigate whether men are more likely to vote for parties that are deemed socially less acceptable in voters' social environment. As will be argued below, this might in turn explain why a gender gap occurs in voting for the Radical Right despite a lack of a gender gap in support for the Radical Right's substantial program. This explanation of the gender gap has not been studied before, and the aim of this chapter is therefore to investigate the plausibility of the underlying causal mechanism.

Though not part of most conventional models of political choice, there is theoretical and empirical reason to expect voters' social context to affect their vote (Zuckerman, 2005). I argue this is especially relevant in the case of Radical Right parties. After all, in most established democracies, Radical Right parties are denounced by elites as well as substantial parts of the public (Happold, 2000; Minkenberg, 2006; Van Spanje & Van Der Brug, 2007). While Radical Right parties' legitimacy and acceptability have been established as an important precondition for their electoral success (Bos & Van der Brug, 2010; Ignazi, 1992; Ivarsflaten, 2006a), there is little research on the *individual-level* determinants that predict which citizens are most likely to refrain from voting for

stigmatized or controversial parties. In the chapter succeeding the current one, I will investigate whether men are less deterred by *normative concerns* over the legitimacy of the Radical Right's claims. The focus in the current chapter, by contrast, is on *social cues*: the way in which citizens are deterred or attracted to parties because of positive or negative evaluations by fellow citizens – regardless of the substantive program of parties.

Not all citizens are affected by such social cues to the same extent when making their vote choice. Though hardly studied in the context of voting, an extensive literature suggests that women are generally more likely than men to take such cues into account (Bond & Smith, 1996; Croson & Gneezy, 2009; Dalton & Ortegren, 2011). I therefore hypothesize that fellow citizens' negative evaluations of Radical Right parties, while deterring to many voters, will affect men less strongly than women. To test this hypothesis, a large sample of Swedish citizens was investigated using innovative survey questions and an experiment. These studies show that gender differences in the evaluation of social cues indeed matter. Men perceive voting for the Radical Right as substantially less socially acceptable than women, and such perceptions affect men's vote choices less strongly than women's. Moreover, the experiment confirms that exogenously manipulated social *denouncement* has a stronger deterring effect on women's party support than men's. Social *endorsement*, by contrast, brings women's probability to vote for a Radical Right-type party closer to men's.

THEORY

Below, I first discuss why social cues can be expected to be relevant for vote choices. Subsequently, I discuss why men and women are likely to be affected differently by such cues. After that, I discuss why this affects voting for the Radical Right in particular.

The social context of voting

The theoretical starting point of this chapter is that important decisions, including vote choices, are hardly made in social isolation (Festinger, 1962). Rather, such decisions are influenced by the attitudes expressed in voters' social environments: "an opinion, a belief, an attitude is 'correct,' 'valid,' and 'proper' to the extent that it is anchored in a group of people with similar beliefs, opinions, and attitudes" (idem: 272-273). Zuckerman (2005: 4) rightly points out that, while it is "both obvious and well-known" that citizens' social circumstances affect their political thoughts and actions, "relatively few political scientists incorporate these principles into their analyses".

Still, there is a long tradition of understanding voting as a socially informed act. In this view, voting, rather than being an individual act, is the result of a complex process which involves all elements of the "lifespace" of a voter, including her/his individual personality and experiences, intimate and close personal contacts ("primary groups"), as well as cues from broader society (Zuckerman, 2005: 9). The importance of the social logic, especially the role of intimate contacts, was confirmed even in *The American Voter* (A. Campbell et al., 1960: 274): "[n]ot only does the individual absorb from his primary

groups the attitudes that guide his behavior; he often behaves politically as a self-conscious member of these groups, and his perception of their preferences can be of great importance for his own voting act.”

However, most of the subsequent voting research has moved away from studying the way in which social context affects voting. Zuckerman (2005: 2) discusses several reasons for this shift. Methodologically, the emerging focus on nationwide, large-N surveys made inferences about small-group processes less reliable and feasible, leading to the exclusion of indicators for social context in such surveys. Theoretically, alleged “social determinism” became unfashionable, being considered irreconcilable with Downsian views of voting as well as theories of democratic representation, and the focus of voting research “moved to the analytical foreground the immediate determinants of vote choice: attitudes and calculations” (idem: 11).

In this chapter, I return to the study of the social context of voting by investigating its relevance for the gender gap in Radical Right voting. I assume that the views and preferences of voters’ fellow citizens (both those intimately and weakly connected) provide a heuristic which limits their ‘choice set’ of parties. It can do so because it provides an informational heuristic – “a desire to obtain an accurate idea of reality” – or for social reasons (Rosander & Eriksson, 2012: 1588). The latter involves “a process of social comparison, which inhibits validation, necessary for conversion, when one is opposing a position held by the majority” (idem: 1588). Staying in line with your peers is relevant, first of all, because of fear for negative social evaluations. Even if the act of voting itself is confidential, it is the expression of political preferences of which the development is in varying degrees subject to social scrutiny. Voters continuously generate and update opinions about parties, and disclosing a favorable position towards a stigmatized party involves potential social costs. In turn, voters might abstain from developing such favorable positions in the first place – they *internalize* the social cue. After all, incompatible differences between a voters’ political preferences and those found in his or her social context can constitute an incongruence that voters might want to avoid or resolve, according to theories of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962) or motivated information processing (Meffert, Chung, Joiner, Waks, & Garst, 2006; Taber & Lodge, 2006).

Indeed, social cues of various sorts affect political behavior. For instance, even on the broadest level, polling data (as a form of ‘social consensus information’) presents a social cue. It can lead voters to support parties that are doing well – not only because of viability (Lau & Redlawsk, 2006), but also because it reveals general support for a party or candidate. On a more local and intimate network, research has shown that information and evaluations have an impact on vote choices, too (Ryan, 2011), especially those from families (Verba, Schlozman, & Burns, 2005) and friends (Kotler-Berkowitz, 2005). The latter mechanism has to be distinguished from the fact that families and groups of friends are often quite homogenous to begin with. Even in more politically and attitudinally heterogeneous primary groups, a social logic might affect its members, leading to an increase in homogeneity over time.

Social cues, gender, and the Radical Right

Can a social logic of voting potentially help explain the gender gap? While social cues can be expected to be important in shaping voters' behavior, they do not affect all voters to the same extent. Voters who are most sensitive to social cues will be most likely to refrain from voting for parties for which many negative social cues exist. The influence of such cues thus depends on whether and how voters *observe* and *evaluate* them. This can potentially explain many observed voting differences between subgroups of the electorate. Specifically, I expect the consistent and almost universal gender gap in Radical Right support to be the result of the social stigma associated to these parties. Before discussing why there is reason to expect such stigma to exist in the case of the Radical Right, it is important to establish why it might affect women and men differently.

There is a tradition in thinking about gender roles which asserts that the social environment generally affects men's behavior less strongly than women's. The core of this argument originates in the view that, in the words of Gilligan (1982: 16), "sensitivity 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." Quite some empirical evidence suggests that men are indeed on average less responsive to social cues (Bond & Smith, 1996; Croson & Gneezy, 2009; Dalton & Ortegren, 2011). To give a trivial example, in an experiment about consumers' preferences for ecological coffee, some respondents were provided with the information that many others had bought this product (Carlsson et al., 2010). Mentioning this social fact did not raise the intention to purchase ecological coffee among men, while it did do so among women.

Bond and Smith's (Bond & Smith, 1996) meta-analysis of 133 replications of Asch' line judgement task, in which respondents were confronted with a dissenting (majority) opinion, found that gender was the moderator with the largest impact. Men were substantially and consistently less likely to change their views according to the majority. On the basis of survey measures, Goldsmith et al. (2005: 593) found that "women [have] higher scores on conformity than men". This is in line with early research on conformity (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974) and on attention to social cues in the environment (Williams & Best, 1982).

The core of the socialization argument is that women's upbringing – to a larger extent than men's – would foster interpersonal orientation and interdependence. A different but reinforcing argument is that defying social cues involves a risk of exclusion. Among men, the risk of exclusion would be less because their status in a group is generally higher (Eagly & Karau, 2002; see Rosander & Eriksson, 2012). All in all, it can be expected that social cues generally affect men's vote preferences less strongly than women's. This, in turn, might explain the gender gap in voting for the Radical Right.

There are theoretically two distinct ways in which social cues might have a stronger effect among women than among men: gender differences in *evaluation* of stigma, and gender differences in *perception* of stigma. Differences in *evaluation* would imply that men give less weight to social cues, relative to other types of information. This is the

argument generally put forward in the literature on gender socialization. Differences in *perception*, by contrast, would mean that men are less likely to be aware of the social cue in the first place. In practice, perception and evaluation are likely to be positively related, which leads to the general expectation that, *ceteris paribus*, social cues are more likely to influence women's vote choices compared to men's.

While this expectation should hold for voting for any party, there is reason to expect the social cues regarding Radical Right parties to be especially pronounced. Many of these parties are treated as political outcasts or 'lepers' (Van der Brug et al., 2000). Some even face criminal prosecution and party bans for inciting racial hatred, or experience a cordon sanitaire by other parties (Minkenberg, 2006; Van Spanje & Van Der Brug, 2007). Media outlets often take a position as well, sometimes quite outspokenly negative (Art, 2007). The controversial nature of this party family usually originates in its alleged discriminatory intentions, and sometimes connections to extreme right history or subculture (Ivarsflaten, 2006a). The presence of a social stigma on the societal level – in itself a cue – is in turn likely to also influence voters through their primary networks, as such denouncement might appear in many voters' broader or smaller social environments. Therefore, a social taboo is likely to exist on being associated with some of these parties in many circles. Indeed, Bos and Van der Brug (2010) show that not all voters see the *Party for Freedom* (PVV) as 'normal', and that this negatively affects voting for this party. All in all, I hypothesize that *negative social cues regarding Radical Right parties affect men's support for these parties less strongly than women's*.

CASE, METHOD AND DATA

The data for this chapter was collected in Sweden. It could be argued that Sweden is a least-likely case to find support for the hypothesis. Gender differences are the product of a complex interplay of factors (Eagly et al., 2005). As discussed in the Introduction, individual gender identities and characteristics can be expected to depend on the extent to which social roles in a country at large are gendered. At arguably the most 'de-gendered' end of the scale, Sweden is a least likely case to find gender differences in social sensitivity to affect voting. If I do find evidence in support of this hypothesis, it is likely that they apply in other countries as well.

Research on social influences on voting is often hindered by data difficulties. Self-reports about origins of vote choices are potentially unreliable. Citizens are not always aware of the sources of their political views, and social desirability might lead them to overestimate their independence in arriving at a vote choice. Some have researched the extent to which citizens access heuristics by creating an artificial election setting (Lau & Redlawsk, 2006). Others have looked at the distribution of political preferences among citizens' self-reported political discussion networks (Levine, 2005), which allows for a more indirect but possibly still endogenous test of their influence. This chapter is based on two complementary methods: first, survey questions designed to directly measure the *perception* and *evaluation* of social cues; and secondly, an experiment designed to

study the effect of social cues on men's and women's support for a party. While the first most closely measures the concepts of interests, the second allows for a stronger causal inference.

The survey questions and experiment were included in a large sample of Swedish citizens in the online *Citizen Panel* survey project (Martinsson, Andreasson, Markstedt, & Riedel, 2014). These data were collected through an opt-in sample, based on large-scale recruitment via newspapers, social media, and events.²² The opt-in character makes the sample not representative for the Swedish population. However, since the core aim of this study is to establish correlations between survey measures and gender, and to assess the effect of a stimulus for different groups, the generalizability of the sample to the entire Swedish population is not crucial in this study. There are no strong reasons to expect the extent to which effects are gendered to differ substantially between subgroups in society. Separate analyses including interaction terms for the higher educated – which is probably the most important overrepresented category – show that the effect of the stimulus did not differ substantially or significantly by educational category.

The data were collected during two different waves, but are for the main analysis treated as if all respondents were interviewed in the same wave. In the Robustness section, I show that this merging was justified, as the same patterns show up in both independent samples. I describe the details of both the survey questions and experiment separately below.

STUDY 1: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Description

The aim of the first study is to investigate whether there are, first of all, gender difference in sensitivity to social cues in the context of voting, and, secondly, whether women perceive Radical Right parties as more strongly stigmatized. To study these questions, the respondents were presented with two batteries of questions that were intended to tap into perceptions of male and female voters. The first battery aims to measure self-reported sensitivity to the views of others when making a vote choice. This battery consists of three items intended to capture the extent to which respondents perceive themselves as sensitive to what others think about their vote choice. The questions wording can be found in Table 3.1. The items scale acceptably, but not very strongly (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.55$), which possibly reflects their skewed nature: a Mokken scale analysis of dichotomized items suggests a strong scalability ($H = 0.50$). The sum scale of the original items was rescaled to a 0 to 10 range.

22 For more details, see <http://www.lore.gu.se/surveys/citizen/>.

Table 3.1 Measure 1: subjective sensitivity to others when voting

Item wording	N	Mean	SD
(1) I don't care what others think about the party I vote for. (<i>reversed</i>)	2957	1.87	1.15
(2) I take into account what other people think about parties when I make a vote choice.	2957	4.36	1.04
(3) I would feel uncomfortable if I would vote for a party that people around me find unacceptable.	2957	3.98	1.25

Answer scale
Fully agree (1) to Fully disagree (5)

Scalability
Acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.55$)

Of course, two disadvantages of self-reported measures are that people are not necessarily aware of their own motivations, and that they might describe them in a socially desirable way. Given the widely held understanding that voting should be an expression of individual political views, social desirability will likely lead respondents to underestimate or underreport the influence of others. While this might bias respondents' answers in the direction of reporting a more independent vote choice, it is still valid to compare men's and women's answers. Women have been found to generally provide more socially desirable answers than men (Dalton & Ortegren, 2011), and this would downplay the extent to which women will be found more sensitive to social cues. This makes any gender difference I do find conservative.

A second battery of questions aims to measure the perceived acceptability of a vote, for various Swedish parties, in respondents' social context. This is especially relevant with regard the Swedish Radical Right party *Sweden Democrats*. These items measure perceived stigma both in the immediate environment of the respondent ("family, friends, or colleagues") and at the societal level ("in general"). The measures are described in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Measure 2: perceived acceptability of vote choices

Question wording
(1) How acceptable or unacceptable would a vote for [party name] be to most people in your close surroundings (such as family, friends, or colleagues)?
(2) How acceptable or unacceptable would a vote for [party name] be to most people in general?

Answer scale
Not at all acceptable (0) to Totally acceptable (10)

Parties
Social Democrats (S), Moderates (M), Liberal People's Party (FP), Green Party (MP), Pirate Party (PP), Center Party (C), Left Party (V), Christian Democrats (KD), Sweden Democrats (SD)

This measure is aimed at establishing whether the Radical Right is indeed perceived as socially less acceptable, and if so, whether this differs between men and women. If the hypothesis about perception holds, we should observe that women perceive the *Sweden Democrats* as a less acceptable choice than men. Furthermore, if the hypothesis about evaluation holds, we should observe that – regardless of the party – perceived

acceptability of a party is a stronger determinant of voting among women than among men.

The latter will be tested by modeling interactions between the measures of Table 3.2 and gender in a stacked regression model with vote choices as the dependent variable. To this end, the dataset was reshaped to a long format with respondents' evaluations of each party as the unit of analysis. This created $N_{\text{respondents}} \times N_{\text{parties}}$ rows. In a regression analysis I subsequently predicted the propensity to vote by gender, perceived acceptability of the party, and the interaction between the two.

Because all respondent-party dyads are nested in respondents, I start with a random intercept model. I add education and age as control variables. The effect of these controls obviously varies per party: higher education may be associated with a higher probability to vote for some parties, but a lower probability for others. To make the control variables 'generic', I employ the so-called *y-hat procedure*. In short, this involves three steps. First, the propensity to vote for each party is regressed on the control variables by means of linear regression. Second, the predicted values are then saved and centered around their means. These 'centered y-hats' are simply linear transformations of the original independent variables. The values reflect the extent to which respondents are predicted to be more or less likely to vote for a party on the basis of the control variables. In the third step, these values are included in the long (or stacked) data set and used as a control variable in the analyses. See Van der Eijk et al. (van der Eijk, Franklin, & Oppenhuis, 1996) for further details.

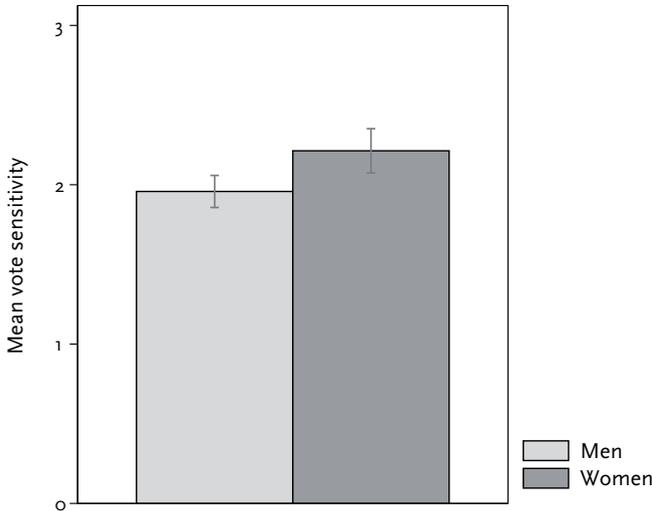
In a second regression analysis, I include fixed effects for respondents. This way, the effect of acceptability perceptions are estimated solely based on variation *within* respondents, thus ruling out any effect of time-invariant respondent characteristics. As a result, the effect of gender can no longer be isolated, but I can still observe its interaction with the perception variables.

Results

This section starts by investigating respondents' scores on the measure of self-reported sensitivity to the views of others when voting. While the scale has its extremes at 0 (least sensitive) and 10 (most sensitive), few respondents report to be highly influenced by others when making a vote choice, leading to a low overall mean ($M = 2.1$, $SD = 2.1$). Figure 3.1 shows the mean scores for men and women separately. It shows that women score higher on this measure, and significantly so ($p = 0.02$). While small on the full nominal scale, the difference is not negligible given the narrow distribution, and at any rate probably conservative (as discussed above).

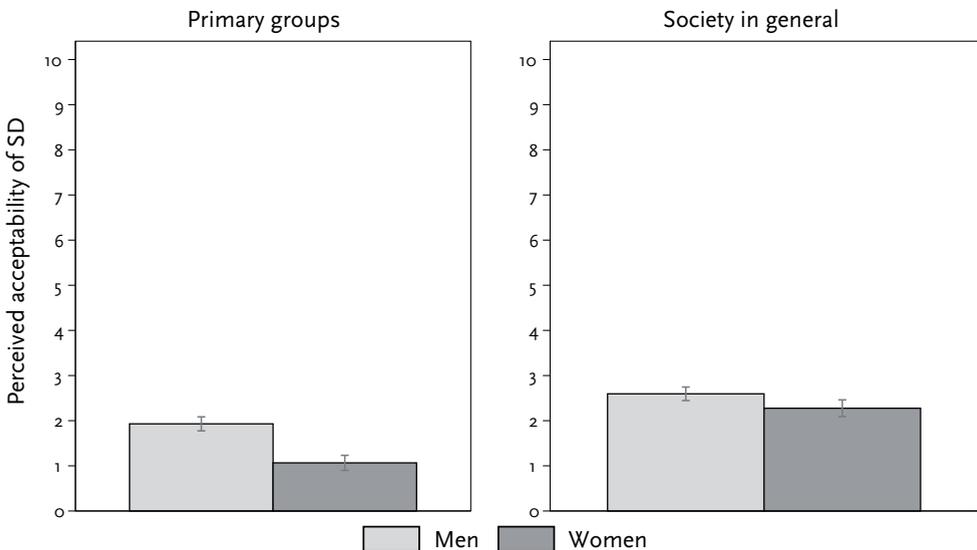
The analysis of the other survey questions – about acceptability perceptions – provides evidence for the importance of social cues in shaping parties' gender balance. It shows, first of all, that acceptability (of any party) 'among friends and family' and 'in general' are strongly but not perfectly correlated ($r = 0.68$), suggesting that these two perceptions are distinct but often go together. Importantly, such perceptions differ between men and women. Figure 3.2 shows the average perceptions among both genders of acceptability

Figure 3.1 Mean scores, among men and women, on the measure of vote sensitivity



(among primary groups and society in general) of a vote for the Sweden Democrats. When asked about their family and friends, women perceive this party as being judged much less acceptable than men do ($p = 0.00$). With regard to society in general, the difference in perceived acceptability is smaller but in the same direction ($p = 0.00$). The data thus confirms that – at least in the Swedish case – women more strongly associate the Radical Right with negative social signals than men do.

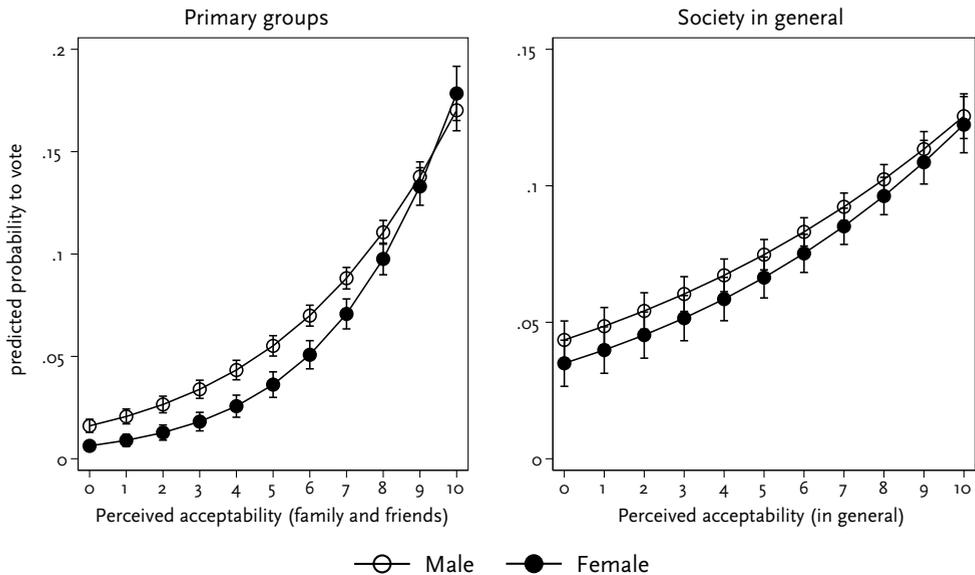
Figure 3.2 Mean scores, among men and women, on the perceived acceptability of a SD vote



It could be argued that the acceptability measures are partly endogenous to vote choices: when voters don't like something, they will project this to others. However, an additional analysis shows that the gender difference in perceived acceptability of Sweden Democrats remains substantial and significant even when looking at the subset of respondents who actually voted for that party. This is a strong indication that women's generally stronger feeling that the Sweden Democrats is a party "one does not vote for" is not purely endogenous to their reluctance to vote for that party.

Finally, I investigate whether acceptability perceptions play a larger role among women than among men in determining their vote choice. This analysis takes voting for all parties into consideration, given that theoretically the role of stigma is not necessarily reserved for Radical Right parties. For other parties, too, a stronger link between acceptability perception and vote can be expected among women. To recall, the dataset was reshaped to a long format with respondents' evaluations of each party as the unit of analysis.

Figure 3.3 Effects of perceived acceptability on voting for a party, among men and women



In a first model random intercepts were included for individuals. The predicted probabilities in Figure 3.3, of which the full regression table is presented in Appendix D, shows that a party's perceived acceptability 'among friends and family' is a stronger predictor of actual vote choices among women than among men ($p = 0.00$). Apparently, perceived social cues originating in the local environment affect women's vote choices more strongly than men's. Among those respondents who perceive the Radical Right as acceptable, no gender gap emerges at all. With regard to perceived acceptability among the general public, the effect is descriptively in the same direction but not significantly so ($p = 0.26$). Still, the evidence in general confirms that social cues play a role in shaping

the gender gap in voting for Radical Right parties. An analysis with fixed effects (also presented in Appendix D) replicates the findings of Figure 3.3: a significant interaction between gender and perceived acceptability among friends and family.

STUDY 2: EXPERIMENT

Description

In this study, the social cue associated with two fictitious parties was experimentally manipulated. The parties remained fictitious to ensure that respondents consider the actual contents of parties’ programs as well as the social cue, and minimize the extent to which the possible social stigma of existing parties contributes to their answers.

Next to a party with a Radical Right-like program – the main interest – I study the impact of social cues on support for a Green-like party as well. After all, Green parties have been shown to be relatively popular among women in most countries (Dolezal, 2010). This is also true in Sweden. If strong negative social cues deter women more strongly than men even when it comes to a Green party, this clearly would show that social cues always affect women disproportionately. If such a gendered effect appears only when it comes to voting for a Radical Right party, this suggests that deterring effects only work in combination with existing doubts about legitimacy (i.e., a lack of a ‘reputational shield’; see Ivarsflaten, 2006 and the next chapter). If the social cue does not especially affect women’s support for either party, social cues might not at all be responsible for the gender gap in Radical Right voting. In short, two elements are manipulated, ideology and social stigma, and either of them might result in a gender gap, or – most likely – especially its combination.

The social cue that was provided to accompany the Radical Right or Green party was either *positive* (endorsement by a large share of the fellow experimental subjects) or *negative* (denouncement by the other subjects). In a control group, *no* social cue was presented.

Table 3.3 Vignettes (in English)

Party	Policy proposals
A	Income differences in Sweden are too high. To decrease these differences, the poorest citizens should pay fewer taxes.
	To provide young people with a better future, the state should invest more money in education.
	Military expenditure should be decreased.
B	The state budget can be reduced by being tougher on fraud with social benefits.
	A larger part of the Swedish health care should be produced in the private sector.
	Employer contributions should be lowered in order to reduce youth unemployment.
C – Radical Right	The European Union is currently way too intrusive in our society. Powers should return from Brussels to Sweden.
	More money should be made available for care for the elderly.
	Immigration from non-Western countries should be halted.
C – Green	The environment should be protected by raising taxes on polluting firms, products and cars.
	The state should do more to assure full freedom of the internet.
	Referendums should be held about important legislation.

The design of the experiment was as follows. Respondents were shown the vignettes of three fictitious parties (Parties A, B and C), each described by a number of policy proposals. The policy proposals of Party A are those of a Social Democratic party and those of Party B of a liberal party. These were the same in all conditions. The vignette of Party C represented either the program of a Radical Right or that of a Green party (based on randomization). An overview of the proposals is given in Table 3.3.

Respondents subsequently indicated whether they felt positive, neutral or negative towards each party by clicking thumb buttons. Table 3.4 shows the vignettes that were used for the fictitious party C, which in this case represented a Radical Right party.

Table 3.4 The three conditions for a Radical Right-like party C

Endorsement condition	Denouncement condition	Control condition
Parti C	Parti C	Parti C
<p>Europeiska unionen har för stort inflytande på vårt samhälle. Makten bör återföras från Bryssel till Sverige.</p> <p>Mer pengar bör läggas på äldreomsorgen.</p> <p>Invandringen från icke-västliga länder bör minskas drastiskt.</p>	<p>Europeiska unionen har för stort inflytande på vårt samhälle. Makten bör återföras från Bryssel till Sverige.</p> <p>Mer pengar bör läggas på äldreomsorgen.</p> <p>Invandringen från icke-västliga länder bör minskas drastiskt.</p>	<p>Europeiska unionen har för stort inflytande på vårt samhälle. Makten bör återföras från Bryssel till Sverige.</p> <p>Mer pengar bör läggas på äldreomsorgen.</p> <p>Invandringen från icke-västliga länder bör minskas drastiskt.</p>
		
a number of likes, neutrals and dislikes similar to the mainstream parties (\pm 70% “neutrals” or “likes”)	an overwhelming amount of disapproval (\pm 90% “dislikes”)	no numbers shown for any party

Note: for the exact number of likes, dislikes and neutrals, see Appendix E.

For some respondents, these thumbs were accompanied by a (manipulated) number, which was implied to reflect other respondents’ likes, neutrals and dislikes.²³ This is a common way of expressing and summarizing evaluations in online environments, and because the survey was conducted over the internet a real-time feedback mechanism was

23 The accompanying text was: “we are interested to know what you and the other respondents think of the parties below. We kindly ask you to read the program of each party. After reading each program, please click on a thumb to tell us if you like the party (the green thumb), feel neutral towards the party (the orange thumb), or dislike the party (the red thumb)”

plausible. The thumbs were interactive: a click on a thumb increased the accompanying number by 1. This was intended to strengthen the credibility of the cue. The bottom row of Table 3.4 summarizes the distribution of thumbs (for further details, see Appendix E). In this way, three experimental conditions were created for Party C. Since Party C is either a Radical Right or a Green party, there are six different experimental groups.

The endorsement condition presents many 'neutrals', rather than an overwhelming amount of 'likes'. For relatively small party families, and especially for a controversial Radical Right party, too many 'likes' would threaten the credibility of the stimulus material. It could be argued that for very small or controversial parties, either a neutral or positive signal from more than two-thirds of the respondents is a sign of endorsement. The presence of denouncement can be expected to deter respondents compared to the endorsement condition (main effect), and this effect can be expected to be stronger among women (interaction).

Two conditions need to be fulfilled for the stimulus to have its intended effect. First, the respondents need to be *convinced* that the numbers truly reflect the other respondents' views. This study's credibility was confirmed by an analysis of the open-question remarks at the end of the study, which suggest that respondents believed the study. Some respondents actually suggested that showing the 'likes' and 'dislikes' of the other respondents was a bad idea of the researchers, because it might have influenced their answers. Second, respondents need to actually *care* about what the other respondents – who they don't know personally – think. Pierce et al. (2013) show that social cues deriving from co-participants of social science experiments are indeed taken seriously. Furthermore, although the study was anonymous, the mere suggestion that answer are public have been found to affect respondents' conformity (Nass & Lee, 2001). However, it is important to note that *even* if some respondents found the thumbs unconvincing, or felt little identification with their co-participants, this would downplay the effects of the thumbs. Any effect that is found is therefore a conservative one.

The dependent variable is a question how likely respondents would be – on a scale from 0 to 10 – to ever vote for party A, B or C.²⁴ This is the same continuous *propensity to vote* (PTV) variable as used in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. As an alternative, which is discussed in the Robustness section, voters were also asked which of the parties (or none) they would vote for if elections were held, thus forcing them to choose one of them. However, because the small number of participants that would actually vote for the smaller parties – especially and crucially the Radical Right among women (only 43) – makes PTV a more reliable dependent variable.

More men than women participated in the experiment: the number of men in each condition is ± 480 ; the number of women ± 260 . However, this does not threaten the validity of a *comparison of effects* between men and women. Because we have clear theoretical hypotheses regarding both the main effect (negative cues lead to less

24 This measure has been validated as a valid measure of electoral utility (Van der Eijk et al., 2003).

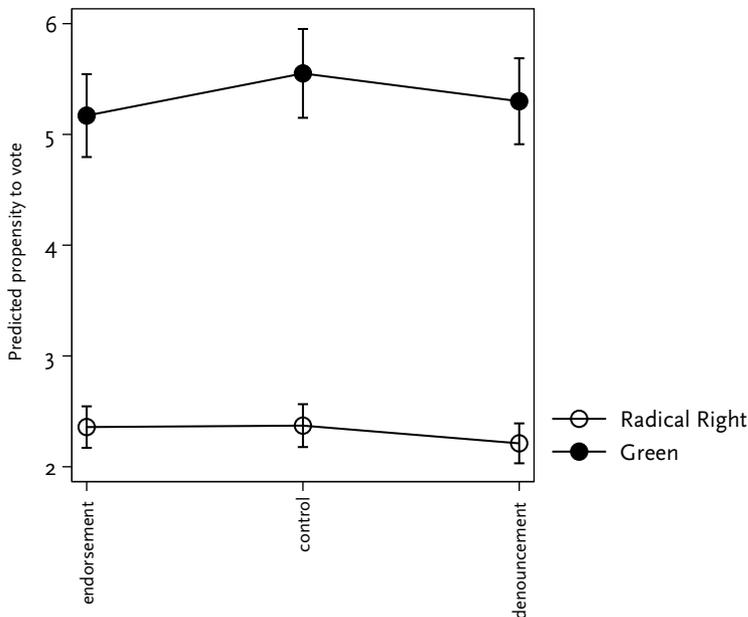
support) and the interaction effect (more so among women), we present one-tailed p -values.

Results

Were the respondents' choices affected by the stimulus? To answer this question, Figure 3.4 shows the predicted probability to vote for the manipulated party, by party program (Radical Right or Green) and condition (endorsement, control, or denouncement). In the case of the Radical Right parties, respondents appear only slightly – if at all – repelled from voting for the denounced party compared to both the control group and endorsement condition. For the Green party, no such effect is visible at all.

Surprisingly, the control group is associated with a *higher* PTV than both the endorsement and denouncement conditions. Apparently, the anonymity of the control group had itself an effect compared to the 'exposed' social cue conditions (where the choice appeared to be shared with others). To study the isolated effect of the thumbs, it is therefore most valid to compare the endorsement and denouncement conditions, rather than the control group and each condition.

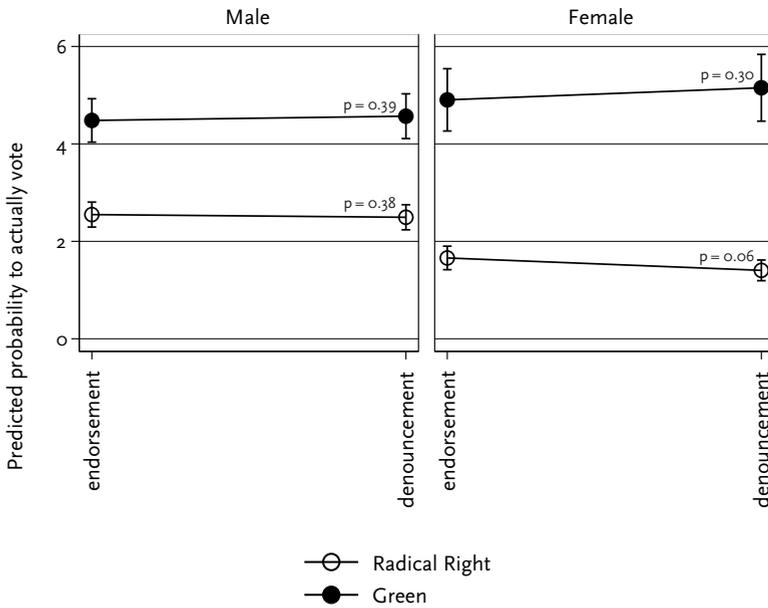
Figure 3.4 Mean PTV for different conditions



In short, no strong effect of the social cue emerges. However, Figure 3.4 combines men's and women's responses, whereas we expect the effects to differ between these two groups. To test whether social cue-following (or -ignoring) behavior differs between men and women, Figure 3.5 shows the results of an interaction between gender and

stimulus. It confirms, first of all, that the Green party is relatively more popular among women, whereas the Radical Right is relatively more popular among men. This is in line with earlier characterizations of the Greens and the Radical Right as *Frauenparteien* and *Männerparteien*, respectively (Mudde 2007).

Figure 3.5 Average PTV for different conditions, among men and women



Note: “p” refers to one-tailed p-values of the difference between the two conditions

More importantly, the graph confirms the expectation that the effect of the stimuli differs between men and women. Among men, social denouncement has no effect for both the Green and the Radical Right party ($p = 0.39$ and $p = 0.38$, respectively). Apparently, whether the party was highly liked or highly disliked by other respondents hardly affected men’s choices. Among women, on the other hand, an effect of denouncement does seem to exist, though not for both parties. When it comes to voting for the Radical Right party, women appear somewhat deterred by social denouncement (although $p = 0.06$). This fits our hypothesis: men are less likely than women to incorporate social cues into their vote choice for the Radical Right. When the Radical Right party is endorsed by others, women’s propensity to vote moves for it closer to men’s. The effect is very subtle, but this might indeed be expected given the anonymous context and the absence of acquaintance with fellow survey-takers. If women are more often deterred from voting for a stigmatized Radical Right party in such a context, it might well be responsible for a larger Radical Right gender gap in a real-world context.

In the case of the Green party, however, women were *not* deterred from voting for that party when it was denounced by fellow participants. The effect even points in

the other direction, although not significantly so ($p = 0.30$). Apparently, the social cue that deterred some of the women in the case of a Radical Right alternative, does not deter a vote for the Green alternative – or, if anything, lead to counteracting it. While stigmatization of a Radical Right-like party resonates with most voters' pre-existing perceptions of the unacceptability of similar parties and policy proposals, lending it credibility and salience, this is not the case for the Green party. That shows that social cues are not simply incorporated blindly, but are interpreted in the context of pre-existing beliefs. In particular, it is likely that the strong denouncement triggered a latent concern about prejudice. This hypothesis will be further explored in the next chapter.

In short, I conclude that social endorsement or denouncement had *no* effect on men's vote choices, whereas it did influence women's – though only when it resonated with existing beliefs and observations. While the deterring effect of stigma on women's votes for the Radical Right is only marginally significant, it is still remarkable given that the cue was subtle, the participants probably felt little identification with the other participants, and for some the credibility of the cue might have been low.

Robustness

The data were collected during two different waves but were combined to increase statistical power. To check if this merging of the two waves was warranted, I re-analyzed the main model for the two *individual waves*. As Appendix F shows, the pattern is highly similar in both waves: no clear effect of denouncement among men; a negative effect among women for the Radical Right party, and an absent effect among women for the Green party. The fact that the results are replicated and identical in both independent waves increases confidence in the conclusions.

As a second robustness check, the analyses were re-conducted with *actual vote* for one of the three parties (“if elections were held today”) as the dependent variable. Because only ± 15 women and ± 60 men indicated they would vote for the fictitious Radical Right party in each of the three conditions, we have to be very cautious with regard to the reliability of the findings. Still, it is relevant to see whether the patterns are comparable. The results (presented in Appendix G) show that this is largely the case. A notable difference is that men seem *more* likely to vote for a Radical Right party that is denounced. However, on closer look this increase is brought about by 4 participants, which renders it unreliable. Among women, the main finding is replicated: the negative effect of denouncement is again the strongest for the Radical Right party. Because the PTV results can be considered more reliable, and the analysis on actual voting confirm that a *negative* effect of denouncement occurred *only* among women, I conclude that the data remains supportive of the general conclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I investigated whether the gender gap in Radical Right voting might be due to gender differences in sensitivity to social cues (Bond & Smith, 1996; Croson &

Gneezy, 2009; Dalton & Ortegren, 2011). Because this explanation of the gender gap has not been studied before, the key aim of this chapter was to investigate the plausibility of the underlying causal mechanism. An analysis of survey measures shows that men perceive themselves as generally less influenced by others when deciding what party to vote for. Men also generally perceive the *Sweden Democrats* as a socially more acceptable choice. Among women who perceive the Radical Right party as rather acceptable, the probability to vote for it was equal to men's. This makes it plausible that social stigmatization of Radical Right parties, while deterring to many voters, affects women more strongly than men.

In an experiment in which the social cue associated with a Radical Right and a Green party was manipulated, the subtle stimulus had only a modest effect on voting, but still allows for some conclusions. Denouncement of a Radical Right party by fellow respondents reduced the probability of female respondents to vote for that party, while it did not do so among men. This result might explain why women have been found to be less likely to vote for Radical Right parties despite the fact that many agree with the party's ideology. By contrast, endorsement of the Radical Right by fellow participants moved women's propensity to vote for it closer to men's.

On the other hand, stigmatization of a *Green* party deterred neither men nor women. The fact that denouncement affected female voters only from voting for a Radical Right party tells something important. While gender differences in the perception and evaluation of social cues matter, this does not mean that women more often simply copy these social cues. Rather, social signals are interpreted in the context of existing values and beliefs. As I will elaborate in the next chapter, in many countries a sizeable share of citizens has normative concerns over the compatibility of the Radical Right with shared societal norms (see also Ivarsflaten et al. 2010). Denouncement of a Radical Right-like party is therefore much more credible and salient. Still, and crucially, this did not decrease men's support, while it did women's.

More in general, it can be concluded that, if we want to better understand voters' choices, studying the social cues they receive is informative (Zuckerman 2009). After all, if a subtle message of endorsement by anonymous fellow respondents already raises people's probability to vote for a party, social cues coming from a larger group, or by people close to the respondent, can be expected to have an even larger effect. While this study was conducted to Sweden, the fact that we find these patterns in a relatively gender-equal country makes it likely that similar mechanism operate in other countries. At the same time, the extent to which parties are deemed socially acceptable will vary between countries and over time. In Chapter 5, I therefore continue the investigation of the role of social cues by taking variation in parties' social stigmatization into account.